



**ANTI-RACISM TASK FORCE
MEETING MINUTES
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT**

**REGULAR MEETING
May 8, 2023**

Present: Chairman Darnell Ford, Chairwoman Sacha Armstrong-Crockett, Pat Alston, Kirt Hart, Brian Gartner, Samantha Rival, Ahmad Daniels, Precious Price, Robyn Anderson, Bobbye Knoll Peterson, Director Faith Jackson, President NAACP Anita Ford Saunders, Staff Cayla Jones

- 1. Call to Order** Chairwoman Crockett called the meeting to order with at 6:15p.m.
- 2. Public Comment**

The Chair opens public comment on agenda items.

Amy Lappos (207 George Street): She is a community member.

Good evening Anti-racism task-force members. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak tonight. I am excited our community has an antiracist task force and am here tonight to show my support.

This task force tells me that Middletown understands there is racism among us and that dismantling systemic racism is in the best interest of our entire community, our entire state, and our entire country.

I have lived in Middletown for about a year and a half and have become a member of several Middletown community groups and very much get a community feel here.

I do however see there are some members of the community who become enraged by the term "antiracism." There are members of the community who also seem to believe the phrase "white privilege" is a slur and even the term "white" is a slur.

They seem to fear the TERMS white feminism and racism more than they fear doing it.

So...For these reasons I started a public Facebook group, Middletown Antiracism, about a month ago.



The purpose of the group is to:

- *provide antiracism educational material including endless book suggestions,*
- *to engage with other antiracists,*
- *To share antiracism events, activities, and other Middletown information centered in antiracism*
- *to hold difficult discussions about racism and antiracism in Middletown and Connecticut,*
- *In addition, to call out or in my peers according to behavior.*

I am antiracist above party, meaning Middletown Antiracism:

- *has called out republicans for laughing at antiracism posts,*
- *called in democrats for lashing out at the academic term White Feminism,*
- *My goal is to speak in white spaces about antiracism in line with what I have learned from studying the practices of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)*

Our group has been met by white rage from a few members of the community.

Facebook post after Facebook post over the last week in one Middletown group claimed over that:

- *I am not a resident of Middletown*
- *I have a lengthy arrest record*
- *I have an active warrant*
- *I was evicted from my home*

My address has been posted repeatedly in that FB group from an email I had sent to the BOE. Someone claimed to have called the register's office to ask for MY information and then threatened to "turn me into the feds" for dual registration and "using aliases."

Not a single... one of these accusations are true. (Last time I checked changing your name back to your maiden name after a divorce is not considered an alias.)

I share my experience tonight in this public forum to acknowledge and recognize publicly how violent and aggressive some residents are- including a Republican BOE candidate- towards antiracism.



I am aware that what I experienced is a mere sliver of what has been done to numerous Black residents and Black leaders in this community. I am white and that protects me.

It is my understanding that the ACLU reported that hate crimes are on the rise in Connecticut and we rose to 9th in the country for White Supremacy propaganda in 2022.

There were 96 incidents in Connecticut in 2022- a 115% rise from the year before. It is also my understanding that there were THREE incidents HERE in Middletown in 2020.

This white violence and white rage is why this task force is so important and so necessary. THAT is what I am here to share.

In closing, I look forward to the conclusion of the investigation into the racism of Middletown, middle school base-ball players and hope there is accountability along with education for our students.

They are old enough to know exactly how violent racism is and should not represent us in athletics IMHO. I wonder if there is any accountability for parents since we know there is someone these children are learning it from.

I would also like say thank you for your time, your energy, and your labor in working to irradicate racism in Middletown. This is a fight that has been going on since the birth of this country and it is time we dismantle white supremacy and systemic racism permanently.

I am thrilled we have an antiracism task force and commend the Mayor in its creation. I am here, as a Middletown resident, to support you with my voice and my actions.

Thank you.

Amy Lappos

207 George St

Middletown, CT

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3. New Business

A. Questions to Director Faith Jackson, Director of Equal Opportunity & Diversity Management



Director Jackson provided a brief overview of her role as the City of Middletown's Director of Equal Opportunity & Diversity Management. Director Jackson stated that her office is multi-dimensional as she is the Affirmative Action Officer, Fair Housing Officer, Contract Compliance Enforcement Officer, and Manager of the Walter C. Jones Fund. She continued by explaining that Human Relations Commission, Affirmative Action Monitoring Committee, and the Walter C. Jones Fund Committee report to her office and indicated that she serves as the Veterans Services contact representative for the City of Middletown.

Director Jackson read and answered questions that she received from the Anti-Racism Task Force prior to the meeting.

Question # 1 – How do you make sure the City's Managers and Directors are held accountable when they do not achieve affirmative action goals.

Director Jackson indicated that her office is working with the Human Resources Department, and is currently in transit of identifying areas of improvement and enhance the recruitment process. She stated that the question was more applicable to the Human Resources Department, as recruitment is a function of the HR Department.

Director Jackson proceeded by explained the Human Resources Department's recruitment procedures. Further discussion ensued regarding the question.

Question #2 – Last year we received a spreadsheet sharing underutilized workforce patterns. Are there goals that you can share with us in all these underrepresented groups?

Director Jackson explained how she sets workforce goals and identifies patterns.

Question #3 – What updates do you have for us since we last spoke?

Director Jackson stated that she has never attended an Anti-Racism Task Force meeting before.

B. Criminal Justice Theme: Civilian Review Board

Chairwoman Crockett stated that the Civilian Review Board recommendation was formally sent to the Mayor's Office. She explained that it will likely go through the Human Relations Committee, Public Safety Commission, and then any other groups who need to review it. Chair Crockett shared that it would be important for the task force to touch base and acknowledge where it is, and to ensure it is moving forward.



C. Education Theme: Discussions on Beman Baseball Team – Racist Text Thread
1. Should the Anti-Racism Task Force make any recommendations to the Board of Education?

Chairwoman Crockett opened a discussion about the Beman Baseball Team text thread of racism text messages. She turned the conversation over to Task Force Member Ahmad Daniels.

Member Daniels started by stating that the children involved were minors, and he always wants to come from a space of protecting all children. He continued by explaining how important it is to teach children about anti-racism, although sometimes what children learn at home cannot be controlled; it is important that in the school setting individuals who are teaching students, are qualified to teach. The task force continued with further discussion.

Councilman Ford stated that this is a teachable moment for all young individuals, the school system, and the community. He stated that it was also a healing moment. Councilman Ford asked the task force to think of how they should proceed with recommendations to ensure the teaching takes place. He suggested collaboration with stakeholders and change agents. Further conversation ensued.

D. Community Building Theme
1. BLM

Chairwoman Crockett opened the discussion about next steps with the BLM Crosswalk. Member Ahmad Daniels suggested a community artist by the name of Ennox. The Taskforce will meeting again to review artwork and make a selection for the BLM Crosswalk.

2. Introduction to Mrs. Anita Ford Saunders/NAACP President

NAACP President Anita Ford Saunders.

Motion: Councilman Ford made a motion to increase the Q Williams Memorial Scholarship from two to three Scholarships at \$2,500/each. Member Kirt Hart seconded the motion. Matter passed unanimously.



E. NCCJ Report (standing item)

1. Plan for making recommendations for Housing Segregation and Labor Equity Themes.

Chairwoman Crockett briefly reviewed the Housing Segregation Theme. She also informed folks that Director Faith Jackson would be attending the May Regular Anti-Racism Task Force Meeting to review the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action reports. She asked task force members to submit their questions for Director Jackson to Cayla prior to the May 8, 2023 meeting.

4. Adjournment.

MOTION: Member Hart made a motion to adjourn, and Councilman Ford seconded. Matter passed unanimously. Meeting ended at 7:49 PM.