


WESLEYAN

U N I V E R S I T Y

Office of the President
Middletown, Connecticut 06459-0290
(860) 685-3500 FAX: (860) 685-3501



DATE: July 17, 1998
FOR: AACU Steering Committee
FROM: Luis R. Torres '99, Intern in the President Office 
SUBJECT: Update on AACU Project

I hope that you are enjoying your summer, and that everything is going well. This is an update on the progress that the steering sub-committee has made since the end of the semester. The information listed below will bring you up to date on the initiative on Racial Legacy and Learning. We have been able to continue with the development of the ideas proposed at the end of the academic year, through a meeting with the neighborhood partners, as well as constant communication within the steering sub-committee. As we move forward, we hope to have as much feedback as possible from you. I am including with this letter a set of the following materials:

- List of the Middletown Neighborhood Partners working with Wesleyan University and new contact list of people on the Sub-Committee.
- The minutes from the first Steering Sub-Committee Meeting: June 29, 1998
- The minutes from the second Steering Sub-Committee Meeting : July 13, 1998
- The minutes from the first Neighborhood Partners Meeting: June 10, 1998
- An Article written by Rebecca Knight '98

I would also like to let you know that President Bennet has asked Charles J. Ogletree, Jr. to deliver a major address at Convocation. Mr. Ogletree is Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, and he will deliver a strong reaffirmation of the fundamental importance on the value of pluralism to the core beliefs and mission of higher education. It will be a great way to start the academic year's initiative.

We would love to hear your reactions to the given information. If you are interested in any of these projects or you have any suggestions, please feel free to contact me at ext. #3500 or Email to ltorres@wesleyan.edu. I hope to hear from you soon.

**American Association of Colleges and Universities
Racial Legacies and Learning: An American Dialogue**

Community Partners

Cross St. AME Zion Church
Contact: Rev. Moses L. Harvill
Deborah Hopkins

Oddfellows Playhouse
Contact: Dick Wheeler
Margaret Rich

Community Health Center
Contact: Mark Masselli

Middletown Senior Citizen Center
Contact: Tom Harding

Middletown Mentor Program
Contact: Edward L. McMillan

North End Action Team
Contact: Lydia Brewster
Ernest Bootts
Roy Lisker

Steering Sub-Committee for the Summer '98

Ms. Flewelling
Executive Assistant to the President
Ext. 2004
Email: RFLEWELLING@WESLEYAN.EDU

Ms. Friedman
Director of Affirmative Action
Ext. 2454
Email: KFRIEDMAN@WESLEYAN.EDU

Dean Benitez-Hode
Assoc. Dean of the College/Sophomore Class Dean
Ext. 2765
Email: GHODGE@WESLEYAN.EDU

Ms. Murchinson
Assistant Director for Foundation and Corporate Relations
Ext. 5062
Email: JMURCHISON@WESLEYAN.EDU

Luis Torres '99
Intern for the President Office
Ext. 3500
Email: LTORRES@WESLEYAN.EDU

**American Association of Colleges and Universities
Racial Legacies and Learning: An American Dialogue**

Breakfast Meeting: Wednesday, June 10, 1998

There were sixteen people present at this meeting; eight Wesleyan staff members and eight members of the Middletown community. Introductions were made and Rebecca Flewelling gave an overview of the AACU Initiative, Wesleyan's involvement and her appreciation that Middletown's organizations wished to participate.

Grissell Hodge passed out AACU's question, "What should higher education be doing, with its local communities, to prepare graduates to address the legacies of racism and the opportunities for reconciliation in the United States?"

The following ideas and suggestions were discussed:

- The group needs to talk about racism first in order to do something about it. We need to get to know each other.
- We need to face the realities of racism, that racism is alive and well, and then go on from there. We need to get uncomfortable in our discussions. Top level administrators need to become involved.
- We should be doing more of what we (Wesleyan and the community) were doing, i.e. students working with the Northend Project, Oddfellows Playhouse, etc. More white students volunteer than students of color although community groups actively recruit students of color on this campus.
- Barriers that keep people of color from participating should be addressed.
- Barriers that hinder reconciliation need to be addressed. How do we build bridges.
- We must first admit that racism still exist and the word legacies should be taken out of the question or reword the question to, "legacies and present racism".
- Send undergraduates into local school classrooms to talk about race and racism. There are not enough teachers of color in the local schools.
- Look at other models at other institutions.
- Change curriculum to let students know that as part of their higher education they must become involved in the community. More service learning needed. Wesleyan students need to be trained before they are sent out into the community.
- How does the public acknowledge racism? How do we bring skills to the community to think about this issue? How do we get people together to work on the problems of racism?

- More University resources and spaces should be made available to the community. The University should continue to support Upward Bound and Excel.
- We should take inventory of what we do and advertise it. Have a dialogue on what different community groups do so as to have overlap.
- A column about Wesleyan in the *Middletown News* to let the community know what is happening at Wesleyan.
- We must remember that we are here to discuss race and not confuse with the Town/Gown program.

Community members will go back to their groups to let them know what we discussed today and get ideas as to how we can proceed. The Northend Action Team invited Wesleyan staff members to one of their Wednesday night meetings. They will give the date and time to Rebecca.

Rebecca has hired Luis Torres for the summer to be a student intern on the Initiative. Luis will contact everyone here today to set up another meeting when the date and time are determined.

American Association of Colleges and Universities
Racial Legacies and Learning: An American Dialogue on Race

Administrators Meeting: Monday, June 29, 1998

The meeting was attended by Ms. Flewelling, Ms. Friedman, Dean Benitez-Hodge, Dean Murchison and Luis Torres.

Convocation Speakers The meeting started by reviewing the AAC&U's recommendations for Convocation Speakers. The committee is still seeking a speaker. It is necessary to suggest a candidate who would be able to address Multi-culturalism in his/her speech, making Convocation serve as the AAC&U required event. Professor Milroy is Convocation's Faculty Marshal. She is trying to change the format to make Convocation more appealing to the students. One recommendation is to have the speaker involved in a group discussion. The discussion groups could take place in the early afternoon before the event or the following day.

Community Leaders in Middletown Next Meeting: Lydia Brewster (NEAT) is in charge of organizing the next meeting. The meeting will take place in the Liberty Common Building (Main St. Liberty) the 22 of July, at 7 PM. Also, it was proposed to invite the Community Leaders to Convocation.

Wesleyan's and Middletown's Activities: In terms of the activities involving Wesleyan and the larger community, it was decided to start focusing on six specific activities:

- Oddfellows Playhouse
- Community Health Center
- Kate Rushin's Symposium on the portrayal of Race through the Press/Media.
- Oral History w/ Middletown Senior Citizen Center and Cross St. Church
- The Wesleyan Magazine edition on Multi-culturalism.
- also contact Billy Weitzer, regarding classes that include Ethnic Diversity in their basic guidelines. A letter to the faculty inviting them to take part in the initiative, will be sent through the summer. Recommendation for awarding grants to students.

Present Programs: There are programs that are presently taking place which could be incorporated into the initiative.

- Meg Zocco & George Strait: Parent Weekend Discussion.
- The Parent's Diversity Fund can be used to award student's involvement. Students that receive this award would have to be part of an event in which they would have to give a speech. (Luis will come up with a list of suggestions for the guidelines to determine a recipient.)
- Martin Luther King Day
- Conferences in which members of the committee could participate:
 1. American Council for Education (Penn. State/ Oct.)
 2. Society Organized Against Racism (SOAR) Conference (Colby College/ Nov.)
 3. Association of American Colleges and Universities (Philadelphia, Nov. 12-15)
- The Community Service director, Frank Kuam, will be informed about the committee's plan of action and it will be invited to attend the general meetings.

**American Association of Colleges and Universities
Racial Legacies and Learning: An American Dialogue on Race**

Steering Sub-Committee Meeting: Monday, July 13, 1998

The meeting was attended by Ms. Flewelling, Ms. Friedman, Dean Benitez-Hodge, Ms. Murchison and Luis Torres '99.

Updates from the Past Meeting: We would like to welcome Frank Kuan, the new Director of the Community Service Office to the committee. His experience and relationship to the Middletown community will be a great benefit to this initiative. We would also like to welcome new student members, Caroline King '99 and Chris Barber '00. Their feedback on the student community will make this initiative more effective.

Convocation Speaker: Charles J. Ogletree, Jr. was announced as the convocation speaker, for Convocation 1998. Mr. Ogletree is Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. He has served as Special Project Editor, for civil rights at Harvard, where he obtained his JD. Mr. Ogletree's speech will deliver a strong reaffirmation of the fundamental importance and value of pluralism to the core beliefs and mission of higher education.."
The AACU Committee will be responsible for organizing a group discussion featuring Mr. Ogletree. This event will take place before or after Convocation. Faculty can be invited to this group discussion, especially ones that are involved in the Experimental Learning Program. Frank Kuan and the community partners will also be invited.

Next Community Leaders Meeting: The next meeting of the Board of Directors of NEAT will be July 22, 1998. The AACU's initiative will not be the main topic of discussion, but it could be part of the agenda. Ms. Flewelling will be in contact with Lidia Brewster to determine if a representative of the steering committee should attend this meeting.

Next Community Leaders and AACU Committee Meeting: The next breakfast meeting in which the AACU's initiative is the main topic will be August 19. The location will be announced.

Wesleyan's Present Programs: In addition to Convocation, we are working on developing a program on the value of multicultural education. Hopefully this will be part of Family/Homecoming Weekend.