



The South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition *on Race*

Visit Our Website

Choosing School Integration When Others Opt for Secession

Essex County is often cited as one of the most highly segregated areas of the country. We know that maintaining an integrated community in a region where racial isolation is high is a difficult project. One of the main tenets of the Coalition's integration project from the outset has been school integration. Without it, there is no real community commitment to social or civic integration-and given that schools are generally arranged by neighborhood, residential integration becomes a lost cause. In other words, our community integration efforts are nothing without school and classroom integration. Given recent efforts in other parts of the country for school districts ([read about a recent court case](#)) to take drastic measures to secede in order to achieve segregation ([click here for information on segregating school districts nationwide](#)), we consider the project of racial integration and equity critical to SOMA's survival as truly inclusive towns.

Our Schools Committee spoke at the recent Board of Education meeting to support the superintendent's proposal to reduce levels in STEM at the high school-a step we believe will support an increase in classroom integration. See their statement below for details. We continue to be concerned, however, by the increasing segregation of the elementary schools. Whether the plan includes true magnet schools, pairing of schools like the original Marshall-Jefferson plan, grade clusters, or some other idea, we want to see true integration and equality. Racial segregation undermines the values of our community and we look forward in the coming months to seeing plans to integrate.

Talking to Children about Race

Children have very complex understandings of differences and stereotypes, and racial attitudes begin to develop at a very young age. As early as six months, babies begin to sort out differences in skin color. They can develop racial biases as early as three years old, despite the attitudes of the adults in their lives. This workshop-for preschool through middle school families-will explore:

- How racial dynamics in families shape adolescents
- The importance of race conscious literature
- Best practices in raising race conscious children



Civic Engagement Institute

Join us for this workshop to gain the knowledge, skills, values and motivation that will help you make a difference in the civic life of our communities! The Institute is being presented at the South Orange Public Library, Community Room in three sessions:



Expanding Community
Engagement

Saturdays, February 7, 14 and 21 9 AM to 12:30 PM

Call **973-761-6116** to register or [click here](#) for more information

Schools Committee Supports STEM Academic Levels Change

Committee co-chairs Carol Barry-Austin and Sue Willis made a strong and heart-felt plea before the Board of Education to support changes to our school district's system of academic tracking or leveling that has had adverse effects for students of color and has created segregated classrooms in the high school.



[Read their remarks here...](#)

Thanks to Authors of *Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America*

It may have been the end of Black History Month, but we hope it is the beginning of learning much more about the countless African Americans who made a profound impact in history. Authors Biddle and Dubin take readers on a journey that includes accounts of Octavius Catto and other remarkable Black men and women in the Civil War period in Philadelphia. [Read more...](#)



The 2017 Annual Report is now On Line

Have a look back at 2017 to see what we did to support racial integration and inclusion in SOMA. We would like to thank the hundreds of individual community donors, local businesses, foundations, faith communities, and community organizations, and the townships of Maplewood and South Orange who supported us so generously. [Click here](#) for the full report and list of donors.

Our Mission: To build and sustain a community that is racially, culturally, and socially integrated and truly inclusive, where there is equity and equality for all.

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Vice Chair:
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Nancy Cooper
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Throughout 2017 we asked how we can create change—especially in a period of rising residential segregation and of ongoing racial tensions in communities across the nation in which the likelihood of cross-racial and cross-cultural understanding is diminished. In his 1967 book *Where Do We Go from Here? Race and Community?* Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that the challenge after the passage of the voting and civil rights acts would be to gain equity in education, jobs, wages, and housing—especially during “a new phase of white resistance.” He offered hope with his vision of the “Beloved Community,” in which an “all-inclusive spirit of kinship and brotherhood” would replace bigotry and racism.

At the Coalition on Race, we pursue community over class. We work to engage people in thoughtful dialogue and relationship-building, in learning about race and privilege, and in advocacy for policies and practices that support equity for all members of our community. In 2017, our work included all of these efforts through programs like:

- Conversations on Race
- Coffee House Discussions
- “Talking to Children about Race” workshop series
- XRocfest, our annual multicultural festival
- The Civic Engagement Institute
- Analysis of and report on the demographics and residential patterns affecting our schools and towns
- Anti-bias training
- Advocacy for police reforms, and more

The result has been a notable transformation in the degree to which people are willing to call our racial bias publicly—whether in group meetings, in response to civic issues like education, policing, housing, neighborhood stability, or on various local social media forums. And we at the Coalition have seen growing attendance at our events, more engagement and collaboration, and requests for more training.

In 2017 we held 56 pro-integrative events, trainings, and dialogues for over 3,000 people. We invite you to have a look at our 2017 highlights to see how you can work on integration and inclusion in the coming year.



Chair Robert A. Marchese speaks at the March for Equity



2017 Talking to Children about Race panel



Coffee House Discussion, Race & Privilege

516 Prospect St. Maplewood NJ 07040 973-761-6116 www.twotowns.org

Forum to Meet Candidates for Maplewood Police Chief

On Monday, March 5th starting at 7:30 PM at The Woodland, the Maplewood Township Committee will hold a forum for the community to meet the two police chief candidates, Maplewood Police Lt. Kevin Kisch and Acting Chief Jimmy DeVaul. There will be an opportunity to ask questions and to provide feedback to the Township Committee. Given how critical this hire is, we encourage people to attend. [More details here.](#)



Other Upcoming Events

Maplewood Idea Festival	March 10 - 24
Maplewood Memorial Library	Click here for more details
Coalition's SOMa Integrated Playgroup	Sat. March 31 10 am - noon Le Parc Place, Maplewood
SOMa Two Towns for All Ages Volunteer Fair	Sun., March 25, 1 - 4 pm The Woodland, Maplewood
South Orange Maplewood School District	Weds. April 4th Location/Time TBD

For more information and updates visit www.twotowns.org

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