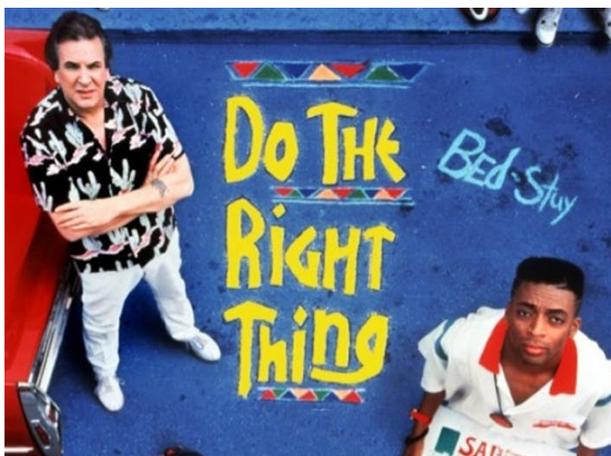


**Saratoga Jewish Community Arts,
sponsored by the Jewish Federation of NENY, and Temple Sinai
Present
A panel discussion
of the classic film, *Do the Right Thing***



It has been 31 years since Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* was released. It was such a prophetic (and controversial) film that it merits attention today, not just for its historic significance, but because it is still fresh and relevant and so clearly foretold the future of interracial relationships in America. One reviewer commented that his initial reaction of wonder and admiration that a filmmaker could be as powerful as a Hebrew prophet in exposing the dark side of our society, still resonates. Yet others in the media at the time publicly speculated that it would ignite violence. In turn, Lee criticized white reviewers for suggesting that black audiences were incapable of restraining themselves while watching a fictional motion picture. He said, "I don't remember people saying people were going to come out of theaters killing people after they watched Arnold Schwarzenegger films." *Do the Right Thing* is not filled with brotherly love, but neither is it filled with hate.

The story unfolds over one scorching summer day in the Bedford-Stuyvesant part of Brooklyn. The filmmaker shows the ugly prejudice that infects everyone. Several locals yell out a stream of racial epithets that incorporate virtually every insult they can think of – targeted are blacks, whites, Jews, Italians, and Koreans. Tempers are already shortened due to the extreme heat and explode at the end of the day. A boombox is blasting with noisy music, and a chaotic brawl breaks out. The cops arrive and a black man is brought to the ground by an officer with a billy club, choking off his air. A fellow cop cries out in protest, "That's enough." Too late, the man has stopped breathing.

The film explores how racial inequality drives conflict in a predominantly African-American community on the hottest day of the summer. It does not provide answers to the problems it exposes. Rather, the film reflects back to its audience their own perspectives on prejudice and compliance. The film was made as the result of provocations, and so it, in turn, provokes. It reacts to white supremacy and paternalism with a justified rage, drawing attention to systemically racist institutions and the injustices they produce; injustices that still exist today.

At its most basic, Lee's intent in *Do the Right Thing* is to demonstrate how, in the context of a racially polarized society, the slow accumulation of small irritations, the heat, some casual slights, bits of anger left over from old injuries, the constant mild abrasions of different cultural perspectives rubbing against each other, can swell to something huge and ugly and lethal. It is a solid idea for a movie, to show us the everyday texture of racial misunderstanding. Lee wants to create an event that cannot be explained away as an isolated incident. And he is not about to let us believe that racism comes only in the form of teen-age thugs. Lee's masterwork remains profoundly relevant 31 years later, especially against one of the most racist administrations in recent American history. *Do the Right Thing* is essential in speaking to

the present. It served, and still serves, as a window into a country that has historically devalued the lives of African-Americans. Anyone who leaves the film with more intolerance than they walked in with was not paying attention.

While the film did not win an Academy Award, it is often listed among the greatest films of all times. In 1999, the film was deemed, in its first year of eligibility, to be “culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant” by the Library of Congress, and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry.

Panel

Reverend Michael D. Bell, MDIV, is a native of Buffalo, New York, who received his education in the Buffalo Public Schools. Rev. Bell is a graduate of Roberts Wesleyan College and Northeastern Seminary, and holds several degrees, including a Master of Divinity. Rev. Bell has pastored in Jamestown, Buffalo, Auburn, Ithaca, Elmira, and is presently in Saratoga Springs. As part of the leadership of the NYS Poor People’s Campaign, he has successfully co-organized the Elmira/Eastern Region of the NYS Campaign. Rev. Bell organized a trade association for minority contractors in Rochester, led two redresses of the Rochester City School District and Eastman Kodak minority employee abuse issue, while also working for one of the nation’s largest financial services business for 30 years and 35 years total. As a pastor, community organizer, and activist, Rev. Bell was nominated to participate in Oxford University’s Round Table, the Rhodes Scholar program in 2007. Presently, Rev. Bell sits on several boards, including the Harriet Tubman Home, Inc. board, the Multicultural Board of Northeastern Seminary, and the Saratoga Springs and NYS PPC, in addition to several ministerial groups. Rev. Bell takes great pride as a family man and community advocate. Nothing else is more important.

Bob Cornute is a martial arts instructor at Saratoga Kyokushin Karate, a fitness trainer, and biking enthusiast. He is a past member of the NAACP and Saratogians for Equality and Acceptance of Diversity. He was born in Albany, NY, but has called Saratoga Springs home for the past 50 years. He attended school at The Ohio State University in Columbus and currently works at Northeast Controls, Inc. in Clifton Park, NY, as the Sales Associate - Supervisor. Bob is married to Patricia Ashton Cornute and they have a daughter, Noelle, who is currently attending Saratoga Springs High School as a junior. As a person of color in a community lacking it for most of his life, Bob has a unique perspective on what it means to be a black man in a hostile educational, social, as well as professional, environment.

Pattie Cornute just celebrated her eight year anniversary as the Temple Administrator for Temple Sinai. She is the founder of Lipedema Fitness (www.lipedemafitness.com), an organization she started in 2013 as a way to spread awareness for Lipedema, and the importance of those with Lipedema staying active, as the chronic and progressive condition tries to take away their mobility. Pattie also started a Facebook support group for those with Lipedema. Being able to support over 7,000 others with the same condition is very rewarding to her. Pattie graduated from Endicott College in Beverly, MA, and is a writer and artist. She is married to Robert S. Cornute, and together they have a lovely daughter, Noelle, who is a junior at Saratoga Springs High School. Pattie is a past member of the local Chapter of the NAACP, and worked with her mother-in-law, Carmen Cornute, who was President of the Chapter at that time.

Alexander Fooy is a sixteen-year-old student from Ditmas Park/Flatbush, a long-standing, multi-racial community within Brooklyn, NY. He was born to a Swedish father and an Ashkenazi Jewish-American mother, and holds dual citizenship for Sweden and the United States He is a junior at Manhattan Hunter Science High School in Manhattan, a small, select public high school. His hobbies include writing for the school’s newspaper, cartography, studying politics, world history, public transportation systems, and watching (or suffering from) the New York Mets, Jets, Islanders, and Knicks.

Roy Pellicano, EdD, left college as a history major in 1964, and answered an advertisement from the NYC Department of Welfare, became a welfare caseworker/investigator responsible for the recertification of welfare recipients. While working from the Welfare Center in Brooklyn, his readings in American intellectual history and literature came alive. It was there he witnessed systemic, institutionalized racism. It was then that he decided to become a teacher, placing his faith in social mobility and social progress through education (Jefferson's notion of a "crusade against ignorance").

Returning to graduate school, Roy entered a teacher education program, became a licensed teacher in 1966, and began work as a social studies teacher within a mile of the Welfare Center. Roy remained in the NYC Public Schools from 1966 until 2000. While working in the NYC schools, he went to Columbia University Teachers College for his doctorate. He taught exclusively in Brooklyn. He gained a reputation as "a maverick," bucking the norms of "the system," while extolling the virtues of a positive self-fulfilling philosophy, and advocating school reforms that would undermine the systemic racism within the school districts he served. After retiring from the NYC School System Roy served as an Associate Professor at Molloy College (Rockville Center, NY), and St Joseph's College (Patchogue, NY) and also led the accreditation teams for two colleges, as they sought and acquired their first national accreditation. Adopted motto: [Esse Non Videri.](#)

Rabbi Jonathan Rubenstein has served, since 1986, as co-rabbi, with his wife, Rabbi Linda Motzkin, of Temple Sinai in Saratoga Springs, New York. Rabbi Jonathan teaches bread making workshops and operates a non-profit, charitable bakery, [Slice of Heaven Breads](#), out of the Temple Sinai kitchen. He has been Pastoral Care Director at Four Winds–Saratoga, a private psychiatric hospital, and a volunteer Chaplain at Saratoga Hospital. He has served on the Boards of Saratoga Hospital, Franklin Community Center, the Saratoga County NAACP, and other organizations. Through the Bread and Torah Project (www.breadandtorah.org), Rabbi Rubenstein and Rabbi Motzkin – a *soferet* (Torah scribe) and Judaic artist – teach workshops and classes on Jewish bread making and scribal arts in Jewish communities throughout North America and abroad.

Elder Lionel (Lonnie) Williams is a native Washingtonian, the youngest of six children. He was educated in the D.C. Public School system where he earned a certificate in the trades as a cabinetmaker and millworker, and furthered his education in the Joint Carpenters Apprenticeship. Elder Williams began college at the University of the District of Columbia, majoring in Civil Engineering. He has worked at George Washington University Medical Center for more than 30 years, and is currently Manager of the Serials Department, print and electronic serial subscriptions, at the Himmelfarb Health Sciences Library. In 1979, he made a commitment in faith. After council with his pastor, he began formal training at Washington Bible College. In February of 2000, he was licensed to preach and in March of 2003, he was ordained to the Gospel Ministry. For 10 years he served at the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church of Lanham, Maryland, as a part-time pastoral staff member, in the dual offices of Assistant Pastor to the Church and Pastor of Education. In 2014, Elder Williams returned back to the location of his ministry roots on Jay Street, NE, in DC to team with two others to establish the Greater Love Church, where he serves as the Pastor of Christian Education. He has been married to Victoria Lee Goode since 1991. They have four children and five grandchildren.

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Upcoming Virtual Programs:

Panel Discussion: **G.I. Jews: Jewish Americans in World War II**, Nov. 10, 7 p.m.

Panel Discussion: **Bombshell: The Hedy LeMarr Story**, Dec. 6, 7 p.m.

Panel Discussion: **Fanny's Journey**, Jan. 10, 7 p.m.

Panel Discussion: **I Am Not Your Negro**, Feb. 7, 7 p.m.

Jewish Storytelling: **Matthew M Neugroschel Annual Jewish Storytelling**, Feb. 21, 7p.m.

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