

Interfaith/Social Action

At this time of national crisis in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, in the midst of the pandemic, many of us have the urge to do something. I would argue that as Jews, and as “Lovers of Justice” (Ohavi Zedek) we are required to act in support of the eradication of institutionalized racism. While many of us have responded in our own way by attending demonstrations, bearing witness publicly, contributing to organizations dedicated to fighting racism, or putting Black Lives Matter signs on our lawns, there are long term strategies for action that will address these issues as well as those that are available to us in the moment.

A group of OZ members has committed to studying reparations in some form, for African Americans and Native Americans.

These two ethnic minorities in American society are each in a unique position within the American landscape. No other group of Americans suffered either enslavement or genocide. Many American ethnic and religious minorities suffered from and still suffer discrimination, including Jews. But that is not the same as it has been and is for African Americans and Native Americans.

As always when we are contemplating possible social action on the part of our congregation, I wish us to be proactive and responsive, not impulsive and reactive. If we are to take (as of now undetermined) steps in the future, any action should be based on information, education and verifiable facts.

Therefore I invite any of you who wish to join us in the study of reparations to contact me at mpschaal@comcast.net.

We have been gifted with a wonderful bibliography of resources that investigates and makes the case for reparations from Jessica Corbman, with contributions from her two sisters. They are the daughters of our fellow congregants Karen and Eric Corbman.

For those who are interested in the topic, but cannot or do not wish to partake in studying, I hope that we can offer programs to the entire congregation that will address racial injustice.

By the time you read this I hope that we will have a growing list of those who wish to participate. I will be appointing a small group of qualified members to help to structure our study. We will do so in a way that will allow flexibility for those of you who have limited time. I believe that studying reparations to these two populations will lead to knowledge and offer us opportunities to practice *tikkun olam*.

When I was a teenager, I was a member of the B'nai Brith Youth organization. The boys version was Aleph Zadik Aleph or AZA. We would say to each other that which I offer to you now: *Chazak V'ematz*. Be Strong and of Good Courage.

~ Michael Schaal
Chair