

TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2012, 7:30 AM
Room 201
Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Maggie Mudd, Susan Ellis, Catherine Onyemelukwe, Patricia Wei, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernice McLeod, Steve Daniels, Judy Hamer, Stu Losen, and Dolores Paoli

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 AM.

A motion was made by Maggie Mudd to approve the minutes for the April 3, 2012 meeting. Patricia Wei seconded the motion. The minutes were accepted with one abstention.

New Business:

What's Up

1. Last Sunday, Henry Louis Gates' program, *Finding your Roots*, featured Ruth Simmons and Condoleezza Rice. Their DNA revealed interesting facts about their heritage.
2. The A Better Chance (ABC) program is celebrating its 10th Anniversary. All 6 of the alumni came back – 4 are employed, all except 1 has graduated. Everyone has done well. The general observation, though, is that it is a tougher entrance year academically and financially to get into schools. As a minority student, what do you do? It sounds like lots of kids will be left behind. Fewer people will be able to pay tuition and it can become worse in the next few years. Something has to be done about college and how it's priced.

Old Business:

Education Committee:

- The Committee will be reviewing nominations for the TEAM Westport award to be given to the Staples senior who has done the most with regard to diversity during their time at the high school. The letters went out to the Administration at Staples for nominations two weeks ago. Maggie is coordinating. Margaret Pinheiro interacts with the Staples Administration. Patricia Wei and Steve Daniels will be evaluating the nominations as well.
- Open Choice:
 - a. There is a commitment for 5 Open Choice students to start in first grade in Westport next school year!
 - b. Harold, Patricia, Maggie, Barbara, and Judy will meet with Julie Horowitz on this coming Friday. The central theme of the discussion will be about having an evening of celebration of the Open Choice program through its Alumni. There could be an equal number of people from Westport who would be involved on a panel perhaps to talk about the impact of Open Choice on their lives as Westporters.
 - c. We can also explore the ties between Project Concern and Open Choice. Harold referenced the video by *Psychology Today* on Project Concern. Mr. Melillo is featured in the video along with a boy and a girl from Bridgeport. Scenes from Westport are interspersed with scenes from Boston and NY State. From Boston, in particular, some of the pieces are vitriolic and visceral. Although Westport was torn apart for 15 years over

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the issue of Project Concern, the video shows that Mr. Melillo handled the kids very well. Joan Schine (one of our Trailblazer honorees) was the head of the Board of Education who took a stand in defense of having kids come to Westport and was almost recalled along with the Board. In the video, also, three psychologists commented on what was happening. Our purpose in showing the video to a wider audience would be to educate the community that Open Choice is part of a continuing tradition, to look at the benefits, and to encourage continuing the tradition via improving Open Choice.

Action:

- 1)Put together a group to give support to Open Choice.
- 2)Seek funding for a community conversation to raise awareness.
- 3)Seek funding for an impact study perhaps through a local university. Stu will pursue this.

Playhouse Partnership Update:

- We have continued meeting with David Kennedy and staff members at the Playhouse. A letter went out to some of the folks we have been trying to get as speakers, but there has been no positive response yet.
- A corporate member of the Playhouse board will pull together the Diversity Officers from some of the corporations in the area to talk to them about possible sponsorship of activities surrounding '*A Raisin in the Sun*' this fall.
- Judy and David Kennedy have met with the Carver Center where they received a great response with regard to students attending a performance. Judy and David are scheduled to meet with the NAACP in June. David has reached out to other possible speakers and is awaiting responses.
- Bernicestine and Harold have spoken with a professor from Brown University who has an interest in the topic of housing and '*A Raisin in the Sun*' and has expressed a desire to participate in some way during the run.
- Catherine is putting together a reading of the play at the Unitarian Church in the fall. She has 5 people thus far who are interested in participating.

Action:

Barbara will set up a meeting with the Clergy Association to let them know about plans for '*A Raisin in the Sun*'.

Programming Strategy and Gameplan:

- Harold, Bernicestine, and Patricia met with Dan Woog with regard to programming for gay teens since '*Harbour*' is also being presented at the Playhouse in the fall. Patricia has also met with someone at Yale. The consensus seems to be that any programming should be celebratory as long as the community is receptive. There is a touring photo exhibit ('*Love Makes a Family*') that is scheduled to be here around the time that '*Harbour*' is here.

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- Dolores attended *Stand Against Racism* sponsored by the Norwalk/Darien YWCA – Racial Justice Committee. There was a panel about the American Dream and Making it in America. The composition of the panel was in a word ‘interesting’.
- We are cosponsoring an event at the Westport Public Library on Monday evening at 7:30PM, presenting the authors of Pax Ethnica: Where and How Diversity Succeeds, Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac. Maggie met them on Saturday evening.
- On Sunday, June 10th, at 2PM at the Westport Public Library, a couple that has spent a number of years as closeted gay men (Alan Shayne and Norman Sunshine) will discuss their book, Double Life: A Love Story from Broadway to Hollywood. We are cosponsoring this event as well.
- We should perhaps have another “Study Circle” amongst ourselves.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 AM.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 5th, 2012, at 7:30 AM in Room 201 of Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary