



OBSERVER REPORT

TASK FORCE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION 3-25-26

In Person at Abbot Public Library Meeting Room

LWVM Observer: Shari Pressman

Members in Attendance: Helaine Hazlett, Diane Gora, Deacon Joe Whipple, Reece Dahlberg, Jean Guastaferrri, Louis Meyi, Jay Morrison, Maura Dartley-Rocco **Guests:** Kim Gubelman, Laura Meyi

James Book Discussion: The 2024 novel James, by Percival Everett had been chosen as a community book read for adults in celebration of Black History Month. Complimentary books were available at Abbot Public Library. The novel had been described as a “revisiting” of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain, so the James discussion became somewhat of a comparison of the two novels. Participants discussed code switching—the practice of African Americans speaking in one dialect when talking with white people and an educated speech with each other. People who’d listened to the novel had difficulty with the “twang” of Missourians and found that reading while listening was useful. The frequent use of the “n” word is offensive to modern readers, but the consensus of those attending the discussion supported teaching the novel uncensored, clarifying that the word was meant to be demeaning and racist. Mark Twain had, in an introduction to Huckleberry Finn, anticipated criticism when his novel was published and for future generations. He was careful to validate the speech he used as well-researched and accurate for that time and place.

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month: Planned for May; Reece will contact senior Niko Vaughan King, MHS Student Representative to TFAD.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast: Held at Old North Church on January 19th; an estimated 150 people attended; event was moved to the main sanctuary to accommodate the attendees; organized by Susan Morrison, wife of Marblehead Racial Justice Team member and liaison to TFAD, Jay Morrison. Organizers hope to make it annual event.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day was held January 30 at two events: noontime at Abbot Hall and evening at Temple Sinai. Each event drew about 50 people, with Police Chief Dennis King at the candlelit noon event. Select Board Chair Dan Fox spoke at both events along with MHS senior Sasha Genezer granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. Sasha shared stories her grandparents told her about their experiences at Auschwitz.

Marblehead Racial Justice Team: Marblehead Grant Coordinator Donna Cotterell applied for and was awarded a grant for the Juneteenth Flag Raising on June 14.

Future Agenda Items: David Shribman, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, former Boston Globe Washington Bureau Chief and former Executive Editor of the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, will speak on May 6. Further details to be announced.

Next meeting: Thursday evening, April 16 at 7:00