

Racial justice is more than a single issue

Written by By Beth Blakeman Associate Editor
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When Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham announced plans for a Council for Racial Justice on June 4, one of the first people she named to the council was State Representative Sheryl Williams Stapleton, D-Bernalillo.

In a conversation with Stapleton June 16, she described the council as one made up of diverse individuals from around the state.

Stapleton told the *Gallup Sun*, “I would like to draw attention to issues that affect the living conditions of all New Mexicans, regardless of whether they are white, Asian, Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, immigrants.

“There are issues in our state right now that cause neglect to all individuals in our state,” she said.

She specified education, healthcare, affordable housing, and transportation in rural communities.

Stapleton said all those issues affect racial, ethnic relations. When a person is poor, and cannot

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afford to feed their children, it creates depression. It creates a mental attitude, one that makes people wonder about who they are, who represents them and what kind of help can they get?

She says a lot of factors play into the stereotyping of New Mexicans and those issues can create an atmosphere of racial tension.

As far as African Americans are concerned, the representative says these incidents of aggression happen more to people of color. She says that while three percent of New Mexico residents are Black, 19 percent of the people behind bars in the state are Black.

“I’m excited about being able to give input to make a difference in the State of New Mexico at a time like this. Black lives matter because it’s at the forefront and the attack is on Black men across the country. But all lives matter,” Stapleton said. “We are all human beings.”

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