

**For Immediate Release:** January 22, 2021

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## **5th Annual Women's March Virtual Event: Lift Every Voice Project**

The "Lift Every Voice Project" is being organized by members of St. Peter's Lutheran Church, OC Progress, and Port Jervis Community Action to commemorate what would be the 5th annual Port Jervis Women's March. The project will showcase the experiences and achievements of local Black, Latina, Asian, and Indigenous women across Orange County as trailblazers and a cornerstone of our local communities.

"Instead of a traditional march with speakers, we are asking people to nominate friends, family members, colleagues, community leaders, and other Women of Color in Orange County who have inspired them," explains Addy Jimenez of Deerpark. Using the StoryCorps model, a long running project "to preserve and share humanity's stories to build connections and create a more just and compassionate world," the organizers hope to spotlight women making an impact in their communities. "We want to create an archive of conversations about aspirations, experiences, and influences that energize and shape our society," explains Margaret Spring of Deerpark. Community members are asked to capture a conversation about someone to share what motivates them and what has supported their success. The testimonials will be compiled into a longer video post to be released on March 8th, International Women's Day. For more information on the nomination process and steps to make and submit your video please visit [www.ocprogress.org](http://www.ocprogress.org). Please submit by February 25th.

The theme 'Lift Every Voice' is inspired by the 1900's African American national anthem "Lift Every Voice and Sing", an affirmation of the long fought hardships and injustices endured by African American people. "We are just beginning to understand the chronic effects of systemic racism after 400 years of inequality. We have a lot of work ahead to repair the damage," says organizer Alexandria Sasso of Middletown. "To be a truly representative Democracy we must have Black and Brown women in elected positions. We all have different skills to help in this pursuit. For myself, I'm organizing and I pledge to cook, babysit, or assist in whatever ways I can help to get minority women in office." says organizer Melissa Kreck of Port Jervis.

Motivated by our national reckoning on race and the historic elections of Women of Color that followed, including Kamala Harris as the first Black South Asian American Woman Vice President and Congress members Cori Bush from Missouri, Deb Haaland of New Mexico, and Sharice Davids of Kansas, event organizers look to highlight the many voices on the local level at work to bring about progressive change. "It's not just our elected officials at the top who are making a difference, it's the regular everyday folks, the Women of Color in our schools, hospitals, law enforcement, community activists, business owners, retail workers, artists, and

health care workers, it's our mothers, sisters, and daughters who are committed to helping others that are leading the way," says organizer Melissa Martens of Minisink.

"The continued fight by Women of Color for equality and justice has helped to hold communities across the nation together and create safe livable environments despite the adversities faced by especially Black women, Black trans-women and members of the LGBTQ community," states organizer Julika von Stackleburg of Minisink. Join in the celebration of Black, Latina, Asian, and Indigenous women who mobilized, registered voters, fought voter suppression, and secured historic elections for Women of Color.

The Port Jervis Women's March formed in January 2016 as a group of local progressive women mobilized to march in solidarity with people across the nation and the world to demand transparency and accountability of our leaders and to fight for human rights, environmental welfare, and social justice. "Five years ago, the first Women's March brought us together to march for Women's Rights. Now we stand together to build community and support policies that benefit everyone, not just the people at the top," says organizer Jocelyn Figueroa of Wallkill.