

Congratulations, Gwendolyn VanSant! We are so grateful for your compassionate and unwavering leadership!

Gwendolyn is doing revolutionary work in the Berkshires and beyond. Her clear vision and courage have impacted and shifted individual lives, institutions, and communities in ways that will be experienced for decades to come, and that have immediate impact on making our Berkshires more welcoming, safe and just for all. Gwendolyn's teaching, writing, training, and leadership have offered numerous pathways and countless opportunities to engage in the necessary work of building a more equitable and just world.

Committing to racial justice work with BRIDGE has changed our lives profoundly! The framework for working in community and in accountability that Gwendolyn has created and holds is a call to action. It is a call to change how we live and relate — to practice equity and justice in ways that are woven into the rhythms of our daily lives. How are we holding ourselves and each other accountable? Showing up in all of our relationships and in our work with BRIDGE with vulnerability and authenticity, considering the impact of our actions and interactions, and calling ourselves and others in are powerful ways of caring for each other. This care is the foundation for the work Gwendolyn models and inspires.

For many of us, coming to understand our place within systems of oppression and accepting responsibility to unlearn our own racism and internalized white supremacy is humbling, challenging work. We have learned and are still learning so much about the history of and current manifestations of race and racism— on a cultural level, but also a personal one — and we are grateful for all the ways Gwendolyn has guided us in developing an ability to recognize, address and act. As a teacher, Gwendolyn brings a level of dedication and skill that goes unmatched, as well as immeasurable honesty, strength, passion,

BRIDGE epitomises effective, grass-roots organising. Working with Gwendolyn to try to address racism in our county and truly build an equitable and inclusive community is a powerful experience, emotionally and intellectually challenging and absolutely vital. With radical compassion, Gwendolyn demonstrates that by committing to becoming a student-agent in the work of racial justice we can build a strong community together. We stand in awe of Gwendolyn's imagination, no-nonsense kindness, and tenacity. She is an extraordinary woman of the Berkshires who is a shining light in our quiet rural community, and we can think of no one who deserves the Woman of Achievement Award more.

Gwendolyn, we are grateful for your friendship, generosity, kindness and fearless commitment to standing up for what is right--for working every day for justice and safety for all. We are honored and humbled by the difference that you have made in our lives, and in the lives of so many in the Berkshires and beyond. Thank you, Gwendolyn--and congratulations!

With Gratitude,

Members of BRIDGE Accountability and BRIDGE TRJ White Caucus