

2020 Freedom Fund President's Speech

This is the second year we have held the “event” as a hybrid event. While we are not all physically together, at least you should have the opportunity to “see” old friends and new friends during our program break.

This event is our largest fundraiser of the year. Thus, I would like to thank the Freedom Fund Committee for all their hard work in putting this event together. They have risen superbly to the challenge of crafting this event in the wake of as we are coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you, also, to all of the sponsors of tonight’s event. Without your support this event and the work of the organization would not be possible. And just to remind you what that work is, our mission is to the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons. It is a mission that is more relevant now than ever as evidenced by the inequities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent legislation including the recently passed divisive concepts language in the Right to Freedom From Discrimination Act.

This event is, also, our organization Annual Meeting. Our By-Laws require that during this Annual Meeting I, as your President, report to you the status of the organization. It is, also, traditional during such meetings for the President to share highlights of what the organization has done throughout the past year and what the organization plans to do in the upcoming year. So, here goes...

First, I am happy to say that the state of the organization is healthy. With a solid foundation built by former officers and members, we have remained an organization to whom people look for understanding the needs of people of color and to address discrimination in the Greater Manchester area.

We have become even more visible with an influx of new members. Our current count is 91 active members. Our contact list is now well over 400 people. With the help our or membership and communications team – Kathy Urie, Anne-Marie Tessier, Tim Denby, Kathi Corrigan, and Jena McLeary, we continue to reach out to

organizations about membership and activism. The Committee has updated our brochure to add a QR code which has been well-received at events at which we have participated such as the Greater Manchester MLK Celebration, the Manchester Juneteenth Celebration, the annual Fredrick Douglas Reading of “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”, the Arts Nabe event, and the We Are One Festival.

I want to thank Woullard Lett and Sarah Robinson for continuing the push on the Education Committee. They are meeting with the new Manchester School Board and holding their feet to the fire to live into the 2014 Resolution as a result of the DOE finding against the Manchester District. We have turned up the pressure on the district by attending Manchester Board of School meetings to let our presence be felt. And it has made a difference as Board members have said that our presence and testimony changed their minds. We need you all to show up as well. And thanks to Suidi Lett, we held our first Discover for the Future session with youth from 12 – 18 to educate them on the true nature of racism in America they are not being taught in school.

Attorney Donna Brown, one of our Freedom Fund awardees from two years ago, continues to lead the Legal Redress Committee. The Criminal Annulment Clinics she helped coordinate were events that drew great crowds. There are plans to expand those clinics to other areas. Our second Summer Intern in our partnership with the Shaheen Gordon law firm, Tim Mainella, did a great job of bringing a focus on our legal redress process and drafting a letter of support for the law suit brought against the state by Manchester School District Chief Equity Officer Tina Phillibotte and others regarding the Divisive Concepts law.

Because of our by-laws, in many cases, there is nothing we can do legally in these matters as we cannot provide a lawyer to help the victims. But many have told us that just knowing we are here and listening to them is of great value to them. Thank You, Donna for your steadfast leadership in this area!

Carola Beasley-Topliff stepped in to fill the Treasurer’s spot. This allowed Arnold Mikolo to step into the 1st Vice-Presidents role. Carola’s dedication to detail has been a great help as we continue to be accountable for the funding we have. At

last report we have a healthy balance of \$ in our bank accounts. Carola and her husband Jim are on vacation so can't be here. But she was checking in over the last week even while she was away. Thanks to Carola for all your efforts on the Branch's behalf.

Speaking of Arnold Mikolo, in addition to being 1st Vice President, he is also Chair of the Environmental Justice Committee. Arnold and Chris Kelly have grown our efforts around environmental justice through our relationship with the NH Nature Conservancy. We played a role in the launching of the All Person's Trail at the Manchester Cedar Swamp just outside of the City. We just purchased a number of air quality monitors which we will be placing in various parts of the city to gather data which will allow us to advocate for cleaner air for our residents. Thanks to Arnold and Chris for all your efforts.

In the Economic Justice Committee has been very active in providing opportunities for individuals and businesses to grow. Our NH Minority Owned Business list has grown to over 150 business. Our unique Community-Driven Economic Empowerment (C-DEE) program in partnership with the NH Community Loan Fund and the Center for Women and Enterprise has launched providing a platform for Black and Brown-owned businesses to learn and get capital and technical assistance they would not normally be able to receive because of the white normative guideline of most financial institutions.

In addition to all this, we have held and will continue to hold Financial Literacy workshops translated into different languages. Thanks to Heidi Edwards-Dunn for leading this great work.

In the Health space, there is so much going on. We worked with the Black Women Health Project to plan the Health Fair at the We Are One Festival. We brought in dental providers and a personal trainer and handed out general health information as well as addiction treatment information. Adine Latimore, a Health Committee member, had members of the Black Nurses' Association of New England set up a table where people could get blood pressure checks and hypertension information as well as speak to a nutritionist.

With funding from the Tufts-Harvard Pilgrim (now Point32 Health) Foundation we dove into vaccine outreach. - Tim Denby, a Health Committee member, did a

tremendous amount of work on the graphic design, layout and preparation for printing of materials that we used by many organizations to drive vaccinations in the community.

We will soon have an online workshop to help people get ready for cold and flu season presented by Dr. Scott Brizard, a Health Committee member as well as other wellness workshops presented by Committee member

And to take this all to another level, Dr. Tracy (your MC) is leading the effort to have Manchester declare Racism as a Public Health Crisis as has been done in several other communities around the country to great effect. We urge your support to this effort by letting your elected official know you support this. Thanks, Tracy for all your efforts.

Our Secretary Curt Smith and Assistant Secretary Kathi Corrigan, have done a fantastic job of keeping track of our new members and the challenges of dealing with record-keeping in a local organization that is, basically, a franchise of a national organization. General meetings still take place monthly on the 4th Thursday at 6:30. We have had many speakers on topics such as obtaining funding to keep businesses running and people in their homes, Voting, and the Census. Thank you, Curt and Kathi for keeping us all going.

There are other people and other activities I could mention like collaborations with the NH Black Heritage trail, meetings with Mayor Joyce Craig, and Police Chief Allen Aldenberg. But, obviously, I don't have time to mention them all here. Let me close by acknowledging that none of what I have mentioned would be possible without your help and support. So, Thank You all for your efforts over the year. And Thank You for what you are going to do in the upcoming year – kicked off by this event with the theme Get Out The Vote. My hope is that tonight's event will fire you up to help us make sure our voice is heard the elections this year.

Thank You!

Awards

Young Adult - Grace Kindeke, Program Coordinator, American Friends Service Committee -NH Program

Grace Kindeke is an artist, activist, community organizer and a B.A. student of Africana Studies and Sociology at UMASS Boston. She was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and immigrated to the U.S. as a toddler. Having spent much of her life in Manchester, NH she moved to Boston, MA where she lived for several years before returning to the Granite State with her husband in 2018.

She is currently the Program Coordinator for the American Friends Service Committee, NH program. She is a fierce advocate for justice and liberation, grounding her work in a Black feminist, afro-futurist and anti-oppression practice

When considering to whom we should present this award, there was very little debate among Committee members. There was no doubt that we should give this year's award to Grace.

I am so glad to have her as part of our community. Working with her and watching her lead even us older folks with a caring for our feelings as humans while driving an unswerving push for justice gives me great hope that our future is in the best of hands. It is my great pleasure to recognize her with this 2022 Freedom Fund Award Youth of the Year Award.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qXOCOjGq2uO_YsCjg8mZSaIF6qciG-jO/view?usp=drivesdk

Adult - Sandra Almonte, Owner of Don Quixote

As a native of the Dominican Republic, Sandra immigrated to New Jersey at the age of 9 in 1981 and later moved in 2000 with her ex-husband and three sons to Manchester, where they opened a Latino restaurant, Don Quijote, when very few existed in New Hampshire.

In just over two decades, Sandra's business has grown and thrived, in no small part due to her unwavering commitment to providing authentic cuisine, a welcoming atmosphere for her patrons, and a genuine concern for the well-being of her employees and community. This concern takes her into

more than just the food industry. She is taking on the one of the largest barriers to economic expansion – the housing shortage with her efforts to purchase and even develop housing for her staff and others.

Sandra is chair for the board of directors of NeighborWorks Southern New Hampshire to help create affordable rental housing in Manchester, Nashua and surrounding communities. She is also a board member for the Conservation Law Foundation and Manchester Proud, and an advisory council member for the Centro Latino de Hospitalid. In addition, she serves on our own Community-Driven Economic Empowerment programs Community Business Advisory Committee (CBAC).

I am so proud to have her as part of our community and someone I can call to get a sense of what is best for the community. It is my great pleasure to recognize her with this 2022 Freedom Fund Adult of the Year Award.

[Journalism/Journalist - Carol Robidoux, Founder/Publisher, Manchester Ink Link](#)

Carol Robidoux is founder and publisher of manchesterinklink.com, a digital news and information site based in Manchester, NH. She has been a journalist since the early 1990s, working for the Bucks County Courier Times in Levittown, PA, as an award-winning columnist, features writer and youth editor before moving to New Hampshire in 2001 for a staff reporting job at the NH Union Leader.

As the economy shifted and newsroom jobs dwindled she continued writing freelance for various publications including the Boston Globe, The Concord Monitor, Business NH Magazine and the NH Bar News. She spent more than two years learning the ways of digital news as local editor for NashuaPatch.com from 2011-2014 before launching the Inklink in June 2014.

She is a founding member of the Granite State News Collaborative, an active member of LION Publishers, serves on the board of the NH Press Association, and has recently started working on initiative called The Inkubator, to encourage student journalism, expand community engagement with local news and create more opportunities for people to gain skills and tools to elevate their own voices within the media.

She would be here today, but she is, understandably, attending her son's surprise birthday party, which was postponed from last weekend due to him contracting COVID. It is my great pleasure to recognize her with this 2022 Freedom Fund Journalist of the Year Award.

Show Video....

[Political Leader - Pat Long, Alderman Ward 3, City of Manchester & Representative, New Hampshire State House of Representatives, District Hillsborough 10](#), Patrick Long is a Manchester born and raised resident. At the age of 3 Pat with his family became wards of the State of New Hampshire, going from orphanages and foster homes until settling with his mother at the age of 16. After High School (West, that is) Pat joined the Iron Workers Union where he worked for 33 years, serving the last 13 years as their Business Manager.

The day he retired from the Iron Workers Union when his “day” job became helping his wife run her family’s business and his “night job” (not really at night) became using his years of experience bringing people together to produce results as a public figure.

Pat learned early of the importance of volunteering in his community, at 20 he began coaching football at the Pop Warner level and continued for 32 more years. Pat also volunteered in Boy Scouts, Friends Program, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and several other organizations.

In 2005 Pat was successful in his campaign for Alderman and the following year won a seat as a State Legislator where he continues in both of those positions. Throughout his Political advocacy Pat recognized that to enjoy a Healthy Community every person and/or organization striving to better our community must have someone who will listen and act on their concerns.

Over the past decade or so I have seen Pat’s caring approach to community. He is a connector. Go to any event in Manchester and you’ll see Pat and his wife interacting with people. It is this ability to connect that makes him so special. It is

my great pleasure to recognize him with this 2022 Freedom Fund Politician of the Year Award.

[Educator - Tina Phillibotte](#)

Tina Kim Phillibotte is a leading advocate for educational equity in New Hampshire. She joined the Manchester School District in July 2021 as the district's first Chief Equity Officer. In December 2021, in her individual capacity as a DEI director in public education, Tina joined a lawsuit with the ACLU, the NEA, and a diverse group of attorneys from throughout New England in protest of NH's "Banned Concepts Law."

Tina previously spent the past 17 years teaching English and Dance at the high school and college levels. She has contributed to curriculum review committees for the NH Department of Education, the NH State Council on the Arts, and has consulted with districts throughout the country around equity in education.

Tina is a NH Listens Fellow, an NAACP Education Committee contributor, and a board member for Stay, Work, Play. Tina was an Advisory Group Member of the Endowment for Health's Race & Equity Series and a member of the Transition Team for the Center for Justice & Equity. She is Leadership NH alumni, a 2019 NH State Teacher of the Year finalist, and a two-time National Writing Project Fellow.

Tina received both her BA and M.Ed. in Education from Plymouth State University and is currently a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Boston University.

Tina and I along with several community leaders have spend most of the last 48 hours together addressing the horribly racist post by a Trinity High School student. Her leadership and ability to cut through to the crux of a situation and yet recognize and hold space for the emotions that are inherent in any discussion about race are truly remarkable.

I have known Tina for many years going back to when she was my daughter Katherine's English Teacher at Goffstown High School. I can

honestly say that there is no one more worthy and deserving of this honor than her.

[Lifetime - Jacqueline Davis](#)

Ms. Jacquie! Mother and big sister to so many of us.