

PRESS STATEMENT

TO: ALL MEDIA
FR: SOCIAL JUSTICE BERMUDA
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RE: Upcoming Event and Ongoing Action
DT: 11 JUNE 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOCIAL JUSTICE BERMUDA TO HOST A BLACK LIVES MATTER EVENT TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL HEROES AND TAKE URGENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTION

Summary: Social Justice Bermuda is hosting a Black Lives Matter - Say Her Name - Bermuda Remembers event on Saturday, June 13 at 4 PM at Barr's Bay Park, marching to key sites throughout Hamilton in honour of National Heroes Day. The community will be encouraged to sign up to get involved in 4 key areas. They will be fundraising to increase the reward for information to bring justice to Chavelle Dillon-Burgess and engaging on the Cannabis reform response.

Social Justice Bermuda announced that they will hold another Black Lives Matter event on Saturday. The group hosted two protests outside of the US Consulate last week for one of their campaigns - 'Reject Rizzuto'. Today, they provided further clarity on an upcoming event and a longer term vision for their collective.

A spokesperson explained, "Social Justice Bermuda is a collective of Bermudians who are inspired by the global Black Lives Matter Movement and the way that communities around the world are standing together to tackle and dismantle oppressive systems of injustice and racism. 'Reject Rizzuto' was our first campaign because of the urgency - he is due to arrive on island as our new US Consul General in less than a month. This campaign included protests at the US Consulate and a petition that garnered over 93,000 signatures. We presented this to the Governor on 10 June alongside a letter outlining our requests. We are currently waiting for his response so that we can plan the next step on that initiative - but there are other urgent actions, and short, medium and long term projects in our 4 focus areas."

The group is circulating a digital sign up form (<https://sites.google.com/view/socialjusticebm/>), and on Saturday plan to engage the community to get involved in these focus areas which are:

- **Education Reform**

We believe that every child in Bermuda deserves access to a high standard of education, garnering the tools and resources they need to succeed, with knowledge of this island's incredible history, and having the opportunity to pursue higher education.

- **Economic Equity (including Immigration/Workforce Development)**

PRESS STATEMENT

We believe that Bermuda's regulatory frameworks continue to benefit entrenched business interests and that the economic equity must actively promote the diversification of business ownership and operation. We believe every Bermudian deserves to have meaningful work that earns them a livable wage. We believe that those who are unable to work should be supported. We believe those who are un- or underemployed should be treated with dignity and provided the tools and resources to find meaningful work. We believe that the high cost of living in Bermuda needs to be examined and solutions found.

- **Criminal Justice**

We believe in a justice system that focuses on prevention, provides rehabilitation, does not criminalise drug users, and focuses on the humanity of each person. We believe in restorative justice.

- **Healthcare & Food**

We believe that healthcare is a right, and that every person should have access to the resources they need to stay well. We believe that access to healthy food is a right. We believe that food security is an urgent issue facing our community. We believe that there should be zero food waste while people go hungry.

Once someone registers their interest, they will receive a list of the actions and projects in the respective category and they can sign up for the one they wish to be part of. If they have an idea that they wish to lead that aligns with the organisation's values, then SJB will add it to the list and engage volunteers.

SJB spokesperson continued, "Our team includes people that have been active in the community for over 20 years, and people that are new to organising, but what we share is a passion for equality and a desire to act boldly and radically. We want a new approach. The committees and boards and politics - they move too slowly and we want to see change in our lifetime. In our children's lifetime. What we have witnessed in the global uprising is that the community has the power to create the direction they want, take action where they can, and pressure the gatekeepers to come along. We will be lobbyists and we will also be doers, working with and within an empowered and engaged community. We are eager to connect with the researchers, experts and advocates who have worked tirelessly and have been met with stone walls and a lack of political will. It is time to join our voices together to demand and create change. We are ready to get loud, especially to amplify the excellence of Bermudians who have felt dismissed and diminished."

The Saturday event is being held to create awareness about their platform and to engage the community around two 'urgent' actions, both under Criminal Justice.

"We are angry about the disappearance of Chavelle Dillon-Burgess. Violence against Black women, whether at the hands of law enforcement like Breonna Taylor or at the hands of her own partner, is often dismissed or met with minimal outrage. As a member of the community wrote recently, 'I have no comforting words, no sage advice, no pearls of wisdom to share with them that will keep them safe. Because there is no safety for Black women and girls anywhere.' On Saturday we will #SayHerName and are asking our participants to come ready to donate funds to allow

PRESS STATEMENT

Crimestoppers to increase the reward for information that will help us to bring justice to Chavelle and her family. We are working in conjunction with both Crimestoppers and Safe Space Bermuda and deeply value and appreciate the collaboration. This is our urgent action on this issue. Donations can be made directly to Crimestoppers via the banking information on their website - <https://www.crimestoppers.bm/donate/> Please put 'Chavelle Dillon-Burgess' in your donation transfer information. We also are supporting a medium-term project being led by a separate organisation focused on Domestic Violence legislative reform."

They explained that they are also preparing an extensive response to the proposed Cannabis reform act/bill, for which the Government has set a response deadline for July 1.

"This law as proposed if implemented will not empower Black people who have been disproportionately affected by punitive marijuana laws. Marijuana legislation should be reparational and instead, this law will make it possible for those with the most access to capital to benefit. We have seen this play out across the US and want to suggest, demand, a different approach."

The group will also use Saturday's event as an opportunity to honor Bermuda heroes, and celebrate Bermuda history in observation of National Heroes Day on Monday, June 15.

"In planning the event for this coming weekend, and thinking about the legacy of activism that we want to honor and build upon, we decided to speak about our National Heroes, and focus on stories that celebrate Black Bermudians. Our march will start at Barr's Bay Park, the site of the Enterprise Slave Ship landing in 1835, and one of our team members, well-known tour guide Kristin White, will tell this story. We will continue on to the 'When Voices Rise' monument at City Hall, in honor of the theatre boycott that led to the island's desegregation. The boycott began on 15 June 1959, and to speak to the anniversary and significance of this event, we are excited to welcome educator and activist Glenn Fubler. The procession will also stop on Cabinet grounds, at the memorial to our rebellious hero, Sally Bassett. Author and educator Ajala Omodele will say words here. We hope to honour our ancestors and trailblazers, those who laid the path for Black people's empowerment that we are walking today."

The full schedule at Barr's Bay Park includes a libation poem to the ancestors by celebrated author and educator Melodye Micere Van Putten, COVID-19 testing, a Speaker's Corner and, provided by the Human Rights Commission, the first 50 people to arrive will receive a copy of Dr. Eva Hodgson's 'The Experience of Racism in Bermuda and It's Wider Context' published in 2008 (1 per household).

After the procession and to conclude the event, participants are invited to join a grounding and mindfulness session at Barr's Bay Park by yoga instructor Latoya Bridgewater.

Social Justice Bermuda also sought to provide clarification on the difference between the group that organised the historic march that took place on June 7, Black Lives Bermuda, and their own movement.

"Social Justice Bermuda had our first virtual meeting on Sunday, May 31, and planned a series of events for the week, with our first US Consul protest scheduled for the following day. Our group had

PRESS STATEMENT

always intended to do a weekend march, and once we saw the flyer for the Black Lives Bermuda movement, of course we wanted to be part of it. The turnout for their march on Sunday was historic, and we are in awe of what the two young Black women at the helm created. Our entire team was in the crowd. We led chants and offered support in other ways, while hopefully always ensuring that people knew the credit for this event should go to Black Lives Bermuda. Coming out of that transformational day, we felt even more inspired. Black Lives Matter Bermuda has since released their platform and will be speaking about it at our event on Saturday. We are looking to learn from and alongside each other. Whenever and wherever Bermudians take a stand against racial injustice, we will be there.”

End.

ABOUT US:

Social Justice Bermuda is a collective of Bermudians standing in solidarity with those around the world who march against fascism, police brutality, and white supremacy. We take action to let the world know that our island has no space for racism. Tackling and dismantling oppressive systems of injustice requires the entire community. We are an entire community. We will not stop.

Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/socialjusticebm>

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