



Pratt Elementary School Principal Justyn Burgess (right) celebrates with the Jackson family, Sharon Peters with husband, Melvin, (left) and Judith Claytor (center), granddaughters of Madison and Amy Jackson. Their story provides a springboard for Pratt students and staff to ask questions about race, and to learn about history and resilience in their own community. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

## THE JACKSON FAMILY PROJECT 2025

Event celebrates resilience of the Black family that integrated all-White Prospect Park and Pratt school in 1908

By **Margie O'Loughlin**

If you had walked into the gymnasium at Pratt Elementary School in Prospect Park on the afternoon of Friday, May 9, 2025, you would have seen three older African Americans seated in chairs, addressing a student assembly. If you had stayed a few minutes longer, you would have realized that the assembly was to honor their grandparents and parents, Jackson family members whose presence in Prospect Park more than 100 years ago was history-making.

**LOOKING BACK**

In 1908, Madison and Amy Jackson built a handsome brick house on Franklin Avenue for their family. Prospect Park probably didn't look all that different then: pleasant homes on winding, tree-lined streets in close proximity to the University of Minnesota and other amenities. The Jacksons were the first African American family to integrate the all-white neighborhood – and their three young daughters, Marvel, Helen, and Zelma, would be the first African American children to attend Pratt Elementary School just a few blocks away.

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## Has there been progress toward police reform in the five years since George Floyd's murder?

A CONVERSATION

By **Jill Boogren**

Has there been progress toward police reform in the five years since George Floyd's murder?

Community members active in the movement for racial justice and police accountability in the Twin Cities were asked that question. Responses ranged from yes and no – to absolutely not. Read on for their views on what's happening at the state and federal levels, local governance and policing.

This is part one of a two-part series; next month will focus on what they'd like to see going forward. Comments are excerpts, edited for length and clarity. See full version online.

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Angela Harrelson, George Floyd's aunt and co-chair of Rise & Remember, visits her nephew's memorial at 38th St. and Chicago Ave. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

DeMello and Whiting seek Emily Koski's seat

## Race is on in Ward 11

By **Cam Gordon**

In Ward 11 the incumbent council member, Emily Koski, is not seeking reelection. Jamison Whiting and Mariam DeMello have stepped up to replace her.

Whiting, an attorney in the city attorney's office, formally started his campaign on Dec. 5, 2024, shortly after Koski announced she was stepping down to run for mayor (which she has since terminated). DeMello, a policy aide to St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter and a member of the Minneapolis Charter Commission, announced her campaign in March.

They are both seeking the Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) Party endorsement that could be determined at the party's Ward 11 convention on Saturday, May 31 at Washburn High School.

Party affiliation is not the only thing the two candidates have in common.

**SIMILAR BACKGROUNDS**

Both were raised on the southside, attended city public schools, and went on to become attorneys who now work in city government.

DeMello is the daughter of immi-

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## S.H.A.K.E. breathes new life into Coliseum Building

Mama Parade along East Lake St. celebrates women on June 21

By **Margie O'Loughlin**

The Historic Coliseum Building in the Longfellow neighborhood has undergone a dramatic transformation. Built in 1917, the stately brick building anchors the corner of East Lake Street and 27th Avenue South – where it has served the needs of the community in many different ways for more than a century.

Four local businesswomen stepped in

to save the building from destruction in 2021. It was slated for demolition because of heavy damage sustained in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder the year before. The fully renovated Historic Coliseum Building is now preparing to celebrate its first anniversary on Juneteenth 2025.

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More trans Americans  
call Minnesota home

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Racism takes aim  
at community members  
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YWCA's triathlon draws  
woman-identifying  
athletes to neighborhood

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# More trans Americans call Minnesota home

By **Jill Boogren**

In the fall of 2023, Charley Maples and his partner packed up all of their belongings, leased an apartment sight unseen, left loved ones behind, and moved to a state where they had never been and knew no one. They were fleeing Texas, which was becoming increasingly hostile toward them. Access to health care was in jeopardy, and they began feeling less and less safe. Maples is transgender and joins others who are finding refuge in Minnesota.

Speaking to a large crowd of supporters gathered at the State Capitol on March 31, 2025 for Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV), Maples described the grim realities faced in other states.

"In Iowa, I can be fired for being trans. In Florida, I can be denied medical care. In 18 states it is a criminal offense for me to use a restroom consistent with my gender identify. And in Odessa, Texas, private citizens can collect a \$10,000 bounty on me if they catch me using the men's room," he said.

Once in Minnesota, it was "immediately clear" that they were safer here. Maples said it's hard to put into words the feeling of existing safely, calling it an "environmental" feeling. While in Texas he felt a general sense in the air of uneasiness – walking his dog past an election sign in someone's yard for a senator who'd made anti-trans remarks, for example, or walking past a coffee shop where someone had jeered at a friend. Here when he goes for a walk, he sees Progress Pride and Black Lives Matter flags, which signal support for marginalized groups.

"I'm proud to call Minnesota my home, and I'm so happy to be here. I feel wanted and welcome," he said.

But it was lonely at first. A few months after arriving, Maples founded Twin Cities Queer Transplants (TCQT) to connect with other LGBTQ+ people starting a new life here so they wouldn't feel isolated. Since its launch in Febru-



The crowd gathers on the Capitol steps for Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31 in St. Paul. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

ary 2024, membership has grown to more than 600 people. Most have already moved here. Others are considering or have already decided to relocate here or are locals also looking for community.

A grad student interested in medical ethics, Maples will defend his dissertation in June over Zoom, and won't walk with his cohort because he can't go back to Texas.

Ash Tifa moved here from New York in January 2022, during a snowy winter. Priced out of living in Brooklyn, Tifa wanted a job in the nonprofit industry, which she found exclusionary and really hard for trans women to break into in New York City. She looked for somewhere with a connected, queer, trans community and found her way to Minneapolis. She also didn't know anyone here.

A trans legal advocate, Tifa now runs her own consultancy firm helping people navigate complex legal systems. She regularly hosts name- and gender marker-change clinics. She's also a communica-

tions coordinator for OutFront Minnesota, the state's largest LGBTQ+ advocacy organization, working specifically on building trans narrative power.

"All of my day is surrounded by building power for the trans community," said Tifa. She feels lucky, in that she showed up here – said "This is who I am. This is what I do" – and has felt valued. She also met and married her wife, C.

With a background in immigration, Tifa is aware of the conditions refugees face across the world. Asylum seekers are often professionals with families whose lives are turned upside down as they figure out where to go next, and how to get themselves and their families there. While not fleeing from one country to another, LGBTQ+ transplants are still displaced and face similar pain and hardship, she observed.

Maples said transplants leave everything behind to escape anti-trans legislation and violence. He spoke of a couple in Texas who had a divorce arrangement

wherein if one party left Texas they would lose partial custody of their kids. For their own safety, they made the decision to leave but no longer have visitation with their children.

"It's very tragic," said Maples. Yet more and more LGBTQ+ people are choosing to uproot their lives and move across state lines.

Transforming Families (TFF), a peer-led support group for trans youth and their families and caregivers, has been expanding over the last decade. According to executive director Hannah Edwards, meetings originally held in Minneapolis have branched out to St. Paul, Mahtomedi, Apple Valley and, most recently, Mankato and Rochester. What about a decade ago was a membership of around 100 people is now at more than 1,000 members in the Facebook group and 1,800 subscribers to their online newsletter. Over the last three years, they've experienced a drastic increase as trans youth and their families come to Minnesota from all over the country – South Dakota, Iowa, Texas, Florida, Oklahoma, Georgia. They've seen enough of a spike in attendance that they need more facilitators to cover their meetings.

"We're a small, scrappy group. But I'm just thankful that we've honed what we do so well that we're able to meet that need to expand," said Edwards.

As stated on TFF's website, "Families meet other families to share, talk and hang out. We're here to listen to each other's stories, exchange resources, build community and have fun. It's a simple idea that works." They host in-person meetings and are now hosting meetings over Zoom for people who are moving to Minnesota.

TFF hopes to partner new families with already-established families, as a form of mentorship. This may mean checking in before it snows or letting them know about the State Fair – things, said Edwards, "that are both joyful and practical."

## SO, WHY MINNESOTA?

The landscape in the U.S. has shifted for trans people in a few short years. There

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### Supporting trans neighbors

For transgender people and allies looking to provide support, there are plentiful resources in the Twin Cities.

At **Transforming Families (TFF)**, in-person meetings are held for parents and caregivers with breakout spaces for trans, non-binary, two-spirit, questioning and gender-expansive teens and tweens. Each are led by trained trans and non-binary adult facilitators. They also have a meeting for parents of adults. Donations to TFF help bring facilitators to meetings and support social events such as their annual Day of the Transgender Child to be held Sept. 27. TFF also lists coalition members, called MN Strong 4 Trans Youth, on its website. These include non-profit organizations, businesses, faith communities, performance venues and sports teams, including the Minnesota Vikings. A labor of love by her husband, Dave, Edwards promotes it as a way to publicly state love and support for trans youth and their families. They reference it at their move-to-Minnesota Zoom meetings.

**Twin Cities Queer Transplants (TCQT)** provides resources on their website, including their move-in tips and tricks, and hosts online craft nights and monthly in-person socials. Sometimes they bring in experts, like a tenants' union rep who can explain renters' rights in winter. "A lot of us have never rented during the winter, so we have no idea we're owed heat," said Maples. "I can imagine somebody from Texas thinking that they're just in trouble." TCQT accepts material goods, like bed frames, pots, pans and other items people might need when they move here.

Organizations like **OutFront Minnesota**, **Gender Justice** and the **ACLU** depend on donations for their advocacy and litigation work. People can give money, volunteer and follow them on social media to stay up to date.

Tifa encourages people to get plugged in to community. Everyone has knowledge and skills to share, for example a good cook may make meals for an unhoused neighbor. "I think we can all recognize in this moment that vulnerable communities are under attack... Do something, whether that's for trans people, whether that's for immigrants, whether that's for asylum seekers, do what you can to help the people around you," said Ash Tifa. "[Make] it a part of your daily practice to [ask], how can I do something for someone else today?"

Charley Maples encourages cisgender people (those who identify with the sex they were assigned at birth) to speak up. People are going to say things about trans people that are misinformed and even hateful that they wouldn't say in front of trans or queer people. "The opportunity that cis people have to educate in those moments is immense," he said. "I know it can be hard. I'm not a confrontational person myself, but just to gently correct and inform people about the issues at hand and what we're experiencing is huge, because I can't do that. People aren't going to talk like that around me."

Hannah Edwards agrees. "In your everyday life, don't be silent. Don't be quiet," she said. "It's really scary and tiresome right now to be trans or to be the caregiver or loved one of someone who is trans, and we need our community stepping in and speaking out right alongside us. When you hear misinformation, interrupt and correct it... have those uncomfortable conversations. Being an ally isn't always comfortable, right?"

Another thing Maples asks is for people to listen and believe trans people. One of the things he hears often from transplants is that they all feel a bit gaslit. People in their home states told them it would all blow over, none of the bills would pass, and that they were overreacting.

"We're told time and time again that what we're seeing and experiencing isn't actually happening... and it keeps going," said Maples. "If you're ever talking to a transplant, it's not particularly helpful to question whether things really happened or are really that bad. We know. I mean, uprooting your life is extremely difficult and traumatic, and we wouldn't be doing it if all of this was just in our heads."

Vanessa Sheridan puts it bluntly: "You either stand up for the constitution and rule of law and against the inhumanity that is oozing from the White House, or you do not. You are either our friends and allies and defenders, or you are not. And if you are not, then please get... out of the way, because the train of resistance is coming."



On March 31, Transgender Day of Visibility, Rep. Leigh Finke tells the crowd in the Capitol Rotunda that the opposite of fascism is not democracy, but love. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

## TRANS AMERICANS

>> from 2

are bills that strip protections against discrimination, remove access to necessary medical care and even penalize parents and care providers for honoring the needs of transgender youth and adults.

Trans activist and reporter Erin Reed, of *Erin in the Morning*, tracks legislation introduced in every state. According to Reed, there were 70 anti-LGBTQ+ bills in 2020; in 2025, there are more than 850. Her "risk assessment map" shows in red the states with anti-trans laws either on the books or that are in danger of becoming law soon and includes two dark red "do not travel" states – Florida and Texas – because of laws there. In blue are states with laws in place or likely to pass soon that are affirming for trans people. If the map divided into red and blue states seems familiar, it's because anti-trans legislation has been led by Republican-controlled legislatures, passed largely along party lines. There is now a large swath of red in middle America and in the South, which impacts cross-country travel for trans people; in some places, it's not safe for them to use a public restroom.

As a "trans refuge state," Minnesota is one of the outliers.

Tifa pointed out that Minnesota has been a long-standing leader in the fight for trans rights. In 1993, the Minnesota Human Rights Act was amended to include protections for trans people. Minnesota led the fight for marriage equality, which passed in 2013. In March 2023, Gov. Tim Walz signed an executive order protecting access to gender affirming care. And in April 2023, championed by Rep. Leigh Finke (St. Paul, Roseville) and the DFL Queer Caucus, the trans refuge bill was signed into law.

"The list of states that are just friendly to us is very small and getting smaller, and Minnesota has really stepped up to the plate and said, 'We are going to do as much as we can to protect this community,'" said Tifa. "We have legislators doing the work, we have a governor and attorney general doing the work, we have a very loud and active trans community that is fighting for their rights... We're in a really good position here, which is very markedly different than a lot of other places in the country."

While she views Reed's maps as useful, Tifa encourages people to do their own risk assessments. In addition to the political dynamic, there's a cultural and social dynamic. Some people are thriving where they are, even in deep red states. Some may feel safer in urban areas over rural areas, while others might be well supported in their communities no matter the size or location. She urges her clients to do regular safety self check-ins.

Even with strong protections for trans people, Minnesota is not immune from attacks. Two sports ban bills were introduced by Republicans this session (neither

passed). And while Minnesota is considered a safe state, passage of the 2023 trans refuge bill in the House was close, 68-62. This means constant vigilance for advocates and lawmakers.

And now, the level of support that's taken decades to build in Minnesota is being tested as the fight moves to the federal level.

### THREATS OF ERASURE

In November 2024, U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson announced a policy barring trans women from using public bathrooms at the Capitol that match their gender identity. Transgender Congresswoman Sarah McBride, of Delaware, agreed to comply. But the rhetoric has gotten so ugly that a male Republican committee leader referred to her as "the gentleman" from Delaware, to which she quickly retorted, "Thank you, Madame Chair." Another committee member called out the chair's disrespect, and the committee adjourned.



Minnesota has really stepped up to the plate and said, 'We are going to do as much as we can to protect this community.'

Ash Tifa



The federal government has removed the "T" from LGBT on the website for the Stonewall National Monument, which recognizes the Stonewall Inn as the birthplace of the gay rights movement in New York City in 1969.

Two trans women, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, were key figures in the Stonewall Uprising that ignited the movement.

Passports are reportedly getting returned with an incorrect gender to citizens, some of whom legally changed their name and gender decades ago. President Donald Trump has threatened to withhold federal funding to school districts and universities who refuse to comply with his executive orders. And on May 6, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to allow a ban on military service by transgender personnel while a legal case challenging it is considered.

"Anti-trans forces in Washington are writing executive orders that attack the civil rights of transgender American citizens," said national transgender workplace consultant, speaker and author Vanessa Sheridan at TDOV. "But do not fail to see this is only a first step. Their ultimate goal is to eliminate us all together."

Speaking at the Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) back in March 2023, the *Daily Wire's* Michael Knowles said, "Transgenderism [sic] must be eradicated from public life entirely." Project 2025, the Christian right-wing manifesto for the first 180 days of a conservative administration, targets use of pronouns and bathrooms, access to health care and military service. It explicitly calls to delete the terms sexual orientation, gender identity, gender equality, diversity, equity

and inclusion, among others, out of every existing federal rule, regulation and piece of legislation.

"Our own federal government has become weaponized against the transgender community... What kind of country do we live in when the government that is supposed to be our protector is now a persecutor, a predator and a perpetrator?" asked Sheridan. "Keep in mind that being transgender is not a choice, but do you know what is? Bigotry."

The anti-trans rhetoric is harmful – especially for youth, said Edwards. Edwards' teenage daughter is transgender, and although she's affirmed at home and at school, she still has hard days knowing that there are people debating her very existence and her right to access a joyful, full life. She's now thinking about college and has to consider whether programs she's interested in are located in safe states.

For Maples, it's no longer about waking up to whatever Texas Governor Greg Abbott might have done to erase his rights overnight; with the number of executive orders being issued from the White House, he now has to wonder what President Trump has done.

"I wish the worst thing I could expect to wake up to was construction on the way to work or a broken toaster or buying decaf coffee on accident," said Maples. "We deserve to be safe, but we also deserve the mundane. We want to be allowed to be ordinary."

### MINNESOTA FIGHTS BACK

Thanks to the state laws already on the books, Minnesotans are fighting back.

"[Attorney General Keith] Ellison has been one of the most active attorney generals in the country fighting the latest slew of executive orders... attacking our community," said Tifa.

Most recently, he filed a lawsuit defending Minnesota's right to protect trans people under our state's Human Rights Act (see Rep. Leigh Finke's remarks on the lawsuit in the online version of this article).

"We are constantly thankful in our groups as caregivers for people like Keith Ellison, Gov. Walz and Lt. Gov. Flanagan, protecting us and our kids passionately... Not in a quiet way, but in a very loud and proud way," said Edwards. "That makes us all feel a lot safer."

Tifa reminds people that while executive orders are scary, they don't in themselves make laws.

"Minnesota state law has not changed, will not be changed by any of the executive orders regarding trans health care. Trans health care is a protected right here in Minnesota, regardless of age," she said.

Having support at the highest levels sets the tone for how institutions operate. Health care providers can continue care for trans youth in part because state leaders help them feel like they can make that choice. And despite threats that federal funding will be pulled if Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) measures continue, teachers can still conduct their classrooms in ways that are affirming for students.

"Because the kids haven't gone anywhere despite all of the executive orders," said Edwards. "We need our leaders, our district admin and school boards and everybody to be brave and unapologetic and bold and feel supported by the government here within the state."

And while Tifa advises against applying for gender and name changes on federal documents such as passports right now, Minnesota residents can still obtain state IDs that reflect their gender identity.

Rep. Finke told the crowd at TDOV that the opposite of fascism is not democracy, but love.

"There is only one side for good, and it is our side, and we will win that fight," she said.

✱ Check social media for these groups and more to find large events and smaller gatherings during Pride in June.



Join the conversation, and let us know your diverse thoughts on the issues that affect your neighborhood. Send letters and guest commentaries to [news@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com](mailto:news@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com).

## TOO MUCH COFFEE

BY TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN  
Owner & Editor

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What does racism look like?

I saw it in April when I received an envelope at my south Minneapolis post office box filled with clips of nearly every person of color who made our edition of the Midway Como Frogtown Monitor in St. Paul that month. The Monitor is a sister paper to the Longfellow Nokomis Messenger and Southwest Connector.

Among them were our regular columnists, Melvin Giles of Peace Bubbles, Rennie Gaither of Greening Frogtown and Dr. Artika Tyner of Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute. A female high school wrestler was on our front page, and Como Park High School teacher and coach Eric Erickson also wrote about the group of students who toured D.C. There was an image of the new District 4 County Commissioner Garrison McMurtrey (the first Black county commissioner in Ramsey County's history), and Hamline Elementary teacher Amanda Jagdeo, who was a semi-finalist for Minnesota Teacher of the Year.

These are the people who are writing about education and sustainability. They care about the community and are working to make it better. They are stepping up and stepping out.

They are our leaders.

And I was so disappointed and upset to see this targeted hate.

It was unsigned and lacked a return address. I question when someone's opinions are such that they don't sign their name to it.

We believe in transparency. We also believe in putting our names on what we write – which makes us different from var-

# Racism takes aim at community members in newspaper

ious online sites and social media. That's why we don't publish unsigned letters.

Erickson is the White teacher at Como Park High who works to highlight the great things going on at the school for the Monitor each month. "It's troubling to see a community newspaper reporting on the accomplishments and activities of its local residents be targeted. And for what reason? Apparently, the sender does not want to see or read about people in the community who are not White. If that is indeed the intended message, we have a piece of evidence revealing that racism appears to be seeping into places and spaces where society had seemed to make progress over decades – reporting and celebrating the achievements, work, and voices of people in our community regardless of their skin color," he said.

"Among the big reasons I have lived in Frogtown for 44 years and continue to live here is that my life has been enriched by my many neighbors who come from all the corners of the earth," stated Patricia Ohmans of Frogtown Green, who is White.

"It's alarming that some people suddenly feel enabled to tout their small-minded, racist attitudes. That isn't what Frogtown is about. It's not what Minnesota is about. And it's not what America is about. It's way past time to call out this thinking and identify it as the hateful ignorance that it is."

## INCIDENT ALONG EDMUND AVENUE

While delivering the May issue of the Longfellow Nokomis Messenger, our long-time female carrier (who lives in Longfellow) came back to her car along Edmund Boulevard to find it strewn with about 40 newspapers from the delivery the month before. On her dash was an ugly note saying the newspaper was "litter."

It was unsigned.

The April edition of the paper had a lovely photo by Bruce Silcox accompany-

ing a story titled, "Lifting up Lake Street" about an initiative supporting murals, festivals, business advice and development assistance. There were items about recycling ambassadors, Patrick Scully of Patrick's Cabaret, the Ward 8 race, Chard Your Yard, and how federal job cuts are hitting close to home.

And inside was a short brief about a meeting with Reclaiming Edmund Coalition on plans to rename Edmund Blvd., as the boulevard's namesake, Edmund G. Walton is considered the first developer in Minneapolis to apply racially restrictive covenants to the properties he sold, which was used for decades as a legal way to racially segregate the city.

I can't help but wonder about that timing.

I am also concerned that one individual is going behind our carriers and picking up papers at other's homes. If you haven't been getting a newspaper at your home, please let us know. If you know people who live along Edmund Boulevard, please check in with them to see if they're getting their newspapers.

We haven't stopped delivering printed editions of the paper. We have items online, too, but we know that many people don't have access to the internet, even in the city. We don't expect you to know how to find us in what can be an overwhelming array of opinions and information online.

We're still doing what we've always done, delivering door-to-door in the neighborhood bringing the news about your community directly to your front door. We make sure you're informed and get news that is relevant. We aim to be trustworthy and accurate.

We're a woman-owned, family-run business that employs local writers, photographers, carriers, and sales people.

We live here, too.

## INCIDENT AT THE NORTHEASTER

The Northeaster newspaper in Northeast Minneapolis recently responded to someone that came to their office and wrote on an editorial with profanity and other colorful and hateful language and taped it to their front door – unsigned, of course. They responded in the next editorial on Feb. 26, 2025, with a piece calling things out.

"To be sure, the scrawler is within their constitutional right to protest," Northeaster staff wrote. "We just wish they had the courage of their convictions and would write us a printable letter. ..."

"We all have to live on this Earth together, and it's better if we all get along. This means having a civil discourse about an issue. It means trying to understand one another, rather than putting someone down or becoming angry because the other person doesn't agree with your thinking. In Congress and in the Minnesota Legislature, it means reaching across the aisle and working together on laws that benefit people."

## WRITE TO US - AND SIGN YOUR NAME

We operate as the Northeaster does. We don't print letters that denigrate other people or races, and we don't print cuss words. It's basic decency. We edit for length (our space is limited), pertinence and libel (we don't want you – or us – to get into legal trouble). Just make sure to sign your missive. We don't print anonymous submissions.

Send us a letter or email sharing your thoughts. That's what this page is for. Email me at [tesha@tmcpub.com](mailto:tesha@tmcpub.com).

I'm proud of the diversity of our community, and we actively work to make sure that our pages reflect that diversity. We're here to mirror our community, to reflect it, to showcase it.

We're not going to stop doing that just because racist individuals are targeting us.

## Give me a minute

BY VALERIE FITZGERALD  
Howe resident



Part 4 in a 4-part series

From Heather Cox Richardson, I learned about an era called the 'Liberal Consensus.' She traces it back to the New Deal of the 1930s. The programs that helped my parents during the Depression remained popular and had bipartisan support for decades, but there was strong opposition from the start.

A group that Heather calls 'movement conservatives' equated any kind of government spending with socialism. When the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s moved toward desegregation and voting rights, race became a key factor in conservative ideology. At first these conservatives were seen as radical. However, their ideas gained traction over the years.

# I should have seen it sooner

In her book "Democracy Awakening," Heather writes: "In the years after 1980, a political minority took over Congress, the state legislatures, the courts, and the Electoral College."

I remember when Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale, the Democratic incumbents, defeated Gerald Ford in 1976. Watergate was fresh in American memory. I recall that my driver's ed class was interrupted to air Nixon's announcement of his resignation. Our Republican Party separated from the National Republican Party. From 1975-1995, Minnesota had the Independent Republican Party.

The first time I voted was in 1980, and the mood had changed by then. There was an energy crisis, gas prices were rising, and American hostages were held in Iran. Reagan's message, that government was the problem, was enormously popular.

Reagan made a symbol of a woman in Chicago who collected public benefits fraudulently using multiple aliases and phony addresses. In his book "The

Queen," Josh Levin tells the story of Linda Taylor, the real person behind Reagan's campaign rhetoric. Ms. Taylor was dubbed "The Welfare Queen" in newspapers at the time. Her story weaves together strands of race, poverty, and exploitation that are prominent in our national history.

I voted for Carter in 1980, Mondale in 1984, and Dukakis in 1988. All lost to their Republican rivals. By 1992, I assumed that Democrats would never win a presidential election.

I was surprised when Clinton won. His administration was plagued by scandal. During all the investigations of the Clintons, it was hard to tell the difference between reality and incendiary political rhetoric. It turns out there was a good reason for this.

In her Jan. 29, 2020 essay from the series "Letters From An American," Heather wrote about a Republican training organization, GOPAC, which "distributed a document called 'Language: A Key Mechanism of Control' to elected Republi-

cans. The document urged them to refer to Democrats with words like 'corrupt,' 'cheat,' 'disgrace,' 'endanger,' 'failure,' 'hypocrisy,' 'intolerant,' 'liberal,' 'lie,' 'pathetic,' 'sick,' 'steal,' 'traitors,' 'waste,' 'welfare,' and – ironically, considering the Republicans current stand – 'abuse of power.'"

In 2000, George W. Bush defeated Al Gore. It was a contentious election, and the Supreme Court intervened to declare Bush the winner.

In her September 25, 2024 essay, Heather wrote about a discussion between journalist Ron Suskind and a senior advisor to Bush which took place in 2004. The advisor referred to Suskind as part of "the reality-based community." This community "believed people could find solutions to problems through careful study of discernible reality."

By contrast, the advisor said, the Bush administration was an empire, "and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort

I SHOULD HAVE >> 5

# Messenger

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## S.H.A.K.E. >> from 1

### CHAIN OF EVENTS

BIPOC business owners Alicia Belton (Urban Design Perspectives), Janice Downing (Common Sense Consulting), and business co-founder Shanelle Montana (Du Nord Cocktail Room) co-developed the Historic Coliseum Building along with Taylor Smrikárova of the non-profit community development corporation Redesign, Inc., who served as lead developer.

To hear Belton tell it, the first time they toured the building it wasn't exactly love at first sight. She said, "The building had obviously been through tough times. It was cold, dark, and damp but it was also clear that it had 'great bones.'"

Because the Coliseum is one block from the former Third Precinct Minneapolis Police Station, it took a particularly heavy hit in the uprising. Belton said, "It's hard to look outside our windows and see the boarded-up former precinct every day, but it also reminds us of why we're doing the work we do."

### S.H.A.K.E.

Belton and Downing have been friends and colleagues for more than 30 years. In addition to redeveloping the building, they have created a Black-owned, women-owned business on the second floor of the Coliseum Building called S.H.A.K.E. Their vision is to curate spaces for BIPOC entrepreneurs and professionals to work with others in a supportive environment, empowering businesses from underrepresented communities to grow and thrive there.

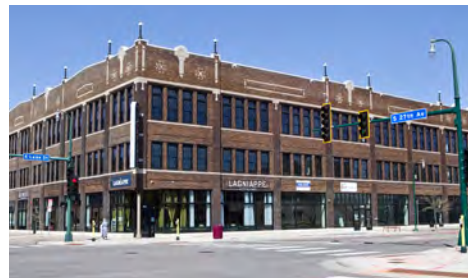


*Alicia Belton and Janice Downing (co-founders of S.H.A.K.E.), a Black-owned, female-owned work space and event center designed to serve multicultural community needs. (Photo submitted)*

The letters that make up the acronym S.H.A.K.E. represent their business values of service, honesty, adaptability, kindness, and experience. Each of the five conference spaces they have available for rent is named for one of these business values.

Belton said, "While our spaces are centered on BIPOC entrepreneurs and professionals, all are welcome who share our values and sense of mission. Our event center is named for Dr. Josie R. Johnson, the first Black regent at the University of Minnesota. Our learning center is named for Dr. Reatha Clark King, the first Black president of Metro State University and the retired executive director of the General Mills Foundation. We are excited to carry forth their spirit of working for justice, and to honor them as strong, enduring role models in our community."

To date, S.H.A.K.E. has hosted non-profit organizations, corporate businesses, retirement parties, baby showers, book clubs, fundraising events, and neighborhood public safety meetings to name a



*The Historic Coliseum Building on the corner of East Lake Street and 27th Avenue South has been fully restored, and is also on the National Register of Historic Places. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)*

few. Their spaces can accommodate groups from 2-200, and events include the planning services of one of their concierges.

### AMENITIES

A guiding principle behind the vision of S.H.A.K.E. is to lift up women, and to address their unique needs. There is easy access on the second floor of the Coliseum Building to a lactation room, where mothers can nurse their children in privacy. There is a meditation room, where those needing a quiet space for prayer can do so with dignity. There is also a station for Wudu, the Islamic ritual of washing one's face, hands, arms, head, and feet with water before prayer, an all-gender restroom, free off-street parking, and indoor bike storage.

To inquire about pricing and availability of rental spaces, contact [www.shakeatthecoliseum.com/rental-spaces](http://www.shakeatthecoliseum.com/rental-spaces). Spaces are available to rent for half day, full day and evening events. Rental rates vary on size and length of event; rooms can be bundled together for multi-use

events.

### JUNE 21 CELEBRATION - DAY AT THE COLISEUM

This day of celebration is a continuation of Juneteenth, and kicks off with a parade starting at 2800 East Lake Street, one block east of the Coliseum Building, at 9 a.m. S.H.A.K.E. is partnering with Bus Stop Mamas to shine light on the critical value of women in the community as mothers, spouses, aunties, friends, sisters, neighbors, and caregivers. The very first "Mama Parade" is a one-mile walk along East Lake Street between the Coliseum and 35th Avenue that celebrates the essential contributions of mothers and caregivers in our communities.

Bus Stop Mamas is a platform for connecting women looking for work with companies that want to hire them - especially women who may have stepped out of the workplace to raise children or are looking for hourly or part-time work.

From 10 a.m. to noon, S.H.A.K.E. and the Bus Stop Mamas are co-sponsoring a job fair and wellness event on the first floor of the Coliseum Building. From noon to 2 p.m., there will be an open house with tours of the spaces available for rent on the second floor. No pre-registration is necessary.

The Du Nord Cocktail Room, located on the first floor, will be hosting an anniversary party from 3-9 p.m.

Belton said, "We want people to know we're here, and that we're open for business! It was really important for us to bring a level of hope to this community. We see ourselves as a catalyst for other businesses to grow in this building. We want to be a resource to others - and a good neighbor."

## JACKSON FAMILY >> from 1

In 1909, the Jackson family was met by groups of neighbors demonstrating against them; asking them to leave the neighborhood because of their race. In one exchange, Madison Jackson was told that the kids nearby wouldn't want to play with his children. He did not strike back in anger - but chose instead to build a playground in his backyard. As he had guessed, children flocked to play there.

The Jacksons continued to live in Prospect Park for another 20 years. When Madison died of cancer, many of the same neighbors who had stood in their front yard years before in protest came to mourn his passing.

### FAST FORWARD

The neighborhood Prospect Park Association (PPA) started what they call the Jackson Family Project in 2019, after learning about the family in a TPT documentary called "Jim Crow of the North."

Jerry Stein is a lifelong Prospect Park resident and the Jackson Family Project's co-chair. He said, "This project matters because the neighborhood is coming to terms with a despicable chapter in its history. We can't change what happened, but we can honor the Jacksons for their resilience, and for their strength. Children and adults are learning from this that we have



*As part of this year's Jackson Family Project celebration, each class completed projects related to the experience of the Jackson family and read them out loud. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)*

a choice in how we respond. Through these three little girls who lived in the neighborhood, the issues of racism and discrimination are immediate and real."

Stein continued, "All three daughters graduated from local high schools, and attended the University of Minnesota, at a time when very few young people went on to college. They did not see themselves as victims."

The Minneapolis Public School Board

voted in 2022 to dedicate the Pratt playground to the Jackson family. A St. Paul architecture firm, 4RM+ULA, created the original design. Funds to renovate the new playground were appropriated in 2024. Recreating the playground at the school integrated by the Jackson sisters has a poignancy to it, all these years after their father built the first neighborhood playground in their own backyard.

### WHEN HISTORY HAPPENS WHERE YOU LIVE

Kiah Young-Burns, a first-grade teacher at Pratt Elementary School, started incorporating the Jackson family into her curriculum in 2021. Young-Burns used the former residents as a lens through which her students learned about broader historical topics like housing discrimination, the Harlem Renaissance, and civil rights. Other Pratt teachers began incorporating Young-Burns' curriculum into their classrooms in 2023.

Among the guests in attendance at the May 9 event at Pratt were Minneapolis

Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Lisa Sayles-Adams, Minneapolis School Board Members Kim Ellison and Abdul Abdi, and Ward 2 Minneapolis City Council member Robin Wosley.

### ADULTS CAN LEARN, TOO

"In addition to learning by the students at Pratt," Stein said, "we always knew there needed to be an effort to help the adults learn things, too. We kicked off that aspect of the project this year with community members reading, 'A Man's Life: the Autobiography of Roger Wilkins'. Roger Wilkins is the son of Helen Jackson, and this is really some book. For our program next year, we have more ideas for things we'd like to offer adult learners."

On May 8, community members gathered at the Pillars of Prospect Park to discuss the book. About 60 people turned up for the event, facilitated by Roger Wilkins' brother-in-law Melvin Peters, a retired professor of African American Studies at Eastern Michigan University.

The Jackson Family Project is funded by the Pratt Parent Teacher Organization, the Prospect Park Association, the University of Minnesota Good Neighbor Fund, the Prospect Park Coop Legacy Fund, the City of Minneapolis Neighborhood Community Relations, and individual gifts. To learn more about this project visit: [www.jacksonfamilyproject.org](http://www.jacksonfamilyproject.org).

## I SHOULD HAVE >> from 4

out. We're history's actors...and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

Barack Obama was elected in 2008. His secretary of state and former First Lady Hillary Clinton lost to Donald Trump in 2016. Trump's first administration dealt with a worldwide pandemic and civil unrest following the police killings of several Black individuals. In Minneapolis, George Floyd was murdered.

In 2020, Trump lost to Joe Biden, but that didn't stop him. His administration oversaw the division of the Republican Party. In one camp are mainstream politicians, whose values align with earlier movement conservatives. In the other are the group identified by the slogan Make

America Great Again, or MAGA. In 2024, Trump won both the popular vote and the electoral vote. He is president once again.

This is the fourth in a series of columns intended to explore the roots of whiteness, also known as white supremacy or systemic racism, in my own identity. As I wrote I was reminded of Langston Hughes' poem, Let America Be America Again:

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,

I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.

I am the red man driven from the land,

I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek -

And finding only the same old stupid plan

Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the

weak.

In 1998, the American Anthropological Association released a statement based on the analysis of genetic data. This statement noted that "there is greater variation within 'racial' groups than between them...The 'racial' worldview was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power, and wealth."

In other words, race as a biological reality does not exist. Race as a factor that influences the legal, economic, and social systems of the United States, however, is very real.

I regret that it took me so long to see how systemic racism lived in my own identity. I should have seen it sooner. People in oppressed communities saw it clearly, and plenty of White people figured it

out before I did.

As I write these columns January-February of 2025, it seems to me we are once again deciding whether to find realistic solutions to problems in the present, or cling to the dated ideology my great-grandparents assimilated into. I believe my ancestors would encourage me to learn from their mistakes, shed the burden of oppression they carried with them, and move forward with the evidence of my senses and the courage of my convictions. I will do my best.

*Valerie Fitzgerald is a clinical counselor who has worked in mental health care since 2011. She resides in Howe. Read the full series online at [www.LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com](http://www.LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com).*



## POLICE REFORM? >> from 1

### STATE AND FEDERAL ACTIONS

• Nekima Levy Armstrong, civil rights attorney, founder of Racial Justice Network and founder of Dope Roots cannabis and wellness company:

"We have made some progress over the last five years, but I believe that there should be more significant progress at this point if the powers that be were serious about transforming the systems that allowed for and helped facilitate the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd.

"It was obviously unprecedented that all four officers were fired, charged and convicted and that the convictions happened both at the state and federal levels. We had never experienced anything like that in our state before. That wouldn't have happened were it not for the people who were boots on the ground from day one, even before George Floyd was killed.

"We had another unprecedented situation where the governor actually listened to us and moved the prosecution of Derek Chauvin and the other [three] officers from [then] County Attorney Mike Freeman to the [MN] attorney general. That was significant, because instead of getting the same, tired prosecution that we would have gotten – if at all – through Freeman's office, we got a master class in how to successfully prosecute killer cops.

"Eleven of us filed lawsuits against the city of Minneapolis and the MPD. We had private counsel thanks to the ACLU of Minnesota, and we settled our cases. As a result of that settlement, [former Minneapolis Police Federation leader] Bob Kroll was forced to agree to not serve in a law enforcement position in Hennepin, Anoka and Ramsey counties for 10 years. That's huge considering his influence on the MPD and metro area police forces."

• Michelle Gross, president of Communities United Against Police Brutality (CUAPB):

"There have been some changes. We were able to get a ban on no knock warrants [2023]. We were able to get a bill in place called Travis' Law [2021] that requires 911 to send mental health crisis responders instead of law enforcement to most mental health crisis calls, which is really significant because 50% of the people killed by police are in the throes of a mental health crisis at the time. In [2024], a bill passed that bans the use of the term 'excited delirium,' and there's been a ban across the state on neck restraints. They don't end police brutality as a whole, but they're modest reforms that I think are valuable.

"At the same time, we in Minneapolis have the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) consent decree which presents opportunities to make some reforms. One of its main points is that anytime they want to make policy changes in the areas covered by that consent decree, they have to be run by the



Nekima Levy Armstrong



Riley Bruce



Christin Crabtree

community. So, the city's been sending out draft policies, and we've done an extensive amount of work giving them push-back and feedback on those policies.

"We are working on an analysis of the U.S. Department of Justice [DOJ] consent decree [on May 21, the DOJ under the Trump administration announced its dismissal of the consent decree]. We don't think it's futile. The city has said they're going to follow it. Well, we're going to know what's in it, so we're going to know whether you're following it or not. And by the way, we're going to make you follow it."

• Angela Harrelson, George Floyd's aunt and co-chair of Rise & Remember:

"I do believe there has been some change. I don't think there's been enough to break the system, but definitely enough to shake the system. We've got judicial initiatives, there are police initiatives that

came out banning chokeholds, neck restraints, mandatory body cams they have to wear, mandatory accountability where if [an officer] sees their partner doing some type abuse of power, they must intervene and report it. And they can't stop [some] minor traffic violations."

• KingDemetrius Pendleton, Listen 2 Us Media and Studio:

"Have there been any change after the public murdering and lynching of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin? I would say, absolutely not; if anything, it's been worse. Prime example: when you think about [provisions] in the George Floyd Act, basically indicating that police officers be held responsible, what we're seeing is no accountability. Police officers are able to shoot people and kill people and basically come up with this tomfoolery statement indicating that they fear for their life. One of the prime examples, is [what] happened to Sonya Massey [who Deputy Sean Grayson killed in her Illinois home]. Luckily, his partner was recording the whole thing. If that would have not been recorded, that would have been swept under the rug."

• Levy Armstrong:

"One of the biggest [missed] opportunities was to end qualified immunity for police. The George Floyd case demonstrated the need to end qualified immunity, because cities are the ones that pay the cost of police violence and the unjustified use of deadly force, which winds up impacting taxpayers at the end of the day, and police shouldn't just be able to walk away scott free.

"At a minimum, Congress should have passed the George Floyd Justice and Policing Act, even though many activists around the nation didn't think it went far enough. It's still better than what we got, which is the bare minimum."

### TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

• Harrelson: "In this political climate, people lost a little hope because they didn't expect the administration to come down so hard on marginalized communities, Black and Brown people. Banning Black History Month, taking it back, just playing with your feelings. I've spoken to some people that feel like second-class citizens – but we always feel like second-class citizens. But I think it makes it much worse, because you feel like you have a leader that don't support and believe in them."

• Pendleton: "For Donald Trump to roll back DEI and not only that, Target, based right here in Minnesota, to jump right on the bandwagon... they rolled it back expeditiously. But they did not know that there would be a push back, and they foot traffic would decline expeditiously.

"We also witnessed not one Blue Lives Matter came forward and say anything about Donald Trump pardon all those 1,500 people, including individuals that [assaulted] police officers. I thought they were so 'back the blue.' Not one got on social media said [a] thing, so that just let us

know how racist our country is and how divided it is.

"Not only that, to see [members of the administration] indicating that maybe we should pardon Derek Chauvin, to make that tomfoolery statement is totally flappedoodle, but... they want to start a race war.

"He's trying to roll back and tear down Black Lives Matter in Washington, D.C. He thought a lot of Black people was going to come out there so he can cattle them and imprison them and shoot them. But he was dead wrong. A lot of people [are] sitting this out."

• Levy Armstrong: "A great development, the national federal database that had been signed into law to capture data around police misconduct, use of deadly force, that we could access as the public to look up officers, is now gone under Donald Trump.

"One thing that happened before [2020] was President Barack Obama repealing most of the 1033 program – that recently got overturned by Donald Trump, as well. That is the [program] that allows the military to sell surplus military grade weapons and equipment to local police departments. That, to me, is multiple steps back."

### LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND POLICING

• Riley Bruce, Powderhorn neighbor: "I think that yes, there has been some progress. However, I do not think that that progress has been made manifest in policy.

"The progress that we've seen has been in the minds of the people of Minneapolis.

"We can see that change in the way that city council elections have gone. [In] the makeup of the Minneapolis City Council, we're seeing people who truly have the community's back coming into office, and who are working to listen to people in the community rather than listen to interests who are just protecting property.

"When it comes to [policing], I have also seen the mask come off a little bit of our current mayor, and folks are able to see the way that he has been facilitating and just allowing this to continue. I think that was made the most clear when the Minneapolis police murdered Amir Locke [in 2022]. With all of the conversation around 'We banned no knock warrants,' no, actually, we hadn't banned no knock warrants. The policy changes that were touted weren't real.

"We have taken a police chief who is a person of color from Minneapolis, removed him from office and replaced him with a White man who is not from Minneapolis. That is truly the extent of the change that I have seen in the MPD. They're still driving 50 miles an hour down my street with their lights on just to get through lights. They're still treating people in the community as the enemy

POLICE REFORM? >> 7

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**POLICE REFORM?** >> from 6

rather than as fellow citizens.

"I'm not some completely naive person who believes that we'll be able to abolish the concept of policing tomorrow. It takes changing things at a societal level, and there are other things that we need to fix in our society – we need to get housing for folks, we need to get health care for folks, we need to have avenues for people to get resources. And that takes time and investment. But I'm not seeing those investments. Partially, because of the massive burden that is the current police budget.

"You've got to follow the money."

• Christin Crabtree, Ward 9 resident: "Generally speaking, no. There has not been meaningful change. I think there has been plenty of conversation around it. I think there have been some real concerted efforts by both community members and our city council. I have not seen the collaboration or efforts in good faith coming from our administration to make it possible. [The mayor]'s responsible for oversight of our police... under this current mayor, there's been a lack of transparency. There has been this strategic way of not really picking a side or not helping accomplish things and then celebrating wins that were other people's work.

"The Behavioral Crisis Response [BCR] team is something that's been lauded by national media as being transformative and a really powerful change that's happened in our city. That was led by city staff, many of whom are not even at the city any more, using both data-driven practices and thinking outside of the box in a creative way. I deeply respect that kind of work.

"It was city council that made sure the BCR could function. It was city council that paid for them to have working vans. They didn't have enough vans initially; the vans they had were falling apart. It re-



KingDemetrius Pendleton

quires intentionality.

"Another example would be group violence intervention and violence interrupters and safety ambassadors – all those programs can be part of a public safety ecosystem that goes beyond policing, and all of those programs can be great when they are brought forward in a way that has accountability, transparency, when they are funded and supported. And what we've seen, is council will put funding into these kind of programs, and then the administration will not implement them. Or the mayor will wanna implement something, but it's not funded. So that leads to this gridlock. And it's really, really frustrating.

"Police are the reaction when something's gone wrong, and we see pretty consistently that their job is more about protecting property rather than about keeping people safe... I have a friend who was distributing food to unhoused neighbors, and the police kicked her off of the private lot that she was pulled up on with these meals and said, 'You can't be here.' She moved off the lot onto the city street to distribute the meals, and they said 'You can't be here, either.' They ended up arresting her. I'm not sure that that's public safety. What are we doing here? What a waste



Michelle Gross

of resources.

"I've seen our police be incredibly disrespectful to elders in our community, putting hands on them, be forceful – and I'm talking within the last year. I've seen real questionable treatment of our community members, especially community members who are not White.

"I see our most vulnerable neighbors get blamed for violence when the real cause of violence is disinvestment in people. I see the Community Commission of Police Oversight [CCPO], and I'm not seeing a whole lot of action coming out of that group. Or a lot of transparency."

• Gross: "The OPCR/CCPO is so dysfunctional. It's designed to be controlled at every level by the city. It's designed to give us the exact outcome that we've gotten, which is less than half of 1% of complaints have ever resulted in any discipline. They are, I think, 1,400 complaints behind.

"The CCPO, I've never seen a more ridiculous outfit in my life. These are people that are supposedly community members, and they are as hostile to the community as they can possibly be. That's one of the main things we don't like, that both consent decrees seem to bake in the OPCR structure."

• Crabtree: "I'm seeing political games being played at the expense of human lives. It's absolutely unacceptable. The council approved funding for violence intervention, the contracts have still not been signed [as of May 15]. Those are the groups specifically in the corridor that would have been East Phillips, where we saw multiple shootings [recently]. Would that have been prevented if these guys were out on the streets and their contract was in effect? I don't know. But I do know that we would probably see less violence if people's needs were met. If we had more presence in the community, if people were fed and housed, we would see a lot of that violence dissipate.

"Our police are not resourced to respond to certain issues, such as mental health crises, domestic violence, homelessness, and yet they are being assigned to all of those things rather than the people that are actually well trained in those kind of responses. I think that's an issue as well, and we're constantly seeing violence and even the killing of young Black and Brown people. That's unacceptable. Then finger pointing between our police chief and our county attorney that's not helpful, and it's dishonest. She can't try a case if there's not enough evidence to do it, and then we're seeing our police not do their diligence to get the evidence required.

• Gross: "When you're the chief of the police and you're more outraged about a burning Third Precinct, but you didn't get upset about a man getting shot in his freaking front yard, Davis Moturi, and blaming him for getting shot in the neck himself. He called [911] 19 times. And you let the guy that did the shooting sit in his house for five days until everybody shamed [you] into arresting. It's just unbelievable to me."

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## Through free soul line dancing classes at Sabathani, local woman builds inter-generational, multi-racial community

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

Tina Jackson is the "Lady of Line Dance." She teaches free classes once a month at Sabathani Community Center in South Minneapolis (310 E 38th St), and is at Oxford Community Center in St. Paul (270 Lexington Pkwy. N) each Tuesday for \$5 classes.

"We are more than a community. We are a family!" said Jackson, who graduated from Central High School in 1986 and has lived in the Como neighborhood for 27 years. "When people come to the class for the first time, many ask how they can join the group. We always let them know that once you come to the class you are now family. We don't just share our love for soul line dancing. We share our problems, and we share our joys. We support each other, we encourage each other, and we pray for each other."

"We're not just a soul line dance group. We are a line dance family!"

Several of the Gotta Dance Soul Line Dance members started attending the class to get them through a significant life change. There have been cancer diagnosis, medical health scares, divorce, relationship breakups, children suffering from drug addiction, and loss of loved ones. "Soul Line Dancing with our Gotta Dance Soul Line Dance Family helped get them through these life changes," remarked Jackson.

"Soul line dancing is a big mood booster. Being around others and enjoying the music helps reduce stress and anxiety. The music and coordinated movements also boost confidence, self-esteem, and cognitive function, making it a valuable tool for your mental well-being."

### IT STARTED WITH 'THE HUSTLE'

The first line dance Jackson learned was "The Hustle." She was seven years old. Her mom's friends had just visited family in Mississippi and when they returned, they showed the dance to others. "I always loved to dance, so I was on the floor learning the dance with them," stated Jackson.

She started teaching Chicago-style Steppin' classes with Amelia Jones and Robert Vasser in 2008. During Stepper's Sets (parties), they would do a couple of soul line dances to give the steppers a

## 'Gotta Dance' with Tina Jackson



LIVING 50+  
**GOOD  
NEIGHBOR**

*Tina Jackson (front row wearing purple tie dye shirt) believes that soul line dancing is a big mood booster. "Being around others and enjoying the music helps reduce stress and anxiety. The music and coordinated movements also boost confidence, self-esteem, and cognitive function, making it a valuable tool for your mental well-being," she said.*

neighborhood, but also come from Bloomington, Minnetonka, Burnsville, Lakeville, Apple Valley, Eagan and even Wisconsin.

"I want to give a big shout out to Fayette Wulf and Nedy Windham," said Jackson. "They have been with me since the beginning. These ladies help with the class each and every week, they perform at all the events, and they are always there to support me."

When she first started teaching soul line dancing at the Oxford/Jimmy Lee Rec Center, it was mostly all Black ladies around her age. "Now our class is as diverse as can be," observed Jackson. "Our soul line dance class is a safe and inclusive space. Everyone is welcome."

### 'IF YOU MESS UP, JUST KEEP DANCING'

Some people are just natural dancers, but some have a harder time learning a dance. "I always tell the class that we will do a dance move several times to try and get them to learn that particular step, but if they don't get it at that very time, they will get it. We will do dances over several

weeks to try and help everyone learn the dance," said Jackson.

She's a patient teacher, breaking down the dance into short pieces and going over each one multiple times. Dancers like the fact that she calls out the steps as they're going along.

"People learn differently, so I call out the steps, count the steps, show the steps, and do the steps with the class," said Jackson. "I try and make sure everyone goes home feeling like they learned something that day. I think because I love soul line dancing so much, it shows in the way I teach."

During each class, Jackson calls out: "If you mess up..." Attendees finish the line: "Just keep dancing!"

People tell Jackson that the class is their therapy.

"Sometimes you're just not having a good day at work or

you're having some issues at home. Soul line dancing is therapy, because when you're learning a dance, executing a dance, listening to good music, and being around good people that's all you need to get your mind off the trouble(s) of the day," said Jackson.

Plus, when people arrive, Jackson's 81-year-old mom, Edna Jackson, greets them at the door with a hug. Everyone loves Mama Edna.

"People say that when they first came to the class, they knew that was where they were supposed to be," said Jackson. "When you come into the class you immediately feel welcome. You feel the positive energy, you hear the good music, and you see the big beautiful smiles."

In addition to the regular community classes, Jackson is available for private and group lessons, as well as corporate events, family reunions, weddings and birthday parties.

Email [jcksntin@gmail.com](mailto:jcksntin@gmail.com), call 651-592-3029, or browse [www.gottadancesoul.com](http://www.gottadancesoul.com).

**Tina Jackson**



LIVING 50+  
**GOOD  
NEIGHBOR**  
Messenger

Know someone aged 50+ that contributes to the Longfellow/Nokomis/Seward community and inspires those around them? Send your nomination to [tesha@tmcpub.com](mailto:tesha@tmcpub.com). Please include your contact information, their name, age, and contact information, and a paragraph about what they do that you find amazing about them. Next Good Neighbor coming in the September edition.

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## WARD 11 RACE &gt;&gt; from 1

grants, a Palestinian father and a Syrian mother. She attended Hale, Field, and Southwest schools before becoming the first in her family to attend college. She received her law degree from Mitchell Hamline in 2018, and worked in the past for the Ramsey County and the city of Minneapolis. She currently works for the city of St. Paul in the mayor's office, where she has been for the past five years.

"In addition to my lived experience as a lifelong Minneapolis resident and the daughter of a low-income immigrant family, my professional background has uniquely prepared me to serve as a city council member," said DeMello. "My entire career has been rooted in public service, with roles across the city of Minneapolis and St. Paul. I interned in regulatory services, worked for former Mayor R.T. Rybak, and held positions as a paralegal and law clerk in the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office. Currently, I serve as an aide to St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter and am a proud member of the Minneapolis Charter Commission. These experiences have given me a deep understanding of local government, a strong commitment to equity, and a proven dedication to serving our communities."

Whiting was raised by his mother in a single parent household and attended Hale, Field, and Washburn schools. He received his law degree from the University of California, Irvine School of Law in 2021. Before joining the city attorney's office in 2023, he served 10 months on the Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission and worked at the Faegre Drinker law firm for two years.

"I have dedicated my career to driving meaningful change at the intersections of justice, reform, and Minneapolis progress particularly around what I believe is our city's most important issue, improving our public safety ecosystem," said Whiting.

"After the murder of George Floyd, I was inspired to make a direct difference in public safety within the city, and I joined the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office to work on implementing the DOJ consent decree and MDHR settlement agreement. Through this work, I have had the privilege of working alongside officers eager to be part of real reform, and with community members pushing for a Minneapolis Police Department that is well-trained, accountable, and rooted in service," Whiting added.

They both live in the Hale neighbor-



(Left to right) Mariam DeMello and Jamison Whiting are running for the Ward 11 city council seat being vacated by Emily Koski (lower right).

hood.

"I may be a little biased, but I truly believe our city's lakes are its greatest asset, and Lake Nokomis is the best of them," said Whiting. "What I love most about our ward, though, is that we are home to the best high school in the city, Go Millers. I have the privilege of volunteering as a football coach at Washburn High School, for both the men's and now the women's teams."

"One of the things I love most about Ward 11 is our easy access to beautiful trails, green spaces, and waterways – like Lake Nokomis, Lake Hiawatha, and Minnehaha Creek," said DeMello. "We're also home to vibrant small business hubs, such as 48th and Chicago, that add so much character to our community. What makes this area even more meaningful to me is that my parents still live nearby in the house where I grew up, which keeps me deeply rooted and connected to the community I'm proud to call home."

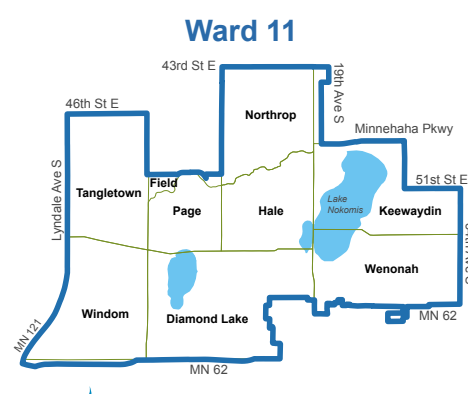
## PRIORITIES

In announcing his campaign Whiting said, "I believe that our city's role is simple: to provide the mechanisms that empower our residents to live their best lives. To meet their needs so they can, in turn, give back to those around them."

He identifies five priorities on his website: a strong public safety ecosystem, safe and affordable housing for all, thriving public schools, supporting local businesses and building sustainable robust public transportation.

DeMello stresses the "need to keep the city livable through strong and sensible local governance and leadership" on her website and outlines four priorities: public safety, city services, housing, and supporting businesses.

DeMello thinks the current council and mayor are doing a good job of keeping people informed. "This commitment



to communication is essential and worth continuing because transparency isn't just good governance," she said, "it's what our community deserves when decisions are being made that affect our daily lives."

Whiting identified work on public safety as one thing the current elected group is doing right. "I can confidently say our city has taken great strides forward in developing a public safety ecosystem grounded in justice, dignity, and, above all, safety for all residents."

He added, "Our public safety ecosystem must evolve beyond traditional beliefs, and we must avoid binary thinking. A fully staffed and accountable police department is not mutually exclusive and is not only possible but required by both the settlement agreement and consent decree."

The working relationships of the elected officials is something they would like to see improve.

"I wish that the city council and mayor's office could do a better job of reaching across the aisle," said DeMello. "Our city would be better served if the city council and mayor's office could foster a more trusting, collaborative, and diplomatic relationship. In my professional experience, I've seen the powerful impact of intentional team-building and cross-functional collaboration training on organizational success. That's why I strongly support the idea of city leadership investing time, energy, and interdepartmental resources into quarterly training sessions and group activities – facilitated by a credible, nonpartisan organization – focused on bridging ideological divides and strengthening their ability to govern effectively together."

"I believe the current political climate at city hall has forced a move away from the foundational municipal basics that make Minneapolis such a great place to live," said Whiting. "The relationship between certain factions of the council and

the mayor has eroded over time and residents of Minneapolis are the ones that feel the brunt of those disagreements. Municipal governance should not be about choosing sides, it should be about delivering results. Most of our city's biggest challenges, from public safety to housing and core service delivery, are not ideological. They are issues of strategy, accountability, and execution. Unfortunately, too much of our current discourse has become polarized, mirroring national politics in all the worst ways."

## DECISION-MAKING

A city council member is expected to make hundreds of decisions every month, some with significant and long-term consequences.

Whiting said that "the ability to recognize the limits of your expertise and seek out the right input is essential to good decision-making."

He believes that city employees "are experts in their fields, and their input must be at the center of how we make decisions."

He said that he also knows "that no one person has or should be expected to know all things. That is why, in addition to relying on our internal city experts, I will always prioritize listening to residents of Ward 11. People know their neighborhoods, they live with the impact of the decisions of elected officials, so they should help shape those decisions."

"I take a rational, data-informed approach when faced with a difficult decision," said DeMello. "I gather relevant information, evaluate the most feasible options, and carefully weigh the costs and benefits to determine the best possible outcome. I'm a strong proponent of strategic tools like SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats) analysis, which help me anticipate potential impacts and make thoughtful, outcome-oriented choices."

In November 2025, Minneapolis voters will elect 13 city council members, three at-large park board commissioners, six district park board commissioners, two members of the board of estimate and taxation and one mayor.

## TO REACH THE CANDIDATES

• Mariam DeMello  
mariam.demello@outlook.com  
• Jamison Whiting  
Jamisonwhitingformpls@gmail.com

## Stories and Journeys

BY DONALD L. HAMMEN



I first wrote this for Father's Day 2021. I have previously written a Stories and Journeys column acknowledging my mother's influence on my life. It's time for me to acknowledge my father with Father's Day coming up.

During my first two years as a student at Simpson College (196-1964) in Indianola, Iowa, specifically 1962-63. I was the first president of the newly formed Student Christian Movement. Along with guidance from the new college chaplain and the newly formed leadership council of the Student Christian Movement, two things happened that left an impression on me.

First, the chaplain, myself and the leadership council participated in a study discussion group formed around the book "The Miracle of Dialogue" by Reuel Howe. Second, we engaged in the study for education and action connected with Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement of that time. We anticipated that we could encounter opposition on our small, mostly White college campus, and we felt that dialogue among ourselves and others would

## Love can be simple between father and son

be the best approach

Then one day while I was visiting my parent's house in Des Moines, I attempted to explain to my father what we were doing to get involved with Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement. This did not set well with my father. It triggered in him the notion that Simpson College was turning me into a communist. This set off a verbal battle from which neither of us would back down. It went on for years and sabotaged any meaningful relationship we had experienced up to that point in time.

Fast forward to the summer of 1970 when I was driving through Des Moines on my way to Minneapolis. Something deep inside of me led me to pull off the road and drive to my parent's house. My mother was not home, but I found my father in the basement.

There I told my father that I was tired of the verbal battles that had pushed us apart. I told him I just wanted him to be my father and me be his son. He seemed to understand what I was saying and asking. We hugged. Things were not instantly perfect going forward, but I felt that deep within my soul in that moment love did prevail.

Love can be simple. One of my Minneapolis neighbors on the block where I live has placed a yard sign containing the words by Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Hate

cannot drive out hate. Only love can drive out hate." Note: I choose to substitute indifference for the word hate.

How ironic that this insight from Dr. King was on display one summer evening in 1970 enabling my father and me to reconnect so he could be my father and I could be his son once again.

During the last year or two of my father's life, we were best friends. I was at his bedside holding his hand when he died along with my sister-in-law, a hospice home health aide, and his cat. At the end of the day love does find a way.

And so, dear reader, if you have read this far you have taken the plunge into the river (flow) of life experiences which is Stories and Journeys. And I ask you what are some examples in your life where love found a way? Tell yourself, tell others or tell me via tesha@tmcpub.com

## ASHOUT OUT

Peter Jaueret and son. Neighbor and participant in the Longfellow Community Council Volunteer Shoveling Program. They did snow removal for me this past winter, helping me to age in place.

## ELDER VOICES (TELLING OUR STORIES/SHARING OUR JOURNEYS)

In April myself, Sylvia and Judith showed up. We shared stories about our

positive experiences at Social Security field offices. Next meet up is June 30, 10-11 a.m. at Turtle Bread, 4205-E.34th Street. Look for the table with the Elder Voices sign.

In gratitude.

Donald L. Hammen is a longtime south Minneapolis resident, and serves on the All Elders United for Justice Board of Directors.

## Volunteer In Your Community

Lutheran Social Service of MN is seeking volunteers age 55+ in your area to provide companionship to older adults or mentor school-age children. Volunteers commit to regular weekly hours for a tax-free stipend and mileage reimbursement. Please contact Please contact Tina at 651-310-9425 or Tina.Voss@lssmn.org for more information and to make an impact in your community.





## NOKOMIS EAST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

By Sarah Friedman  
executive director  
sarah.friedman@nokomiseast.org



On Aug. 10, 2025, more than 1,400 women-identifying athletes will descend on Lake Nokomis for a day of swimming, biking, and running as part of the 16th annual YWCA Minneapolis Women's Triathlon. The average triathlon gets less than 400 athletes, and YWCA Minneapolis is proud to state that their race has already sold out for the 2025 season. Even though there are already enough athletes, the YWCA is still looking for volunteers. They have 300 spots. As a community, I know we will have no problems filling these much-needed spots.

### INCLUSIVITY

I was lucky to be able to speak with Kym Zest, the YWCA race director and longtime triathlete. "YWCA has always been on the forefront of change in terms of racial justice and women's equality," Zest said. "Ultimately triathlons should be about more bodies becoming more capable... You don't need a fancy bike. You can bike on whatever gets you to the grocery store... The gear itself can make you feel out of place," Zest completed her first triathlon when she was 15 years old on a vintage bike. In fact, she even completed a 140.6-mile triathlon on that same bike.

The YWCA has a long history of championing equity, from operating the first integrated swimming pool in Minnesota to today incorporating a land acknowledgement to singing, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," into the triathlon's open-

## YWCA's triathlon returns to Lake Nokomis



Over 950 amazing athletes took part in the 2024 YWCA Minneapolis Women's Triathlon on Aug. 11 at Lake Nokomis. In 2025, there will be over 1,400 athletes. (Photo submitted)

ing ceremonies. She pointed out that the average triathlete is a white middle-aged male, so having a race only open to women-identifying people helps to promote a sport where women have not held an equal share.

Last year, the progress pride flag was added to the YWCA race shirts. "Why put that on there? To say it's a safe place," Zest said. She mentioned that some people questioned if they could be a part of the race, and her answer was to ensure all knew they were welcome. "At a time when everyone is really nervous. Anyone who is really concerned about human issues...

We are all very aware that these values are threatened." Zest is proud to use her power to help to use her platform to open doors to inclusivity.

### FUNDRAISING FOR THOSE IN NEED

This triathlon raises money to help YWCA continue to thrive. "Some of it is just keeping the lights on in the buildings and diapers for early childhood education... It's not glamorous, but those programs need funding." Through racing, Zest helps the community raise funds for some of our most vulnerable populations.



(Photo submitted)

### HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Although the triathlon is full, the YWCA is still looking for volunteers. "All races simply don't function without volunteers. Volunteers just make it safer and it makes it more fun," said Zest. Volunteer captains start organizing six months leading up to the race. They work on crowd control, make sure waste is stored in proper bins, and are available to answer questions. Furthermore, racers don't have their cellphones on them, so volunteers keep an eye out for racers and can call for help if needed. "And volunteering is a great way to see the race if you're interested in racing in the future. You get more of an inside peak than if you were to stand on the sidelines and clap... It's a really an amazing event. There are ways to get involved and all involvement helps support the mission-based programs for the YWCA."

I hope to see you at Lake Nokomis on Aug. 10 to support the racers and inclusivity. I know I will be there. If you are interested in volunteering, please visit: <https://raceroster.com/102498>.

## CITY BRIEFS

### NONPOLICE TO LEAD POLICE DIVISIONS

The Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara has appointed Ayodele Famodu as chief of the Internal Affairs Bureau, and Ganesha Martin as chief of the Constitutional Policing Bureau, noting in his announcement that this is the first time non-police officers have held such high-ranking positions in the department. The two bureaus were created in 2023 by O'Hara.

### AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION

The Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) has scheduled maintenance work this spring and summer that may affect flight patterns and noise levels in south Minneapolis. Runway closures and reroutes were planned for April 14 to May 23, and Aug. 18 to Sept. 26, 2025. This timeline means that the runway will be fully open during most of the peak summer travel season.

### NEW NICOLLET

The city has approved a framework for redevelopment of the 10 acres of land the city owns at the former Kmart site. It includes a new park and six parcels they plan to sell to provide up to 600 rental housing units, retail uses concentrated on Lake St. and Nicollet Ave., an indoor recreation space, a full-service grocery store, and 20-25 townhomes for homeownership. The first request for proposals could go out later this year focused on the southeast quadrant of the site that is next to the proposed park followed by parcel-by-parcel requests moving clockwise through the rest of the site over the next several years.

### PARTY ENDORSEMENTS

In the Democratic Farmer Labor party ward conventions for Wards 7, 8, 12 and 13, Elizabeth Shaffer, Soren Stevenson, Aurin Chowdhury and Linea Palmisano were endorsed in their respective city council races. The Green Party met in

April and endorsed Adam Schneider for at-large Park and Recreation Board commissioner. The DFL Wards 9, 10 and 11 conventions will be held on May 31.

### HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

Hennepin County is holding community collection events this summer where people can dispose of garden and household hazardous waste on Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. June 27 and 28 at St. Louis Park Middle School and Aug. 8 and 9 at South High School.

### NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP

The city has authorized a contract of \$15,000 with the Longfellow Community Council for the Bryant, Central, Corcoran, Longfellow, Nokomis East, Powderhorn Park, Hale Page Diamond Lake, and Standish-Ericsson neighborhood organizations to explore shared services, staff, training, programming, and fundraising.

### IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES

The city council has authorized contracts of \$80,000 with Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, \$25,000 with the International Institute of Minnesota, \$70,000 with the Volunteer Lawyers Network, \$20,000 with the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, and \$80,000 with Advocates for Human Rights to support the continuation of immigration legal services through the end of the year.

### CHARTER CHANGE

The city charter commission is proposing amending the city charter to reduce the number of appointments that the city council must approve from 11, as it is currently allowed, to seven. Under their latest proposal the mayor, who now also has to approve the 11 appointees, would take over sole appointing authority for the appointments of the city's commission of health, as well as directors of civil rights, regulatory services, and emergency management.

- Compiled by Cam Gordon

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Th, F in the chapel

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Contact us at 612-345-9998 or [denis@TMCpub.com](mailto:denis@TMCpub.com)

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✦ **Nokomis East Food Shelf**, 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 2-4 pm

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**SERVICES**

Concrete work: Steps, sidewalks, patios, driveways. Licensed, bonded, insured. Call Tom Seemon, 612-721-2530.

Neighborhood Concrete - Sidewalks, Driveways, Patios, Steps, Neighborhood Concrete. com 612-930-7071.

Gutter cleaning. Let the Rain Drain Away. Call Larry 651-635-9228.

**ROOFING**

30 years experience hail and wind damage specialist. Replace or repair. Free estimate. Licensed/insured. 612-724-3934

**SPACE TO RENT**

Wellness or therapy space for rent: On bus route. Easy access to light rail. Located at Minnehaha Ave S. and 42nd St. 2nd floor space avail. Approx. 144 sq. ft. Call Jim between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. 612-490-1457 or email: KRZ@NELSONELECTRICINC.COM.

**WINDOWS**

Window washing, inside and out. "You will see the difference." Call Larry. 651-635-9228.

**Pets****DOG WALKING**

John's Dog Walking - Daily dog walks, boarding and in home pet visits. 15 years experience, Insured and Bonded. 612-825-9019. www.facebook.com/john-petservice

AFFORDABLE  
ADVERTISING  
IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**Health****MEN'S WALKING GROUP**

Get exercise / build community Saturdays 7:30 a.m. from Turtle Bread, Alternate Tuesdays 5:30 a.m. from clinic opposite Riverview Theater, https://ogwalking.wordpress.com/.

**KEEP WATCH****ON AI**

Stealing is un-American. Tell Washington to make Big Tech pay for the content it takes.

**SupportResponsibleAI.org****NEWS MEDIA**  
ALLIANCEYour Search for the **Right Mechanic** Stops Here

2904 E. 35th Street

**612.729.2516****www.alexandersimportautorepair.com****WE'RE HIRING. WORK LOCAL.**

• Full benefits • No weekends • Competitive pay • Flat Rate Bonus



**LONGFELLOW COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

**Neighborhood Garage Sale**

**GARAGE SALE**

June 7th-8th, 2025  
8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Last year, over 40 houses held sales!



**Want to play the cello?**

- Lessons
- Online
- Cellist for hire
- Cello Choir

**mcello.com**  
**megan@mcello.com**

**Our country is in a constitutional crisis. It's time to take our democracy back.**

Unite and Rise 8.5 will activate 8.5 million voices through civic engagement, education, and collective power.

**8.5 Million Voices. Be One!**

**WOMEN DEFEND DEMOCRACY** **LWV**



## Bugs Benefit Us All

For hire:

- Parties, insect safaris, monthly Bug Club
- Garden consultations
- Professional insect collections
- Classroom presentations, educational activities
- Community events & more



## Environmental Entomology

Check out [www.dragonswynd.com](http://www.dragonswynd.com)

Email for information on Bug Club:  
[jessica@dragonswynd.com](mailto:jessica@dragonswynd.com)

[WWW.SOULOFTHESOUTHSIDE.COM](http://WWW.SOULOFTHESOUTHSIDE.COM)

**THE LEGACY BUILDING PRESENTS**

**SOUL OF THE SOUTHSIDE**

**MINNEHAHA AVE. EAST LAKE ST.**

**FREE JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL**

**THURSDAY JUNE 19TH FROM 12-8PM**

**DRUM & DANCE LIVE MUSIC SPOKEN WORD LOCAL DIS STEPPING & SOUND BATH FAMILY ACTIVITIES ART FAIR FOOD TRUCKS YOGA & MEDITATIONS BLACK-OWNED MARKETPLACE ANCESTRAL FOOD WAVES IMMERSIVE ART INSTALLATIONS**

**LONGFELLOW RISING** **THE LEGACY BUILDING** **CARBON SOUND** **CRWN MEDIA** **LAKE STREET LIFT**

**BOOK PALACE** **SOLCANA** **Hook Ladder** **ARBITEER** **HISTORIC Coliseum BUILDING**

LAKE STREET LIFT PROJECTS WERE MADE POSSIBLE BY FUNDING FROM DEED AND THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS.

**\$1.00 OFF**

**Next Ice Cream or Popcorn Treat Purchase!**

(Good thru August 31, 2025)

**THE MINNEHAHA SCOOP**

Operated by:  
Big Bell Ice Cream Inc.  
612-729-5205  
[bigbellicecream.com](http://bigbellicecream.com)

**3352 Minnehaha Ave. S. Mpls 55406**

Check Facebook for current hours and events!

**Longfellow Community Council**

**NEIGHBORHOOD GARAGE SALE**

**Saturday, June 7th and Sunday, June 8th**

Shop over one hundred sales across greater Longfellow!

