

TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
August 2, 2011, 7:30 AM
Room 201
Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Judy Hamer, Steve Daniels, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Nick Rudd, Bernicestine McLeod, Susan Killian, and Barbara Butler

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 AM.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes for all back meetings were reviewed. Corrections to the June meeting were suggested. The minutes and the amended June minutes were approved.

New Business

What's Up?

- 1) Relative to senior citizens: plans are being made across the state of Connecticut to care for seniors in their homes where possible, but certainly within their local communities versus populating nursing homes. Even people who are already in nursing homes may be placed back into their community under the concept of "Money Follows the Person". This concept is also being tried with people with mental health issues, but the results have not been necessarily positive. This trend is something we should keep an eye on and possibly weigh in on.
- 2) There was a study that showed that black men at Yale (class of 1970) have died in a greater proportion due to stress than their white classmates (triple the rate). This appeared in the May/June 2011 issue of the Yale Alumni Magazine.

Westport Country Playhouse

TEAM Westport has the opportunity to partner with the Westport Country Playhouse (WCP) this time next year during the production of *Raisin in the Sun*, by Lorraine Hansberry. Mark Lamos, Artistic Director, wants to put together a number of events around the play similar to what we did at Staples and what the WCP did around *The Diary of Anne Frank* last year. The play (*Raisin in the Sun*) is about the promise of moving into the suburbs by minorities and what would happen once they 'arrived'. It preceded the tremendous expansion of the black middle class but discusses the issues surrounding this migration and implies how those who would be left would be affected.

Given this information, we brainstormed some possible ideas that TEAM Westport can do in partnering with the WCP related to the experience of all groups versus just the black/white experience portrayed in the play. We'll keep in mind how to approach the subject so that it's framed properly for this community and look to involve parents, students, seniors, school administration, the town, and cultural institutions – everyone to the extent possible.

1. It may be of interest to explore how the audience and the characterization of people in the play might have changed over the 50 years since the play debuted. We can interview people in Westport who may have seen the play originally to ascertain how they felt then versus how they feel now.
2. Use the "www.implicit.harvard.edu" survey from Harvard to determine attitudes toward racism then see how people react to the play knowing that it is set in the 1950s/1960s.

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3. Compare the dynamics of that period to the dynamics of the current day. For example, the significance of the kitchen/dining room table in family life has changed between then and now. This discussion could be particularly useful for young people and a subject for research.
4. Pretend the production is set in 2011/2012 in Westport. Have a community conversation about how the reactions today might contrast with reactions then.
5. Decide what speakers may be of interest (for example, Ruby Dee, Sidney Poitier, Isabel Wilkerson, author of the Warmth of Other Suns, and Bruce Norris who wrote *Clybourne Park* in 2010 portraying events that might have taken place before and after *Raisin in the Sun* – a wraparound play) .
6. Use Fairfield County ‘racial’ history, for example, the Village Creek and the Main Street fire in Westport, as a basis for discussion. Enlist the Historical Society.
7. Do run outs from the show at school auditoriums, if possible. Design a curriculum and teaching guides around the show. Also consider hosting play reading sessions around the County. Some could be on-line.
8. Do a demographic profile of Westport from 1960 to 2010 to see if and how the population has changed.
9. Bring in other school systems and other towns. Also, consider doing theatre parties to talk about the play in different communities in Fairfield. Then report out from each to commonly synthesize the results. This would give other communities opportunities for county-wide collaboration.
10. More than one talkback could be conducted at the Playhouse from different aspects.
11. Culturally the menu of *Raisin in the Sun* could be served in restaurants; also music and dances of the time could be researched and performed.
12. Explore the meaning and origin of the title *Raisin in the Sun* [*A Dream Deferred*, Langston Hughes].

Old Business and Committee Reports were tabled until our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9 AM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 6, 2011, at 7:30 AM in Room 201 of Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary