



The Fortune Journal

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Editor's Viewpoint

By Birgit Mondesir

“Unconscious Bias”

We've no doubt heard this term being referred to in incidences where African Americans are being arrested and detained by police officers under circumstances for which their white counterparts seldom are, if at all: in coffee shops for 'loitering', moving into their homes, leaving Airbnbs and even at Ivy League institutions while sleeping in common areas. The instigator prompting this behavior is being deemed "Unconscious Bias", defined as unconsciously allowing one's biases to dictate one's actions and behavior. What a neat little packet!

As an object of its repercussions, the term itself offends me. 'Unconscious' denotes unawareness, unintentional, and devoid of responsibility. Coupled with "bias", it results in discrimination without recrimination. That used to be called "Jim Crow" practices. Injustice by any other name is still injustice. It is even more egregious under a term that

seeks to remove all consciousness from it, giving the perpetrators an intellectual 'pass' for attitudes and actions, just as reprehensible as cross-burning and lynching. Moreover, it seeks to excuse itself by supposedly hiding in the 'subconscious' mind, where it's less culpable, rather than in the 'conscious' mind where it would be exposed for what it is.

So, in the words of Iyanla Vanzant, "let's call a thing, a thing!" Bias! Shame on its implicit lack of responsibility and ownership. Shame on the linguistic attempt to excuse it! Shame on those who remain silent about it, in the face of its blatant hypocrisy!

Unconscious bias resides in the same mind as alternative facts and they are both very dangerous and very much conscious.



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All articles written by Birgit Mondesir

What's Up & Coming @ the Cultural Center



Awards Good Neighbors Arts & Culture Grant to the T. Thomas Fortune Foundation

The OceanFirst Foundation has awarded the T. Thomas Fortune Foundation a "Good Neighbor Arts & Culture" grant in support of the Fortune Tellers Program for students in the 7th - 12th grades. This program engages students in social justice projects through writing and advocacy work. The Foundation provides a platform for students ready to take on the complex issues of justice, civil liberties and equality through civic engagement. Students serve as ambassadors for the Cultural Center and gain valuable skills while earning community service hours.

T. Thomas Fortune Quote of the Month

"Ours is supposed to be a government in which classes and distinctions melt into a harmonious whole."

Community News

May 16

Jessie Fortune's Birthday: Daughter of T. Thomas Fortune and Carrie Fortune was born on this day in 1883. Jessie became a teacher and married Aubrey Bowser and settled in Sag Harbor, NY. They had four children, (3 boys, one who died at five days old and one girl).



June 7-8

The NJ Preservation Conference will be held at Passaic County Community College, in Paterson on Thursday and Friday from 8 am - 4:45 pm. There will be a networking reception held offsite from 5 pm-7pm at the close of the conference on Friday. This year's theme is: "Building a Place for History." For more information and to register visit www.njpreservationconference.org.

July 1

To emphasize and to draw attention to Fortune's words, the T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center is launching "Words Matter!". It's our campaign to literally spread Fortune's words around town. On Sunday, July 1, our Fortune Tellers and volunteer members of the TTFCC will be spray-chalking (washable) selected quotes by Fortune on specific sidewalk locations in Red Bank. So, while meandering in and around town, look down and be enlightened by words that give us pause to think about the greater good for all.



MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the T. Thomas Fortune Foundation is to preserve and further the civil rights and social justice legacy of T. Thomas Fortune through community outreach, education and public programming.

Summer Teachers' Training

On Tuesday, July 17th, the T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center, in conjunction with the Two River Theater and the Amistad Commission, will offer a one-day professional development training for teachers. It will illuminate the impact of T. Thomas Fortune's life during the 19th and early 20th Centuries as

a journalist, editor and social justice crusader. His vision was lauded theatrically and embedded thematically in the work of Pulitzer Prize winning playwright August Wilson. The economic inequality, housing and urban blight that pep-per Wilson's work, in King Hedley II and Radio

Golf, will be explored, along with the nuances of spirituality and humanity.

TWO
RIVER
THEATER

NEW JERSEY
AMISTAD
COMMISSION

Shoulders We Stand On: Judge William Henry Hastie Jr.

William Henry Hastie, Jr. was an American educator, lawyer, judge, public official, and advocate for the civil rights of African Americans. He was the first African American to serve as Governor of the United States Virgin Islands, as a federal judge, and as a federal appellate judge. Judge William Henry Hastie was involved in many of the most important groundbreaking cases in the civil rights years and became the first African American

appointed to a United States District Court and to a Court of Appeals. He fought historic legal battles in the South during the thirties and forties.

There is an exhibit commemorating his life and work, in Langdell Hall, at Harvard Law School, where Hastie graduated in 1930. During the Second World War he was a civilian aide to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and recommended integrated housing and mess-hall facilities. When his

recommendation was rejected, he quietly resigned. Hastie was born in 1904 and died in 1976. Despite the limitations imposed upon him, he still left his mark for liberty and justice for all.



Roger Mumford: Building More than Homes

It's About Building a Better World and the Gift that Makes Him Proud

I sat down with Roger Mumford in the offices of his Home Design Studio, located in Red Bank, NJ, to find out what he's all about. What made him take up the 'T. Thomas Fortune Torch' and run this far with it. His answer was as unassuming as I found him to be. "If not me, then who?" Mumford sees this venture as an opportunity to contribute his experience and abilities to birth an innovative solution, consistent with his own personal beliefs, that is beneficial to all involved.

The landmark Fortune House was in dire need of a creative person with the resources to preserve the home. Serendipity had its way and the T. Thomas Fortune Project managed to attract the developer who builds new homes and rental properties. Miraculously, the restoration and rehabilitation project got underway, after clearing some hurdles. Could Mumford's willingness to meet the stringent guidelines to restore the house have come together by sheer happenstance? As Mumford puts it, "never underestimate the importance of random events and the positive or negative impact they may have in your life." Maybe that response harkens back to when, as a child, he emigrated to the United States from England. Mumford and his family lived in Virginia for a time - a time long enough to observe segregation at work first hand - long enough to realize that the playing field was certainly unequal for African Americans.

Or maybe it was another set of random circumstances that started him on the path to building and construction, that eventually lead him to become a respected member of the New Jersey development community. Whatever it was, Mumford is someone who really enjoys his work and is open to possibilities and people, regardless of stature or influence. Mumford credits his sensibility to life lessons and personal growth.

Years later, when Gilda Rogers (co-founder of the Foundation) walked into his office wondering why he'd invited her there, and hoping for a miracle, Mumford already had in mind how he could craft a solution that could address the needs of all parties involved. His eyes light up with excitement, his passion for this project evident, as he recalls how it all happened. Mumford had formulated a plan to save Fortune's home, utilizing his resources and expertise, while simultaneously reconciling the inequality he had witnessed in our society, all into a sound business plan.

Then quite intentionally, he sat up and said, "TIMING! TIMING is also very important." Indeed, especially in a time characterized by so much divisiveness in our country, Mumford felt the timing was right for T. Thomas Fortune to take his place in a world where he had been denied his long overdue recognition.

Aside from work, Mumford's favorite pastime is cooking. He does not golf and actually finds time to read epics like the Pulitzer Prize winning book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, by

Isabel Wilkerson, about the Great Migration of African Americans. Mumford is unconventional that way.

When asked what he would say to Thomas Fortune if he could, Mumford responded with a question, "What do you believe will be the state of affairs regarding social justice by the year 2000?" Without voicing it, we both thought we could imagine his answer. Whatever Fortune's response, he probably would not have predicted this perpetual discrimination, sustained by the racist legacy of slavery. Living that legacy, as I do, in its countless manifestations, is like standing beneath a waterfall. After a while, not even rock can withstand the constant battering and erosion.

I then asked Mumford what he thought Fortune might say to him. He smiled and said, "Where were you when I needed repairs done on Maple Hall?" I think they would have been friends. Roger Mumford, unassuming and idealistic, just trying to "build" a world, better than the one he found.

Thank you Roger!



American Association of University Women

Empowering Women Who Change Our World

Honoree: Gilda Rogers



The T. Thomas Foundation is so very proud of the accomplishments of Gilda Rogers, its Co-Founder, for being honored on April 26th at a luncheon of The American

Association of University Women (AAUW). The luncheon was held at the Salt Creek Grille in Rumson, NJ. Rogers was among three women, including Linda Bricker (center) and Mary Eileen Fouratt (left), who received the "Women of Achievement Award" for their contributions to arts, culture and history. Janet Benton, author of the book, *Lilli de Jong*, was also featured in the afternoon's festivities. Monies raised from the luncheon will support the AAUW's scholarship efforts for perspective students. Roger's recognition was for her tireless and ongoing efforts to help bring The T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center to fruition, as well as her work as an educator and author.

The AAUW has been empowering women since 1881 and has advanced their initiatives to include advocacy for equality, individual rights, and social justice for a diverse society. They support a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity for all women to achieve economic self-sufficiency. The AAUW also vigorously upholds the enforcement of Title IX and all other civil rights laws pertaining to education. (Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was the first comprehensive federal law to prohibit sex discrimination in education.) These are all initiatives relevant to the mission of The T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center and we are proud to be affiliated with the AAUW. We look forward to working collectively for the greater good.



NJISJ

NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE
FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Celebrates Juneteenth at 13th Annual Gala @NJPAC

It was a joyous occasion when the slaves in Texas received the news that they were free, albeit two years later, after President Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation. That day known as "Juneteenth" is celebrated on June 19th and from its inception the cultural holiday has been woven into the fabric of Black History. Indeed, a grand affair it will be on Tues., June 19th when the NJISJ hosts its 13th Annual Gala and celebrates the holiday at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, in Newark, at 6:00 pm. Some of the honorees include: The Honorable Loretta Lynch, the former Attorney General of the United States, along with Wade Henderson, the former CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil Human Rights and others.

For more information visit www.njisj.org.



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Partnerships:

The alliance that the T. Thomas Fortune Cultural Center (TTFCC) is forming with the NJISJ as an advocate, will help to broaden the Institute's ongoing work to rid society of unjust policies and practices.

The TTFCC takes this opportunity to extend congratulations to the NJISJ CEO/President, Ryan Haygood and his courageous staff.