





February 12

## This Week

We welcome you to another Sunday gathering on the steps of the post office. We can't guarantee bags of brussel sprouts (see below), but there is sure to be more great conversation, perhaps some music, and one of our "snowbirds" will be returning after a month away! Our work involves building community and these Sunday assemblies are an essential component. Each week, even if there is no formal presentation, you are guaranteed to learn something and meet new people.

Artwork by Cookie Rivera





## Last Week

If you drove by the post office last Sunday you likely saw many of us holding bags of Trader Joe's brussel sprouts. Thanks to **Jay Lustgarten**, we were treated to these healthy and delicious green delights. Conversations included debates about sauteing, roasting or boiling them, and favorite recipes.

We paused to hear ARC updates from Leslie Dunn and Kevin Lowther. Kevin shared that the Town Council has several openings on its committees. Volunteering your time is a great way to get involved and make meaningful change in Westerly. See below for more details! We were also treated to beautiful music performed by Kevin.

Whether the discussion is about brussel sprouts, civic engagement, or social justice, Westerly ARC is a welcoming and inclusive community.

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

## **Positions Available on Town Council Boards**

Get involved and make positive changes in Westerly by volunteering for one of the many boards.

Applications can be obtained on the Town of Westerly's website [www.westerlyri.gov](http://www.westerlyri.gov) and submitted to the Office of Town Clerk.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (FULL MEMBER)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (ALTERNATE MEMBER)

BOARD OF CANVASSERS (ALTERNATE MEMBER)

LICENSING BOARD (AUXILIARY MEMBER)

VETERANS 'ROLLS OF HONOR' MEMORIAL COMMITTEE (1ST AND 2nd ALTERNATES)

HOUSING AUTHORITY (ONE MEMBER)

MULTICULTURAL COMMITTEE (TWO MEMBERS)

ZONING BOARD (2nd ALTERNATE)

CONSERVATION COMMISSION (FULL MEMBER)

CONSERVATION COMMISSION (AUXILIARY MEMBER)

PLANNING BOARD (FULL MEMBER)

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE (ALTERNATE MEMBER)

BOARD OF FINANCE (TWO FULL MEMBERS)

CONCERTS ON THE BEACH COMMITTEE (TWO FULL MEMBERS)

BOARD OF ASSESSMENT REVIEW (FULL MEMBER)

## **In Case You Missed It: Equity Audit Update**

During the Westerly School Committee meeting on Wednesday, Feb 1 Dr. Garceau offered a thorough update of the equity audit. He explained the purpose of focus groups as one method of gathering information from the school community and clearly explained the reasoning behind using focus groups based on specific identities, a common qualitative research tool.

Dr. Garceau answered all questions from School Committee members. Two School Committee members, questioned the need for a focus group for BIPOC and other marginalized people with one member stating, "The equity in Westerly has nothing to do with the color of people's skin." Another member said the focus group format, "assumes that people want to be segregated" and implied that it violates the district's discrimination policy. They later admitted, "I wasn't paying a lot of attention, I'll be honest, because I didn't



support it” when referring to a slide deck shared by PCG, the consulting group conducting the audit.

In response, the School Committee chair pointed out that no one questioned focus groups for parents of special education students in previous years, and asked, “What exactly are we afraid of?” by using focus groups. One more School Committee member reminded everyone that people of color were “laughed at, ridiculed, discredited, and called liars” after sharing their experience at previous meetings.

Clearly, your voice is needed to show your support for the equity audit, to combat misinformation, and ensure the equity audit proceeds without impediments by those willfully ignorant to the process of assessing where our schools are in relationship to caring for all of Westerly students. We will continue to share resources at our Sunday gatherings and in our newsletter to aid in this effort. Thank you to all who have begun speaking out on social media and in other spaces. You can see the [full video of the meeting here](#).



**ESSAY CONTEST**  
HONORING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH  
MARCH 2023

## **Essay Contest: Honoring Women's History Month**

Open to **9th grade students** in social studies classes from Chariho, Exeter-West Greenwich, Narragansett,

North Kingstown, Prout, South Kingstown, and Westerly High Schools, and 9th grade Home School students. **\$100 award to top winner in each high school.** [Click here to read the contest details](#). Deadline to submit essay - **Midnight, February 18, 2023.**

## **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.



**February 13** Town Council Meeting, 5:30

**February 15** School Committee Meeting, 5:00

**February 27** Town Council Meeting, 5:30

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](#).

Don't forget to like, subscribe, comment, and share on our social media posts!



### 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



### A Sense of Place

Each Sunday, ARC supporters gather in solidarity on the Post Office steps in the heart of Westerly. This place in the center of town has become inextricably linked to ARC's story and advocacy.

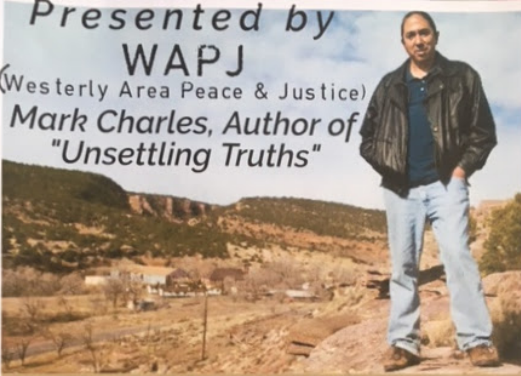
Place and history are complexly interwoven on so many different levels. To know the place where important historical events happen is often to know much of the story itself. During Black History Month, we acknowledge that Black History is American History and vice versa.

[The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund](#) was launched by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2017 to identify and preserve





Presented by  
**WAPJ**  
 (Westerly Area Peace & Justice)  
**Mark Charles, Author of**  
*"Unsettling Truths"*



*Mark R. Charles is a Native American activist, public speaker, consultant, and author on Native American issues.*

*His book, "Unsettling Truths" examines the racially charged yet unrecognized theology that unleashed the slave trade in West Africa and the dispossession of indigenous peoples' lands in North America: the Doctrine of Discovery.*

*A light supper of soup, salad & bread will be served prior to his presentation.*

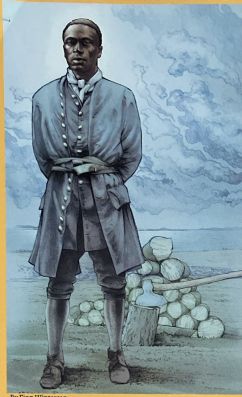
**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1ST AT 6PM  
 CHRIST CHURCH WESTERLY R.I.**

America: the Doctrine of Discovery. A light supper of soup, salad & bread will be served prior to his presentation.

Wednesday, March 1 at 6:00 pm,  
 Christ Church, Westerly

## The Story of Venture Smith and Slavery in Stonington

We highly recommend a visit to the The [Stonington Lighthouse Museum](#) to see the permanent exhibit telling the story of Venture Smith (Broteer Furro) and slavery in Stonington. Venture's autobiography is one of the earliest narratives of an enslaved person in the United States. The exhibit follows the story of Venture's capture in West Africa as a child to his brutal treatment at the hands of several local enslavers and his long and calculating struggle to resist injustice and gain his freedom. This fascinating local story has lessons for us all, including the legacies of slavery that endure in our region today.



**"My Freedom is a Privilege that Nothing Else Can Equal"**

The Story of Venture Smith and Slavery in Stonington

An Exhibition at the Lighthouse Museum

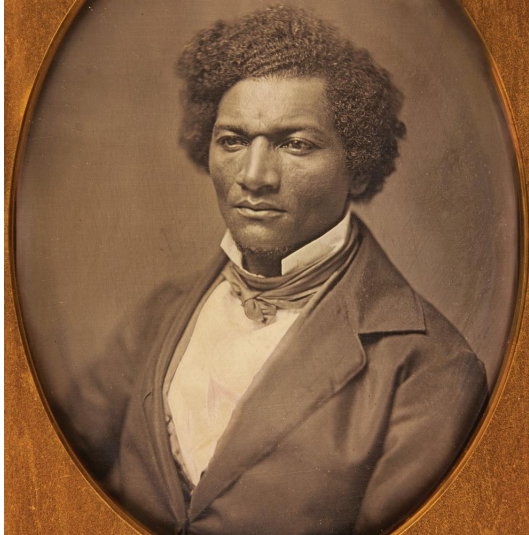
## Culture Calendar

### Feb 14 - Birthday of Frederick Douglass

"I would unite with anyone to do right and with nobody to do wrong." ~ Frederick Douglass

Though born a slave around 1818, Frederick Douglass would become one of the world's foremost champions of human freedom. A self-taught man, his life as an author, orator, newspaper editor, U.S. Colored Troops Recruiter, and U.S.

Ambassador to Haiti stood as a counter-example to the then largely held belief that slaves did not possess the intellectual capacity to live in freedom alongside their white counterparts. Although posterity primarily aligns him with the abolition of slavery, Douglass firmly believed in the equality of all people regardless of race, gender and creed. ([Frederick Douglass Institute](#))



Learn more with this fascinating PBS Newshour video: [New England's role in Frederick Douglass' first steps to freedom](#)

### **Feb 15 - Birthday of Susan B. Anthony**

Champion of temperance, abolition, the rights of labor, and equal pay for equal work, Susan Brownell Anthony became one of the most visible leaders of the women's suffrage movement. Along with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she traveled around the country delivering speeches in favor of women's suffrage. ([National Women's History Museum](#))

And here are [some facts you might not know about Susan B. Anthony](#), including that she came from a family of abolitionists and was friends with Frederick Douglass.

## Up Next

Calendar of Events	
February 11	<a href="#">Mystic Celebration of Black History Month</a> , 10:00 am at the Mystic flag pole
February 13	Town Council Meeting, 5:30 pm
February 15	School Committee Meeting, 5:00 pm
February 27	Town Council Meeting, 5:30 pm



Join our weekly gatherings

westerlyarc@gmail.com

Sundays 11-1

Downtown Westerly Post Office steps

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signed up on our website or at one of our  
events.



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