

April 2018 Newsletter

Edited by Rebecca Friday

LGBTQ Team by Danny Clark

The LGBTQ team began to research and discuss one ongoing and one new initiative for Alexandria. We researched and summarized policies that proactively support LGBTQ youth in the school systems. We also gathered research on the possibility of expanding the city's non-discrimination ordinance to include gender identity. We are about to start setting up meetings with a member of the Human Rights Commission along with other public officials and potential allies. Lastly, we met with school board candidate Marc Solomon to share our priorities for the school system.

Grassroots Book Club by Rebecca Friday

Grassroots Alexandria had the first meeting of its new book club group. We met in April to discuss the book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander. We had an excellent discussion and explored many of the themes of the book including the prison industrial complex, systematic racism, the War on Drugs, and more. As a result of this meeting we put together the following resource list for those who might be interested in learning more about these topics:

The New Jim Crow: Resource List:

book: Locking Up Our Own, James Foreman Jr

podcast: pod save the people

podcast: scene on radio (series of shows on being white)

book: Stamped from the Beginning, Ibram X. Kendi

book: Democracy in Chains, Nancy MacLean

TV: Raised in the System

Article: Lessons From the Kerner Report

Film: 13th

Our next book club will be held at the end of May (exact date TBD) and we will be reading *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America* by Nancy MacLean. Anyone interested in joining can email rebeccaifriday@gmail.com

Grassroots Alexandria

Anti-Fascist Team by Norah Dick

Our bi-monthly protests continue with steady turnout, both on King and Patrick street (at Richard Spencer's office) and at the Appomattox statue. We will be hosting a special protest against Confederate Memorial Day (often observed on April 26th) on Sunday, April 29th from 10-11 AM at the statue. We have also changed our second protest in May to again focus on the Appomattox statue and "Alexandria Liberation Day," May 24th, which is also the day the statue was dedicated. Thanks to Glenn Klaus for organizing and providing historical background for these events.

We continue our GOTV efforts, as directed by Opal Boyer. Our regularly scheduled May 13 protest (Mother's Day) will focus on GOTV.

Finally, we were also invited by the Kyo Gallery (located right off of King Street on Patrick), a modern art gallery, to submit pieces for their "Welcome to the Resistance" exhibition. The exhibition was open to all Grassroots Members. Our pieces will become a multimedia collage, that will be exhibited as part of their grand opening (and exhibition opening) on May 25th.

Communications Team by Jonathan Krall, Team Co-Leader

We set up a Twitter feed and renamed our Instagram feed so they both have the same handle: @GrA_Alexandria

We conducted our first Book Club meeting, to discuss *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander. For our second book club meeting, we will discuss *Democracy in Chains*, by Nancy MacLean. To join the book club, write to grassrootsalexandria@gmail.com.

We updated our logo and printed t shirts.

We haven't produced a ton of blog posts, but one that we did publish got quite a bit of attention from the Alexandria Sheriff. Read it here:

<http://grassrootsalexandria.org/2018/02/27/ice-and-alexandria-what-weve-learned-so-far/>

Reaction in the press can be found here:

<http://grassrootsalexandria.org/press/>

Vulnerable Communities Team by Zeina Azzam

The Vulnerable Communities team has been involved in the following efforts:

- 1) Restorative Justice in Alexandria City Public Schools: We have been meeting with Tenants and Workers United (TWU), the Advancement Project, and NAACP-Alexandria regarding expanding restorative justice practices to ACPS middle and elementary schools. We have had meetings with school board members, spoke at a school board meeting, and wrote a letter to the mayor about our concerns. We have also met with the RJ expert from Fairfax County Public Schools to get information about their successful program.

- 2) ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) in Alexandria: Since November 2017, we have partnered with TWU to look into the Alexandria sheriff's support of ICE in rounding up undocumented workers. We feel that they are doing so without regard to the effect of detention and deportation on American families and communities. In March we raised the awareness of the City Council and the sheriff and learned even more. As a result, we have specific questions that any of us can ask city officials: a) Can we please stop handing people over to ICE from our city jail before their sentence is complete? (Virginia law allows this but does not require it.) b) Can we please end our IGA (intergovernmental agreement) with ICE? We shouldn't be letting them use our jail to do their dirty work. c) Can we please require a judicial (vs. administrative) warrant in order to hold someone in our jail for an extra 48 hours after the end of their sentence? ICE needs judicial oversight. Any of us can go to any of the many City Council or Mayoral debates, and other events, to ask these questions. We can also talk to friends and generally spread the word. In an effort to change our sheriff's policies, TWU and GrA will continue to raise awareness of these specific issues.

- 3) Police data transparency: Our efforts with TWU and NAACP-Alexandria bore fruit. The Alexandria police chief, Michael Brown, disseminated his new Data Refinement and Transparency Plan which addressed some (though not all) of our concerns. We held a community meeting on April 6 with Chief Brown to inform everyone about the efforts of the community partners with the police department regarding their data collection in our community, how they share it with us, and how the process could be improved. We feel that we have accomplished a lot with everyone's help. We asked Chief Brown to explain his new plan and how it responds to our community's needs and the timeline for it.

Grassroots Alexandria

- 4) We are working with TWU and NAACP to host a forum for city council candidates to answer questions about issues the community feels are important (such as criminal justice, public housing, immigration, and public education).
- 5) Gun violence initiative: We have reached out to Moms Demand Action in Alexandria to potentially work with them in combatting gun violence in our schools and communities at large.
- 6) Islamophobia: We organized and attended the monthly GrA meeting featuring a speaker on the topic of Islamophobia.
- 7) The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander: Many team members participated in the GrA book club that featured an informative discussion of this important book.
- 8) Human Rights Commission: Team members continue to attend the monthly Alexandria Human Rights Commission meetings.