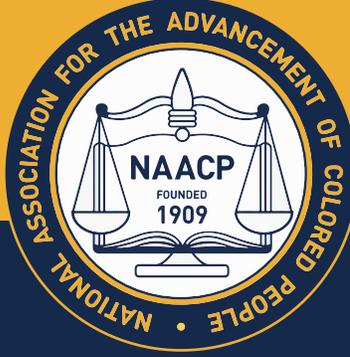


GREATER BRIDGEPORT BRANCH



NAACP

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Representing Bridgeport, Fairfield, Stratford, Trumbull • George Mintz, Branch President

Newsletter: Volume 1, Issue 1 [June 2016]
Communications Committee of NAACP of Bridgeport Branch, 2002

Message from the President



Welcome to all readers! This is a first edition (June-Aug, 2016) of our Bridgeport Branch 2002 Newsletter. We are using it to communicate information that may not be available to you elsewhere, as well as to support use of our outreach Phone Line (203-397-6758) and existing info@bridgeportnaacp.com. Our initial schedule is a quarterly publication. However, as you indicate subjects, people and events of broad or historic interest that you wish covered in our Bridgeport, Fairfield, Stratford and Trumbull communities, you can directly assist us in our service to you. We are a volunteer organization and welcome new members to the NAACP branch as well as folks willing to provide a hand in one or more of our activities. Thank you for checking us out. Pass this along to others when you have finished and let us know how you rate us.

George Mintz

“Race is not a costume” from student leader regarding “ghetto party”

A pre-spring break “theme party” sponsored by five Fairfield University students including three lacrosse players subsequently suspended from current games by their coach became a lightning rod for seeing a lack of understanding how fellow students might be impacted by privileged lack of awareness. The party was held at off campus shore housing and was informal, not sponsored by the University. However, communication of the theme as well as some photos, from yet another party allegedly showing a pregnant young woman through social media, multiplied the awareness of the event. Fairfield University Student Association called a forum in the Barone Center Oak Room that was completely filled.

NAACP Board members met with Fairfield University President **Rev. Jeffrey Von Arx** and members of his leadership team, subsequently talked with Fairfield Police Chief **Gary McNamara** and First Selectman **Mike Tetreau** and finally met with two

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Monthly Meetings: Fourth Thursday

Race Page 1 student leaders after convening with Vice President of Student Affairs **Tom Pellegrino** and VP of Marketing-Communication **Jen Anderson**. Clarification of what really happened and ongoing conversations within the university community on how to take advantage of student body diversity and provide opportunities for people to listen to as well as question each other.

Comments from the student forum like, “Ghetto is a style” indicate the distance required for students unfamiliar with “ghetto reality” to become educated according to **Anif**

McDonald, a senior who is Fairfield University Student Association president. Another student who came from Pakistan to Bridgeport 5 years ago, and graduated from Bassick High, **Anmol Tabassum**, is pursuing a career in International Business and Management. She pointed to the new course on campus this semester, “Black Lives Matter” that had a waiting list as it was oversubscribed, to show the interest of some students in the subjects of race, privilege and power. The branch continues in conversation with university personnel to encourage formation of a chapter at Fairfield University in the fall.

Re-Entry Conference, May 14, 2016

The First Annual Re-Entry Conference of the Bridgeport Chapter of the NAACP, Criminal Justice Committee and Mt. Aery Re-Entry Network was held on Saturday, May 14, 2016 at Mt Aery. It ran from 8AM registration to almost 3 PM closing with more than one dozen speakers giving their best.

Session I addressed sentence reform with a focus on Federal sentencing and elimination of Mandatory sentences for drug offenses by Attorney **Felice Duffy**, formerly of the US Attorney office. Fairer enforcement with the 2010 Fair Sentencing legislation and bolstered prevention efforts were specifically addressed.

Session II focused on Effective Law Enforcement with **David Daniels III**, retired Bridgeport Police Lieutenant talking about Community Service efforts including the 2 hour course he offers “What to do When Police Stop You” and your Fourth Amendment rights. Officers **Nick Ortiz** and **Roger Reed** talked about work with those released and followed such that “not too many come back”. **Kenneth R. Jackson** asked the audience to look at the day as an “educational classroom” and introduced other members of his Street Safe Bridgeport team who deal with gangs members.

Keynote Speakers **Dae McKnight** and **Darlene Dailey** spoke for better than ninety minutes on their respective journeys, from community to incarceration and out again and repetition until the decision to change you presented itself and is accepted. **McKnight** presented many statistics including the fact that 14,381 males are incarcerated in CT today with 3,000 new offenders and over 11,000 recidivists. Much attention was given to how changes can move people from expensive incarceration into community re-entry slowly but steadily. **Dailey** was honest in sharing her early attitudes that dodged hard things like reading skill and other corrective action in turn took the easy route of hustling and substance abuse. The latter moved from recreational to addiction though through recovery she is 20 years clean. When change faced her, she asked the system for 365 days in her last sentence so that she had time to get clean, prepare for return and make a full “heartful change”.

Session III dealt with Eliminating Barriers for formerly incarcerated individuals with presenters from State Commissions, CT Board of Pardons and Parole and Court Support Services division. The current State action to “eliminate the box” on employment applications was raised.

Session IV concluded the day with Survivors of Crime. Personally these speakers touched me profoundly, starting with YANA (You Are Not Alone) with **Dawn Spearman** talking about victim and family support, including the shooting locally one day previous. YANA was followed by **Richard Mancini**, a former homicide detective, whose daughter was killed by a drunken driver and works to identify and support existing victim rights. He does not pursue vengeance, but is a blessing to victim families as an advocate. **Robert Middleton**, age 18, spoke of the difficulty of growing up as child of incarcerated parents and the role of staying super busy so as to keep making good choices. Thanks to **Sauda Baraka**, NAACP Criminal Justice Comm., **George Mintz**, NAACP President and **Deacon Luis Febres**, Re-Entry Ministry and **Pastor Anthony Bennett** of Mt Aery Baptist Church.

John Marshall Lee

**Become a Member
Have a complaint?
More info?**

(203) 397-6758

or

www.bridgportnaacp.com

Student Spotlight: Rahadra Strickland, Hall School



Hi my name is Rahadra Strickland. I am a 5th grader at Hall School. I'm here to tell you what turnaround arts has meant to me. When I was younger, I didn't care about school due to the fact I was not interested in what I was learning.

When I got into the 1st grade, I started to have behavior problems. When I was in the second grade I always got kicked out of class, and one time I even got suspended and by the time I got to the third grade, I was always in red or blue, as I have learned through the "ruler program". I left Hall in 4th grade, but returned in 5th grade.

This is when we started with the turnaround arts program. I loved it there even more; and everyone started to notice the difference in my behavior. We did focus five, and learned about concentration and cooperation. That made me focus on my work more, and I also learned how to make stronger choices and control my voice. This helped me to change my behavior in school for the better. I still get mad or have problems, but now I know ways that I can express myself in a positive way.

In using visual art thinking strategies I have seen more art and

can try to see what the artist was attempting to explain.

By February, things really changed for me when I got chosen to be in a Black History Month Program to say a speech by Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I A Woman", and that gave me the confidence to try out for our first school play, "Annie". I got the role of Ms. Hannigan. I worked hard with the other students after school for five months. It was fun to work towards something new and exciting. I also got to know many of the other students in my school. I had always kept myself apart from many of the other kids, but this gave me a chance to get to know many of them. We worked together, and if I forgot my lines they helped me. We cheered each other on and supported each other.



This year I have not only turned around my behavior, but my grades too. I made the honor roll for the first time, not once but twice. I have made friends with other kids that I probably wouldn't have if not for the experiences with the arts who support and care about me. I am now interested in learning new things at school and like coming to school. And that is what Hall School and the Turnaround Arts Program means to me.

NAACP Awaits Bridgeport Police Department Personnel Action and Internal Report

The Bridgeport Police Department has frequently been in the news during the past year highlighted by a mayoral contest on public safety matters. In late September 2015, 'hate' letters were found on at least eight vehicles in the Police Department Parking lot. The Police Department letterhead included Chief Joseph Gaudett's name and the alleged signature of Assistant Chief Nardozzi. The body of the letter listed "White Power Emerald Society" and then the names of former and current black officers previous to the hateful racially targeted material.

Chief Nardozzi denied signing the paper and declared that the sentiments of the letter were not his. Investigations by the State Attorney's office and the Bridgeport Police Department were opened. Clive Higgins, an African American former police officer, was found responsible for producing the material. Higgins made a statement after his arrest indicating that Lt. Lonnie Blackwell, an African American serving as head of the

Bridgeport Police Academy and leader of the Bridgeport Guardians had directed him to that activity. Blackwell was suspended in December. The investigation and report from the state attorney has been completed for more than six months. It found no grounds to pursue legal action. Yet Blackwell's suspension with pay continues and his services are lost to the important ongoing training of officers. His personnel hearing is complete. We wait for the chief to render a final decision. On June 15, it was revealed that the chief is consulting with legal counsel.

Chief Perez has indicated his support for regular meetings with community representatives as an open and accountable community initiative. The NAACP of Greater Bridgeport will continue to pursue the internal affairs findings as well as to explore opportunities for the City to seriously consider African Americans in the leadership and recruitment ranks.

Next Edition News... WPCA Process in Bridgeport: Your Home at Risk!

Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul, Eddie S. Glaude, Jr. 2016

As Professor of African-American Studies and Religion at Princeton University, Glaude “offers a thicker description of current state of black America”. In the final months of President Obama’s two terms and post-Ferguson, when white people are valued more than others, he sees a “value gap” and racial habits (things we do without thinking) that sustain racial inequality. He explores black liberal politics.....”the wrongheaded idea that some leader in some back room can represent the interests of black people without any mechanism of accountability.” Working his way through the blood that has been spilled in communities across the country and the way that young people have responded he indicates, “If we are committed to American democracy, and by some twisted fate I must be, we have to work

for something more transformative.” “It has to occur at many levels: in government, in communities among individuals.” “What gets lost in all this are the actual lives of real black people” he cautions to those who would measure everything with statistics or ignore black reality when asking for government intervention. Finally Glaude calls for reimagining black politics by blacks so that the “narrow and limited vision of black people among black people” can “be tossed in the garbage.” The text is well supported with notes for each chapter and suggested readings as well. It is a book to be read and discussed for deeper understanding of what is ongoing in our country today sapping ‘black and white’ strength daily and sickening us with unnecessary deaths too often. (Crown Publishers)

District 131 Council member, Jack Banta, shares outrage at Council session....

At a City Council meeting on June 6, 2016 South End Councilperson Jack Banta requested a moment of personal privilege following opening ceremonies. He expressed his outrage at the appointment process by the Mayor of a new Fire Chief. The City has had historic legal issues regarding public safety hiring and has spent much taxpayer money on legal defense and subsequent settlements with African American officers over the years. Banta, whose father was a member of the New York Fire Department, and a Vulcan member, has seen both white and African American members of the local Firebirds concerned with the continuing racial insensitivity. The process “failed two well qualified Deputy Chiefs who are African Americans and were not even interviewed.” “The Mayor has relied on the community to provide him a “second chance” opportunity to be Mayor, but has been insensitive to the community history with no transparency when he could have taken a historic step.” After the statement Banta walked out of the Council chambers.



Marching Proudly in the Juneteenth Parade with the Housatonic Community College Banner are NAACP College Chapter member Gail McNair, First Vice President and Marsha L. Smith, Advisor.

Books to Read:

Have a favorite?

Perhaps an older work of fiction with a message for today?

Or non-fiction that is a current must read?

Share your passion with all of us.

TIPS

TIPS-Trustworthy Information for Public Safety

Important Information:

- Who? Name, License Plate, etc.
- What were they doing? To whom? Describe...
- When were they acting out? Time of day, day of week?
- Where was the scene of the activity? Street? Place? Hangout?
- How many people or times?
- Why are they a threat to the neighborhood?