



Education and Housing Equity Project Records.

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TABLE COPY

PATHWAYS

TO ONE

AMERICA

IN THE 21ST

CENTURY

PROMISING

PRACTICES

FOR RACIAL

RECONCILIATION

The President's Initiative on Race

January 1999

*Community Circle Collaborative,
Education and Housing Equity Project
(continued)*

and recommendations of the circle dialogues. Throughout the year, many of the participants in the circle dialogues and the sponsor organizations formulated action plans and held town hall meetings in their schools and communities.

Outcomes

The Collaborative brought together more than 500 citizens and organizations in conversations about issues of race. The Circles have helped to inform and increase public support for education equity and State legislation for affordable metropolitan housing. EHEP is planning a second round of conversations for the fall and winter of 1998 and

1999 that will build on the first round and include a forum to connect citizens to efforts to address identified issues. In 1999, 1,000 citizens are expected to participate in up to 100 Circle dialogues throughout the metropolitan area. At the conclusion of these conversations, EHEP and the Collaborative will cosponsor a Citizens Summit with the Minnesota Meeting and Minnesota Public Radio Civic Journalism Initiative. An actionable agenda addressing issues of educational access, housing, and school desegregation is to be produced at the Summit. This agenda will help shape the policy and action agendas of partners in the Collaborative and public decisionmaking bodies.

Community Circle Collaborative, Education and Housing Equity Project Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

Contact(s)

Dick Little, Executive Director,
612-330-1505

Purpose

To build broad-based partnerships that engage area citizens in public discussion, analysis, and action that promote racially and economically inclusive communities with quality schools and affordable housing.

Background

The Education and Housing Equity Project (EHEP) was founded in 1995 to advance public understanding of growing economic disparities and racial segregation in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and to develop constructive community responses to these problems. EHEP's mission is to act as a catalyst in building broad-based coalitions and partnerships that engage the metropolitan community in informed public conversations, analysis, and advocacy. EHEP promotes racially and economically inclusive communities that give families and citizens of all income levels, races, and ethnicities access to quality schools, affordable housing, and livable-wage jobs throughout the metropolitan area.

In 1996, EHEP began a partnership with more than 20 organizations, including the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing, the Minnesota Fair Housing Center, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, the Minneapolis Initiative Against Racism, the Minnesota Churches Anti-Racism Initiative, and the Study Circles Resource Center. This partnership, the Community Circle Collaborative, encourages metropolitanwide dialogue about the challenges of education and housing segregation. The creation of the Collaborative was motivated

by the pressing need to link issues of school segregation and disparities in educational achievement to the broader issues of segregated housing and communities and the related issue of concentration of poverty and isolation from opportunities. The first dialogue was launched in 1997.

Program Operations

In 1997, 500 citizens from 35 communities and all major racial and cultural backgrounds participated in the Collaborative's community circle dialogues. Participants in the circle dialogues met as many as six times over 3 months to discuss two central issues: the impacts of existing patterns of residential, economic, and racial segregation on the educational achievement and life opportunities of Twin Cities area children and families; and what individuals and the community can do to enhance educational success, housing choices, and economic opportunities for *all* children and adults in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Collaborative invited organizations such as schools, churches, and neighborhood councils to convene the circle dialogues. A discussion guide, *Choices for Community*, was prepared to provide a focal point for the work. The conversations culminated with a Metropolitan Citizens Forum; a final report synthesized the findings, conclusions,

Getting people involved in addressing public issues is not a "nice" thing... What you want people to say is not that it is a nice thing to do but that it's an absolutely necessary thing to do.

*Martha L. McCoy
Executive Director
Study Circles Resource
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