



SOUTH ORANGE | MAPLEWOOD  
COMMUNITY  
COALITION  
ON RACE

# Annual Report

Ensuring the sustainability of racial integration  
and equity in our towns

2022



## LEADERSHIP MESSAGE     Advancing Racial Equity Together

In 2022, we were proud to have celebrated the organization's 25th anniversary. We honored that milestone with a look back how the Coalition on Race started, the conflicts and controversies the organizers faced, and with a retrospective on how it has grown to face ongoing and new issues in integration and equity. Be sure to tune into 'Light the Way,' the podcast series, and the video 'The Pursuit of Racial Equity & Integration: A 25-Year Journey in Maplewood and South Orange' on our website to learn more.

We were especially excited to present on the topic of reparations, support the establishment of a task force in NJ to research reparations, and to launch the Wealth Gap Equalizer Loan, all of which are critical efforts to address home ownership disparities locally. We honored Dr. King and lit luminaries throughout the towns, and we celebrated Black History Month and Juneteenth.

We continued our advocacy for the adoption of the Amistad and AAPI school curricula and held our annual Conversations on Race, this year organized by the Schools Committee on the timely and important topic of Critical Race Theory. We also brought people together at a Neighborhood Summit, in Integrated Art Circles, in anti-racism trainings, and to discuss community safety and policing. We finished 2022 with the release of the new Demographics Report on SOMA demographics with a focus on changes in diversity and integration.

Your support allows us to grow, to stay the course on ongoing equity challenges, and to meet new issues in integration, and for that we thank you!

With gratitude,

Nancy Gagnier, Executive Director  
Kelly Quirk, Chair of the Board of Trustees





## THE PURSUIT OF RACIAL EQUITY & INTEGRATION A 25-YEAR JOURNEY IN SOMA

To honor the commitment and dedication to intentional integration over 25 years, we hosted a discussion moderated by Nancy Solomon (Senior Reporter, WNYC/New Jersey Public Radio), featuring the voices of founding members, staff, and current trustees—with special appearances by SOMA native SZA, and the Honorable Tahesha Way, Secretary of State of New Jersey. We shared our unique story, contributions made through the years, how we've adjusted to emerging needs in pursuit of racial integration and equity, and what's on the horizon as we enter the next stages of our mission. In addition to the video of the history of the Coalition, the 25th anniversary inspired more ways to capture the rich history, practices, and methods of the organization, including: Light the Way: A Podcast Series Featuring Voices from the Coalition, and a book coming out in 2023.

### IN THE NEWS...

#### ***NJ Future: Promoting and Maintaining Racial Integration: Lessons from Selected New Jersey Towns***

"The South Orange/Maplewood Community Coalition on Race is the best example of an active organization focused on integration and taking steps to make integration a reality."

#### ***Politico: How a New Jersey district could be the new national model for school integration***

The Coalition's work on residential and school integration is highlighted in this article. "Two New Jersey towns, progressive bastions in a state grappling with entrenched school segregation, have embarked on an ambitious and "intentional" program education experts say could change the way the country thinks about integration."

#### ***The New York Times: At the Intersection of Race and Housing***

Founding trustee Carol Barry-Austin and Executive Director Nancy Gagnier are interviewed by NYT journalist Gregory Schmidt: "The process is constantly evolving," Carol Barry-Austin, a founding member of the Coalition, "You can make a difference. You can see change."

#### ***A Roadmap to End Segregation in the Suburbs-The Brian Lehrer Show***

Executive Director Nancy Gagnier and Program Director Audrey Rowe talk about the work the Community Coalition on Race has done to promote racial integration in their New Jersey suburb, and how other like-minded communities and people might learn strategies for their own towns.

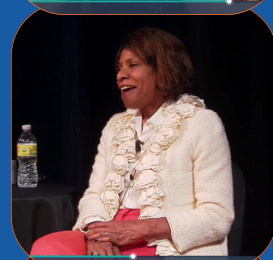
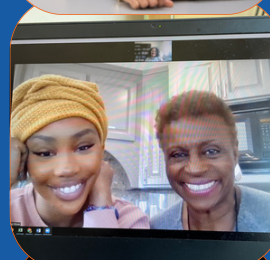


TONY CENICOLA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

### At the Intersection of Race and Housing

I recently learned more about the history of an effort to integrate South Orange and Maplewood.

2h ago • By GREGORY SCHMIDT



## ADVOCACY, ANTI-RACISM, RACIAL JUSTICE

### The Wealth Gap Equalizer Loan

This is a pro-integrative financial incentive developed to address the need to improve the prospects for Black and non-white Hispanic homebuyers. It was launched mid-year and three loans were completed for new SOMA homebuyers!

### ChooseSOMA.com

The new ChooseSOMA.com website was developed by the Marketing Committee to reach prospective Black in-movers about the benefits of this community, its commitment to integration, and to provide support in the home-buying process.

### Taking a Closer Look at Reparations

The speakers--Laurie Beacham, Esq., Director of Communications at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, and Professor Khalil Muhammad, Ford Foundation Professor of History, Race, and Public Policy--provided historical context, and answered questions about how to make a difference in addressing the racial inequities perpetuated by laws, policies, and cultural, segregative practices that cause generational disparities.

### Community Forum on Safety & Policing

This forum addressed concerns, including how to develop good practices to help our neighbors and the police, a perceived increase in crime in SOMA, and the best ways to stay safe. It included Maplewood Police Chief DeVaul, South Orange Police Chief Morillo, Alexis Karteron, esq., Dr. Sara Wakefield, Ayoola Akinnuoye, Co-chair of the Maplewood Community Board on Policing, and Stephanie Lawson-Muhammad, Chair of the South Orange Community Police Collaborative.

### Supporting the Amistad and AAPI Curricula

The Schools Committee worked to support the robust implementation across all grades and subject areas of the state-mandated Amistad curriculum, signed into law in 2002, and the AAPI curriculum, mandated to begin in 2023. The committee also hosted an informative Board of Education forum to ask about candidates' commitment to racial equity and the district integration plan.

### Deconstructing Racism

The Anti-Racism Committee developed this community program to explore how our society is infused by racist conditions and systems that impact us all behaviorally and psychologically, as well as what we can do to disrupt it.



“We are so grateful to live in a community that's always striving to do better!”



### WGEL Loan Recipient

*"Seeing that South Orange and Maplewood are trying to right past historical racial injustices so that Black and Brown homeowners have a little extra support, that shows a seriousness," Tony said. "Not just paying lip-service to diversity or inclusion, but actually putting your money where your mouth is."*



**#ChooseSOMA**  
The Communities of  
South Orange and Maplewood



## DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING & AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

### Conversations on Race: Critical Race Theory

The Schools Committee planned the 2022 Conversations on Race on the topic 'Critical Race Theory.' Professors Khalil Muhammad and Peggy Cooper Davis shared their knowledge and insights about this increasingly important topic in educational equity. Our goal in hosting this event each year is to engage people in productive conversations about issues connected to our mission of racial integration, equity, and inclusion.

### The 21st Annual MLK Observance & Luminary Project: Serving Something Greater than Ourselves

Residents shared how they live out Dr. King's call to service. They told stories about their experiences of volunteerism and service. It attracted over 1200 viewers. The Luminary Project engaged over 2000 households throughout SOMA.

### Neighborhood Summit

The Residential Committee hosted the 2022 Neighborhood Summit at the Dehart Community Center. The goal was to bring together people from all the neighborhoods throughout South Orange and Maplewood for a 'meet and greet,' to hear the experiences of some leaders of neighborhood associations, and to share concerns as well as best practices solutions for resolving issues.

### Integration through the Arts: Integrated Art Circles

This project combined art education, creative expression, interracial interaction, and community discussion into a single process. A racially diverse group of Essex County artists designed projects for small, racially diverse group workshops. Facilitated community discussions followed the public displays.

### Connecting through Art in Challenging Times: Youth Documentary Series

The Coalition Youth Collective members shared their documentaries that highlighted racial justice issues.

### Juneteenth Celebration at Durand-Hedden

This day-long event was full of moments that educated people about the history of slavery in NJ, honored the history of the day, and celebrated the work to find freedom.

### Realtors' Conversation with SOMSD Superintendent Dr. Ronald Taylor

Over 60 realtors attended this Schools Committee event which updated realtors on district preschools and the Elementary School Integration Plan.



Integrated Art Circles Participant:

*"I just want to let you know how much I like this program. What a wonderful way to connect people across age ranges and ethnicities. AWESOME!!"*



# 2022 HIGHLIGHTS

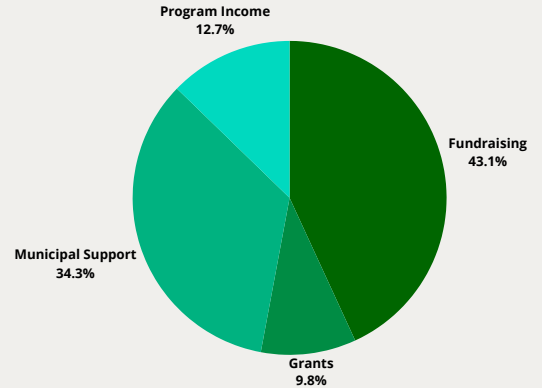
In 2022, we

- Hosted 20 public events and workshops and launched 4 new projects
- Registered over 1500 people for our events and tracked over 2000 viewings of recorded programs
- Enlisted 136 Volunteers
- Engaged people from 18 Towns and 5 States beyond SOMA
- Collaborated with 21 local and regional organizations
- Raised funds from over 400 donors
- Distributed 2100 Luminary kits to shine in SOMA on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day
- Trained 32 facilitators for leading group discussions on race

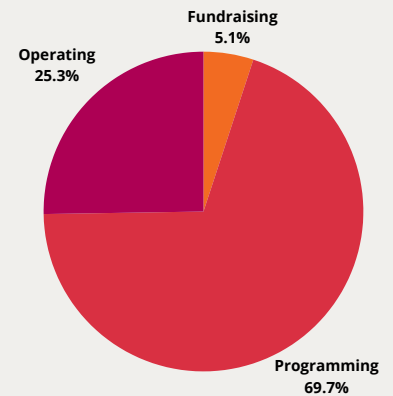
## We are grateful for the grant, service, and donation support from:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Township of Maplewood</li> <li>• Township of South Orange</li> <li>• AXIS Capital</li> <li>• A Paper Hat</li> <li>• The Able Baker</li> <li>• ADP</li> <li>• Amazon Smile</li> <li>• Benevity Community Impact Fund</li> <li>• The Blackbaud Giving Fund</li> <li>• Blackrock</li> <li>• Brick City Greenhouse</li> <li>• Columbia High School Special Dance</li> <li>• Columbia High School Chorus</li> <li>• Congregation Beth El</li> <li>• D&amp;I Fitness</li> <li>• Durand Hedden House</li> <li>• Essex County Local Arts Grant Program</li> <li>• The Fraentzel Foundation</li> <li>• First Baptist Church of South Orange</li> <li>• General Store Cooperative</li> <li>• Google</li> <li>• MAC Scholars of Columbia High School</li> <li>• Maplewood Division of Arts &amp; Culture</li> <li>• Meadowlands Park Conservancy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsoft</li> <li>• NJ Institute for Social Justice</li> <li>• Oh! Canary</li> <li>• Pet Wants</li> <li>• President's Council</li> <li>• Rosecomm</li> <li>• The Schofield Group</li> <li>• Seton Hall University</li> <li>• Seton Village Neighborhood &amp; Preservation Program</li> <li>• SOMA Justice</li> <li>• SOMA Action</li> <li>• SOPAC</li> <li>• Sparkhouse Toys</li> <li>• St. George's Episcopal Church</li> <li>• SZA</li> <li>• TechSoup</li> <li>• True Salvage Cafe</li> <li>• Village Babies</li> <li>• The Vincent A. Huggins Foundation</li> <li>• Words Bookstore</li> </ul> |
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2022 Projected Income: 168,856



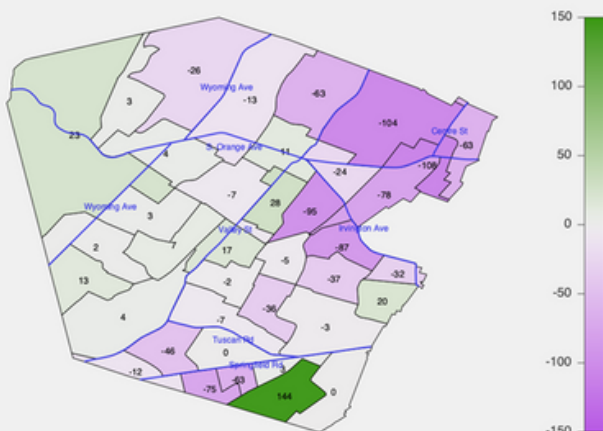
2022 Projected Expense: 165,969



## 2022 DEMOGRAPHICS REPORT: A Current Snapshot and Changes Over Time

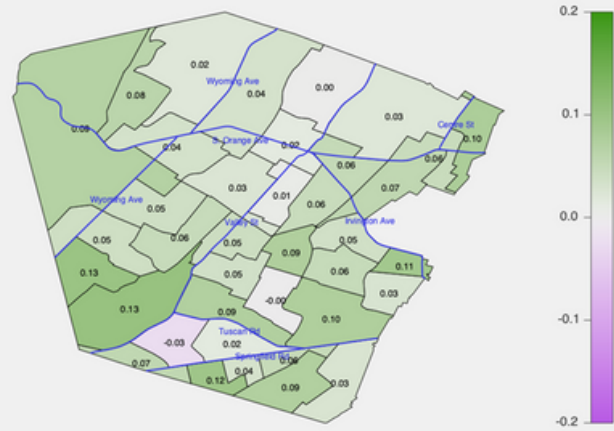
Based on the 2020 US Census, our newest report delves into neighborhood integration and overall diversity and integration levels in neighborhoods and census tracts in South Orange and Maplewood over the past 20 years. It also looks at comparable suburban towns in our region. The full report and video presentation is available on our website.

Numerical Changes in SOMA Population Identifying as Black, by Block Group,\* 2010 to 2020



\*Includes residents who identified as Black alone or in combination with any other race.

Change in Integration in SOMA, 2010 to 2020  
Almost every block group became more integrated.



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### **Celebrating Integration: Advancing Racial Equity Together**

We were so grateful to this year's honorees: Abigail P. Cotler and Khalil G. Muhammad. They have given so much of their time, talent, and passion to the mission of the Coalition. Each one spoke that night about the importance of stepping up, volunteering, spreading the word about the mission, and about taking it seriously as we strive to achieve our next goals in racial integration, equity, and inclusion.



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