

TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2013 7:30 AM

Room 201

Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT

Attendees: Maggie Mudd, Brett Aronow, Judy Hamer, Patricia Wei, Harold Bailey (Presiding), Bernicestine McLeod, Catherine Onyemelukwe, and Susan Ellis

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

The minutes from the December 4th, 2012, meeting were reviewed and approved.

New Business

What's Up

We discussed the events in Newtown, CT, that occurred in December. People all over the world responded. Foreign correspondents did not understand why we Americans have this problem with the accessibility of guns. Teachers everywhere were affected. Tour buses are going into Newtown. According to the media, gun sales have gone up.

There is a March on Hartford being organized by a group in Fairfield on February 13th re: gun safety.

Old Business

Programming Strategy and Gameplan

1. Judy will be talking at the Unitarian Church on Sunday, January 20th, at the 9AM and 11AM services about her family's struggles over generations because of housing discrimination against African Americans. This talk is as a result of facts she shared during programming surrounding 'A Raisin in the Sun'.
2. Harold will be speaking at the Westport Sunrise Rotary meeting on February 8th. The meeting begins at 7:30 AM at Bobby Q's on Main Street.
3. Library Programming:
 - a. The author of Sick from Freedom, Jim Downs, will appear on April 3rd at 7:30 PM.
 - b. Eric Falkenstein, who is working on a play about Rev. Martin Luther King, will present on February 12th at 7:30 PM. During this session, he anticipates holding a conversation with someone who knew Dr. King – to be announced.
 - c. The series Eyes on the Prize has been purchased by the Library (DVDs – 14 hours). A programming thought is that we might line up people to speak about different parts of the Civil Rights movement with reference to the series.
4. The series The Abolitionists is starting tonight. A book called Clinging to Mammy, written by Micki McElya, – counterpoint to The Abolitionists. In 1923, Senate approved a statue on the Mall, sponsored by the American Daughters of the Confederacy, to celebrate the 'Mammy' but could not get the House to approve it. The book discusses the role of the Mammy figure, for example, Aunt Jemima in 1853. It's the reverse of The Help. Women who have mammies treat the help like one of the family. It looked like love on the surface, but while the employer's children were well taken care of, the Mammy's children were ignored, so it was not. Perhaps a discussion or presentation of this book might relate to a theme introduced by the popularity of The Help a year or so ago.
5. Stephane was attempting to get to Michelle Norris (recently of NPR) but unsuccessful. She suggested that we work with the Westport Library to reach her. Ms. Norris initiated The Race Card Project after writing her book The Grace of Silence. This could be an interesting event.
6. Maggie is in contact with James Basker at Barnard, who has edited a compendium of anti-slavery writings – American Anti-Slavery Writings from Colonialism to Emancipation (a narrative from antebellum to current). He has received so much interest in the book because of the Lincoln movie, but we hope to schedule him to come to Westport to talk.

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7. There will be a reading of *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage at the Westport Country Playhouse on February 11th at 7PM with a reception before the reading. It premiered at Center Stage in Baltimore when Michael Ross was Managing Director there.
8. Harold and Bernicestine have met with representatives of The Cultural Alliance for the Arts in Fairfield. It is an association comprised of artistic groups in Fairfield County. The Cultural Alliance is reaching out to be inclusive with regard to art and communities of color. Of immediate interest is that Cicely Tyson will be performing in *The Road to Bountiful* on Broadway. We are exploring possibilities centered around this production.
9. Possible Conversation Topic:
In 2010/2011, the Hartford Courant analyzed a study that reports data on the practice of police departments as to their discretionary stopping of people for traffic violations. Blacks and Hispanics are treated worse (racial profiling). Since 2001, 40% of the police districts within the state have sent data; however, it was not really analyzed until the Hartford Courant did so. Alan Noodleman (CONNECT) saw the results and is now meeting with Police Chiefs and town officials to discuss them. Some police chiefs are saying that the data is wrong.
We might use this as a topic for a Conversation on Race topic with regard to Westport.
Action: Harold, Judy and Catherine will pursue.

Education Committee

1. The Social Studies curriculum in the secondary schools here in Westport has apparently changed for the better with theme-based history lessons, units on poverty, discussions on empathy, more diverse reading sources, etc., and a more global focus. Changes will take place in the elementary and middle school curricula as well.
2. Recruiting more staff of color is important, particularly when educating students for today's world when we need to more accurately reflect society. Readings pertaining to this topic are The Twilight of the Elites by Chris Hayes and The Price of Inequality by Joseph Stiglitz.
Action: Invite the Curriculum Coordinators from the Westport School system back for an update.
3. Open Choice seems to be doing all right, but we can check in to see how we look for next year.

Governance Committee

Glenn Lau-Kee is working on Friends of Team Westport and will send a report when he finishes.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 AM.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 5, 2013, at 7:30AM in Room 201 of Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine McLeod
Secretary