



**TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes**  
**February 6, 2018, 8:00 AM**  
**Room 201, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT**

**Attendees:** Ramin Ganeshram, Judy Hamer, Susan Ellis, Maggie Mudd, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Zoe Tarrant, Dolores Paoli, and Catherine Lewis

**Guests:** Elizabeth Woodson, Beth Huisking (Westport Playhouse), Alison Patton (Saugatuck Church), Foti Koskinas (Westport Police Chief), Rebecca Marsick (Staples High School), Julie Heller (Westport Public Schools), Isa Mujahid (CTCORE-Organize Now!), David Bue, and Sam Arciola (Deputy Police Chief)

**Approval of Minutes:** Susan moved that the minutes of our January 9, 2018 meeting be approved. Judy seconded. The vote was unanimous. The meeting minutes will be posted accordingly.

**Programming:**

1. MLK Planning Committee – The core group that has planned recent Martin Luther King, Jr. annual celebrations will continue as a group to work on planning Anti-Racism training per the appeal made on January 14<sup>th</sup> at the MLK event. Donations made on that day totaled \$2,741. Regular meetings are being scheduled to plan how best to implement training in Westport.
2. Essay Contest Planning – The due date for contest entries is Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>. Posters will be redone. Publicity and information distribution will continue. The judges are already in place.
3. Conversations – A few dozen people attended the January 29<sup>th</sup> Community Table conversation at the Library. The next one is scheduled for April. We would like to attract more people including students. Other spaces including the Westport Historical Society may be available and attract a different audience.  
Action: We'll make extra efforts to publicize better. Also, let's consider parallel conversations at the high school.  
We are still on target for our TEAM Westport conversation later this year entitled: "Who belongs here?".
4. Policing – Chief Koskinas is still working with Jeff Pegues to try to schedule our follow-on "Black and Blue" discussion; however, Jeff is working on special projects at the moment. In the meantime, we can explore setting something else up. One thought is a discussion based upon a recent case in Bridgeport where a 15-year old boy was killed by police. The topic would be race relations and the public and the use of deadly force vs. techniques for de-escalation. This is a very hot issue in Bridgeport, but may not be as much so in Westport. However, advice as to how to be prepared to keep something from happening is important in this community. We have various constituencies in town reading books about this and related topics; an important piece of the conversation is how to connect what's happening in real time with what we are reading. The officers have the experience and it would be good for our community to hear what they have to say and to be prepared. We could even include in such a discussion police chiefs from neighboring communities.
5. Playhouse – *Flyin' West* by Pearl Cleage will be here the end of May. Programming will be set up around the production. Julie requested that a student show be added and Beth will communicate the request to the Playhouse.  
*Gina's Journey: The Search for William Grimes* will be screened. The story documents the life of Mr. Grimes who was enslaved and gained his emancipation in 1830 in New Haven. Regina Mason, his descendant and researcher for the book and film, will give a talk at the Westport Historical Society.
6. Westport Historical Society – An exhibit is being worked on to open May 6<sup>th</sup> and run through September. The following are needed: an advisory council, exhibit curation, and community sponsorship for programming around the exhibit. The exhibit will demonstrate that there has been and continues to be an African American presence and experience in Westport. Original material exists that will be included.



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The exhibit will be up during Juneteenth. The programming will be interesting and will include speakers from academia and law, for example. We can use graduate student interns and there are opportunities for Staples' students to be docents and assist in some aspect of the programming.

7. Library Partnership/Coming Events – We thank the Library for their co-sponsorship of the MLK celebration and for obtaining our speaker. The facility is under construction; however, there are ongoing lectures and programs in the Library's space as well as in other spaces around town.
8. TW Book Club – We met in December; however, attendees had not finished the book (Stamped from the Beginning by Ibram X. Kendi). The discussion continued at our February 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. Zoe and Catherine were asked to pick a book that is not as long. They will alternate content and format frequently (e.g., film, readings, books). Book suggestions were given: Waking Up White by Debby Irving and Sing, Unburied, Sing by Jesmyn Ward.

We discussed other activities being conducted currently:

- Other groups are reading Stamped... and discussing it chapter by chapter.
  - Stamford frequently programs speakers and we may be able to collaborate.
  - Isa Mujahid talked about the racial justice programming and organizing that he is doing in Hartford, Waterbury, New Haven, and Bridgeport with several organizations (Stamp Out Oppression Now, Bridgeport Generation Now, and workshops from Undoing Racism). Sixty people now meet on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of each month at 6PM. They are reading Stamped and attended the MLK event. They want to have conversations and to collaborate.
  - We met with Darien in December re: TEAM Westport. We have had no feedback yet.
  - Elizabeth Woodson will be working with Bryan Stevenson whose current project is the National Memorial on Lynchings in Birmingham, Alabama. There may be opportunities to collaborate.
9. Interfaith Clergy/Interfaith Council – At 3PM on Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup> at the United Methodist Church, a panel will discuss sanctuaries for immigrants and explain DACA and other factors related to immigration. There will be representatives from sanctuary churches. Additional details are on our FaceBook page.

**Education:**

1. Staples – Julie arranged a meeting for Harold and Bernicestine with James D'Amico, Staples' Principal. Mr. D'Amico is looking forward to continuing to work with TEAM. Mid-day sessions with students are possible. Also interacting with Kool to be Kind may work best since TEAM Westport-Staples is not active this year. He would like to schedule a session by Zoe and Catherine for faculty and administrators at Staples.
2. Strategic Planning – Zoe and Catherine presented to Superintendent Palmer giving an overview of their training on "What Children See" in Westport. Julie will coordinate a leadership training meeting for the district's top administrators in April.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 AM.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 6, 2018, at 8AM in Room 201, Westport Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod  
Secretary