

Immediate, Short And Long-Term Responses After Of The Tragic May 14th Buffalo Shooting.

By Deborah Goldman, JCRC co-chair; Adam Fogel JCRC co-chair and Mara Koven-Gelman, JCRC director

Many in the Jewish and general community are asking – “What can we do to stand in support of the Black community after the horrific white supremacist fueled-hate May 14th that left 10 Black people killed and 3 others injured at Tops Market on Jefferson Avenue?”

As members of the Buffalo Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) dedicated to building a more caring and civil community, we created immediate, short and long-term responses following the guidance of Buffalo Black-led organizations.

Immediate: Like many in our community, we reached out to our friends and community partners to share our horror and compassion. We wrote a powerful statement that focused on the reality that this was Black racism. We attended and helped lead interfaith vigils, and worked with our JFS who provided a list of resources where people could contribute mental health expertise, time, food and funds. We dropped off food and groceries and hosted meals so that our friends could share their grief.

Short Term:

We will continue amplifying all the Black-led organizations who are providing food, mental health care and volunteer opportunities. There is strong need for immediate services, but this is not sustainable. Some of these organizations include Buffalo Community Fridge, Resource Center of WNY, Buffalo Urban League and Black Love Resists in the Rust, African Heritage Food Co-op and Open Buffalo.

Longer Term:

There are many possibly longer-term issues to address. They include:

- Combatting white supremacy and anti-Black and antisemitic hate
- Gun Control/Safety
- Diversity, Equity and Belonging work throughout Buffalo and its surrounding communities
- Changing the disparities by chiseling away at social determinants of health such as economic, social, housing, education, and health disparities
- Building sustainable relationships with our neighbors

JCRC will continue to work on these issues but elevate issues identified by our community partners: 1) Changing the disparities and 2) Building sustainable relationships.

Change the Disparities

We believe in working with our existing partners: to affect social determinants of health and to address the root causes of systemic racism. As Buffalo Urban League President Thomas Beauford Jr clearly stated, we must have plans that are strategic, sustainable and support, “the nonprofits that will remain here after cameras have gone.”

Legislatively, two of JCRC's priorities, the creation of an Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act were both approved by the NYS legislature and awaiting the Governor's signature.

Building Sustainable Relationships

JCRC will continue to build on the many and deep relationships with our Black community partners and friends.

JCRC wants to provide opportunities for the Jewish community to spend time and build relationships with our neighbors in the East side of Buffalo. JCRC Racial Justice Coordinator Rachel Beerman has organized several virtual and in-person opportunities to learn about US Black history locally and in Greensboro, NC.

In July, we are offering an opportunity to take a tour of the beautiful East Side Garden Walk on Sunday July 24. Brandye Merriweather, president of the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation told the Business First, "If you want to be part of the change...Make Black people and Black neighborhoods part of your life."

JCRC is taking the long view based on our Jewish values – B'tzelem Elokim – we are all created in G-d's image. To erase the effects of systemic racism, we have to go beyond standing with our friends in the Black community; we will work on those barriers to equity, and most importantly to see people as fellow human beings. To find out more information and join these initiatives please contact, Rachel Beerman, rachel@buffalojewishfederation.org or Mara Koven-Gelman, mara@buffalojewishfederation.org