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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Social Justice Committee
Monday, February 28, 2022 – 6:30PM
*This meeting was conducted via Zoom***

MINUTES

CB8 Members Present: Lori Bores, Taina Borrero, Sarah Chu, Saundrea I. Coleman, Wendy Machaver*, Rita Popper

*Public Member

1. Educational Equity presentations by Yorkville East (MS 177) students

- **Teacher: Ms. Rebecca Grodner, 8th grade ELA teacher**
 - Ms. Grodner teaches a unit that is focused on how her students can make change in their community. In this course, students collectively select a topic for examination that impacts their lives. This year, they chose the high school admissions process. As the students conducted research, they honed in on issues of educational equity. They interrogated how and why the process is changing, the factors that contributed to the change, and the current state of affairs. The students also worked on developing speeches which developed arguments based on evidence.
 - The four students presenting today are Juliet Nanes, Aspen Cannon, Abi Hernandez-Santos, and Jake Somerfeld.
 - The following are summaries of the students' speeches, but we encourage our community members to hear them in full at: <https://youtu.be/Cp-mzhz0gdU>.
- **Students:**
 - **Juliet Nanes**
 - Juliet discussed how a student's motivation may decrease if they've worked hard for something only to have a result that was not proportionate to the effort. The high school admissions system produced segregation and NYC administrators need to solve racial inequity. The new middle school and high school admissions process uses a lottery system which she believes juggles with students' futures. Juliet also argues that changes to the admissions process is only fair if it is equally beneficial. She objects to the narrative that schools are segregated because neighborhoods are segregated because 30.7% of schools are racially representative. Diversity is a key source for learning and the admissions system should find pathways to improve diversity without pitting one community against another. Lastly, Juliet raised the stress that COVID has caused and how it impacted student life.
 - **Aspen Cannon**
 - Aspen noted that NYC high school students recently walked out for change and called for more resources for the schools that lack them. The current admissions process is creating a tremendous amount of stress for students and she is concerned that schools will not benefit from the new admissions process. Changes that can improve schools include successful desegregation strategies, boosting underserved schools with more experienced teachers, and directing more resources to schools that are underperforming. Aspen argued that 80% of Black students attend segregated schools and since diverse classrooms provide

richer learning opportunities that segregation deprives all students of a better education.

■ **Abi Hernandez-Santos**

- Abi noted that schools in poorer neighborhoods have more students of color. In these schools, accelerated classes are less accessible, which greatly impacts Black and Latino students. She suggests that perhaps the DOE needs to change how students are evaluated. Instead of framing the process as integration, it is the student evaluation component that needs to be addressed. Lastly, Abi argued that the admissions process should also consider geographic distance.

■ **Jake Somerfeld**

- Jake noted that integration can be accomplished by removing the screening process. He advocates for tutoring programs to bring students to a higher level, geographic screens that consider commutes, and addressing district funding gaps. Black and Hispanic students comprise 70% of students in the system and have a much lower representation in specialized schools. With regard to his proposal to provide tutoring programs, Jake notes that tutoring fees can run \$100/hr for SHSAT (specialized high schools admissions test) preparation. Many students are not able to afford these tutoring programs and the SHSAT is not taught in schools. Jake advocates for the creation of group tutoring programs as a solution.
- The presentations were followed by an active Q&A between the students and the community. The students were complimented on the complexity of their arguments, their use of citations and sources, as well as an appreciation for the personal experiences they used to inform their arguments. Importantly, the students raised concerns regarding how COVID has impacted student mental health and drew attention to the need to put systems and resources in place to support them.

2. Old Business

3. New Business

- Sarah Chu described a study she was conducting and provided information to the community on how they could participate.

Saundrea I. Coleman and Sarah Chu, Co-Chairs