



TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
July 10, 2018, 8:00 AM
Room 309, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

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

Guests: Sam Arciola (Deputy Chief, Westport Police), Rebecca Marsick (Staples High School)

The meeting was called to order at 8:06AM.

Approval of Minutes: Catherine Onyemelukwe moved that the minutes from our June 5, 2018 meeting be approved. Ramin Ganeshram seconded. The motion passed. The minutes will be posted accordingly.

What's Up:

- The Library held a Community Table discussion on June 26th at Saugatuck Congregational. Zachary R. Wood talked about his book Uncensored: My Life and Uncomfortable Conversations at the Intersection of Black and White America that describes the political life on elite college campuses and the struggles of the working poor against the backdrop of institutional racism. The issues discussed were of great interest.
- On July 20 at Grace Farms in New Canaan @ 7:30, there will be a conversation about Portraying Faith/An Inside View of Religion in the Media.
- There was a New York Times Letter to the Editor stating that no one talks about affirmative action for white kids, even though legacy status and money can be viewed as forms of affirmative action.
- A study, also in the New York Times, revealed that even if you are African American and prosperous, there is no guarantee that your children will be successful and prosperous.

PROGRAMMING:

1. TEAM Westport Book Club: A small group attended last night. The group will continue to meet and discuss. We have a bigger reach since we have included listening to pod casts in addition to reading materials. Besides books, we are reading articles such as Ta-Nehisi Coates' article on reparations/housing and are considering viewing documentaries such as the *Pruitt-Igoe Myth* about housing in St. Louis. *White Fragility* was a wonderful article preceding the book of the same name. *Teaching Tolerance* has just put out new teachings on slavery. They are very generous with their resources and detail the benefit of the institution of slavery to white people even though individuals might say that their family did not directly own people.

2. Policing:

- Chief Koskinas is away at a conference with high-ranking officers from throughout the nation.
- The Fairfield Prep/Staples situation is still an open dialogue. The department will continue to monitor this.
- Althea is involved with officer training and is in the process of scheduling Ken Barone to come talk to the leadership.
- We are currently working on having a School Resource Officer (SRO) particularly at Staples in lieu of the DARE program.
- The department is still actively looking to hire minority officers.

3. Westport Historical Society:

- The WHS hosted a film on June 15th about Josiah Henson who is said to be the influence for Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. The film is very factual, from primary sources, and multi-sided in terms of the life of Mr. Henson.



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- Visitors to the *Remembered* exhibit have come from all over the states. However, more attendees and more publicity are needed. The commitment is that every exhibit will have some diversity. Please tell everyone. Meadow Ridge is planning to attend in September. The exhibit will be open until the end of November. \$5 regular admit, \$3 for seniors and children. It is open except on Sunday and Monday. The PTA, other groups, Ys Women, Book Groups, Staples Reunion Groups are planning to come throughout the summer.
- On November 6th, a book entitled The General's Cook about Gen Washington's cook, Hercules, will be available. The Library Journal is doing a roundup of books in the fall and this is one of them.
- 4. Playhouse:** *Flyin' West*, recently at the Playhouse, is a universal story. It was hopeful and optimistic. Historically, the railroad mentioned in the story did not come after all, so the land was depressed in value. Whites moved in and took over. Similar stories preceded the rise of the Klan. The next production, *A Flea in Her Ear*, will have race-conscious casting. *Man of La Mancha* is coming soon and will have Latinx casting. *A Thousand Pines* follows and deals with how to heal after a mass shooting. *The Pianist of Willesden Lane* returns in December for 3 weeks.
- 5. MLK Planning Committee/Anti-Racism Training:**
The next meeting of the MLK Planning Committee is scheduled for tomorrow. Planning continues. Anti-Racism Training: We just completed a survey for Professor Kendi and his staff at American University. We are working with them to see what they have that maps to what we need and are moving forward. They want to systematically train the town to make institutional changes, so we're trying to get everything worked out for all the sectors in our community.
- 6. Restaurant Fundraising Opportunity:** We need further discussion on this offer.
- 7. Essay Contest:** The committee is thinking about topics for next year – perhaps, a more personal one.

EDUCATION:

- 1. Strategic Planning:** Zoe and Catherine L. are scheduled to give their presentation on “*What White Kids See*” at Saugatuck Elementary in November and are targeting Staples and Bedford at some point. They would like to use their presentation as an introduction and employ breakout groups for more detailed discussion. Ideally, teachers in the schools will be trained and then go to Border Crossers. People who can lead the breakout sessions need to be identified.
- 2. Staples:** The Hate U Give was read by students at Staples and at Harding High School in Bridgeport. The two groups then met to discuss the book. It was revealing for the Staples' students especially with respect to the occurrence of code-switching and how it cannot be ignored. We would like to do more such book clubs with Bridgeport.
- 3. Board of Education:** Karen Kleine resigned from TEAM Westport. We need another representative.

Next Meeting: We shall not have a meeting in August. The next meeting will be 8AM on September 4, 2018 in Room 201 of Westport Town Hall.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary