

From: Trane, Andrea
Sent: Monday, June 5, 2023 10:47 AM
To: Washtock, Linzi
Subject: FW: "Hear Here Program" (unfunded)

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From: Carolyn and Glen <cgjenks@earthlink.net>
Sent: Sunday, June 4, 2023 7:15 PM
To: Trane, Andrea <tranea@cityoflacrosse.org>
Subject: "Hear Here Program" (unfunded)

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Dear Andrea Trane,

Let me introduce myself, my name is Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins and I live at 2642 Hackberry lane, La Crosse

Ariel Beaujot is a Professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse and a co-founder of the "Hear Here" program. Hopefully you have seen (round orange signs in downtown area) and listened to some of the recordings. I bring this topic up because Ariel just informed me last night that the "Hear Here Project" slated for the north side of La Crosse is to start this Fall at UW-L has shown up on the unfunded list and it will be taken up on June 5th at a budget meeting.

I'm really dismayed at this thought for many reasons:

1. First and foremost, my husband and I were involved in UW-L coursework at the beginning of the initial "Hear Here Program." We interviewed and recorded Hmong and Ho Chunk members of this community who shared their stories. Tony Yang was an immigrant from Laos and he shared his first experiences in a rented home in the downtown area. His experience prior to this time was in a more forest/jungle setting, grass & stick structures, open windows and no doors. His father helped US forces, they were fleeing in fear and lived in a camp prior to being allowed into the US. All these elements that I have just shared, informs, teaches and opens ones consciousness to "others" and their personal history. It helps people connect to the community and it engages the community whether a community member or a tourist. It also provides a

community with a sense of identity. These stories are real people who shaped this community and they were immigrants. How do we create an identity if we can't get the message out who we really are-we are not a white privileged sanitized community, although we act like one sometimes.

2. Second, the quality of education of the course work that lends itself to the development of this project was excellent. In a semester of class, we were exposed to consciousness of culture, interviewing techniques (unbiased), recording & editing of audio (Wing Technology Center), research on the background/history of our interviewees, creative and personal history writing and creating a formal presentation of this project to the community. The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse encourages engagement in the community for their students and this program certainly accomplishes that goal. Another very interesting fact is that as of September 2022 the downtown "Hear Here Program" had 16,219 calls into the recordings and 8367 were out of state calls. Tourists are curious about the "the place" that they visit.

3. Third, this Fall the north side of La Crosse was going to be the beginning of another "Hear Here" program outreach. The value of inclusiveness, engagement, and creation of pride in who we are is critical in our present times when everyone is feeling marginalized. We have just had a failed public education building referendum where the tension of Northside/Southside La Crosse was refueled. This project can attempt to reaffirm the distinctive nature of north La Crosse and publicize the outcomes in an unbiased and historical manner. A "sense of place" is critical in our development.

4. Last but equally important, we are facing a time in our history where democracy is teetering on its edge. "Hear Hear" gives many people a chance for voice, many who may not typically use their voice. The goal of improving social justice and equity can be facilitated by such a project. Change can be slow but every voice counts.

Ms Trane, please take time to consider this issue carefully and ensure that funding is provided to begin the project. Professor Beaujot has provided some personal funds and she will continue writing grants to cover other costs like she did in the first "Hear Here Project."

Sincerely,

Carolyn and Glen Jenkins

Wendell Berry: "We have come, or we are coming fast, to the end of what we were given. The good possibilities that may lie ahead are only those that we will make ourselves, by a wiser and more generous and more exacting use of what we have left."

