



SOUTH ORANGE | MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY COALITION ON RACE

Our Vision:

To achieve and sustain the benefits of a thriving, racially integrated, and truly inclusive community that serves as a model for the nation

2014 Annual Report

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Bringing Community Together

In 2014 we witnessed events in some communities, including Ferguson, Staten Island, Brooklyn and more, that made the importance of intentional integration, as opposed to accidental diversity, part of a national conversation. We have been having that conversation in our community for decades and for the last 19 years we have been proactive about community-building across race and cultural divides. We know the potential perils of a diverse community that is racially divided by neighborhood and by schools, and that lacks diverse representation in local leadership.

We are fortunate to have had since the inception of the Coalition on Race open dialogue opportunities with elected officials, leaders, the police departments, school administrators, clergy, and a host of community groups to discuss and work on stable integration issues. This is not a claim



Session 4 Civic Engagement Institute Graduates

that many communities across the country can make. We use race-conscious strategies to build a vibrant and successful community in which all people feel welcome and safe, and especially that they have a voice.

Inside this report you will see the many ways in which we provide the opportunities, the leadership, the professional voices, and the safe spaces in which to address racial tensions and conflicts that are crucial to advancing our community's quest to be truly inclusive. In 2014 our programs truly resonated with needs at the national level to address the inequities that work against inclusiveness, including forums and workshops on cultural competency, implicit bias, and examining our role in greater regional equity issues. And we were especially pleased that this work was recognized by in a *USA Today* article about diverse suburbs.

The Community Coalition on Race will stay the course on intentional integration and true inclusion of all marginalized groups. We encourage you to support this day-in, day-out work in your community by being a part of conversations on race, culture, and diversity of all kinds, and by cultivating equity in all aspects of community life.



2014 Celebrating Integration Awards Dinner

2014 Highlights...

The 13th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Celebration

Over 600 people filled Oheb Shalom Congregation where Rev. Dr. M. William Howard, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church in Newark, gave a memorable speech that called for an ongoing fight for freedom. Rev. Howard reminded attendees that Dr. King was interested in all kinds of inclusion, the inclusion of all marginalized groups, and that “race is not the only index for oppression.” He reminded people to take action against the war, poverty, and racism we see all around us, just as Dr. King called for more than 50 years ago. Performances by the Greg Bufford Jazz Trio, Voices in Harmony, and CHS Special Dance made the afternoon extra-special.



Peace Luminaria Honor Dr. King's Legacy

Front steps and walkways were lit up with luminaria as a sign of peace and solidarity on the night of Dr. King's national birthday recognition by over 150 families throughout Maplewood and South Orange.



Integration through the Arts Offered Outstanding Performances at SOPAC for Children

The 2014 Integration through the Arts theater production for children was a family-friendly, musical production of two familiar stories told with a twist. This year's stories, produced with music and dance, aligned with our mission of racial inclusiveness: *The Zax*, Dr. Seuss' lesson on the consequences of not compromising and Dvorak's *Rusalka*—a Czech version of *The Little Mermaid* were performed at SOPAC. This event was made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts and administered by Essex County Division of Cultural and Historic Affairs.

Implicit Bias Conversation Engages Community

At this year's Conversations on Race forum, over 90 people gathered to learn about implicit bias, talk about specific instances of different kinds of bias, and hear about some practical tools for personal 'debiasing.'

Implicit bias is a form of learned stereotypes that operate automatically—and therefore unconsciously—when we interact with other people. Under the guidance of moderator Elizabeth Williams-Riley, President & CEO for the American Conference on Diversity, and by using video scenarios, participants had a chance to analyze instances of implicit bias that involved everything from racism, sexism, and ageism to regionalism and anti-gay discrimination.



2014 Community Art Project: Doors to New Pathways and Possibilities

This was a multidisciplinary, community effort under the direction of a local artist team. Participants painted, inscribed or otherwise embellished door panels. The doors depict individual and group reflections on our community's diversity. The doors were displayed at two local art exhibits and became an interactive site at which viewers could add comments and drawings to the panels. The artists were on hand to reflect on their contributions.



Cultural Heritage Festival Draws Over 1,000 People

It was a sunny day in June Maplewood Memorial Park for our first annual Cultural Heritage Festival. About 1000 people came out to watch performances like Colombian accordion music, Indian dancers, Chinese Lion dancers, Umoja Dance Company, as well as participate in activities like drumming circles, story time, face painting, origami, karate, and so much more. Food vendors included Ethiopian, Thai, Greek, and Italian. It was a great event for families with lots of activities for children and engaging entertainment for all ages. The idea for the festival arose from a discussion about finding ways to be more inclusive and to increase our cultural awareness of the many ethnicities and cultures in our region.

The Schools Committee Engages Community, Teachers, & School District in Their Goal of Excellence & Equity for All Students

Two Cultural Dynamics Workshops Held for Teachers & Community Members Community members met with Elizabeth Williams-Riley, of the American Conference on Diversity, for a workshop on cultural dynamics. Attendees completed a personal and community assessment of our effectiveness in promoting an inclusive environment. Ms. Williams-Riley followed with an excellent presentation on how to achieve greater inclusion in our personal lives and within the community.

District teachers met with the Director of Youth/Collegiate Development Services for the American Conference on Diversity to work on building practical skills for teaching in a diverse community. The groups worked on defining inclusion in the classroom and what 'culture' means, discussed some specific case studies, and shared issues faced by teachers when students and families have varying communication styles, attitudes about education, and languages spoken in the home.

School District Diversity Hiring Fair The Schools Committee suggested that the SOM district host a diversity hiring fair in order to attract more candidates of color to teach in our schools. On June 12, the first fair was held at Columbia High /school with over 70 candidates signing up! The district was able to bring in 4 new hires as a result of the fair.

BOE Candidates Forum Residents came out to hear the candidates' positions on cultural competency, the achievement gap, increasing diversity in the teaching staff, and other issues connected to the Coalition's mission to support excellence and equity for all students.

The 13th Annual Preschool Open House attracted families with young children to visit with over 23 schools at the CHS cafeteria. We even had prospective home buyers visit from out of town. Special thanks to Rene Joyce of SOM School District for giving a talk on kindergarten readiness, and to Suki & Heather of Weichert Realtors for supporting this event.



Great Discussion of the Documentary *The Loving Story*

We partnered with the Maplewood Memorial Library which received a grant from the New Jersey Council on the Humanities for their Face to Face: Community Conversations program that encourages dialogue on issues central to civic life in New Jersey.

The focus of this year's event was the movie *The Loving Story*, the moving account of Richard and Mildred Loving, whose arrest in 1958 for violating Virginia's ban on interracial marriage culminated in a landmark Supreme Court decision, *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) overturning anti-miscegenation laws in the United States. The conversation following the screening, led by Professor Chris Fisher from the History Department at The College of New Jersey, was lively and engaging and left most of the participants asking for more!

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Celebrating Integration: Bring Community Together Awards Dinner

We filled the SOPAC Loft with supporters of the Coalition as well as friends and family of the honorees. Everyone enjoyed great food, music, conversation, and of course hearing about and from the honorees, **Anthony Greene** and **Barbara Heisler**. Both were presented with awards in grateful appreciation for their outstanding work toward establishing our towns as models of intentional integration.

There was so much good fellowship in the room that night, especially after the attendees watched a video from this year’s first Cultural Heritage Festival and heard from both Anthony and Barbara about their experiences with the Coalition. A live auction helped to raise more funds and dancing rounded out the evening.



Carol Barry-Austin presents award to Barbara Heisler



Coffee & Conversations with Realtors

Local realtors joined us for an update on ways that we can partner to promote the towns to prospective homebuyers. We presented Coalition tools that can be used by realtors such as the *Two Towns, One Great Community* video, the *Gitney Tour*, Community Information Packets, the Pre-school Open House for young prospective homebuyers, and the new Home Maintenance Loan Program and we discussed the issues realtors face in selling homes here and brainstormed future action steps.



Preston Pinkett presents award to Anthony Greene

Foundation, Community, & Corporate Support—Thank You!

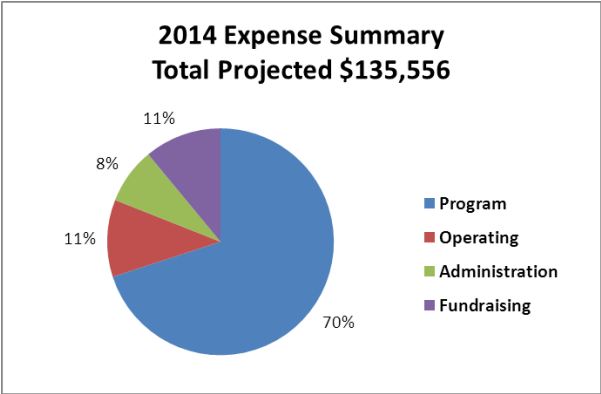
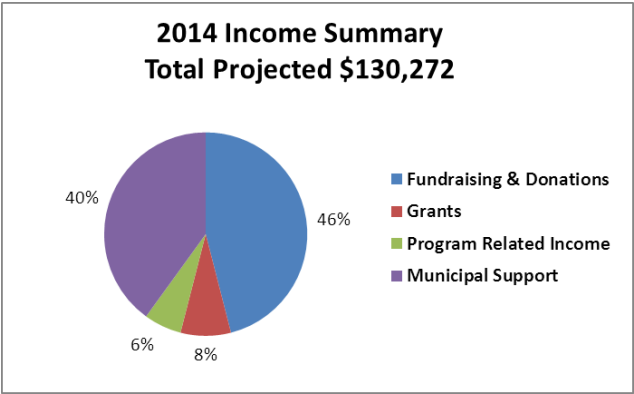
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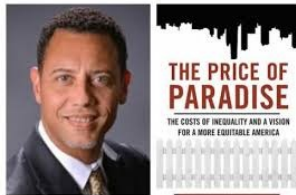
**Civic Engagement Institute
(CEI) Trained New Volunteers**

We held two CEI sessions in 2014 to train local volunteers. Participants received specialized training that they can apply to a variety of volunteer and leadership roles across the community. The series of four workshops includes training that incorporates presentations by local professionals and leaders, case studies, group discussions, skills assessment tools, and interactive techniques.



**Author David Troutt Spoke about Regional Equity at
Two Towns-One Book Event**

We discussed *The Price of Paradise* and learned about regional equity, integration, and the future of diverse suburbs from author David Troutt, Professor of Law and Director of the Center on Law in Metropolitan Equity at Rutgers at our **Two Towns-One**



In February we participated in the **Center on Law in Metropolitan Equity's First Annual Scholarship Conference**. Nationally recognized metropolitan scholar David Rusk and Rutgers Law Professor and author David Troutt presented their studies on achieving greater regional equity with a focus on reducing inequalities between economically isolated and racially segregated people.

We also attended a panel presentation 'Ferguson & Staten Island: The Roots the Reality, & the Response' at the Center for New York City Affairs where we shared our integration strategies.

The **South Orange Civic Organization** held its 44th Annual Martin Luther King Celebration in January 2014. Coalition trustees Celia King and Shelley Slafkes were honored with the Beloved Community Awards.

Coalition on Race Interviewed by *USA Today*

USA Today did a cover story on diverse suburbs on October 21st that highlighted South Orange as a suburb that "has consciously struggled for decades to maintain its racial, ethnic and economic diversity..." The article is part of a series called *The Changing Face of America: Second Immigration Wave Lifts Diversity to Record High*. The Coalition was noted for its integration mission,

Remembering Prof. Clement Price & Charlie Bibbins

Charlie Bibbins was a charter Trustee, an active member of the Neighborhoods & Civic Life Committee, and a frequent participant at events like Conversations on Race. He was our 'Celebrating Integration' honoree in 2012 where spoke so eloquently on behalf of the Coalition's efforts to build a truly inclusive community.

Dr. Clement A. Price, professor of history and the foremost authority on the history of the African American experience in New Jersey, was generous with his time and knowledge in support of our mission, and was one of the kindest people to work with. As the keynote speaker for the 2006 MLK Observance, he addressed the challenge of the academic achievement gap as the unfinished business of the civil rights struggle.

We will be forever grateful for their generous support and passion for integration.

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