



SOUTH ORANGE | MAPLEWOOD  
COMMUNITY  
COALITION  
ON RACE

# Annual Report

Ensuring the sustainability of racial integration  
and equity in our towns

2021



## LEADERSHIP MESSAGE

## Building racially inclusive and equitable communities for 25 years

For 25 years, the Community Coalition on Race has ensured that our two towns remain committed to being a racially integrated, inclusive, and equitable community. This essential work has not only endured, but has evolved to meet the challenges of our time.

Creating and sustaining a racially integrated and equitable community is a dynamic endeavor—one that needs persistence and fresh approaches. One of our most innovative current projects is the creation of a Wealth Gap Equalizer Loan and a grant program to support historically disadvantaged homebuyers.

Throughout 2021, we brought the community together to learn and to build relationships in ways that are responsive to community needs. Plus, we advocated for integrated schools and classrooms, practices that prioritize educational equity, highlighted youth voices, and began analyzing 2020 census data for updates in residential integration.

Have a look at this work and more inside.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we thank all the volunteers, donors, and event attendees--you make change possible!

With gratitude,

Nancy Gagnier, Executive Director

Kelly Quirk, Chair of the Board of Trustees





## ADVOCACY, ANTI-RACISM, RACIAL JUSTICE

### Roadmap to School Integration: Lessons learned from “Nice White Parents”

consisted of two community conversations with Julie Snyder, Executive Producer of the podcast *Nice White Parents*, moderated by Dr. Adunni Anderson. The Schools Committee posed questions about the best approaches to racially integrated schools that are truly inclusive and have all students' and families' best interests in mind.

The **Wealth Gap Equalizer Loan**, a pro-integrative financial incentive developed to address the need to improve the prospects for Black and non-white Hispanic homebuyers, was designed and will be available in 2022.

**ChooseSOMA**: This new website was developed by the Marketing Committee to reach prospective Black in-movers and offers information on the community and support in the home-buying process.

**Community Organizing Workshop for Youth** was sponsored by the Coalition Youth Collective and led by advocate Larry Hamm, leader of the People's Organization for Progress. He shared advice and strategies for aspiring racial and social justice activists using his experience as a student activist at Princeton to his work with POP.

**Anti-Asian Racism Coffee House Discussion** focused on anti-Asian hate, its roots in American history, and microaggressions toward Asian people. Parents shared their experiences in SOMA and groups discussed AAPI invisibility and what we can do to make the towns more inclusive of the AAPI community.

**Journey to Anti-Racism Groups** formed after we hosted Journey to Anti-Racism Coffee Houses in 2020. About 40 attendees continued meeting monthly with Coalition facilitators in small groups to learn more and find ways to take action.



*I have a better understanding of how I have facilitated systemic racism by my focus on things like test scores. And teaching my kids that life is more about supporting the success of a community than about their personal test scores is a far better education.*

Roadmap to School Integration attendee

## DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING...

**Conversations on Race**, in partnership with Seton Hall, focused on educational justice with teacher, author, and activist, Jesse Hagopian who shared information that demonstrates what were up against in creating equity and racial justice in education. Small groups discussed plans of action for SOMSD.

**Dear MAPSO: The Conversation**, hosted by the Coalition Youth Collective, showcased youth perspectives on persistent racial inequities through poetry, art, and film. Attendees shared their experiences in youth-facilitated discussion groups.

**Juneteenth** was honored and celebrated in SOMA at the Durand-Hedden House with period reenactors, art, poetry, music, and an historical exhibit on slavery in New Jersey that explained the state's complex legislative history regarding slavery and emancipation.

**Connecting through Art in Challenging Times** was an Integration through the Arts project that used film documentary to highlight social and racial justice issues. Coalition Youth Collective members developed filming and editing skills to produce films for release in 2022.

**Presentation by Dr. Khyati Y. Joshi, author of White Christian Privilege:** This event was organized by the SOMA Action Religious Justice Committee and supported by the Coalition's Interfaith Outreach Committee.

**Demographics Report:** Based on the 2020 US Census, our newest report delves into neighborhood integration and overall diversity and integration levels over 20 years and looks at comparable suburban towns in our region.



*The evening was very impactful. The speaker offered great examples, anecdotes, great advice for racial justice in the curriculum, teacher retention, and more with such clarity and reasonableness.*

Conversations on Race: Racial Justice in Education attendee





## ... AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The 20th Annual MLK Observance was held virtually and in the aftermath of a white supremacist insurrection in our nation's Capitol. We were grateful to provide this opportunity to reflect on what community means in a time of crisis with speaker Andrea McChristian of the NJ Institute for Social Justice, students who shared powerful and provocative ideas, composer Mark Miller, Special Dance of Columbia High School, the Coalition Youth Collective, and the Bufford School of Music.

The Luminary Project created over 2600 luminary kits that were lit on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day throughout SOMA neighborhoods, Seton Hall University, around Meadowland Park pond, with messages of hope for peace and healing in a time of hurt and loss.

**"Bloody Sunday:" Memories of a Civil Rights Prodigy:** The Coalition on Race, SOMA Action Racial Justice Committee, and SOMA Justice partnered to bring Black History to life in a virtual conversation with Civil Rights activist Joanne Bland who crossed the Edmund Pettis Bridge with John Lewis and others at age 11 on "Bloody Sunday," March 1965.

**Black Health Matters: COVID19 Vaccine and the Black Community** featured a panel of Black medical professionals--Dr. Omar Bey, Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones, and Sean Hudson, who discussed COVID19 vaccines and was moderated by Professor of History, Race and Public Policy at Harvard University, Khalil Gibran Muhammad.

**Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin:** SOMA Pride hosted a screening of this visionary civil rights activist. Audrey Rowe of the Coalition moderated the panel.



# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

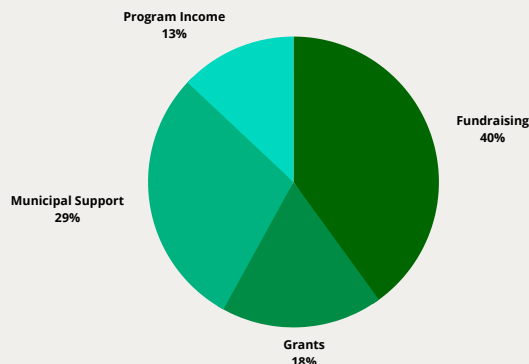
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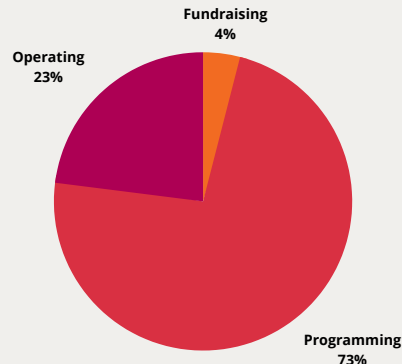
In 2021 we

- Hosted 14 virtual programs for nearly 3000 people
- Worked with 150 committee volunteers
- Engaged people from 18 towns outside of SOMA and 4 states beyond NJ
- Collaborated with 12 local and regional organizations
- Raised funds from over 250 Donors
- Distributed 2600 Luminary kits to shine in SOMA on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day
- Trained 14 new facilitators for leading conversations on race

2021 Projected Income: 181,424



2021 Projected Expense: 141,217



## Celebrating Integration: Honoring Our History, Envisioning Our Future

We honored two community members who have supported our mission in deep and special ways. Dr. Diane Hughes has been an integral part of the Schools Committee's Talking to Children about Race series for many years. She has brought both her professional knowledge as a researcher in this field as well as her personal experience raising children in SOMA. Rev. Dr. Forrest Pritchett's career at Seton Hall University has been devoted to teaching that empowers students to address racism. He has collaborated on our annual Conversations on Race program as well as the Luminary Project, helping to build a bond between SOMA and the University.



# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

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### Remembering Lee Boswell May

Lee was a lifelong resident of South Orange, jazz lover, and a long-term trustee of the Community Coalition on Race. She lived and breathed Dr. King's vision of a "Beloved Community" - a town rooted in justice, equal opportunity, and love for each other.



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