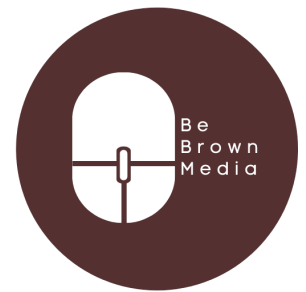


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**Athletes Aim to Make “Black Lives Matter” Visible from the Moon This Weekend**

Boston - July 13, 2020 - A diverse group of athletes is taking GEO ART to a new level. Using STRAVA, a global leader in GPS-enabled fitness apps, and a “back-end” which they built themselves, they are attempting an organizationally ambitious, geographically enormous, technologically innovative major peaceful action to spell out “BLACK LIVES MATTER” along the coastline from New York City to Portland, ME on a heat map that could be seen, virtually, from the moon. This volunteer group of cyclists, runners, and everyday folk interested in supporting social justice reform with visibility - are calling the project “[Wheels Of Change](#).”

Wheels Of Change emerged when one member of the Winchester Rippers, a cycling group, asked the other group members to make an anti-racist statement following the tragic murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers in late May. A number of members responded. A key catalyst was the response of one member of the Rippers who shared a personal reflection on riding while black. It helped others understand and prompted a core group of members to create this fun, socially distanced experience for all.

The outcome they seek is a peaceful coming together of people, of all stripes and capability, participating on the route, or wherever they are in the world supporting this message. They expect to produce a visual image, and an impact that is extraordinary.

All comers are encouraged to participate from children on tricycles to walkers to wheelchairs. Anyone can walk a block or ride hundreds of miles. Some are committing to traverse the whole 1500 mile message (which WOC will track throughout 2020). Cyclists with a smart trainer can ride it virtually from anywhere on the planet.

All participants are pledging to take action to help normalize anti-racism. On July 18th and 19th, participants can run, walk, ride, “however you roll” any or all of the [16 letter-shaped routes](#), which cover more than 1,500 miles. Together, all of the routes create the most expansive piece of STRAVA [art](#) ever. Other technology platforms are being utilized such as Ride with GPS. But the ability to do this rests with the group’s innovative use of technology never before assembled.

“This unique, gigantic, athlete-powered, crowd-sourced ART, where we are combining potentially thousands of individual rides into one ‘heat’ map, to our knowledge, has never been done before. It is more expansive than anything the Strava team has seen. It is not only a novel idea in the world of Geo Art, but required the construction of an entirely new application. This is all possible because a team came together around a powerful idea and were passionate about accomplishing something unreasonably difficult in a timeframe that would impact current events,” said the organizers of Wheels of Change.

Registration is free and available to anyone with a cell phone anywhere in the world. Ways for distant supporters to participate are offered at www.wheelsofchange.us.

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Wheels Of Change is a volunteer group of friends spreading from New York to Boston. There is no formal organization or corporate entity. Find out more about them at <https://www.facebook.com/wheelsofchangeus/> or via #WOCBLM.

Image of the 16 routes comprising the Wheels of Change course



About the Organizers:

About Darren

He visualized and then built the technology to create this crowd-sourced heat map that has never been done before. He is an MIT scientist working on nuclear fusion, accustomed to visualizing large data sets and working with complex systems. He is also, and perhaps more necessary in this case, indefatigable. He accomplished this wizardry in literally three weeks' time and held down his day job (not doing much – just trying to help crack the equation to produce clean energy for the planet). We don't know if he slept. No surprise that he is an accomplished randonneur. He also does the extreme Fleche ride described below in the “about Phillip” section.

WHY In Darren's words - As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." It affects me. It affects you too, but what, you ask are we going to do about it? My friend and riding companion, Phillip, spurred me with the question, but the passion was already simmering there. My only answer is "everything". But, cycling has been a great boon in my life, and so let's start there, write the message BLACK LIVES MATTER as large as we can, and let's pledge to not wait for MLK's dream to come true, but make it come true in our actions large and small.

About Phillip

He asked the provocative question to the Winchester Rippers which set all this in motion. He is also indefatigable and brilliant. He is a software engineer for Teradyne. “The same job I took out of college 37 years ago after Bill Gates decided not to hire me!” He is an accomplished randonneur, endurance athlete, and thoughtful human. His note to us ended with, 'JFK said. "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." The Rippers are good people. What will we do?’ Phillip hiked all 48 four-thousand footers in New Hampshire in one summer, then did it again the next winter. For the last 5 years, he has been a member of a Fleche team with Darren. Each team of 5 cyclists designs its unique 360km course then completes it in exactly 24 hours. He also organizes an Overland Beer Safari each year for a small group of friends. They spend a weekend riding over dirt roads and forest trails to craft breweries in New England.

WHY In Phillip's words - Usually, I spend my time thinking about biking, baking, and beer. These days I'm thinking a lot about racism and butterflies. You know, that butterfly that flaps its wings in the Amazon and the tiny perturbation grows until it is a tsunami across the ocean. On May 31, my nephew asked me if the Rippers (my cycling group) talk about racism. I said no. He believes one reason racism persists is that some good people are uncomfortable discussing racism. The next day I called Randolph and asked how he was doing. I learned some harrowing things about “biking while black” that I never even considered. One day later I wrote a letter to the Rippers and asked what we are going to do to fight racism. Later the same week, Randolph wrote a moving letter about his experiences, with links to learn more about cycling diversity, and closed with a call to action. Within hours, Trish answered that call and proposed creating Strava Art to spell BLACK LIVES MATTER across Massachusetts. In the following weeks, Trish pulled together the Wheels of Change team. The plan kept growing and now BLACK LIVES MATTER will extend from New York to Maine in the largest Strava Art project ever. Hundreds of participants have registered to traverse the letters. Each has also pledged to specific actions they are taking to fight racism. The breeze from the butterfly wings caused a ripple and now it's a wave. As more people in the world join this effort it will become a tsunami wiping away racism.

About Randolph

Randolph's willingness to share his experience as a black cyclist helped others understand and decide to take action. Their conversations led Phillip to send the "what do good people do" question to his Ripper friends. Randolph lent his perspective to the Wheels of Change team, in part with the "biking while black" [post](#) he wrote and shared with the Rippers, the Pan-Mass Challenge, and another local cycling club. The post increased understanding, sparked public statements of support, and spawned diversity efforts within these groups. He has been at the center of organizing WOC, using his decades of product management, engineering, and operational experience in the preparation of this complicated event. He has been central to the systems and communications of the team, contributing to the remarkable pulling together of this project in an unreasonably short time frame.

WHY In Randolph's words - My family has had a long history of fighting racism. My father was sent by Martin Luther King Jr. to Miami to help establish CORE in Miami after graduating college in Boston. WOC is a continuation of the family tradition.

About Trish

Trish proposed the giant BLM message to the Rippers in response to Phillip's question and then threw herself into making it happen. She is an entrepreneur, athlete, artist & lifetime activist for social and environmental progress. A latecomer to competitive cycling in her 50's, she got faster and stronger, particularly in uphill racing and endurance events. Trish has used her love for cycling before to make social change with large projects, and she tries to leave small waves of positive energy as she rides through life.

WHY in Trish's words - My parents set an example of making every day count toward a more just and sustainable society. I've been chipping away that. I also have a deep passion for making art. And I love being outside in nature doing things. Especially love my bicycle. When Corona locked us all down I devoted my newfound free time to paint, think and write from my home on a farm. I was intensely aware of my privilege and safety. I was doing pro-bono work with threatened minority and women-owned small businesses. But it did not feel remotely adequate. There was such great suffering all around. I had recently "written" a political statement with my bicycle, in Strava Art, on the Guilford Town Green. Then the George Floyd killing rocked the world. My kids and I were in an ongoing conversation about why what it meant and what to do. When Phillip sent out his question I sent back an article of my son's with suggestions and included this. Then Randolph's moving personal statement helped galvanize the team and here we are. [My Corona Journal](#) has been nearly abandoned since we launched this effort. I will get back to it. This is more important.

About Dave

Dave is a high school physics teacher and an avid cyclist. He was the first Ripper to respond to Trish's BLM idea and was all-in from the get-go and has been a backbone of the team getting all the pieces put together as well as a steady, strong, principled guiding voice for the mission and inclusion.

WHY In Dave's words - Unintended bias is a part of everyone's life. We make decisions daily without realizing why we actually made them. Sometimes those decisions are made because of unintended biases. The Wheels of Change Project is a break from all that unintended bias. It is a conscious effort, physical and mental, to act in a way to defeat bias. Every stride or pedal stroke is a reminder that we can all do a little more to set aside our biases, and treat one another with kindness and compassion. We can all think about the ways we want to change; this project is an opportunity to act and make those changes in ourselves.

About M - (who prefers to keep a super-low profile)

M volunteered without knowing any of us – it was just on the power of the idea that he said, “I’ll try to do whatever needs to be done.” He runs IT operations for a large health care system. A friend turned him into WOC and he immediately raised his hand. He hammered together the back end of our website and info systems.

WHY In M’s words - M sent this text to the editor and then reluctantly agreed to it being included: Thank you for wanting to mention me in the posting of the team bio’s. I prefer to be left as a silent helper with the groups and organizations I’ve assisted over the years. I just enjoy seeing a change in the world and follow a basic principle: Help the helpers. I am excited to see what a group this capable will accomplish.

About Karen

Karen, the Ironman triathlon legend, jumped in as soon as she heard about the effort and took on the job of running recruiting and being sure every inch of the course was covered. No need to tell you what her stamina and focus looks like. But as a colleague, she is also a positive-energy joy in every way. She recruited Neil to do the website and another wonderful person (who has to remain anonymous) to do Social Media.

WHY in Karen’s Words - I have been involved in sports since I was a kid. Throughout my involvement with sports, I have marveled at the way it can bring diverse people together in a multitude of ways. When training together, it fosters respect among teammates. When at a participatory event, it sparks camaraderie among people from all backgrounds and cultures. When cheering for a favorite team or star, it serves as a unifying mission.

When Trish sent out a query to some of her contacts asking if anyone would like to be involved in organizing a bike ride to bring awareness to the Black Lives Matter movement via a giant Strava art attempt, I knew immediately I wanted to help. Like many other people, I have had a pit in my stomach ever since the video of George Floyd’s death surfaced. I subsequently read testimonials, articles and watched documentaries about how ingrained racism and injustices are in our country and I desperately wanted to DO something. The Wheels of Change was a perfect opportunity for me to take action: it combines my belief in sport as a vehicle to bring people together for a common cause, it helps educate and spread awareness about one of our country’s biggest impediments to having a fair and just society, and it promotes individual action which is what it will take to finally eliminate racism.

About Neil

Neil jumped in to “help out a bit” with the WOC website design VERY late in the game when Karen Smyers pitched it to her and her former teammate, Trish, piled on. It has been a 24/7 effort ever since and she pulled off a small miracle - chasing down every minute detail and making every single impossible deadline. Neil describes herself as a computer geek who worked as a Systems Engineer in high tech until having children and then started her own company to have the flexibility to work from home. The flexibility had an added bonus - creating her own work hours gave her more time during the day to pursue her passion - cycling. Cycling branched out to include triathlon. She holds AG titles in Ironman Triathlon events and in many of the cycling segments. Neil met Trish while participating in a 4-women 60-year-old team in RAAM - the Race Across America. It is a grueling non-stop 3200 mile, 7-day time trial from San Diego to Annapolis. At the time she was 66 years old! She is coached by Karen Smyers.

WHY in Neil's Words - Although mostly retired now, I jumped at the chance to participate in the WOC project. Although I joined late, I respected Trish and knew she would assemble an amazing team. As a child of the 60s, I am appalled at how little our society has advanced. Our generation had great aspirations, and it is devastating to see what we let happen on our watch. Although our aspirations have not been achieved, I believe it is more important than ever to take action NOW.

About Melanie

Some of the responses to Phil's initial post connected Melanie to Randolph who connected her to Wheels of Change just as the site was going live. She jumped in to use her resources to help spread the word to media, bike shops and journalists. Melanie is a former automotive engineer working as a freelance journalist in Boston. She is the founder of the Yellow Jackets cycling club in Rochester, New York, and Boston. Both chapters were founded to introduce the sport of biking to people of color, but all are welcome. Melanie is a storyteller at heart. Shooting and editing video is something that comes naturally. And she's always up for a good interview. As a long-distance cyclist, she learned about CRW shortly after moving to Boston. She's also interviewed a few Rippers on her cable access TV show, "The Lady in The Yellow Jacket."

WHY in Melanie's Words - My great-grandmother was a slave. My grandparents fought racism. My parents fought racism. I'm fighting racism. My niece and nephews are fighting racism. Now my great-niece and great-nephew are fighting racism. More than 120 years later, we're still in the same fight. George Floyd's 8 minutes and 46 seconds murder at the hands, well, really at the knee of a police officer, was a game-changer. This horrific act started long-overdue global conversations and actions on racism. Blacks have always needed more than blacks in this fight. Mr. Floyd brought the world together for the purpose. Wheels of Change is a unique opportunity to further the conversation and take action.

About Don

Don signed on to help recruit participants late in the game when he heard what we were up to. He is, we think it's fair to say, a role model for all of us in various ways. His joining our team was a huge lift when we were a bit exhausted and it wasn't yet clear if we had critical mass. The editor chose in this case, to insert the modest first-person narrative from Don: "I grew up racing jalopies on our farm in Pennsylvania, ran the 880 pretty fast in high school and college, raced motorcycles pretty fast in the 60s and 70s, cars in the 80s, fell for MTN bike racing at age 57, then on to skinny tires and a few brushes with racing fast in the hill climb and long distance categories. When I moved to Arlington in 2011, I had the great good fortune to be welcomed by the Rippers, among whom I made many lasting friendships, good people indeed, as this brilliant BLM project exemplifies." Editor's commentary: Don is an architect who has done wonderful work in a small footprint and green design, held records in HS and College track, was one of a four-person 70-year-old RAAM team in 2012 that set the 70 and 60-year-old records simultaneously (!), holds many Hillclimb records and Mt. Washington records and titles, is unflappably kind, has written wonderful books, is a gentleman and a scholar and is pretty much adored by all who know him.

WHY in Don's Words - I hope the good people in whose honor this ride was put together will finally receive the respect and rights they've been too long denied. Many thanks to this amazing gang. May the good work continue!