

Opening Minds & Opening Hearts!

*A newsletter of the National Conference for Community and Justice of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts, Inc.
Founded in 1927 as the National Conference of Christians and Jews*

NCCJ's SHINING STARS

Each year NCCJ recognizes ANYTOWN alumni with the Human Relations Youth Award. This award is given for exemplifying the principles of NCCJ and ANYTOWN. These principles include; respect for others, tolerance, responsible leadership by example and diligence in the struggle for human rights and dignity.



NCCJ Youth Award Recipients Shantell Lozada and Natasha Wilson enjoy an evening at the 80th Annual Human Relations Award Banquet at Chez Josef, in Agawam, Massachusetts

Natasha Wilson

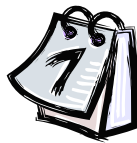
Natasha's freshman year at Holyoke High School started with her publicly standing up and speaking out for a student who was being bullied about his presumed sexual orientation. Since that first day, Natasha has tirelessly advocated for others, worked toward and created caring communities of people around her through her involvement with Hermanas in Power at Girls Incorporated of Holyoke as well as her involvement in International Day at Holyoke High. Anytown gave Natasha the courage to speak up for others and the confidence to combat the negative messages about young women of color.

Shantell Lozada

Shantell is a junior at Holyoke High School, she is an active member of her school's Gay Straight Alliance. Shantell has played a large part in creating safe spaces for LGBT students and allies through educational and social events such as the Day of Silence and the Youth Pride Prom. She is heavily involved with Girls Incorporated of Holyoke, and was a leader in an educational campaign about sexual abuse prevention through the program Hermanas In Power. Shantell credits Anytown with helping her to become more comfortable with herself and being a role model for other young women of color.

SAVE THE DATES !

October 16 – November 16
Hartford Stage, Resurrection
Daniel Beaty



October 23
Community Conversations Circle
Springfield, MA

April 2
Annual Human Relations Award Banquet
Hartford, CT

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NCCJ YOUTH PROGRAMS

ANYTOWN™ is a week long residential community building and leadership camp for high school age youth. The mission of the program is to educate, liberate, and empower participants to become effective, responsible leaders in our pluralistic society. A diverse group of high school students come together to spend one week working to understand one another, find common ground, form an independent community and make lifelong friends.

A Different Perspective: From Delegate to Counselor

By *Brishell Soca-Guzman*

When I went to ANYTOWN as a counselor I had the second best experience I have ever had in my life after first going as a delegate. Going as a counselor was very motivating because it gave me the opportunity to be there for someone whose shoes I have walked in. Being a counselor made me aware of the fact that I was creating change just by setting an example and giving knowledge to those who are blinded by society's oppression. A second look at the activities and workshops performed at ANYTOWN made me realize that as you get older, the oppression and prejudices in the world just continue to increase and affect you little by little. A few times I became very frustrated because some of the delegates did not understand or were not taking the workshops seriously, but as we continued I began to feel at ease just by trusting the process and allowing the learning to take place at each delegate's pace. I learned that I may not be able to change everyone, but I can certainly try to leave an impact or a memory of what is going on in our society and how we need to change it. As next ANYTOWN approaches and my desire to be a counselor arises, I get eager to go and illuminate the delegates with different ways in which we can come together to finally make a difference. Volunteering as a counselor gives me an embracing perspective in which instead of talking about my experience and my feelings, I get to listen and consume all the stories, feelings, and viewpoints of others. Having the opportunity to take in all that energy from others is very inspirational and makes me believe that everyone is capable of making a difference.

ANYTOWN August 2008

The 2008 Regional ANYTOWN took place from August 16th -22nd with 45 delegates and 25 staff making this the largest Regional Connecticut and Western Massachusetts camp ever. Delegates came from all over including Hartford, Springfield, Holyoke, Amherst, Bloomfield, Windsor, Westport, and even Lumberton, New Jersey! Delegates and Staff spent the entire week exploring and questioning their understandings of prejudice, bigotry, and oppression. After a few days of intense, enlightening conversations that created a strong ANYTOWN community, we celebrated our individual cultures with visiting family and friends during Culture Night. The following day, Dr. Steven Botkin and James Arana from Men's Resource International conducted a workshop on positive masculinity. A first for ANYTOWN, participants practiced active listening skills as a tool to continue positive and constructive dialogue between men and women. As ANYTOWN came to a close, delegates discussed and planned various activities to take back to their communities to put their learning into action. From educating their peers at school, to community service projects, the final moment was full of confidence in ourselves and each other that change is



ANYTOWN delegates August 2008

YOUTH ACTION COALITION (YAC)

Youth Action Coalition Quick Bits!

- 23 ANYTOWN Alumni attended the YAC Kick Off meeting at Classical Magnet School in Hartford. Following the meeting, the group attended "An Evening with Daniel Beaty" at the Hartford Stage where they talked with Michael Wilson, Artistic Director of Hartford Stage as well as Daniel Beaty, author of "*Resurrection*" about their ANYTOWN experience.
- Next YAC meeting planned for October 15th, 2008 at Hall High School.
- College Field Trips to New York, Boston, Western Massachusetts, and Connecticut are planned for November and December

- "Basics of College Admissions" An all day workshop is being organized for college bound youth to understand the college admissions process, including financial aid.
- ANYTOWN Reunion planned for third week of January. More news to come!
- "*The Unspoken Word*" – A weekend workshop on spoken poetry to be held in December to give rhyming youth a structure to express themselves through the powerful act of Spoken Word!

NCCJ 80th ANNIVERSARY BANQUETS



NCCJ Honoree, Alan Green, Executive Director of the Hartford Housing Authority addresses guests at the 80th Anniversary Annual Human Relations Awards Banquet April 10, 2008 at the Hilton, Hartford.

2008 marked a landmark year for NCCJ as 80 years of operation in the Greater Hartford and Western Massachusetts region. NCCJ celebrated this milestone during the Annual Human Relations Awards Banquets on April 10 in Hartford, CT and on June 17 in Agawam, MA.

For 80 years, the NCCJ has boldly faced the challenge of working in the community to eradicate bias, bigotry and racism. The Annual Human Relations Awards Banquet honors the work of individuals who have dedicated significant time and effort to all NCCJ values. Funds generated from each banquet assist in sustaining NCCJ's many programs, including the award winning Community Conversations which brings together individuals of all races, religions and ethnicities to dialogue on race relations and empowers individuals to improve their communities, as well as the youth programs which encourage and empower youth to make change in their schools and communities.

The following individuals in the Greater Hartford community were honored on April 10, at the Hartford Hilton:

- Kathleen Murphy, President & CEO, ING US Wealth Management
- Richard Barry, President, Citizens Bank, Hartford, CT
- Alan Green, Executive Director, Hartford Housing Authority
- Henry Zachs, President, Zafa Towers International
- Brishell Soca Guzman - Hall High School, Youth Award Recipient

NCCJ continues the tradition of paying tribute to members of the Western MA community who uphold the mission and principles of the NCCJ. The following honoree achievements were celebrated on June 17, at Chez Josef in Agawam, MA:

- Victor Woolridge, Managing Director, Babson Capital Management Group
- Joan Kagan, President, Square One
- Mary Ellen & Roy Scott, Owners, United Personnel Services
- The Davis Family, John Davis, Stephen Davis and Jane Davis –Kusek
- Shantel Lozada & Natasha Wilson, Youth Award Recipients

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NCCJ Western MA annual human relations banquet award honorees, chair and Board member. Left—right: upper row; honorees John Davis, Victor Woolridge, NCCJ Board Chair Erica Broman, Stephen Davis. Bottom row; Baystate Health President and CEO, Mark Tolosky, Banquet Vice Chair, honorees, Joan Kagan, Roy Scott, Mary Ellen Scott, Jane Davis Kusek.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Calling All Adults...

For information on how you or your organization can participate in NCCJ's many adult programs please contact the NCCJ offices at **860-683-1039 ext. 105** or email jroberts@nccjtwma.org.

HARTFORD STAGE



*October 16 through
November 16*

The NCCJ will partner with the Hartford Stage in moderating ten post performance discussions for the world premier of *Resurrection* by African American poet/playwright Daniel Beaty. In a unique blend of music, poetry, and dance, Daniel Beaty brings us six show-stopping characters—from Eric, a budding child scientist, to The Bishop, the leader of a mega church, to his son Isaac, a corporate executive. The stories of these African American men collide one evening in an unforgettable look at identity, relationships and, above all, our human connections. Tickets for this exciting event can be obtained from the Hartford Stage directly at **860-527-5151** or **WWW.HARTFORDSTAGE.ORG**.



An Evening with Daniel Beaty, September 22, 2008, Members of the NCCJ Youth Action Council (YAC) attend an evening at the Hartford Stage with 2007-2008 Aetna New Voices Fellow, writer in residence Daniel Beaty. Hartford Stage Artistic Director, Michael Wilson also hosted a question and answer session with the group.

Facilitation Skills Training Workshop

Trainers: Judith Barlow-Roberts & Terry Nelson

This training is open to individuals with basic facilitation experience. In the context of facilitating NCCJ Community Conversation on Race & Poverty workshops, you will learn and practice the following skills:

- The dialogue process.
- The role of a facilitator and importance of setting ground rules.
- Managing process and content.
- Building trust, openness, mutual confidence and support.
- Increasing participation and dealing with conflict.
- Building consensus and developing action agreements.

Cost of the workshop is \$25. This includes a light breakfast, lunch and materials. For registration and directions contact Judith Barlow-Roberts at jroberts@nccjtwma.org or call at 860-683-1039 ext. 105.

Date: October 18, 2008
Time: 9am-4pm
Location: Western New England College
Campus Center
Conference Room 4

ADULT PROGRAMS

NCCJ Partners with Mayberry Village

The Mayberry Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) Inc. hosted a pizza and pasta community dinner event for recycling on Thursday September 25, 2008 6-8pm. The East Hartford recycle coordinator, Jim Kate's facilitated an informational program at the Larson Center located in Mayberry Village. Sponsored by the town of East Hartford, the evening was designed to bring the community together and encourage recycling within Mayberry Village. On average only 40% of the residents actively recycle on a weekly basis. The NCCJ's *Beyond the Dialogue* program has assisted the NRZ in making the community better for all of its residents. Additional speakers Bill Knose from Foodshare and Raymond Mack from the Northeast Utilities WRAP (Weatherization Residential Assistance Partnership) program were also in attendance. The WRAP program assist income-eligible customers reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient.



Mayberry Village Residents gather to hear a presentation on recycling from Northeast Utilities.



Toward A More Perfect Union- *In An Age of Diversity*

**Saturday, October 25, 2008,
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.
Hartford Public Library
500 Main Street
Hartford, CT 06103**

The 2008 Presidential Election is historic for many reasons. For the first time since the founding of the United States over 200 years ago, we have a multi-racial candidate for president and, for only the second time, a female candidate for vice president. The nation is facing momentous economic, international, environmental, demographic, and other challenges. In this historic time and this age of diversity, more than ever it is critical to, as our Founding Fathers wrote in the Constitution, "...form a more perfect union..." Come to this in-depth discussion co-sponsored by the National Conference for Community and Justice and the Hartford Public Library. Lunch provided.

MESSAGE FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



80 Years and Still Going Strong

For the past several months NCCJ has been celebrating things that are 80; Mickey Mouse, Pez candy, the birth year of Maya Angelou, Elie Wiesel and the birth year of NCCJ. The very creation of this human relations organization was the result of a courageous response by leaders like Jane Adams and Charles Evan Hughes to growing and widespread bigotry against various racial, ethnic and religious groups. Primitive hatreds and xenophobia unleashed by World War I were being harnessed by organizations such as the American Protective Association and the KKK. Their venom was directed at Catholics, Jews, African-Americans and others. In response, men and women of good will came together to organize and support an effective counter force, which they called The National Conference of Christians and Jews or NCCJ. Since its inception, NCCJ worked to mobilize people to confront such destructive groups as they organized hate campaigns employing slogans such as “America for Americans” and labeled everything that they politically or morally opposed as “un-American”.

In 1928 the Connecticut and Western Massachusetts chapter of the NCCJ held its first major gathering and it has been going strong ever since. Throughout this year several special celebrations have been held acknowledging our 80th Anniversary. The culmination of these celebrations will be held on Monday, October 6 at the University of Hartford as Jonathan Kozol receives NCCJ’s highest honor – The Charles Evans Hughes Award. Established in 1965, the Charles Evans Hughes Gold Medal for Courageous Leadership in Governmental, Civic and Humanitarian Affairs was created in honor of Chief Justice Charles Evan Hughes. Dedicated to fighting the growing bigotry and hatred aimed at various racial, ethnic and religious groups in America, Chief Justice Hughes worked with some of the nation’s most influential leaders of the time to found NCCJ. His civic and humanitarian contributions to the furtherance of human dignity through government service have set a standard for this award which honors his memory as well as the recipients. Past recipients include leaders such as Dwight Eisenhower, Earl Warren, Marian Wright Edelman and Maya Angelou.

In October of 2008 NCCJ was honored to bestow upon Mr. Kozol this award for his life-long commitment and dedication to highlighting injustice in our national educational system, speaking out and advocating on behalf of our nation’s youngest and most vulnerable victims – our children. Jonathan Kozol is a National Book Award-winning author and has worked with children in the inner city for the past 40 years. Most noted for his 1991 book, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America’s Schools*, Kozol chronicles the differences between schools in affluent neighborhoods and those attended by the children in low income regions and how poor children have suffered from the inequities in public education. Many thanks to all who joined us for this momentous occasion and as always, I thank you for your continued support of this important work.

Andrea C. Kandel





Muneer Panjwani

NCCJ Welcomes Muneer Panjwani

Muneer Panjwani comes to the NCCJ as the new Director of Youth Programs.

A student of the University of Massachusetts Social Justice Program, Muneer brings a wealth of expertise to his new role here at the NCCJ. Muneer is anything but a stranger to the NCCJ, as he is a former recipient of the NCCJ Youth Award, an alumni of NCCJ's Camp ANYTOWN and former member of the Youth Action Coalition (YAC). Muneer brings hands-on experience to the youth programs here at NCCJ and is enthusiastic about his new post. The board and staff of NCCJ are pleased to welcome Muneer into his new position!

NCCJ Welcomes Brishell Soca-Guzman

NCCJ is proud to have Brishell Soca-Guzman join the staff as Youth Action Coalition Coordinator. Brishell is a graduate of Hall High School and winner of the 2008 Connecticut Board of Education Student Leadership Award. She has staffed camp ANYTOWN twice and organized a school wide ACTION Day raising awareness about issues of prejudice at Hall. Brishell is the winner of NCCJ's 2008 Youth Human Relations Award. *NCCJ is excited to have such a vibrant, talented, and promising youth on our team!*



Brishell Soca-Guzman

In the Spotlight...

Adult Programs, Our Volunteers Make a Difference !

Beth Green, the retired Executive Director of the Human Service Forum for over 21 years assisted the NCCJ as a community volunteer in Western Massachusetts during the winter and spring of 2008. Beth's sphere of influence and network of community based organizations added to the efforts of growing the NCCJ's mission in Massachusetts. Beth assisted in recruiting volunteers, participants and host site locations for the Springfield Community Conversation on Race & Poverty dialogue program. Ms. Green has been involved with the Community Council of Greater Springfield from 1984 to 1986 and was involved with Springfield Department of Public Health in 1982 through 1984 coordinating efforts to fluoridate water of Springfield, Mass. for the Dental Division of the Mass. Department of Public Health (note- in Massachusetts citizens vote on this issue). Ms. Green has been active in the League of Women Voters, holding a wide variety of volunteer, committee, and board positions over 25 years. Ms. Green is active in her synagogue holding a wide range of positions. She received a Bachelor's of Science, Simmons College, Boston, 1969 in community work. She obtained her Master's Degree in Urban Affairs, Boston University, 1980 with an emphasis in social service administration. Beth is a former recipient of NCCJ's Annual Human Relations Award in 2006 and is now currently serving as a consultant doing special projects for non-profits in the Pioneer Valley.



NCCJ Adult Program Coordinator Judith Barlow-



nccj The National Conference
for Community and Justice

of Connecticut and Western
Massachusetts

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WE OPEN MINDS

SAVE THE DATES!

October 16 - November 16

Resurrection, Daniel Beaty

Hartford Stage

For ticket information
contact the Hartford Stage:

(860) 527-5151 or visit
WWW.HARTFORDSTAGE.ORG

April 2, 2009

*Annual Human Relations
Awards Banquet*

WWW.NCCJCTWMA.ORG

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