



# SOUTH ORANGE | MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY COALITION ON RACE

## *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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## 2019 Annual Report

Maplewood and South Orange are racially inclusive towns in a region of racially isolated communities, in a state and a nation that have seen growing racial segregation in both schools and residential patterns in the last forty years. While our towns have enjoyed a higher measure of diversity than most regional suburban communities, the sustainability of our racial integration needs our continued intentional work.

The results of the Coalition's demographics research in 2019 gave new urgency to the initiatives the board of trustees established just the year before: 1) to strengthen the community's commitment to racial and cultural inclusion of all people of color by challenging the community power structures (government, school system, realtors, businesses, media, key leaders) to rectify disparities; and 2) to ensure the sustainability of racial integration by supporting the current population of Black people and by developing strategies to increase the rate of Black in-movers.

Consequently, we initiated a marketing approach in 2019 that supports sustainable racial integration. We geared our advocacy work toward dismantling community dynamics, policies, and practices that create and uphold racial inequity. And, we held vital events like Conversations on Race, Coffee House Discussions, Integration through the Arts, and Talking to Children about Race, creating safe spaces for all voices to be heard, and raising consciousness on issues like racist language, implicit bias, white privilege, and the need for integrated schools.

Going beyond our planned programs, we addressed emerging needs in collaboration with other local groups and leaders on issues like community-police interactions, creating a unified response to hate groups, and launching a year of communal learning based on the 1619 Project.

*We are proud to have held nearly 40 dialogues, trainings, presentations, and celebrations that reached over 3000 people in 2019. Take a look inside at the highlights ...*



The MLK Luminary Project team leaders display luminary bags decorated by kids with messages of peace and justice.



The Civic Engagement Volunteer Showcase group leaders



The Force Report Panel responds to community questions about police use of force and advocacy for change at the state and local levels.



Lynette Huggins presents the Vincent A. Huggins Foundation grant to the Community Coalition on Race

# 2019 Highlights...

## The 18th Annual MLK Observance & Volunteer Fair featured Lt. Governor of New Jersey Sheila Y. Oliver

Hundreds of people came to honor Dr. King through music, dance, a sharing of interfaith readings, and an affirmation of Dr. King's call to action and service. Naresh Jain, trustee emeritus of Parliament of the World's Religions, offered insight into non-violence. Lt. Governor Oliver gave the keynote speech, noting that Dr. King's movement was based on several principles: moral power, non-violence, appeal to faith, a call to civil disobedience of unjust laws, and a plea for full equality. Performances included *Glorious Peace* by Maplewood Middle School's Select Choir and *Glory* (from the movie *Selma*) by CHS Special Dance Company directed by Kandice N. Point-Du-Jour. The Volunteer Fair featured community groups that provide opportunities to make an impact, including hunger relief and mentoring young people.



## SOMa Was Shining with Luminaries on MLK Day for the 6th Year

The MLK Luminary Project was the biggest ever! Under the leadership of Patricia Canning, with co-leaders Trenesa Danuser and Liz Testa, even more youth groups and businesses were engaged. The team led a luminary kit decorating party for kids; MAC scholars at Columbia High School and girl scout troops assembled kits; youth of all ages spoke at the lighting ceremony about Dr. King's message; Seton Hall University students lit hundreds of lights; businesses in both towns offered the kits in their stores; and nearly 1300 residents lit luminaries in front of their homes.



## The South Orange Civic Organization 49th Annual MLK Celebration

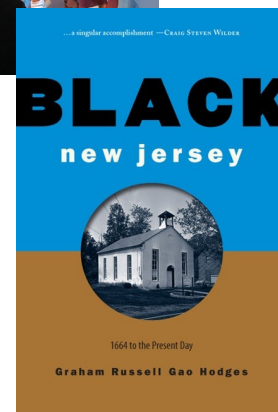
SOCO honored three community members with the Beloved Community Award: South Orange resident Stacey Borden, Maplewood Committee person Dean Dafis, and SOMS teacher Diane Grant of South Orange. Rabbi Jesse Olitzky of Congregation Beth El in South Orange gave the keynote address. "We shouldn't only act for our own cause and benefits," Olitzky said at the event. "When we act as allies, we are helping a cause that doesn't affect us."

## We Honored Black History Month with Learning, Music, and Conversation

### *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin*, Produced by Progressive Theater, Brought Thought-Provoking Performances

The story of Viveca, a Black girl from Los Angeles who is alternatively optimistic about making her way in the world and troubled by the realities of racism, really resonated with the audience. The story provided a great springboard for post-performance conversations with journalist Ayesha K. Saines and the playwright Kirsten Childs. The audiences discussed their personal experiences facing racism, colorism, white privilege, and one's complicated sets of identities, as well as the special rejections faced by Black women in the work and performance worlds. Colgate University history professor Graham Russell Gao

Hodges spoke to CHS students and the public about his book, ***BLACK New Jersey: 1664 to the Present to the Present Day*** that brings to life the generations of men and women who fought for freedom in this state during slavery and battled racism in more recent times.





## 19th Annual Conversations on Race: The Invention of Race

Dr. Nell Irvin Painter spoke to nearly 200 participants at this year's Conversations On Race about the invention of race and the various historical contexts of creating racial identities. We partnered this year with Seton Hall University where the event was held. Dr. Painter, professor emerita at Princeton University and author of the New York Times bestseller *The History of White People*, noted that throughout US history exclusionary ideas of whiteness were developed using science, economics, and politics, and that those racial definitions changed—and continue to change—to suit the needs of those in power. Table discussions included how to confront institutional racism; the connection between privilege and the construction of race; and the issue of rising white nationalism.



## Coffee House Discussions: Residents & Police Address 'When Should I Call the Police?'

This event offered a safe space for people to talk about what might, in their minds, be a reason to call the police; why someone might hesitate to call; and what concerns people have about their own protection or in putting someone at risk. As a follow-up, we made suggestions, tips, and advice from local police available as a community resource on our website.



## The Schools Committee Seeks Excellence & Equity for All Students

**Advocacy** continued in 2019 for both diversity in school district hiring and a sustainable, integrated elementary school plan

**Talking To Children About Race** Attendees learned about creating a home environment that supports open communication about race and difference, being intentional about talking about race, and providing kids with the tools they need to understand difference with expert Dr. Diane Hughes and a panel of parents.

**Talking to Children about Race: Language Matters** Moderated by communications expert and educator, Ayesha Gallion, a panel with Dara Gronau, principal at Maplewood Middle School, and Columbia High School students discussed how to talk to children about racist language—everything from use of the 'N'-word to code-switching to cultural appropriation. A glossary of terms and further reading are available on the Coalition website.

**New Teacher Orientation** The co-chairs welcomed new teachers and staff to SOMSD with a presentation on district diversity and inclusion and shared resources on how to make their classrooms welcoming and safe for all students.

**SOMa Integrated Playgroup** The playgroup fosters integration through personal relationships and community building. It meets monthly on Saturday mornings and includes educational child/parent discussions on books about difference, race/ethnicity, and culture.

**BOE Candidates Forum** The committee posed questions focused on racially integrated schools, closing the achievement gap, and supporting all students in achieving academic excellence, enabling voters to learn about the candidates' positions at this important time of change in the district.

**18th Annual Preschool Open House** This event provided parents with the opportunity to learn about preschool options in our area in support of quality early education.



## Celebrating Integration: Community Building by Honoring Difference

The Board of Trustees were pleased to honor Patricia Canning, George Robinson, and SOMA Cross Cultural Works for their commitment to racial integration in our towns and the actions they take to achieve it. Patricia Canning has volunteered for the Schools Committee, runs the MLK Luminary Project, and led our first 1619 Observance. George Robinson is a founding member of the Coalition on Race, served many years on the Board of Education, and developed the Coalition's approach to demographic research. SOMA Cross Cultural Works educates our community about our rich cultural diversity through multicultural artistic and educational events.



## SOMA Remembers Jamestown, 1619 & Begins a Year of Communal Learning

We hosted a vigil to honor the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery in Jamestown at First Baptist Church of South Orange with Rev. Terry Richardson. This was followed by the launch of a year-long series of community discussions and presentations on topics connected to the 1619 Project.

## Foundation, Community, & Local Business Support—Thank You!

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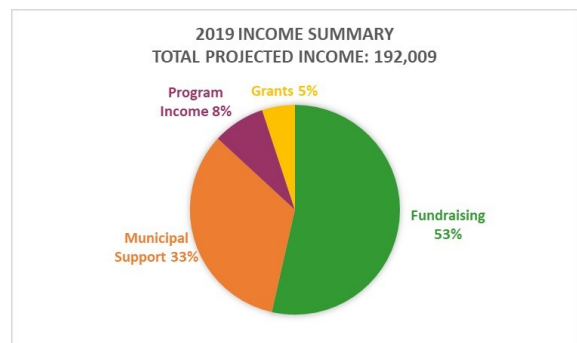
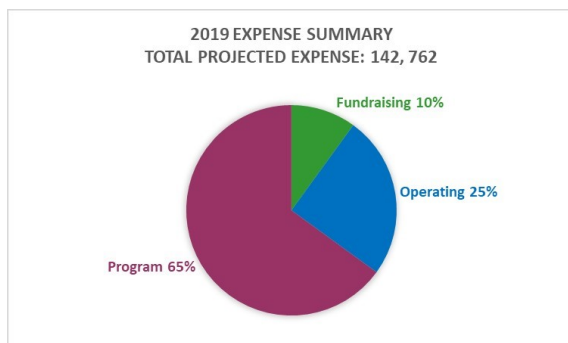
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**Many thanks to the following for the donation of space, goods, and services!**  
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### ***Coalition Leaders on Here & Now***

Chair Robert A. Marchman and Executive Director Nancy Gagnier appeared on *Here & Now* to discuss the challenges of racial integration, the strategies used by the Coalition, and the new initiatives developed to address changing racial residential trends as well as ongoing equity issues.



### ***Me, the "Other" Screening Fosters Discussion about Otherness in SOMA***

The film presents moving profiles of people who tell their personal stories of prejudice and share that 'otherness' is never one thing. The audience enjoyed a talkback with the director and one of the storytellers.



### ***Remembering Carol Buchanan***

Carol Buchanan was a dedicated volunteer, teacher, librarian, and all round wonderful person. She, along with her husband Jim, was a Celebrating Integration honoree in 2017. She had a strong commitment to the Hilton neighborhood. Her support of racial integration and inclusion, among so many other things, will be deeply missed.



### ***Demographics Report***

***Visit our website to view the reports***

Our 2019 updated report offers an expanded look at the schools, an overview of school integration history, affordable housing, plus income and integration comparisons to some comparable NJ suburbs. Our goal in doing the study is to have accurate information about trends in racial integration in all aspects of SOMA community life in order to inform pro-integrative strategies.

### ***Juneteenth Celebration 2019***

Juneteenth, an African American holiday marking the end of slavery, was celebrated at the Durand-Hedden House in Maplewood. The event included performances, activities, and an exhibit on the history of slavery in New Jersey.



### ***Fred Profeta's Generous Donation Furthers the Coalition on Race's Mission***

Fred Profeta, a founding board member and first chair of the Coalition on Race, made a very generous gift to the organization he has supported with his time, talent, and financial contributions over its 23-year history. Mr. Profeta's gift of \$29,000 at the end of 2018 provided the seed money to enable the Coalition to work on a targeted marketing campaign that will support the sustainability of racial integration in the South Orange and Maplewood communities.

