

GREATER BRIDGEPORT BRANCH N A A C P

The Vision of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is to ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights and there is no racial hatred or racial discrimination

Newsletter: Volume 2, Double Issue [November 2017] | Communications Committee of NAACP of Bridgeport Branch, 2002

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

Message from the President

On behalf of the officers and the executive committee members, I would like to thank all who worked to make the NAACP Great Debate a success for our students and for our Bridgeport Public Schools. Working together, we were successful in getting 3,000 of our Bridgeport students to Webster Arena for the Great Debate on October 20, 2017. The CT State NAACP Convention was held on Saturday, October 21, 2017 in Trumbull, CT at the Trumbull Marriott Hotel. The following action items were discussed:



- Minority Teacher Recruitment Plan for 2017/8
- Greater Bridgeport NAACP Summit Spring of 2018
- Education, Economic Development, Housing and Health
- Membership Drive for 2018
- Get out the Vote in 2018
- Criminal Justice & Criminal Reform

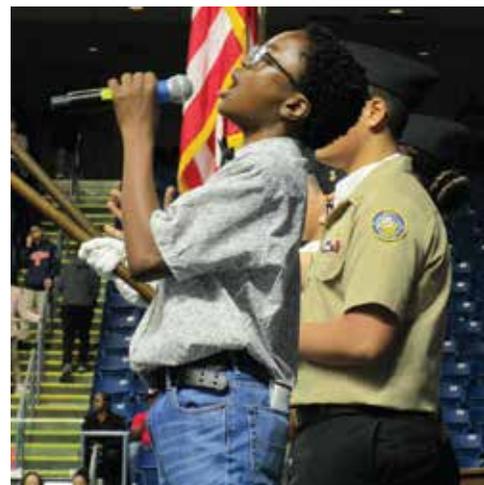
My vision for the Greater Bridgeport Branch in 2018 is the following:

- Plan a Massive Voter turnout in 2018 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1968 Voter Rights Act
- Establish Youth & College Groups in local high schools and colleges
- Panel discussions and educational forums on the power of voting & political representation
- Community Forums on Criminal Justice & the Legal System
- Public Education and School Governance in the Greater Bridgeport Region
- Economic Development & Employment in Bridgeport

It is my personal wish that each of you will have a Blessed, Safe, Healthy and Happy Holiday Season. I sincerely ask each of you to help the branch achieve the above goals in a collaborative way that will create a sense of pride, dignity and respect for all people.



Great Debate, October 13, 2017, Bridgeport. 8,000 in attendance.



Right: Ajibola Tajudeen, Grade 8, High Horizons Magnet School.

High School Graduation Course Requirements Increase

On October 23 the Bridgeport Board of Ed heard a committee recommend three courses at least one of which will be a graduation requirement. Under the direction of Principal Joseph (Jay) Lipp members of the graduating class of 2022, entering high school in the fall of 2017 can take **African American Studies, Caribbean/Latin Studies or Perspectives on Race**, each a half-year course to pair with Civics. Currently only one year of American History and one-half year of civics are required to graduate.

The changes were initiated in response to attempts by the State of CT to require more intense preparation for graduation. At the moment text selection and teacher training are under study. It is also something advanced by Sauda Baraka, Board of Ed member, who believes that “cultural competency has been shown to change the direction of young people and make them more

interested in learning.” Lipp also believes that this subject matter will migrate into the middle school course content where art, music, literature, and social studies can reinforce such courses and at the end of a semester, a school can create a celebration for the entire school community with the many things learned that year.

As a student of American History or Civics years ago. I did not learn enough about subjects that would have helped me become a more informed resident of Bridgeport. Such course work might also help neighbors become more ready to participate in our democratic process of learning, knowing, writing, standing for office and voting, especially to the extent of entering the polling booth confident in our understanding and the choice made while voting. Will such former students make for a stronger electorate in the future? Time will tell.

BOOK REVIEW: THE THIRD RECONSTRUCTION

How a Moral Movement is overcoming the politics of Division and Fear, Reverend Dr. William J. Barber II Beacon Press, 2016

Hailing from North Carolina where he is President of the state NAACP Chapter, Barber provides context of the first period of Reconstruction and changes that occurred in North Carolina and around the South. He calls the Civil Rights fight of the 60’s a second reconstruction and looks at the moral movement like Moral Mondays where oppressed folks from many backgrounds and grievances have gathered together to fight injustice. “Before you get loud, make sure you’re not wrong.” So, he learned “how essential an economic and political analysis is to moral leadership”.

When we all get together, something powerful can happen. Fusion campaigns joining disparate individuals and groups who deep down were using law, customs and religious interpretations to maintain a status quo for those practicing white supremacy and supporting all action moving towards the practice of equal rights. Learning really began in 2010 when reconstruction necessary and deconstruction sought began to be enacted.

“Civil disobedience is a tactic that must be employed

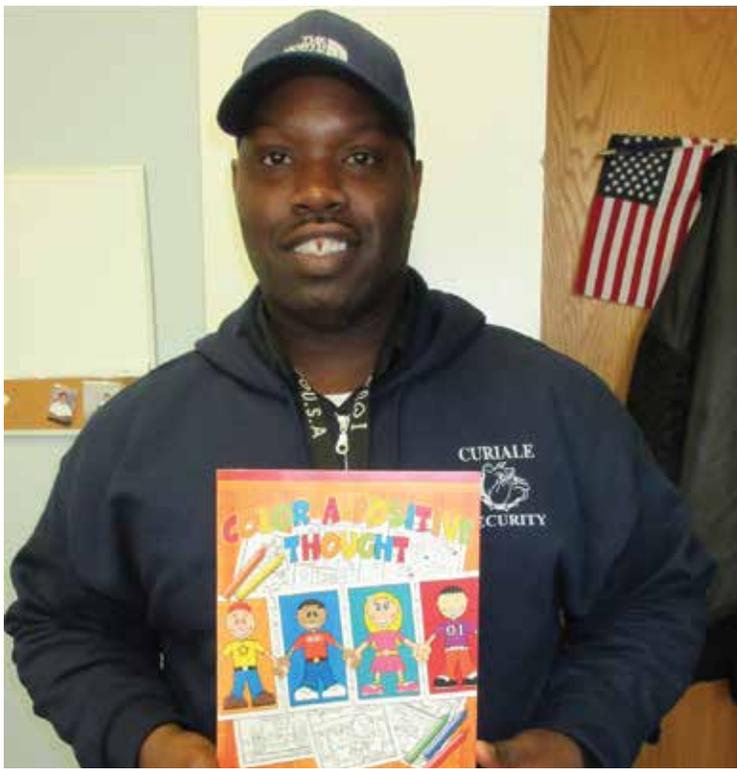
strategically” Barber writes. He introduces Ghandi’s four steps: 1) Study all aspects of the injustice, 2) Attempt negotiation with the ‘ruling authorities’, 3) When refusal is the response, self purification individually and personally is necessary preparation to embrace suffering and 4) Direct action. It is the voices of the least regarded, those who have suffered the most that call out for you to speak for them. It is hard to listen to those voices and deny their truth for those who are mostly ignorant and unknowing. Because it is a moral struggle, as Barber relates, “we knew we would win if we didn’t give up.”

It’s a relatively thin paperback volume to provide such truth and hope. The most significant fact I learned was from the men who reformed the North Carolina Constitution in the 19th century reconstruction. Where the original North Carolina document talked about “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” as the rights of men, the rewrite talked about “persons” and included new language that said “life, liberty, the enjoyment of the fruit of their own labor, and the pursuit of happiness.” Barber’s emphasis is so wonderful and applies universally so as to be a real American value, even at a time when wealth seems to have more value than persons, where truth is trashed in the public meeting place daily and when moral authority is wanting in the land.

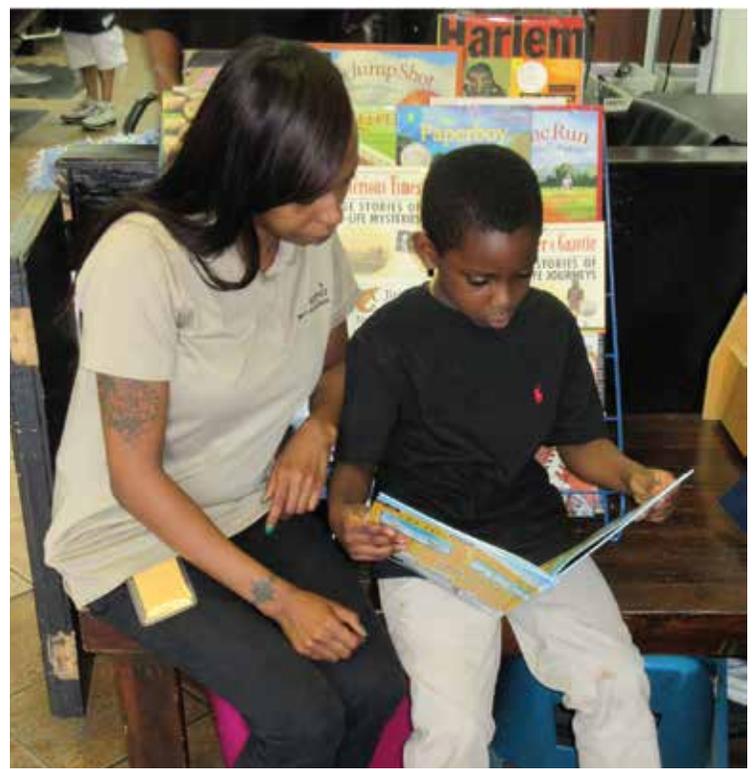
Meetings of the Greater Bridgeport Branch NAACP are scheduled for the fourth Thursday of each month (except holidays) at the Burroughs Center, 2475 Fairfield Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06605.

Next meeting is on Tuesday, November 28, 2017

Executive sessions are held from 5:30 - 6:30 pm followed by the general meeting until 8:00 pm. All are welcome to the general session



School Security Officer Harry Bell was featured last month because of his creation of COLOR A POSITIVE THOUGHT (VOLUME 1&2) coloring books that feature an opportunity to use crayons and view a positive act for daily practice. He has initiated a formal mentoring program for eight youth. Mentor phone conversations weekly and monthly fun and education experiences happen. Most days you can find him on duty at Curiale School.



Stylz Barbershop at 1156 State Street is the location of this picture of Camari Verner and his mother reading one selection from the book stand installed months ago. It carries reading materials of interest to males of all ages. Anthony Sanchez, proprietor of Stylz was happy to become the first barber shop in Bridgeport to set up such a service for his patrons in order to support strong reading as a way to lifetime learning.

November 2017: A referendum question on election day, provided voters with a chance to affirm a 1.3 mil allocation of FY 2018-19 which will be reviewed in the spring of 2018. Voters in every district responded affirmatively. That may allow the library board to develop older as well as a new location in the Eastern part of Bridgeport, including Newfield and Old Mill Green branches. It is the second time in the past decade that voters have shown support for library services despite opposition from elected city leaders.

Another Look at “Second Chances” in Bridgeport

(In the last edition of the Newsletter we featured interviews with two administrative officials, Kimberly Staley, Chief Administrative Officer for the City and Louis Reed who was responsible for City “second chance” activities as a former offender himself. Reed has since departed his position but the situation of former incarcerated members of the community is so serious that we revisit the subject once again.)

Ms. Staley reminded me that approximately 1200 currently incarcerated members of the Bridgeport community will be released in the next twelve months. It is this population that the “Mayor’s Initiative for Reentry Affairs” (MIRA) attempts to reach in the months previous to release, specifically the 90 days before they are out. This first step is termed “outreach and recruitment”. Second it leads to a “basic needs assessment” worked up by staff. The third step is a referral to one or more community sources to assist with unmet needs.

CAO Staley was responsible for such a program in Hartford that

also offered some services. Bridgeport already enjoys a variety of programs to those released and under direction of State parole and probation personnel. They include Career Resources, Family ReEntry, RYASAP, Project Longevity, ABCD and Social Services from the City among many. So establishing a new service was deemed inappropriate. Currently applications for MIRA leadership are being received. Staley indicated that while MIRA continues to fall under her overall management responsibility, her major task is monitoring results and summoning adequate resources to support its mission.

Interns from Housatonic College are responsible for data entry from the assessments and presumably the results which include tracking and referring those who have already returned and yet have unmet needs where some contact and referral may move them to a productive path for person, family and community. Contact can be made with the CAO office 203-576-3963 until a new MIRA director is retained by the City.

Freedom Fund 2017 Keynote Speaker

Andrew Mitchell Davenport

Civil Rights Today: A Historical Perspective



We live in a paradoxical country. Our times are best understood not as interesting, but as maddening and absurd. And perhaps they have always been such in this city, on this land, first occupied by Native Americans, then settled by subjects of a far-away monarch in the decades before we termed ourselves Americans. We are, after all, in Bridgeport: a city made famous by PT Barnum...whose career began by purchasing an elderly woman, Joice Heth, out of slavery and displaying her as George Washington's 161 year-old wet nurse. He made a fortune off of her. In this, of course, tragically, he was not alone.

I want to speak this evening about history. As a student, as a teacher and a writer, as a citizen of the United States, I take it as a holy obligation to know our history—and to criticize misinterpretations and misrepresentations of our history. I was not always so interested in the past, though I have always been a voracious reader. I was not such a great student, in high school nor in college, and I take it that teachers are a forgiving bunch because my former teachers at Fairfield Prep, knowing full well my teenage aptitude toward misbehavior, hired me. And now I have my own flock of students to shepherd, some of whom I must now discipline as I once was. Karma, I've heard it said, is a royal you-know-what. I try to instill within my students that the study of history is a battle toward truths that others may not want you to know. Command of history is a powerful weapon, indeed.

Our America suffers from amnesia; and so we remember. We are the bearers of counter-memories, so that when others attempt to tell us that this is the best country in the world, we might say, but, sir, we still have a long way to go.

Our America, as news bulletins illustrate each day, is violent; and so we protest violence and hatred in all their wicked ways.

This is our America. This is our America. And this is the America I celebrate and criticize this evening.

Our America is defined by history—a history we live and die with. This is a violent, amnesiac country, and so we protest and condemn our evil ways; and we remember that we live in a nation aspiring to the ideals of liberty but daily lived out in a reality of racial, economic, religious, and gender oppression. Again, a paradox: Thomas Jefferson, writer of the Declaration of Independence, enslaved 607 people. He described the peculiar institution of slavery as holding the wolf by the ear. We have inherited the wolf. This is the history I call forth. The writer Christina Sharpe calls this history “weather.”

It is weather, and even if the country, every country, any country, tries to forget and even if “every tree and grass blade [of the place] dies,” it is the atmosphere: slave law transformed into lynch law, into Jim and Jane Crow, and other administrative logics that remember the brutal conditions of enslavement after the event of slavery supposedly came to an end...When the only certainty is the weather that produces a pervasive climate of anti-blackness, what must we know in order to move through these environments in which the push is always toward black death?

How will we make it through this thing? What must we know? That the weather of our America is defined by repetitions of ritualistic violence. That we must be vigilant, advocating for the protection of our fellow citizen's civil rights.

What must we know? That race is America's original fiction but that racism is now and has been the order of the day, ever since the social construction of race centuries ago when administrative logics crafted and virtually perfected slave law.

What must we know? That, in the words of the philosopher Stuart Hall, if you want to witness “how difference operates inside people's heads...you have to go to art, you have to go to culture—to where people imagine, where they fantasize, where they symbolize.”

Jefferson and the Founding Fathers imagined and wrote the United States of America into existence. They imagined a way forward—replete with the necessary adornments of any nation: founding myths and creeds and, eventually, a symbol—a flag—to pledge allegiance to, or protest with.

I had the opportunity to spend this past summer at what was once Jefferson's home, his Monticello plantation, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Monticello was Jefferson's home, yes, but it was also home to hundreds of enslaved Americans of African descent. My ancestors were enslaved there.

While in Charlottesville, I studied an oral history archive, the Getting Word Project, comprised of memories of descendants of Jefferson's enslaved community. I mentioned earlier that Jefferson owned 607 individuals during the course of his lifetime. Nearly two hundred years after his death, there must be tens of thousands of us still living in the United States. One of these descendants, William Monroe Trotter, was a co-founder with W.E.B. Du Bois of the Niagara Movement, a forerunner of the NAACP.

Studying the Getting Word Project this summer, I came across the recollections of two of William Monroe Trotter's relatives. In 1998, two researchers arrived at 2001 15th Street, NW, in Washington, D.C., where Bessie Baskerville Dorsey, born in 1902, was joined by her cousin Calvin Jefferson for an afternoon interview. Ms. Dorsey revealed that she had heard her people all "worked up there at Monticello. They had huge gardens, and my great-grandfather, I heard, was the blacksmith. He did the shoeing of the horses." Ms. Dorsey recalled growing up just outside of Charlottesville in Campbell's Station; all the boys in the neighborhood would come over to her grandmother Carrie Ann's house after church and drink the liquor her grandmother had made. The family moved to Washington, D.C., and Bessie was married to a young man, who was a chauffeur at a department store. He and his friends stole fancy underwear from the store for Ms. Dorsey to have. The marriage didn't last.

Ms. Dorsey's cousin Calvin was born at home on Christmas Eve, 1946; his parents didn't have money for a hospital birth. "All my life I wanted to know [about my past]," Calvin said. In 1978 Calvin finally began researching, "Because I kept telling my Cousin Bessie that I would do it and she finally told me that I wasn't going to do it, so I decided I better do it to show her that I could do it.

The more I find out, the more I want to know because, to me, the whole system at Monticello is a small image of what has happened to the country as a whole. At Monticello you have the beginnings of people called Negroes, basically, because you have one side of the family that you can tell is totally African. The other side of the family is mixed. And you can see that beginning, you can see how people became separated based upon skills, knowledge and color. You can see it at Monticello. And to know that I think it gets you a little bit closer to some of the problems that this country has today based upon race.

When I speak of descendants of Monticello's enslaved community, I speak in universal terms, just as Calvin Jefferson does: "Monticello is a small image of what has happened to the country as a whole." As Americans, we are all descendants. As citizens, we are by definition bestowed with certain unalienable rights, as imagined by Thomas Jefferson. I am a descendant of enslaved peoples at Monticello, yes, but I am a descendant of peoples enslaved in other areas of Virginia, and through my father, I am a descendant of recent Irish immigrants to this

country, too. You and I, all of us gathered here, are related in the common pursuit of fulfilling the ideals bestowed upon us by the Declaration of Independence and protected by the Constitution. As a great friend of mine, the writer Lewis Lapham, says, "We must love our fellow citizens not because they are great or that they are good or famous, but because they are our fellow citizens." Each of us presents to each other an original astonishment: the incalculable value of a life.

Our struggle for recognition continues. Others corrupt our plain-as-fact statement that "black lives matter." Why do others corrupt our message into "we hate America"? That is not our message. We love America, and so we criticize her. We are gathered here because we love her; and our love, by necessity, must be critical. Ours is a necessary endeavor. We must always be critical, always, of this American experiment. And for good reason. The study of history affords us the knowledge that, while the moral arc of the universe might bend toward justice, it must be forcibly bent—bent by protest, by criticism, by men and women like you and I. Our collective memory tells us that this is the case.

Nearly twenty years after being interviewed by the Getting Word Project, Calvin Jefferson has retired and relocated to a home in a gated golf community in Palmyra, Virginia, just fifteen miles from Monticello, where I visited with him and his family this summer during a party in celebration of his son Julius' 49th birthday. Julius began researching history as a 10-year-old at his father's side. He attended Howard, and thanks to those research skills honed in the archives next to his father, Julius became so adept that he is now a librarian at the Library of Congress, an institution founded by Thomas Jefferson.

Calvin is cooking on the grill outside as two hapless golfers search for a stray ball a few dozen yards from his back porch. I grab a soda and sit in an Adirondack chair beside Julius as he offers his countermemories to Jefferson's narrative of an America founded in freedom. Julius' mind turns to Jefferson again. "Jefferson was not a great man unto himself. He had unpaid, enslaved individuals who were extremely skilled and talented. And for the most part, they're all from the same families. These five to eight families from the beginning to the end."

The following morning after Calvin's cookout, two of Calvin's granddaughters visited with me where I was staying at Tufton Farm, once owned by Thomas Jefferson, and where our ancestors were enslaved. Calvin's littlest granddaughter, about to begin preschool, runs around the property chasing butterflies, demanding to be played with and thrown in the air. Her giggles can be heard across the valley. That beautiful, beautiful child. There's a fire in her belly and a story in her blood.

You see, the currents of the past are alive within us today. Our struggle is an assurance that the past is brought to bear in the present, despite what either might hold. We are witnesses, we are here, and I love you. We are inheritors of an outrageous fortune.

BOOK REVIEW: NO BLACK HEROES

The true story of a black police officer's struggle with racism, corruption and crime. By William "Ron" Bailey 2017 I Roc Publishing LLC

Bailey's story starts in Coatesville PA where his father was a steelworker and segregation was still alive. He introduces us to a vivid story of how his father was humiliated while seeking a sandwich to feed his young son on "the wrong day". Ron's father died before he ever got a second chance to take the son out to eat. That set in motion a move to Bridgeport, CT near to PT Barnum, then in Father Panik Village and by age 15 to Green Homes where he continued to find racist behavior the norm. A fight while at Central placed him in the Principal's office where the white student's story was believed and he was sent home termed a liar. He returned with his widow Mother in a taxi to revisit the principal's office where she is quoted:

"Don't you ever call my son a liar. I didn't raise him that way. His father sure enough didn't. You hear me."

"Yes, Mrs. Bailey, I understand."

"Good day, sir."

"I would forever have to live up to that standard she and Dad set" Bailey tells us.

Bailey trained with a class of 80 recruits and the first day was July 20, 1983 and was not sure at that time why serving and protecting the public was his chosen vocation. Drugs and gangs were rampant in the City at the time, and most of the chapters deal with Bailey's work in various task forces, his attempt to increase and demonstrate his skills in order to be considered for promotion, and the stark yet subtle opposition to the advancement of African Americans.

As a lighter skinned person of color he could insert himself into various drug sites as a spotter where whites and others could not. His use of clothing, makeup and behavioral cover to pass and be ignored by drug spotters, made him very effective, all the while knowing that to be caught and outed was a dangerous reality. The ability to get inside an area, set himself in a lookout position and report by radio the buyers and sellers of drugs including the cars they used on multiple occasions resulted in more "business" than police booking could handle. Drugs, money, cars, and weapons including violent gang members who were known killers were the product of his skillful participation in such actions. Yet from the beginning others would get the credit and notice in their file.

The Guardians was an organization formed to represent the needs of African American officers, which Bailey later came to lead. It was important to those men and women of color who wished to serve honestly and with integrity. Not all blacks or whites showed respect for Bailey reveals over the years. The

Bridgeport Police Department was under Federal court jurisdiction for many of his years of service, something the City tried to reverse and finally did. Bailey's service came under several Chiefs of Police, African American, white and Hispanic. But the racial attitudes that kept the numbers of blacks relatively low in comparison to their numbers in the community were in evidence in other ways, for instance training opportunities (necessary for advancement) seemed to come to white officers with less experience and motivation. Bailey discovered that certain ranking officers made sure that the opportunities stayed essentially unreported to the Department and restricted to favored whites, some of whom were outright racist.

Learning and using martial arts on the job as well as excelling in their practice nationally was something smart for Officer Bailey. But using his knowledge of the City on undercover assignments impressed me even more. The United Illuminating plant chimney thrusts into the sky some 400 feet and has red and white markings on it. Ron decided that it would be an ideal location to access to look down into Marina Village and note departing buyers as many as several miles away. A ten minute ride on an external stack elevator was necessary to sit at the very top of the stack on a two foot molding around the stack rim. And the stack moved in the breeze.

His empathy for the people he served, his neighbors is most clear whether to term a person ignorant for considering project residents as "good for nothings who stayed at home and collect". He was around to see community policing begin and earn trust and respect by teaching youngsters rhymes and hand games that caught on. Bailey as a man of faith could listen to spiritual advice and know that it directed his behavior even to living a miracle and witnessing another. As he puts it, "There was so much I had done, not because I had to, but because I wanted to. It was unsettling to be considered someone of importance because of a few fights on the streets.people missed the things that really defined me; a smile, handshake or a hug someone needed.....I could only hope that someday people would realize there's more to me than that."

**Invest in Civil Rights, for you and for all....
NAACP Annual Membership\$30....**

For more than a Century the NAACP has been recognized as an organization that will stand with others to present their grievances and pursue justice. Members support each other. They serve on Committees and urge others to join and address what they see in our community that is not right. Contact Vanessa Williams, Membership Chair viz naACP@bridgeportnaACP.com for membership forms or answers to questions.

How's Your Housing?

Does “No hot water for tenants” imply “hot water for management”? What does “no heat” at night mean to management?

When you are asked to think of a vulnerable population in your community, where does your attention go? Do you tune out, saying, “That’s not my problem? Good luck.” Or does your mind move to children, the elderly, the disabled, or those who have suffered past abuse or trauma that impairs their world today? It can be a broad world that demands much of mercy and charity from the community. It also demands accountability from those who have taken a position as stewards of vulnerable people. How does owner/management respond to elected tenant representatives?

Housing is one area where those who are poorest have real issues when it comes to shelter from the elements, safety within their four walls, a healthy environment free of lead, rodent or insect threats and a management responsive to issues and concerns as they arise. Who holds management to their duties and responsibilities when they fail to uphold basic quality of life standards, ignore stated limits for occupancy of one bedroom units, or allow businesses to function within residences? Who gets into ‘hot water’ for failure to administer fairly and with

justice for all?

And today ‘hot water’ is the issue in a least one locality. When the mechanicals in a housing complex become old, sometimes they begin to deliver intermittently, or weakly or possibly, not at all. A local Section 8 complex for elderly and disabled has on two occasions in a recent 5 week period failed to maintain availability of hot water for five days at a time. That is a quality of life omission according to lawyers familiar with housing law. What if it happens that service of equipment is uneven and some tenants get lukewarm water, at best, and others get only cold water? Or what happens when a pipe breaks, the Fire Department is called to close off the break, and no matter what is done to restore appropriate water circulation, residents are left with incomplete restoration of walls and interiors leading to unhealthy mold conditions?

Today we are raising the simple issue of ‘hot water’ for bathing and for kitchen use. Whom do you call? How long do you reasonably wait? What is fair and just for people who live in public housing? Are there consequences for those who fail to care for or seek to profit from the exercise or abuse of their power? Time will tell.



Freedom Fund Dinner 2017 October 13, 2017, Bridgeport Holiday Inn

*Left: Board Members with
President George Mintz*

*Below Left: Senator Richard Blumenthal-
Civil Rights and Justice*

*Below: Family and friends gathered to honor
Laurayne Farrar James honored with
the Ella Anderson NAACP Image Award.*



A Reflection On American History - John Marshall Lee, Editor

United, blessed, privileged, fearful, white and for too much of history, ignorant:

God Bless America... bountiful and beautiful.....sweet land of liberty...freedoms... to assemble, speak and practice religion....and equal rights (initially white, literate men with property).....a second chance for those from other lands who would work in the growing capitalist enterprise, dreaming and hoping for chances for an educated second generation? Awareness of American history? Systemic racism? 'White supremacy'?

Perhaps we know our family story and where it intersects those of other people with similar skin coloration particularly those from Western Europe. But do we know or have we reflected on those others who were present when the first Europeans landed? How did refugees, freedom seekers and settlers deal with those of color who were present? The land was so fertile and large that more workers were required to make the land fruitful, especially in the Southern colonies (and States). Africans captured in battle were brought bound or in chains to coastal ports, suffering the Middle Passage across the Atlantic for 300 years. 8% of the 6 Million enslaved blacks were landed in the colonies and sold, before importation was made illegal in 1807. Chattel slavery continued. By 1861 blacks in the US had grown to about 4 Million people. 10% served in Northern and Southern armies during the Civil War creating about 60,000 'red-blooded' casualties.

After the Emancipation Proclamation (1863) and Civil War surrender (1865) plantations, whose real wealth had been humans indentured and controlled for life, needed land workers. Relations changed to keep cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar cane crops flowing. Despite reconstruction, segregation and Jim Crow, including lynching, kept African Americans in an inferior place common in the South. In the North limited education, housing, and workplace opportunities maintained segregation there for the most part. "Inferiority of blacks" seemed a self-fulfilling eventuality over generations. The presence of notable and exceptional blacks despite challenges caused awareness to rise among those neighbors using heart, mind, and spirit to live and grow in Christian wisdom.

Country of opportunity for all...if fair chances and basic lessons are available to all? By God provided talent, gifts of certain kinds appeared in athletic, musical, artistic, and comedic format, though skill at humor may be a special gift to those who have lived with absurdity for too long. Does 'white privilege', if understood as a matter of birth chance, something unearned, when referenced and put in a rightful place, allow people to identify how much such privilege has contributed to their journey thus far? How much 'story' is credited to that which is a gift at birth? Does knowing the story of your family and listening to that of others lead to connections of 'universal' experiences that transcend skin color? How do we address this gift or privilege in living out our years? Do we call upon the Spirit daily in grateful prayer for grace and wisdom? Time will tell.

OBITUARY: On August 26, 2017 a back to school celebration at P T Barnum was scheduled including backpacks for 400, grilled hot dogs and hamburgers and free haircuts from **Deon Rodney** shown in each photo with two young customers. Less than three weeks later a gun-carrying intruder to his Park Avenue business location shot and killed the generous and skilled barber who came from Jamaica about five years ago.

