ACTS February 2020 Newsletter

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Meet the New President of ACTS

Angela Douglas has been bi-vocational for more than 25 years. Currently serving as the Associate Director of Vera House leading strategic planning, execution, organizational and leadership development and change management in order to increase capacity, deconstruct social norms that maintain sexual assault and domestic violence, while advocating for systemic changes to end violence and abuse. Equally, Angela has been a consultant providing infrastructure design/support, capacity building, board development, leadership and professional development to grassroots, startups and mature organizations. She designed curricula, training and educational programs for more than 30 years, holds several training certifications and is a sought after speaker/trainer.

Angela champions the causes of reducing youth violence, alternative education, poverty elimination and racial equity, to name a few. She works to engage and organize communities to address trauma, healing and survivorship. In her recent work with underrepresented communities, Angela declares:

‘the time has come to dismantle the inherent racist ways of delivering services, mental models of our work and the separating out of all other forms of violence as if they are not connected to sexual violence, power and control. There is no longer the need for mere allies in this work. Those of us who are from the underrepresented populations are calling for accomplices. Accomplices are formed in the fire of deconstructing mental models of white supremacy, acknowledging white fragility and pursuing authentic work of building solidarity without notoriety.’

Angela has supported, championed and called for accountability among dominant culture organizations and systems in order to be a catalyst for healing and transformation.

Angela was elected to the office of President of the Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse in January, 2020. She serves on the boards of New Justice Services and CancerConnects. She is Chair of the Survivors Network that determines to provide voice, presence and action for all of those that have experienced sexual, domestic and other forms of violence. Additionally, Angela serves on the HSLC (Human Services Leadership Council) Advocacy Committee and is Co-Chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

For the last 18 years, Angela is a faithful member and active leader at Abundant Life Christian Center (ALCC). She has worked five years in a full-time ministry capacity for ALCC, leading and supporting 42 ministries, their leaders and their work with more than 1100 volunteers. Angela serves as a Deaconess, ministering to many and providing opportunities for greater discipleship, fellowship and community outreach. Out of her faith, Angela serves and calls for justice.

Angela resides in Syracuse with her husband Andre and two dogs. Angela and Andre continue to volunteer and serve, alongside their grown four children and growing grandson, with many local organizations.
**ACTS Welcomes New Officers and Board Members**

**New Officers**

At the ACTS Annual Meeting last month, a new officers were elected. **Angela M. Douglas**, Associate Director of Vera House, is the new ACTS President and **Brian E. Moore**, Board member at Catholic Charities, is the new Vice President. **Linda Mulvey**, former Vice President, will take over for Lennie Turner in the role of Secretary. **Jennifer Hamlin-Navias** will continue to serve as Treasurer.

**Brian E. Moore** is the owner of Moore About You, an audio and video production company focused on creating quality educational and entertaining pieces to preserve the history of individuals for current and future generations. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Brian spent his early career working in radio and television, where among numerous accomplishments, he earned a Syracuse Press Club award.

In addition to his production background, Brian has spent a significant part of his career in the nonprofit sector, working for a few major funders in the Central New York region, where he first became acquainted with ACTS. Having always been interested in the intersection between community engagement and public benefit, coupled with his strong faith, Brian is helping to develop ACTS’ ability to catalyze efforts that will improve the lives of all who live in Syracuse.

Brian lives in the Greater Syracuse, New York area with his wife and children. In addition to his entrepreneurial pursuits, he is an accomplished musician and composer.

**New Board Members**

**Reverend Dr. Bruce Burns, Sr.** and **Bishop Colette Matthews-Carter** were elected to the Board for their first term. Also joining the Board is **Peter Sarver**, former volunteer Executive Director and member of St. Lucy’s Church. **Lawrence Brooks**, of SEIU 1199, has been elected for a second term. In coming issues of our newsletter, profiles of new Board members will be featured. This month we begin with a profile of Bishop Colette Matthews-Carter.

**Bishop Colette Matthews-Carter**, described as a woman of courage, conviction and character believes in the transformative power of Jesus Christ. A former government official, she currently serves as the Senior Pastor of the Zion Hill World Harvest Baptist Church and Prelate of the Covenant Fellowship of Churches. A graduate of Syracuse University, Bishop Carter did postgraduate work at Colgate Rochester Divinity School. She is the recipient of numerous leadership awards and salutations including the New York State Senate “Woman of Achievement” award. She is passionate about the work of social justice. Bishop Carter is the organizer for the Community Think Tank; VOICE (Violence Overcome by Involving Community Effort); serves as the 2nd Vice President for the NAACP of Syracuse and Onondaga County; and lends herself to a large number of community efforts to help those in need. She is married to the love of her life, Mr. Alex Carter.
Forging Ahead on Education and Criminal Justice Issues

As we start a new decade, we can celebrate social justice wins and recommit to the work that still needs to be done. We are excited that the Syracuse STEAM bill has been signed by the governor, but there is still much work ahead to ensure that it fully lives up to its educational vision for our region. We all love our children and we want ALL children to have access to a quality education. ACTS’ Equity in Education group welcomes your participation as it works to bring its equity vision to reality in our community.

ACTS worked on NYS Bail Reform through court-watching and other activities during 2019--culminating in passage of the bill. Now, as changes are being made, there are many folks pushing back --speaking about criminal activity being inevitable if we let certain individuals out without bail. This perception is not supported by data collected in communities that have implemented bail reform. We must remain committed to the belief that people who can’t afford bail should not be detained for months or years because there may be a chance they could reoffend. That very same possibility exists for individuals who CAN afford bail. Being indefinitely detained disproportionately impacts poor people and people of color. This is deeply unjust and is an equity issue.

Here’s the good news -- our criminal justice and policing research group has reported back that there is a noticeable reduction of people being held locally. Moreover, there is a reduction of detained and incarcerated people throughout the state, and this is one important element to help end mass incarceration. This is especially important since the vast majority are held on non-violent charges. ALL people must be treated equally and we MUST STOP oppressing and treating poor people differently. This cannot stand, and so our work continues...

There are many other efforts locally and regionally that require our attention. Currently, ACTS is working collaboratively with other organizations on getting the Right to Know Act (RTK) passed. RTK requires that people who are stopped by police fully know their rights--understanding what the police can and cannot do-- and what you can do if you’ve been treated unjustly. I doubt many of us understand our rights when stopped. This will also require a very large educational outreach effort to the community.

I write this the same week we honor the work and legacy of Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Sadly, we continue to live every day with the same injustices he and many, many people walked hand in hand to overcome. There remains ample opportunities to work together to ensure justice for our beloved community. I welcome your thoughts, and warmly invite you to join ACTS’ efforts in achieving justice for ALL our neighbors.

Linda Malik, Community Organizer

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ACTS Youth Council Update

The ACTS Youth Council is continuing research and planning action on creating college and career centers in each of the Syracuse City School District high schools. Recently we reached out to two more people that had experience in the Syracuse City School District when it had a college and career center model in the past.

The Youth Council is also continuing to focus on recruiting additional members. Students at Southwest Community Center are interested in the Youth Council. They posed transportation being a potential barrier to participation, and it is something we are discussing as a group.

Finally, we revisited one-on-ones with Linda Malik, ACTS Community Organizer. She taught us more ways that the one-on-ones can benefit us for recruiting. We are working on getting comfortable with the process. Doing one-on-ones requires us to have clarity on our vision, mission and what the Youth Council means to our members.

Youth Council meets at Temple Concord the first Saturday of the month at 5:00 - 6:30PM and the third Wednesday of the month at 6:00 - 7:30PM, unless noted otherwise. For more information, contact: actsyouthcouncil@gmail.com

Equity in Education

The ACTS Equity in Education Task Force continues to research education issues to narrow their focus for lobbying and action. At the same time, task force members have supported Superintendent Alicea and Mayor Walsh’s plan for a Regional STEAM High School in the former Central Tech High School building as part of the Syracuse Surge initiative. Members lobbied Governor Cuomo’s office, county legislators and other local officials including State Senator Rachel May and State Assemblyman Bill Magnarelli. Support for the Regional STEAM High School is strong and we are happy to report that Governor Cuomo announced funding to move the project forward in his State of the State Address. This is a win for the community and for ACTS!

The Task Force will continue working to advance the STEAM school. Of particular interest to the group is the promise of a high-quality educational program and integration, as the newly created high school will have a 60/40 percent mix of student from the Syracuse City Schools and surrounding districts in the county. It is anticipated that the STEAM Regional High School will open in September of 2021.
Important Forum on Police Accountability

On Monday, February 17th, 5:30-8:00 at the Community Folk Arts Center, 805 E. Genesee St. a forum on Police Accountability will be held. Come to learn about ACTS and coalition efforts to pass the Right to Know Act (RTK) which will help address issues with day-to-day interactions with police officers, improving communication and transparency—ensuring our city meets its obligation to protect the fundamental rights of ALL people in Syracuse. It is critical that the Common Council pass the Right to Know Act and you can help!

There are two parts to the RTK Act:

· Part one requires officers to identify themselves and explain their reason for subjecting a person to law enforcement activity.
· Part two requiring officers to explain New Yorkers’ constitutional right to refuse a search when no legal basis exists for it except consent. It also and requires that officers have proof of consent when a person agrees to a search under this circumstance.

This is critically important as ACTS works for equity and justice in criminal justice and police reform. Please come, learn more, and support this important effort!

Welcome to Syracuse, Reverend Jackson!

ACTS welcomes the Rev. Eric Jackson, new pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church (United Church of Christ) in downtown Syracuse— one of ACTS’ founding congregations. He comes to Syracuse following several years of ministry in New Hampshire. A hallmark of his time there was his community involvement, including serving as president of the Manchester NAACP, tri-chair of the NH Poor People’s Campaign and a lead community organizer for Faith in Action’s NH affiliate. Prior to Eric’s time in NH, he was on staff at Judson Memorial Church in NYC, where he was an active leader in the Occupy Wall Street Movement, Living Wage Campaign, Fast-food Workers Movement, and New Sanctuary Coalition.

Rev. Jackson completed his B.A. at City College of New York, M.Div. from the Theological Seminary at Drew University, completing his D. Min. from Hartford Seminary, and begun his Ph.D. at Christian Theological Seminary (Indianapolis) in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the national United Church of Christ.

Eric is a newlywed who recently married the love of his life, Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson. Darnisa earned an Educational Leadership Doctorate from Harvard. She is CEO of The Disruptive Equity Education Project (DEEP), which is a professional development and strategy organization focused on equity and dismantling systemic oppression and racism.
ACTS Celebrates the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance sponsored its annual MLK Birthday Celebration at Living Water COGIC on Wednesday, January 15th, the date of Dr. King’s birthday. The inspirational program featured Dr. Phil Turner, Pastor of Bethany Baptist Church. In attendance representing ACTS were several individuals including Linda Malik, Community Organizer and Board Members, Craig French and Peter Sarver. Also in attendance and participating in the program was new Board Member and Senior Pastor of Zion Hill World Harvest Baptist Church, Bishop Collette Matthews-Carter.

ACTS also had a large presence at the Syracuse University 35th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration “A Living Legacy” on Sunday, January 26th. More than 70 ACTS individual and congregational members came together for dinner and program featuring Rev. Raphael Warnock, Senior Pastor of the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church.

“A Living Legacy”
FREE Implicit Bias Workshop Open to All

On Tuesday, February 18th, OnCare is offering a free workshop on implicit bias. Dr. Bryant Marks of the National Training Institute on Race and Equity will present on implicit bias. Individuals can select either the morning or afternoon session. The training will be held at the Embassy Suites adjacent to Destiny USA. “Implicit bias training is strongly recommended for law enforcement, education, judiciary, corporate, community, city/county government, and healthcare organizations as well as other entities in which implicit bias has been shown to significantly impact important life outcomes for large groups of citizens.”

This training is powerful and highly recommended for anyone who wants to understand implicit bias and its ramifications, and help make us all better allies when working on social and racial justice issues. For details call Tashia at (315) 435-2465 or use these links to register directly:

Morning session (8:30 AM – 12:00 PM):  https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Feb18morning
Afternoon session (1:00 – 4:30 PM):  https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Feb18afternoon
ACTS Community Calendar of Local Events - February 2020

ArtRage Gallery Exhibition - Carrying the Weight: Fire & Ice. Focusing on climate change, two highly acclaimed artists document our earth to being attention to our fragile planet. February 1st to March 14th. See www.artragegallery.org for more information about this exhibit and Reality Changes Everything Workshops, Climate Change Conversations and Climate Action Day on February 29th from 12:00 – 4:00 PM.

Building Beloved Community Beyond the Binary - Saturday, February 8th at First Unitarian Universalist Society of Syracuse, 109 Waring Rd., 9:00 – 4:30 PM. Featuring a day of trans-centered learning. Sliding Scale: 0 - $50. Childcare available. For tickets and more information: bbc-btb.org

400 Years of Inequality: An Observance for a Just Future, Part 3 - Sunday, February 9th, 6:00 – 9:00 PM, at Hopps Memorial CME Church. Guest speaker will be the Rev. Frank L. Gibson, III, Director of Interfaith Initiatives at Interfaith Works. Free, tickets www.eventbrite.com

FORUM on Police Accountability - Monday, February 17th, 5:30-8:00, Community Folk Arts Center, 805 E. Genesee St. Join ACTS and coalition members to learn more about the Right to Know legislation before the Common Council.

Interfaith Dinner Dialogues – Thursday, February 20th at various homes throughout the area, from 6:00 – 8:30 PM. Dinner is free for attendees, hosts and facilitators. Sign up by February 7th by completing this online form. For more information, contact Daryl Files at (315) 449-3552, ext. 208 or email dfiles@interfaithworkscny.org or Reggie Kelley at (315) 449-3552 ext. 115 or email rkelley@ifwcny.org.

Prayer in the Public Square – Saturday, February 22nd, 11:30 AM – 12:00 PM at 655 W. Onondaga St. (lower entrance to lower Onondaga Park). Join faith leaders, community leaders and residence in prayer for the City of Syracuse. All are welcome. Prayer in the Public Square will also be held on Saturday, March 28th.

NAACP 3rd Annual Address to the Community, Presidential Address by Linda Brown-Robinson – Thursday, February 27th, 5:30 PM at Bellegrove Missionary Baptist Church, 219 Dr. Martin Luther King West. RSVP at (315)440-6340 or syracusenaacp@gmail.com

ArtRage Gallery New Book Launch – “Undertow of Memory” by Vince Sgambati, Friday, February 28th, 7:00 – 9:00 PM at ArtRage Gallery, 505 Hawley Ave. Syracuse.

SAVE the DATE - ACTS Spring Banquet
Tuesday, April 21, 2020 | Drumlins Country Club
“Race Matters” Book Club

The “Race Matters” book for February 24th will be “A Mercy” by Toni Morrison

The ACTS interfaith network’s Transformative Reading Initiative has held 16 monthly sessions with a variety of topics and authors since July 2018. With “A Mercy” the book club returns to fiction and the world of a writer’s imagination in a historical context. Morrison’s ninth novel, published in 2008, “reveals what lies beneath the surface of slavery in early America. It is both the story of mothers and daughters and the story of a primitive America.” In 2019, we observed 400 years of slavery in our country, dating back to 1619. Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. She died last year after a monumental writing career and the gift of amazing contributions to our culture.

“A Mercy” is one of The New York Times 10 Best Books of the Year!

In the 1680s the slave trade in the Americas is still in its infancy. Jacob Vaark is an Anglo-Dutch trader and adventurer, with a small holding in the harsh North. Despite his distaste for dealing in “flesh,” he takes a small slave girl in partial payment for a bad debt from a plantation owner in Catholic Maryland. This is Florens, who can read and write and might be useful on his farm. Rejected by her mother, Florens looks for love, first from Lina, an older servant woman at her new master’s house, and later from the handsome blacksmith, an African, never enslaved, who comes riding into their lives.

The book club meets the 4th Monday of the month at various locations throughout the community. The February gathering site is TBA. Peter Sarver, ACTS Board Member, is co-facilitator for the discussions. All readers are welcome to come once or come often. For more information, contact Peter at petersarveracts@gmail.com.

End of the Year Giving Campaign is a Success

Thank you to everyone who has financially supported ACTS throughout 2019. We are very pleased to announce that our End of Year Campaign was successful. Although we fell below our $15,000 goal, we raised over $10,000. To date more than 85 individuals participated in our giving campaign. Funds raised will support staffing and overall operational costs for the equity and social justice work of ACTS.

We look forward to your continued support and hope to see you at our Annual Spring Banquet on April 21, 2020 at Drumlins Country Club. Tickets, sponsorship and ad information is available from Peter Sarver at petersarveracts@gmail.com.
You are invited to the

ACTS Spring Banquet
At Drumlins Country Club
Tuesday April 21, 2020
5:30 PM Social Hour, 6:30 - 8:30 PM Dinner and Program

Please join us to celebrate the Fine Arts
and their pursuit of social justice!

This year’s honorees include:

ArtRage Gallery Social Justice Leadership Award

Bishop Colette Matthews-Carter, Pastor at Zion Hill World Harvest Baptist Church

Rev. Nebraska Carter Clergy Leadership Award

Bonnie Shoultz, Zen Center & Hendricks Chapel – ACTS Volunteer of the Year

The Spring Banquet will also feature a social justice musical program, under the direction of Brian E. Moore. Moore’s committee of Dr. Joan Hillsman, Joe Driscoll, Rev. Pete Shidemantle, Jessie Kerr-Whitt and Joe Downing promise an inspirational evening for the cause of the “Beloved Community” envisioned by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

For reservations, contact officemanager.acts@gmail.com.

Sponsorship & advertisement opportunities are available and encouraged!