



Weekly Newsletter

25 Dec 2022



Artwork by Cookie Rivera

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"For families across the country, today marks the beginning of a joyous time to reflect on the rich African-American culture and to remember the principles of unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith—principles that reflect our most cherished values as Americans."

— Barack Obama, speaking on the seven principles of Kwanzaa

Embrace



December 25

This Week

Christmas Day falls on Sunday this year. As we all know, racism does not stop just because it's a holiday. Some members of ARC are planning to come to the Post Office as they express their desire to continue to be a presence for the rights and dignity of everyone.

ARC steering committee member, **April Dinwoodie will help us celebrate Kwanzaa** which begins on December 26. Please feel free to join us if you are able.

Poster artwork by Cookie Rivera



Last Week

Last Sunday, December 18, was a festive day for the ARC community. Recognizing the convergence of three cultural holidays we put together a memorable celebration that honored Hanukkah and Christmas.

ARC supporters **Sandra Laub** and **Katherine Rosen** shared their personal memories of Hanukkah and the historical significance of the Jewish holiday which is an eight-day celebration. Sandra read a lovely story about the lighting of candles and passing the light to others. We held small Hanukkah candles and each one was asked to symbolically pass the light while answering the question, "Who do you wish to shine a light on today?" Many responded with heartfelt wishes for an end to racism, war in Ukraine, the unhoused, care for the mentally ill, as well as offering light to all elected officials.

Rev. Ruth Shilling Hainsworth, pastor of United Congregational Church of Westerly, reminded us of how racism is inherent in our stories and portrayal of the Christmas story. She searched the internet for over 45 minutes to find even one visual that depicted the Holy Family as dark skinned people from the Middle East. This experience of continuous misinformation reminds us how

pervasive racism is not only in the US but throughout the world. Rev. Ruth encouraged us to open a dialogue with our families and friends about this great injustice. We must be willing to tell the truth instead of portraying Mary, Joseph, and Jesus as white, fair-haired and privileged while the shepherds as dark skinned, lowly and poor.

As we observe these holidays it is important to understand how many of our traditions contribute to the ongoing issues of racism and marginalization of "the other". Read more about this topic in [this column](#) Rev. Ruth wrote in *The Westerly Sun* and see below for a petition related to this topic.

Finally, **Kevin "Big Lux" Lowther**, took up his violin and serenaded us with his rendition of some favorite Christmas music and a rousing Hanukkah song! Many old friends and some passersby joined us for this celebration of our rich culturally diverse heritage. Several members brought their favorite cookies and breads including rugelach, a traditional Jewish pastry, along with hot cider and hot chocolate.

Many thanks to all who participated, told stories, played music and brought refreshments!



Join us for these upcoming Sunday events

January 1

New Year's Day is also a Sunday and the rally will continue from 11-1 for all those who would like to start the New Year on a positive note. We will take some time to look back at 2022 at our

accomplishments and share some thoughts about the exciting year ahead.

At 1:00 you are invited to gather around the Peace Pole at Christ Church on Elm St. for the annual **World Day of Prayer for Peace** which is traditionally celebrated by Westerly Area Peace and Justice. All are welcome.

January 8 Asa Peters, Indigenous Speaker

Asa Peters is a music-maker and learner who finds home in Mashpee, MA and Narragansett, RI. He enjoys playing and writing music, spending time outside, and making meaningful memories and bonds with those around him. Asa is currently working as a research associate at UMass Boston with the Institute of New England Native American Studies and the Asian American Studies program. He is a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe with roots in the Narragansett tribe, and lives much of his life through the lenses of his communities' histories which inform his priorities and values.

We meet every **Sunday from 11:00-1:00** on the steps of the Westerly Post Office on High Street. Join us anytime!

Empower

Tell Mattel and Fisher Price: No white Jesus Nativity playsets

After hearing Rev. Ruth Hainsworth speak last Sunday, this article stood out to us. Faithful America, a Christian organization fighting for social justice, has written about the importance of depicting accurate images in Nativity playsets for children.



As stated in their petition, "Jesus and the Holy Family were almost certainly people of color. But selling white Jesus, Mary, and Joseph toys isn't just untrue - it also undermines the Gospel's message, fueling the very oppression Christ opposed." [Click here to learn more and sign the petition.](#)



Lizzo Brings Out Activists & Game Changers to Accept PCAs Award

Fighting for a more just world can be exhausting at times. Yet, there is so much hope for our future when you look at all of the individuals and organizations that are doing this work. Take a moment to watch [this brief and moving video](#) and be inspired by the positive change happening in our world!

Town Meetings

Westerly ARC encourages those who can to attend Westerly Town Council and School Committee meetings. Your presence and involvement is an important way to show our elected officials that creating a more equitable and inclusive town and school system must always be a priority.



January 4 School Committee Meeting, 5:00

January 9 Town Council Meeting, 5:30

January 18 School Committee Meeting, 5:00

Here is the link to meeting schedules and agendas:

<https://clerkshq.com/westerly-ri>

Act

[View our Calendar](#)

Here are a few ongoing ways you can support the work of Westerly ARC.



Share

Spread the news!
Forward this newsletter to at least one person you think might be interested in it. Ask them to sign up for our newsletter on the [Westerly ARC website](#).

We have **over 200 subscribers** as of now; help us reach an even wider audience!



Donate

ARC advocate Amanda Dunn continues to collect toiletries, personal care items, and non-perishable food to distribute to our community. Please bring your donations to Amanda at our Sunday rallies. Your kindness and generosity are greatly appreciated.



Show Up

Stop by one of our weekly gatherings, join one of the events listed in this newsletter, attend a town meeting, etc.

"We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

— Elie Wiesel

Educate



Creating Change with Effective Protest Tactics, Strategies, and Goals

[This article from Anti-Racism Daily](#) provides some relevant ideas as we reflect on the work of ARC this year. We certainly have a lot to celebrate from this past year, but know that there is always room for

improvement. Let us know your thoughts on how ARC can more effectively promote equity and justice in our community (westerlyarc@gmail.com).

Culture Calendar

December 26–January 1 **Kwanzaa**

Kwanzaa—a seven-day celebration traditional to the African American community—takes place Dec. 26–Jan. 1. Derived from the Swahili phrase *mutanda ya kwanzaa*, which means “first fruits,” Kwanzaa was first celebrated in 1966 and reinforces traditions across the continent of Africa.



It is a cultural celebration of Blackness that is about knowing self, understanding self, reinforcing self and understanding the beauty that lies within. It is an African American African-centered celebration of community that fills a void that previously existed for African Americans. (Don Harrell, [UCF Today](#).)

Image source: metroweekly.com

December 26 **Last Night of Hanukkah**

To commemorate the oil that miraculously lasted for eight days, modern-day Jewish families recite blessings and light candles on each of the eight nights of Hanukkah. Candles are placed in a menorah, with the number of lights increasing each night.

As Hanukkah ends on the 26th the following prayer is said: **Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b-mitzvotav, v-tzivanu l'hadlik ner shel Hanukkah.** Blessed are you, Our God, Ruler of the Universe, who makes us holy through Your commandments, and commands us to light the Hanukkah lights. Read more: [History: The Hanukkah Story](#).

Up Next

Calendar of Events	
December 25	Celebrating Kwanzaa, Westerly Post Office, 11:00–1:00
January 1	World Day of Prayer for Peace celebrated by Westerly Area Peace and Justice, Christ Church, 1:00 pm
January 4	School Committee Meeting, 5:00 pm

January 9	Town Council Meeting, 5:30 pm
January 10	Community reading of "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Westerly Public Library, 5:30 pm
January 18	School Committee Meeting, 5:00 pm
January 23	Town Council Meeting, 5:30 pm



Westerly Anti-Racism Coalition

Join our weekly gatherings
Sundays 11-1
Downtown Westerly Post Office steps

westerlyarc@gmail.com

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