Economic Inequality Initiative Meeting

April 27, 2015


Richard started off by summarizing a session he attended at Syracuse University on March 20, “The Politics of Inequality.” He mentioned that two Syracuse University political science professors were particularly impressive as panelists, Drs. Christopher Faricy and Spencer Piston. Dr. Martin Gilens of Princeton University was the featured speaker, and the panelists referenced the work of Suzanne Mettler of Cornell University. All would be excellent resources for the Economic Inequality Initiative going forward.

The group discussed how to organize itself. We decided to continue to build the group’s base and still seek greater participation and representation from the faith, government, business, and agricultural communities of Cortland. We also discussed the importance of including those most affected by inequality among the group’s participants.

At the same, we decided to organize ourselves into three working groups – one on curricular development; one on developing the Democracy Wall idea (perhaps leading into the Deliberative Dialogue idea), and one, Community Connections, to develop stronger ties to existing groups and opportunities in order to spread the word about what we are doing in the Cortland community (e.g., identifying events at which we can be represented; developing a social media presence; developing a new website; having a discussion related to economic inequality at an upcoming Community Roundtable; writing letters to the editor; asking for a monthly column in the newspaper (perhaps using the column as a vehicle for student contributions on the issue); promoting a discussion of the issue at the Community Forum in January; posting events on a community calendar; and hosting a community-wide poverty simulation).

Lindy Glennon mentioned two upcoming opportunities to spread the word about our group. The first is Wednesday at 9 a.m. at CAPCO when the Hunger and Homelessness Coalition meets. Ethan Lewis agreed to attend that meeting on our behalf. The second is on the radio on May 9 between 11 a.m. and noon (Rotary Radio Day). Sarah Hobson agreed to appear on the radio with Lindy Glennon on behalf of the group. (Lindy is hosting the hour.)

The group also decided to proceed with organizing a series of monthly lunch time talks at Main Street SUNY Cortland drawing upon the expertise of group members. Craig Little, Lindy Glennon, and Barb Barton all agreed to participate to get the program underway. We are planning to start the series of talks in June.

To get the work groups underway, Craig Little will convene the group devoted to Curriculum Development. The Institute for Civic Engagement will convene the Community Connections group. We are seeing someone to convene the Democracy Wall group.
We also discussed changing the name of the group to Pathways to Opportunity Initiative. Our next meeting will be in June. Be on the lookout for the Doodle Poll and please respond as soon as you can.