



Education and Housing Equity Project Records.

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For Public Release, May 21, 1999

Community Circles Dialogues Receive National Recognition

President Clinton's Initiative on Race recently selected the Minneapolis-based Education & Housing Equity Project (EHEP) and the Community Circle Dialogues on Education, Housing and Race in the Twin Cities as a national model of a "Promising Practice for Racial Reconciliation." Directed by MICAHI board member Dick Little, the Community Circles project began as a partnership of regional and community organizations that included MICAHI (Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing). In May of this year, Mr. Little was one of four representatives of regional projects throughout the country who were invited to address scholars and public officials in Washington, D.C. on innovative approaches to our nation's racial problems as part of a National Issues Forum entitled "Race in America: New Approaches to Bridging the Divide" sponsored by the Brookings Institution.

Matthew Little, long-time civil rights leader in Minnesota, is the president and co-founder of EHEP. Joy Sorensen Navarre, executive director of MICAHI, serves on EHEP's board of directors.

Currently, over 50 Community Circle dialogues are underway in Minneapolis, Saint Paul and suburbs. In Saint Paul, Community Circles are being convened by neighborhood groups, schools and congregations as part of "Cities at Work," a city-wide initiative co-sponsored by the Wilder Foundation. A citizens summit focusing on the results of the conversations will be held toward the end of the year and will be co-sponsored by the Minnesota Meeting, Minnesota Public Radio, KMOJ/Insight News and other media partners.

Two outcomes of the Community Circles held in 1997 are the Inclusionary Housing Legislation promoted by the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability and passed by the Minnesota Legislature this spring, and the award-winning fair housing play "Like Waters Rolling Down" produced by MICAHI and the Illusion Theatre.

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Matthew Little, long-time civil rights leader in Minnesota, is the president and co-founder of EHEP, and one of its sixteen distinguished board members. EHEP is headquartered at Augsburg College, an urban liberal arts college in Minneapolis. It has been in the forefront of engaging the public in conversations that consider the connection between segregated schools and segregated communities, the impacts of economic and racial segregation on life opportunities and educational achievement of our young people, and promising approaches to achieving more diverse, inclusive communities and access to schools, jobs and social environments that benefit *all* children and adults throughout the metropolitan area. Informed citizen action is one of the intended outcomes of the conversations.

Currently, over 50 Community Circle Dialogues are underway in Minneapolis, Saint Paul and suburbs. In Saint Paul, the Circles are being convened by neighborhood groups, schools and congregations as part of *1999 Cities at Work*, a city-wide initiative on "Race, Connections and Commitment" co-sponsored by the Wilder Foundation. A Citizens Summit focusing on the results of the conversations will be held toward the end of the year and will be co-sponsored by the Minnesota Meeting, Minnesota Public Radio, KMOJ/Insight News and other media partners.

Two outcomes of the Community Circles held in 1997 are the Inclusionary Housing Legislation promoted by the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability and passed by the Minnesota Legislature this spring, and the award-winning fair housing play "Like Waters Rolling Down" produced by MICAH and the Illusion Theatre. The Community Circles project is one of several initiatives credited with contributing to the largest funding increase in Minnesota history for metropolitan affordable housing by the 1999 Minnesota Legislature. The project has also contributed a reservoir of ideas for consideration in mediating a settlement of the NAACP v. State of Minnesota educational adequacy lawsuit and Saint Paul School District v. State of Minnesota educational equity lawsuit.