



JUNETEENTH¹ Celebration of Racial Healing, Learning and Solidarity beginning the weekend of June 19, 2020

Thanks for supporting this celebration of Juneteenth in the service of racial healing, learning and solidarity. This celebration is part of the ongoing work that the Plymouth League for Women Voters, Indivisible Plymouth, and Plymouth No Place for Hate committed to in the wake of the Peaceful Family Vigil² held on June 3, 2020. That event honored the memories of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and so many others whose lives were lost before them. We came together as a community to confront systemic racism and bias. This Juneteenth Celebration is to take the next step and commit to the actions of racial healing, learning and solidarity. In the light of history, we support ongoing community reflection and conversation to develop racial literacy and deepen historical perspective to guide our current actions to promote the American promise of liberty and justice for all.

Racial Healing

We focus on ways for all of us to heal from the wounds of the past, to build mutually respectful relationships across racial and ethnic lines that honor and value each person's humanity, and to build trusting intergenerational and diverse community relationships that better reflect our common humanity.³

Racial Learning

We focus on learning about our shared racial history and experience as necessary to get to a place where people of all colors feel safe and cared for in our community. Racial learning and conversation need to start when children learn to speak and continue through adulthood. When we learn to discuss race, we can uncover blind spots we didn't know we had and see a fuller picture of our country's history and of ourselves. Together we can raise the next generation in Plymouth to be more inclusive, informed and brave when it comes to race – as we model that behavior for them.⁴

Racial Solidarity

We focus on racial solidarity as we come together across race unified by our common interest in a community and country that is safe for all, but especially for those for whom it has not been safe historically and is not safe in the present moment. We show up as allies⁵ as we explore and exercise our support for the Black Lives Matter movement through participation in peaceful action like the vigil, creating art and poetry, displaying Black Lives Matter yard signs and other visible signs of support, having conversations with our children, families, and neighbors about why the Black Lives Matter movement and other acts of solidarity across the diverse identities in Plymouth, in Massachusetts, and across the United States are important to us. We express solidarity with communities that are in pain as we combat and counter acts of violence, create space for Black imagination and innovation, and center and support Black joy.⁶

Thanks for joining this important community conversation.

¹ 'Juneteenth' commemorates the end of slavery in America because it was on June 19th, 1865 that African Americans in Texas finally learned they were free: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/historical-legacy-juneteenth>

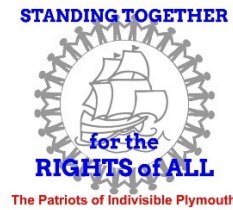
² <https://plymouth.wickedlocal.com/photogallery/WL/20200604/NEWS/604009992/PH/1> and <https://youtu.be/wISnjqA5OsM>

³ <https://healourcommunities.org/>

⁴ <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/topic/how-kids-learn-about-race>

⁵ <https://www.dismantlecollective.org/resources/>

⁶ <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>



About Juneteenth from the Smithsonian Website: "On "Freedom's Eve," or the eve of January 1, 1863, the first Watch Night services took place. On that night, enslaved and free African Americans gathered in churches and private homes all across the country awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. At the stroke of midnight, prayers were answered as all enslaved people in the Confederate States were declared legally free. Union soldiers, many of whom were black, marched onto plantations and across cities in the south reading small copies of the Emancipation Proclamation spreading the news of freedom.

But not everyone in Confederate territory would immediately be free. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective in 1863, it could not be implemented in places still under Confederate control. As a result, in the westernmost Confederate state of Texas, enslaved people would not be free until much later. Freedom finally came on June 19, 1865, when some 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas. The army announced that the more than 250,000 enslaved black people in the state, were free by executive decree. This day came to be known as "Juneteenth," by the newly freed people in Texas."⁷

About Black Lives Matter from the BLM website: "#BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc is a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives.

- **We are expansive.** We are a collective of liberators who believe in an inclusive and spacious movement. We also believe that in order to win and bring as many people with us along the way, we must move beyond the narrow nationalism that is all too prevalent in Black communities. We must ensure we are building a movement that brings all of us to the front.
- **We affirm the lives** of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, undocumented folks, folks with records, women, and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. Our network centers those who have been marginalized within Black liberation movements.
- **We are working** for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise.
- **We affirm our humanity**, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.
- The call for Black lives to matter is a rallying cry for ALL Black lives striving for liberation."⁸

About the Juneteenth Celebration of Racial Healing, Learning, and Solidarity: Thanks for learning more about this celebration which will include the following events:

- Distribution of Black Lives Matter Yard Signs as display of solidarity Juneteenth weekend and beyond.
- Online reading lists available from sponsoring organizations to support learning and conversations across our communities: <http://library.booksite.com/6300/nl/?list=CNL16>
- Diversity Art Challenge 2020 run by the Plymouth Public Schools Visual and Performing Arts Department and Plymouth YMCA Summer Camp: Diversity means the inclusion and advancement of all people regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or any other factor. The aim of this challenge is to uplift and include the voices of people who have been historically silenced, marginalized or underrepresented. Submissions accepted in all mediums by August 31, 2020 by sending to DiversityArtChallenge@gmail.com
- PAC TV Juneteenth Celebration Program Series featuring the following learning and viewing opportunities: Meet Your Muslim Neighbor (October 2018), Unconscious Bias: Mayflower to 2020 (February 2020), and the Peaceful Family Vigil (June 2020). <https://www.pactv.org/pactv/towns/plymouth>
- We acknowledge the convergence of Celebrating Juneteenth during our country's designated Pride Month, remembering how the Stonewall Uprising on June 29, 1969 was the first step towards Pride celebrations⁹. We commit to honoring diversity as we work to make our Plymouth community more inclusive, informed, and brave.

⁷ <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/historical-legacy-juneteenth>

⁸ <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

⁹ <https://americanhistory.si.edu/exhibitions/gay-history-beyond-stonewall>

Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org/2018/09/use-your-everyday-privilege-to-help-others> Use Your Everyday Privilege to Help Others [Dolly Chugh](#) September 18, 2018



SAMUEL ZELLER/UNSPLASH

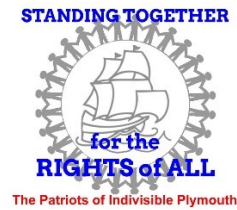
I often forget I am straight. I just don't think about it much. When asked what I did this weekend, or when setting family photos on my desk at work, I have no reason to wonder if what I say will make someone uncomfortable, or lead to a "joke" at my expense, or cause a co-worker to suddenly think I am attracted to them. Our culture is set up for straight people like me to be ourselves with very little thought. But for some gay colleagues, a simple question about the weekend or a decision of how to decorate the workspace carries significant stress—how to act, who to trust, what to share. A recent [study](#) found that 46% of LGBTQ employees are closeted in the workplace, for reasons ranging from fear of losing their job to being stereotyped. Unlike me, a non-straight person is unlikely to have the privilege of going an entire day without remembering their sexual orientation.

This privilege of being able to forget part of who you are is not unique to straight people. Each of us have some part of our identity which requires little attention to protecting oneself from danger, discrimination, or doltish humor. For example, in America, if you are white or Christian or able-bodied or straight or English-speaking, these identities are easy to forget. It is just an ordinary way of being. *Ordinary privilege* is ordinary because it blends in with the norms and people around us, and thus, is easily forgotten.

Just about every person in America has one form of this ordinary privilege or another. This is nothing to be ashamed of, or deny, even though it can often feel like an accusation. Ordinary privilege is actually an opportunity. Research repeatedly confirms that those with ordinary privilege have the power to speak up on behalf of those without it and have particularly effective influence when they do. For so many of us looking for an opportunity to fight bigotry and bias in the workplace or in our broader culture, we may be missing the opportunity staring back at us in the mirror: using the ordinary nature of who we are as a source of extraordinary power.

For example, psychologists Heather Rasinski and Alexander Czopp looked at [how people perceive confrontations](#) about a racially-biased comment. They found white observers were more persuaded by white confronters than by black confronters and rated the black confronters as more rude. Whiteness gave the person more legitimacy than blackness when speaking up on racial bias.

Similarly, scholars David Hekman, Stefanie Johnson, Maw-Der Foo, and Wei Yang [studied](#) what happens to people who try to advocate for diversity in the workplace. Those who were female and nonwhite were rated worse by their bosses than their non-diversity-advocating female and nonwhite counterparts. White and male



executives saw no difference in their ratings, whether or not they advocated for diversity. They found the same pattern with hiring decisions. If a white male manager hired someone who looked like him (or someone who did not), it had no impact either way on his performance ratings. But, if a nonwhite male manager hired someone who looked like him, he took a hit for it. In other words, ordinary privilege—that part of our identities which we think less about—is also the place where we wield outsized influence on behalf of others.

This influence even exists online, as political scientist Kevin Munger showed through a clever [experiment](#) on Twitter, focused on people using the n-word in a harassing way towards others online. Using bots with either black or white identities, he tweeted at the harassers, “Hey man, just remember that there are real people who are hurt when you harass them with that kind of language.” This mild tweet from a “white” bot who appeared to have 500 followers led to a reduction in the racist online harassment in the seven day period following the tweet, whereas the same tweet from a “black” bot with the same number of followers had little effect (interestingly, only anonymous n-word users were affected; those using what appeared to be a real name and photo were unaffected by the confrontation). If this is the effect a mild tweet from a stranger can have, we have to wonder about the potential impact of our own ordinary privilege.

To use your ordinary privilege, here are some things you can do:

- First, figure out the parts of your identity that you think about least. Once you’ve pinpointed them, you’ve identified your ordinary privilege.
- Second, start learning what people who lack that ordinary privilege encounter as challenges at work, at school and in their communities. You can use the Internet as a good starting point for first-person accounts.
- Third, look for opportunities to speak and act. Confronting people is only one of many ways we can use our ordinary privilege. Instead, we can ask questions, raise issues, and add perspectives that are not organically emerging in discussions at work. We can introduce data, invite people into conversations, and create buzz around ideas. We can amplify the views of people not being heard at meetings, and bring back conversations when someone is interrupted. We can give credit for people’s work and spread the word about their talent. We can notice when bias is playing out around us, and name it when it happens.
- Fourth, be thoughtful about moments when you may inadvertently speak over the group you mean to support. It is not unusual to accidentally center ourselves instead of the people to whom we are trying to be an ally, but it is costly. When it happens, step aside or step back, and learn from those whose lives are directly affected by the issue, rather than presenting ourselves as the experts. Take *their* lead while using *your* ordinary privilege.

What we think about least may be the place from which we can do the most good. Each of us has some form of ordinary privilege, and that’s good news, because that means almost all of us have more influence than we may realize.

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