

Library Forges Pathway For Dialogue

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their community.

Homa Naficy outlined the essence of Community Dialogue, how it works, the benefits and outcome to participants and their communities. She said that the project builds on US citizenship, providing more than just Citizenship Education but promoting continuing learning.

Guest speaker Doe Hentschel, vice president, Leadership Greater Hartford made a critical point, "The world is changing rapidly. Adults are recognizing their needs and are motivated to learn. They are coming together with people who are learning, some are spending long hours to learn a new language. Some have become self-directive, seeking out things they need to learn."

"Regardless of our learning needs, all of us will need continuing education to function in this life," Hentschel said.

Mayor Pedro Segarra lauded the Hartford Public

Library's project and underscored the fact that "adult learning is critical to our city's productivity and we must ensure that our population gets access to our system."

Segarra said, "the city is committed to work in collaboration with other organizations including the library. Together, they help the city to do better. The biggest strength of our city is its diversity," he added.

Estela Morales' story certainly tells the impact of adult learning as a pathway to change. Morales emigrated from Mexico. She never spoke English. She went through various organizations and studied English as a second language for three years. Now she is a student in Early Childhood Education at Capital Community College. She is a family literacy facilitator at the Adult Education Center of Hartford and has empowered herself through Citizenship Education and became a citizen of the United States in 2011.

"Now I am able to vote in this year's election," Morales said.

According to Morales, "In

this country adults can go to school free of cost and access many resources in Adult Education. Currently, she is involved with Voices of Adult Learners (VOCAL), an organization that enabled her to tell her story which continues to motivate people.

After Carolyn Abdullah of Every Democracy delineated the audience in several breakout groups, it was a spectacular scene to see each group with a facilitator and engaged in an interactive dialogue between and among themselves. Most of the individuals in the various groups had never met before. They were from a mix of cultures, languages, race and ethnic backgrounds—most of them were from Hartford and all shared a willingness to work together and make a difference in Hartford.

What a picture to see strangers engaged in frank and active talking. "We want a better quality of life. This is due us in that we pay our taxes," said one group.

Rev. David Hendricks, VOCAL's co-chair, said that for him everyone is equal. We need more help and support for Adult Education. "With education, we can help our-

to make their community better. What is missing from the table? Asked Urania Petit, member, Organizing Team. The response: Children and the Arts.

Those in attendance signed up for the forthcoming series of dialogues and there was a sense of deep appreciation for the project funded in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Leadership Grant to promote immigrant civic engagement.

Economic Empowerment

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be achieved through a management approach that involves positive attitudes, transformational leadership, teamwork, flexibility, creativity and innovative planning."

Guest speaker Marc Nelson, City of Hartford tax Collector, said that we have made some significant improvement in our office, but because of the state of the economy, we now have more taxpayers on the payment plans. However, he told the gathering of some plans that are now in place to assist the elderly, disabled and veterans.

He urged them to pass the word onto people they believe may need this help and encourage them to try and get a good understanding of the programs.

To apply for these credits, you can apply or send a representative at the office, which is opened Monday through Friday, 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. each day.

Nelson also urged the gathering to get involved in the political affairs of the city. "If we want change you must play as big a role as you can. You must become involved in local government."

The president of the founding chapter of the league in New York was also present with two of her officers. She congratulated the Hartford League for its efforts, remarking, "It now seems that we (in New York) may need to learn something from the Hartford League.

By the gathering I see here it is obvious that you are doing better than we are," she said.

Reflection: The Trayvon Martin Calamity

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what they think happened at the time of the crime.

Renowned research and case studies have confirmed that eyewitness accounts of crimes are habitually unreliable and susceptible to memory errors, potentially leading to the erroneous identification of criminal perpetrators. In contrast, physical evidence is esteemed to be more influential than eyewitness evidence. Physical evidences are often tangible items allegedly used or left behind at a crime scene, and these can potentially lead to the unveil-

ing of events that occurred during the crime.

Sorrowfully, for Trayvon it is possible that crucial physical evidences were lost at the crime scene due to it not being secured properly. Not only did the crime occur on a rainy night, and in this regard already limits the number of evidences retrieved. The various personnel that had access to the crime scene and Trayvon's body are disturbing. Essentially, every contact one has with another individual always leaves a trace—fingerprints, blood, hair, fibers, etc.

Thus, the uncontrolled access to the Martin-Zimmerman crime scene increased the risk of the removal or addition of evidences at the scene.

Additionally, there have been indications of fabricated evidences. Whether or not Zimmerman is charged, it is clear that the Sanford Police Department must be investigated too to determine if it, intentionally or unintentionally, destroyed or concealed any evidence during the initial investigation.

This case has certainly stirred up the emotions of several peo-

ple and sheds light on the *Stand Your Ground* law, which many did not know existed. This law is currently enforced in Connecticut.

Taking all of these things into account, one cannot help but be compelled to think back on the countless deaths of innocent black males that have occurred ever since this law was enacted, and cases similar to Trayvon that were not headlined in the news.

Without a doubt, Trayvon Martin forced America to revisit and wrestle with issues such as race, injustice, violence and criminal justice often overlooked and disguised by claims that "racism no longer exists."

Trayvon's memory and untimely death should awaken and motivate us to make a difference in our communities and ensure that more deaths such as his do not occur. Are there lessons for all of us?

Friendship Group Offers Scholarships

By Christopher A. Service Sr.

Unpretentiously, John Davis said: "My philosophy of life is, work for what you want and try to achieve it. Education is power," he said, "and young people should stay in school."

A longtime Hartford resident and coordinator of the Friendship Group of Hartford, Mr. Davis was very passionate as he spoke about the importance of educating youth and the contribution that the Friendship Group has made and continues to make towards that cause.

For the past 10 years, Davis has spearheaded the Friendship Group of Hartford. The late David Carter, the late Keith Carr, and Alphanso James who now resides in Florida started the organization.

The group is comprised of seven West Indian and American organizations: West Indian Social Club, Caribbean American Society, New England District Grand Lodge, American Legion, Mc Kinley Post 142, Barbados Social Club, Jamaican Progressive League, and Sportmen's Athletic Club. Members intermingle and visit each other's meeting place each Monday on a rotation basis, fellowship together with food and friendship.



John Davis

Two years ago, Friendship Group celebrated its 13th anniversary. Davis alluded to the fact that the general public in the Hartford area knows little about the fundraising activities of Friendship Group, providing scholarships for high school students with the desire to go to college but are unable to find the necessary money. Anyone who wishes to offer assistance may get in contact with the Friendship Group at P. O. Box 320215, Hartford, CT 06132.

Davis recalled the assistance he received in 2005 when he suffered a great loss as a result of a fire at his home. He also mentioned that there are young people who have the opportunity to do well academically but they do not make good use of the opportunity. This is unlike many of their parents who did not have the same opportunity. "I feel very inspired when I see young

recipients collecting their scholarships," Davis said.

The scholarship awards for 2012 will be held June 10 and there is an application process. Students with a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 2.5 may apply. The GPA is so set that those who are marginal have a chance to get a scholarship."

High school students of Hartford who are of African American or West Indian descent and wish to apply for a scholarship may do so by filling out an application and submit it no later than May 15, 2012. An essay explaining why they should be awarded the scholarship is required. Application forms can be obtained from any of the member organizations through the end of April 2012.

Davis should be commended for the time that he devotes to attending meetings and other activities on behalf of the Friendship Group. He is another West Indian who is making a contribution to our community.

Along with his philosophy of life, Davis mentioned that two Greater Hartford residents—Colin Edwards, a former president of Jamaica Progressive League, and Michael Chambers of Cricket Hall of Fame. They have been a source of inspiration to him.

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