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NPLI News

Summer/Fall Edition - 2020

Good news in challenging times.

The year seems to be moving so quickly. It's autumn already and we are still in the midst of challenging times. During challenging times, it is sometimes hard to see the GOOD. So, we are here to share good news with you. And though our intentions are good, we will not ignore or dismiss what is troublesome:

- concerns for the health and safety of students continue now that schools across the country have reopened at all levels of education and all models: distance learning, in-person and hybrid;
- civil unrest continues and people protest racist policies and racist systems that perpetuate the senseless death of black and brown people in this country;
- the abuse, neglect, and violation of migrant children and adults detained in public and privatized detention centers;
- COVID-19 rates on the rise again, and the “long-standing health and social inequities that have resulted in increased risk for infection, severe illness, and death from COVID-19 among communities of color.”¹
- and voter suppression and the threat to democratic process in our elections. Across the country, one in 13 Black Americans cannot vote due to disenfranchisement laws. And only 40 percent of polling places fully accommodate people with disabilities.

In order to tackle these problems, we have to name them and address them. But these problems do not suppress that which is GOOD. We can acknowledge these truths and also lift up goodness. GOODNESS still exists. Perhaps you see it as

hope, honesty, kindness, possibility, faith or even optimism. Whatever it may be, let's agree together that it still exists. And we are here to share some goodness and good news with you.

We continue to engage in discourse and public process. Though we strive for a healthy democracy in partnership with parent leaders and others, the good fight for democracy is personal. Democracy is personal.

We need to share the good news of democracy - we know that some may be disturbed with what is being presented to us as democracy in this country, but there is hope. With all of these challenges parents are still managing to show up, lead and engage. Our recent pre/post evaluation report showed that civic actions **increased** across all 12 civic areas measured post-PLTI for parent leaders. 83% worked with neighbors to improve something, 78% participated in a civic or political organization, and 67% met with an elected official. Parents are at the table in school reopening conversations including addressing inequity and many of them like their children are returning to school. Parents are pushing for justice and policy change through peaceful protests. Parents are educating their communities on the Census and why responding is critical.

Everyone counts. Every voice counts. Every vote counts.

We, the people, are still working hard for the sacred opportunity to vote, the right to vote and to protect the vote - we cannot give up.

A healthy democracy is infused by the actions of the people who live in our communities. We can all take part in helping to restore the health of this democracy. And that's a good thing. We are inspired by the words of the late, beloved U.S. Congressman John Lewis, "Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."

We lift up goodness, the greater good and joy of doing good. We believe good trouble is an essential thread in the true fabric of democracy.

In Community,
Donna Thompson-Bennett
NPLI, Executive Director

Below, NPLI Executive Director Donna Thompson-Bennett who is also a Bridgeport PLTI graduate pictured here with community leader, Jasmine Vermont encouraging people to complete the census and register to vote. Right, Stamford PLTI graduate, Michael Hernandez door knocking Stamford, CT.



(L to R) Edith Targonski, Stamford PLTI graduate and Stamford Census Coordinator picture here with CT Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz, State Representative Patricia Billie Miller, and State Representative David Michel and Stamford Complete Count Committee member knocking doors to remind residents to respond to the Census.

CLTI Spotlight

Child Leaders Doing Good.



Bridgeport Child Leader working the polls (left) pictured with Gina LeVon Simpson, National CLTI Specialist; and 4-year old Nylah, grand daughter of PLTI graduate, promoting the Census with the We Count census book.



Children's Leadership Training Institute (CLTI) young leaders helped the Stamford Girl Scouts for a food drive benefiting The Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County.

Welcome Fall Cohorts!

Welcome and congratulations to the 2020/2021 PLTI & CLTI Cohorts starting virtually this Fall.

Hawaii (2 Consecutive Cohorts); Kansas City, MO; Greater Rochester, NY; Gustine, CA; Delhi, CA; Merced, CA; Los Banos, CA; Everett, WA; Decatur, IL; New Orleans, LA.



Greater Rochester PLTI kicking off their virtual cohort with an in-person meet and greet for parent and child leaders with appropriate socially distancing, care packages including Greater Rochester PLTI face masks.

Congratulations PLTI & CLTI Graduates!



Naugatuck, CT Parent Leader, Francis Morgan, representing as elected class speaker for the Naugatuck in-person graduation held in September. We so appreciate the efforts of Site Coordinators and Civic Design Team members who took great care in planning and executing beautiful, socially-distanced outdoor celebrations to honor these PLTI graduates who completed the latter part of their cohorts virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



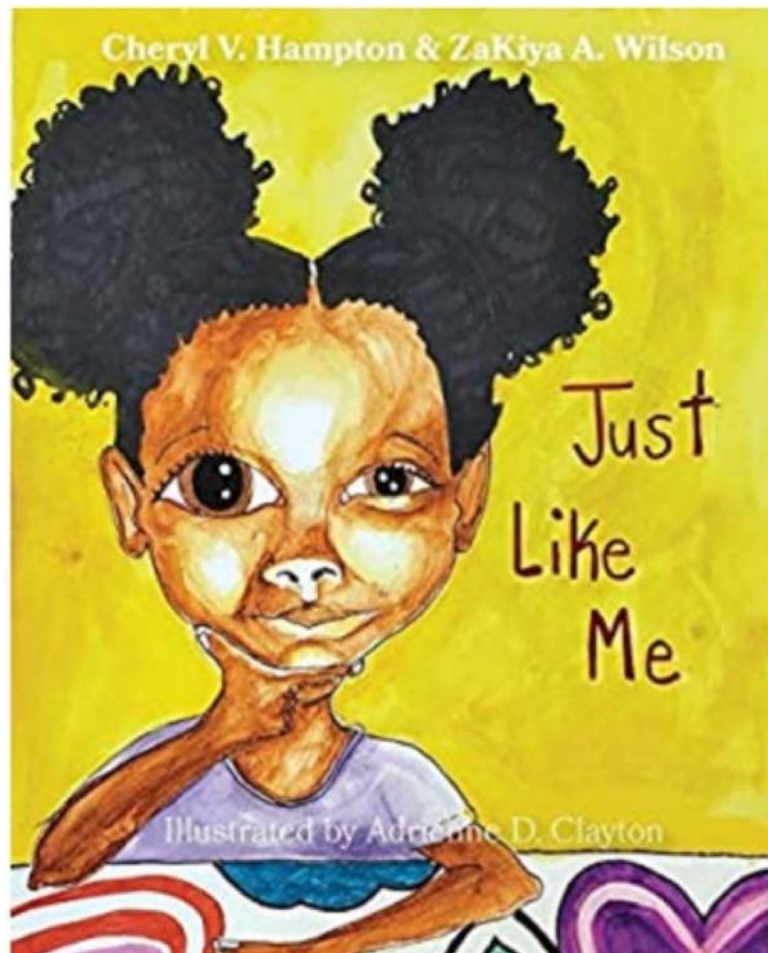
Top Right, Naugatuck CLTI Graduate gets some microphone assistance from State Senator George Logan; Top Left, One of our youngest graduates this year, one-year old Grace from Naugatuck, CT pictured. Bottom, Danbury CLTI class speaker delivers his remarks with support from CLTI Lead Teacher, Dr. Karen Muller.



Parent Leadership Spotlight

Leading for Inclusion and Literacy

Congratulations to Kansas City, MO alumnae Cheryl Hampton on her PLTI community project becoming a published children's book, *Just Like Me!* It's the first in a series titled: "Everyone is Someone" that she created with co-author Keya Wilson and illustrator and local artist Adrienne Clayton. The book follows the story of six-year-old Charlize as she experiences her first race-related moment. [You can purchase the book on Amazon.](#)



Leading to Fight Food Insecurity

Along with education, equity, economic, health, safety and racial unrest over the past six months, food insecurity has been on the rise. Nationwide, we saw PLTI Parent Leaders help their fellow alumni and communities in need of food and resources due to the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Naugatuck PLTI Alumna, Jill Mahoney, increased capacity for her mobile food pantry by 50% taking on additional food boxes that PLTI alumni delivered to senior citizens. Children's Leadership Training Institute (CLTI) young leaders helped out the Stamford, CT Girl Scouts at their food drive benefiting The Food Bank of Lower Fairfield County.

And in New Orleans, LA Juana Leticia Casildo shifted her community project to directly address hunger in her community, launching an initiative to feed families in need with the support of her husband, fellow PLTI parent leader Mario Mendoza. They have undertaken an ambitious project to feed families who need and are not eligible for, or could not access, food benefits. Beginning with about 60 families, this project has swelled to regularly feed more than 500 people! Through the PLTI connection with the office of Mayor Latoya Cantrell, this issue and project was brought to the attention of the city. As a result, changes were made in city policy to expand access and benefits to undocumented families.

Parent Leaders in Merced County, CA have been busy providing food resources, face masks, and other basic necessities to families in rural areas of the county.



Pictured here are PLTI Alumni and Facilitators Carmen Perez Ojeda and Maria Alapizco making sure farmworkers and rural families have basic necessities over the summer including masks and food, in Merced County, CA.

Racial Justice

NPLI continues to stay committed to the work of racial justice and working toward racial equity for families in various systems and institutions in communities across the country. Here we share with you how we are working with parent leaders to engage in this work.

In Rochester, NY parent and child leaders as well as supporters from Greater Rochester PLTI are on the frontlines peacefully protesting and using their voices to stand against the death of another black man in American due to police violence. Rochester papers, *The Democrat* and *Chronicle* reported the

story of Daniel Prude, who died after being restrained by Rochester Police Department officers in March 2020. We support their civic actions to peacefully engage and challenge systems that are harmful particularly to people of color and others who are marginalized.

This summer we began training PLTI community teams of facilitators and site coordinators on our Curriculum Update: Racial Equity (CURE). The five-part CURE Training was the culmination of a 2-year project to update the diversity focused PLTI curriculum with additional racial equity components and language that would encourage and invite facilitators and participants to walk toward difficult conversations on race and inclusion.

In addition to the CURE Training, this summer we collaborated with our partners at EmbraceRace on a webinar, **Parents Who Lead on Racial Justice in Their Communities** which focused on the value and impact of child-centered, anti-racism parent advocacy and partnership. Jacksonville, FL PLTI graduate Whitney Touchton shared how she partnered with Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement at Duval County Public Schools, Tia Leathers, to bring her racial equity focused community project to the 21st largest school district in the country, serving close to 130,000 students. NPLI Executive Director, joined the discussion sharing the beginnings of PLTI in its founding state of Connecticut and brought the national landscape of parents leading in racial justice to the table. Dr. Maira Martelo, Director of Strategic Engagement and Partnerships, at the Jacksonville Public Education Fund in Jacksonville shared on the community project support she provides PLTI parent leaders as they engage in the curriculum during the sessions and beyond. View the informative discussion [here](#).



Upcoming Roundtable Hosted by



The Parent Policy Table:

Voting & The 2020 Election

**September 17th 4:00 PM Pacific/
7 PM Eastern**



On September 17th, the timely topic was Voting and the 2020 Election. The panel of parent leaders shared on their role as civic leaders during this election season, why it's important for parent leaders to participate in the election, and the many ways parents can engage right now. Panelists: Zulema Gomez, NPLI Sr. Implementation Specialist (California), Claire McLauchlin (Greater Rochester, NY PLTI), Bhuwan Pyakurel (Colorado FLTI and Central Ohio PLTI), Bianca Shinn (Stamford, CT PLTI), and State Representative Hilda Santiago (Meriden, CT PLTI). Melvette Hill, NPLI's Policy, Partnership, & Communications Consultant moderated both panels. NPLI's [ASK, KNOW, DO](#) election season tool was shared with participants and can be accessed below. It includes great ideas for actions to take now like hosting ballot parties or helping others get to the polls, while getting to know the candidates and the issues. The [tool](#) is appropriate for local elections as well as the Presidential election. Access the recording [here](#). Access Passcode: iEFH+u6@

2020 Census

NPLI as well as many organizations was disturbed by the U.S. Census Bureau's decision to end Census Operations early. We are relieved to report that the [U.S](#)

[Supreme Court has ordered the Census Bureau to continued Census operations through October 31st](#) after many rounds of litigation in the District Courts. We encourage everyone to continue encouraging families to respond to the census. Although, the [U.S. Bureau is reporting that 99% of households have been counted](#), this does not mean that all people have been counted. We are sharing this [op-ed](#) to offer clarification on this issue. There is still work to be done.

Census Roundtable: Equity & Impact through Parent-Led Outreach Strategies
 Thursday, July 30th, 2020 at 5:00 PM

MODERATOR

Donna Thompson-Bennett
 Exec. Dir. National Parent Leadership Institute

Regan Allan
 Programs Coordinator, Stamford Public Education Foundation

Edith Targonski
 Census Coordinator, City of Stamford

Janine McMahon
 CT 2Gen Parent Consultant

Merrill Gay
 Count All Kids CT Early Childhood Alliance

Melvette Hill
 State Director, Parent Leadership Training Institute

For more information, please email us at: Melvette.Hill@percct.org

Eva Bunnell: MQA Coordinator, Field Dir. New York Region U.S.

To join this conversation visit us at: www.facebook.com/CWCSEO

The Connecticut Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity hosted a **Census Roundtable: Equity and Outreach through Parent-Led Strategies** (on Facebook Live) which featured a panel of PLTI parent leaders, Count All Kids Connecticut and a U.S. Census Bureau Mobile Questionnaire Assistance Director. The panel, moderated by Melvette Hill, highlighted the work of parent leaders in leading Census outreach efforts in Connecticut and strategies to reach historically undercounted communities. Panelists:

- **Representing Bridgeport:** Donna Thompson-Bennett, Executive Director, National Parent Leadership Institute
- **Representing Stamford:** Regan Allan, Programs Coordinator, Stamford Public Education Foundation and Edith Targonski, Census Coordinator, City of Stamford
- **Representing Hartford:** Janine McMahon, CT 2GEN Parent Consultant
- **U.S. Census Bureau MQA Director,** Eva Bunnell
- **CT Early Childhood Alliance & Count All Kids CT,** Executive Director Merrill Gay

Watch the replay [here](#).

Capacity Building

Along with NPLI's continued focus on supporting parent leadership through PLTI, we place an emphasis on the importance of strengthening the ability of systems to build meaningful partnerships with parents and families. We call this our dual capacity approach. By working closely with parents in our communities across the country, we are able to help forge close partnerships for change in the very systems where we live and work.

In 2019 Greater Rochester Health Foundation invited four health and human service grantees in Rochester to join a learning collaborative on partnering with parents. GRHF hired NPLI to co-convene the collaborative and provide technical assistance. NPLI has worked with teams of staff and parents to assess organizational strengths and weaknesses, collaboratively develop goals, and support teams in driving organizational change. We would like to shine a light on this system capacity work in Rochester, NY as we were honored in September to be invited with GRHF to present to the **Funders' Group on Parent Leadership, Family Engagement, and Leadership Development** on our initiative to build parent voice in program and policy decision-making in human services organizations.



A year ago, we also launched a system capacity project in Memphis, TN, bringing together partners in health care, education, and social services, to

engage families in topics including Census and schools reopening.

NPLI is proud to support this work, hand in hand with parent leaders in our communities. When we are all pulling in the same direction and listening deeply, this is when change happens.



NPLI Welcomes New Board Members



Ellen Galinsky

Ellen Galinsky is the chief science officer at the Bezos Family Foundation where she also serves as executive director of Mind in the Making. In addition, she is a senior research advisor for the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). She also remains president of Families and Work Institute. Her life's work revolves identifying important societal questions as they emerge, conducting research to seek answers, and turning the findings into action. She strives to be ahead of the curve, to address compelling issues, and to provide rigorous data that

can affect our lives.

Seeing how important work-life issues are, she helped to establish the field of work-life in the 1980s and co-founded Families and Work Institute (FWI) in 1989, becoming its president in 1996. Since the 1990s, Ms. Galinsky has directed or co-directed the most comprehensive ongoing studies of the U.S. workforce and workplace as well as When Work Works, an award for workplace effectiveness, now in all 50 states. In December 2016, these three programs became a part of SHRM. In 2017-2018, SHRM will release 10 new reports based on these studies of the workforce and workplace.

In early 2000, Ellen Galinsky became concerned that far too many young people were dropping out of learning and she turned to investigating how to keep the fire for learning burning brightly in children's eyes. The resulting research journey led to her best-selling book, *Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs*. In March 2016, Mind in the Making (MITM) became a program of the Bezos Family Foundation. Its mission is to promote Life Skills that are based on and promote Executive Functions. Projects include Learning Modules, now in 20 states and communities, a library of videos, and Skill Building Moments—tip sheets that reframe discipline from managing “discipline problems” to giving children the skills they need to thrive. She is currently at work on a book about adolescence that extends the work of MITM into the adolescent years.

Career highlights include writing more than 100 books, including *The New Extended Family: Day Care That Works* and the now classic *Six Stages of Parenthood*, and over 300 articles, serving as a child care expert in the TV series *What Every Baby Knows* with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton; serving as a parent expert in the *Mister Rogers Talks to Parents* TV series; being the elected President of the National Association for the Education of Young Children; being elected as a member of National Academy of Human Resources; receiving a number of awards including the Distinguished Achievement

Award from Vassar College; and speaking at five White House conference on children and family issues. In 2017, *Exchange* magazine honored her as a Doyen in the early childhood field—a “special group of leaders held in high regard with a true place of respect as mentors to our generation.” In 2018, the Work and Family Researchers Network announced that the Ellen Galinsky Generative Researcher Award will be given on an ongoing basis. It will “recognize a researcher who has contributed ‘break-through’ thinking to the work-family field of study with theory, measures, and/or data sets from innovative studies.” In addition, she was selected by her peers in the Work and Family Researcher Network as a 2018 Top Ten Extraordinary Contributor to Work and Family Research.



Fernando Piñeda-Reyes

A native of Mexico, Fernando Piñeda-Reyes has more than 20 years’ experience in community engagement. He founded and leads CREA Results (Community + Research + Education + Awareness), a social enterprise specialized in authentic community engagement in 2006. He is also the Director of Community Engagement for the Puerto Rico Public Health Trust.

He has extensive experience working with local and state agencies and foundations. His work includes recent high-profile initiatives including the Partnership of Academicians and Communities for Translation executive committee where he serves as Chair, and recently served for the work group for the Institute of Medicine report for the National Center to Advance Translational Sciences. He provided services to many organizations and businesses developing a community-wide outreach strategy to address health disparities through the state of Colorado.

He’s also gained valuable experience working with federally funded programs including the Environmental Protection Agency grants Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) and

Community Action for Renewable Environment (CARE), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) research programs and Community Based Participatory Research programs (CBPR) and Translational Research (CTSA/NIH).

He has been an active member of the Denver community and served on the board of Metro CareRing. He served as a commissioner for the Early Childhood Leadership Council and in the National Steering Committee of Promotores de Salud from HHS/OMH. He serves in the APHA governing council Community Health Workers Section. Fernando was among the first certified facilitators of PLTI (FLTI) in the state of Colorado. He has managed over 60 health and education programs for Denver Public Schools, Denver Museum of Nature and Science and the University of Colorado and the Colorado Health Exchange. Fernando has dual degrees in Clinical Biochemistry and Pharmaceutical Chemistry from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Fernando is the proud father of three children and lives in Denver and in Puerto Rico.

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[Learn more about our team](#)

Why NPLI exists

The National Parent Leadership Institute coordinates and increases the civic skills and impact of diverse parents to improve child and community outcomes as they build caring communities.

The impact we want to have

A strengthened democracy, resulting from all parents, cross-race and cross-class, being equipped with the skills, knowledge, and opportunity to have presence and power in the school, the neighborhood, the community, and at all public-policy decision-making tables.

Value statement

Race equity is both a value and a verb for NPLI. NPLI is a non-partisan, parent centered, and anti-racist organization that partners with parents and other community leaders to increase racial equity in policy and practice, advance a healthy democracy, and improve child outcomes through the civic engagement of families.

www.ParentsWhoLead.org



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