

Justice is the Pointe: A Night to Remember

The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. arrived at Grosse Pointe South High School on March 14, 1968 — three weeks before he was assassinated — under police escort. The Detroit police bomb squad had swept the building. In a split vote, the Grosse Pointe Board of Education only approved the visit contingent on the event sponsor, the Grosse Pointe Human Relations Council, taking out a \$1 million insurance policy.

Approximately 200 protestors from a Proud Boys like organization called Breakthrough lined the entrance to the gym wielding signs. One read, “USA forever — Traitors must die!” Many had infiltrated the gym using forged tickets. The Human Relations Council’s president, Rev. Harry Meserve of the Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church, urged the sold-out crowd to respect Dr. King’s “right to speak and your neighbors right to hear.”

“In this America, children grow up in the sunlight of opportunity,” King said. “But there is another America. This other America has a daily ugliness about it that transforms the buoyancy of hope into the fatigue of despair.”

The event very nearly didn’t happen. Breakthrough, the Grosse Pointe Property Owners Association and others mounted opposition campaigns. Jude Huetteman, program chairperson for the Human Relations Council, received a phone call so threatening, she almost canceled the event. Residents at heated school board meetings argued the high school shouldn’t be a platform for dangerous, radical and Communist views.

Today, similar rhetoric is used to demean the Black Lives Matter movement and challenge those who support racial justice and equity. In recent days, this includes an anonymous letter-writing campaign designed to scare Grosse Pointe residents with BLM signs and a Black family being intimidated through the placement of a KKK sign facing their home from a neighbor’s window.

This isn’t about race, detractors claim, and they label the BLM founders as Marxists, invoking the specter of socialism to incite fear and branding appeals for socioeconomic equality as un-American. Where would these detractors have stood in 1968? With those hurling insults at the civil rights icon, or with those who embraced Dr. King’s message?

“There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular,” King said that night, “but he must do it because conscience tells him it is right.” **That time is now.**

The Grosse Pointe & Harper Woods NAACP branch, in partnership with WE GP, the Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church Racial Equity Task Force and the St. Paul AME Church, is hosting a virtual read-aloud of The Rev. Martin Luther King’s “The Other America” speech, performed by area youth and available for viewing on the anniversary of the speech Sunday, March 14th. To view the performance of the speech starting at 9am on Sunday March 14th, go to: facebook.com/GPHWNAACP

Join us! We welcome your thoughts, questions, requests for signs, solidarity and financial donations at:
we-gp.org/Justice-is-the-Pointe



Paid for by:

*WE (Welcoming Everyone) GP, the Grosse Pointes & Harper Woods Branch NAACP,
and the Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church Racial Equity Task Force in collaboration with
Bianca Garcia, Graig Donnelly & Frank Joyce of Grosse Pointe Park*