

South Orange/Maplewood COMMUNITY COALITION *on Race*

*nonprofit organization working for a
community that is truly inclusive and racially
integrated—free of segregation in housing
patterns and community involvement.*

2 0 0 2 A N N U A L R E P O R T
J A N U A R Y 1 , 2 0 0 2 — D E C E M B E R 3 1 , 2 0 0 2

Dear Neighbors:

It is a pleasure to present to you the Annual Report of the South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race. The work described on these pages could not have been done without the time and investment of a large number of dedicated volunteers and supporters.

This is an organization of volunteers who attempt to live the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (and many of those who similarly sacrificed for equal justice) each day of the year—working for his vision of a “beloved community.” It is important to remember that we were founded in 1996 when a group of citizens from different races and backgrounds joined together to preserve that element so rare in suburban communities and so valued here—our integration. Just over six short years ago, residents expressed major concerns that our community was in an “irreversible downward spiral” due to, among other things, stagnant property values and a perception of white flight. The Coalition developed several key goals including the promotion of strong and sustained robust demand by all racial groups for housing in all areas of our community, more inclusive involvement of underrepresented groups in the civic life of the community and ongoing dialogue to promote understanding on race-related issues. Activities highlighted in this report during this past year evidence our movement toward our goals. Successes are almost too numerous to list. Here are but a few:

◆ 324 packets of information were sent to prospective neighbors interested in learning more about our two towns, with over 56

of those subsequently receiving tours given by community volunteers. With data still incomplete, we know that about 12% of individuals receiving information will purchase homes while the return in terms of home sales is even higher—approximately 20%—of those who took tours. This translates into real dollars in terms of tax revenues—and increases in property values.

◆ Our pro-integrative second mortgage program has been re-energized through a fine-tuning and has resulted in an increase in applications and awarding of loans.

◆ Our partnership with a regional fair housing council, MUSE, has resulted in a financial settlement with a Realtor found to have engaged in problematic behavior. Proceeds of that settlement will fund continued oversight of compliance with the Fair Housing Act.

◆ Hundreds of residents participated in educational and philosophical discussions related to our mission through our forums, fairs, study circles, workshops and events.

◆ Our Schools Committee significantly supplemented the efforts of the School District in addressing academic achievement issues—introducing a national expert into the discussion and action plan.

◆ The work of the Marketing Committee continues to be extra-ordinary. This committee has had a major impact in shaping the positive perceptions of our community through placement of advertisements, and “pitches” resulting in articles in *NJ Savvy Living Magazine*, *NJ Monthly Magazine*, *NY Times*, *Star Ledger*, *Victorian Home Decorating*, and *This Old House Magazine*, to name a few. We’ve also appeared on CNN and been heard about on NPR nationwide. This work over the years

has resulted in—using marketing parlance—a positive “buzz” about our community locally, statewide and nationally. Frankly, we’re hot!

We also understand that our activities cannot be successful if we view our community in a vacuum. There is strength in numbers. We have participated in a number of activities to promote and support other organizations wishing to join us in creating the communities of tomorrow, today. Toward this end, we co-sponsored a meeting hosted by former Gov. Tom Kean exploring what a statewide pro-integrative policy might look like. We were honored by the American Psychological Association at their annual conference in Chicago as one of two groups recognized for exemplifying the principles of valuing diversity. And, we partnered in presenting a national conference in Cleveland, Ohio focusing on pro-integrative initiatives across the US—at which our work was examined as a model for other communities.

What a joy it was for us to announce to that group that our community had been chosen by Money Magazine as one of the best places to live in the United States. We have defied conventional wisdom—those nay-sayers that opined that unique communities like ours couldn’t survive! 1996 seems so long ago. Indeed, with your support and participation, we are thriving and will continue this important work!

In community,

Robert A. Marchman
CHAIRMAN

Barbara Heisler Williams
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Activities

Since its formation, the Coalition has promoted public discussion as a primary tool for maintaining a healthy, integrated community. Clearly, all communities face numerous challenges that require creative approaches to problem solving. Those that are successful are using effective ways to help people talk respectfully about important issues, understand one another, and work together for lasting solutions.

In our two towns, our diverse citizenry provides us with exceptional opportunities for growth. Simply stated, people of different racial or cultural backgrounds can view the same situation quite differently, and solutions that seem obvious to one group just do not work for another. The Coalition has worked to encourage open dialogue within the community about issues that many other towns simply do not address—though they exist there as well.

At the forefront of our efforts have been our forums. These events have provided time for neighbors to learn and think about issues before us in the context of race—our schools, our faith communities, the pro-integrative nature of our work—and to talk about them candidly. In 2002, residents participated in the following discussions and activities:

- ◆ *Making it More than A Dream*—1st Annual MLK Celebration
- ◆ *Planning Ahead*—a workshop for middle school parents
- ◆ *Neighborhood Association workshop*
- ◆ *One Person Making A Difference*—a conversation with Rev. Grace Jones

- ◆ *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness*—an author's reading with Jane Lazarre
- ◆ *Closing the Achievement Gap: Challenges, Questions, Solutions* featuring Dr. Ron Ferguson
- ◆ *3rd Annual Independence Eve Celebration of Vision*
- ◆ *Faith and Race: Vision and Harmony* with Rev. William Sinkford

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

2002 saw the growth of a partnership sponsoring one program and the birth of a partnership to start another.

TWO TOWNS STUDY CIRCLES

The Adult School and the Community Coalition continued their partnership to present the Two Towns Study Circles Program in our community. Started in the Spring of 2001, Two Town Study Circles provide a simple way to involve community members in dialogue and action on important social and political issues.

The Two Towns Study Circles Program brings diverse people together for dialogue and action. While study circles can address many different issues, study circles in 2002 continued community discussions on race. Nearly 100 participants to date have taken part in defining the issues and then finding ways to address them.

TWO TOWNS: ONE BOOK

The Community Coalition joined with the Maplewood and South Orange

public libraries and Seton Hall University to present the first-ever community wide book discussion in New Jersey—featuring *John Henry Days* by Colson Whitehead. The program included ten scheduled events such as book discussions, the author's reading, and a community forum on Race, Media and Myth in Pop Culture. The book explores the lives of two men, contrasting the Industrial Age, which literally killed John Henry, with the digital age, which is destroying the protagonist's soul—and discovers they are not so very different. Star Ledger book critic Bette Spiro called the choice "bold and innovative."

FOCUS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Across the country, communities are focusing on one of the most vexing problems in education: the academic achievement gap. In a nutshell white and Asian students score higher and take more advanced courses, on average, than do their black and Hispanic peers. The Community Coalition has made a focus on understanding and eliminating the achievement gap a priority.

Led by the Coalition's Schools Committee, we invited Dr. Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University to visit our community and address administrators, teachers, parents and other community members in a series of workshops held in May 2002. According to Dr. Ferguson, "The achievement gap (singular) is a misnomer. There are, in fact, many types



Members of the Schools Committee



Neighbors engaged in forum discussions



Executive Committee members prepare for Two Towns

of achievement gaps between and among groups of students. These gaps reflect differences in academic performance between poor and non-poor, rural and non-rural, and white and black students, to name only a few. Noticeable achievement gaps often mask the academic potential of certain groups of students. Thus, we should distinguish between academic achievement gaps and student potential for academic achievement, and we should strive to address both issues." Dr. Ferguson noted that we need to improve our cultivation techniques (i.e., our strategies for cultivating achievement) so that more students have opportunities to maximize their potential. As a result of the Coalition's initiative, the School District engaged Dr. Ferguson to work with our teachers and administration in developing such strategies. Additionally, in the spring of 2003, the Coalition will host a series of study circles examining the achievement gap and exploring community approaches.

A CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY

Amidst all of our serious work, we did take time out to celebrate and have some fun. Auction 2002: A Celebration of Community was held on October 5, 2002 at Congregation Beth El in South Orange. Leading a stellar committee, co-chairs Allison Teixeira and Margaret Prentice gave us an opportunity to come together in celebration of the wonderful gift of community shared between South Orange and Maplewood, as well as raising funds necessary to build on the success achieved thus far. In addition to being a fabulous evening, it was a wonderful financial

success—enabling us to exceed our fundraising goal! A wave of the bid card to the committee members, and the Coalition Youth Connection, for their fine work.

ON THE WEB

The Coalition's website has become a source of information for potential neighbors and current residents alike. For current residents, www.twotowns.org hosts an events calendar, the Artist's Network Calendar, copies of Coalition newsletters and reports on current Coalition initiatives and successes. Averaging over 600 hits per month, prospective neighbors find information about our community and schools, and can request an information packet, PRISM application or schedule a neighborhood tour. The site is regularly enhanced and updated. Links to our site are welcomed.

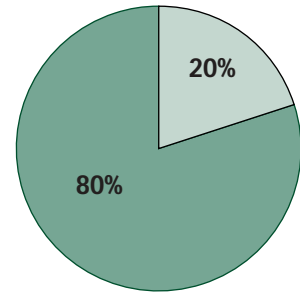
COMMITTEES

Committees comprised of volunteers handle most of the work of our many initiatives. Over 175 community volunteers served on one or more of the following Coalition committees in 2002:

- ◆ Promotions/Marketing
- ◆ Touring
- ◆ Finance and Development
- ◆ Schools
- ◆ Financial Incentives
- ◆ Ordinance Review
- ◆ Interfaith Outreach
- ◆ Monitoring/Evaluation/Research
- ◆ Neighborhood Association/Civic Life

Expense Summary

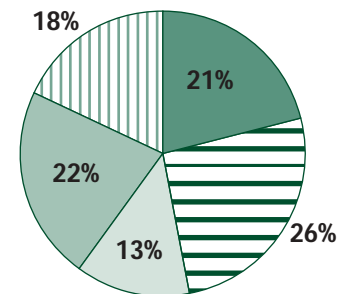
Program Expenses
Operating Expenses



TOTAL \$162,832

Income Summary

Foundation
Fundraising
Private Gift
Township of Maplewood
Village of South Orange



TOTAL \$164,674

A copy of our audited financial statements will be available for inspection and on file with the Town Clerks in early spring.



: One Book



Members of the Interfaith Outreach Committee



Dr. Ron Ferguson

Contributors

In 2002, the Coalition began a leadership giving club to recognize those donors showing a significant commitment to the success of the Coalition through generous gifts of \$1000 or more. The following donors have earned the designation "Coalition Builder": Katherine and David Flaxman, Joel Hahr and Angela Forero, David and Nancy Grant, Don and Ellen Greenfield, Robert and Faye Marchman, Crystal and Don Mullins, Nonie and Francis Murphy, James Nathenson, Fred and Susan Profeta, Ed and Nancy Stuart, Matthew and Lisa Winkler, one Anonymous gift.

The trustees thank the following generous individuals, organizations and foundations for their financial gifts and vote of support for our work. If your name should appear below, and doesn't, please accept our apologies and do let us know. Donations to the Community Coalition are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.



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