



TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes March 5, 2019 Westport Town Hall, Room 201, Westport, CT

Attendees: Judy Hamer, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Rev. Alison Patton, Candace Banks, Catherine Lewis, Susan Ellis, Maggie Mudd, Bernicestine McLeod, Harold Bailey (Presiding), and Ramin Ganeshram

Guests: Lauren Francese (Westport Schools), Julie Heller (Westport Schools), Rebecca Marsick (Staples High School), Foti Koskinas (Chief of Police, Westport), Sam Arciola (Deputy Chief of Police, Westport), and Michael Barker (Westport Country Playhouse)

The meeting was called to order at 8:10AM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Susan moved that the minutes of our February 5th meeting be approved. Maggie seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously and will be posted accordingly.

WHAT'S UP: Harold commented on the movie *Green Book* and its winning Best Picture during the Academy Awards. There was an actual Green Book that indicated "safe places" where African Americans could stop when traveling particularly in the South – hotels, restaurants, etc. Without the Green Book, when traveling south, you did not stop. Food was packed and eaten in the car and any stops were very carefully selected. It was developed by a postal worker in Chicago who kept adding to it as he learned about additional places.

PROGRAMMING:

Essay Contest: We received entries before the deadline of 11:59PM on February 28th. The essays will be turned over to our judges. We need to contact the Saugatuck Congregational Church regarding the Audio/Visual setup for the awards ceremony on April 3rd.

MLK Planning Committee: The event featuring Professor James Forman, Jr. will be held this coming Sunday (March 10th) at 3:30PM at the Playhouse (rescheduled from January 20th). Maggie, Catherine O., and Candace volunteered to hold the baskets during the appeal, but we need additional people.

Library Partnership/Coming Events: Cody is collecting ideas from everyone about future programming in the newly remodeled Library space. He has proposed establishing a Racial Justice Lab and a series of lectures and appearances by people including artists/authors (that we can help identify). Please submit any ideas you may have to Cody. Planning may also entail ways for us to measure our progress, individually and collectively, as we progress toward racial justice. Perhaps *Project Implicit* provides a way in which each person can enter input into their own personal survey to track progress over time.

Suggested speaker: David Blight, author of [Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom](#).

Upcoming Events:

- Catherine O. will discuss her new book [Breaking Kola: An Inside View of African Customs](#) on Thursday at 7 at the Westport Women's Club.
- On Tuesday, March 12, the author of [Exit West](#) (2019 WestportREADS selection) will appear via video interview at the Saugatuck Elementary School at 7.
- Jacqueline Woodson (author of [Brown Girl Dreaming](#) and [Harbor Me](#)) will be at the Quick Center at Fairfield University on March 18th @ 7. Register through the Fairfield Public Library site.
- Sean Wilentz (author of [No Property in Man: Slavery and Antislavery at the Nation's Founding](#)) will be speaking at the John Jay Homestead in Katonah on March 19th.

Anti-Racism Training: Dr. Ibram Kendi is enjoying increasing notoriety. He lectured at the Library of Congress; [Stamped from the Beginning](#) is on Barack Obama's short list of recommended books; and Dr. Kendi's new book on Anti-Racism will come out in August. The follow-on webinar to the December 17th Anti-Racism class will be held on April 10. We are attempting to schedule the second session for our community's officials for the Fall since Dr. Kendi's time is limited until then.

Money raised at the MLK event in January of 2018 was applied to the Anti-Racism training in December 2018. TEAM Westport has enough to cover the Essay Contest this year. We'll be making another request for funds this Sunday for the next Anti-Racism class.



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Policing:

- Recruitment efforts are still in process; however, there has been no real success thus far. A key criterion of recruitment is to have a diverse pool of candidates from which select.
- The department wants to bring in selected representatives from the community to interview any possible new hires.
- We discussed multiple topics including the Jussie Smollet case and Sacramento.
- Chief Koskinas is going to Harvard Management School in April on how to handle deadly force.
- We still need sayings for the billboards. Ramin will work on getting this accomplished.
- Chief Koskinas will schedule restart of the Leadership Council meetings.

Playhouse: Lauren Gunderson's play *The Revolutionists* will be presented on Friday at 7PM in observance of International Women's Day. The 2019 season begins at the end of April. This season promises to be quite diverse with 2 women playwrights and 3 works by people of color included. The Playhouse would like Staples students to attend *In the Heights*. Harold will contact James D'Amico to see what can be done.

Schools: The meeting that was scheduled yesterday with Richard Lemons from the Connecticut Center for School Change was postponed because of the weather and will be rescheduled. On March 19, Harold and Lauren are attending the "Leading for Equity" Institute along with Dr. palmer and Principal James D'Amico. We can take some steps in addition to what the Center recommends.

- Connecticut has released the accountability reports for the district that can contain some important information. There continue to be gaps among high-need students.
- B-level classes have been eliminated at Staples. Now there are only A-level, Honors, and AP classes.

TW Book Club: The next discussion will take place on March 25th at the Westport Historical Society at 7:00 PM ([White Fragility](#) by Robin DiAngelo). On March 11th, Catherine and Zoe will host a meeting on Micro-Aggressions within our schools for parents at Saugatuck Church in the Youth Room from 9-10:30 AM as a follow-up to their presentations to several PTA school groups in town. The invitation went out through the PTA.

Westport Historical Society:

The "Remembered" Exhibit is up through June and has been nominated for several prominent awards.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55AM

The next meeting will be held at 8AM on Tuesday, April 2nd at Westport Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine E. McLeod
Secretary