

It Seems That We All Have Racism on Our Minds. Here Are My Thoughts.

It has certainly been an interesting and emotional two weeks since the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. Rita and I have been happy to add our voices, and are impressed at the longevity and the worldwide spread of the demonstrations.

On Sunday afternoon, there was an event in downtown Golden, which the two of us attended. (See the picture by Chris Davell of Goldentoday.com at right.) It was followed by a march through downtown Golden, although Rita and I didn't stay for that.

The event was organized by a group called **Golden United**. I have attended several prior events by this wonderful organization, headed by Golden resident **Ron Benioff**. You will probably read about it elsewhere in this newspaper since I met the reporter covering it. Several hundred people attended the event in Parfet Park, most of them wearing masks and all socially distanced.

It was, of course, very peaceful. After all, this is Golden, a college town that is majority liberal, majority white, and my home for the past 23 years. A city councilor, **JJ Trout**, emceed the event, giving a very thoughtful speech of her own. Mayor **Laura Weinberg** also spoke. Both displayed great introspection and deep thought on the topic of racism. Ron Benioff spoke, stressing that being non-racist is no longer enough. We all have to be anti-racist.

The police chief, **Bill Kilpatrick**, was there with one other officer and received generous applause at the mention of his sensitive letter to the community which he wrote shortly after the death of George Floyd. (That was followed this week by a lengthy posting on the city's website outlining police practices and training related to implicit bias, the use of force and other topics raised following George Floyd death.)

I have a couple thoughts to share beyond my sincere appreciation for Golden United and our city's political leaders.

First of all, I feel that we are overlooking anti-Hispanic racism, which is just as pervasive as anti-black racism. It was the first and remains the greatest expression of racism by our current president, who opposes even legal immigration from people of any color other than white. (Remember his comment about Norwegians being more desirable than Hispanics?)

It's my perception, and perhaps yours, that whites and the police are not as fearful of Hispanics as they are of African-Americans, but they still don't view Hispanics as equally valuable human beings.

I certainly value and appreciate our Hispanic population and especially the Mexican-Americans and their undocumented cousins who work tirelessly and with seeming contentment

at so many jobs which other Americans are unwilling to perform — picking our vegetables and fruits, repairing or replacing our roofs, and collecting our trash alongside African-Americans. (It was heart-warming last week to read a post on NextDoor urging neighbors to tape dollar bills to the lids of our trash carts as a way of thanking our trash collectors.)

Not only do we as a white society insufficiently appreciate our black and Hispanic population, our regressive laws work to keep that population impoverished. We need to address our anti-poor policies — which are really *pro-wealthy* policies, such as the Trump tax bill of 2017 — which have widened the gap between rich and poor in America.

Real estate, at least in the Denver market, is a majority white industry, not representative of the racial diversity of the metro area. I can say with confidence that it's not reflective of any anti-black discrimination in hiring. My first partner in real estate with whom I co-listed properties was an African-American woman who I miss working with. She remained with Coldwell Banker when I moved to RE/MAX Alliance before starting Golden Real Estate.

My seven broker associates are all white, but they and I would welcome with open arms one or more African-American and Hispanic agents to join our ranks. It is hard to say why our industry has not attracted more African-American brokers, but I've noticed a large contingent of Hispanic agents, who even have a highly active association. I've attended their events.

For this column, I interviewed two of the three blacks who serve on the 18-member board of directors of the Denver Metro Associ-



ation of Realtors. That ratio, it should be noted, is better than the ratio of blacks who are members of DMAR.

Milford Adams, managing broker of Lyons Realty Group LLC in southeast Denver, told me that economics are the primary reason there aren't more blacks in the industry, since it's hard for a new agent to get established in the business without significant cash reserves. (I know this personally, since it was two years of expenses exceeding income before I myself started making a living in real estate.) And, yes, he said he has experienced discrimination, much of it subtle, at every turn as he himself rose through the profession.

Lori Pace, of Kentwood Real Estate in the City Properties office in downtown Denver, has been an activist within the profession and operates a strategic consulting business, offering training to real estate brokerages (see her website, www.LoriPace.com) in the area of recruitment and diversity training. On that website you can also watch her TEDx talk "Philanthroperity," which was about inspiring women, not just minority women, to invest in "real estate, not purses," to grow in wealth and power. I can't do justice to the lengthy and inspiring conversation I had with her, but hope to include more in my posting of this article at www.GoldenREblog.com.

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