



Westerly ARC Newsletter

Weekly Newsletter

28 Aug 2022



Artwork by Cookie Rivera

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"The trouble is that once you see it, you can't unsee it. And once you've seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing, becomes as political an act as speaking out. There's no innocence; either way you are accountable."

— excerpt from Arundhati Roy (1961-) on injustice and racism,
Indian novelist, political activist, 1997 Booker Prize, and 2004 Sydney
Peace Prize



Sunday Protests

Last Sunday

Christine Martone, president of the **South County League of Women Voters**, Nina Rossomando and Etta Zasloff, past presidents, joined us for our Sunday protest on 21 August 2022 to give us valuable information on the

history of the League of Women Voters and the “Let RI Vote Act,” which Governor McKee signed in June 2022. The bill expands voter access and ensures election integrity.

Did you know the League of Women Voters is 102 years old, officially founded in Chicago, six months before women won the right to vote with the passage of the 19th amendment to the US Constitution in 1920? And that it was founded by political strategist Carrie Clinton Lane Chapman Catt and other suffragists of the National American Woman Suffrage Association as a “mighty political experiment” designed to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters? Over the last century, the League continues to fight for election protection, democratic reforms, and equal access to the ballot—all while maintaining a commitment to non-partisanship and fostering an informed electorate.

Passing an amendment to the Constitution is no small feat – it’s only happened 27 times in our country’s history. This major milestone in the history of our democracy was achieved over decades, even beyond the lifetimes of some of its greatest champions, and the path to women’s suffrage was complicated and sometimes ugly. In addition, history books tend mostly to credit the courage and tenacity of white women, but there were many women of color who were at the center of the movement alongside their white counterparts, including Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell. And when the 19th Amendment was ratified, not all women gained equal access at the ballot box. Women of color, especially those in the south, did not have full voting rights. Poll taxes and literacy tests deliberately kept African Americans from fully participating in democracy until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Denial of citizenship, property requirements, and sanctioned violence against voters barred Native Americans from the polls. Literacy tests were used to disenfranchise racial minorities as late as 1970.

Did you know in 1944-45, after World War II, the League carried out a nationwide public support campaign, at the request of President Franklin Roosevelt, to establish the United Nations and to ensure US participation? Following the campaign, President Harry Truman invited the League to serve as a consultant to the US delegation at the United Nations Charter Conference. One of the first organizations officially recognized by the UN as a non-governmental organization (NGO), the League still maintains official observer status today.

In the 1950's, as the League became more active in advocacy work, the need arose for a separate organizational arm for activities like voter registration and information. The League of Women Voters Education Fund was established to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues.

Did you know that in 1972, shortly after congressional passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), the League voted officially to support "equal rights for all regardless of sex"? The League followed this vote with a nationwide pressure campaign that continued through the 1970s. That national campaign ended in 1982, but it continues to push for ERA ratification today.

The "**Let RI Vote Act**" is designed to make it easier for people to vote. The law also assures the integrity and security of the election process through technological changes and updates. At a time when many states are making voting more difficult, we applaud our legislators for making these improvements in the RI voting process permanent.

Although the RI legislature passed the "Let RI Vote Act" this year there was not enough time before the 2022 midterm elections to initiate the new procedures. According to the League, there are three ways to vote in 2022, 1) At your voting poll on September 13 and November 8. 2) Early voting at your town hall in person from August 24 through September 12 for the primary and October 19 through November 7 for the general election, and 3) By mail. However, to vote by mail in this year's primary and general election, you must apply for a mail ballot before the deadline. Beginning next year applying for a mail ballot will no longer be necessary; it will be a permanent change to the voting laws.

The League of Women Voters, South County, RI meets via Zoom the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 7:00 pm. Membership is open to US citizens 16 yrs. and older, and ALL are welcome. For membership information visit, lwvscri@gmail.com.

A big thanks to Christine, Nina and Etta for their detailed and informative presentation. Thank you also for all you do to educate and ensure all eligible voters have their voices heard and their votes counted!

Aug 28

This Sunday

This week, August 28, we welcome **Michael Niemeyer, candidate for the Senate District 38** as our program presenter. Mike is a husband, father and resident of Westerly. He works in international aid and has devoted his life to giving back to others. When Mike's beautiful daughter was born with a rare brain disease, he began organizing protests and campaigning to improve conditions for disabled children and Medicaid recipients in Rhode



Island. He is one of three candidates running in the Sept 13th Democratic Primary. Mike will share his story of his journey in the political arena and what he hopes to accomplish if elected Senator to the RI Legislature. Welcome Mike! For more information on Mike and his campaign, please check out these links,

Website: www.niemeyerforri.com

Twitter: @niemeyerforri

Facebook: facebook.com/niemeyerforri

Email: niemeyerforri@gmail.com

Please note we do not officially endorse any candidate, but give all candidates an opportunity to address our ARC community on Sunday mornings to discuss their platform and policies and engage in Q&A.

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



In the News

Dr. Luis Daniel Muñoz Calls Out Channel 12

We were pleased to welcome **Dr. Luis Daniel Muñoz** at last Sunday's protest. Dr. Muñoz, who is running for Rhode Island governor as a Democrat, has visited Westerly ARC protests on several occasions over the past year.

As the election season gears up with many candidate forums and debates occurring, Dr. Muñoz brought an important topic to our attention. He is currently being excluded from the WPRI Channel 12 Democratic Primary Debate being held on September 6. Nexstar Media, which owns Channel 12, has said that Dr. Muñoz is the only candidate not eligible for the debate based on his not meeting the minimum requirement of \$50,000 in campaign contributions. As Dr. Muñoz has pointed out, however, Channel 12 has made exceptions to this rule in the past and has the ability to do so again. Furthermore, Dr. Muñoz has already participated in six forums or debates and is considered by many to be a leading candidate for governor. He has also been accepted to participate in the upcoming debate hosted by WJAR Channel 10.

Dr. Muñoz is working with the ACLU to challenge Channel 12's decision to exclude him and is calling for a **boycott of Channel 12**. As Dr. Muñoz stated in an interview with the Coalition Radio Network, his exclusion is "damaging to our electoral system" and speaks to the "perpetual caste political system where only insiders are given time." We applaud Dr. Muñoz's efforts to speak out for marginalized communities and fight injustice in the electoral process. If you would like to learn more about this topic, see [this interview](#) from August 17. You can learn more about Dr. Muñoz at [his website](#).



Music in the Park with Geoff Kaufman

We are so pleased and excited to announce that fellow activist, Geoff Kaufman will be performing a free end-of-summer concert in Wilcox Park this **Sunday, 28 August 2022**, from 6–8pm (near the park's historic bandstand.) Geoff will share a collection of

"Songs of the Heart and Spirit." Please bring a blanket or chair and join us for some good folk tunes, good storytelling, and good fun. See the attached link for concert details.

<https://westerlylibrary.org/events/2022/08/03/music-park-geoff-kaufman>

Empower

Town Meetings

We continue to monitor the **Westerly Town Council** and **School Committee** meetings. Please see

the schedule below and if possible attend the meetings. A big thank you to **Stevi Blanchette** and **Pam Young** who attend the School Committee meetings and to Stevi for keeping our ARC community posted on the issues with her meeting summaries. We are so grateful to you and for you.

- Wednesday, 7 Sept - School Committee Meeting 5:00pm
- Monday, 12 Sept - Town Council Workshop 5:30 pm
- Monday, 19 Sept - Town Council Regular Meeting 5:30 pm
- Wednesday, 21 Sept - School Committee Meeting 5:00 pm



School Committee meetings convene at 5:00, Town Council meetings at 5:30pm, and both meet in the Council Chambers, 2nd Floor, Westerly Town Hall, 45 Broad Street. ARC is committed to attending these meetings regularly, and we need more volunteers to attend with us! Here is the link to meeting schedules and agendas: <https://clerkshq.com/westerly-ri>



Voters' Corner

For everything you need to know about voting and to make sure your vote counts, please check out the **Secretary of State's website** Vote.RI.gov. On the site, you will be able to view and update your voting record, register to vote, find your polling place, view a sample ballot, apply for a mail ballot, find your elected officials, and trace your mail-in ballot.

Another voting information tool is Vote.org, a non-profit advocacy organization, based in the US, that provides online voter guides for every state, including where to vote, what's on the ballot, voter registration forms, absentee ballot applications, and

information on deadlines, directions, and ID and residency requirements. They also have information on how to contact your election officials.

Spread the word and encourage all to vote, help others register and get to the polls, stay informed and learn about the candidates through their websites and FB pages. Attend the forums or watch online. We will provide a calendar of events as we become aware of the dates. YOUR VOTE MATTERS.

Act

[View our Calendar](#)

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



Share

Tell us your story. Share your perspectives, opinions, questions, ideas, etc. Write a piece for this newsletter or our website. Prepare a talk or performance for our weekly protest.



Donate

ARC member 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 protests or show up to one of the events or meetings described in this newsletter.

[Read More](#)

Educate



A Matter of Truth: The Struggle for African Heritage & Indigenous People Equal Rights in Providence, RI (1620-2020)

“Executive Order creates a process of Truth, Reconciliation, and Municipal Reparations to address institutional and systemic bias and racism affecting Black, Indigenous people, and people of color within the City of

Providence.”

The African American Ambassador Group was established by Providence Mayor Jorge O. Elorza originally as a means to ensure equitable access to COVID-19-related care. The weekly meetings of faith leaders served as a direct line of

communication between the community and the Administration. What originally began as a means to ensure equitable access to pandemic-related care and resources soon expanded and subcommittees were established focused on recommending strategies to increase equity citywide.

On July 15, 2020, Mayor Elorza signed an Executive Order that identified and created a process of Truth, Reconciliation, and Municipal Reparations to address institutional and systemic bias and racism affecting Black, Indigenous people, and people of color within the City of Providence. Working together, a team of city and state historical institutions has crafted a comprehensive narrative for public education, public interpretation, and future policy-making efforts. This work is called *A Matter of Truth: The struggle for African Heritage & Indigenous People Equal Rights in Providence, Rhode Island (1620-2020)*.

They have collected over 600 primary and secondary documents and historical artifacts highlighting 400 years of Providence and Rhode Island history. The account is divided into seven sections. Each includes detailed examinations of the people, events, and places that have shaped the history of the city and state.

Systemic racism, a form of race-based discrimination embedded as a normal practice within a society and its governmental system, has a long history in America, and cities like Providence approved discriminatory and dehumanizing laws and policies that created and exacerbated inequality in almost every sphere of life. This report documents 400 years of discrimination in RI, including the detribalization of Indigenous people and the enslavement of those of African heritage. From the moment when the English colonists settled Providence and Rhode Island, African heritage and Indigenous people were denied equal standing and a chance at self-determination. Although some within the colony sympathized with the oppressed, any laws that would have empowered them were largely ignored. To read the entire report and for more information, check out the following links,

[Matter-of-Truth2.pdf](#)

<https://aaagpvd.com/a-matter-of-truth-2/>

Up Next

Calendar of Events	
28 August 2022	Michael Neimeyer, candidate for RI Senate District 38
28 August 2022	Geoff Kaufman's Concert in Wilcox Park, 6-8pm, (bring chairs)

30 August 2022	Black Film Series @ United Theater. "Sorry to Bother You." 7:30 pm
04 September 2022	Cynthia Mendes, candidate for Lt. Governor of RI
13 September 2022	Primary Day in R.I. - VOTE, VOTE, VOTE

Westerly Anti-Racism Coalition

Join our weekly protests

Sundays 11-1

Downtown Westerly Post Office steps



westerlyarc@gmail.com

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