

New year of fairness

Projects will support progress

Joyce Ferriabough Bolling Sunday, January 03, 2016
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For me, 2015 underscored the value of active and engaged communities of color. Here are a few suggestions that I hope will be on the front burner for 2016 that will build on progress for an even more productive and constructive new year.

1. ENGAGE IN MORE COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

Kudos to the NAACP, the

Urban League and the fearless leadership of activist Mary Franklin, whose work to solve hundreds of cold case murders in communities of color was highlighted by the Boston Herald series that not only shed light on the disgraceful rate of languishing cases, but also asked some tough questions about the inequity.

Collaboration between police and community played an important role in Boston, avoiding some of the horrific travesties experienced in Chicago, Baltimore, Ferguson and other cities. Police Commissioner William Evans and Superintendent-in-Chief William Gross combined street smarts with visibility and actually listened to community advocates, adopting practices and procedures that proved effective in keeping the peace.

But there remains work to do around police testing practices that don't test what really counts. There's an opportunity to get it right this year. Not doing so stops progress toward greater racial diversity and hinders all-important diversity of approach to solving many of our public safety issues.

2. CLOSE THE ECONOMIC GAP

The fiasco that was Boston 2024 didn't just lead to Mayor Martin Walsh's creation of his 2030 initiative, it gave rise to the black community's Freeze Frame initiative, an eye-opening, jaw-dropping initiative developed, researched and compiled by One United Bank's Teri Williams, business leaders Darryl Settles and Glynn Lloyd, activist Louis Elisa and former state Sen. Dianne Wilkerson that showed a stark and wide array of disturbing disparities that continue to impede wealth building and economic growth in communities of color where it is needed the most. Freeze Frame has gained hundreds of followers, many of whom have strong track records working for business and community empowerment. Freeze Frame makes solid recommendations for city and state government to break the cycle of disinvestment. Many should be adopted simply because it is the right and fair thing to do.

3. FIX MADISON PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Who could forget the media images of the young people attending Madison Park when they took to the streets to demand basics like timely class schedules. It was an embarrassment even as we cheered on the young people for taking action. Boston's technical and vocational high school's uneven record of accomplishment has for years done a disservice to our city and most importantly to our children, who deserve so much more. Superintendent Tommy Chang comes to the situation with fresh eyes that hopefully will translate into practices that support progress. How about we start by looking at best practices of other vocational schools in the state? What makes them succeed where ours fail? Young people also need to be at the table and actively engaged in helping to contribute to devising a plan that once and for all builds a solid future of achievement for themselves and future generations.

4. A TOAST TO LONGEVITY WITH PURPOSE

Happy 50th anniversary to institutions that have long contributed to a better Boston: Bay State Banner newspaper and the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts.

5. A FEW HOPEFUL SIGNS ON THE HORIZON

- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative's launch of a new job-hunting website could help put a dent in the entrenched double digit unemployment rate in communities of color.
- Skylab and Venture Cafe in the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building's newly designated Roxbury Innovation Center are designing exciting programs for current and up-and-coming entrepreneurs that could bring much needed change to the area's present and future business landscape.
- Mayor Walsh's Economic Development Chief John Barros and Chief Diversity Officer Shaun Blugh bring promising and complimentary public and private sector perspectives and expertise to accomplishing goals around much needed successful economic diversity.

Let's work to make 2016 not just a year of promise but one of fairness and real accomplishment.

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