



## Westerly ARC Newsletter

Weekly Newsletter

04 Sept 2022



Artwork by Cookie Rivera

[Visit Our Website](#)

“This Labor Day, let us reflect on how we can build a more just economy by promoting the welfare of working families through both charitable works and through advocacy for improved policies such as expanding the Child Tax Credit and passing the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. Advancing these two policies would have a profound impact on family stability, especially for families who are financially vulnerable.”

- Most Reverend Paul S. Coakey, Archbishop of Oklahoma City



## Sunday Protests

### Last Sunday

On Sunday, August 28, we welcomed **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 for Senate in the Sept 13th Democratic Primary. The race is for the Democratic candidate for the 38th district which includes

Westerly and parts of Charleston and Hopkinton.

Mike explained how he was moved to run for office because of the state of our health care systems in R.I. and the obstacles that stood in his way as he was trying to get life-saving medications for his daughter. He is also concerned with the right to access the shoreline which he believes is every citizen's fundamental right. If elected he promises to represent all the people in the 38th district, not just the wealthy. His love for nature and the quality of life on the planet has led him to be an advocate for strong measures to reverse climate change.

**Early voting is now open** everyday at the Town Hall. We encourage everyone to vote and to vote early if possible. For more information on Mike and his campaign, please check out these links,

Website: [www.niemeyerforri.com](http://www.niemeyerforri.com)

Twitter: @niemeyerforri

Facebook: [facebook.com/niemeyerforri](https://facebook.com/niemeyerforri)

Email: [niemeyerforri@gmail.com](mailto: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.***

## This Sunday

This weekend ARC welcomes **Cynthia**

**Mendes**, candidate for Lieutenant Governor of RI. Cynthia is a single mom, a gun violence survivor, a community advocate, and she knows what it is like to have to work multiple jobs at once to make ends meet.

Cynthia is of Puerto Rican and Cape Verdean descent, has worked in the dental field, and NEVER imagined getting into politics. She prioritized

volunteering in the community like serving unhoused Rhode Islanders, those who were food insecure, and mentoring young women of color. In 2020, members of her community asked her to challenge her State Senator, Rhode Island's powerful Senate Finance Chair. Cynthia laughed at first because people like her don't normally run for office but she had to think about the world she was leaving for her daughter. Despite being outspent 4-to-1, Cynthia won in a landslide. Since being elected to the Senate Cynthia has fought tirelessly for reproductive rights, government transparency, racial justice, universal healthcare, and climate action. Now, Senator Mendes is running alongside Matt Brown for Governor and dozens of state legislative candidates – teachers, nurses, social workers, and everyday people who have spent their lives fighting for their communities. **To get an anti-racist government you need anti-racist leaders!**



The primary election is on September 13th but early voting has already started! To learn more about Cynthia's campaign or to get involved please visit [www.mattandcynthiaforri.com](http://www.mattandcynthiaforri.com)

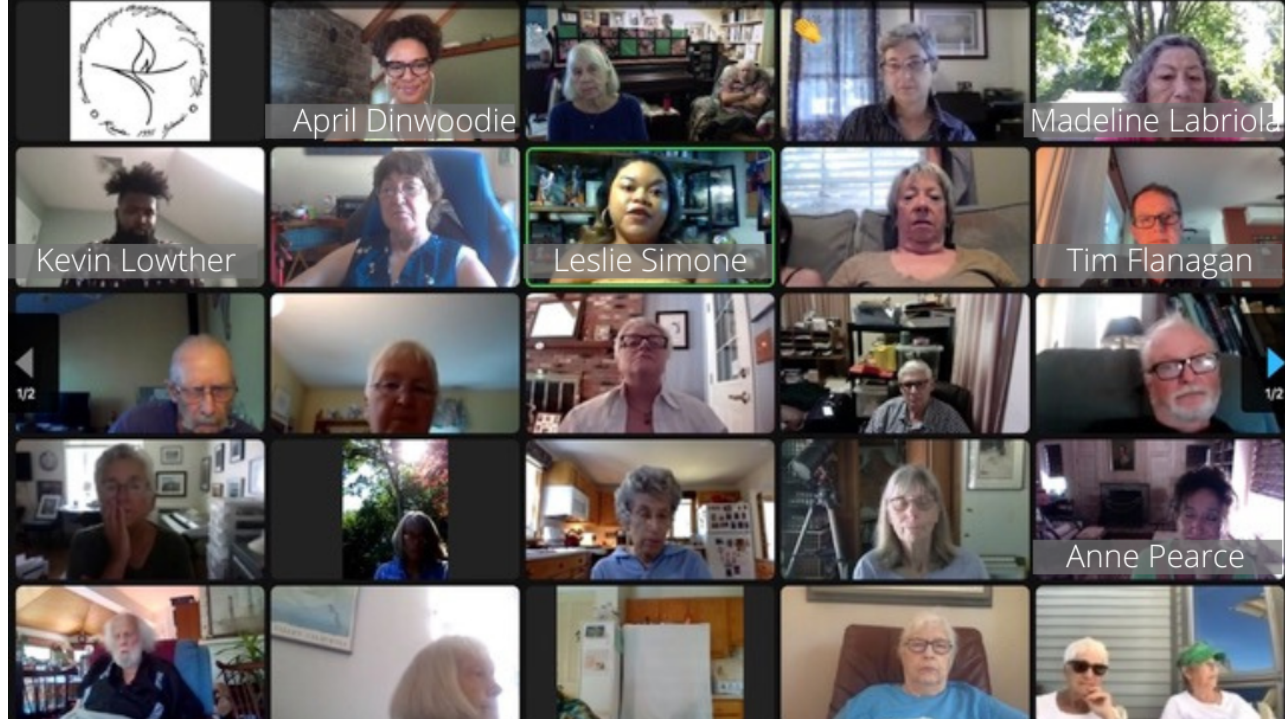
Twitter: @Cynthia\_Mendes\_

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/cynthiamendesri/](https://www.instagram.com/cynthiamendesri/)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/CynthiaMendesRI/](https://www.facebook.com/CynthiaMendesRI/)

TikTok: @cynthiamendes2022

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

## Westerly ARC Welcomed to UUCSC Service

Westerly ARC Steering Committee members were pleased to participate in the **Unitarian Universalist Church of South County (UUCSC)** service (via Zoom) on August 14. We were invited to share the story of Westerly ARC, including our challenges and successes. It was an opportunity for us to reflect on ARC's goals to educate, embrace, and empower, and to appreciate how far we have come in two years thanks to the support of the ARC community.

It was wonderful to be a part of the "order of service" which included **music by Big Lux**, sharing of joys and concerns, and time for questions. The UUCSC is a diverse and welcoming community which supports many social justice issues, including the work of Westerly ARC. You can learn more about them and sign up for their very **informative newsletter** at their website:

<https://uusouthcountyri.org/>

## 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
- Saturday, 17 Sept - Special Town Council Meeting 9:00 am
- Monday, 19 Sept - Town Council Regular Meeting 5:30 pm
- Wednesday, 21 Sept - School Committee Meeting 5:00 pm
- Monday, 26 Sept - Town Council Regular 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, Westery 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](http://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](http://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



### Reparations for Our Beloved Community

The City of Providence's reparations commission report released on 29 August 2022 listed a range of programs and efforts Providence could undertake to begin atoning for its extensive ties to the transatlantic slave trade and the centuries of racism and discrimination that

followed. But it didn't recommend giving out direct payments to Black and Native American residents impacted by slavery and other discrimination, as some had called for. Instead, it defined "reparations" as efforts that close the "present-day racial wealth and equity gaps."

Providence Mayor Jorge Elorza proposed spending \$10 million in federal coronavirus pandemic aid on financial literacy and homeownership, workforce training, small business development and other programs recently recommended by the city's reparations commission.

Mayor Elorza's spending plan calls for using \$250,000 in federal money to launch a legal defense fund for residents facing eviction, \$400,000 dedicated to directly support Black and Native American residents displaced and negatively impacted by urban renewal and \$500,000 to expand the guaranteed income program for low income residents that launched last summer, among other initiatives. The mayor's proposal now goes to the city council.

The Democratic mayor also signed an executive order formally apologizing on behalf of Rhode Island's capital city for its role in slavery, urban renewal and other racist and discriminatory practices.

"While we cannot undo the harm that has been done, I am confident these programs and investments will make great strides in closing the racial wealth and equity gaps that exist in Providence," Mayor Elorza said.

It will be a long journey to make amends for 400 years of injustice - the following article from *The Westerly Sun* highlights the first steps in the work of Providence's reparations commission.

[Read the whole article here.](#)

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## History of Labor Day

Labor Day pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers. It is traditionally observed on the first Monday in September in order to give workers a three-day weekend. This year it occurs on Monday, 5 September. It was created by the labor movement in the late 19th century and became a federal holiday in 1894. Although it is an annual celebration of workers and their achievements, it originated during one of American labor history's most dismal chapters.

In the late 1800s, at the height of the Industrial Revolution in the US, the average American worked 12-hour days and seven-day weeks in order to make a basic living. Despite restrictions in some states, children as young as 5 or 6 years old toiled in mills, factories and mines across the country, earning a fraction of their adult counterparts' wages. People of all ages, particularly the



very poor and recent immigrants, often faced extremely unsafe working conditions, with insufficient access to fresh air, sanitary facilities and breaks.

As manufacturing increasingly supplanted agriculture, labor unions, which had first appeared in the late 18th century, grew more prominent and vocal. They began organizing strikes and rallies to protest poor conditions and compel employers to renegotiate hours and pay.

The idea of a “workingmen’s holiday,” caught on in other industrial centers across the country, and many states passed legislation recognizing it. Congress would not legalize the holiday until 12 years later, when a watershed moment in American labor history brought workers’ rights squarely into the public’s view. On May 11, 1894, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike to protest wage cuts and the firing of union representatives.

On June 26, the American Railroad Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, called for a boycott of all Pullman railway cars, crippling railroad traffic nationwide. To break the strike, the federal government dispatched troops to Chicago, unleashing a wave of riots that resulted in the deaths of more than a dozen workers.

In the wake of this massive unrest and in an attempt to repair ties with American workers, Congress passed an act making Labor Day a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories. On June 28, 1894, President Grover Cleveland signed it into law. More than a century later, the true founder of Labor Day has yet to be identified. Many credit Peter J. McGuire, cofounder of the American Federation of Labor, while others have suggested that Matthew Maguire, a secretary of the Central Labor Union, first proposed the holiday.

Happy Labor Day!

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## Up Next

<b>Calendar of Events</b>	
04 September 2022	Cynthia Mendes, candidate for Lt. Governor of RI
11 September 2022	Special event honoring the 21st anniversary of 9/11
13 September 2022	Primary Day in R.I. - VOTE, VOTE, VOTE
18-24 September 2022	Banned Books Week - Presentation by local Librarian - TBD

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## Westerly Anti-Racism Coalition

Join our weekly protests

Sundays 11-1

Downtown Westerly Post Office steps



westerlyarc@gmail.com

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