

The unsung heroes of America's long march to racial reconciliation have always been ordinary citizens working together to make a difference. The programs described here are the latest offspring of their legacy. We have much to learn from them. They offer us tangible proof that our vision of one indivisible Nation can indeed be realized. They show us that when people of goodwill join hearts and hands, we can free ourselves from the destructive grip of prejudice and discrimination. They illuminate new pathways of hope as we dedicate ourselves to building One America in the 21st century.

Bill Clinton

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*A*mong the most valuable activities sponsored by President Clinton's Initiative on Race was the identification of "Promising Practices for Racial Reconciliation." Across America groups of concerned and committed people are working effectively to facilitate constructive dialogues and to establish opportunities to bridge racial and ethnic divides. The list of Promising Practices includes community-based organizations at the local level as well as national organizations, all of which are carrying out important work related to racial reconciliation. These organizations and groups provide all Americans with examples of how we can successfully and fruitfully work together to overcome the historical obstacles of intergroup separation and distrust. The hundreds of organizations identified as Promising Practices also give us hope and inspiration for the future, for they serve as vanguards in collective and individual searches for ways to interact positively with others in our diverse society.

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Introduction

The President's Initiative on Race compiled information about efforts that are helping to fulfill President Clinton's vision of One America in the 21st century. These programs, called Promising Practices for Racial Reconciliation, represent the diligent, often volunteer, efforts of Americans who recognize that racial divisions and disparities are not easily overcome without focused action. The programs described herein illustrate the many approaches and pathways that can lead us toward racial reconciliation. We are grateful that the leaders of these Promising Practices have allowed us to showcase their organizations and programs as models that are making a difference.

For the purposes of this publication, we have defined a Promising Practice as an effort or program intended to increase awareness of racial issues, improve the lives of individuals who are affected by past and/or present discrimination, or eliminate racial prejudice and discrimination from societal institutions such as workplaces, schools, or retail establishments. These programs range from mentoring and tutoring support for people of color to innovative ways communities are banding together across racial lines. They may vary in scope, duration, and intensity, but all are making important contributions to racial reconciliation.

Racial reconciliation involves the healing of two aspects of American life. One is the racial divisions of our society; the other is its racial disparities. Racial divisions can be thought of as the barriers in our hearts and minds that lead to fear and distrust and perpetuate the racial stereotypes and misunderstandings that exist so often between people of different races. They manifest themselves in actions of overt bigotry as well as unconscious prejudice, and they are rooted in racial tensions in our country's history. Racial disparities cause the gaps in social and economic well-being that exist between the races. These disparities exist in education,

criminal justice, economic development, and health care. They are created not only through the discriminatory actions of individuals but also through the policies and procedures of organizations and other sectors of our society.

These programs demonstrate what leaders at all levels of public and private life can do when they commit themselves to finding common ground across racial lines. This publication highlights only a fraction of the community efforts working toward improving race relations. They were chosen because of their proven effectiveness and the valuable lessons they offer to all Americans. In the following pages, we provide you with some key characteristics used to assess the programs in this publication and some accompanying questions for each key characteristic that may help frame your thinking surrounding the work of racial reconciliation. (For a more detailed discussion of the methodology, citations of other program directories, and the program assessment worksheet, see Appendix B).

This document is best understood not as the final word, but as an important contribution to the country's ongoing dialogue about racial reconciliation. Quotations introduce every Promising Practice; those without attributions are from the programs' literature. We strongly believe this publication should be viewed as a reference tool to advance the work on racial reconciliation. Two other resources associated with the Initiative that we would like to bring to your attention are *Changing America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being by Race and Hispanic Origin*, produced by the Council of Economic Advisers, and the *One America Dialogue Guide*, produced by Initiative staff. For a complete list of all the Promising Practices highlighted throughout the year, please refer to *One America in the 21st Century—Forging a New Future: The Advisory Board's Report to the President*. These documents are on our Web page at www.whitehouse.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica.

Building the Framework: Key Characteristics for Promising Practices

During the course of the President’s Initiative on Race, we encountered a wide variance of opinion on just what is meant by a quality program working for racial reconciliation. We thought it would be helpful to begin with a brief description of the characteristics we looked for in our search for Promising Practices for Racial Reconciliation.

We reviewed each Promising Practice within the framework of eight key characteristics to ensure the program: promotes racially inclusive collaboration; educates on racial issues; raises racial consciousness; encourages participants’

introspection; expands opportunity and access for individuals; fosters civic engagement; affects systemic change; and/or assesses the program’s impact on the community. The program had to possess at least one of these characteristics.

Set forth below are the key characteristics and their definitions. Accompanying each characteristic are key questions used to assess the strength of each characteristic in a given program. As you read the compilation of programs, we hope this framework guides your thinking about the efforts being used to work toward racial reconciliation in America.

<p>Promotes Racially Inclusive Collaboration— creates opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration that fosters mutual respect and meaningful joint tasks between people who fully represent the racial diversity of the local population</p>	<p><i>Key Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program foster peer-to-peer collaboration across racial lines? • To what extent do the program participants reflect the full racial diversity of the local community? • To what extent is there full diversity among program managers and board members?
<p>Educates on Racial Issues— explicitly educates participants so that they can educate others about the importance of historical and contemporary facts regarding race, racism, and/or culture</p>	<p><i>Key Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program educate participants about the historical contributions of diverse racial and cultural groups and/or issues of racism in society? • Does the program educate participants about the personal impact of subtle racial issues such as unconscious prejudice, unearned privilege, and racism against one’s own group? • Does the program encourage participants to educate non-participants about issues of race?
<p>Raises Racial Consciousness— explicitly emphasizes program goals of reducing racism as well as lessening racial disparities and divisions</p>	<p><i>Key Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program explicitly take into account the unique perspectives of different racial groups? • Does the program encourage participants to see the connection between their activities and racial reconciliation? • Does the program raise participants’ awareness about the interrelationship between race and other societal divisions such as those based on gender, class, sexual orientation, and/or power?

<p>Encourages Participants’ Introspection— creates settings that encourage participants to examine their conscious and unconscious attitudes about race and culture</p>	<p><i>Key Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program directly encourage participants to examine and share their feelings about racial issues, including biases of which they may not be aware? • Are participants encouraged to explore connections between their feelings and race-related issues in society?
<p>Expands Opportunity and Access for Individuals— increases opportunity and/or access for those who historically have been excluded</p>	<p><i>Key Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program provide some resource(s) that help participants, particularly those from historically disadvantaged groups, increase their opportunity to attain success? • Does the program conduct followup sessions with participants to document their gains and to provide additional assistance?
<p>Fosters Civic Engagement— provides encouragement and opportunity for program participants and leaders to take action in addressing racial reconciliation</p>	<p><i>Key Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program provide participants with the skills to recognize racism and constructively engage others in discussions and/or actions that will foster racial reconciliation? • Does the program foster greater participation in civic causes that can promote leadership in racial reconciliation efforts? • Does the program include processes where established community and/or civic leadership can network with other people to address the causes and effects of prejudice and racism?
<p>Affects Systemic Change— reforms the ways in which organizations, institutions, and systems operate to lessen racial disparities and eliminate discrimination</p>	<p><i>Key Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program provide constituents/consumers tools to hold institutions accountable for practices that undermine racial reconciliation? • Does the program address discriminatory behavior by people whose decisions may perpetuate racial disparities? • Does the program include an effort to analyze and change the ways that policies and practices may perpetuate racial disparities and divisions?
<p>Assesses the Program’s Impact on the Community— measures an organization’s accomplishments, considers the challenges it faces, and reassesses the program’s desired future outcomes</p>	<p><i>Key Questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program attempt to assess the breadth and depth of its effect on people and/or organizations? • Does the program continually adjust its goals and practices to keep pace with changing local needs and racial demographics?