From: Jonathan Wainscott <jonwainscott@gmail.com>
Sent: 9/30/2021 8:27:41 PM
To: S. Antanette Mosley <antanettemosley@avlcouncil.com>
Cc:
Subject: Pastor Hardaway's comments...

It seems like things just fell into place quite nicely as Pastor Hardaway hit on the same theme I really wanted to express: this historic council, its opportunity to make historic change, and a bit of a challenge to rise to those occasions. It would have sounded a little different coming from me.

That historic 1989 Council I referenced in a previous email to you? Gene Ellison joined Wilhelmina Bratton and it was the first time Asheville had two black Council members serving together. Issues of the day were The Block. Ms. Bratton pushed for a change to the City Charter so that the Mayor would be elected by the people rather than appointed by Council. It was customary for Council to appoint the member that took the most votes in the election to Mayor, and in 1975 that went to Dr. Otis Michael, a black man and a Republican. Council passed on making him the first black mayor of this town. We had to wait 30 more years, passing the century mark into the new millennium when Terry Bellamy became Asheville's first black mayor in 2005 . Wilhelmina Bratton and Gene Ellison's names are on that historic change. They expanded democracy for the whole town and did right by correcting the wrong of 1975. The at-large elections system, well, it continued to be justified by the sudden rise in black participation. '

Pastor Hardaway mentioned that "reparations" won't be able to compensate for all that was taken from and done to the black community. He noted that there is some symbolism, important symbolism, in this process of breaking down all the systems and structures of racism. And Pastor Hardaway also mentioned red-lining. The specific injustice that we can point to and say "Here, here's the land, here's the words that described it, here's the damage that was done, there's where the homes used to be..." It's a very tangible transgression with tangible receipts to prove it. When I hear this call-out of redling and see what was said in the Area Descriptions that are available on our City's website, my immediate thought is, 'those documents were produced and signed by William Coleman in 1937- the same William Coleman that was one of three men to serve on the specially-formed Municipal Board of Elections in 1931 to oversee the upcoming referendum as to whether or not to change our form of government from the failed Asheville Board of Commissioners to our current Council/Manager form.' The at-large system was discussed in the political discourse leading up that referendum. In fact the Senator that agreed to sign off on the new form of government pending support via a referendum wanted us to return to a ward system but the white supremacists fought to keep the system in an at-large fashion. It's just as tangible of a transgression against the black community as red-lining was, with more receipts to go with it. And we renewed that 1931 tool of disenfranchisement in 2019.

I know there are many, many more pressing concerns in Aseville's black community (that now only has 9.21% of the whole voter registration in Asheville) than the issue of our election system. Changing that system won't change anyone's life overnight, but how long will Asheville hold onto this 1931 tool of disenfranchisement? As Pastor Hardaway mentioned, referencing Dr. King, don't wait for change. Change what you can, as soon as you can.

Changing the charter takes three Council meetings, and 4 votes to pass. The actual change can go into effect at some time in the future to allow for transition though this should have been done before we were born and has been conspicuously ignored long enough IMHO as the kids say. My ultimate goal is to abolish our Jim Crow election system, obviously. The small step in that direction, is a fair and thorough conversation (public engagement) with real experts evaluating the data and history of our electoral system that is equivalent to the red-lining analysis we are discussing so much. The same fingerprints are on both the red-ling maps, and the election (non) map. Red-lining ended. We still have an at-large election system. Asheville: first city in NC to abolish ward (district) elections in 1916, first to abolish absentee voting in municipal elections in 1931. The Jim Crow policies that ORIGINATED IN ASHEVILLE hurt more than the black residents of Asheville as other cities went on to adopt our precedent-setting practices. This needs to be acknowledged, and rectified.

J. Hackett offered an interesting observation on the third night of the Reparations Speaker Series. To paraphrase, he asked why it was incumbent on the disenfranchised and marginalized community to solve the problems created by white people. 'Ya'll did this, ya'll fix it'. That might not work too well as an entire approach to dismantling the systems people who look like me created, but it is an important part of the march forward. So, here I am. A white man who is coming forth to elucidate a very specific transgression by white men and women against the entire black community in Asheville, Buncombe County, North Carolina during Jim Crow.

I'm not coming into this conversation to tell the black community what to do or what is best for you. I am not trying to be your voice or tell you what to say with it. I am a white man with many privileges. One is to have been born into a family that valued education. My father was teaching me to be anti-racist before I learned our phone number which was well before "anti-racism" was a thing. He corrected the false teaching I received

in Pickens County, South Carolina schools. This endeavor that I have found to be a calling has given me a new old thing for me to chop up with my father. In addition to being able to dial up a professor and get an hour lecture on the finer points of this time or that, all the academic stuff, he's been telling me about his own observations of systemic racism in Charlotte, where he grew up, in the 50's and 60's. My father is with me every time I address Council, and I'm grateful he's still around to dial up on the 45 year old landline phone number mom and dad still have, to answer more questions between those 3 minutes every two weeks on Tuesday night.

I reached out to Pastor Hardaway this afternoon. Just told him I listened to what he had to say the other night, that I had spoken as well, and that I had been working on bringing our Jim Crow election system to the attention of the public. Asked if he'd be interested in hearing about it. He said sure and we're meeting Tuesday at 1:00 at his church. I doubt he would object to you joining us if you would like. I called him at the Rock Hill Baptist Church number (828) 274-2533. Most of what I can cover in a would be stuff I've already told you, but I guess it's more in the context of having a review of the electoral system as part of our reparations journey.

Thanks for all you are doing and listening to all that's being said, by everyone.

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