



Education and Housing Equity Project Records.

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TO THE POINT

Talk may be cheap,
but it's valuable, too

When divergent people come together determined to learn from each other, profound change may occur. That's one goal of the Cities at Work partnership, which will hold its fall 1999 forums Thursday and next month.

For example, a woman who participated in a Cities at Work community circle in 1998 wrote that a handful of people, including two African-Americans, met for dinner and discussion on five Monday nights. She described their frank and animated dialogue about race in Minnesota, their disagreements and their epiphanies. They talked about the way the white members of the group had the option of being perceived as individuals, while the blacks were expected to speak as representatives for their entire race.

Ultimately, members of the mostly middle-age, middle-class, female group agreed on one thing: their common bond as parents who are deeply committed to raising good, strong, healthy kids.

And they agreed that discussion groups were pointless unless the talk led to action.

Just about every facet of urban life has received attention from the forums sponsored by Cities at Work, a partnership of organizations and initiatives that spark dialogue and work for change. The many sponsors and funders serve as a clearinghouse for information on improving urban life while lessening the isolation between groups. More than 6,380 people have participated in the 64 forums since they began in 1996.

It's hard to measure the impact of any forum, whether it's on the merit or demerit of a baseball stadium or on how to acknowledge and eliminate racism. Quite possibly minds change one by one, after receiving an influx of new information.

The women in the discussion group made a tiny inroad toward understanding. Maybe what the Cities at Work initiative knows is this: If you combine enough whispers, you eventually hear a roar.

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**DEBORAH
LOCKE**

EDITORIAL
WRITER

TO ATTEND

The two Cities at Work race forums — this month on business and next month on putting talk into action — are free and open to the public. Registration is required for the free meals before each; call (651) 642-4060.

■ **WHAT:**

"Changing Faces of Business": topics include community-building; the impact of minority-owned businesses; and the recruitment of a new work force

■ **WHEN:** 8 a.m. to noon Thursday

■ **WHERE:** Metro State University, 700 E. Seventh St., St. Paul

■ **WHAT:** "Beyond Tolerance: A Call to Action," with keynote speaker John Powell, director of the U.S. Institute on Race and Poverty

■ **WHEN:** Starting at 5 p.m. Nov. 8

■ **WHERE:** Arlington High School, 1459 Rice St., St. Paul