



**Educate. Embrace. Empower.**

# **Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Committee Newsletter**

**Seventh Issue | January 2022**

**Our Mission:** Educate, Embrace and Empower a workplace of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion



# Introduction to this Issue

*from Theresa Thomas, DEI Committee Chair*

*Welcome, 2022!*

If you are like me, the start to a new year was a little different than what I had expected. The pandemic was not over. Omicron was rapidly impacting our world adding to the number of deaths that was already higher than we could ever have imagined. Gatherings were still on hold, anxiety was increased and yet, we were faced with a new beginning.

Many people make new year's resolutions: to read more, save more, eat healthier, travel more, stress less or even map out time for themselves. For the last ten years, I've written a letter to myself on January 1. My opening line always starts, "You made it, now what?" I consider the past year, highlighting what I consider my victories, my many missteps (never failures) and my hopes for the new year.

My letter written on January 1, 2022, also began with "You made it, now what?" I highlighted the completion of my Masters of Health Administration degree, the special mug of celebration given to me by Barbara D'Agostino (Executive Director of GHA), the ability to FaceTime nightly with my grandchildren, the joy of walking into a workplace that has supported me and my colleagues during a pandemic and the great joy I have been given to support, honor and uplift the lives of older adults and those who care for them through Goodwin House.

Missteps included times when I lost patience (which resulted in reacting quickly and often wrongly), taking too much time to forgive myself and, of course, eating the extra row of Oreos. I admittedly refused to let my challenges outnumber my victories on paper, but inwardly I knew they were more than I listed.

My list of hopes for the new year was much shorter than previous years. I wrote, in large letters, "Be Kind, Accept Others". My first lesson learned from 2021 was that kindness should not be optional; we are all members of humanity and that means we are created with a sense of caring and compassion that is exhibited in our acts of kindness to one another. Lesson two: accepting others is the key to understanding, growth and inclusion. As we accept others, we are enlightened to the things that make us uniquely alike, and often this is greater than the differences we tend to magnify.

Whatever way you have decided to welcome 2022, may it be a path that leads to kindness and acceptance of others. Along your path may you enjoy the fullness of knowing what **Diversity** can add to the world, the fairness of opportunity that results from **Equality** and the many contributions gained when **Inclusion** is embraced.

G. Theresa Thomas, DEI Chair



# The Steps We Take

*from Rob Liebreich, President & CEO*

*This letter was first shared with the Goodwin House family on January 14, 2022.*

Dear Goodwin House Family,

The steps we take are intentional. They show and tell the story of an organization that lives its mission to support, honor, and uplift, while doing so through the lens of our value of Individuality. Our value of Individuality states: We believe that each person is of sacred worth. We celebrate the uniqueness and diversity of the members of our community. The steps we take are just that, steps on our journey for Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion that will continue for decades to come.

Since we established our Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee in July 2020, well-led by Goodwin House Alexandria Associate Executive Director Theresa Thomas, we have experienced many positive steps.

For example, we welcomed the frequent educational and informative “DEI Friday Thoughts;” we established a calendar to normalize our diverse celebrations throughout the year such as Diwali; we increased job position availability within the organization so everyone has a chance to better pursue their desired career path; we sought and continue to seek out diverse organizations to provide education about who we are in hopes of welcoming more of their members as future residents, members of Goodwin House at Home, and beneficiaries of our community based services; we set up DEI leadership training last year which this year will be extended to all employees.

Of significance for Monday, Jan. 17, 2022, Goodwin House elevated Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day as an official Goodwin House paid holiday, to honor his life and legacy as the visionary and chief spokesperson for nonviolent activism in the Civil Rights Movement.

Grateful to be taking our steps together,

Rob Liebreich  
CEO and President

# Coming Soon: “Spotlight” on Countries of Origin

Goodwin House values and embraces diversity. The DEI Committee is thrilled to announce a new employee engagement initiative that recognizes and celebrates the diversity among our staff.

Through birth or heritage, we know our staff represent approximately 60 countries. We want to learn more about our staff and their countries of origin, so we will “Spotlight” one country each month for the next three months.

As the country with the most staff representation (outside of the United States), Ghana will be our first country of focus.

As we “Spotlight” Ghana, we invite ALL staff, residents, Priority Club and GHAH Members, regardless of your heritage or country of origin, to do the following:

- **Complete this brief survey about Ghana by February 18.** (Survey will take less than 5 minutes.) <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PV6VGDL>
- If you have photos of Ghana that you would like to share, please send them to [dei@goodwinhouse.org](mailto:dei@goodwinhouse.org). We will collect and feature these photos in a slide show (note that this slideshow may also be shared outside of Goodwin House). In your email, please use the subject line: “Ghana Photos,” so we can easily recognize which emails contain photos.

We would also like to invite staff members from Ghana to be featured in the form of a written interview. We will choose one staff member each from GHA, GHBC, and our Home and Community Based Services to be featured in the “Spotlight”. **Please email us by February 18 if you are a staff member interested in participating!**

Be on the lookout in March to learn what the GHI family said about Ghana and what staff members from Ghana shared!

We are so excited to hear from you!

# Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

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## *A New Paid Holiday for Goodwin House*

**by Mary Hix, Chair, Goodwin House Board of Trustees**

The Goodwin House mission to support, honor and uplift the lives of older adults and those who care for them guides all decision-making at Goodwin House. The means of fulfilling the mission are many and varied and resonate at every level of leadership, management and operations. Because the Board of Trustees seeks to fulfill the mission by pursuing visionary thought and strategic oversight, one might question what role the Board played in the operational decision to observe the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday as a paid holiday this year.

Legislation was passed in 1983 to designate the third Monday in January as a federal holiday in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. The first observance of this holiday nationwide was in 1986, a celebratory day that included marches, parades and speeches by civil rights and political leaders. It became a paid holiday for many throughout the United States but it was not a paid holiday for Goodwin House staff.

When a Goodwin House employee suggested to the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Committee last year that Martin Luther King, Jr. Day be observed by Goodwin House, the committee pondered the possibility and recommended action to our senior leadership. The adoption of a new paid holiday had financial cost and was written into the budget for 2022. The Board became aware of the proposal as they reviewed the budget and gave unanimous approval to the recommendation to adopt the holiday.

And so, returning to the question of why a strategic board became involved in an operational decision, the answer is found in the mission statement and the Board's charge to fulfill our mission. Recognizing and applauding the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. resonates with both residents and staff as a way to honor and uplift all individuals. May the observance of this new paid holiday for Goodwin House employees bring thoughtful contemplation of the history of our country and hope for a future of increased understanding and respect for all.

# Celebrating Milestones for Diversity in Virginia

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## *History-Making Inaugurations*

by **Lindsay Hutter, Chief Strategy and Marketing Officer**

The week of January 10, 2022 was significant for many reasons, and three in particular.

First, it was the week leading up to the first celebration of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday as an official paid holiday for Goodwin House. What a wonderful demonstration of the sincerity of our DEI efforts!

Second, it was the week leading up to the inauguration of the first black woman to hold a statewide role in the Commonwealth of Virginia. On Saturday, January 15, Winsome Earle-Sears was sworn in as Lt. Governor of Virginia.

Of double significance, Lt. Governor Sears presided over the opening of the Virginia Senate on the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. Her comments in an interview conducted on this milestone day are worth sharing, as they honor the wisdom of Martin Luther King, Jr.

“People who look like me never would have imagined that I could be sitting here second in command of the former Capital of the Confederacy,” Earle-Sears said. “I am the first woman—of whatever color—to be the Lieutenant Governor of Virginia and I think that is what speaks volumes about today being Martin Luther King Jr. Day that we celebrate because this is what he fought for, equality. Not for us to divide ourselves by race.”

The third milestone was the inauguration of Jason Miyares as the Attorney General of Virginia. Attorney General Miyares is the first Latino elected to a statewide office in Virginia. Attorney General Miyares has said of his mother, “She fled communist Cuba in 1965 with the clothes on her back and instilled in her three sons a passionate love of the freedom and democracy of America.”

And fourth, Gov. Glenn Youngkin rounded out his Cabinet picks on January 19 by announcing Angela Sailor as his choice for the state’s chief diversity, opportunity and inclusion officer.

“Virginia is big enough for the hopes and dreams of a diverse people,” he said. “Angela Sailor’s experience in government, nonprofits and the private sector will guide us as we ensure that the government is working for all Virginians across our diverse commonwealth, especially when it comes to economic opportunity for all Virginians.”

I hope everyone in the Goodwin House family joins me in wishing Lt. Gov. Earle-Sears, Attorney General Miyares and Chief Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion Officer Sailor well in their new roles.

# Challenging Assumptions

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## *At Home, at Work and Everywhere in Between*

**by Carol Lewis, GHBC Resident & Member of the DEI Committee**

Assumptions. We make them all the time about the people we encounter in our daily lives. It's a shorthand that helps us navigate the world quickly, making snap judgements based on preconceived ideas so we don't have to think too hard or look too closely at who is really in front of us.

I have a big, multi-racial, multi-generational blended family. I am white, as is my son. My husband is black, as are his children, and there are multiple mixed-race marriages in our family. We don't use the word "step" to identify our relationships to one another, so it can be confusing to outsiders. For example, my son calls my husband is his father, not stepfather. Suffice it to say that others frequently make assumptions about us centered around race.

It's 10 p.m. in my house. I've just called 9-11 for my husband and given the EMT information on his meds and conditions. I then followed the ambulance to the hospital. The EMT said to my husband, "The lady from back at the house is following us." My husband replied, "That's my wife." Did the EMT assume I was his caretaker or a lady of the evening?

Our white son, in the emergency room with his Black father (my husband, remember?), holds his clothes and ID. The doctor enters, looks at our son, demands, "Who are you?" Our son replies, "I'm his son." The doctor counters, "Well you don't look like his son!" My husband dryly jokes, "He takes after his mother." Did the doctor assume our son was a random white guy just hanging out in the ER?

In the ER, having followed my husband's ambulance to the hospital, I ask the guard who couldn't find him in the system to go look through the ER for a "Mr. Lewis" or a man with no name. The guard returns, saying, "There's no Mr. Lewis and the only person with no name is a Black man." Apparently Black men don't have names or white wives.

My bi-racial grandson (Hispanic-white), a manager at an apartment complex, greets a potential tenant. The tenant, seeing a Hispanic name on the desk, says "I bet you get a lot of your people here." "My people?" my grandson replies. "Mexicans," the tenant clarifies. My grandson tells them, "I was born in Beltsville." While his heritage is Ecuadorian, he is American-born.

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# Challenging Assumptions

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## *At Home, at Work and Everywhere in Between*

**by Carol Lewis, GHBC Resident & Member of the DEI Committee**

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For the most part, my family laughs about these assumptions, although they are tiresome. But assumptions can turn deadly, as we know from the headlines:

- Trayvon Martin, a Black boy walking through a white neighborhood, assumed to be dangerous, is shot by a resident.
- George Floyd, a Black man suspected of passing a counterfeit bill, assumed to be violent, is killed by a policeman's knee on his neck long after he had been subdued.
- Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man jogging through a neighborhood, assumed to resemble a suspect in recent break-ins, is accosted and shot by a father and his son.

Closer to home, I've heard about the following assumptions from fellow residents:

- A resident walks from GHBC to CVS, shops a bit, comes out and sits on her walker to rest before returning home. A passer-by sees her and assumes she is homeless and needs a handout. They drop a \$20 bill in her lap. In reality, the woman is quite wealthy, routinely takes her family and friends on lengthy cruises, and, as she said, she was wearing her best jeans!
- A handsome man moves into GHBC. A woman resident, assuming he was in a heterosexual relationship, sidles up and asks if his wife moved here with him. He replies, "My husband died six years ago." In reality, he had been in a same-sex marriage.
- A new resident at GHBC encounters a Black woman in the elevator and asks, "And what do you do here?" Because the woman is Black, the new resident assumes she is on the GHBC staff. In reality, the woman is a professor with a PhD and a 10-year+ resident who has chaired the Resident Council and has served on the Goodwin House Board.

Many others become victims of our shorthand, our preconceived ideas, our assumptions every day. Sometimes our assumptions are accurate, but often they are not. We need to challenge them, to think about the assumptions we make based on race, gender, size, clothing, whatever. We need to consider how we might change our behavior, take a breath and allow people to reveal themselves to us as who and what they truly are.

# International Holocaust Remembrance Day

## *At Home, at Work and Everywhere in Between*

**by Rabbi Gail Fisher**

I was caught off-guard when Theresa asked me to write an article in observance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27, sometimes known as the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust. The observance with which I am more familiar is Yom HaShoah, which is on the 27th of the Hebrew month of Nisan – midway between Passover and Israel Independence Day, and falling during the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. In 2022, this day begins at sunset on April 27. “Shoah” means catastrophe in Hebrew, and the word is typically reserved for referencing the Holocaust. Hence, Yom HaShoah is the Day of the Holocaust. This is the observance marked in Israel and it is also observed in Jewish communities worldwide.

On the other hand, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27 is a date designated by the United Nations that falls on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. There cannot be too many commemorations of these events, in my opinion. As the remaining witnesses die off, we are in danger of being left only with “Holocaust deniers”, those who don’t believe that this genocide ever really took place.

The Nazi regime in Germany systematically murdered far more than Jewish people. According to *Democide: Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder*, by R.J. Rummel, published in 1992, along with almost six million Jewish people murdered, there were another 220,000 homosexuals, 258,000 Gypsies, 10,547,000 Slavs, and 173,500 handicapped Germans who were killed by the Nazis. The book explains:

“Most Nazis were absolute racists, especially among the top echelon; they believed utterly in the superiority of the “Aryan” race. They had no doubt that they were the pinnacle of racial evolution, that eugenically they were the best. So science proved, as many German and non-German scientists told them. And therefore they could not allow inferior groups to pollute their racial strain. Inferior races were like diseased appendixes that had to be surgically removed for the health of the body. Therefore they must exterminate the Jew and Gypsy. So also must they liquidate the homosexual and handicapped. So eventually they must also eliminate the Slavs, after exploiting their slave labor. Slavs were not only biologically inferior, but also inhabited territory that Germany needed for the superior race to expand and grow.”

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# International Holocaust Remembrance Day

## *At Home, at Work and Everywhere in Between*

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Population figures published by the Jewish Virtual Library starkly show what happened to world Jewry:

- 1939 – 16,728,000
- 1945 – 11,000,000
- 2021 – 15,166,200 (note: still not back to where we were prior to the Holocaust)

The Holocaust Encyclopedia (published by the United States Holocaust Museum downtown) details the statistics of how Jewish populations in various countries changed over the period of Nazism, summarizing by stating baldly, “By 1945, most European Jews – two out of every three – had been killed.” They report: “Germany had a Jewish population of 525,000 in 1933 and just 37,000 in 1950. Hungary had 445,000 in 1933 and 190,000 in 1950. Czechoslovakia's Jewish population was reduced from about 357,000 in 1933 to 17,000 in 1950 and Austria's from about 191,000 to just 18,000...In 1933, Poland had the largest Jewish population in Europe, numbering over three million. By 1950, the Jewish population of Poland was reduced to about 45,000.”

There has been continued immigration of Jewish people from Europe primarily to Israel or to the United States, so that Europe now only represents 10% of the total world Jewish population today.

The Jews – and Gypsies, the disabled, homosexuals and Slavs – were, among others, considered by the Nazis to be genetically inferior. The Nazis believed their blood could not be permitted to mix with the pure Aryan blood of the German elite. Their solution was to kill as many of these people as possible.

Mass gassing of people was believed to be more efficient than lining people up, having them dig a ditch, and then shooting them all so that they would fall into the ditch as their common grave. You can kill a lot more people a lot faster and with less expenditure of money or manpower by using gas. The product that was used in the gas chambers of the Nazi death camps was Zyklon B, originally used as rat poison, very suitable to the Nazi concept of “exterminating the vermin”, the sub-human animal that the Jew was considered to be.

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# International Holocaust Remembrance Day

## *At Home, at Work and Everywhere in Between*

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In my childhood, there were still many survivors who had migrated to the United States and started new lives. The people my age who were born in Displaced Persons camps during the second half of the 1940s, were almost entirely born to recently-married couples who had lost their original spouses and children in the Holocaust and were starting over. It was not uncommon to see the tattoo of a survivor's assigned number on his or her arm. It was a very horrifying sight: the reduction of a human soul to a number, the submersion of individual identity into a throng of herded animals.

On Yom HaShoah, we basically run the equivalent of a communal memorial service—a service very similar to "Yizkor", which is presented several times a year for personal losses within the congregation. Yom HaShoah includes songs, prayers, and psalms related to mourning and more specifically to the Holocaust. This program also usually includes a candle lighting: six candles are lit, one for each million killed, and varying words are said over each one. And it might include English readings like this one:

We begin - with silence.

The silence of death:

the silence after destruction;

there are times when songs falter,

when darkness fills life,

when martyrdom becomes a constellation of faith

against the unrelieved black of space about us.

There are no words to reach beyond the edge of night,

no messenger to tell the full tale.

There is only silence.

The silence of Job.

The silence of the Six Million.

The silence of memory.

Let us remember them as we link our silences.

- Elie Wiesel and Albert Friedlander, adapted

# Diversity Calendar: January - March

We're sharing upcoming days of interest for the next quarter, and we'd love your feedback. If you know of any important anniversaries, observances or other days of note that you'd like to see on this list, please let us know! Email us at [dei@goodwinhouse.org](mailto:dei@goodwinhouse.org).

## January 2022

**January 1: Emancipation Proclamation** | On this day in 1863, President Lincoln declared all persons held as slaves would be free.

**January 4: Birthday of Louis Braille** | French educator Louis Braille created a system of reading and writing for those who are visually impaired. His system, known worldwide as "braille," remains largely unchanged today.

**January 6: Feast of the Epiphany** | Epiphany celebrates the arrival of the Magi (Wise Men) at Jesus' birth. That is important because they were not Jewish (probably Zoroastrians), indicating God's revelation outside the Jewish community and tradition.

**January 14: Makar Sankranti** | A festival in the Hindu faith that is dedicated to the Hindu religious sun god Surya.

**January 17: Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Friday Thoughts)** | Martin Luther King Jr. was an American Baptist minister and activist, revered as one of the great leaders of the American civil rights movement.

**January 27 International Holocaust Remembrance Day** | This day commemorates the approximately 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered during World War II.

**January 29: Birthday of Oprah Winfrey** | A well-known talk show host who was dubbed the "Queen of Media," philanthropist, Oprah Winfrey is also North America's first black multi-billionaire.

## February 2022

**Black History Month (Friday Thoughts)** | This month celebrates African American History. February was chosen because Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, two men prominent in eliminating slavery, were both born in February.

**February 1: Chinese New Year** | This festival celebrates the beginning of a new year in the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar.

**February 11: Birthday of Tammy Baldwin** | Tammy Baldwin is first openly LGBT+ woman elected to both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

**February 14: Birthday of Frederick Douglass** | Frederick Douglass was a well-known American social reformer and abolitionist. Douglass escaped slavery and became a prominent activist during the Civil War.

# Diversity Calendar: January - March

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## February 2022 (continued)

**February 15: Birthday of Susan B. Anthony** | Susan B. Anthony was one of the most visible leaders of the women's suffrage movement. She championed temperance, abolition, rights of labor, and equal pay for equal work.

**February 15: Nirvana Day (Friday Thoughts)** | A Buddhist holiday also known as Parinirvana. This annual festival remembers the death of the Buddha after he reached Nirvana.

## March 2022

**Women's History Month** | This month honors the vital role of women in American history.

**March 2: Ash Wednesday** | This holiday in the Christian calendar is a day of prayer and fasting. Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent.

**March 8: International Women's Day (Friday Thoughts)** | This day celebrates the various social, economic, cultural, political achievements of women.

**March 10: Birthday of Harriet Tubman** | Harriet Tubman was an abolitionist and activist, best known for her role on the Underground Railroad.

**March 17: St. Patrick's Day** | This Irish holiday celebrates the Feast of Saint Patrick. It is a cultural and religious celebration held around the world.

**March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Friday Thoughts)** | After an incident in which police killed 69 people in South Africa in 1960, the United Nations created this event to call for elimination of racial discrimination.

**March 19: Holi** | A Hindu holiday celebrating the winter harvest and the onset of spring.

## Join The DEI Committee

The DEI Committee is composed of residents and staff who share the common goal of highlighting diversity in each of our communities and throughout our organization through written articles, engaging conversations and offering recommendations to the Goodwin House Incorporated Strategy Team. If you are interested in joining our committee, please send us an email and we can share more information. Email [dei@goodwinhouse.org](mailto:dei@goodwinhouse.org).