

Excerpts of the Remarks of William W. Ginsberg  
President of The Community Foundation *for* Greater New Haven  
at  
The Foundation's 2015 Annual Meeting  
  
Evans Hall, Yale School of Management  
New Haven, Connecticut  
December 1, 2015

## **Our Vision for Greater New Haven**

We envision Greater New Haven as a welcoming and inclusive community; a community that is narrowing and ultimately eliminating its inequities, a community that is creating opportunities for its next generation.

The Community Foundation envisions a community of connection – where the people of Greater New Haven are connected to this place and to one another. We envision a community that knows what it takes to make those connections real and meaningful. That means a community that understands that our diversity is among our great strengths and so challenges ourselves to be a welcoming and inclusive community. That also means a community that understands that our persistent and pernicious inequities - in health outcomes and in educational achievement, to name two areas – are our deepest and most troubling weaknesses, and so challenges ourselves to close these gaps. In our vision, a community of connection is one that is connected across generations too, a community that understands what it will take to create real opportunities for our young people to build successful lives here over the next generation, and that challenges ourselves to look beyond the here and now to think and act with the next generation in mind.

Proclaiming our local vision and aspirations clearly and loudly seems particularly important in this moment in time. Think about what is happening all around us. The 2016 Presidential campaign is filled with overt appeals to racist xenophobia of a kind not seen in half-a-century. And in the last year, the Black Lives Matter movement has taught us once again that the fight for full civil rights for African-Americans in our society goes on, and it must be won again in new ways in this generation too.

## **Promoting Inclusion, Eliminating Inequity**

Greater New Haven has every right to be proud that we as a community hold our own community aspirations high. But that's not enough. We have learned that progress only comes when we push ourselves to live up to our vision of being one inclusive community where all can feel understood, respected, accepted, supported, treated with dignity and provided an opportunity to build successful lives. We know that any

successes we have come not from holding ourselves above this challenge, but by engaging deeply in it.

We are seeing this today at Yale University, as it works to bring to life its commitment to inclusion for all of its students; and indeed, under utterly different circumstances, we have seen this in East Haven's progress dealing with the issue of racially disparate law enforcement over the last several years.

Our vision of community came brilliantly to life on one memorable and moving day this past April. In partnership with Long Wharf Theatre and its play *Brownsville Song*, The Foundation sponsored a half-day program entitled "Violence in our Community: Towards Understanding and Empathy." We told powerful, personal stories of the effect of gun violence on local individuals, families and schools. The community came together across lines of town, neighborhood, race and ethnicity to share this most intimate experience. Tears were shed and embraces were shared. Many people who were present told me then and tell me still that it was the most powerful thing we have done – not only because of the raw emotion of the day, but because it put people for one afternoon and evening into the lives of those in our community who live very differently. It did indeed create newfound understanding and empathy; I say with pride that it truly strengthened our community.

This kind of understanding and empathy are essential ingredients in confronting the inequities that persist in our community and in our broader society. This fall, The Foundation has put on two important programs that have highlighted the continuing need to confront these inequities.

In partnership with the City of New Haven, we were proud to host a day-long Health Equity Summit, which brought two leading national figures to New Haven, Dr. David Satcher and Dr. Camara Jones. Drs. Satcher and Jones laid bare the continuing shame of racially disparate health outcomes in our country – the history, the progress, the challenges that remain, and the clear connections to structural racism in America. We are very proud of our work on these issues over many years through New Haven Healthy Start and in other ways as well. Even as our work on health disparities has grown this year with increased Federal funding, we are committed do more.

Our Community Fund for Women and Girls has marked its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015. Its late October celebratory event – the largest event The Foundation has ever put on – brought Gloria Steinem to New Haven for an illuminating and inspirational recounting of battles won and lost and lessons learned in more than four decades of leading the fight for full inclusion for women in the economic and social mainstream of American life. Even more than that, the event was a celebration of the potential of women's philanthropy to re-shape our community through its different view, its inclusive view, its view of Greater New Haven's challenges through a gender-specific lens. Already, that potential has brought forth what is by far the largest pledge in the history of the Fund for Women & Girls. The event was an inspirational moment that will have long-term effect. I can't wait to see what the second twenty years of women's philanthropy in Greater New Haven brings us.

David Satcher, Camara Jones and Gloria Steinem personify national leadership in the fight against inequity and for inclusion. The Foundation is committed to developing local leaders to champion these causes locally too. *Celebrating Latino Leaders* is the title of an outstanding series of profiles developed and promoted in 2015 by our Progreso Latino Fund, continuing PLF's long-time role in growing Latino philanthropy for the future. And our neighborhood leadership program continued its work this year in support of grassroots leaders in New Haven neighborhoods.

## **Inclusion of Immigrants and the Formerly Incarcerated**

The Foundation's commitment to engage the challenges of building an inclusive welcoming community finds expression in two new strategic initiatives launched in 2014 in support of immigrants and those returning to our community from incarceration.

In 2015, these initiatives reached full speed. The Foundation did dedicated grantmaking in these two areas, supporting undocumented local residents through organizations such as Connecticut Students for a Dream, Unidad Latina Accion, and Junta, and supporting the employment, housing and health care needs of the formerly incarcerated through grants to Career Resources, the Phoenix Association and Yale's Transitions Clinic.

Our re-entry and immigration strategies are multi-faceted. Later this week, we will host our second donor gathering of the year on issues of mass incarceration and re-entry. Early in the year, our report "Understanding the Impact of Immigration in Greater New Haven" created a new level of understanding of immigration as one of the most powerful forces shaping the growth and progress of our community. We followed that report in March by hosting Felicia Escobar, the senior White House immigration policy official, for a forum on opportunities for undocumented immigrants under President Obama's 2014 executive orders. And I am very pleased to announce this evening that The Foundation has just received a \$100,000 grant from the Open Society Foundations to support the Immigrant Strategic Funders Collaborative for Connecticut, which we are establishing with 6 other funder partners including the community foundations in Harford and Fairfield County to assist the undocumented population across the state.

## **Education: Creating a Community of Opportunity for the Next Generation**

I mentioned educational inequity a bit earlier. I want to return to this most important topic, and to speak to how we see the challenges and opportunities of public education in New Haven today.

Opportunity in America – and in Greater New Haven – comes with education. In his new book *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Professor Bob Putnam of Harvard has documented the decline of social mobility in our society and has shown us a clear picture of the opportunity gap between children of college-educated parents and children of non-college-educated parents. Putnam's work has underscored the importance of what we have been working toward in New Haven for years: the creation of a college-going culture in the schools, families and neighborhoods of our city.

Five years ago, The Community Foundation proudly stepped into a central role in New Haven's efforts to enhance educational outcomes in our public schools. Believing that the very best investment we can make for the future of our community is to support the education of our most accomplished young people, our support for New Haven Promise has totaled more than \$2.5 million since 2011, which is our largest single investment. We are very proud of our partnership with New Haven Public Schools, Yale University, Yale-New Haven Hospital and others that has made New Haven Promise a reality.

And most of all we are deeply proud of what New Haven Promise has meant for hundreds and hundreds of young scholars and their families in our city. Promise's mantra – "to, through and back" – is lived out in the support they receive to prepare for and go to college, to succeed in college and to return to New Haven after graduation to build successful lives here. New Haven Promise sends a powerful signal to the next generation that you are welcome here, you are wanted here, and you will have the support of your community to be included in the opportunities that are being created here for the future.

We are proud too as to how New Haven Promise has grown and matured as an organization under Patricia Melton's leadership. After five years of being incubated within The Foundation, Promise will become a separate independent nonprofit organization early in 2016. The Foundation looks forward to continuing our support for New Haven Promise in this new form, and to taking a seat on the soon-to-be constituted new board of directors of New Haven Promise.

After five years, after all that has been accomplished, this is also the time to take stock, and to ask ourselves how can we broaden and deepen the impact of New Haven Promise going forward. Is a 3.0 high school GPA the right cut-off for eligibility, or do we extend the community's support to a larger group of our young people? What ends are served by weighting Promise so heavily toward in-State, public higher education? And perhaps most fundamentally, how do we really deliver on this idea of support for our young people not only in going to college and in succeeding at college but also in returning here after college? How do we make our community a true place of opportunity – most notably employment opportunity in the growth economy of the future - for these outstanding young people?

We need to ask these questions. Our answers can be the starting point for a new and even broader vision of the promises that we as a community make to the next generation.

Such a vision can only come to life through broader and deeper engagement by our local private sector - as funders surely, but also as leaders in creating the new biomedical economy, as mentors and employers to assist our young people to find their places in it, and as long-term committed partners in enhancing educational outcomes in our city.

This engagement must start by reinvigorating the urgency, the excitement, and the passion of for educational change in New Haven that we all felt five years ago. 2016 is the time to reassert that the education of our young people is this community's top

public/private priority. This community's private sector needs to line up behind Mayor Harp's bold new leadership role as Chair of the New Haven Board of Education. We need to support the Mayor's and the Superintendent's vision for the next phase of change in New Haven's Public Schools. We need to get beyond the divisiveness of last winter and support our outstanding charter schools to build collaboration with New Haven Public Schools. And we need to create a public-private ongoing dialogue on education issues in our community that will both illuminate the progress being made and create accountability for continuing that progress. The Foundation is committed to doing what we can to turn these imperatives into realities.