

YOUTH DIALOGUES ON RACE AND ETHNICITY IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT

Youth Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity in Metropolitan Detroit increases diversity dialogues, challenge racial and ethnic discrimination, and creates community change. The program involves young people - of African, Asian, White European, Middle Eastern, and Latin American descent - in small group dialogues, metropolitan tours, and residential retreats. More than 800 young people have benefited from the dialogues, in addition to residential retreats, community action projects, and public policy leadership.



OBJECTIVES

- **Increase youth dialogues on race and ethnicity**
- **Enable young people to build relationships with others who are different from them**
- **Plan action projects that challenge discrimination and create change**
- **Build school and community capacity for work of this type**
- **Promote youth participation in public policy**
- **Involve supportive adults in working with young people**
- **Engage diverse youth in a precollege program that brings them to campus and provides information about applying to college and finding financial aid.**

BACKGROUND

Metropolitan Detroit is among America's most segregated areas, with small areas of diversity. As some suburbs increase in population of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latin American descent, others are almost exclusively White European, and Detroit is largely segregated in its African American population.

Young people are open to discussion of race and ethnicity, but live in segregation, with few opportunities to communicate with people who are different from themselves. They understand the limitations of segregation, appreciate diversity, and want to interact across boundaries, but again with few opportunities to do so. New initiatives are needed for intergroup dialogue, without which racial tension will rise and diverse democracy decline.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Summer Intergroup Dialogues: Youth participate in weekly dialogues with teams from other racial and ethnic backgrounds to address issues of social identity, racism, and segregation. Trained University of Michigan students facilitate the dialogues. Dialogue teams also participate in a metropolitan area tour, social activities, and community service projects.

Campus Retreat: Young people come to the University of Michigan for a residential retreat where they develop leadership skills, and plan community action projects.

Community Action Projects: Young people create action projects to challenge segregation and discrimination in their home communities. Examples of projects include school exchanges, community marches, diversity forums, and policy salons where they encourage other youth and adults to discuss discrimination and segregation in their community.

Social Justice Fellows: Youth leaders selected from the dialogues meet throughout the year to discuss policy issues. They research issues, hold policy dialogues, and present their findings to state and national officials. For example, they have produced a statewide resolution on civil rights and social justice education, in collaboration with state agencies.

Youth Civil Rights Academy: As an outgrowth of the program, the academy was established to prepare a new generation of civil rights change agents. The academy includes online courses, school outreach, and statewide summits.

Mosaic Youth Theatre's Speak for Yourself: The Mosaic Youth Theatre - based on participants' stories of growing up in segregated area --- is available for school and community performances.

Book Project: Youth participants published *My Dreams Are Not a Secret: Teenagers in Metropolitan Detroit Speak Out*, a book in which they write about growing up in segregated worlds and living on the borders of change.

Evaluation is integral to the programs, and findings show that the program deeply affects student's (1) understanding of their own racial and ethnic identities (2) knowledge about others who are different from themselves and (3) willingness to act against racism and segregation in their communities.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Our partners have included: Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS); Allen Park High School; Alternatives for Girls (AFG); Asian Pacific American Club (APAC); Association of Chinese Americans; BBYO; Canton High School; Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan; Detroit Asian Youth (DAY) Project; Detroit Youth Foundation; Farmington Hills Mayor's Youth Council; Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development; Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit; Neutral Zone; Peoples' Community Services; Rosedale Park Baptist Church; Renaissance High School; Sacred Heart Chaldean Church; Southfield Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council; St. Clair High School; United Family and Community Organization; West Bloomfield High School.

COLLABORATORS

Youth Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity in Metropolitan Detroit is a program of the Michigan Youth and Community Program in the School of Social Work, in partnership with the Program on Intergroup Relations (IGR), whose dialogue and social justice curriculum has been adapted for this youth and community purpose.