

Dear B-SURJ members-

To those of you who have been showing up for the racial justice initiatives our Accountability Partner Multicultural BRIDGE has been leading these past few months - the Great Barrington Trust Policy, Not in Our Town/County events and planning, Toward Racial Justice meetings, DuBois 150th - thank you! It is critical that we put our time and resources into this work and honor the leadership of BRIDGE in our community.

We know that some of you have been missing the community meetings B-SURJ hosted this past fall, and we want to acknowledge that and share some of our process with you, to reconnect and be transparent around how we have been functioning.

We want to begin by acknowledging the amount of time, energy, and resources that BRIDGE has put into supporting our SURJ chapter throughout its issues and stages of development. We are continually grateful to the many people over the past year who have been a part of the BRIDGE Accountability team.

How We Got Here

About a year ago, the Berkshire SURJ chapter was created out of a call from Multicultural BRIDGE, asking white allies to show up accountably. The call asked for a SURJ chapter to work in accountability with Multicultural BRIDGE, move resources, and facilitate a space for white Real Talk on Race alum to stay engaged with racial justice work.

Since that initial vision, in the past year B-SURJ has gone through multiple transitions on the Coordinating team, in terms of our membership, structure, and focus.

Focusing on Accountability

Our decision to stop holding community meetings came from a deep need to listen, reflect, take ownership for our actions, *and support the work that is already happening in our community.*

We had built momentum in a direction that was not accountable or supportive in honoring the long-standing leadership of Multicultural BRIDGE. As a result, we perpetuated some of the racist systems, structures, and behaviors that SURJ seeks to undo.

Our work over the last few months has been about understanding what it means to be accountable as white people, and changing our structure and organizing practices to align our

intent with our impacts. We are continuously learning accountability as an ongoing practice requiring honesty, transparency, trust, self-reflection, and self-education. As a chapter and as individuals we know that is a continuous process— this is what the work is about— we still have and will always have lots of work to do.

Our focus at this point is maintaining and strengthening our accountability relationship and **showing up** for the work that Multicultural BRIDGE has been doing for the last 10 years and continues to do.

As white people doing racial justice work, education is an important part of the necessary task of unpacking our privilege. Join us:

- **Tomorrow at the BRIDGE office in Lee (17 Main St Suite B3) - Walter Atkinson, Senior Conciliation Specialist**, Community Relations Service, U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division will be visiting the Berkshires and has offered to meet with community members, activists, leaders, and concerned residents of Berkshire County from 12:00-1:00 on July 14th.
- B-SURJ will be holding a **book club** starting in late July for folks interested in group reads and discussion of books about race and racism. More information coming soon! If you have book requests, feel free to send them our way.
- We invite you to attend the **monthly Towards Racial Justice (TRJ) meetings** held by BRIDGE on the first Thursday of every month at the UU Church in Housatonic. (The next meeting will be held on 8/3.) Members of the B-SURJ coordinating team are currently engaged in supporting the white caucus of TRJ, open to folks who are able to attend the first Thursday TRJ meetings. This is also a great place to connect with the actions and initiatives BRIDGE is coordinating in the Berkshires.

The learning continues, and so does the work — keep showing up for Not In Our Town/County efforts, DuBois 150th planning and events, and keep supporting the critical work of Multicultural BRIDGE with your time and contributions.

Let's work together to SHOW UP in ways that are true to our accountability values.

~Coordinating Committee composed of Ananda Timpone, Ari Cameron, Olivia Van Sant, Sara Mugridge, and Lily Swartz

