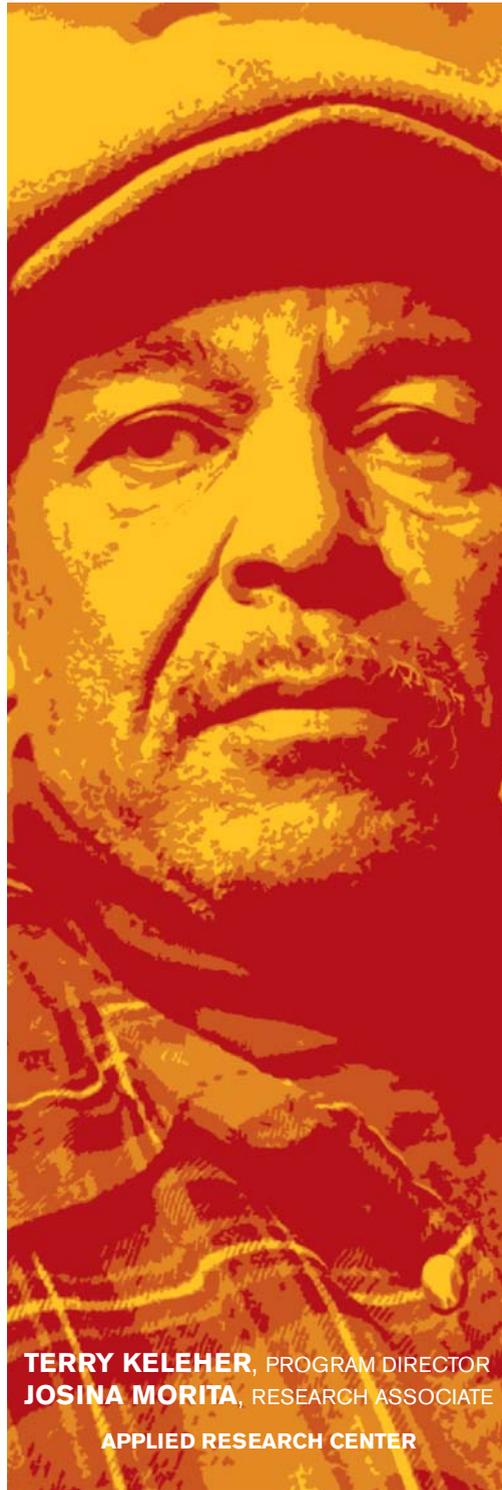


BUILDING CAPACITY FOR CHANGING COMMUNITIES



TERRY KELEHER, PROGRAM DIRECTOR
JOSINA MORITA, RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
APPLIED RESEARCH CENTER



RACIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

RACIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

CONTENTS

PART 1:

2 Overview/Purpose

PART 2:

5 Trainings

PART 3:

8 Consultation & Capacity Building

- 8 Blocks Together
- 9 ProTex (Network for a Progressive Texas) and Criminal Justice Coalition of Texas
- 10 Northwest Federation of Community Organizations and Idaho Community Action Network
- 11 Organization of the NorthEast
- 12 Arab American Action Network and Coalition of African, Asian, European and Latino Immigrants of Illinois

PART 4:

13 Curriculum Development

PART 5:

16 Future Plans

- 16 Initial Results
- 16 Lessons
- 18 Next Steps

© Copyright 2004, Applied Research Center

The Applied Research Center (ARC) is a public policy, educational and research institute whose work emphasizes issues of race and social change. ARC is based in Oakland, California, with offices in Chicago and New York and publishes *Color-Lines* magazine. For more information, ARC's website is www.arc.org.

TRAININGS AND CONSULTATIONS
Applied Research Center
2125 W. North Avenue
Chicago, IL 60647
(773)-269-4062

COMMUNICATIONS
Applied Research Center
584 Broadway, Ste. 612
New York, NY 10012
(212) 431-3276

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS
Applied Research Center
3781 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94611
(510) 653-3415

PART 1: OVERVIEW/PURPOSE

A community organization that spans Latino and African American neighborhoods addresses community safety issues by demanding more police. But police routinely engage in racial profiling of community residents and youth of color. The organization realizes its efforts are having the unintended consequence of perpetuating racial inequality.

A regional training organization finds that systemic racial inequalities are evident in most leading issues being addressed by the groups it serves. The training intermediary wants to help organizations develop their racial justice organizing capacity, but conventional organizing and “diversity” trainings lack practical tools for developing campaigns for racial equity.

A multiracial, statewide coalition responds to the post-9/11 anti-immigrant backlash by supporting drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants. African American leaders in the coalition believe that people who have come to the U.S. illegally should not be entitled to rights. Conflict erupts, and the African American organizations decide to leave the coalition.

RJLI combines analysis, strategic planning, and leadership development with organized action.

THE RACIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE (RJLI) strengthens the capacity of community-based organizations, training intermediaries, and individual activists to engage in education and action to advance racial equity. Launched by the Applied Research Center (ARC) in 2002, RJLI combines political analysis, strategic planning, and leadership development with organized action focused on addressing structural racism. ARC is providing consultation and support to social change organizations around the country as they plan and implement trainings, campaigns, and actions. The Initiative addresses ongoing challenges organizations face when confronted with the complexities and controversies associated with race so they can develop strategic responses to systemic inequality.

Structural racism, the most fundamental type of racism, is a deeply rooted and continually evolving system of racial inequality that affects every institution and individual in our society. Structural racism is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics—historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal—that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color. Evidence of structural racism in the U.S. is apparent in every major quality-of-life indicator, from infant mortality rates to life expectancy, from household income and home ownership

to educational attainment and healthcare access. Yet structural racism is rarely acknowledged, hardly understood, and insufficiently challenged. Several emerging challenges and needs have been identified:

Complex and changing manifestations of racism require new understandings. The transforming global economy and international political climate, shifting demographics and migration patterns, and new forms of racial profiling and anti-immigrant sentiments related to the “War on Terror” add new complexities to race issues and race relations. Conservatives are rolling back civil rights movement gains and pushing so-called “colorblind” policies such as the California “Racial Privacy Initiative” aimed at banning public agencies from collecting data by race. These changes must be thoughtfully assessed to formulate effective strategic responses.

More efforts to expose and explicitly address racial inequality are needed. People are afraid to talk about the volatile subject of race. The normalcy, complexity and subtlety of structural racism are accompanied by widespread public confusion, misconceptions, and denial. More efforts are needed to popularize an analysis and acknowledgement of structural racism. The social and political constructs that produce racial inequalities must be illuminated before they can be eliminated.

More models for challenging structural racism and creating equitable policies are needed. Racial inequality is profound, pervasive, and persistent. Efforts focused on racial *diversity* have failed to achieve racial *equity*. The civil rights establishment is confronted with a puzzling dilemma: legal mechanisms designed to produce equity have been codified, yet vast racial inequities persist or have deepened. There is a need for new models to expose, challenge, and eradicate structural racism, especially at the policy level.

Social change organizations need more mechanisms to prevent racial divisiveness. Differences in language, culture, history, and interests, as well as disparities in institutional access and impact, can create misunderstandings, competition, and distrust. In order to unite more people to effectively challenge long-standing issues of inequality, community leaders and organizers need to expand their analysis, skills, and strategies to forge a new balance of power. New tools for conceptual learning and strategic action are needed.

A wider, more diverse, and highly skilled pool of racial justice leaders needs to be developed. The variety of effects of racism on different constituencies, demands that a broad base of key actors from a wide array of disciplines be developed, connected, and engaged to confront the issue.

Structural racism is rarely acknowledged, hardly understood, and insufficiently challenged.

There is a need for new models to expose, challenge, and eradicate structural racism, especially at the policy level.

Racism has grown both less visible and more destructive, with new manifestations of the ways in which people are being disadvantaged and divided. These changes have had a tremendous impact on racial identity, consciousness, and politics. As new threats to civil rights and growing inequalities emerge, community organizations and social justice activists must overcome their reluctance to address race by acquiring new analytical and strategic skills to develop proactive and successful efforts to produce institutional equity. The Racial Justice Leadership Initiative is designed to provide leading activists with the confidence, competence, and capacity to reframe issues, refocus strategies and reinvigorate a broader movement for racial justice that can, in turn, play a leadership role in advancing progressive social change.

The **goals** of the Racial Justice Leadership Initiative include:

- expanding the capacity of social change organizations to explicitly and effectively address issues of structural racism so as to inform public opinion and public policy.
- strengthening the skills, deepen the analysis, and broaden the connections of key leaders, organizers, researchers, and other activists engaged in racial justice work.
- developing new models for community organizations that link learning and strategic action to produce more racial equity and promote institutional change.

The **key components** of the Initiative include:

- Trainings
- Consultations
- Curriculum Development

PART 2: TRAININGS

To foster an in-depth analysis of structural racism and develop strategic options for advancing racial justice among key social justice activists, ARC created an intensive three-day training module called the Racial Justice Leadership Institute that has been conducted in several locations around the country. These training seminars were piloted in Seattle, New York City, and Chicago. The trainings are designed for established and emerging leaders who wish to sharpen their analysis and skills, share and test ideas, and explore strategies for shaping public debate and policy on issues related to structural racism and racial equity. The multi-day seminar brings together community organizers, researchers, policy advocates, academics, writers, and other activists from around the country—thereby fostering cross-sector analysis and connections. In the process, an expanding pool of leaders from diverse communities and disciplines is further developed, connected, and equipped with the capacity to articulate a new analysis of structural racism while formulating new strategies, alliances, and policies to bring about racial justice.

Unlike trainings on “diversity” or “dismantling racism”—usually emphasizing bias reduction, cultural sensitivity, and race relations—these seminars focus on structural inequalities and systemic change. The trainings provide an interactive forum for analyzing complex and changing race issues, assessing new tools, and developing practical approaches that document and challenge structural racism while exploring new opportunities to advance equity-based policy alternatives.

These seminars were piloted in geographically diverse settings in order to test how the trainings worked with different kinds of participants and to assess the needs and challenges of different kinds of groups. They involved a racially diverse mix of participants from community organizations, human rights groups, community development organizations, public health agencies, universities, faith-based organizations, advocacy groups, and policy think tanks.

The Racial Justice Leadership Institute held in Chicago brought together a wide spectrum of participants and perspectives from both the local area and from locations around the country. Chicago is one of the most racially diverse, yet most racially segregated, large cities in the U.S. The prevailing organizing model in Chicago typically downplays explicit attention to race or other dynamics that may be viewed as “divisive.” The demand for the Racial Justice Leadership Institute in Chicago exceeded the available space, with four times more applicants than those selected to participate. A local working group and selection com-

The trainings provide an interactive forum for analyzing complex and changing race issues, assessing new tools, and developing practical approaches document and challenge structural racism.

Throughout the Institute, the expertise of the participants was utilized extensively, drawing out a variety of perspectives and a wealth of experience.

mittee involving leading activists, academics, journalists, funders, and organizers helped plan the training. Selected participants crossed many disciplines and included nine African Americans, six Latino/as, five Asian Americans, three whites, two people of Middle Eastern descent, and one Native American. Two thirds were women, and one third were men, with nearly half in their 20s, a few over 50 years of age, and the remainder in their 30s and 40s. The faculty for the seminar included a variety of experienced trainers, presenters, and panelists, accomplished and recognized in their respective fields. Throughout the Institute, the expertise of the participants was utilized extensively, drawing out a variety of perspectives and a wealth of experience, while minimizing the gap between faculty and presenters.

Each Racial Justice Leadership Institute includes an evaluation component, and the overall feedback has been very positive. The most valuable aspects participants said they learned included a conceptual framework for understanding structural racism, techniques for publicly framing issues with explicit attention to race, and exposure to new tools and curricula for educating people about racial justice. A civil rights attorney from a national organization said, “Although I had a good understanding and analysis of structural racism prior to the Institute, I was in need of the ‘right words’ to explain it and discuss it with others. The Institute and the portion dedicated to structural racism was helpful in finding the words necessary to explain and articulate it.” A community organizer said, “It gave me an overall framework and analysis, as well as concrete tools to use in my organizing work.”

In addition to the multi-day institutes, ARC has been invited to conduct several shorter trainings on organizing, advocacy, research, and policy development related to racial justice. Audiences have included students, teachers, faith-based communities, funders, community organizers, and researchers. Organizations for whom ARC has conducted such trainings include: the National Training and Information Center; the Field Museum’s Center for Cultural Understanding and Change; the Wheaton (IL) Franciscans; the National Coalition of Education Activists; and the Brighton Park and Albany Park Neighborhood Councils.

TRAINING PARTICIPANTS' ORGANIZATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Advancement Project (AP), Washington D.C.
American Friends Service Committee
Arab American Action Network, Chicago area
Blocks Together, Chicago
Breakthrough: Building Human Rights Culture
California Works Foundation
CAUSA (Immigrant Rights Coalition of Oregon)
Center of Concern
Center for Law and Social Justice,
Medgar Evers College
Center for Third World Organizing's GrassRoots
Organizing for Welfare Leadership (GROWL)
Chicago Jobs Council
Community Justice Initiative
Coalition of African, Asian, European and Latino
Immigrants of Illinois, Chicago area
Crossroads Fund, Chicago
Day Care Justice Co-op, Rhode Island
Eastern Illinois University, Dept. of Journalism
East-West University, Chicago
Families for Freedom
Families United for Racial and Economic Justice
FORCE (Families Organizing for Real Change and
Empowerment), Chicago
Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
Georgia Hunger Coalition
Good Jobs New York
Idaho Community Action Network
Independent Television Service (ITVS) Community
Connections Project, San Francisco
Indian People's Action, Montana
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, Chicago
Justice Policy Institute

Little Village Community Development
Corporation, Chicago
Logan Square Neighborhood Association
Minnesota Restorative Justice Campaign
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Montana People's Action
National Association of Black Social Workers
National Education Association, Human and
Civil Rights
National Funding Collaborative on
Violence Prevention
National Housing Institute
National Immigration Project
NETWORK (A National Catholic Social
Justice Lobby)
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations
Organization of the NorthEast (ONE), Chicago
Oregon Action
Paper Tiger TV
Political Research Associates (PRA), Somerville
Pro-Choice Public Education Project
ProTex: Network for a Progressive Texas
Roxbury Defenders
Seattle-King County Defender Association, Racial
Disparity Project
Seattle Young People's Project
Southwest Youth Collaborative, Chicago
Target Area Development Corporation, Chicago
Third Sector New England, Boston
University of Chicago, Dept. of Political Science
Washington Citizen's Action
West Harlem Environmental Action

PART 3: CONSULTATION & CAPACITY BUILDING

In addition to training, ARC provides consultation to help social justice organizations work through the challenges of issues campaigns and organizational development efforts. With ARC's assistance, organizations have developed their capacity to document racial disparity, arrive at shared understandings of racism, reframe issues around race, and build new strategic alliances.

In 2003, ARC experimented with a new way to provide consultation to community organizations and training intermediaries. ARC selected 13 groups—eight from Chicago and five from other states—to form a racial justice capacity building cohort. These organizations were actively addressing a variety of issues including poverty, public education, affordable housing, criminal justice, immigrant rights, and civil liberties. Each group selected a two-person leadership team to participate in a yearlong training process. The program focused on expanding the capacity of community organizing groups to engage diverse constituencies in effectively advancing racially equitable public policies. ARC helped foster relationships among the organizations and facilitated a process of learning and developing new strategies to address structural racism.

Within months, the internal trainings began to directly impact the external activities of the organization on several of its issue campaigns.

ARC convened the participants three times during the year for weekend racial justice trainings and discussions. Between trainings, the participating organizations engaged their respective constituencies in an internal organizational learning process about racism, as well as external activities to address racial justice in their issue campaigns. Organizations that previously struggled with addressing race worked through their challenges with consultation from ARC, applying many of the skills and analyses developed through the trainings. The following are a few examples of how organizations applied what they learned. Many efforts are still in progress.

BLOCKS TOGETHER is a multi-issue, grassroots, direct action organization on Chicago's Near North Side, an area that ranks among the city's highest crime districts and lacks many basic community services. Blocks Together requested training and consultation from ARC to help them rethink and refocus some of their organizing campaigns. Blocks Together's key organizers and leaders, in turn, led trainings with their staff and board. Within months, the *internal* trainings began to directly impact the *external* activities of the organization on several of its issue campaigns.

In its campaign to address community safety, Blocks Together shifted its emphasis from punitive to preventive solutions, while insisting

upon police accountability. The group has called on the police to conduct bilingual trainings on how residents can file complaints about police misconduct. The group is also working to secure more after-school programs, health clinics, and a new library so that youth and low-income residents have more access to services and opportunities. They have secured more school support staff, including nurses and special education teachers at local schools. Blocks Together is now calling for a revamping of the school district's entire system for allocating the amount of support staff to each school by replacing its *numerical-based* formula (which considers only the total number of students at a school), with an equitable *needs-based* formula (which considers factors such as the number of low-income students, English learners, students in high-crime neighborhoods, and overcrowded schools). The Chicago School District's CEO and Board Chair have expressed interest and are seeking viable funding options.

Similarly, Blocks Together framed its campaign for a new neighborhood library as an issue of racial equity. The group researched and documented racial disparities in the city's library services, producing evidence to support their perception of racial discrimination. They presented their research findings to the Mayor's office, the library board, and the media. The racial disparities angle caught the attention of a *Chicago Tribune* reporter, who, reporting on the group's findings, wrote that the closest library to Humboldt Park "...serves students from 27 schools in a predominantly African-American neighborhood. By contrast, some libraries in other parts of the city serve families from as few as seven area schools." Organizer Jennifer Dillon said, "The framing of the issue as racial discrimination made our campaign stronger and helped us get press that we would not have gotten otherwise." The group succeeded in securing a commitment for a new Chicago Public Library branch on the city's west side. A consortium of foundations recently presented Blocks Together with the top Chicago Community Organizing Award.

PROTEX: NETWORK FOR A PROGRESSIVE TEXAS AND THE TEXAS CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM COALITION provide an infrastructure for grassroots activists and policy advocates to work together on fair policies in the areas of health care, tax fairness, criminal justice reform, and fair employment. The Texas Criminal Justice Reform Coalition, a program of ProTex, focuses on issues of racial profiling and sentencing reform. ARC provided training and consultation to the Coalition, which helped deepen the racial analysis of its Steering Committee. Coalition organizer Eva Owens said, "Working with ARC has been a rare and vital opportunity to address some of the fundamental challenges in racial justice work. ARC delivers clear, specific, useful tools to address

The framing of the issue as racial discrimination made our campaign stronger.

some of our challenges, which makes solutions more tangible and achievable. The trainings showed how some of the most basic information concerning race is often concealed or not popularly known, and how our most common stereotypes are so deeply inaccurate.”

The Coalition is now actively monitoring the local implementation of a bill passed in the Texas legislature that bans racial profiling. The new law requires more than 1,000 local police and sheriff’s departments to develop a written racial profiling policy that includes officer training, data collection, a complaint process, and disciplinary measures. The Coalition helped in the development of a manual on how citizens can influence their local law enforcement’s racial profiling policies and recently released a report called *Prohibiting Racial Profiling: An Analysis of Local Implementation* to help raise public awareness and accountability. The Coalition has emerged as a major force in challenging the systemic racism of the Texas criminal justice system.

NORTHWEST FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS (NWFCO) AND IDAHO COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK (ICAN).

NWFCO is a regional training intermediary organization comprised of four statewide citizen action organizations. NWFCO’s mission is to strengthen the state-based community organizations and to execute regional campaigns that address social and economic inequities. ARC has provided extensive training and consultation to NWFCO, which has made a sizeable commitment to providing racial justice training to the staff and leaders of its affiliates. This has helped transform the racial composition of staff and leaders, while giving them new, winnable handles for addressing racial discrimination and disparities in their issue campaigns. NWFCO Director LeeAnn Hall says, “The trainings are giving leaders and staff the skills to artfully facilitate and intervene in discussions when racism and race issues emerge. All of the statewide affiliates have come out of these trainings with some concrete action plans relating to different organizational policies, guiding documents, and practices that would be revised to foster a culture of commitment to racial justice work internally and externally.”

In 2003, ARC worked closely with NWFCO’s affiliate, the Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN), a statewide organizing group with chapters and membership clusters in 14 communities. ICAN, along with hundreds of immigrant rights organizations across the country, has been working on the DREAM Act and the Student Adjustment Act that would reduce college tuition fees for undocumented students. During this campaign, ICAN organizers approached ARC with a dilemma: they were getting ready to hold a local press conference as part of a coordinated national week of action, but they were uncomfortable with the way other local and national groups were fram-

The trainings showed how some of the most basic information concerning race is often concealed or not popularly known...

ing the issue. While advocating for the rights of “bright and innocent” students who came to this country by no choice of their own, they were incriminating the parents of these students as immigration lawbreakers. According to organizer Sam Blair, “ARC staff counseled us to expand the frame to a broader immigrant rights agenda and draw on the language and legacy of the civil rights movement to frame our messages.” ICAN, in turn, engaged its allies in internal education to reframe the campaign. Reflecting on the organizer’s experience, Blair said, “Connecting the fight for immigrant rights to fights for civil rights made it possible for groups that have never talked about legalization to do so. One of our strongest allies, for the first time, talked about the DREAM/Student Adjustment Act as part of the larger fight for legalization. Essentially, the point is that we can’t cede the long-term battleground for a quick victory.” This new frame enabled ICAN and its allies to talk about the rights of undocumented students in a way that did not criminalize their parents or communities. By sharpening and broadening the frame, ICAN was not only able to implement a more successful press conference, but also to strengthen its relationship with allies, to clarify its commitment to legalization policies. This helped prepare the group to engage in a subsequent national organizing effort, the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, which continued to build connections between immigrant rights and civil rights.

ORGANIZATION OF THE NORTHEAST (ONE) is a Chicago community organization with 78 diverse institutional members, including congregations, ethnic associations, businesses, and nonprofits in several neighborhoods. ONE works on issues of housing, employment, welfare, immigration, and youth and families, and it is one of the most racially diverse organizations in Chicago. The group was seeking opportunities to unify their base around a shared understanding of racism. In early 2003, ONE’s staff and board decided to utilize the training and consulting services of ARC to provide them with some teaching tools designed for organizing groups.

ONE used its 2003 annual convention—attended by 950 community members and local elected officials—as an opportunity to illuminate systemic racial disparities in their neighborhoods. Leaders presented racially disaggregated data about criminal justice issues, along with a skit illustrating barriers that former prisoners—mostly African Americans—face when seeking employment. ONE also decided to devote its annual weekend leadership retreat to the theme of racial justice, with ONE leaders and staff conducting four trainings from ARC’s Racial Justice Training Curriculum. Fifty participants discussed and learned about how people are affected by institutional racism. Issue teams then developed ideas for addressing racial justice as part of their

Connecting the fight for immigrant rights to fights for civil rights made it possible for groups that have never talked about legalization to do so.

The issue teams had concrete and specific ideas for researching and using statistics to document disparate impacts.

current campaigns. Afterwards, ONE Director Sarah Jane Knoy said, “The racial justice trainings really informed the campaign discussions. The issue teams had concrete and specific ideas for researching and using statistics to document disparate impacts.” ONE now has a deeper analysis, a wider array of organizing tools, and more leadership skills to inform and shape the organization’s strategies on a variety of ongoing issue campaigns.

COALITION OF AFRICAN, ASIAN, EUROPEAN AND LATINO IMMIGRANTS OF ILLINOIS (CAAELII) AND THE ARAB AMERICAN ACTION NETWORK (AAAN). CAAELII involves nearly 20 agencies serving immigrants and refugees in the Chicago metropolitan area, including AAAN, one of its member organizations. Immigrant communities have faced a barrage of anti-immigrant sentiments and policies that were heightened in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. ARC provided training and consultation to both organizations to develop a public response to this discrimination. The groups used the training curriculum to lead discussions about racial profiling with their respective communities. “The program helped put handles on many of the issues our immigrant communities face,” said CAAELII organizer Saket Soni. “The opportunity to strategize with groups in Chicago and around the country that organize around racial justice issues was invaluable. The tools for curriculum and campaign ideas were used in our work,” said AAAN Director Hatem Abudayyeh.

ARC developed a research model for the groups to document immigrants’ interactions with law enforcement personnel. In addition, ARC worked with the immigrant groups to bring public attention to how homeland security policies such as the USA PATRIOT Act, not only resulted in civil liberty violations, but also constituted racial profiling. People in Chicago were being routinely targeted as terrorist suspects not for any criminal activity, but merely on the basis of their racial, ethnic, and national background. ARC helped the immigrant groups connect to other human rights, social justice, and criminal justice organizations. Together, these groups and ARC co-sponsored two “Public Truth” hearings on racial profiling of immigrants and people of color that brought together more than 300 people and featured first-hand testimony from people of color mistreated by law enforcement personnel. One hearing was held in an African American church on the south side, with the proceedings translated in five languages, while the other was held downtown. The *Chicago Tribune* and other media outlets provided good coverage of the hearings and the frame of “racial profiling.” Efforts such as the Public Truth hearings have contributed to a growing outcry against unfair and discriminatory homeland security policies.

PART 4: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

ARC has developed an extensive, interactive curriculum for teaching about structural racism and racial justice to community organizations and activists. The curriculum consists of a series of lesson plans that provide complete instructions to enable facilitators to lead a group through the learning activities. The curriculum also includes informational handouts for the participants. Having a comprehensive written document that describes all of the learning activities enables different types of groups in various settings to utilize the material. Several community organizations around the country have now used the curriculum with success, using their own staff and leaders as the facilitators.

Interactive lesson plans utilize a variety of formats to engage participants in critical thinking and active learning. Activities include debates, role-plays, skits, video, panel discussions, small group exercises, and story sharing. The curriculum is also adaptable: it includes lesson plans for 15 different workshops. Groups can choose which lesson plans they want to conduct, as well as how to sequence them to best meet the experience level and needs of their participants. Some groups have just conducted a few of the sessions, while others have implemented a full series of trainings depending on their available time, commitment level, and campaign needs. The curriculum, which has been tested in a variety of settings with various audiences, is being revised and finalized with the goal of publishing it in 2004 so that it can be readily and widely available to more organizations and activists.

The interactive lesson plans engage participants in critical thinking and active learning.

RACIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION AND ACTION CURRICULUM

- The Changing Face of Race
- Acknowledging The Big White Elephant
- The Race Debate
- Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning
- The Race Lens
- Leading with Race
- What is Racial Justice?
- Addressing Racism in Organizing Campaigns
- Different Levels of Racism
- Multi-Racial Organizing
- Structural Racism
- Racially Equitable Policy Development
- Racial Histories
- Race and Media: Exposing and Explaining Racism
- Documenting Racism

In the process of developing and testing the curriculum with different audiences, ARC was able to learn from the participants. This led to modifications and refinements such as those described below.

INDIAN PEOPLE’S ACTION / MONTANA PEOPLE’S ACTION: ARC conducted several racial justice trainings with Indian People’s Action, which is part of Montana People’s Action, a multi-issue, statewide organizing group. At one training, MPA Director Janet Robideau described racism by saying, “There’s a huge white elephant in the room. We look over it, under it, and around it, but not right at it. Everyone’s staring at it, but no one says a word about it. We’re afraid to see the truth.” ARC decided to build an entire training session around this useful metaphor. In one of the workshops, a drawing of a huge elephant is displayed. Participants work in small groups to identify some of the internal racial challenges their organizations are facing, then some of the external racial inequalities they see in their communities. The things they identify are written on adhesive “post-it” notes, then attached to the elephant. This provides a lively, accessible, and provocative way for people to surface and process some of the many racial challenges they face.

There’s a huge white elephant in the room. We look over it, under it, and around it, but not right at it. We’re afraid to see the truth.

GEORGIA HUNGER COALITION: Key staff members of the Georgia Hunger Coalition challenged the use of the term “white domination” as a way of describing structural racism in the U.S. In the South, many people use the term “white supremacy” instead. At an ARC training that involved organizers and activists from around the country, a debate among the participants ensued as to which term might be more effective. A minister from Chicago said that a lot of people in the North, upon hearing the term “white supremacy,” immediately associate it with the Ku Klux Klan and extreme racial hatred. This reduces racism to blatant and willful acts of bigotry by hateful individuals. But structural racism is often unintentional and invisible, and perpetuated by institutions rather than individuals. The term “white domination” seemed to place less emphasis on individuals and extremists, and more focus on the prevalence and assertion of white privilege. What resulted from this debate was a common awareness that different terms may have different meanings in different geographic locations. One term may not always work in every context. What’s most important is to use whatever term seems most precise, appropriate, and useful for the situation.

NORTHWEST FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: At a racial justice training in Seattle that involved a very racially mixed group of participants, one of the organizations present wanted to plan a campaign to rid their state of public signage that referred to Native Americans in derogatory ways. The group stumbled over how to even have a conversation about one of the most objectionable words, referring to the “s---- word,” which to Native Americans is extremely

derogatory, much like the “n----- word” is to African Americans. The group decided not to say the actual word in the training session, but when one of the facilitators wrote the word on a sheet of flipchart paper, it set off some heated reactions. The immediate controversy was diffused when the paper was removed from public display. But the incident revealed a difficult lesson for the trainers: that both the trainers and participants need to take extra time at the beginning of difficult conversations to clarify ground rules and agree on how to deal with conflicts and disagreements that may arise. Like any skills, these can be learned and practiced. ARC has developed and adapted some tools for having difficult conversations so that facilitators can feel more confident and competent in handling controversy. Since race is such an emotionally charged topic, it’s inevitable that disagreements may arise. Engaging in them rather than avoiding them will be more educational and empowering to the group. ARC plans to include more guidance on this in the introduction to the curriculum manual it is developing.

These examples illustrate how the racial justice curriculum developed and evolved with considerable experience and thoughtful input. It is not the same curriculum that we began with, having undergone considerable changes to make it more accessible and adaptable.

PART 5. FUTURE PLANS

INITIAL RESULTS

The Racial Justice Leadership Initiative is accomplishing many intended results and pursuing areas for further development. The Initiative has succeeded in several respects:

- Creating practical tools for research, media advocacy, policy development and organizing have been created, helping many organizations and leaders develop and increase their capacity to address racial justice.
- Emphasizing structural racism has led organizations to examine their issues in new ways and sharpen their focus on institutional policy change.
- Several organizations have reframed issue campaigns so that the often ignored, but critical, dynamics of systemic racial inequality can be directly addressed.
- Several organizations have strengthened their internal cohesion and developed new alliances and collaborations with other organizations. Shared understandings around controversial race issues also helps prevent internal divisiveness that can be exploited by conservative political forces skilled at driving wedges between constituencies to advance their policy agendas.
- An emerging set of racial justice leaders is developing the confidence and competence to constructively address race issues. Over 100 leaders, organizers, researchers, policy advocates, writers, and other activists from around the country have participated in Initiative trainings, seeding new ideas and connections for an emerging, reenergized racial justice movement.

Community organizations that were once reluctant to address systemic racism are finding that naming and framing racial inequality can provide them with a powerful handle for winning issue campaigns.

LESSONS

The following are lessons learned during the pilot phase of the Racial Justice Leadership Initiative:

1. **Explicitly and effectively addressing racial inequality can bring increased attention and success to organizing and advocacy efforts.** A number of community organizations that were once reluctant to address systemic racism are finding that naming and framing racial inequality can provide them with a powerful handle for winning issue campaigns. Organizers, advocates, and funders are now eagerly seeking more analysis and examples of how and when to “lead with race.”

2. **Conventional “diversity trainings” do not effectively prepare social justice organizations to engage in strategic action to challenge structural racism.** Typical trainings on race focus on interpersonal relations, promoting tolerance and cultural sensitivity. But they fall short of preparing community organizations with the practical skills to strategically challenge systemic racism. Participants have consistently reported that ARC’s trainings provide them with a clear conceptual framework and concrete organizing and advocacy tools not available in other trainings they have attended. Based on the number of individuals who have applied to attend the Racial Justice Leadership Institutes and the many organizations around the country seeking ARC’s consultation—more than ARC can accommodate—it is clear that there is considerable interest in, need, and demand for this work.
3. **Intensive training coupled with ongoing consultation works best for groups that want to put into action their commitment to promote racial justice.** Stand-alone racial justice trainings can be useful, but are only as good as the concrete change they help produce. To maximize impact, ongoing consultation increases the likelihood that leaders will effectively integrate a racial justice analysis into actual organizing and media campaigns aimed at producing equitable policy change. ARC’s experience providing a yearlong program of training and consultation to a cohort of leaders demonstrates that groups that make a serious commitment and receive ongoing technical support can effectively work through the challenges of race to realize many concrete benefits. Because this is labor- and time-intensive, ARC is experimenting with different modes of delivering and replicating these services.
4. **Cross-sectoral trainings and local learning cohorts can greatly enhance the insight and support leaders need to engage in racial justice activities.** Cross-sectoral learning at the Racial Justice Leadership Institutes not only brought more perspectives to light, but also helped build new connections and potential collaborations. ARC’s yearlong “Racial Justice Action Education” program that involved the cohort of 13 diverse organizations provided an ongoing forum to exchange ideas and explore challenges in a proactive manner.
5. **High-quality, accessible educational tools are critical to popularize a wider understanding of the complex dynamics of structural racism.** Manifestations of racial inequality often go unchallenged because people lack a clear way of thinking and talking about these dynamics. ARC’s interactive training curriculum has been well received, yet participants are asking for even more

Ongoing consultation increases the likelihood that leaders will effectively integrate a racial justice analysis into actual organizing and media campaigns aimed at producing equitable policy change.

written materials and visual aids to clarify and simplify complex concepts. To meet the need for more concrete examples and models for engaging in racial justice work, ARC is developing additional materials in a variety of formats that can be easily accessed and replicated.

- 6. More social justice organizations and foundations are realizing that “racial justice capacity building” can be made a critical component of changemaking and grantmaking, though it requires a rethinking of how to address underlying causes of particular issues.** Many organizations are committed to racial justice, yet do not engage in deliberate analysis and action to strategically address racial dynamics and impact disparities that define so many major contested policy issues. Community organizations can often be limited by their historic ways of approaching change, where action is not accompanied by enough analysis, just as funders can be limited by narrowly defined issue interests, where “racial justice” is seldom a named priority. As racial dynamics change, organizations committed to supporting and promoting equitable change must learn to effectively address the current terrain of structural racism.

Funders can be limited by narrowly defined issue interests, where “racial justice” is seldom a named priority.

NEXT STEPS

The following are future plans for the Initiative:

- **Trainings and Consultations:** ARC will conduct a series of Racial Justice Leadership Institutes in several locations around the country in 2004. These will take the form of two-day intensive trainings, followed up by consultation with participants, tailored to their needs to help them: (1) develop internal education activities with their respective constituencies, (2) reframe their issue campaigns’ messages and strategies; and (3) foster new or stronger relationships with external allies.
- **Documentation:** ARC is evaluating and documenting the successes, shortcomings, and challenges of engaging in racial justice organizing and advocacy, so that experiences and lessons can be shared. This will include publishing illustrative case studies and stories.
- **Curriculum Development:** ARC will continue testing the racial justice education and action curriculum with a variety of audiences in order to further consolidate the curriculum content in to standardized and replicable formats. Later in the year, ARC will publish the curriculum: a comprehensive series of interactive lesson plans and activities that can be used by social justice organizations around the country.