

# Call to Eliminate Racism

**Vision: Rockford is a Community Where Everyone Feels Valued**

**Mission: Eliminate Racism in Rockford**

## Quarterly Reports: December 10, 2019

Community Support:

- Thank you to The African American Resource Center at Booker for the Community Leadership Award
- Thank you to the NAACP for the Award given at the Freedom Fund Banquet.
- Xavier Ramey Update: We hope to work with Xavier Ramey to do long range strategic planning in 2020.
- Film and Book Discussion Series for 2020 is attached.

**Criminal Justice:** Meets 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month at Montague Library at 6:30 pm

**Goal #1 led by Steve DeLap:** The City of Rockford will create a racially diverse Civilian Review Board by 2021 made up of non-police members to provide input related to investigations resulting from police action.

Our group has researched the types of Civilian review boards and would like input from the rest of the ER815 teams as to which type we should attempt to establish.

- Type 1: Citizens investigate allegations of police mis- conduct and recommend findings to the chief or sheriff.
- Type 2: Police officers investigate allegations and develop findings; citizens review and recommend that the chief or sheriff approve or reject the findings.
- Type 3: Complainants may appeal findings established by the police or sheriff's department to citizens, who review them and then recommend their own findings to the chief or sheriff.
- Type 4: An auditor investigates the process by which the police or sheriff's department accepts and investigates complaints and reports on the thoroughness and fairness of the process to the department and the public.

There are:

- Investigation-focused models.
- Review-focused models.
- Auditor/monitor-focused models.

**Goal #2 led by Wendy Bennett:** To reduce by 20%, racial disparities in stops by the Rockford Police between African Americans, Latinos and White people by 2021. We have focused on the Driver's License Amnesty Program and progress has been made at the state level. While we cannot claim any credit for it the License to Work Act now sits on the governor's desk! According to the ACLU, "over 50 thousand

Illinois licenses are suspended each year because drivers can't pay tickets, fines, or fees; or for other reasons unrelated to bad driving. If you can't work, you can't pay. If you can't pay, you can't work. The debt cycle continues, hurting individuals, families, businesses, communities, and taxpayers. The impact is also disproportionate. Black and Latino drivers are more likely than white drivers to be stopped by the police, to be fined or arrested for traffic offenses, and to suffer undue fines or incarceration.

The License to Work Act would:

- Eliminates driver's license suspension as a penalty for most non-driving violations, including:
  1. Failing to pay parking, compliance, or tollway tickets, fines, or fees
  2. Being judged to be a "truant minor"
  3. Criminal trespass to a vehicle, and a handful of other non-driving violations
- Allows an individual whose license was suspended under any of these provisions to have their license reinstated."

This License to Work concept is now a National movement which, we believe, will have the byproduct of lowering interactions between the police and poor people and people of color. Our next step, assuming the governor signs the bill, will be examining ways to assist in implementation for local citizens. We are also examining how local poor teens, high school drop-outs, and teens of color get access to driver's education in our local schools. Not having a valid driver's license increases police/citizen interactions. Research continues.

Our committee continues to examine the feasibility of implementing a civilian police oversight board. We have learned a great deal about the various formats that have been utilized nationwide. We are particularly interested in what is called the 'police auditor' form of oversight, but research is ongoing.

**Goal #3 led by Ellyn Ahmer:** The Winnebago County Court system will create and implement a Restorative Justice Court which includes additional support for low-level offenders to help them become productive citizens of the Rockford area by 2021.

There's a core of six women to lead & support this goal.

In December, at least three of us are visiting

- the RJ court in Chicago
- one of the organizations which helped found & is involved with the court

Calls / requests made, call back / info not yet received

- Judge Doherty
- Public Defender's office
- data - \$ to start, what was capacity for circles, who beyond court personnel are paid, how many cases so far, results of cases

January:

- meeting set with Juvenile Justice Coordinator
- meet with public defender's office
- meet with candidates for State's Attorney
- set a regular monthly meeting time
- request meeting with Family Peace Center
- begin circles at Strong Houses

## **Economic Opportunities:** Meets 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at Rundalls, 413 Stiles

Parkway @ 6:00 pm

The Eliminate Racism 815 Economic Opportunities Action Team has met monthly during the past quarter. The team has one primary goal:

**Goal 1: To facilitate the creation of a Southwest River Development Coalition to promote the recreational, entertainment, and small business use of the Rock River in Southwest Rockford by January 1, 2020.**

Two members met with Karl Franzen, Director of the City of Rockford Community and Economic Development Department. Three members met with five representatives of the Rockford Park district. They discovered that there is a coalition already meeting through the Region 1 Planning Commission. On December 10, 2019 three members met with four representatives of the Region I Planning Commission. We explained our goal and steps toward that goal and asked that Eliminate Racism 815 become members of the coalition. They agreed to this request and also asked that we help them gather input about potential projects from people in southwest Rockford.

The team has a small number of members and is currently working on recruiting more members. When more members join the team, there are three more potential goals which could have sub-teams:

- Promoting grocery delivery through Instacart in the Southwest area of Rockford.
- Promoting the location of a Salvation Army or Goodwill store in the Southwest area of Rockford.
- Promoting the expansion of the two-lane part of North Springfield Avenue to four lane to facilitate commercial transportation on the Westside of Rockford.

The Economic Opportunities Action Team meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month at 6:00 at 413 Stiles Parkway. If you would like to join the team, come to the next meeting. We will not meet in December because that date is Christmas Eve. We will meet again the fourth Tuesday in January which is January 28, 2020.

# **Education Team:** Meets 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of month at Pilgrim Baptist Church @ 4:30 pm

## **Quarterly Meetings with the Superintendent are Scheduled:**

### 1. Wednesday, Dec 18, 2019 @ 9:30 @ RPS 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor: Goal 1 Focus

**Goal 1 is led by Ron Simmons: To increase to 20% People of Color - especially African-American and Hispanic - in all levels of RPS205: administration, faculty, staff, and board members by the 2020-2021 school year. By the 2025-2026 school year, have percentages of African-American and Hispanic administration, staff, and board members match the percentage of African-American and Hispanic students within the system.**

The Education Committee has met several times this quarter with Supt. Jarrett and staff. Discussed were the breakfast results and Eliminate Racism Recommendations. Also, Objectives of Goals 1, 2 and 3. The new data received from the district shows an increase of 8.91% of African American Administrators and an increase of African-American para-professionals of .8%. All other areas we have looked at have gone backwards. On Dec. 18, we will again meet with Dr. Jarrett and members of his Human Resource Staff to discuss this data, the recommendations made by Eliminate Racism and also suggestions from the Breakfast participants toward meeting 2020 objectives.

### 2. Wednesday, March 6, 2020 @ 3:00 @ Pilgrim: Goal 2 Focus

**Goal 2 led by David Rundall: To ensure that RPS205 policies and resources, including teachers, counselors, supplies, and technology, are equitable, based on the needs of students in the school and measured by the state required assessment data and the district discipline data. This goal shall be met by 2020-2021 school year.**

This team is discussing the need for a community advocacy group to support students and parents when they are put up for expulsion. The Team is also preparing to attend the public meetings which will be held related to the RPS Discipline Code in early 2020.

We will be requesting data related to the success of the new funding formula that has been rolled out by the district. Our main finance question is related to how the additional dollars the State of Illinois gave to RPS based on the Adequacy formula being spent. Are they creating "Community Schools" and putting more financial resources into "multi-classroom leaders"? Are they supporting "trauma-sensitive initiatives" and "job-embedded professional development"?

3. Thursday, June 11, 2020 @ 9:00 @ RPS 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor: Goal 3 Focus

**Goal 3 is led by Carol Jambor Smith: Students of Color– especially African-American and Hispanic – will be encouraged to enroll in and be enrolled AP (Advanced Placement) classes and will receive the support they need to be academically successful. By 2020-2021 school year, Students of Color enrollment will have increased by 25% within these advanced curricular programs; these students will have received a final grade of “C” or better.**

The goal 3 team plans to do research in 2020, seeking national information and examples of successful implementation of the following with the goal of providing further information and making recommendations to RPS205 regarding AP. We want to have this ready for the team's June meeting with the Supt.

1. Selection and Training of AP teachers
2. Student Recruitment for AP classes
3. Parent Support and Advocacy for AP classes
4. Academic Support for those taking AP classes
5. AP Coordinator positions
6. Increasing the pass rate for AP exams for Students of Color

**Relationship Team:** Meets 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of month at Pilgrim Baptist Church @ 6:00 pm

**Mission:** To radically alter divisive social patterns by building genuine relationships across racial, religious, class, and cultural differences.

**Zeidler Training:** We held a 3rd training session on Fri evening Oct 25 6-8:30, to Sat. Oct 26 8:30-4pm.

The Ex. Director Catherine Wilson came to Good Shepherd in Rockford for the training. We had 14 new people and 7 returning as alumni of a previous training. We offered 6 scholarships for the event and were given \$1620 by participants. We wanted to give the Zeidler Center the planned \$2000 for the training, so the Eliminate Racism budget from the Baptist Church covered the \$380 that we needed. We did better than we expected and no one was turned away because they couldn't afford it. We now have 43 facilitators trained and many have experience as facilitators in various events.

**Rockford Library "Courageous Conversations":** We have finished the 3rd round of sessions and will begin the 4th round Mon Dec 9, 8:30-10 am, then Fri Dec 13 2-3:30pm. For this round (Dec-Jan) we will use a handout on "Racial Conditioning" and a video from u tube on "Conversations with my 3 white grandchildren (as a black man)". Harlan is splicing together a video from the 18 minute video that we all liked. (very personal and easy to relate to)

Questions for our sessions with the library will be :

- 1) What struck you in the video?
- 2) Do you have a story about your own children, grandchildren, re: race, etc.
- 3) What did you learn, ... how might this affect how you live?
- 4) Open conversation...

**Martin Luther King weekend and follow up: Jan 20- Feb 28-**We are still planning to challenge our city with "Enacting the Dream":

... groups, churches, religious organizations, getting together from Jan 20 through Feb with various kinds of facilitated conversations, gatherings.

We could offer facilitators for these events. We will discuss further at our

Tues. Jan 7 meeting and the Steering Committee Tues Dec 10, and Jan 14.

There is a song written and a band forming. Consider how your groups may want to "Enact the Dream"... be daring, no time for less.

submitted by jim roberts