

Editorial

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The Allied revitalization project is in full swing. After receiving the long anticipated 7.5 million dollar low income tax credit from WHEDA, the project can now move forward. The major concern at this point is how will Allied residents be given the first opportunities to work on this project? The CDA is the agency given the authority to oversee this massive project, however the city is signaling the Allied community that requiring contractors to employ residents and seek MBE'S and WBE'S may not happen according to the city attorney's office.

It seems that when ever there are attempts to help those living in poverty, local government can't find ways to help. It's funny how people of all color including the underemployed, can pay taxes but when the big bucks are doled out, the money goes to only one color. The city of Madison has the Office of Civil Rights that includes affirmative action and contract compliance. Their charge is to ensure and enforce regulations governing disparities, equality and diversity where city funds are being used. The residents of allied have the right to demand representations on any project or business coming into their neighborhood especially when the community is being disrupted. The Allied community, along with association president, Alice Howard and Alder Brian Solomon should continue to hold the city of Madison accountable for the integration of this project.

Mayor Dave and the Common Council requested and received full support from the allied association and residents, as evidenced by their participation in the revitalization process from day one. The city of Madison is now saying their hands are tied when it comes to ensuring diversity on all levels of this development. It would be unconscionable and degrading to the residents to leave the community out of the economic equation.

We, the Allied community, will not stand by idle and allow economic prosperity to exist and not be allowed to share in the economic wealth of our community. We will continue to Move Forward, and Not Out.



Letters to the Editor

To the editor:

I recently learned of the City's intent to rename some of the streets of the Allied neighborhood when the Revitalization is completed. We often hear "what's in a name?" I think for this and any community a name is extremely important. It gives identity and place of belonging.

I hope as the City moves forward with this project, they will keep in mind, that the community today and those that will live there in the future, would benefit from street names that call to mind, recognizable leaders who understood and worked for community.

Thank-you.

Allied resident (name withheld by request)

Hats off to the Allied Festival Organizers and Participants

I want to publicly applaud the leaders and festival attendees for the organized and quick response to the storm warnings! All worked as a collective group to keep the neighborhood and its guests safe. Although many got wet, everyone remained safe. I tip my Allied baseball hat (thanks Freddie!) to you all!

Jeanne Erickson

"Fill in the Blanks"

By Jeanne F. Erickson,

reprinted from *The Madison Times*, with additions

When asked the question, "What is the achievement gap?" the majority of students in the Dane County area would quite possibly answer they don't know. Many adults would give the same response. However, the harsh reality for students of color in Dane County, is that they experience the Achievement Gap throughout their academic career.

On Friday May 16, the Dane County Youth Board, opened a well needed and frank dialogue to answer that very question, by hosting the 2nd Annual Teem Summit, "Fill in the Blank" A community forum and panel discussion on Dane County's Achievement Gap and Post-secondary Options for youth. Facilitated by Arthur Richardson, Streets of Gold Productions, the Dane County Youth Board welcomed middle and high school students and adults community members to the Lussier Teen Center. Panel members included Past MMSD School Board President, Johnny Winston, Jr., Cindy Shepp Memorial High School CRIS (Credit Recovery and Increasing Skills) Program, Julie Koehnke, MSCR and a teacher representative from East High School.

A facilitated discussion broached difficult issues such as students of color who achieve good grades being accused of "acting white;" or white students stating they are stopped in hallways and asked for passes at a lesser rate than the students of color, they may be actually walking with. An impassioned college age woman of color talked about how she would drop her grades in high school to fit in, only to find that when she entered collage, there were students of color who did not do that. Her question was simple. "Where were they when I was in school?"

There was the SE Asian student who explained that when she approached her teacher for assistance in the subject area she was told she did not need it. The subject was math. The Madison Metropolitan School District statistics on retention, graduation, and average grade point for the four high schools, also provided fodder for in-depth discussion between the panelists and the participants.

When asked by past School Board President, Johnny Winston, Jr. if it would make a difference if there were more teachers of color, the answer was consistent from all who answered, What was needed is more teachers who are "willing to take the time to understand and show they really care WHO we are, NOT what color we are."

It is never too early NOR TOO LATE to become active in efforts to not just lower but ELIMINATE the achievement gap. But the time is now to begin! Efforts must begin with early education and care, those formidable years of growth and development and CONTINUE through the life of that child.

It was announced this week, that Madison again made the No Child Left Behind List of under achieving schools. I am in no way a proponent for the "No Child Left Behind Act" or its governing principles and regulations. Having said that, we must look at the statistics, (broken down by school and by race) that were presented at the Youth Summit, esp in the areas of Grade Point Averages, Retention rates, and Graduation rates and ask ourselves, how and why are we allowing these patterns to continue? *These tables can be found on the VOICES website, in the Our Viewpoints Section)*

There is much conversation these days about our incarceration rates being higher than our graduation rates, for students of color. Wisconsin is ranked number 1, no not for football or any other sport this time, but for the having the highest disproportionate minority confinement percentages. It is not enough to have conversations about this issue. It is time to put our "resources where our mouths are."

Funding resources need to be allocated for programs that provide mentoring, and support the students. Many students can tell us what they are needing and missing to help them succeed academically.

Are we ready to listen and actively work to
 "Fill in the Blanks?"

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