

# Councilwoman Negron: “It is no longer time to be asking for a seat at the table”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Jacob Blake September 4, 2020

🌿 *Latest in a series of posts responding to the Jacob Blake shooting* 🌿

*Text of Councilwoman Olga Negron’s speech at the 57th Anniversary of the March on Washington, August 28, on Payrow Plaza organized by Esther Lee and the NAACP.*

Good afternoon,

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

I’m Councilwoman Olga Negron, and I am the first elected woman of color to Bethlehem City Council, and still today in 2020, I am the only woman of color on Council. I am proud of this accomplishment, but it’s appalling that there is just me here. It’s time for us to stand up, to speak out, to be part of history. I implore you, dear brothers and sisters of color, to think about the different ways you can be part of the leadership of our local government. Systemic racism is encrypted in our everyday lives, and we will continue to call it by its name and push for change, but we must stand up and do our part.

It is no longer time to ask for permission; it is no longer time to be asking for a seat at the table. As my favorite congressman, John Lewis, used to



say: “When we see something that’s not right, not fair, not just, we have a MORAL OBLIGATION to say something, to do something, to speak up, to speak out and get in GOOD TROUBLE, get in the way, to lead the way!” We have been waiting long enough, and it is no longer time to be patient. It is time for action, real action.

I will continue to fight the good fight, but I can’t

do this alone. I need all of you. I need to you to be engaged, I need you to be part of what's going on in your city. We need your voices to be heard. As loud as my voice is, my voice alone is just not enough — I need yours too. Behind these walls of city hall, decisions are being made every day that affect our communities. Zoning laws, Planning laws, and policing policies should be designed to benefit all of us and not just special interests, and we need to make sure that we are involved in the decision-making process every step of the way.

Your voice needs to be part of the process. You can serve on authorities, boards, and commissions that make decisions that directly affect people of color. If you look at our city's boards and commissions, they don't look like us, and this is something I have been pushing this administration to improve on during my time on council. But I need your help. You need to be part of this process in order for your voices to be heard.

I have a dream that our local government will reflect the ethnic and racial composition of our communities. Please, join me, reach out to me, send me an email, I'll help you out in any way I can. It's time for people of color to start running for office and getting elected to city council, county council, mayors. It's time for us to be part of the future of our cities; it is time for us to be judged not by the color of our skin but by the content of our character!

Olga Negrón