



**TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes**  
**February 7, 2017 8:00 AM**  
**Room 309, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT**

**Attendees:** Catherine Onyemelukwe, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Sarah Heath, Ramin Garesham, Althea Seaborn, Susan Ellis, Dolores Paoli, Judy Hamer, and Zoe Tarrant

**Guests:** Catherine Lewis, Karen Kleine, Dave Matlow (WestportNow.com), Brett Aronow

The meeting was called to order at 8:08 AM.

**Approval of Minutes:** Susan moved to accept the minutes of our January 10, 2017 meeting as written. Catherine O. seconded the motion. The motion passed. The minutes will be posted.

**What's Up:** Did you know that Ida B. Wells' wedding was covered on the front page of the New York Times in 1895?

**Programming**

1. **Essay Contest:** Harold presented the facts about the TEAM Westport essay contest that asks our high schoolers to write about "white privilege" – including to what extent it exists or not. Harold also talked through how it became a topic "heard 'round the world".
  - a. This is the fourth year of our Essay Contest. It was announced publicly on January 15<sup>th</sup> at our MLK celebration event. We received positive responses afterward with no widespread negative reaction in town.
  - b. On January 24<sup>th</sup>, after an AP reporter wrote an article about the contest, the story blew up internationally because the word "outrage" was used in the body of the article to describe the town's reaction setting off a barrage of positive and negative emails, phone calls, Facebook posts, etc. The vast majority of the negative comments that were identified came from out of town and missed the intent of and what was meant by the topic.
  - c. The topic was proposed by a subcommittee of TEAM Westport, accepted by TEAM Westport, and reviewed by a teacher. Students at Staples already discuss "implicit bias" in Social Studies. The essay contest is supported by the school system and other town organizations and institutions.
  - d. We discussed the potential for an anonymity option for entrants and agreed to support this. **Action:** Harold will discuss with appropriate Town leadership. Ramin will draft.
  - e. We've had good community discourse via blogs and Facebook. The New York Times article on February 4 was positive. We received positive responses from Westporters including an invitation to speak at the next meeting of the PTA Council. We are meeting with the Westport/Weston Interfaith Clergy this afternoon.
  - f. We are working on a statement from town organizations in support of open discussion as a Westport value. **Action:** Catherine O, Catherine Lewis, Karen Kleine, and Ramin have agreed to draft this.
  - g. We have 2 additional essay contest judges, bringing our total to 5.
  - h. We are looking at inviting a follow-on speaker re: this topic later in the year. We have some ideas, but we need to further explore options.



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Action: Karen will work with Maggie and the Westport Library.

2. Playhouse: *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* will be presented during a short run in April (7 performances between April 5<sup>th</sup> and April 9<sup>th</sup>). We are co-sponsoring programming surrounding the production.
3. Conversation: *What Do We Tell Our Children?*  
This was held on January 22, 2017 and was well attended (50 or so people). People wanted to talk and learn more which is very positive. It was a thought-provoking and interesting session with good things to think about. People do see color and this does have implications. We now have 25 people who signed up after this Conversation to join a book group to continue discussion.
4. New Events:
  - On February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 PM at the Westport Historical Society, Adrian Miller will discuss the book he's written about White House chefs up through President Obama's administration. The book is entitled: All the President's Chefs: Cooking at the White House. TEAM Westport is co-sponsoring this event.
  - On March 8, TEAM Westport will co-sponsor "True Confessions of a Recovering Skinhead" at The Conservative Synagogue at 7:30pm

**Education:**

1. TEAM Westport is presenting to the PTA Council on March 1<sup>st</sup>.
2. Also, the school system will be holding a session for teachers during Professional Development Day at Greens Farms during which the video developed for "What Do We Tell Our Children?" will be shown.

**Marketing:** We now have an official blog for TEAM Westport and a Twitter account.

**Farewell:**

We bid Brett Aronow a fond farewell and thanked her for the tremendous record of engagement and effectiveness she leaves behind.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 AM.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 8AM at Westport Town Hall –Room 309.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod  
Secretary