

Minutes, West Tisbury Task Force Against Discrimination Monthly Meeting, June 6, 2023

Present: Susanna Sturgis, Loren Ghiglione, Elaine Cawley Weintraub, Terry Kriedman, Jill De La Hunt (guest speaker)

The meeting came to order a little after 5 p.m.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to **approve the May 2 minutes.**

Land Acknowledgment Statement discussion

Some Vineyard organizations (e.g., the Martha's Vineyard Museum and the NAACP) open meetings and/or other events with a statement that this was originally the land of the Wampanoag people. Such statements have become increasingly common across the country at many kinds of events. Loren shared a version used at Northwestern University: "The Northwestern campus sits on the traditional homelands of the people of the Council of Three Fires, the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa as well as the Menominee, Miami and Ho-Chunk nations. It was also a site of trade, travel, gathering and healing for more than a dozen other Native tribes and is still home to over 100,000 tribal members in the state of Illinois." Do we want to make a recommendation to the selectboard about using a statement at meetings?

Loren volunteered to draft a statement for us to consider at our next meeting that West Tisbury resides on the ancestral lands of the Wampanoag. He and Susanna are willing to bring the matter up with the selectboard.

Seeing White on Martha's Vineyard

Susanna introduced Jill De La Hunt, from the Racial Justice and Human Dignity Committee (RJHD) of We Stand Together / Estamos Todos Juntos. RJHD members worked during the pandemic to develop a program based on the [Seeing White documentary podcast series](#) and relating it to Vineyard history and current issues. [ATTACH FLYER TO MINUTES]

Jill acknowledged Elaine's guidance to the RJHD group in their initial stages. She then explained that *Seeing White* is a 14-episode podcast series released in 2017 that does a "deep dive" into structural racism, anti-blackness, and related issues. The working group decided to do two episodes a week and to break each episode into a three-day program. Participants were emailed a handout each day that included a question to prompt reflection on the podcast: Day 1: Get the Idea; Day 2: Bring It Home; and Day 3: Make It Personal. The survey conducted after the program ended suggested that participants found the "Bring It Home" aspect particularly important.

They expected perhaps 15–20 people to sign up, but more than 80 did. Two open discussions were held via Zoom and two in person at the Martha's Vineyard Museum, at which materials from the museum's collection were on display.

The organizers are now offering the program, "SWMV2.0," to community groups. These can be affiliated with existing organizations or informal, e.g., friends or neighbors who want to do it

together. The groups organize themselves, then the core organizers will advise from “behind the scenes,” using the materials already developed. Groups can choose to do two *Seeing White* episodes a week, as was done last fall, or stretch it out to 14 weeks by doing just one.

Loren asked about using the program in the schools. Jill noted that other programs dealing with race and racism are already being used in the schools, but when those kids go home, their parents don’t have the same info. Making *Seeing White* available to (white) parents might help facilitate conversations at home. She also said that *Seeing White* complements the work of the African American Heritage Trail by focusing on the issue of whiteness.

Susanna reported that library is interested and would be available as a meeting space and maybe as a co-sponsor.

Jill noted that the Facebook group didn’t work very well, possibly because it’s hard for “people to be beginners” in a public space. She stressed the importance of live groups supplemented by virtual groups. She also suggested that the situation might be different for a group whose members already know each other, perhaps because they work together. She added that the podcast series can be listened to at any time, with or without a group.

In response to Loren’s question about demographics, Jill said that the only info requested was town of residence, and that there was “definitely cross-island participation.”

Follow-up on Town Hiring Practices

This was deferred to our next meeting.

Update on MV Charter School Project

Artwork from “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough,” the fifth and sixth graders’ research project about the “Vineyard 5” and others involved in the civil rights movement, is featured at the West Tisbury library through June. On June 22 at 3 p.m. Elaine and MVPCS teacher Freedom Cartwright, perhaps assisted by some of the students, will talk about the project at the library.

Fall Forum on Microaggressions

Susanna reported that NAACP MV’s Political Action Committee is in the early stages of planning a fall forum on microaggressions in the workplace and elsewhere. Elaine noted that in general “It’s usually not about the huge things. It’s the daily wrapped-into-our-daily-lives things that we don’t notice.”

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and passed at about 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanna J. Sturgis
Pinch-hitting recorder