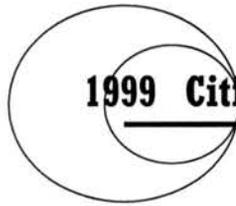




## Education and Housing Equity Project Records.

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## **1999 Cities at Work Community Circle Dialogues**

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### EDUCATION AND HOUSING EQUITY PROJECT

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#### **What are the Cities at Work Community Circle Dialogues?**

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- A diverse group of 8-15 people who:
  - ...come together to talk to each other about critical public policy issues and to identify some possible ideas for community action.
  - ...participate in a small, democratic discussion and share common concerns, thoughts, and perspectives.
  - ...can agree that it is not necessary to agree with each other, but that it is important to listen and respect all viewpoints in order to learn from each other.
- The groups meet for five sessions over a period of two months followed by a call-to-action forum.
- The discussions are facilitated by a person who is not there to act as an expert on the issues, but to keep the discussion focused and to ensure that all voices are heard.
- The facilitator and participants use a framework provided in a discussion guide that includes differing points of view about critical issues, questions for discussion, and reference material that can be used to inform the circle participants.

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#### **What is Required of You as a Sponsor?**

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##### ***Fundamentals:***

- 1) Recruit a diverse group of between 8 and 15 people for your community circle.
- 2) Arrange a meeting space and time for your community circle.
- 3) Distribute discussion materials to each participant.
- 4) Designate a scribe to capture a written record of the highlights of each circle conversation.
- 5) Participate in an evaluation process.

##### ***Other key roles of a sponsor:***

- Provide light snacks and beverages, a writing board and name tags at each meeting.
- Recruit a co-facilitator for your circle (may also serve as scribe).
- Keep records of participation for your circle (including address and phone listings).
- Provide child care, transportation and interpretive services as needed by participants.

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#### **What Cities at Work will provide for your community circle:**

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- Discussion guide (plus additional background materials)
- Trained facilitator
- Assistance in linking with other sponsor organizations to ensure group diversity
- Opportunity to share ideas for community action at the *Cities at Work* Call-to-Action forum

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## PARTICIPANT'S EVALUATION FORM

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*This form asks for a considerable amount of demographic information. You should request this information only if you have the staff time available to collate and use the responses. This document is based on a form developed by Selena Singletary in Springfield, Ohio, which was later adapted for use in San Leandro, California. The study circles in those cities focused on race relations.*

**Please take a few moments to read and answer the following questions as honestly as possible. You do not need to sign your name to this form. Thank you for your time.**

1. What effect, if any, has the study circle had upon the following?

	increased	no change	decreased
Your ability to discuss issues openly and frankly	3	2	1
Your understanding of your own attitudes and beliefs	3	2	1
Your understanding of others' attitudes and beliefs	3	2	1
Your ability to communicate more effectively with people who may have different beliefs	3	2	1
2. Which sessions were of most value to you? Why?
3. What one activity do you feel *[city or sponsor]* is doing to facilitate better race relations in our community?
4. If you could change one thing about race relations in *[city or region of your program]*, what would it be?
5. What important issue would you like study circles to address in the future?
6. In your opinion, how should *[city or sponsor]* follow up these study circles?
7. Please list the three most serious problems facing our community which involve *[topic of study circles]*.

**Finally, we'd like to ask you a few additional questions that will help your community better understand the results of the evaluations.**

8. Which age group are you in?  
 under 18    18-29    30-44    45-64    65 & over
9. What is your sex?  
 male    female
10. What is your race or ethnicity?
11. What is your occupation?
12. What is your zip code?
13. In which of the following ranges does your family income fall?  
 less than \$10,000 a year    \$25,000 to 44,999  
 \$10,000 to \$14,999    \$45,000 to \$64,999  
 \$15,000 to \$24,999    \$65,000 and over
14. Additional comments:

If your study circle discussion leader does not collect this form, please mail it to:  
*[sponsor's address]*

***Thank you for your feedback!***

# KIDS MOBILITY PROJECT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

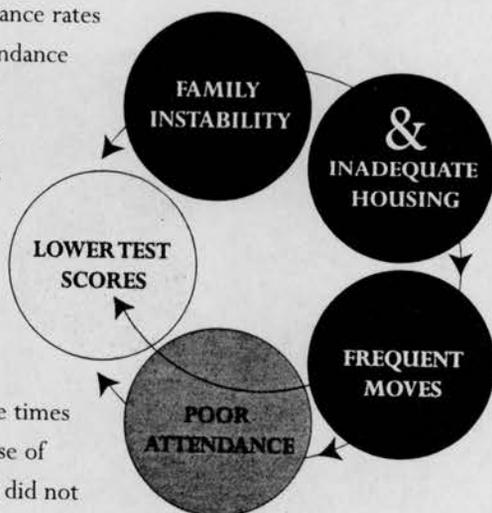
The Kids Mobility Project was initiated by a group of local planners and researchers from a variety of educational and community organizations who wanted to learn more about the effects of changing residence on student achievement and adjustment. Mobility affects one in five Minneapolis students, although 85 percent of elementary students stay in the same school. They asked: Do students who move more often have lower test scores? If so, what factors account for the lower performance of mobile students?

To find the answers, participants in the Project undertook two studies and a review of research on student mobility. The first study analyzed school data related to student achievement and mobility. The second analyzed interviews with 100 mostly low-income families about the impact of moving.

## ATTENDANCE LINKED TO MOBILITY AND LOW SCORES

The first study, a quantitative analysis, looked at the relationship between mobility and other factors that may affect student performance for elementary age students. Socioeconomic levels, race, out-of-state birth, family structure and attendance were found to have a strong relationship to reading achievement test scores and to residential moves.

Researchers found that students who moved often had lower attendance rates and that attendance levels were important to achievement. Average reading scores for students who moved three or more times were half those of students who did not



move. Students who, on average, were absent 20 percent of the time scored 20 points lower than students who attended school nearly every day. Similar patterns have been found in local and national research.

## FAMILIES COPE WITH POOR HOUSING AND OTHER STRESSORS

In the qualitative study of 100 families, 75 percent were selected because of a history of frequent and recent moves. Many of those interviewed were coping with stressful life events such as loss of income, divorce, abuse, or poor housing.

Families reported relentless and often futile searches for adequate, safe, and affordable housing, especially if they had large families. Families were forced to stay with relatives or friends and sometimes experienced episodes of homelessness. Many said that frequent moves made it difficult for their children to adjust to new schools, friends and neighborhoods, resulting in poor school performance and behavior. Follow-up reports from teachers showed poorer school attendance, school performance, and social and emotional adjustment for children with frequent moves.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY POLICY MAKERS

Low-income families need easier access to safe, affordable, adequate and available housing so that frequent moves do not become a way of life. Children and families need communities that provide opportunities and services that improve their stability. Although they have not been blind to the issues highlighted by the Kids Mobility Project, schools, social service and community agencies, religious and philanthropic organizations must assess the effectiveness of present efforts and refocus efforts in three areas: attendance, housing and strengthening family stability. Organizations, must make school attendance a strong social value in Minneapolis and build welcoming, stable communities with integrated social services and adequate housing.

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PROJECT

# KIDS MOBILITY PROJECT REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

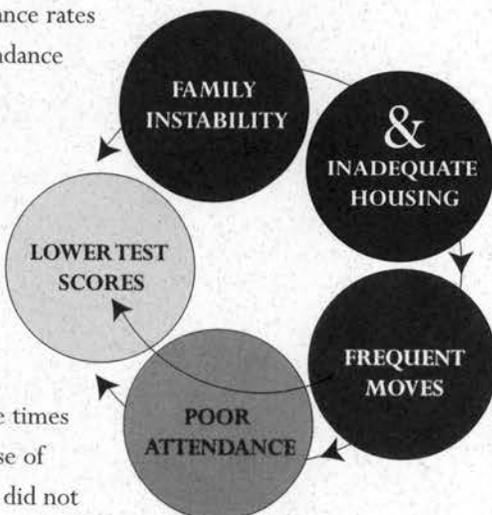
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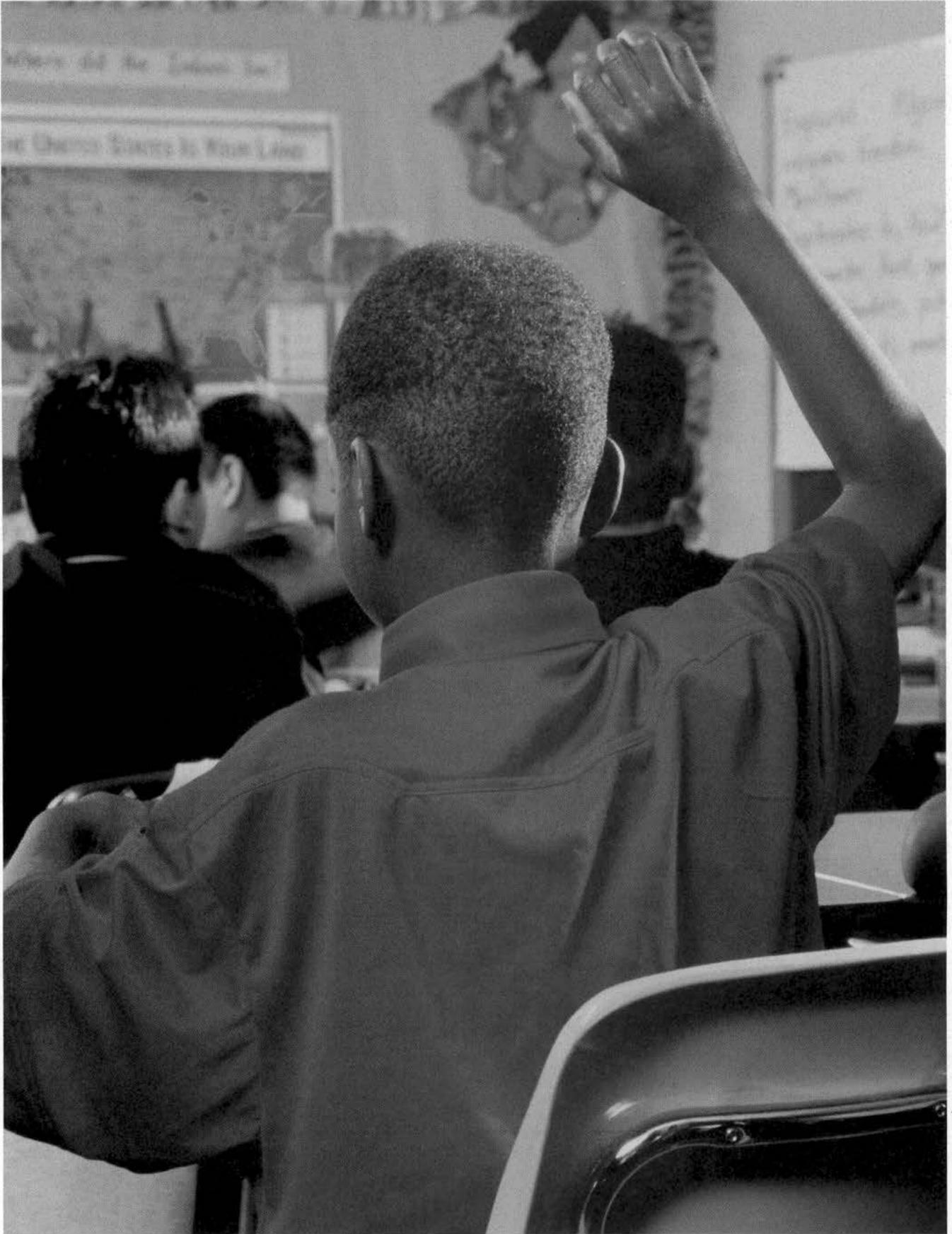
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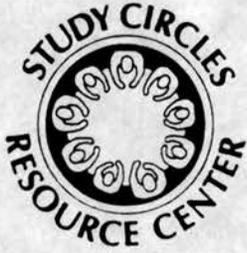
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## A comparison of dialogue and debate

Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.

*Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.*

In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.

*In debate, winning is the goal.*

In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning, and find agreement.

*In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.*

Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.

*Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.*

Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation.

*Debate defends assumptions as truth.*

Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.

*Debate causes critique of the other position.*

Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.

*Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.*

Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.

*Debate creates a closed-minded attitude, a determination to be right.*

In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other peoples' reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.

*In debate, one submit's one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.*

Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.

*Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.*

In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.

*In debate, one searches for glaring differences.*

In dialogue, one searches for strengths in the other positions.

*In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other position.*

Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.

*Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person.*

Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.

*Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.*

Dialogue remains open-ended.

*Debate implies a conclusion.*

*Adapted from a paper prepared by Shelley Berman, which was based on discussions of the Dialogue Group of the Boston Chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). Other members included Lucile Burt, Dick Mayo-Smith, Lally Stowell, and Gene Thompson. For more information on ESR's programs and resources using dialogue as a tool for dealing with controversial issues, call the national ESR office at (617) 492-1764.*

## *Intercultural Communication Workshops with Karima Vargas Bushnell*

Experiential trainings designed to introduce deep, subtle, and useful concepts in a lively and interesting manner:

**Communicating Across Cultures** – Encounter the software of the mind, and the fascinating world of communication between cultures.

**Between Two Mirrors: Exploring Biculturality Hands-on** –different aspects of your cultural identity interact to improve empathy and self-awareness.

**Traveler and Village: An Experiential Ritual for a Multicultural World** – Enter the ancient circle of the human tribe. *Traveler and Village* was a hit at the 1998 U of M Intercultural Encounters conference.

**Barnge** – Used by intercultural trainers around the world, this most popular of training games shows vividly what happens when people come together who play by different cultural rules.

**Star Power** – Another winner from the intercultural relations training field. How do economics and the class system affect our worldviews? How would we feel if we were suddenly moved to a different social class? Find out!

**A Different Place: The Intercultural Classroom**, sometimes called “the best training video ever made”, gives a first hand look at confusion across cultures.

**Exploring Culture through Drama** –*Voices on the Waves*, Karima’s original comedy/drama of multicultural castaways, world religions, dead folks, and an interviewer with the sensitivity of Donald Duck, forms the core of a two-day workshop combining culture with theatre. With playwright, producer, and director Lucas Smiraldo.

**Karima Vargas Bushnell**, sole proprietor of *Intercultural Communication Workshops*, is a master’s degree candidate in intercultural relations at Antioch University and a cultural awareness trainer with extended family and background in many cultures and religions. She has presented for groups including the University of Minnesota, Minnesota Catholic Education Convention, and the Minnesota Humanities Commission, had articles published in *Cross Winds* and *Sharing Diversity*, and received recognition from the Minnesota Cultural Diversity Center. Through her trainings, her research with immigrants and interpreters, and her two-act play, *Voices on the Waves*, Karima leads guided tours of the boundaries between cultural realities and how to bridge them.

**Karima Vargas Bushnell \* Intercultural Communication Workshops**  
**(612) 827-4424 4604 Columbus Ave. S. MPLS, MN**

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ON

"COMMUNICATING  
ACROSS  
CULTURES"

## **Some General Principles of Communicating Across Cultures**

**1. Sometimes we think of culture** in terms of things like music and dance, colorful costumes, and distinctive foods. While these are important, the far greater part of culture is hidden, affecting everything about how people view the world, how they act, and what they believe in. Culture includes geography, history, language, religion and science, but it also includes values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and context. From these influences come the particular behavior we attribute to any given culture. An individual may not be aware that these influences are at work, shaping him or her.

**2. A culture is a grouping, large or small, where there are shared behaviors, values, and assumptions.** Cultural groupings are based on different factors such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, ability, shared interests, and membership in business, communal, or family networks.

Sometimes people help choose and define their own cultural affiliations, and they sometimes move in and out of cultures, or participate in several of them at once.

Also, cultures themselves do not stand still. While there may be time-honored values and behaviors, things may change in reaction to outside influences or internal pressures.

**3. When people who have learned opposing definitions of what is 'polite' or 'normal' behavior interact, misunderstandings result.** Suppose I have been taught to talk with a lot of energy, expression and enthusiasm, gesturing with my hands. Nobody told me to do this, but most people around me always did it.

Now suppose *you* have been taught to stand quietly with your hands at your sides, listen respectfully and carefully, and express yourself very subtly, in little ways. It's quite possible that you'll think I'm rude, noisy, insensitive—maybe even angry (because I'm loud) or stupid (because I don't notice the small signals you're giving me.)

On the other hand, I may think you're cold, boring, only half alive—maybe even angry (because you seem so withdrawn) or stupid (because you don't seem able to express yourself.)

If I've been taught it's respectful to modestly look down and you've been taught it's honest to look people in the eye, you'll think I'm sneaky and evasive, and I'll think you're aggressive and rude. Even if we're both good people with good intentions, these kinds of misunderstandings make working together very difficult.

**4. Not only ways of behaving, but goals and values vary from culture to culture.** According to the modern, 'mainstream' values many are taught at home or school, people should help themselves, control their time, see change as positive, compete, be individualistic, look toward the future, be informal, and be practical and efficient.

Other world cultures, and many cultures in the U.S., teach otherwise. We should depend on family and friends and help them in turn, give more importance to people and what's actually going on than to following a strict schedule, honor our rich traditions (look to the past), work together cooperatively, be ceremonious and polite, and center on the spiritual and the idea.

These differences create the same kinds of problems as the differences in manners. Thus one group might look down on an other as lazy, dependant, and impractical, while to the others they may seem soulless and machine-like, without sensitivity to beauty or meaning, without concern for others.

**5. In many situations, injustice, oppression and bigotry are powerful forces which determine systems, attitudes and outcomes.** These things are real; they range from a lynching to a sneer, from denial of education, housing and good jobs to an unspoken judgment that the other person isn't quite a full human being. These things need to be exposed and challenged, but removing the cultural awareness and communication problems makes it easier to see what is real evil and what is only misunderstanding.

**7. There's no magic pill to make intercultural communication perfect.** People are complex, and each is individual as well as cultural. Here are some things you can try: **A) Take time;** avoid jumping to the conclusion that someone is ignorant or ill-intentioned. Behavior or ideas that seem odd to you may be cultural. **B) Get in tune** with the other person or group. Watch what they do, and see if you can mirror their behavior subtly and come into harmony with it. **C) Ask.** Try asking politely about what you don't understand. **D) Ask around.** If asking directly doesn't feel comfortable, try one of the many ethnic associations. Part of their purpose is to provide information about their communities. Consult the phonebook, or the Ethnic Resources Directory of the International Institute of Minnesota. **E) Investigate** books and films created by the people you're interested in.

People can rise above cultural misunderstandings to form wonderful, deep friendships and working or family relationships, both by avoiding the intercultural traps shown above and by finding common goals. In India, Hindu and Muslim musicians (whose cultures are often embattled) have played wonderful music together and mixed freely, joined by their skill and love of music. Goals like saving the environment, honoring the Divine, and bringing peace and justice for all our children can bring us together; but it helps to know where the pitfalls are.

## DIGGING INTO CULTURE: WHAT'S DOWN THERE, ANYWAY?

There is certainly more general awareness of cultural differences than there was even a few years ago. Still, many people think of culture as a kind of superficial gloss over basically similar individuals, as though identical dolls were made in different colors and dressed in different clothes.

A friend of mine, confronted with a tee shirt that said, "Love sees no color," responded by saying, "Love sees *all* colors." At any diversity workshop, it's likely that someone will say, "I don't care what color or religion people are. I just treat everyone as an individual."

What's wrong with this attitude? In one sense, nothing. It's an attempt to treat everyone fairly and judge people on their own merits, not on preconceptions or stereotypes. But it can be subtly insulting, if it assumes that the other person's difference from oneself is a *bad* thing to be politely ignored. Also, the concept of individuality itself is a western cultural concept. Consider this:

"When confronted with people who do not locate the self within the individual, most Americans are bewildered. That the self can be centered in a role or a grouping of some sort is to them a culturally preposterous idea. American foreign student advisors may display impatience with Chinese and other Asian students whose actions are guided by family considerations, especially when these students make career and life decisions that are detrimental to themselves but in compliance with the desires of others in their identity network. The advisors may be impelled to counsel them on the virtues of individuality—on watching out for themselves. To the Asian students, the family members *are* themselves."

American Cultural Patterns, Steward and Bennett

In the movie *Milo and Otis*, the cat asked the dog, "But deep down inside, we're all cats, right?" To which the dog replied firmly, "No. Deep down inside—I'm a dog." Too often, "We're all human, right?" means, "We're all white, middle class, secular or Protestant U.S. Americans, right?" This becomes an invisible norm, and people are ranked by how far they fall from the center of that norm. Their *own* cultural norms, which may be equally valid and beautiful, are ignored.

Culture determines the way people structure their reality. As in the old example, Inuit (Eskimos) and skiers see many types of snow. Others less interested see only "snow." Where inland people may see only water, some Pacific Islanders see current patterns which give definite information. Thousands of stimuli reach us every second. We can't attend to them all, so unconscious mental processes filter out the unimportant things. ***But what is important and what is unimportant varies drastically from culture to culture.*** My foreground may be your background. My "trivia" may be your "matter of life and death."

## High and Low Context Cultures

Social scientists sometimes divide cultures into **high context** and **low context**. In low context cultures, most of the communication is stated explicitly, spelled out. In high context ones, most of the information is in the situation, the environment, and the people involved. Some world cultures in order from highest to lowest context: Japanese, Arab, Greek, Spanish, Italian, English, French, European-American, Scandinavian, German, German-Swiss.

In low context cultures the main responsibility for good communication is on the speaker or writer, to communicate clearly and persuasively. In high context cultures, the main responsibility is on the listener, to listen subtly and draw meaning from small clues and nuances, and from the situation as a whole. This is like a meeting of a person with a soft voice and acute hearing with a person who speaks loudly and clearly, but is partially deaf. The Japanese (or Native-American) is apt to find the Black or White American aggressive and unaware of subtleties, while the American may find the Japanese person, as in the old cliché, "inscrutable." Mutual stereotyping is a likely result.

## Action Chains

Different types of interactions contain sets of steps embodied in unwritten rules which 'everybody knows'. Unfortunately, these do not translate across cultures.

One example comes from a story told about American GIs and British girls during World War II. The girls, from their experience of current British cultural rules, saw the kiss as several steps closer to actual sexual activity than did the soldiers. This resulted in misunderstandings for which each group blamed the other. The girl thought the boy "fresh" (because he tried to kiss her too soon) and the boy thought the girl "fast" (because if he *did* manage to kiss her, there was little more resistance).

Another example: According to sociologist Edward T. Hall,

"In Anglo-American disputes, one progresses by steps and stages—from subtle innuendo and coolness (one must be polite) to messages via a third party, to verbal confrontation, then legal action, and finally force—if nothing else has worked and the law is on your side. For Spanish-Americans, another system is used."

Hall says the Spanish-American action chain in a dispute starts with brooding and proceeds directly to some show of strength. The law courts are much further down the chain. But this show of strength, intended as a communication, is interpreted by Anglos as the final step in communication *breakdown*, as it would be in the Anglo chain. Thus the Anglos respond as to a crisis, though probably no crisis exists.

These concepts and stories offer just a glimpse behind the curtain of culture. Their lesson: Our common humanity is shaped and molded into different forms by our cultures. Love sees all colors.

## Community Profiles

### The Hmong (pronounced "Mong")

The Hmong are an ancient, agrarian people who gradually migrated down from Central Asia into Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and Burma. After suffering great losses aiding the CIA's "secret war" in Laos, over 150,000 refugees fled reprisals, coming to the U.S. According to a local Hmong community representative, the Hmong lost one third of their men fighting for the U.S. cause.

Minnesota and California are the largest Hmong states. Previously an oral culture, Hmong traditionally passed on wisdom through folk songs and embroidery ("flower cloth"). Education is highly valued, as is collective decision-making.

Hmong society is made up of large clans who share a last name and are deeply bonded as family. Traditionally, clans are headed by elder males, and gender roles are strongly differentiated. Children are loved and valued, and they care for parents in old age or illness. Currently, the stresses of acculturation are causing family upheavals which manifest as divorce, domestic violence, and breakdown of parent/child relationships.

The many strong Hmong community organizations helping Hmong in Minnesota include the Hmong-American Partnership, Lao Family Community, Women's Association of Hmong and Lao, and the Association for Advancement of Hmong Women. Burgeoning Hmong media include two community newspapers, a television program and a radio program.

Adapted and condensed by from the *Hmong Community Profile*, Center for Cross Cultural Health, located on the U of M campus, (612) 624-0996

## The Somalis

Springing from the Horn of Africa, Somalis are a monocultural people with one ethnic group, one language and one religion. Traditional occupations are herding (camels, sheep, cows), small industries, and trade. Through sea trade they have a history of contact with other cultures.

The ongoing civil war in Somalia relates to colonial divisions between British and Italian areas, as well as weapons and confusion left over from the Cold War. Refugees have fled to many countries, including the U.S, often becoming separated from family members.

With an estimated 18,000-20,000 Somalis, Minnesota is the largest Somali state. Like other refugee groups, the Somalis have been severely traumatized, and children in refugee camps may have missed years of education.

Somalis are Sunni Muslims, many very religious and some less so; this is an individual choice. Their religion requires that unrelated men and women do not touch, and that men and women dress modestly. Somalis ask to be judged by their actions, not their clothes. As observant Muslims, they pray five times a day and abstain from pork, alcohol and drugs.

Somalis are an expressive, friendly people who have strong clan and family loyalties and love children. They are also independent, energetic entrepreneurs who have started 62 businesses in Minnesota. Many strong community organizations exist in Minnesota, including the Somali Community of Minnesota and the Federation of Somali Communities. Somali media offerings include three television and three radio programs, two journals, and three newsletters.

Sources: Numerous Somali individuals and organizations encountered by Karima Bushnell while conducting the *Immigrant and Indigenous Communities Project*, 1998-99.

## Community Circle Dialogues: *Reflection and Action on Education, Housing and Race in the Twin Cities*

by Dick Little, Education and Housing Equity Project

There is growing ethnic and racial diversity within Saint Paul and the entire Twin Cities region. We are becoming increasingly polarized along the lines of race and class. Demographic changes in the central cities, suburban communities, and school districts point to serious issues of equity and access to opportunity in both housing and public education.

Community-wide study circle programs have taken place in many communities across the country. (See sidebar, next page) but the Twin Cities community circle dialogue project is the first attempt at a region-wide program. With the growing national attention to regional policy issues such as urban sprawl, segregation, social equity, and transportation, the regional approach to community circle dialogues is an innovative model. Recently, the community circles on education, housing and race in the Twin Cities was selected by the President's Initiative on Race as a model of a "Promising Practice for Racial Reconciliation" and as an innovative approach to our nation's racial problems.

### **Metro-wide Community Circle Dialogues**

The community circle dialogues on education, housing and race, initially launched by the Education and Housing Equity Project (EHEP), encourage civic engagement and multi-

cultural conversations to help build more inclusive communities in the Twin Cities. In 1997, EHEP and partnering organizations, including the Minnesota Minority Education Project, the Metropolitan Interfaith Council, sponsored the first "community conversations" or community circle dialogues on the challenges of segregation in education and housing. In the fall of 1998, a new round of community circles was launched in the Minneapolis Public Schools.

The community circle dialogue project has brought together hundreds of people in dozens of communities throughout the Twin Cities region, who met in "community circles." Suburban moms, city dwellers, recent immigrants, small business people, the

underemployed, people of color, pastors, police officers, teachers and many others have met in small groups to explore the related issues of housing and school segregation. Dialogue participants share personal experiences with prejudice and racism and develop their ideas for building integrated and inclusive communities that work.

In 1999, several major community activities had their genesis in the circle dialogues of 1997 and 1998. The innovative and inclusionary housing legislation sponsored by the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability was recently passed into law by the 1999 State Legislature. MICAHA (Minnesota Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing) and the Illusion Theater,



Community circle dialogue participants share experiences at June gathering.

Source: Education and Housing Equity Project

## • Work in Progress •

produced and performed the fair housing theater event "Like Waters Rolling Down" in churches and synagogues around the metro area this past year. The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability and MICAH were both partners and sponsors of the 1977 community circle dialogues on housing, education, and race. Another idea that grew out of the community circle dialogues, still in the development stage, is the creation of a property tax check-off as part of mortgage, and utility payments. The funds donated will contribute to a metropolitan affordable housing fund. The small monthly donations will support fair housing initiatives and to reduce up front expenses for households attempting to access better housing.

The community circle dialogues can also lead to new relationships and partnerships that contribute to overcoming racial stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes. A circle convened by Saint Paul's Commonbond Communities, Inc., brought together residents of one of their developments in Oakdale with nearby residents who had initially opposed the introduction of affordable housing in their neighborhood. New understandings, new connections and new commitments by residents who are together working to build a shared community.

### Community Circle Dialogues in Saint Paul

In the spring of 1999, the *Cities at Work* public forum series kicked off their fifth season with "Unleashing the Power of Our Community: A Public Dialogue on Race, Connections and Commitments." *Cities at Work* community circle dialogues were convened to complement the citywide forums by engaging Saint Paul residents in dialogue at the grass-roots level.

A new discussion guide was developed. Experienced facilitators were recruited and trained by the Minnesota Facilitators Network and Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution. A training workshop on "Understanding Community and Institutional Racism" was offered by Minnesota Churches Against Racism. In Saint Paul, twelve community circles have met this spring; more are planning to convene in the fall. Each circle is ethnically and racially diverse, consists of 8 to 15 participants, and meets for approximately 10 hours spread over five sessions. Examples of circles meeting this spring are the Frogtown Pluralism Circle, and the SPNN (Saint Paul Neighborhood Network) Circle.

In all, more than 50 community circles have or will be convened in both Saint Paul and the Twin Cities area. *Cities at Work* and EHEP co-sponsored a gathering of the community circle participants in June. In November, *Cities at Work* will hold its final forum, "Beyond Tolerance: A Call to Action." The forum will capture the results of the community circle

### Community Circle Dialogues Engage Citizens Across the Country

The *Cities at Work* and EHEP community circles dialogues are modeled after a highly successful study circle program developed by the national Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC), headquartered in Pomfret, Connecticut. Study circles have been used throughout the country to generate reasoned citizen dialogue, decisive policy input, and grass-roots problem solving. SCRC is a national partner in the Twin Cities circle dialogue project.

The community circle, or study circle process is one important way to achieve new levels of citizenship, interaction and civic action on difficult issues affecting the community. Large scale, community-wide and metro-wide community circle programs can have a significant, cumulative impact. These impacts range from new friendships, to neighborhood projects, to city-wide action plans, to new legislation. Citizens who participate in community circles often become more involved in the civic life of their community.

Examples of other community study circle programs that SCRC has assisted include suburban Cleveland (race relations), Maine (community violence) Oklahoma League of Women Voters (criminal justice) and Lima, Ohio. In Lima, communities of faith joined forces with the state university, labor unions and the chamber of commerce, and the mayor and city council to initiate the first city-wide study circle program on race relations. Study circle participants in Lima have done everything from building new playground to changing the makeup of a regional board. A statewide study circle program in Oklahoma helped the state legislature enact sweeping changes in the criminal system. ●

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## **Community Circle Dialogues:**

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conversations, generate ideas for community action and mobilize citizens to take action in new and different ways that bridge the diverse cultural, ethnic and racial communities that make up Saint Paul.

A metropolitan Citizens Summit, sponsored by Minnesota Meeting and Minnesota Public Radio, is also planned for early Winter that will include participants from all of the Twin Cities area circles, and invited community and public officials. At the Summit, participants will use electronic audience response technology to discover areas of consensus and to prioritize action steps for the community. ●

If you are interested in learning more about community circle dialogues in Saint Paul, call Barb Rose at (651) 659-6031 or email her at [bar@wilder.org](mailto:bar@wilder.org). If you live or work in Minneapolis, call Dick Little at (612) 330-1505.

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2211 Riverside Avenue CB 185  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
P: 612-330-1505 F: 612-330-1507  
E: eh@augsb.org

## Education and Housing Equity Project

# Memo

**To:** Community Circles Dialogue Sponsors and Facilitators  
**From:** Dick Little; Education and Housing Equity Project  
Community Circles Collaborative  
**Date:** October 6, 1999  
**Re:** Information Packet for Community Circles

Thank you for volunteering your time to the Education & Housing Equity / Cities at Work community circle dialogue project. Your contribution is a very valuable ingredient in making the dialogues a success. We truly appreciate your time and effort.

The materials enclosed should help you guide the discussions over the next few weeks and help make your circle dialogue a success. Let me briefly describe each of them:

1. **The Facilitator's Handbook** contains a brief introduction to the goals and objectives of the community circles and offers some helpful tools to use as guidelines for monitoring your group's process. Please feel free to copy any of these materials if you would like to share them with your group.
2. **The Discussion Guide** is a session-by-session presentation of various viewpoints around housing, education, race and segregation. The guide also walks the group through several exercises and offers a set of questions for each of the dialogue sessions. Facilitator instructions and tips are included. Please use this guide as the framework for your five-session dialogue.
3. **"What the Research Shows"** is a handout specifically prepared for the Community Circle Dialogues by the University of Minnesota's Institute on Race and Poverty. It documents some of the demographic trends and impacts which affect the challenges our community is facing with respect to housing, education, race and segregation. Please share this information with your group as recommended in the discussion guide to provide some background for analyzing these issues.
4. **Participant Profile** is a form that we want every circle dialogue participant to fill out and return to the facilitator or the representative from the sponsoring organization so that we can track the diversity of participation in the circle dialogues. Please return the completed profiles to us following the first or second session.
5. **Flip Chart Notes** are requested. We ask either the co-facilitator or a recorder to capture the content from each dialogue session on flipchart paper. Review the notes with participants at the end of each session. Please return these charts to us after the final session. (We are able to reduce and copy flipcharts for easier use.) **Community Circle Report forms** for each session are enclosed to help your reporting process.

6. **Attendance Roster** is a form that we want you to fill out and use throughout the dialogue sessions to register participant attendance. Please return it with the participant profiles and the flipchart notes after the final session.
7. **Participant Evaluation and Discussion Leader Evaluation** forms are to be filled out by each participant and the facilitators at the last session. We ask that the completed evaluations be returned to Education & Housing Equity Project immediately following the last session.
8. **Now That We've Talked...Ideas for Community Action** includes guidelines for moving from conversation to informed public action at the individual, group, community and policy levels.
9. **Announcements about upcoming events.** All community circle participants, facilitators, and sponsors are invited to participate in the **Action Forum** on November 8, 1999 and the **Citizens Summit** scheduled for December 1999 - date to be announced. See enclosed flyers.
10. **Background summaries** will help to inform the discussions. We enclose the following items provided for your use by our project partners:

Affordable Housing Shortage Threatens Children's Health (Doc4Kids Project)

Examining the Relationship Between Housing, Education, and Persistent Segregation (Institute on Race and Poverty, University of Minnesota Law School)

Inclusionary Housing (Alliance for Metropolitan Stability)

Kids Mobility Report (Minneapolis Public Schools)

Face to Face: Public Dialogue on Race, Connections and Commitment (Wilder Foundation, *Community Matters*)

Need for Affordable Housing (Family Housing Fund)

A Region with Access for All (John Powell)

Segregation and Poverty (*Metropolitica*, Rep. Myron Orfield)

State of Affordable Housing in the Twin Cities (Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing)

Success for All - a model for schools (Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs)

Working Doesn't Always Pay for a Home (Family Housing Fund)

We would like to hear from you about how your dialogues are progressing and how we can respond to your needs. Please feel free to call our staff anytime at 612.330.1505 or reach us by fax or email.

# Community Circle grapples with issues like housing, race

Richfield discussion group winds up weeks of meetings.

By Mike Westholder  
Sun Newspapers

Racial diversity, housing and education were some of the issues a Richfield community circle group grappled with during the last several weeks.

Made up of Richfield and Minneapolis residents the community circle was one of several groups that gathered throughout the Twin Cities as part of "Conversations at the Crossroads." In Richfield, the conversations were sponsored by the city's Human Rights Commission and the Education and Housing Equity Project (EHEP), a non-profit organization with headquarters at Augsburg College, said Connie McDonald, a member of the Richfield Human Rights Commission.

"The purpose was to engage people in conversation to find community-based solutions for potential problems," McDonald said. "Did we find solutions — well no. But we did come up with a lot of ideas."

The Richfield group included a diverse group with an average of eight people attending on a given week, McDonald said.

*'Diversity is making Richfield a very powerful place.'*

Odell Brown, member of the Human Rights Commission

The circle's final meeting was March 23. Participants didn't always agree and some discussions were heated, said Odell Brown, a participant and member of the Human Rights Commission, but everyone had at least one thing in common.

"Everybody left Tuesday night with one thought: 'When can we do this again,'" said Brown.

Brown said the experience was exciting and it gave him hope and encouragement for the future.

"Diversity is making Richfield a very powerful place," he said.

The community circle provided an opportunity to do something that isn't done enough, Brown said, talk with one another.

It was a chance to express one's self on a variety of issues and communicate in a meaningful way, Brown said. It was in-

teresting to hear that other people had many of the same feelings and concerns, he added.

One thing the five weeks of discussions made clear is that all members of the Richfield community need to keep the lines of communication open, Brown said. There was a commitment by all parties to continue the dialogue and move forward, he said.

"Everybody has something to say but no way to say it," Brown said.

The metro-wide community discussion groups were organized by the EHEP, whose mission is to promote public dialogue about school segregation, housing inequity and other community issues, McDonald said.

"One of our main focuses was on affordable housing," McDonald said.

There is a severe shortage of housing in the Twin Cities, McDonald said, not only for couples but also for single parents. It's difficult for many people to find housing that accepts children and is affordable, especially when a parent has to pay for child care, she added.

One of the ideas generated by the circle was to contact legislators to promote more state-subsidized housing for low-income families, McDonald said.

There are programs and assistance for families trying to buy a home as well which many people could benefit from, McDonald said. The problem is that many of the potential beneficiaries don't know about the options available to them, she said.

Finding ways to educate and inform people about these programs is another idea the group discussed, McDonald said.

Another topic the group concentrated on was promoting a sense of community in Richfield for all residents, McDonald said. One way of doing that could be encouraging minority parents to participate more in their children's schools.

"One of the biggest things was the idea of tapping into a lot of different cultures," she said.

For example, parents whose primary language is not English could participate in classes by sharing their first language with students. This would get parents involved in their children's schools and teach children about other languages, McDonald said.

"It would be a good way for parents to get involved and help them feel a little more comfortable and promote a sense of

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## Circle

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belonging," McDonald said.

One barrier to the building of community can be seen in many of the city-sponsored programs for youth, Brown said. Very few minority children participate in those programs, he said.

"If you don't have a dialogue, you don't know that's happening," Brown said. "You need to sit down and have a conversation about what's going on."

Then community members can look at ways to better advertise youth activities to the minority families or find other ways to encourage them to take advantage of those opportunities, he said.

In the end, the circle agreed the focus should be on children, communication and housing, Brown said.

"There are ways to solve these problems but you can't by blaming each other and accusing each other," Brown said.

Community circle members also talked about fear, McDonald said. One participant talked about the fact that he was afraid of diversity and what could happen in his neighborhood, she said.

"We found that fear is not just a white thing," McDonald said. "Other races have fears, maybe not the same fear but they are afraid."

For example, some Hispanic people live in fear that they will be deported if they don't have the right papers, she said.

"I believe fear is a major problem," Brown said. "We're all afraid of darkness and what we don't know. We don't see it but we feel it. But there's no reason to fear... You have to put a light on these issues so you're not so afraid."

Communicating about these issues and sharing information may be the best way to address these type of issues, she added.

Later this spring, the circles will meet in a series of forums to share their ideas and perhaps develop legislation to introduce to state lawmakers, McDonald said. A Citizen Summit will be conducted in November.

That doesn't mean the issues and discussions will wait until this fall.

"We need to continue doing this," Brown said. "We don't want to wait until November."

Here is the  
article on  
the Richfield  
Community  
Circle -  
on reduced +  
on white 8 1/2 x 11  
paper.

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Recent articles by scholars and practitioners such as Robert Putnam, Bruce Adams, Jean Bethke Elshtain, and Benjamin Barber have fleshed out these concepts. A host of new organizations and efforts, including the Alliance for National Renewal, the American News Service, America Speaks, and the Civic Practices Network, are convening some of the thinkers and doers, and identifying examples of communities and programs that embody the cutting edge of democratic practice.

Many of these leaders and organizations have turned their attention to the study circle, a proven method for strengthening dialogue and democratic participation. The community-wide study circle program — in which study circles are used throughout a community to engage citizens in discussion and problem solving — is a vital model for this work. As a result, SCRC has become a focal point for this new, larger audience.

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Much of the new interest comes from public officials, who are beginning to realize that the old debates don't connect to citizens in their struggles to deal with the issues that affect their lives and their communities. It is becoming more difficult to rely on the old "right-wing" or "left-wing" ideas and policies, because those ideas and labels no longer resonate much with citizens.

Conservative and liberal public officials are interested in dialogue and democracy for very different reasons. Conservatives have long championed the need to reinforce family and community values, but they've never been more eager to find a mechanism for doing it. Many conservative thinkers and leaders have realized that merely keeping "big government" out of the way is not enough. In the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, William Bennett has called for a "return to civil society." Lamar Alexander advocates local organizing to confront community problems — his campaign slogan is "The people know what to do."

At the same time, liberals who believe in the power of government to address social problems are facing the reality that growing numbers of taxpayers don't share this belief — or at least aren't willing to sustain government spending. By encouraging citizens to examine problems like crime and poverty, liberals hope to foster community-based programs that help pick up where government has left off. Some

## STUDY CIRCLES AND ACTION

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We have always assumed that, at the very least, participation in study circles makes people better informed, more understanding of other viewpoints, and able to vote more intelligently. These results of dialogue embody the idea that "to understand is to act." With every change in an individual, every study circle nibbles away at the polarization and grandstanding that currently dominate our public life. On a grand scale, this can result in a greater sense of ownership of public issues, as well as in elections defined more by substance than style.

"Government by the people," however, means more than just voting. In the hands of many organizers, study circles have become a way of directly communicating the views and values of citizens to officials in government and in the schools. These organizers have shown that providing input is another important way to take action. Reports written jointly by study circle members, individual letters from study circle participants, and structures like the Study Circle Council in Lima, Ohio, funnel ideas and concerns from participants to community leaders.

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Examples of these collaborative efforts resulting from community-wide study circles around the country include: youth mentoring projects; a film festival on ethnic diversity; collaborative school-business efforts; a multiracial "unity choir;" improvements to a community policing program; new playgrounds; a new soup kitchen; neighborhood "peace zones;" and a city-wide planning process for violence prevention. These kinds of collaborative efforts to address public problems define citizenship broadly and actively.

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# EDUCATION & HOUSING EQUITY PROJECT

## Mission Statement

*The purpose of the Education & Housing Equity Project (EHEP) is to act as a catalyst to build broad-based coalitions and engage the community in public discussions and advocacy for the purpose of promoting racially and economically inclusive communities that give families of all incomes, races and ethnicities access to schools and housing throughout the metropolitan area.*

## Current Activities:

- (1) Exploring how to build a coalition that can work for racially and economically inclusive communities and respond to the segregation and disparities now developing in the housing and schools of the Twin Cities metro area.
- (2) Working in collaboration with other housing, education, religious, and anti-racism organizations to plan and implement a metro-wide study circle and community forum project for 1997 and 1998 that focuses on the questions:
  1. "How does racial and economic segregation of housing affect educational achievement and life opportunities of Twin Cities' children?" and,
  2. "What can citizens do individually and collectively to enhance education and life opportunities for all children in the Twin Cities metropolitan area?"

## Contact Information:

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- (1) Exploring how to build a coalition that can work for racially and economically inclusive communities and respond to the segregation and disparities now developing in the housing and schools of the Twin Cities metro area.
- (2) Working in collaboration with other housing, education, religious, and anti-racism organizations to plan and implement a metro-wide study circle and community forum project for 1997 and 1998 that focuses on the questions:
  1. "How does racial and economic segregation of housing affect educational achievement and life opportunities of Twin Cities' children?" and,
  2. "What can citizens do individually and collectively to enhance education and life opportunities for all children in the Twin Cities metropolitan area?"

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# EDUCATION & HOUSING EQUITY PROJECT

Revised 5-1-99

## Mission Statement

*The purpose of the Education & Housing Equity Project (EHEP) is to build broad-based partnerships that engage Twin Cities area citizens in public discussion, analysis and action that promotes racially and economically inclusive communities which provide families and children of all races, incomes and ethnic backgrounds access to quality housing and schools throughout the metropolitan area.*

## Current Activities:

- (1) Exploring how to build a coalition that can work for racially and economically inclusive communities and respond to the segregation and disparities now developing in the housing and schools of the Twin Cities metro area.
- (2) Working in collaboration with other housing, education, religious, business, community and anti-racism organizations to plan and implement a metro-wide study circle and community forum project for 1997, 1998 and 1999 that focuses on the questions:
  1. "What are 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,
  2. "What can or should citizens do, as individuals and as a community, to enhance the educational, housing, and economic opportunities of all children and adults in the Twin Cities metropolitan area?"

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## A comparison of dialogue and debate

Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.

*Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.*

In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.

*In debate, winning is the goal.*

In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning, and find agreement.

*In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.*

Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.

*Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.*

Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation.

*Debate defends assumptions as truth.*

Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.

*Debate causes critique of the other position.*

Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.

*Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.*

Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.

*Debate creates a closed-minded attitude, a determination to be right.*

In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other peoples' reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.

*In debate, one submit's one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.*

Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.

*Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.*

In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.

*In debate, one searches for glaring differences.*

In dialogue, one searches for strengths in the other positions.

*In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other position.*

Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.

*Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person.*

Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.

*Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.*

Dialogue remains open-ended.

*Debate implies a conclusion.*

*Adapted from a paper prepared by Shelley Berman, which was based on discussions of the Dialogue Group of the Boston Chapter of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). Other members included Lucile Burt, Dick Mayo-Smith, Lally Stowell, and Gene Thompson. For more information on ESR's programs and resources using dialogue as a tool for dealing with controversial issues, call the national ESR office at (617) 492-1764.*

# **Metropolitan Citizens Summit**

## **Education, Housing and Race in the Twin Cities Area**

**December 1999**

At the conclusion of the 1999 Community Circle Dialogues, circle participants will be invited to participate in a "Citizens Summit" on creating better schools and affordable housing for every resident of the Twin Cities.

This event will be designed to bring "closure" to the "Community Circles" meeting this and previous years, and to move the community forward on these important issues:

- to honor the work these dedicated citizens have undertaken;
- to provide a forum for further exchange of ideas among these diverse citizens (in the form of more concrete solutions and next steps);
- to further build connections among citizens metro-wide to *act*;
- and, finally, to generate attention for citizens' ideas among local, state and national policy leaders, the media and the public.

The ultimate goal is to "change how we do business" as a racially diverse community.

The Citizens Summit will have two parts:

1) **A Citizens Forum with participants from the Community Circle project**

At the forum, participants will present their best ideas for moving from ideas to action on better integrating the metropolitan area (i.e., building more inclusive communities and schools). This session will be fully interactive, with participants having the ability to electronically vote on or rate the various ideas presented. The forum will be moderated by a known and trusted community leader.

In addition, the forum will be attended by a number of local policy makers – elected officials from suburban, urban, metropolitan, school, county and state government – all key officials working on or influencing these issues. The goal of the meeting will be to have these policy makers present to listen to the citizens who participated in the community circle conversations, and to understand the depth of support of their ideas.

2) **A Minnesota Meeting address**

In conjunction with the forum, the Minnesota Meeting will also host an address by a nationally prominent leader in civil rights, education and housing (who will have observed the citizens summit). A larger group of community leaders – largely from business and the professions – will join the participants from the citizens forum for the Minnesota Meeting, a luncheon event which will be broadcast live on the stations of Minnesota Public Radio. This event will give the speaker an excellent opportunity to relate to a larger public (luncheon guests and radio listeners) her/his understanding of the work among the citizens that happened at the forum.

Sponsored by: ***The Minnesota Meeting, the Minnesota Public Radio Civic Journalism Initiative and the Education & Housing Equity Project***

Funded by: ***The Minneapolis and the Saint Paul Foundations***

# Community Circle Report Form

## Session #1: Getting Started

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Sponsoring Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please describe two or three main themes or ideas about experiences with racism or segregation which your group discussed today: (1-2 sentences each)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Please use this space to note action ideas, if any, that were mentioned in today's discussion:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Community Circle Report Form

Session #2: What are the reasons for segregation in the Twin Cities?

Sponsoring Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please describe two or three main themes or ideas about the reasons for segregation in the Twin Cities that your group discussed today: (1-2 sentences each)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Please use this space to note action ideas, if any, that were mentioned in today's discussion:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Community Circle Report Form

*Session #3: How can we address the housing challenges in the Twin Cities?*

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Sponsoring Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please describe two or three main themes or ideas about the housing challenges we face in the Twin Cities that your group discussed today: (1-2 sentences each)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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**4. Please use this space to note action ideas, if any, that were mentioned in today's discussion:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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# Community Circle Report Form

*Session #4: What can we do about the achievement gap in our public schools?*

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Sponsoring Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Please describe two or three main themes or ideas about the achievement gap in our schools that your group discussed today: (1-2 sentences each)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Please use this space to note action ideas, if any, that were mentioned in today's discussion:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Community Circle Report Form

## Session # 5: Making a Difference

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Sponsoring Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_

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While there may not be consensus within your group about how to best address some of the challenges discussed, there may be ideas or solutions which have emerged over the last few weeks and are supported by most participants.

**1. What are two or three of the most powerful steps *individuals* can take to make a difference?**

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**2. What are two or three of the most powerful steps *groups or organizations* can take to make a difference?**

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*(over)*

*(Session #5 report form continued)*

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- 3. What are two or three of the most powerful steps our community or region can take to make a difference?**

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- 4. What are some of the things participants said they would do differently in the future as a result of being part of this community circle dialogue?**

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# DISCUSSION REPORT FORM

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## What do you think?

The Education and Housing Equity Project will assemble a document, entitled "Choices for Community: Creating an Agenda for Building Inclusive Communities and Successful Schools in the Twin Cities and Metropolitan Region." This document will represent some of the views of study circle participants and the results of the Action Forum; it will also be used to inform public policy making.

Your group is invited to submit a summary of your discussions for that document. Try to capture the main ideas that emerge during the discussion, using exact words or recalling actual stories or examples given by other participants whenever possible. Keep in mind that only one final form can be submitted per group.

Recall:

## The Task of the Community Circles

Keeping the conversations centered on the following two questions:

- *What are 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?*
- *What can or should we do, as individuals and as a community, to enhance the educational, housing, and economic opportunities of all children and adults in the Twin cities area?*

What were some issues of common concern within your group?

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What were some areas of agreement and disagreement?

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## DISCUSSION LEADER'S EVALUATION FORM

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*This document was adapted from a form developed by Selena Singletary in Springfield, Ohio.*

**Please complete this form after your last discussion session and return to [address] no later than [date].**

1. Your name
2. The name of your study circle organizer
3. Where and when (day of the week and time) did your study circle meet?
4. How many times did your study circle meet?
5. Number of participants at:  
Session I \_\_\_\_ Session II \_\_\_\_ Session III \_\_\_\_ Session IV \_\_\_\_
6. How would you characterize your study circle in terms of gender, racial and ethnic make-up, political spectrum, etc.?
7. What perspectives were well represented in your group? Which were missing?
8. What were your own observations about the dialogue and group process?
9. What did members of the group say about their discussions?
10. What was the topic of the group's liveliest discussion?
11. What were areas of general agreement? What were areas with little consensus?
12. What suggestions came from the group about how people (individuals, organizations, institutions, government) might better address the issue?
13. Did you have adequate support from your study circle's organizer and from the coordinators of the overall program? If not, what additional support would have been helpful?
14. If you were to lead another study circle, what would you change? Feel free to comment on discussion materials, organization of the overall study circle program, your meeting site, your performance as discussion leader, and any other aspects.
15. Do you have concerns, or did the group have concerns, which need to be discussed with the study circle program's working group?

- 4) Ask participants to share whatever information they found about ongoing efforts or programs in your community on the issue you are working on.
- 5) To figure out what you want to do, try a brainstorming session — talking and writing down ideas as you go along. Then, review the list you generated. Do any common themes emerge? If so, plan to focus your efforts on areas of consensus. If not, ask group members to rank their top three concerns (anonymously & on paper). Collect their papers, take a break, and tabulate which ideas have the most support. Put the top 3-5 ideas on the board, and discuss the list.
- 6) Think about what is already being done in the community in these areas. Are there ways to build on existing efforts and find people to work with?
  - a) You may want to contact the people who coordinate the programs that interest you, and see how your efforts might best be applied. You may want to invite someone to come and speak to your group. Or, as a group, make a site visit to the organization.
  - b) You may want to start something new — something that no one is doing in your community. Take some time as a group to think about what gaps there are in community services, programs, or other civic enterprises.
  - c) You may want to invite more people to join your group.
- 7) Take a few minutes to discuss how you will keep your group up and running.
  - Just because you agreed to convene the first meeting doesn't necessarily mean you must continue in that role. If it is not feasible for you to continue, be sure to identify other leadership within the group to carry the work forward. Whoever runs the meeting should do so in an impartial, evenhanded way, much like a study circle facilitator.
  - You should begin to develop a paper trail, documenting the work of your group. (Remember, come [date], at the kickoff event for the next round of study circles, this task force will have the chance to report on what you did.) Rotate the recorder's job from week to week.
  - For the group to remain connected to the larger study circle program, someone needs to keep in touch with the [sponsoring organization]. That person(s) might also take on the responsibility of making sure that the meetings happen — that is, finding a site, calling participants, etc.
- 8) Set a time and place for the next meeting.
- 9) Thank everyone for their contributions. Again, remind people of the importance of their work!