

**TEAM Westport Meeting Minutes**  
**November 5, 2013, 7:30 AM**  
**Room 201, Westport Town Hall, Westport, CT**

Attendees: Catherine Onyemelukwe, Judy Hamer, Maggie Mudd, Steve Daniels, Susan Ellis, Bernicestine McLeod, Harold Bailey (presiding), Barbara Butler, and Dolores Paoli

Guest: Jen McCool, Community Engagement Coordinator, Westport Country Playhouse

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

Approval of Minutes: Catherine moved to approve the minutes of October 1st, Maggie seconded. The motion carried with 1 abstention.

**New Business**

What's Up?:

1. The Senate just passed the anti-discrimination bill with the support of 7 Republicans.
2. Steven L. Davis, Dallas 1963, spoke at the Westport Library last evening. He pointed out that the language being used then is the same as language being used today. Public conversation is toxic and leads to bad outcomes. News spreads much faster today because of social media and the media. It's dangerous on all fronts. We should all be concerned about the environment that is building.
3. August Wilson's *Fences* is at Long Wharf, November 27-December 22, directed by Phylicia Rashad.

Westport Country Playhouse – Proposal from Jen McCool

Thank you for being involved in 2012 with the Playhouse's production of *A Raisin in the Sun*. 2014 will be the 5<sup>th</sup> year where the Playhouse has done a community initiative during the run of a play; however, 2013 was on a different scale (more low-key).

During the fall of 2014 (October 7 – November 1), *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage will be produced at the Playhouse. It premiered 10 years ago at Center Stage in Baltimore. The play was read here in February at the Playhouse and some of the members of TEAM Westport attended. It is a beautiful play. Discussion topics around the play include: African American history, labor history, immigration, women, the Panama Canal, African American/Jewish history, opportunities and the lack thereof, economic inequality, and how we make incorrect assumptions about other people automatically.

The Playhouse would love to partner with and collaborate with TEAM Westport again. Some activities and formats are being contemplated while the play is here, but there are many other possibilities as well:

- Have students create personal narratives (encourage them to talk to parents, grandparents).
- Research and discuss the history of Westport, African American history of Westport, and/or the "hidden" history of Westport.
- Events start before the play begins its run and can be held at venues other than the Playhouse. Formats can include: panels, film screenings, book discussions, speakers, etc.
- 10 AM student matinees will be available. The Playhouse will put together a study guide for educational purposes and a video introducing the production overall.

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**Old Business**

Programming Strategy and Gameplan

- 'Eyes on the Prize' has wrapped up after 7 weeks at the library.

Follow-on:

- We need to put a link to the pod-cast of Uhuru Williams' talk on our website and FaceBook page.
- Questions:
  - How do we improve attendance at all sessions?  
*Time slot might have been problematic in this case.*
  - How to make it relevant? Why should it be important?  
*Discussions were the beginning of a free and open discussion about race. We opened with the films so that viewers could have a comfortable discussion about race afterward. This should be important for a wider audience. However, we see the same group at the events.*
  - Are we missing an age-group that is not attending that may be a little less vested? Are we missing younger people (30-45)?  
*One opinion: that age group has a little different attitude and they don't see discrimination and racism as problems. Issues for 'younger' parents include the stress and anxiety that their children are feeling and the extreme pressure to excel in all aspects. Parents are focused on making sure their kids get ahead and their time is filled with these concerns. Consequently, there is no room to consider diversity as an issue of any kind especially since it's not something they obviously have to deal with here in Westport.*
  - Is there a message from TEAM Westport to encourage an appreciation for diversity?  
*We've come at it several different ways with the high school as a partner. We may have an angle with the teachers and the departments at Staples. A connection can be made through the schools and to the parents with programming. Our essay contest should help. Our contest is not a one-time deal, but ongoing so it will keep the message in front of students. This should be extremely helpful to Westport students during the college application process. Now that colleges are beginning to turn away from manufactured applications (Building Beyond Borders, SATs, etc.), what do you do? We had been talking before about having a Staples component of TEAM Westport. One of the issues nationwide is the rising racial demographic, but how do you deal with it? We can build a set of kids who are really interested and authentic. In general, kids don't see the changing demographic especially living here.*

Action: Get a group of Westport kids and Bridgeport kids to talk. Barbara will speak with Harold Levine (Neighborhood Studios) and Bob Francis (RYSAAP).

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▪ Next Steps

The documentary Racial Taboo is available. Take a look at it. Can this be a basis for a discussion on race? These discussions need to continue. This could be another forum where people can talk about issues. Our continual problem is how to get people to come.

Education Committee

○ Diversity Essay Contest

The Westport Library will be a sponsor and will give a room for the event awarding the prizes. We discussed the details about judging, prizes, sponsors, submission process, logistics for getting the application out on the web site by December 1<sup>st</sup>, and for publicizing.

Action: Maggie will talk to the newspapers.

Harold will set up a time to talk to John Dodig and the heads of curriculum for the schools.

○ Social Studies Resource Survey

Please fill it out and encourage anybody to do so. We have 6 names now. Older people, in particular, can be of real value as a resource to come to talk to students in the schools.

Marketing Committee

Reading Recommendations:

We want books people have read. Please widen the circle. This list is going to James D'Amico to be recommended to high school teachers and students.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 AM.

The next meeting will be held at 7:30 AM on Tuesday, December 3, 2013, in Room 201 of Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Bernicestine E. McLeod  
Secretary