



## Education and Housing Equity Project Records.

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## What is EHEP?

One of the best kept secrets in the Twin Cities' civil rights community these days goes by the acronym of EHEP (Education and Housing Equity Project). Its anonymity, while not necessary planned, creates no alarm or despair within the organization, for the success of the organization is not predicated on public notoriety or attention to itself. Its mission is designed to be accomplished through the coordination and support of other organizations and groups with compatible missions.

EHEP was born as a spin-off from the early days of the Minneapolis NAACP's school adequacy suit against the state of Minnesota. When it became evident that a mediation process was going to be the most viable instrument of solving the dispute, the chapter leadership at that time felt that securing the support, understanding, and cooperation of a large community cross-section would be necessary.

Another factor in the formation of EHEP was the realization that there was a direct correlation between housing and education, that would probably receive greater acceptability if they were combined as a single issue. Many of the advocacy groups had traditionally



approached the two as separate initiatives.

To further its agenda, in 1997 EHEP started what it called "Community Circles Collaborative, a multi-sector initiative to promote inter-community dialogue on the critical issues of education, housing, race and segregation in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It solicited and obtained a host of established partnership with organizations such as the Minnesota Minority Partnership, the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing, the Minnesota Churches Anti-Racism Initiative and the Urban Coalition, to name a few. The circles themselves consist of eight to fifteen participants, each who will meet at least five times for two hours each meeting. Each circle meets on specific dates at specific locations, use a prepared discussion guide, moderated by experienced facilitators. Currently, over 50 community dialogues are underway in Minneapolis, St. Paul and surrounding suburbs. In St. Paul, many of the circles are being convened as a part of its 1999 "Cities at Work," citywide initiative on race sponsored by the Wilder Foundation.

The rapid expansion of the

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community circles has forced EHEP to take on a life of its own, beyond being just an enabler to the NAACP's school adequacy lawsuit. The project recently received

national recognition by being selected by the President's Initiative on Race as a national model of a "promising practice for Racial Reconciliation." Last spring the program's executive director was invited to Washington to discuss innovative approaches to our national racial problems.

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