

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

June 2, 2025

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Celebrating 103 years of Service

THE MAGIC OF ROTARY 2024-2025



Members and guests entered a room that President **REBECCA GERALDINI** had decked out in festive Pride colors, with treats and messages of Love for everyone! She wished us Happy Pride,

which we will be celebrating all month long.

CHARLIE WEIDANZ introduced his guests Utsav Gupta and Rebecca Neff, founders of an AI start-up. Both are recent graduates of Leadership Palo Alto, and both are graduates of Georgetown University, where today's speaker is situated.

NEW MEMBER INDUCTION! YAY!

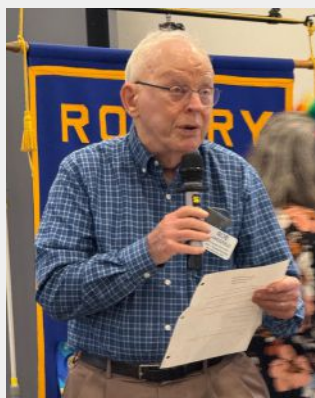
LINNET KWOK inducted **RANDA HOFFMAN** into membership in our club! Her sponsor, **KANIKA SABHARWAL**, introduced RANDA who was previously a



member of Rotary in Bellevue, Washington. RANDA gave special thanks to REBECCA and KATIE SEEDMAN, who have been especially welcoming. And then there was confetti!!



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY



Stanford University recently sent **ROB LANCEFIELD** some insight into the attributes we need most as we live to be 100, and those are curiosity and courage. Rob notes that the 4-Way test can help us develop these attributes – aren't we

fortunate to be Rotarians?

PRESIDENTS CLUB

GEOFF ZIMAN joined in honor of two graduating family members. His oldest great grandson has just graduated with a master's in computer science. His youngest grandson graduated from the US Naval Academy in Annapolis and has received his commission in the US Marine Corps.

BRIAN STEEN reminded us of two performances of the Bay Choral Guild, with which he has sung for many years. You can hear the beautiful voices on Saturday, June 7 in Campbell, or on Sunday, June 8 at 4:30 pm

at the First Congregational Church on Louis Road in Palo Alto.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

KAREN ROHDE recognized REBECCA for her membership in the Polio Plus society. REBECCA got confetti!



Thanks go to **MATT DOLAN** and the Homewood Suites for hosting a cheerful TGIF attended by 16 party animals!

And speaking of parties, it looks as though the District 5170 gathering was a festive event, or perhaps it was just that our team brought all the animation. Thanks to **KAREN ROHDE, JOY OCHE, DANA TOM, REBECCA GERALDI,** and **CHARLIE WEIDANZ** for representing our club. CHARLIE shared two

memorable messages from the speaker sessions: Don't say you can't do it, ask how can you do it? Ask yourself what will you do that will be most remembered?



Congratulations to **DANA TOM,** recipient of the 2025 Stan Allen "We Care" Award! More confetti!

LINNET invited us to pick up a Rotary t-shirt, which she modeled for us. Go to **BEN THRELKELD's** office to pick up the right size for you, and wear it proudly and often.

DEBUNKING TIME: JUNE 30th, 5:30 pm

LIZ KNISS, Past President, invited all to Rebecca's "DeBunking". Mark your calendars for **PEACE, LOVE, REBECCA**, the Debunking of our President REBECCA GERALDI, Monday, June 30, 5:30-7:30 pm at the home of **Jane and BRUCE GEE**. Tickets are \$40/person for a dinner of paella (regular and vegetarian) and an evening of fun. Purchase tickets online <https://square.link/u/8hXS5zro> and plan to dress thematically! Your option.

MORE ROTARY CELEBRATIONS

REBECCA honored 14 members whose Rotary anniversaries fall in this month, with the longest-serving being **DAVE SMULLIN** at 46 years of Rotary membership followed by **GLORIA HOM** and **JON STOUMEN**, each at 38 years, all the way to **KATHY TORGERSEN**, our newest June member of one year.

While June is a big month for Rotary membership anniversaries, we only have four members with birthdays this month. Years are not given for this category - everyone is whatever age they choose! Celebrating are: **ROGER SMITH, JOHN O'KEEFE, SHERRI SAGER**, and just one baby picture for the guessing game, but almost everybody was able to identify **JOOP VERBAKEN** from his picture as a two-year-old! *CHEERS!*

OUR ENDOWMENT FUND DRIVE IS ON

BETSY BECHTEL announced that we are at \$21,000 towards our goal of \$30,000 for the Endowment Fund. If you haven't given, or can't remember if you already gave, now is the time to make that gift!

FLAGS ON MEMORIAL DAY - MAY 26th

Thank you to a big crowd who made sure that University Avenue was adorned with flags on Memorial Day: **BETSY BECHTEL, LEN ELY, GLORIA HOM, SUZANNE JAIN, ERIC JENSEN, DAVE SMULLIN, CHARLIE WEIDANZ, JACKIE WHEELER, and JAKE YOO.**

PROGRAM

TODAY'S PROGRAM: **DANA TOM** introduced **Dorothy Brown**, the Martin D. Ginsburg Chair in Taxation and Professor of Law at Georgetown Law School. Professor Brown



advocates for economic and social justice. She has won teaching awards at each of the three law schools where she has taught, she appears on major news networks and contributes opinion pieces to the top news journals. Dana heard her on a Code Switch podcast episode last year. Professor Brown's 2022 book is entitled "The Whiteness of Wealth: How the Tax System Impoverishes Black Americans and How to Fix It," which is the subject of her talk today.

Dr. Brown chose the specialty of tax law specifically because she wanted work that did not pertain to race, having dealt with race enough in her own life. But soon in her career, she saw a letter asking academics in all disciplines of law to look at how race played into their specialty. She responded to that call. Not finding race data in the government's tax information, she applied her knowledge of taxes to race data.

Home ownership: We know that Black Americans have a lower home ownership than White Americans, but do tax laws have different impacts on White and Black American homeowners? The answer is yes. When you sell your home, if you sell at a gain, you get a tax benefit, but if you sell at a loss there is no tax benefit. Most Black American

homeowners live in racially diverse or all-Black neighborhoods. Homes in those neighborhoods don't appreciate as much as homes in White neighborhoods, so Black homeowners are more likely to sell at a lower gain or a loss.

The home ownership tax benefit is unlike that for stocks. If you sell stocks at a loss, you get a tax benefit. Whites are more likely to be invested in the stock market.

Labor market: We know that occupational segregation exists. Jobs that are disproportionately occupied by Black Americans are less likely to come with tax-free benefits. Even when Black employees have access to these benefits, they are less likely to take advantage of them, and one explanation may be related to other family needs: Black college graduates are more likely to send money to their parents and grandparents, whereas White college graduates are more likely to receive money from their parents and grandparents.

Marriage: The tax benefit of marriage has gone primarily to married couples with a single wage earner. Married couples with two equal wage earners actually have paid a marriage penalty. Historically, married White couples have been more likely to have a single wage earner whereas married Black couples have been more likely to have two comparable wage earners. This marriage penalty was reduced by a 2017 law, as married White couples increasingly have two equal wage earners.

Solutions: In her book, she proposes a wealth tax credit for every tax payer below median wealth. Another solution would be a living wage credit: if a person is working full time and not being paid a living wage, the government would make up the difference to bring it up to a living wage. Both of these would help all races.

In response to questions from **HENRIETTA, RANDA, JACKIE, DANA**, and our guest Rebecca, Dr. Brown responded that

- She is optimistic that private organizations will continue to publish

race data even when the government does not.

- Better access to tax planning for Black Americans would be beneficial, but would not overcome all of the problems such as the home ownership benefit if they don't want to live in an all-White neighborhood.
- There is no similar imbalance for Hispanic Americans with regard to home ownership tax benefits, but Hispanic Americans do pay penalties in their retirement accounts.
- We should not run away from DEI terms, despite pressure to do so.
- To give people more political power, we must make them aware, but people hear "taxes" and run in the opposite direction!

We in the audience were glad we did not "run in the opposite direction" when we heard the topic of today's talk.

CLOSING REMARKS

At 1:30, Past President **KAREN ROHDE** thanked our speaker and our members, and then she and **DUANE KALAR** stayed to clean up the confetti! Rotarians in Action! Thank you both!

TODAY'S VOLUNTEERS

Greeter: **Kristina Lugo, Charlie Weidanz**

Welcome Desk: **Katie Seedman**

A/V: **Dana Tom**

Microphones: **Steve Emslie**

Pinion Writer: **Sally Tomlinson**

Pinion Editor: **Ginny Lear**



UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

June 9 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Roland Greene, Stanford Professor of English <i>Shakespeare: Young, Old and in the Middle</i>
June 16 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Jonathan Chen, Assist. Professor, biomedical <i>AI in Medicine: Real Magic or Technological Illusions</i>
June 23 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Joe Simitian, Public Servant <i>Reflections on a Career of Public Service</i>
June 30 5:30-7:30 pm DEBUNKING No Club Meeting	President Rebecca's final day on the job! <i>Come to the home of Bruce & Jane Gee as we celebrate her year!</i> \$40 per person: sign up coming



Together, with the Palo Alto University Rotary Club, flags were posted and retired on Memorial Day on University Avenue. Social time followed. Thanks everyone!

