

NATIONAL Zoom Meeting Report—June 27, 2020

Topic: What kind of activism work can you do while staying home or safe from COVID-19?

In this Zoom event, the facilitators randomly separated the participants into various chat rooms. Each room was asked to have a notetaker to list the activities of those in the Zoom room. This is a compilation of those notes. Items with ** indicate the activity was mentioned in more than one group.

NOTE: These are listed in random order—no hierarchy here! **NOTE**—these are not merely suggestions. For the most part, OLOC members are actually doing all of these actions/activities.

- **Make a donation**—clothes, money, food—there are all kinds of needs **
 - NAACP
 - Domestic violence support groups
 - Local activist groups
 - Social agencies helping in community
- **Send/Donate money and/or stimulus check** **
 - To organizations doing anti-racism work and support
 - For bail bonds to help people who were arrested
- Assist with **mutual aid** organizing to assist with food, rent money, etc.
 - Doing intake to get the information to people doing delivery
- **Support/shop at local businesses**—especially those owned by women and/or people of color
- **Continue to pay** personal service workers (e.g., housekeepers) who may not be able to do the work right now and also may be undocumented or unable to access various stimulus packages or unemployment pay
- **Network** with others to make donations (help find donors)
- **Share information** and causes via Facebook—pass along information to others via social media or phone calls
 - Forward activist emails
 - Repost articles against racism
- **Encourage membership/participation in OLOC National**
 - Stay current with OLOC membership
 - Support fundraising for OLOC

- Become active member of OLOC (e.g., national projects)
- Start or facilitate an OLOC chapter
- Attend Zoom events when possible
- Set-up and facilitate **OLOC Zoom meetings** every week (or month, etc.)
- Write grants for National OLOC projects—(e.g., to support National Gathering and funds for tech assistance to members)
- Encourage/remind people (including yourself) to **register & vote**: **
 - Write letters or postcards (*handwritten*)
 - Make phone calls
 - Send texts
 - Put messages on social media, e.g., Facebook
 - Support **online voter registration**: this is getting a lot of attention in Alabama through a Facebook page, FIAA Freedom Vote 2020 in support of re-electing Senator Doug Jones. The online **voter registration drive that Michelle Obama is backing is at wevote.us**.
 - Participate in the VoteForward campaign [<https://votefwd.org/bigsend/indivisible?partner=indivisible>]—Rhode Island OLOC chapter is doing this as a group—meeting together via Zoom to write together—and encouraging other Old Lesbians (and Lesbian and feminist organizations) to do the same
- Join or start a **car rally or car caravan** to make noise about local issues or in support of national issues (e.g., Black Lives Matter, Lesbian Pride, etc.)**
- Make **protest and statement signs**—(e.g. "White Silence Kills") to place in windows or on lawns or other public areas **
- **Communicate** with your local advocacy groups
 - Supporting local groups anti-racism workshop
- Make **“reach-out” phone calls** (especially to those who are isolated—offer companionship voice)**
 - [OLOC member] knows a lot of people going through the pandemic alone, including two people who have suicided. Others are very despondent about the situation. **Reaching out to people** is not political activism but it is activism of a kind. Reaching out includes not only Lesbians but other communities we are connected to, for her the blind community, who have special challenges in quarantine.
 - The SAGE **“friendly caller” program** checks in with people, a social (not medical) check-in

- Check local state aging programs—Rhode Island has a similar program (Project HELLO)
- **Make craft** items or pot small plants for local groups/organizations to sell for fundraising
- **Attend vigils or demonstrations** or share information for others so others can attend**
 - Do safely with masks and social distancing
 - Get COVID-19 test if possible after going to a rally
- **Stay home** during the pandemic & wear a mask if you have to go out—this is now a form of activism (especially in “hot spots”)
- Support and participate in **online intergenerational discussions with students** in places like San Diego (though she is herself in New York City). These are middle and high school students interested in LGBTQ issues. [OLOC member] tries to inspire them to activism.
- Facilitate an **online book group**
 - E.g., a group that has been meeting monthly for years and is now on Zoom (topic: world voices)
- Work with a **Neighbor to Neighbor program**
- **Deliver meals** to single moms
- Participate in **SAGE activities** (local & national)
 - Several SAGE projects now coming to fruition benefit by going online. One was a talk by Patricia Johnson, an **audiologist, who focused on hearing and masks**. (see below for link).
- Become active in the **local NOW chapter and League of Women Voters**. The NOW chapter has done a lot of fundraising for reproductive services. They have also worked on getting the city to provide affordable housing for the many workers who cannot afford to live in Santa Fe.
- Do **research** projects: [OLOC member] who lives in Birmingham, Alabama, is part of a mixed gay group with some straight allies. They are looking for information about medical rights, nursing home rights, etc.
- Participate in **online workshop** or pursue (read) information on reading lists—especially about anti-racism
- [OLOC member] I'm taking a really interesting workshop with lots of great videos and handouts by a woman from the Rainbow Center in El Paso. It's 90% directed toward white people. I've told them, but it was well worth going to. I learned some new terms and ideas and saw excellent videos. Much is online about anti-racism.

- **Sign petitions**
- Join **white women's group** to understand and un-do white privilege and dominance
 - Shift language from “white supremacy” to “white dominance”
- **Contact local/state/federal representatives** (including congress people & senators)—make opinions known about various issues
 - Email
 - Phone calls
 - Petitions
- Take **anti-racism training online** (see link below)
 - Read
 - Watch videos
- **Write letters** to editor and op-ed articles**
- **Organize discussion** about films available online
- Work with **local city council** to create budgets focused more on social services rather than police/policing structure (more \$\$ to services, less to police)
- **Create alternative forms of activism** (besides direct action on streets)—such as:
 - Make education more relevant, especially to young People of Color, but to all young people in K-12. If we are using different forms of communication, hip hop, for example, then we are learning to communicate across cultures. Same could be said for understanding that our struggles against racism and police brutality in the US are and should be viewed in a global context.
 - Participate in community art projects
 - Make and share artistic expressions (writing, painting, photography, music, dance, etc.)
- **Volunteer to be a poll watcher** (if able)
- **Go shopping** (food, medications, essentials, etc.) for those who need it
- Make sure to **wear a mask** and do not be afraid to tell people to “back off” to 6 feet
- **Sing** with the Raging Grannies
- **Investigate ...** (spirituality):
 - Buddhist practices
 - Local Friends community
 - Centering/meditating/yoga

- Nature walks
- **Downsize** (living space and stuff)
- **Talk with family members** (especially white women with difficult family members) about racism and BLM
- **Plant a row**—gardeners—plant an extra row or two and donate the fresh produce to food banks or local community centers distributing food

Some observations/expressed concerns/stories ...

All of us are activists who lamented that we couldn't march now for Black Lives Matter because of our age and COVID-19.

Several women expressed feelings of loneliness, both in general as Lesbian seniors and specifically with the isolation caused by the virus. One is a recent widow ... widowhood issue deserves further discussion.

[OLOC member] said donations have to play a larger part in our work now that marching is less feasible. She is participating in ongoing groups of Black and white women, who are in separate groups for discussion purposes, that are discussing racism.

[OLOC member] has a friend in a “posh nursing home” where everyone is totally safe, but they are confined to their rooms. Another friend’s partner has Alzheimer’s, and a lot of services they relied on aren’t available now. **“It’s not hard to find people [who need help].”**

Although a lot of frustration was expressed about not being able to directly participate in protests, women are increasingly looking for opportunities to be activist via Zoom.

[OLOC Member] From Virginia: I've been staying in. I'm a retired epidemiologist and I'm being cautious. In Richmond, we have demonstrations around the Robert E. Lee statue. Some statues have been taken down. I've been down there in the daytime because there aren't so many people. A lot is going on: meetings about justice. White allies are there to support African American people. It's an amazing thing to be in the former capitol of the confederacy at this time. People are bringing their children to see it. This is a place where you can feel the stench of

the subjugation of people. It infuses everything. It was a major location of the domestic slavery in the US. I'm also supporting the solidarity on the street. I'm writing emails. I'm involved in several projects doing research, writing, participating in public meetings of public agencies. We won a partial victory yesterday.

[OLOC Member] I feel strange because I haven't done anything but try to protect myself. I've been upset and sad about what I see on TV. In my neighborhood I saw two ropes with nooses on them. They're blue and white—perhaps for a swing. I don't understand how it could be for a swing. I wrote her a note and I haven't heard from her. It conjures up images of Black men being hanged. Some people think it could be innocent. I think my next step should be to talk to her. My neighbors say not. I'm in Eagle Rock, a progressive neighborhood. We're the only Black people on the block, some Latina. If I were to call the police, get on Next Door. It's alarming. I went to the grocery store and wore my mask and gloves when not too many people were in the store. I'm not going to a restaurant; sometimes do takeout.

[OLOC Member] I am triggered and angry by the violence against People of Color. I'm reaching out to Lesbians of Color—I've stopped watching the news—especially when they show abuse against Black people over and over.

[OLOC Member] for Pride month I decided to create my own “front porch project.” I contacted the Old Lesbians in my network and offered to come to them to take their picture—with Pride symbols or not—on their front porch or in their “natural environs.” I've taken pictures of couples, groups, individuals and will continue to do so until I can get to everyone—then I will make an Old Lesbian Pride collage. Not sure yet if it will be used to raise funds but it will at least show Old Lesbian pride.

Requests to National OLOC—Suggestions raised by members in some rooms

Wants OLOC to endorse efforts to **defund/restructure police departments** (references full-page ad about this in San Francisco paper listing many endorsers).

Three participants want to form a group where white Lesbians can discuss privilege and related issues. I think there are others in the larger group and hope that they can all connect.

Not everyone, based on this group of Lesbians, knows about the **National OLOC listserv**. Maybe this information can be included in the next report, with the name of the appropriate contact person.

Also, women don't know what opportunities exist to interact with OLOC on a national level. An example of how this is working is the technical team. Can we develop other teams that can operate virtually?

I've submitted a proposal for the Steering Committee to develop a task force. It's not enough not to be a racist. Everyone has some racism.

We propose development of an OLOC anti-racism committee.

Specific Suggestions of Readings or Films from Participants

- Confessions of a Former Bastard Cop,
<https://medium.com/@OfcrACab/confessions-of-a-former-bastard-cop-bb14d17bc759>
- "Mask Communication," with captioning,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtildHf_Qf4&list=PL-ApYGbUQhxjaNTHcDWrWK_4Eyg9nnN43
- Just Mercy, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4916630/>
- Anti-Racism Training - Diversity and Resiliency Institute of El Paso
[<https://www.driep.org/>]
- You Tube: A Conversation Between Michelle Alexander & Angela Davis (10/20/17), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixX4HfOiVPo>
- Front Porch Project:
 - <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/nation/2020/04/01/coronavirus-front-porch-photo-projects-show-how-families-cope/2928577001/>
 - <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/coronavirus-community-power/2020/05/11/yes-issue-contributors-2/>