



## From the ACTS President

I'm going church-hopping this summer. Want to come with me?

No, I'm not dissatisfied with my current place of worship. At least no more so than the usual ways I'm dissatisfied by any form of community. (Which, of course, is mirrored by how my own shortcomings contribute to a community's inadequacies.)



No, what I have in mind is this:  
To visit some different communities of faith over the summer and get to see them in action ... at worship ... at what is the center of their identity and existence ...and so get to know them, at least a little bit better.

1-on-1's are great for getting to know individuals. But they don't often tell us what those individuals believe, how they pray, what they hold sacred, what sustains them. For that, I have to step out of my world and into theirs ... at least for a little while.

The segregation/segmentation of Syracuse's housing and neighborhoods is paralleled—oh the shame—by the segregation/segmentation of our places of worship. Is it too much to imagine that we might understand and care about each other a bit more by making a point of sitting in each other's mosques - synagogues - churches, observing and participating in (as far as possible) each other's prayers, songs of faith, sacred scripture, and holy or moral instruction?

Over my lifetime, I've been privileged to do that from time to time, and it's always been enriching and a

blessing, even if I didn't fully comprehend what was going on. (How could I?)

But if I hope to see ACTS become more fully multi-faith, multi-racial, multi-cultural, then I have to be willing to take the initiative in reaching out by stepping out of "my" world into someone else's (and not expecting or waiting for them to be the boundary-crosser).

I—as a privileged white Christian male—have the luxury of sitting back and assuming it's up to others to make the first move. But I have come to understand that, as much as anything, I and my assumptions and ingrained habits are the biggest barrier, and so I must be the one to let my guard down first. I have much to gain by doing that.

So I'm going to spend this summer worshiping in ways and places that are foreign or unaccustomed to me. Specifically, I'll be venturing out to different parts of town and different styles of praying - singing - preaching - believing with people whose faces and features and customs may be different from my own, but whose hearts are just as sincere and precious as mine.

I'm going church and mosque and synagogue hopping this summer. I'd love to have you join me. E-mail me ([craigfrench@twcny.rr.com](mailto:craigfrench@twcny.rr.com)) for dates and details.

Craig French

PS Don't forget Faith in Action's regional training, July 31–Aug. 3. See registration info on page 8 .

**ACTS welcomes Mohamed Khater to the Board!**

Dr. Khater was voted to a seat on the ACTS Board at our June Leadership Council meeting. Dr. Khater is the President/CEO of Rahma Health Clinic in Syracuse, Principal in SJ Business Consulting Group and President of the Muslim American Care and Compassion Alliance. He formerly served as President of the Islamic Society of Central New and has participated on the Roundtable of Faith Leaders at Interfaith Works. Dr. Khater holds a PHD in Islamic Studies and degrees in mechanical engineering and industrial management.

Dr. Khater is married to Magda Bayoumi, long time ACTS leader and the catalyst for the health clinic. He is looking forward to partnering with ACTS to further social justice work in the Syracuse community.

## ACTS Organizational Calendar - July 2019

**Newsletter Items Due** - Tuesday, July 23rd to Linda Mulvey at [lindamulvey@acts-syracuse.org](mailto:lindamulvey@acts-syracuse.org)

**ACTS Board Meeting** - Thursday, July 25th, 5:30 PM at Temple Concord

**ACTS Financial Sustainability Committee** - Tuesday, July 30th, 8:30 AM at First UU Church.

**Faith in Action Regional Training** - Wednesday, July 31st - Saturday, August 3rd (Pendle Hill, PA). Contact Linda Malik at [acts.cny@gmail.com](mailto:acts.cny@gmail.com) if you are interested in attending.

### Reminders - Future Meeting Dates:

- **ACTS Equity in Education Task Force** - Monday, August 5th, 7:00 PM at Temple Concord.
- **ACTS Race Matters Book Club** - Monday, August 26th, 7:00 PM at Trinity Episcopal Church, 106 Chapel Street, just off E. Genesee St. in Fayetteville.
- **ACTS Leadership Council** - Tuesday, September 10th, 7:00 PM, Location TBA
- **Fall Issues Assembly for Social Justice** - TBD

## ACTS June Leadership Council Meeting



The last ACTS Leadership Council Meeting was held on June 11<sup>th</sup> at All Saints Church. Over 31 members attended either as individual members or representatives of 18 different organizations. Elizabeth Quilter, Financial Consultant, delivered a proposal to work with ACTS to implement structures that would help achieve greater fiscal stability and increase funds raised from a variety of sources, including individual donors. The Leadership Council voted unanimously to support Ms. Quilter's engagement with ACTS on a multi-phase, year-long development process, pending grant funds awarded for this purpose and development of a contract by the Board.

A variety of reports and updates were delivered to the Leadership Council including one from the Human Resources (HR) Committee, a fiscal update and a Power Up! 2019 progress report and Lifecycles recommendations from our strategic planning process. The fiscal update included the pending status of both the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Unitarian-Universalist Just Society Fund. We are optimistic that these grants will come through and enable us to make progress in hiring a part-time office manager, second part-time community organizer and a fiscal consultant. The HR Committee is working on a job description for the ACTS Office Manager. Following a presentation on Lifecycles and Power Up! 2019, the Leadership Council voted to endorse the Lifecycles recommendations.

Research in Action presented recommendations to sunset the Criminal Justice and Community Violence

and Youth (CV & Y) Task Forces. As we prepare for an Issues Assembly to be held this fall, Research and Action is reviewing Task Force work and making recommendations. For Criminal Justice, we have had success with Raise the Age, eliminating solitary confinement for youth. The CV & Y Task Force has worked closely with OGs Against Violence to support neighborhood walks and assist in strengthening their organization. The task force has also supported Alternatives to Violence Program trainings which are now offered on a regular basis. Given these accomplishments relative to the goals each group set, ACTS Research in Action recommends that the groups conclude their work in preparation for the Issues Assembly. Following the assembly, it is expected that new groups will form around newly identified issues or areas that continue to need attention. A vote to sunset the task forces resulted in tabling the motion.

The meeting concluded with a vote to approve Mohamed Khater to join the Board. Aneesah Evans was thanked for her work with the Youth Council. Action was taken to repurpose the By-laws Committee as the Strategic Plan & By-laws Committee. Additionally, Leadership Council endorsed a proposal for the Board to explore additional anti-racism work for ACTS so that we, as an organization, can make progress in our desire to become more integrated and effective as a diverse social justice force within the community. This work will be supported through a \$10,000. grant from Faith in Action.

The next Leadership Council meeting will be held on **September 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM**, location to be determined. All are welcome to attend!

## Community Organizer Update

---

In the last few weeks, after extensive media attention to recent Syracuse Police Department's (SPD) use of force, I hear many people saying that Syracuse is on the brink of "Our Ferguson Moment." Needless to say, that is frightening thought, and something that requires our attention and action.

As a member group comprised of faith leaders and people of moral conscience, many of ACTS' members, and the community at large, have been shocked and concerned over the recent SPD's use of force. Of course, we know that this follows other incidents of use of force that have harmed or killed members of the community over the past several years, leaving residents uneasy, frightened and angry. Far too many in the community have lost faith in those we pay to serve and protect us, and we see this especially impacting black and brown people. We understand that the police have a very difficult job and that most do their work with integrity. However, we also know that the community needs to place their faith and trust in the police to protect them--and depend on them to diffuse situations, not escalate them for little reason. We are outraged and deeply fearful of overreactions by the police, who should be well-trained in applying de-escalation techniques.

This is one issue where we must raise our voice in our community to ask for fairness, transparency and justice. Citizens deserve, and need to have input on many aspects of policing, and especially, the use of force policy. Unfortunately, the policy provides ALL the protections for the police, and little, for the community members police are tasked to serve. A fair and just use of force policy must demand that the police officer always comply with de-escalation techniques FIRST, before individual discretion and use of force which can ultimately lead to injury and even death. This is why Faith in Action and ACTS talks about building power through relationships. The more we share with--and listen to--others about what matters and what we want for those we love, the more able we are to work for justice. We can demand that Mayor Walsh and Chief Buckner fight for the equal rights of the residents of Syracuse--to ensure they are heard and protected. Lives are on the line and lives have been lost, and we cannot sit idly by and continue to let this policy continue to harm our families, neighbors, friends and community members. People of faith and moral conscience must not let this use of force policy stand.

A coalition of organizations, including ACTS, speaking one voice [#accountability](#) will continue to review and make recommendations for the use of force policy. Additionally, we will support more opportunities to dialogue about community and police relations and push for preservation and empowerment of the Citizen's Review Board. We are changing the narrative and.... changing our city [#wearebettertogether](#)

*Linda Malik, ACTS Organizer*

Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse (ACTS)  
910 Madison Street, Syracuse, NY 13210

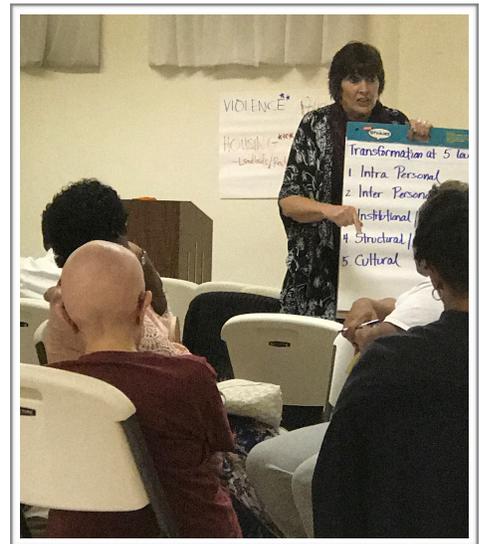


## Building a New Syracuse - Part 2

A group of 70 people gathered at Hopps Memorial CME Church on Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup> to continue to learn about community organizing for social justice and take the first steps toward action to build a new Syracuse. People who attended included members of 15 different organizations, individual ACTS members and others. Building on the first training session held in May, these committed individuals debriefed the 1 on 1 conversations they had with others to identify issues of concern and visions for a new Syracuse where social justice prevails.

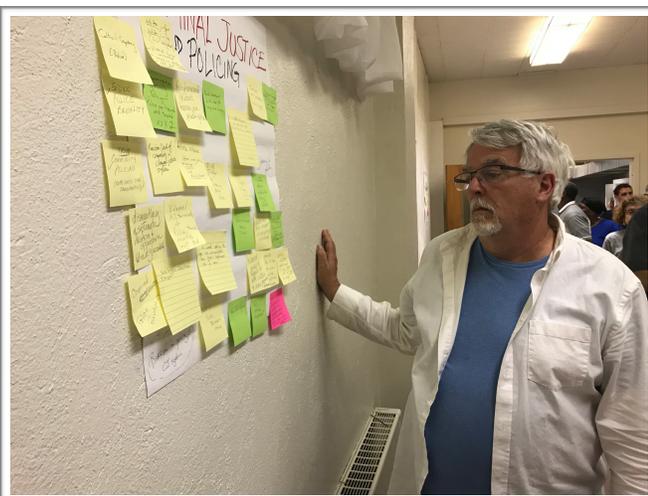
Bishop Dwayne Royster, Tim Lilienthal and Stephanie Gut of Faith in Action (ACTS national resource network for community organizing) led the session along with ACTS

Community Organizer, Linda Malik. Pastor Bruce Burns, Sr., of Hopps Memorial CME Church, opened the session with a welcome and inspirational words. Pastor Carter of Living Water closed the evening with prayer.



Thank you to everyone who attended. We will continue to work with you on using the process we learned to go deeper and begin developing a campaign for a new Syracuse. We will move forward with the issues identified to do research and develop leadership for each group. Our

upcoming Issues Assembly later this fall will provide the process for selection of issues and actions that will move our work forward in the future. If you are interested in joining one of the groups (Education, Housing, Community Violence, Criminal Justice and Poverty), please contact Linda Malik at [acts.cny@gmail.com](mailto:acts.cny@gmail.com).



## Equity in Education Task Force

The Equity in Education Task force is continuing its study into the issue of equity in the schools in Onondaga County. The task force has also ramped up advocacy efforts for the STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) regional high school for Onondaga County. In April, the Onondaga County Legislature voted unanimously in support of a resolution that would ask state lawmakers to allow the County to assist in the financing of the new regional high school. Last week the state legislature did indeed pass such legislation, allowing the county to assist in the financing of the new school. As of June 21st the bill was waiting for Governor Cuomo's signature! We are optimistic that Governor Cuomo will sign the bill given that he has expressed his support for the project in the past. This may give our task force some work in the fall as we lobby to assure that the funding will indeed be made available and dedicated to this project.

We continue to research the issue of educational equity and hope to reach out to others in our community who believe every child has the ability to succeed in school and the right to an education that brings out the best in them.

The task force is taking the month of July off but will be meeting in August to go over plans for the next school year. The date, time and location for our next meeting will be announced later in July.

### ACTS Community Calendar of Local Events - July 2019

**I-81 Viaduct Project Neighborhood Meeting (Camillus and Western Suburbs)** – Tuesday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 - 8:00 PM, Town of Camillus Municipal Building – Gymnasium.

**I-81 Viaduct Project Neighborhood Meeting (East Syracuse and Eastern Suburbs)** – Wednesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 – 8:00 PM, East Syracuse Minoa High School.

**I-81 Viaduct Project Neighborhood Meeting (Southside)** – Thursday, July 11<sup>th</sup> 3:00 – 5:00 PM and 6:00 - 8:00 PM, Dr. King Elementary School.

**I-81 Viaduct Project Neighborhood Meeting (Downtown)** – Tuesday, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 - 8:00 PM, Syracuse Institute of Technology.

**I-81 Viaduct Project Neighborhood Meeting (Eastside)** – Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 - 8:00 PM, H.W. Smith Pre K-8 School.

**I-81 Viaduct Project Neighborhood Meeting (Lafayette and Southern Suburbs)** – Tuesday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 6:00 - 8:00 PM, Grimshaw Elementary School.

**I-81 Viaduct Project Neighborhood Meeting (Cicero and Northern Suburbs)** – Thursday, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 - 8:00 PM, Cicero-North Syracuse High School.



## ACTS Welcomes Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ



The Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ at 347 Cortland Ave. in Syracuse is ACTS' new organizational member. Pastor G. Maxwell Jones and First Lady Daphne Jones lead the church community that was originally founded by Pastor Max's father, Bishop Robert W. Jones, in 1957. In the memory of his father, Pastor Max founded the Robert and Marjorie Jones Community Development Organization, Inc., a civic organization with a mission to develop the community around the church; educationally, socially, recreationally, and culturally. It is his philosophy that the church must have a positive impact on the community immediately surrounding the church. We welcome Pastor Max and First Lady Daphne Jones and all of the members of Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ to the ACTS community. We look forward to your active engagement in ACTS work!

### **Moving People Transportation Coalition**

*Peter Sarver, Convener*

The N.Y.S. Department of Transportation held its open house on June 18<sup>th</sup> and laid out its rationale for preferring the Community Grid option over the other two alternatives under consideration for the I-81 replacement process. The materials, spoken and displayed, from this event are available at <https://www.dot.ny.gov/i81opportunities/>.

You can listen to a 20-minute presentation by Mark Frechette, the D.O.T. Project Director, posted on YouTube. You can explore the display boards by clicking on the highlighted item in the lower right hand corner of the home page. Be forewarned that the display material is there but you need to click on each individual item to see the boards. You can't simply scroll through.

The D.O.T. is also offering opportunities for dialog with their staff at a number of Neighborhood Meetings. The format of the meetings is simply the display boards and dialog. There will be no formal presentation, per se. All citizens are encouraged to attend one of these gatherings to gain a bird's eye view of what is being proposed and ask questions about to the whys & wherefores. We have included the schedule of meetings in our Community Calendar or you can view and/or download the schedule at <https://www.dot.ny.gov/i81opportunities/repository/NeighborhoodMeetingsFlyer-2019Jun13.pdf>

ACTS, through Moving People, will continue its efforts to advocate for the Community Grid as the best alternative for our social justice concerns. Please contact [MovingPeopleCNY@gmail.com](mailto:MovingPeopleCNY@gmail.com) for more information or to learn how you can help with these advocacy efforts.

## **ACTS Awarded CCHD Grant!**

ACTS is thrilled to announce that it has received a 6-year grant from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). The Community Development Grant is awarded to organizations like ACTS who do community organizing around social justice for systemic change and anti-poverty initiatives. For the coming year ACTS has been awarded \$52,000 annually, and will be eligible for renewed funding for the next 6 years. The purpose of the grant is to build capacity and strengthen ACTS. Initial plans for the grant include employing a part-time office manager and, hopefully hiring an additional, part time community organizer to more deeply engage with our inner-city congregations and individuals directly impacted by poverty, systemic inequity and racism. We would like to thank Mike Melara, CEO of Catholic Charities and local CCHD representative, Ian Mitchell, Area A CCHD representative, Paul Welch and Bishop Royster of Faith in Action for supporting our work.

## **Northeast Regional Leadership Training**

Are you interested in delving deeper into the mission of ACTS? If so, you are invited to join us at this year's Northeast Regional Leadership Training from Wednesday, July 31-Saturday, August 3 at Pendle Hill Conference Center in Wallingford, PA.

For more information and details, please contact Linda Malik at [acts.cny@gmail.com](mailto:acts.cny@gmail.com).

We would love to have you join our team of attendees!

---

## **Criminal Justice Task Force Celebrates Accomplishments**

The ACTS Criminal Justice Task Force focused on the work of bail reform beginning in 2017, joining the statewide movement to eliminate cash bail and the bail bond industry. This work is grounded in a commitment to the presumption of innocence and the belief that no one should be in jail simply because they are unable to buy their freedom, especially when cash bail disproportionately impacts people of color.

The Task Force has partnered with Unchained on a court watching project to document how bail is set at arraignments. More than 55 community members were trained and they have observed almost 700 arraignments. In April 2018, NYS passed legislation overhauling the pretrial process, including bail reform. Court watching efforts will continue in the future to monitor implementation of the new law.

Another accomplishment of the Criminal Justice Task force is the *Raise the Age* initiative. The Task Force partnered with Center for Community Alternatives, RocACTS, VOICE Buffalo and NOAH to advocated to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18. New law was passes and now most 16 and 17 year old charged with a crime will remain in family court instead of the adult system. This went into effect for 16 year-olds in 2018. The law will extend to 17 year-olds in October 2019. A court watching project has been started to monitor implementation of *Raise the Age*. Success was also obtained with the Onondaga County Legislature's September 2017 passing of the *Resolution to End Solitary Confinement and Isolation of Youth in All Onondaga County Facilities*. Work will continue to support the proposed HALT Solitary Confinement ACT that did not pass in this year's legislative session.

ACTS is proud of the achievements of the Criminal Justice Task Force and congratulates Nancy Gwin, chairperson, and all members of the Task Force throughout the years on its work!

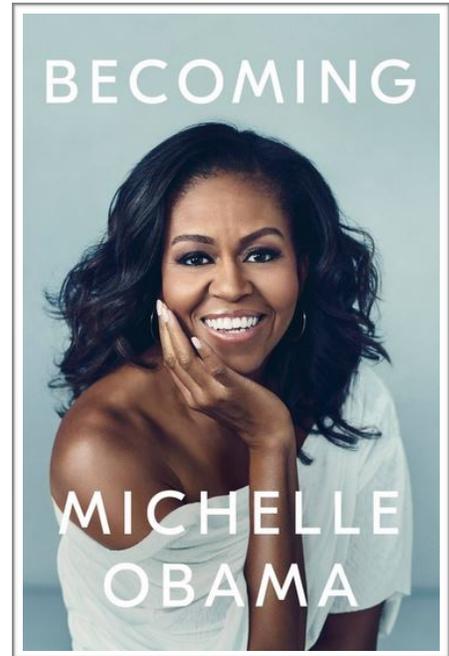
## Summer Reading For Race Matters Book Club: *BECOMING*

"Becoming" by Michelle Obama will be discussed at Monday, August 26th gathering of the ACTS-sponsored "Race Matters" Book Club. The 7 PM session will be hosted by Trinity Episcopal Church in Fayetteville. The location is 106 Chapel Street, just off E. Genesee St. in Fayetteville.

Described as "an intimate, powerful & inspiring memoir" by the former First Lady of the United States, the book has sold more than 10 million copies. With "serving" in The White House for 8 years as her husband's partner, one would think we all know her well but there's lots more.

The autobiographic work takes us back to her home roots on the south side of Chicago and along the journey as working Mom and then through her role as the President's wife. Already, an extraordinary life, she & Barack left the WH on Jan 20, 2017.

Join us for another lively discussion as folks struggling with white privilege and its role in systemic racism. How do we assess the impact of the Obamas on the issues of social justice in our country? In June, our group had 22 persons from 12 different congregations. Listen & learn from a diverse set of viewpoints. The discussion will be co-facilitated by Ednita Wright PhD, professor of Human Services at OCC and Peter Sarver, Executive Director of ACTS.



Coming up this Fall: "Salvage the Bones" by Jesmyn Ward on Sept 24; "Live Your Enemies" by Arthur Brooks on Oct 28; and "The Color of Law" by Richard Rothstein on Nov 25.

For more information, contact [petersarverACTS@gmail.com](mailto:petersarverACTS@gmail.com)

### ACTS Membership Drive

ACTS is working hard to build its membership base. Currently there are two opportunities for membership. One is a Congregational or Organizational membership. In this case all members of the congregation or organization have membership in ACTS. In addition, Individual memberships are available. Individual memberships provide the opportunity for any interested people, even if they are not connected to a member organization. Become an individual member today or encourage others to get involved! **Click on this link** to access the Individual Membership form and additional information on our website. An annual individual membership is only \$25.

Individual membership offer any interested person an opportunity to become more directly involved with the work of ACTS. Individual members are considered to be delegates at our Leadership Council meeting.