

Black Lives Matter in Asylum Hill

There are several signs in Asylum Hill that remind us that, black lives matter, but the most prominent is the sign on the parking lot at My People Clinical Services at 111 Gillett St.



For those who are not aware of this longtime Asylum Hill treasure, you can Google either that or Abdul Rahmaan Muhammad. Abdul is the founder and Executive Director of MPCS, as well

as the ingenious Ice Cream for a Dream that we wrote about some years ago. It continues on as do many of the other programs that Abdul has been responsible for.

Most recently Abdul evolved a Fatherhood Engagement program group session into what became the Fatherhood Manologues that premiered on Father's Day this year. The idea was to get nine African-American men to tell a story about father, either theirs or themselves, and then to refine those stories into performances that could change the narrative.

"I'm all about changing narratives, like I want people to be able to see Black men fully, not only when we die, not only when we're mad, not only when we are in handcuffs, but when we are being our genuine true selves, when we are talking about the love of our lives, like our children." Abdul said to Ray Hardman at CT Public in an interview that can be found [here](#). All of this began before COVID and was finally presented a month after George Floyd's murder. All of the Manologues are now available on Facebook [here](#).

Much of the coaching that allowed these stories to become performance pieces was accomplished by Godfrey Simmons at Hartbeat who was featured in our February News & Views.

In an email that went out June 2nd, Godfrey Simmons organized a "virtual space specifically for Greater Hartford-area BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) artists, activists, students ~ anyone who needs an BIPOC affinity space for strategizing, decompressing and healing in these traumatic times" to be followed by "virtual space for local, self-identified White people to strategize around how to "show up" for BIPOC and commit to practicing anti-racism in their everyday lives."

The latter event, which I attended, was titled "Breaking the White Silence." It had more than 20 attendees, many connected with Hartbeat Ensemble. It was co-facilitated by Patricia O'Rourke and Peter Callahan, and it allowed all of us to talk about our feelings regarding the current situation, and ways that we could help without getting in the way. I'm proud to see that Abdul, Godfrey and our friends at CT Public are all leading the way. To stay up to date go to any of their Facebook pages, [Hartbeat](#), [My People and CT Public](#).