



## Education and Housing Equity Project Records.

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12:8:98  
 Mr. Little,  
 At this point the "Y"  
 is happy to provide meeting space  
 for your groups. Thank you.

**THE COMMUNITY CIRCLE COLLABORATIVE**

**PLEDGE OF PARTICIPATION FOR: SPONSORS**

**Responsibilities of the Working Group:**

1. Form partnerships with public officials, organizations, and individuals working to address housing, education, employment, and racism issues, and seek their support.
2. Recruit a broad group of Resource Partners and Sponsors to carry out the program.
3. Promote and publicize the project through the media and through Sponsor organizations.
4. Work with Resource Partners to prepare a *Discussion Guide* for the community circles and provide research support to the community circles.
5. Work with Sponsors as they recruit participants, identify meeting sites, and arrange for the details of individual community circles. When necessary, pair homogenous groups of participants to create diverse study circles.
6. Work with Resource Partners and Sponsors to organize Community Forums I and II.
7. Coordinate fundraising for the project.
8. Train community circle facilitators.
9. Draw on feedback from the community circles to prepare a report for the community.
10. Evaluate the community circles and other components of the project.

**Responsibilities of Sponsors: - For Meeting Space Only**

1. Become a well-informed spokesperson for the program by participating in a pilot study circle, or at least by reading through the Discussion Guide.
2. Establish one or more study circles in collaboration with the Working Group and facilitator(s).
3. Recruit between 8 and 15 people for each community circle.
4. Arrange a site for each community circle and a meeting time convenient for participants and facilitators.
5. Distribute discussion materials prior to each community circle's first session.
6. Recommend possible facilitators and recorders.
7. Promote the program by any means possible, including bulletins, newsletters, and personal contacts.
8. Participate in presentation of results of each community circle at Community Forum II.
9. Where possible, provide in-kind contributions such as child care, meeting space, and transportation (see below).

Name of sponsoring organization or agency that you represent:	Hiawatha Branch YMCA
Your name:	Dawn Cveengros
Your address:	4100 28 <sup>th</sup> Ave. S. 729-7397
Your telephone & fax:	Mpls., MN 55406 / fax 612-729-1011
Your e-mail (if applicable):	

I understand the responsibilities of Sponsors and commit my organization to this project. This commitment is based on approval from our Board of Directors, Executive Director, or other appropriate authority.

In addition, my organization can provide the following if necessary:

Child care       Refreshments       Transportation (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)  
 Meeting space (only)       Facilitator training       Translator(s)       Recorder(s)  
 Media equipment       Volunteers for Community Forums       Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Return to:  
 Dick Little  
 Education & Housing Equity Project, c/o MICAH  
 122 W Franklin Ave #320  
 Minneapolis MN 55404  
 tel: (612) 871-8980 fax: (612) 871-8984

**HIAWATHA BRANCH YMCA**

**4100 28th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406**



*Dick Little  
Education & Housing Equity Project  
122 W. Franklin #320  
Mpls., MN 55404*



55404/2452



*9/MICAH*

**Hiawatha YMCA Study Circle Roster  
Spring 1999**

Stacy Rooney  
4725 17<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN. 55407

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Minneapolis, MN. 55406

Barbara Nelson  
3533 46<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN. 55406

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3728 13<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN. 55407

Caroline Lawrence  
3604 15<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN. 55407

Lyn Onaki  
1835 Ulysses St. N.E.  
Apartment 4  
Minneapolis, MN.

Mary Morrow  
4039 37<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.  
Minneapolis, MN. 55406

**To: Dick Little, Education and Housing Equity Project**  
**From: Sheryl Erickson**  
**Date: April 23, 1999**  
**Subject: Community Circles Study Project**



Following up on my experience with the study circle I helped to facilitate at the Hiawatha YMCA, and on our conversation earlier this week, I have written a few of my perceptions on the process. Even though our circle was not well-attended, those who did attend were serious, thoughtful and concerned about the work. I learned a great deal from them.

1. I heartily endorse this effort. I very much agree that public policy must be informed by the thoughtful participation of the people affected.

2. That being said, however, the Minneapolis/St. Paul area is a very diverse community. I think we should be aware that the process we are using is a rather "western" middle class approach. The process assumes that participants are literate and familiar enough with American government and community processes to be able to read background material and contribute to a discussion on a variety of policy options.

3. At least in the circle I facilitated, the invitation process was not successful in attracting any people of color or any of the recent immigrant families who live in the community. If it is our desire to get a broader representation, much more work needs to be done within these communities to shape our approach and possibly to change our process and objectives to more realistically reflect the needs of people in them.

4. Among the people who did participate, there is a sense of frustration about whether this is a real effort to listen. There are many things that happen - actions taken by politicians, the school board, etc. - that make people feel they will not be heard. For example, interpreters are not made available for meetings so that people can fully participate. Public meetings are scheduled at times of the day when most working parents cannot attend. Meetings are held with very little public notice. Participants believe that these are actions taken to intentionally discourage participation, while making it look like participation is occurring. Participants do not necessarily trust that the Study Circle project will be different.

I think this is important feedback - a possible "bonus" from the process. If people in our communities in fact feel that they do not have a "voice", their sense of powerlessness will sap the energy from many of the actions we might try. It may be a core issue underlying some of the other problems we are attempting to tackle.

I am willing to meet with you at some point if you'd like to talk about this any further. Thank you for the opportunity to facilitate one of the study circles. It has been an interesting and rewarding experience.

## COMMUNITY STUDY CIRCLE NOTES HIAWATHA YMCA

### Session 1 March 16, 1999

(My notes from this session are not complete. Help to fill them out will be appreciated.)

The session focused on our individual stories about where we grew up and where we now live, and our choices. We also shared our views of life in the city, race relations, and opportunities available.

The following points were made:

- Schools are a big factor in what makes people decide to move out of the city - city schools are perceived to be of much poorer quality than suburban schools
- There is a strong belief that large business owners ignore or exploit people who live in the city. This is seen in the lack of care that is taken with cleanliness, service, product availability and higher prices for stores located in the city as compared to the suburbs - for stores in the same chain. The perceived reason for this is that "businesses will do whatever they can get away with to make more money". People in the city have fewer choices.
- One factor in this is transportation - lack of access limits choice.
- There is also a perception that fewer services and stores are available in the city than there once were. Small businesses have died as people retired, and it is very difficult to establish a neighborhood business now. For neighborhood businesses that exist, it is very hard to compete with the perception that one can get better less expensive products in the big suburban stores. This means that there is less employment opportunity and less market competition in the city.
- There is also a perception that this general situation creates greater job stress on those who work at jobs located in the city, and that employers are more free to exploit their employees.
- Finally, there is a perception that people who live in the city are generally less able to fight this kind of mistreatment. They are often not skilled in what it may take to protest poor treatment, and they have very little time and energy to do so.

## Session 2 March 23, 1999

The purpose of this session was to focus on the most likely reasons for segregation in the Twin Cities, and from that to suggest possible things that might be done to change it.

- First it was suggested that another reason for segregation should be added to those in the study guide: Elitism - Where one lives - one's address - speaks to status, importance, and identity.
- Another possible reason was identified: Fear - need to escape. It was noted that the police reinforce an atmosphere of fear. When they are asked by people who are thinking of moving in about neighborhoods, they often ask "What do you want to do that for?" They talk about crime, kids on the street, noise/ boom boxes, gangs - all of which are code words for race. There is a sense that anyone who can afford it, will move away as fast as possible.
- Other factors also seem very real. Public policies on different sentencing patterns for use of crack (primarily used by people of color) and cocaine (used by upper class whites) are racist. Real estate agents and the media feed the fear and perceptions about where we are "supposed to live".
- There is a perception that segregation perpetuates ignorance - "We like what we know." A lot of other factors help to keep myths and fear going.

Questions were raised about whether segregation is really the issue. Is segregation a bad thing? A number of observations were made:

- "If everyone was treated the same, had the same opportunities, and viewed themselves as having the same opportunities, who cares?"
- "We are spending too much money to fight segregation itself, and not enough on improving education."
- "Bussing across town divides people, and reduces parent involvement in the schools."
- "I question whether parent involvement matters as much as everyone thinks. I believe that the attitudes and expectations of teachers is more important."
- "We need to spend more money on kids before they go to school - Head Start, etc."

There was also discussion about whether discrimination in the workplace continues to be a big problem. It was felt that this will be more and more a moot point, since workers are so hard to find these days. Employers are beginning to bus people from the cities to the suburbs to work. The group was uncertain what the effect of this will be.

Ideas for change:

- Emphasize the positive aspects of our communities. Neighborhoods aren't as segregated as we might think. People need to meet each other - sponsor more and more neighborhood events - get media involvement and support.

- It was suggested that there needs to be support for more individual ownership of homes. However, there was not consensus that rental property, renters, or landlords are “bad” for neighborhoods.
- Need a concerted effort to breakdown myths about bad tenants, crime, life in the city, people/differences, ideas that a vote doesn’t count (need to get people of color and poor people to vote)
- Need to change the city council election process to foster greater representation from people of color.
- Suburbs have too much power in state government - rural and city areas are excluded.
- Education - need films for everyone on the struggle to get the vote - women’s suffrage, voting rights struggle in the 60’s

There was agreement that in Minnesota, the struggle against discrimination is difficult because it is insidious and hidden.

### Session 3 April 6, 1999

The discussion focused on the question of what should be done about housing and residential segregation in the Twin Cities.

As the group began the discussion, the general thought was that poverty, economic class and social class issues are as much the focus of these "solutions" as is segregation. There was not necessarily disagreement that "classism" may in fact be one of the main problems.

The group considered each of the possible solutions:

#### 1 - Enforcement of anti-discrimination laws

- It was felt that this would not be a very effective approach. Issues get tied up in the courts. Lawyers benefit, and money is spent on litigation rather than on addressing the issues of poverty or education. It was felt that we may in fact find lawyers "drumming up" suits that are not well-founded.

#### 2 - Limit new growth and expansion

- This approach has more possibilities. One suggestion offered was to charge suburbs a premium for services provided by city infrastructure.
- Limiting growth might help the city become more attractive to investment, and therefore may contribute to upgraded housing and neighborhoods. However, there was significant concern that affordable housing will be torn down and replaced with more expensive units. There is a big concern with where people will be able to go at that point.
- Winners: Developers and real estate agents, as well as people who bought inexpensive houses and who can now sell them at much higher prices.
- Losers: Poor people

#### 3. Eliminate Exclusionary Zoning Practices

- There was concern that voluntary commitments to change these practices haven't been met.
- This approach would have the effect of relieving some pressure on the cities to provide all of the affordable housing, and might impact the concerns raised in regard to solution # 2 (above).
- This approach may also relieve some of the transportation issues - if people who need new jobs are living in the communities where the jobs are being created.
- However, it is hard to live in the suburbs without a car. Would need to develop more transportation options within suburban boundaries.
- Are the jobs being created in the suburbs "livable wage" jobs?
- Winners: Poor people - employers in suburbs

#### 4. Reinvest in Core Cities and Inner Ring Suburbs

- There was not agreement that renters make bad neighbors, although there was agreement that more money needs to be directed to investment in neighborhoods.
- There is concern that like the NRP money, we need to make sure that the City Council is not able to direct its use. Money should be in control of the neighborhoods.
- Concern was expressed about NRP money going away.
- Investing in the neighborhoods would make them more liveable, and would attract more diverse residents.
- Winners: everybody

#### 5. Focus on Jobs and Transportation

- Minneapolis and St. Paul need to stop trying to steal each other's employers away.
- The thought is that this solution addresses poverty more than it does segregation, since it involves moving people to their work and home again.
- The group raised many issues and concerns that the community needs to address related to employment: (they weren't raised above because employment wasn't the focus)
  - Literacy and language training
  - More effective business/education partnerships
  - Community-wide workforce planning - people are reaching retirement age, and soon there will be no one to do the work.
- Winners: business/employers  
newly employed/better employed people

#### 6. Mandatory Requirements for Mixed Income Development (somewhat similar to # 3)

- Question the premise: "If you build it they will come"
- Compared to # 3, this would require development of specified types. Not sure people from the city would use it. May end by being the affordable housing used by the children of the well-to-do parents in the suburbs.
- There was a sense that people like living close to people who are culturally similar, especially newer immigrants to the country.
- Same transportation issues as in some of the other options.
- Need accessible services close to the lower cost housing.

#### 7. Let market regulate itself - deregulate land-use and building codes.

- Lots of concern about this one.
- Need regulation to make sure safety standards are met. There isn't enough regulation as it is. Need more inspectors to be sure codes are being followed. Builders are already throwing up shoddy buildings that we'll have to tear down soon.
- Winners: Builders out to make a fast buck
- Losers: everyone else

**Favored options are:** 3 - Zoning Change

4 - Incentives for city neighborhoods

5 - Jobs and Transportation

**To make these options work:**

Invest in transportation

Education and Training

Subsidized Day care

Accessible services in the suburbs

***Other options offered:***

**Lots of concern was expressed about what is happening to affordable housing in the city. New regulations should be passed requiring that older buildings be rehabbed if possible, and that when any buildings with affordable housing are torn down, they must be replaced with affordable housing.**

**Also, need more neighborhood services for kids who are too old for day care and are out on the streets after school and in the summer.**

#### Session 4 April 13, 1999

The subject of discussion for this session was what can be done about unequal opportunity in our schools.

Our group was not especially interested in any of the options suggested in the study guide. They seemed to have a paternalistic feel to them, and somehow deny personal responsibility. They also ignore some of the deep "systems" and process issues that group members have found in several of the school districts.

The following observations and suggestions were offered:

#### Allocation of resources to the districts does not match resources available to the students

- The Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts are allocated much more money per student than most other state school districts. Yet we observe that students in the city schools have few or no text books, supplies or lab equipment.
- Group members have also observed that processes in the city schools are much more cumbersome and bureaucratic than in other school districts. For example, it takes much longer for the city schools to offer teachers positions than it takes for other districts.
- Detailed process analysis should be done. Group members suggested tapping the business community for help much like the United Way uses "Loaned Executives" for its fundraising efforts. Most businesses are experienced in systems mapping, process review and analyzing best practices.
- The group favors a regional approach to school management, with resources allocated across the region, and minimum standards set for books, equipment, supplies, etc. Teachers should be rotated around the region to expand their experiences and to bring a greater diversity of resources and experiences to the schools. Administration should be standardized to meet the best practices that now exist.

#### We are not paying enough attention to pre-school children.

- Expand Headstart
- Build education and support for parents so that they can support their children. Many parents are very young themselves.

#### Retain community schools, and expect parental accountability

- Community schools should be retained because of the importance of parental involvement. These schools should focus on the needs of their particular "customers". The "customers" should include the parents and the community in addition to the students.
- In Atlanta a law has been passed requiring parental involvement in school activities and conferences involving their children. It is being enforced. Consider this kind of action in Minnesota.

## Session 5 April 20, 1999

The last session focused on summarizing conclusions from previous meetings, and on reflecting on the Community Study Circle process.

### Concluding Thoughts on Education Equity

- read George H. Wood, A Time to Learn
- Forget about lawsuits - the money is not being spent in the right places - the approach is negative and blaming.
- Look at what has succeeded. The Seed Academy is very highly regarded. It took a positive approach. Expect success. Study why it worked, and carry that to other schools.
- Retain community schools. Parent participation is critical. Help to strengthen parents as well as children.
- Build appreciation of multicultural history, values, religion, culture - by involving both parents and children in learning and celebration - use the teaching mission of the schools to help foster broader understanding between people.
- Strengthen teachers through better training, salaries, mentoring programs, work in multiple sites and environments
- We need a deeper understanding of what we mean by success, other than basic test scores. Basic tests are only the beginning.

### Reflections on the Community Study Circle Process

Since attendance at this circle was poor, and there were no people of color involved (other than one of our facilitators), the group spent time on several occasions reflecting on the process. Several observations were made:

- The sponsors were community institutions (the Hiawatha YMCA and Roosevelt High School). The Director of the "Y" indicated that many people in the community are recent immigrants (Lao, Somali, etc.). They are particularly distrustful of institutions. It is unlikely they will participate in this kind of conversation. Rather, the process needs to go to them, in the form of someone they can understand and trust, and engage in conversations that are important to what is happening in their lives.
- Significant numbers of people who may be in poverty have had negative experiences in the schools. They have a natural sense of alienation from them. They may be embarrassed about their communication ability. They do not think that they will be heard.
- Public institutions such as the Minneapolis School Board do not welcome participation. (In response to disruptions at school board meetings, the meeting times were changed to late afternoons - a time of day when few working people can attend.)
- Language interpreters are not provided for school board or other meetings.

copy

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The following observations and suggestions were offered:

#### Allocation of resources to the districts does not match resources available to the students

- The Minneapolis and St. Paul school districts are allocated much more money per student than most other state school districts. Yet we observe that students in the city schools have few or no text books, supplies or lab equipment.
- Group members have also observed that processes in the city schools are much more cumbersome and bureaucratic than in other school districts. For example, it takes much longer for the city schools to offer teachers positions than it takes for other districts.
- Detailed process analysis should be done. Group members suggested tapping the business community for help much like the United Way uses "Loaned Executives" for its fundraising efforts. Most businesses are experienced in systems mapping, process review and analyzing best practices.
- The group favors a regional approach to school management, with resources allocated across the region, and minimum standards set for books, equipment, supplies, etc. Teachers should be rotated around the region to expand their experiences and to bring a greater diversity of resources and experiences to the schools. Administration should be standardized to meet the best practices that now exist.

#### We are not paying enough attention to pre-school children.

- Expand Headstart
- Build education and support for parents so that they can support their children. Many parents are very young themselves.

#### Retain community schools, and expect parental accountability

- Community schools should be retained because of the importance of parental involvement. These schools should focus on the needs of their particular "customers". The "customers" should include the parents and the community in addition to the students.
- In Atlanta a law has been passed requiring parental involvement in school activities and conferences involving their children. It is being enforced. Consider this kind of action in Minnesota.

## Session 5 April 20, 1999

The last session focused on summarizing conclusions from previous meetings, and on reflecting on the Community Study Circle process.

### Concluding Thoughts on Education Equity

- read George H. Wood, A Time to Learn
- Forget about lawsuits - the money is not being spent in the right places - the approach is negative and blaming.
- Look at what has succeeded. The Seed Academy is very highly regarded. It took a positive approach. Expect success. Study why it worked, and carry that to other schools.
- Retain community schools. Parent participation is critical. Help to strengthen parents as well as children.
- Build appreciation of multicultural history, values, religion, culture - by involving both parents and children in learning and celebration - use the teaching mission of the schools to help foster broader understanding between people.
- Strengthen teachers through better training, salaries, mentoring programs, work in multiple sites and environments
- We need a deeper understanding of what we mean by success, other than basic test scores. Basic tests are only the beginning.

### Reflections on the Community Study Circle Process

Since attendance at this circle was poor, and there were no people of color involved (other than one of our facilitators), the group spent time on several occasions reflecting on the process. Several observations were made:

- The sponsors were community institutions (the Hiawatha YMCA and Roosevelt High School). The Director of the "Y" indicated that many people in the community are recent immigrants (Lao, Somali, etc.). They are particularly distrustful of institutions. It is unlikely they will participate in this kind of conversation. Rather, the process needs to go to them, in the form of someone they can understand and trust, and engage in conversations that are important to what is happening in their lives.
- Significant numbers of people who may be in poverty have had negative experiences in the schools. They have a natural sense of alienation from them. They may be embarrassed about their communication ability. They do not think that they will be heard.
- Public institutions such as the Minneapolis School Board do not welcome participation. (In response to disruptions at school board meetings, the meeting times were changed to late afternoons - a time of day when few working people can attend.)
- Language interpreters are not provided for school board or other meetings.

**Hiawatha YMCA Study Circle Roster  
Spring 1999**

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