



Education and Housing Equity Project Records.

Copyright Notice:

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit www.mnhs.org/copyright.

Proposal to the Cowles Media Foundation

A. ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

History & Mission

The Education & Housing Equity Project (EHEP) was created in early 1995 by a group of education and housing advocates who shared a belief in the pressing need to link the issue of school desegregation/integration with the broader issue of segregated housing and neighborhoods. The organization's mission is to act as a catalyst to build broad-based coalitions and engage the community in public conversations 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.

EHEP pursues its mission through a three-part strategy:

- (1) Coalition building and advocacy;
- (2) Community education and public conversation; and
- (3) Assisting communities in becoming more inclusive and integrated.

Activities & Accomplishments

In its first year, EHEP was awarded a start-up grant to develop the organization and hire part-time staff in late 1995. Since that time, EHEP has worked to develop itself as an organization (including obtaining 501(c)(3) status and beginning a process of strategic planning) and collaborated with other organizations and individuals to determine the best strategies for making progress on these issues, which are as complex and daunting as they are immediate.

With staff time limited to a part-time Coordinator's position, EHEP has been involved in the following activities and accomplished the following over the past two years:

Coalition building. EHEP spent its first year in numerous discussions and collaborations. These have led to several specific coalition projects as well as a fuller understanding of the need for an organization that can link these two issues - housing and education - and help develop the desperately needed consensus and leadership to move forward. After several months of one-on-one interviews with a broad range of community leaders and experts in the fields of housing, education, anti-racism, and metropolitan stability, EHEP brought together over 30 organizations to begin the process of building a broad-based coalition that can work on these combined issues. EHEP has also helped expand the base and scope of existing coalitions by connecting the coalitions with related organizations and encouraging the linkage of housing and schools issues in their work. It has worked with a coalition focused on the re-drafting of the State Board of Education's desegregation rule, for example, and linked that

school issue with broader issues of housing segregation and metropolitan stability. Similarly, it has encouraged a coalition working on a fair housing testing campaign in suburban Hennepin County to frame this issue in the context of schools and broader life opportunities.

Community education & conversation. In February 1996, EHEP partnered with the Minneapolis Initiative Against Racism, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, and the Minnesota Fair Housing Center to create the Community Circle Collaborative (CCC). This is a metro-wide dialogue project in which at least 500 citizens from all walks of life have joined together - 5-15 at a time - in study circles held throughout the metro area to discuss two central 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?" and
- "What can or should we do, as individuals and as a community, to enhance educational success, and housing and economic opportunities for *all* children in the Twin Cities area?"

The CCC is now a broad-based collaboration of community-based organizations, public staff and officials, and individuals working in a variety of fields, including anti-racism, housing, education, social justice, religion, law, and social research. The early partners included: the Minneapolis Initiative Against Racism; Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton; Toward Tomorrow Together (a St. Paul area anti-racism coalition); the Wilder Foundation; the St. Paul Dept. of Human Rights; the MN Churches Anti-Racism Initiative (of the MN Council of Churches, the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, and St. Paul Area Council of Churches); the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH); the Suburban Hennepin Anti-Racism Coalition; and the Institute on Race & Poverty. The Collaboration has been coordinated by the Director of EHEP, Dick Little.

During its second year, the Community Circle Collaborative has expanded to include more than 20 public, civic and community-based organizations that serve as the principal partners (see attached list). Each partner contributes its unique strengths or resources to the Collaborative, assuring a broad-based and comprehensive initiative.

The "Kick-Off" conference for potential sponsor groups and conveners of Community Circle study/discussion groups was held in December, 1996. It brought together representatives of nearly 100 different organizations and was highlighted in a Star Tribune Editorial. Recruitment of facilitators began in early 1997, with the assistance of such organizations as the Minnesota Facilitators Network, and concluded with two major facilitator training seminars organized by the Collaborative in February. Approximately 75 facilitators were trained and volunteered to be "matched" with community circles. Other members of the Collaborative helped prepare and review the discussion guide, Choices for Community: A Regional Conversation About Education,

Housing, and Segregation, used by the Community Circles to help inform and focus their discussions and deliberative process. Additional resources are being provided at metro area libraries with the assistance of Librarians for Social Responsibility.

Beginning in March, 1997, sponsors convened the community circles, in some cases pairing their circles with others to maximize diversity of participants and perspectives. Most circles have included between 6 and 20 individuals and have met four to six times for periods of two hours each. The MPR Civic Journalism Housing Forum Project helped to stimulate participation in the Community Circles. Some 50 Community Circles have been or are still being convened and many groups will be meeting into the summer months.

On May 29th, a forum titled "COMING TOGETHER: A Regional Conversation on the Challenges of Education, Housing and Segregation" was held at Macalester College. This event brought together representatives of different Community Circles meeting from throughout the metropolitan area to share the results of their small group discussions and to converse with each other about the issues they were charged to address. Selected community leaders, academic and business leaders, public elected and appointed officials, and the media were invited to listen and participate in the discussion. 154 citizens registered, and 122 citizens attended the Forum. The results of the Forum conversation were discussed the following day by the moderators, George Latimer and Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, on Minnesota Public Radio's Mid-Day Program.

Many Community Circles will also be convening local forums in their communities with representatives from their sponsor organizations as well as local policy makers, educators, community leaders and other members, to discuss the results of their deliberations. Finally, each Community Circle will prepare a written report of its findings and conclusions. These reports will be synthesized into a single document summarizing the results of the first round of Community Circle conversations. In addition, the various conversations, forums, and training events are being recorded for future use and public broadcast by the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program and Office of Film and Video.

Future plans for the Community Circles project include a second, expanded round of Community Circle discussions to be held in the Fall of 1997. This round will build upon the findings of the first round of community circle discussions and will include additional groups not represented in the Spring round, such as the business community. The discussions will be resourced by metro area libraries with assistance from Librarians for Social Responsibility and will be more clearly focused on issues of building more inclusive communities and moving the discussion to issue identification and action. EHEP and the Community Circle Collaborative will also co-sponsor a Citizens Summit with the Minnesota Meeting and Minnesota Public Radio. The Summit will use electronic key pad technology to elicit focused responses and discussion of specific issues and solutions from Community Circle participants on the best ways the

metropolitan community can address issues of educational access and achievement, and housing, community and school desegregation in the Twin Cities area.

Staffing

Dick Little holds the position of coordinator, and is responsible for all aspects of the project: organizing, coalition building, administration and community education. He works under the direction of a Board of Directors. Mr. Little has an extensive background in housing, education, race relations and use of study circles.

Board of Directors

The Board of EHEP consists of:

- Matthew Little, Vice President for Education, Minneapolis Branch NAACP, former Branch President, and longtime activist for racial and social justice;
- Barbara Bearman, member Executive Committee, Minneapolis Branch NAACP, and community activist who participated in the original Minneapolis school desegregation lawsuit in the early 1970's;
- Michael Anderson, East Side Neighborhood Development Company;
- Dr. Josie Johnson, Senior Fellow, College of Education and Human Development, University of Minnesota;
- Van D. Mueller of the University of Minnesota Department of Education Policy & Administration;
- Joy Sorensen Navarre, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing;
- Georgina Stephens, former President of the Minnesota State Board of Education;
- Jerry Timian, Director, First Call for Help, St. Paul United Way and member, St. Louis Park School Board; and
- Jim Hilbert, Co-Director of Programs, The Institute on Race & Poverty, University of Minnesota Law School.

B. PURPOSE OF GRANT

The Need

Public conversation about the possibilities for inclusive and integrated communities is rare, usually divisive and poorly informed, not conducted on a systematic or sustained basis, and with too few groups and individuals involved. We believe these adverse conditions imperil the chances of building inclusive and integrated communities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The principal danger is that public discourse is fast settling into simplistic, distorted polarities – neighborhood schools versus forced busing, quality education versus desegregation, core cities versus suburbs, rich versus poor and, of course, whites versus people of color (especially African-Americans). A climate of public opinion poisoned by these divisions inevitably limits what policy makers (and, as we've found in our initial discussions, advocates and community leaders as well) feel they are able to do; we speculate that this climate even limits what judges feel *they* are able to do. In the current environment, the issues are captured by the most extreme and negative voices, which are then amplified by the media. The public sits and listens. Few want to get involved, because of the fear of getting burned in the heated controversy and because of the not-unreasonable judgment that little will be accomplished under these conditions.

There is a need to involve many groups and the broader public in civil, informed conversations about the possibilities for integrated communities. There is a need to expand the serious discussion of these issues beyond the courtrooms and the academic halls. As many people as possible in our community should be participating in the conversation about this issue. The discourse should not be limited to the invectives of "talk radio," the well-intentioned opinions of newspaper editorials, the sociological jargon of academia or the legal technicalities of the court.

The issue is developing rapidly. The question is who will be involved in the public discourse, and how will that discourse be framed. Unfortunately, past experience shows that these issues are easily polarized – and stay polarized. We believe that this familiar yet unfortunate outcome can be averted by organizing a wide range of groups that have a potential stake in integration, by engaging broad-based public participation in informed conversations about what segregation and integration involves and by offering assistance to communities as they seek to become better integrated.

Our Response

In response to this need, and based on the experience and information we have gathered over the past two years, we propose to continue and expand our work in coalition building and public education. We want to continue to take the public conversation about racial and economic segregation and integration to neighborhood centers, public libraries, school buildings, places of business, living rooms, and backyards – the places where ordinary people live their lives and where the real task of building inclusive communities must take place. We wish to encourage and inform public conversations that will help lead people to support the principle of integrated communities and to support efforts to move toward that goal. This organization seeks to educate the public – that is, to lead people to a more informed, effective understanding of the effects of segregation, why integration is important, and how it can be accomplished. Through this process, we hope that people come to understand the value of integration for themselves, for other people, and for society as a whole.

We have no illusions that all people will be persuaded, or that all will be willing to participate. There are, after all, real conflicts of interest and conflicts of values. These will not be dissolved by a little talk. But without a concerted effort to bring people together for informed and civil conversations, the most extreme voices will remain to frame the issue. Public-spirited conversation will be drowned out by shrill debate; our common interests and values will get lost in the sea of opposition and conflict.

Our Project

We propose to continue and expand our current work on three fronts:

- Supporting and linking existing coalitions that are working on these related issues,
- Solidifying a broad-based coalition that can advocate for racially and economically integrated schools and housing throughout the metropolitan area, and
- Sponsoring informed public conversations that will advance the understanding and promotion of inclusive communities.

Each of these elements reinforces the others.

(1) Supporting and linking existing coalitions and organizations. There is a wide range of groups and individuals in the Twin Cities metro area with a potential stake in the cause of inclusive and integrated communities and schools. We have begun connecting and collaborating with many such groups in our first two years, and believe much can be accomplished simply by helping to support and expand existing coalitions that already focus on housing and school issues, but do not necessarily link those two issues in their work. We propose to continue our coalition-building efforts by focusing on faith communities, elected officials (legislators, school boards, city councils, mayors, county boards), neighborhood groups, parent organizations, teacher and staff groups, professional education programs, fair housing and housing advocacy groups, labor unions, business organizations, civic groups, civil rights organizations, human rights commissions, libraries, the media, and others.

These groups all have different interests and different understandings of what integration means for them. Moreover, although we have found that many of them agree on the importance of linking school desegregation/integration with the broader issue of housing, few actively combine those two issues in their work or in their recruitment of additional coalition members.

Over the past two years we have seen – and begun to build on – a great potential for such broad coalition development and support. Yet we also appreciate that it will require a labor-intensive effort to attract the participation of these groups in ways that are appropriate to their interests and capacities. Such an effort is critically needed, however, and these groups constitute the essential infrastructure through which we can develop the broader public understanding and support for integrated communities, and

a broader response to the deepening socioeconomic and racial segregation in the Twin Cities area.

(2) Solidifying a broad-based housing/education coalition. The discussions and research we have undertaken so far have convinced us that the building of a single coalition that can advocate for more integrated schools and communities in the Twin Cities will be challenging and slow-going. We have begun to lay the foundation for such a coalition, however – by working within existing coalitions, by listening closely to both mainstream and community leaders and citizens, and by educating them about the realities and options facing us – and will work to solidify this foundation over the next year. We plan to move from dialogue to issue identification and action, working with the same broad range of organizations and individuals we have identified over the past year, as well as others. As we have found already, once groups have the information and tools they need to delve into these issues and begin to see how the issues must be linked and pursued in coalition, there is a powerful movement to work together. The challenge over the next year will be to support these groups and individuals in figuring out *how* to further efforts toward resolving these issues in a way that is equitable, manageable, and capable of attracting widespread support.

(3) Creating informed public conversation and analysis. The issues of residential and school segregation have become increasingly polarized and complex. There is a palpable sense of ambivalence about what to do about segregation, as both past and present strategies seem inadequate, flawed, or even misdirected. This is true even in those communities most affected by segregation, at every level: citizens, educators, housing advocates, community leaders, and policy makers. Our first two years of work have given us a deep appreciation of this confusion, even as it has frustrated and worried us, and convinced us of the necessity for widespread and well-informed public conversations about these issues. Without such conversations, we fear the silence and ambivalence – to say nothing of poor public policy and lack of leadership – will continue. We propose, therefore, to continue creating such opportunities for education and dialogue at several levels:

- (a) The Community Circle Collaborative and the “Choices For Community” Study Circle Project.** As noted above, EHEP has been a leading partner in this metro-wide collaboration. Through the Community Circle Collaborative, EHEP continues to organize and support “community circles” throughout the metropolitan region, which will meet to explore the questions of how existing patterns of residential, economic and racial segregation affect the educational achievement and life opportunities of Twin Cities area children and families, and what we can do as individuals and as a community to enhance those opportunities. Our focus in the upcoming years will be on: (1) expanding the Collaborative to include a broader range of points of view from organizations, public institutions, and individuals throughout the metropolitan region, (2) promoting and publicizing the project, (3) providing research support to the community circles, (4)

fundraising, (5) continuing to recruit and train community circle sponsors and facilitators, (6) evaluating and reporting on the outcomes of community circle deliberations, forums, and subsequent actions, and (7) developing an action component.

(b) Community and Metro-wide Citizens Forums. These forums will flow from the study circle conversations and will enable broader engagement and education of the public.

(c) A ' Blue Ribbon ' Commission / Task Force. This group will consist of public, business, church and community leaders selected by the Collaborative to focus on engagement and education of public policy and institutional leaders. This group, modeled after the Latimer Commission, which evaluated the implementation of the Metropolitan Livable Communities Act, will have as its major tasks:

- to use the results of the first round of Community Circle conversations to guide the second round of discussions;
- to use the results of both rounds to formulate findings and recommendations for public policy makers; and
- to develop additional strategies for educating and informing the public and "moving the community" to act collectively on needed change.

How Our Project Differs From Other Projects and Organizations

1. Its unique methodology of fostering conversation among disparate members of Twin Cities communities, not only to discuss issues and problems, but to develop action registers and common solutions that can be used by the community at large. Three discussion models for community deliberation have been combined to achieve this outcome: The Study Circles model of the Study Circles Resource Center; the National Issues Forums of the Kettering Foundation; and the Communities of Color Empowerment Model of the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership.

2. Its focus on the region as a whole and on consciously linking the issues of housing, education and employment. No other organization in the Twin Cities, nor nationally, is currently engaged in this kind of collaborative grassroots dialogue and mobilization effort linking housing and education, and race, locally and regionally.

3. Its use of a collaborative of diverse organizations, including principal organizing partners, media partners, funding partners, project coordinators, resource partners, and community circle sponsor organizations. This project brings together anti-racism organizations, along with civic and media organizations, to focus on challenging segregation in housing and education.

4. Its ability to measure success in tangible ways. These measures include the breadth and depth of participation in the study circles by local and regional citizens. Breadth and depth means diversity of participants in terms of ideas, race, place of residence, age, and economic status. It also includes number of participants and conversations. The project's impact will also be measured by having our findings and recommendations publicly addressed by the State Legislature in its 1998 and 1999 legislative agenda.

Proposal to the Cowles Media Foundation

A. ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

History & Mission

The Education & Housing Equity Project (EHEP) was created in early 1995 by a group of education and housing advocates who shared a belief in the pressing need to link the issue of school desegregation/integration with the broader issue of segregated housing and neighborhoods. The organization's mission 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.

EHEP pursues its mission through a three-part strategy:

- (1) Coalition building and advocacy;
- (2) Community education and public dialogue; and
- (3) Assisting communities in becoming more inclusive and integrated.

Activities & Accomplishments

In its first year, EHEP was awarded a start-up grant to develop the organization and hired part-time staff in late 1995. Since that time, EHEP has worked to develop itself as an organization (including obtaining 501(c)(3) status and beginning a process of strategic planning) and collaborated with other organizations and individuals to determine the best strategies for making progress on these issues, which are as complex and daunting as they are immediate.

With staff time limited to a part-time Coordinator's position, EHEP has been involved in the following activities and accomplished the following over the past two years:

Coalition building. EHEP spent its first year in numerous dialogues and collaborations. These have led to several specific coalition projects as well as a fuller understanding of the need for an organization that can link these two issues - housing and education - and help develop the desperately needed consensus and leadership to move forward. After several months of one-on-one interviews with a broad range of community leaders and experts in the fields of housing, education, anti-racism, and metropolitan stability, EHEP brought together over 30 organizations to begin the process of building a broad-based coalition that can work on these combined issues. EHEP has also helped expand the base and scope of existing coalitions by connecting the coalitions with related organizations and encouraging the linkage of housing and schools issues in their work. It has worked with a coalition focused on the re-drafting of the State Board of Education's desegregation rule, for example, and linked that

school issue with broader issues of housing segregation and metropolitan stability. Similarly, it has encouraged a coalition working on a fair housing testing campaign in suburban Hennepin County to frame this issue in the context of schools and broader life opportunities.

Community education & dialogue. In February 1996, EHEP partnered with the Minneapolis Initiative Against Racism, the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, and the Minnesota Fair Housing Center to create the Community Circle Collaborative (CCC). This is a metro-wide dialogue project in which at least 500 citizens from all walks of life have joined together - 5-15 at a time - in study circles held throughout the metro area to discuss two central 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?" and
- "What can or should we do, as individuals and as a community, to enhance the educational, housing and economic opportunities for *all* children in the Twin Cities area?"

The CCC is now a broad-based collaboration of community-based organizations, public staff and officials, and individuals working in a variety of fields, including anti-racism, housing, education, social justice, religion, law, and social research. The early partners included: the Minneapolis Initiative Against Racism; Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton; Toward Tomorrow Together (a St. Paul area anti-racism coalition); the Wilder Foundation; the St. Paul Dept. of Human Rights; the MN Churches Anti-Racism Initiative (of the MN Council of Churches, the Greater Minneapolis Council of Churches, and St. Paul Area Council of Churches); the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH); the Suburban Hennepin Anti-Racism Coalition; and the Institute on Race & Poverty. The Collaboration has been coordinated by the Interim Director of EHEP, Dick Little.

During its second year, the Community Circle Collaborative has expanded to include more than 20 public, civic and community-based organizations that serve as the principal partners (see attached list). Each partner contributes its unique strengths or resources to the Collaborative, assuring a broad-based and comprehensive initiative.

The "Kick-Off" conference for potential sponsor groups and conveners of Community Circle study/discussion groups was held in December, 1996. It brought together representatives of nearly 100 different organizations and was highlighted in a Star Tribune Editorial. Recruitment of facilitators began in early 1997, with the assistance of such organizations as the Minnesota Facilitators Network, and concluded with two major facilitator training seminars organized by the Collaborative in February. Approximately 75 facilitators were trained and volunteered to be "matched" with community circles. Other members of the Collaborative helped prepare and review the discussion guide, Choices for Community: A Regional Conversation About Education,

Housing, and Segregation, used by the Community Circles to help inform and focus their discussions and deliberative process. Additional resources are being provided at metro area libraries with the assistance of Librarians for Social Responsibility.

Beginning in March, sponsors convened the community circles, in some cases pairing their circles with others to maximize diversity of participants and perspectives. Most circles have included between 6 and 20 individuals and have met four to six times for periods of two hours each. The MPR Civic Journalism Housing Forum Project helped to stimulate participation in the Community Circles. Some 50 Community Circles have been or are still being convened and many groups will be meeting into the summer months.

On May 29th, a forum titled "COMING TOGETHER: A Regional Conversation on the Challenges of Education, Housing and Segregation" was held at Macalester College. This event brought together representatives of different Community Circles meeting from throughout the metropolitan area to share the results of their small group discussions and to converse with each other about the issues they were charged to address. Selected community leaders, academic and business leaders, public elected and appointed officials, and the media were invited to listen and participate in the discussion. 153 citizens registered, and 121 citizens attended the Forum. The results of the Forum conversation were discussed the following day by the moderators, George Latimer and Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, on Minnesota Public Radio's Mid-Day Program.

Many Community Circles will also be convening local forums in their communities with representatives from their sponsor organizations as well as local policy makers, educators, community leaders and other members, to discuss the results of their deliberations. Finally, each Community Circle will prepare a written report of its findings and conclusions. These reports will be synthesized into a single document summarizing the results of the first round of Community Circle conversations. In addition, the various conversations, forums, and training events are being recorded for future use and public broadcast by the Minneapolis NRP and Office of Film and Video.

Future plans for the Community Circles project include a second, expanded round of Community Circle discussions to be held in the Fall of 1997. This round will build upon the findings of the first round of community circle discussions and will include additional groups not represented in the Spring round, such as the business community. The discussions will be resourced by metro area libraries with assistance from Librarians for Social Responsibility and will be more clearly focused on issues of building more inclusive communities and moving the discussion from dialogue to issue identification and action. EHEP and the Community Circle Collaborative will also co-sponsor a Citizens Summit with the Minnesota Meeting and Minnesota Public Radio. The Summit will use electronic key pad technology to elicit focused responses and discussion of specific issues and solutions from Community Circle participants on the best ways the metropolitan community can address issues of educational access and

achievement, and housing, community and school desegregation in the Twin Cities area.

Staffing

Dick Little holds the part-time position of coordinator on an interim basis, and is responsible for all aspects of the project: organizing, coalition building, administration and community education. He works under the direction of the Board of Directors, which plans to appoint a permanent coordinator in the near future. Mr. Little has an extensive background in housing, education, race relations and use of study circles.

Board of Directors

The Board of EHEP consists of:

- Matthew Little, Vice President for Education, Minneapolis Branch NAACP, former Branch President, and longtime activist for racial and social justice;
- Barbara Bearman, member Executive Committee, Minneapolis Branch NAACP, and community activist who participated in the original Minneapolis school desegregation lawsuit in the early 1970's;
- Michael Anderson, East Side Neighborhood Development Company;
- Dr. Josie Johnson;
- Van D. Mueller of the University of Minnesota Department of Education Policy & Administration;
- Joy Sorensen Navarre, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing;
- Georgina Stephens, Treasurer, former President of the Minnesota State Board of Education;
- Jerry Timian, Director, First Call for Help, St. Paul United Way and member, St. Louis Park School Board; and
- Jim Hilbert, Co-Director of Programs, The Institute on Race & Poverty, University of Minnesota Law School.

B. PURPOSE OF GRANT

Need

Public discussion about the possibilities for inclusive and integrated communities is rare, usually divisive and poorly informed, not conducted on a systematic or sustained basis, and with too few groups and individuals involved. We believe these adverse conditions imperil the chances of building inclusive and integrated communities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The principal danger is that public discourse is fast settling into simplistic, distorted polarities - neighborhood schools versus forced busing, quality education versus

desegregation, core cities versus suburbs, rich versus poor and, of course, whites versus people of color (especially African-Americans). A climate of public opinion poisoned by these divisions inevitably limits what policy makers (and, as we've found in our initial discussions, advocates and community leaders as well) feel they are able to do; we speculate that this climate even limits what judges feel *they* are able to do. In the current environment, the issues are captured by the most extreme and negative voices, which are then amplified by the media. The public sits and listens. Few want to get involved, because of the fear of getting burned in the heated controversy and because of the not-unreasonable judgment that little will be accomplished under these conditions.

There is a need to involve many groups and the broader public in civil, informed conversations about the possibilities for integrated communities. There is a need to expand the serious discussion of these issues beyond the courtrooms and the academic halls. As many people as possible in our community should be participating in the conversation about this issue. The discourse should not be limited to the invectives of "talk radio," the well-intentioned opinions of newspaper editorials, the sociological jargon of academia or the legal technicalities of the court.

The issue is developing rapidly. The question is who will be involved in the public discourse, and how will that discourse be framed. Unfortunately, past experience shows that these issues are easily polarized - and stay polarized. We believe that this familiar yet unfortunate outcome can be averted by organizing a wide range of groups that have a potential stake in integration, by engaging broad-based public participation in informed conversations about what segregation and integration involves and by offering assistance to communities as they seek to become better integrated.

In response to this need, and based on the experience and information we have gathered over the past two years, we propose to continue and expand our work in coalition building and public education. We want to continue to take the public discussion about racial and economic segregation and integration to neighborhood centers, public libraries, school buildings, places of business, living rooms, and backyards - the places where ordinary people live their lives and where the real task of building inclusive communities must take place. We wish to encourage and inform public conversations that will help lead people to support the principle of integrated communities and to support efforts to move toward that goal. This organization seeks to educate the public - that is, to lead people to a more informed, effective understanding of the effects of segregation, why integration is important, and how it can be accomplished. Through this process, we hope that people come to understand the value of integration for themselves, for other people, and for society as a whole.

We have no illusions that all people will be persuaded, or that all will be willing to participate. There are, after all, real conflicts of interest and conflicts of values. These will not be dissolved by a little talk. But without a concerted effort to bring people

together for informed and civil conversations, the most extreme voices will remain to frame the issue. Public-spirited conversation will be drowned out by shrill debate; our common interests and values will get lost in the sea of opposition and conflict.

Our Project

We propose to continue and expand our current work on three fronts:

- (1) supporting and linking existing coalitions that are working on these related issues,
- (2) solidifying a broad-based coalition that can advocate for racially and economically integrated schools and housing throughout the metropolitan area, and
- (3) sponsoring informed public conversations that will advance the understanding and promotion of inclusive communities.

Each of these elements reinforces the others.

(1) Supporting and linking existing coalitions and organizations. There is a wide range of groups and individuals in the Twin Cities metro area with a potential stake in the cause of inclusive and integrated communities and schools. We have begun connecting and collaborating with many such groups in our first two years, and believe much can be accomplished simply by helping to support and expand existing coalitions that already focus on housing and school issues, but do not necessarily link those two issues in their work. We propose to continue our coalition-building efforts by focusing on faith communities, elected officials (legislators, school boards, city councils, mayors, county boards), neighborhood groups, parent organizations, teacher and staff groups, professional education programs, fair housing and housing advocacy groups, labor unions, business organizations, civic groups, civil rights organizations, human rights commissions, libraries, the media, and others.

These groups all have different interests and different understandings of what integration means for them. Moreover, although we have found that many of them agree on the importance of linking school desegregation/integration with the broader issue of housing, few actively combine those two issues in their work or in their recruitment of additional coalition members.

Over the past two years we have seen – and begun to build on – a great potential for such broad coalition development and support. Yet we also appreciate that it will require a labor-intensive effort to attract the participation of these groups in ways that are appropriate to their interests and capacities. Such an effort is critically needed, however, and these groups constitute the essential infrastructure through which we can develop the broader public understanding and support for integrated communities, and a broader response to the deepening socioeconomic and racial segregation in the Twin Cities area.

(2) Solidifying a broad-based housing/education coalition. The discussions and research we have undertaken so far have convinced us that the building of a single coalition that can advocate for more integrated schools and communities in the Twin Cities will be challenging and slow-going. We have begun to lay the foundation for such a coalition, however - by working within existing coalitions, by listening closely to both mainstream and community leaders and citizens, and by educating them about the realities and options facing us - and will work to solidify this foundation over the next year. We plan to move from dialogue to issue identification and action, working with the same broad range of organizations and individuals we have identified over the past year, as well as others. As we have found already, once groups have the information and tools they need to delve into these issues and begin to see how the issues must be linked and pursued in coalition, there is a powerful movement to work together. The challenge over the next year will be to support these groups and individuals in figuring out *how* to further efforts toward resolving these issues in a way that is equitable, manageable, and capable of attracting widespread support.

(3) Creating informed public dialogue and analysis. The issues of residential and school segregation have become increasingly polarized and complex. There is a palpable sense of ambivalence about what to do about segregation, as both past and present strategies seem inadequate, flawed, or even misdirected. This is true even in those communities most affected by segregation, at every level: citizens, educators, housing advocates, community leaders, and policy makers. Our first two years of work have given us a deep appreciation of this confusion, even as it has frustrated and worried us, and convinced us of the necessity for widespread and well-informed public conversations about these issues. Without such conversations, we fear the silence and ambivalence - to say nothing of poor public policy and lack of leadership - will continue. We propose, therefore, to continue creating such opportunities for education and dialogue at several levels:

(a) The Community Circle Collaborative and the "Choices For Community" Study Circle Project. As noted above, EHEP has been a leading partner in this metro-wide collaboration. Through the Community Circle Collaborative, EHEP continues to organize and support "community circles" throughout the metropolitan region, which will meet to explore the questions of how existing patterns of residential, economic and racial segregation affect the educational achievement and life opportunities of Twin Cities area children and families, and what we can do as individuals and as a community to enhance those opportunities. Our focus in the upcoming years will be on: (1) expanding the Collaborative to include a broader range of points of view from organizations, public institutions, and individuals throughout the metropolitan region, (2) promoting and publicizing the project, (3) providing research support to the community circles, (4) fundraising, (5) continuing to recruit and train community circle sponsors and facilitators, (6) evaluating and reporting on the

outcomes of community circle deliberations, forums, and subsequent actions, and (7) developing an action component.

(b) Community and Metro-wide Citizens Forums. These forums will flow from the study circle discussions and will enable broader engagement and education of the public.

(c) A ' Blue Ribbon ' Commission / Task Force. This group will consist of public, business, church and community leaders selected by the Collaborative to focus on engagement and education of public policy and institutional leaders. This group, modeled after the Latimer Commission, implementing the Metropolitan Livability Act, will have as its major tasks to use the results of the first round of Community Circle conversations to guide the second round of discussions, and to use the results of both rounds to formulate findings and recommendations for public policy makers and develop additional strategies for educating and informing the public and "moving the community" to act collectively on needed change.

How Our Project Differs From Other Projects and Organizations

1. Its unique methodology of fostering dialogue among disparate members of Twin Cities communities, not only to discuss issues and problems, but to develop action registers and common solutions that can be used by the community at large. Three discussion models for community deliberation have been combined to achieve this outcome: The Study Circles model of the Study Circles Resource; the National Issues Forums of the Kettering Foundation; and the Communities of Color Empowerment Model of the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership.

2. Its focus on the region as a whole and on consciously linking the issues of housing, education and employment. No other organization in the Twin Cities, nor nationally, is currently engaged in this kind of collaborative grassroots dialogue and mobilization effort linking housing and education, locally and regionally.

3. Its use of a collaborative of diverse organizations, including principal organizing partners, media partners, funding partners, project coordinators, resource partners, and community circle sponsor organizations. This project brings together anti-racism organizations, along with civic and media organizations, to focus on challenging segregation in housing and education.

4. Its ability to measure success in tangible ways. These measures include the breadth and depth of participation in the study circles by local and regional citizens. The project's impact will also be measured by having our findings and recommendations publicly addressed by the State Legislature in its 1998 legislative agenda.