CREATING CHANGE WITH OUR OWN TWO HANDS

2006 Summer Youth Dialogues Evaluation Report
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Dedicated to the memory of

Phillip Vails

2005 Summer Youth Dialogues Youth Evaluator
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WITH MY OWN TWO HANDS

Ben Harper

i can change the world
with my own two hands
make a better place
with my own two hands
make a kinder place
with my own two hands
with my own
with my own two hands

i can make peace on earth
with my own two hands
i can clean up the earth
with my own two hands
i can reach out to you
with my own two hands
with my own
with my own two hands

i'm gonna make it a brighter place
i'm gonna make it a safer place
i'm gonna help the human race
with my own
with my own two hands

(From the Album: Diamonds on the Inside, Virgin Records, 2003)
INRODUCTION/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We start with the song “with my own two hands” as a theme for the 2006 Summer Youth Dialogues Program. Through this program, young people in the nation’s most segregated metropolitan area reach across traditional racial and ethnic boundaries to dialogue, discuss, and work with their own hands to create change in their communities.

The Summer Youth Dialogue program began in 2005 as a project of the National Center for Institutional Diversity at the University of Michigan. Funded by the Skillman Foundation and the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at the University of Michigan, the program brings together young people of African, Asian, European, Latino/a, and Middle Eastern descent, across city and suburb to dialogue on issues of race and ethnicity. Using a curriculum developed by the University of Michigan’s Intergroup Relations program, the Summer Youth Dialogues enables young people to explore their identity, conflict, difference and similarities across groups. University of Michigan undergraduates facilitate the dialogues.

In 2006, 67 young people from 12 community agency teams participated in the program. The participants represented five suburbs in addition to the city of Detroit. The participant breakdown was approximately 39% from the suburbs and 61% from the city. The racial and ethnic breakdown for the participants was the following: African American (36%); European American (18%); Arab American (16%); Latino/a (12%); Asian American (8%); and multi-racial (10%).
Participation in the dialogues had a powerful impact on the youth. Findings from the pre- and post-test surveys and the qualitative youth-led evaluation revealed the following four outcomes from participation in the 2006 Summer Youth Dialogues:

1. **Young people increased their understanding of their own racial and ethnic identities.**

   Although many young people came to the program with strong racial and ethnic identities, others had little or no identification with their own racial or ethnic identities. Through participation, they increased their own understanding of their identity and the complexity in which identified with their own racial and ethnic background.

2. **Young people increased their knowledge about others who are racially and ethnically different from themselves.**

   They gained content knowledge about what it is like for other youth growing up in the metropolitan area; and about race, ethnicity, racism, and segregation. They recognized their similarities, appreciated their differences, and develop new friendships.

3. **Young people increased their knowledge about racism as a force that affects them.**

   They became more sophisticated in their beliefs about racism and segregation, and this caused them to challenge some of their own ideas and practices. Although their levels of awareness about racism – especially institutional racism - varied before the program, many participants came to recognize racism more broadly in themselves, their families, their peers, and in their communities.

4. **Young people increase their awareness of how to take action against racism and segregation in their community.**

   Although some young people came with a pre-existing sense of how to create community change, many others developed their change-making skills as a result of the program. They responded that they gained in self-confidence and the
empowerment ability to create changes regarding issues of racism and segregation, and developed practical skills for program development and implementation.

Overall, participation in the Summer Youth Dialogues was a powerful experience for young people. They learned about themselves, others, and how to work together for change. In the process, young people discovered that they could be leaders and work “with their own two hands” to create a more diverse community.

This report contains the findings from the evaluation team. It includes quantitative findings from the pre- and post-test survey analysis and qualitative findings gathered by the youth-led evaluation team. Within the report are participant experiences and stories, and quotes from participant interviews and facilitator focus group. We have relied heavily on quotes from young people themselves in order to allow young people to speak for themselves about their participation. We also have included three visual mosaics called “Metropolitan Detroit through the Eyes of Young People.” These mosaics include pictures taken by the participants of their respective communities.

We hope you enjoy.
OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM AND ACTIVITIES

Metropolitan Detroit is the nation’s most segregated metropolitan area. As some suburbs increase in Asian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern populations, other suburbs are almost exclusively white European, and Detroit is largely segregated in its African American population. Young people are open to discussion of race and ethnicity, but have few opportunities to communicate with people who are different from themselves in such a segregated environment. New initiatives are needed for intergroup dialogue, without which racial tension will rise and democracy will decline.

The purpose of the Summer Youth Dialogues (SYD) program is to increase youth dialogues on race and ethnicity in the metropolitan area. This program enables young people to learn more about their own social identities and about others who are different from themselves. It develops intergroup communication and intercommunity collaboration across racial and ethnic boundaries, contributes to leadership development, and prepares young people for active participation in a diverse democratic society.

As stated above, the program’s objectives are to: (1) Increase youth dialogues on race and ethnicity; (2) Reduce racial segregation and social isolation; (3) Plan action projects that challenge discrimination, build relationships, and create change; (4) Build organizational and community capacity; (5) Prepare young people for new roles as group facilitators and agents of change; (6) Promote youth participation in public policy; and (7) Involve supportive adults in working with young people.

In 2006, 12 community-based agency teams participated in the SYD program. These teams represented five suburbs in three counties (St. Clair, Oakland, Wayne) in addition to the city of Detroit. The teams were selected by the SYD staff in conjunction with the advisory committee and funders. Participating agencies are responsible for selecting youth,

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1 Summer Youth Dialogues Proposal
2 Summer Youth Dialogues Proposal
3 Summer Youth Dialogues Proposal
providing adult support, securing facilities and transportation for participants, and serving as the fiduciary for youth stipends. The following community-based agencies participated in this year’s dialogues:

- Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), Dearborn, MI
- Arab American and Chaldean Council (ACC), Detroit, MI
- Canton High School, Canton, MI
- Detroit Asian Youth Project (DAY), Detroit, MI
- Detroit Youth Foundation, Detroit, MI
- Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development (LaSED), Detroit, MI
- Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit, Detroit, MI
- Rosedale Park Baptist Church, Detroit, MI
- St. Clair High School, St. Clair, MI
- Southfield Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council, Southfield, MI
- Farmington Hills Mayor’s Advisory Council, Farmington Hills, MI

Agency teams were paired with those of different racial/ethnic backgrounds to create six dialogue team pairings. In general pairings were made between groups that have historic difference with one another. Each team was facilitated by a University of Michigan undergraduate of the same race or ethnic background.

The 2006 pairs were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team Pairing #1</th>
<th>St. Clair High School</th>
<th>ACCESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Pairing #2</td>
<td>Farmington Hills Mayor’s Advisory Council</td>
<td>MOSAIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Pairing #3</td>
<td>Southfield Community Foundation</td>
<td>Arab American Chaldean Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Pairing #4</td>
<td>Detroit Youth Foundation</td>
<td>Detroit Asian Youth Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Pairing #5</td>
<td>Rosedale Park Baptist Church</td>
<td>La SED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Pairing #6</td>
<td>Canton High School</td>
<td>La SED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activities**

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4 La SED had two groups of young people participate in the program.
The 2006 SYD began with an Orientation program in June. During the orientation, young people, parents, and community allies gathered to celebrate each other, and discuss the roles and activities of the dialogues. Young people took the pre-test survey at this time for later evaluation.

Over the next nine Saturdays, the teams met to dialogue on race and ethnicity using the curriculum developed by the Inter-Group Relations program at the University of Michigan. The first two meetings of the dialogues were intragroup (within each agency team individually) and the final seven were intergroup (between two different agency teams) meetings between dialogue pairings. The curriculum for the dialogues included a variety of elements, but focused on the following, to: learn and practice dialogue skills; tell their stories and listen and learn from other group members; get to know each other personally; strengthen understanding of the relationship of their own personal lives with social group identities and multiple identities; identify differences and sources of conflict; explore similarities and differences between groups; experience conflict as an integral part of the learning process; discuss some concrete, contemporary issues involving these groups; generate ideas for action projects on which groups might work; and prepare for the campus retreat and metropolitan summit.

In addition to the dialogues, the teams also participated in a bus tour of Metropolitan Detroit to highlight the differences amongst groups and discuss the history of segregation in the region; a social activity at Kensington Metro Park; and community service activities.

The dialogues culminated in a three day retreat at the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor, where participants learned about action planning and developed proposals for action projects to address racism and segregation in their home communities.
METHODS

The evaluation for the SYD was a multi-level evaluation with both participatory qualitative and quantitative elements.

Youth-Led Participatory Qualitative Assessment

At the core of the evaluation was a participatory effort led by young people themselves. Five high school students, including past participants of the SYD 2005 program, participated on the evaluation team. The team was multi-racial and multi-ethnic and included young people from both Detroit and its suburbs.

The youth-led evaluation team began meeting in the late Spring 2006 to plan the evaluation. They focused on wanting to evaluate the program in relation to the way youth participants experienced race and ethnicity and their experience in the dialogues. Specifically the team focused on four key questions: What is it like to grow up in Metropolitan Detroit?; What do they think about race and ethnicity?; What was their experience like in the dialogues?; and What do they think about the future?

The youth-led evaluation used a variety of vehicles for gathering information for the evaluation. They interviewed selected participants about their experience in the dialogues. They gave each team a camera and asked the participants to capture on film what it was like to grow up in their respective neighborhoods. And, they asked participants to journal about what it was like to be a participant in the program. The team also asked one young person from each dialogue team to be designated as the evaluation leader. This young person served as the main liaison between their dialogue team and the evaluation team. Among their tasks included identifying youth team members to be interviewed and taking responsibility for the team’s camera for the photo element of the evaluation.

Once the information was gathered, the evaluation team met to analyze and extrapolate findings. During a day-long meeting, the team looked through the interviews, the journal entries, and the pictures to make sense of how young people experienced Metropolitan Detroit and how this related to their experience in the Dialogue program. They coded the interviews, developed themes, and then created an overall analysis of their findings. They then used the findings to develop a powerpoint presentation which was shown during the SYD retreat at the University of Michigan. The presentation drew on quotes, themes, and pictures which the youth evaluation team felt best reflected the lessons learned from the 2006 participants.
In addition, one of the undergraduate facilitators (who was a member of the evaluation team) conducted a focus group of her fellow facilitators. The purpose of the focus group was to gather information about the impact of the SYD on the participants from the perspective of the facilitators and assess the impact on the facilitator’s participation.

**Quantitative Assessment**

The quantitative assessment involved a comprehensive pre- and post-test survey. The survey included multiple scales aimed at measuring racial and ethnic identity, sense of a just and color-blind world, ability to handle conflict, and self-esteem. The specific scales used in the survey included: Conflict Questionnaire, Multigroup Ethnic Identity Scale (MEIM), Color- Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), and Global Belief in a Just World Scale (GBJWS). The survey was created in 2005 by a professional evaluator for the SYD program.

The survey was administered prior to the start of the dialogues during the orientation meeting and again after the end of the dialogues at the conclusion of the three-day campus retreat. In addition, the quantitative assessment includes findings from a brief evaluation of the participant’s experiences during the retreat.

A quantitative researcher was hired to enter and analyze the survey data. The analysis was conducted using a mixed procedural model with the SAS 9.1 system. The following variables were analyzed in the model: agency, time (pre-test and post-test), gender, SES, age, and agency x time. The outcome variables examined were: conflict, MEIM (overall scale and subscales), CoBRAS (overall scale and subscales), self-esteem, and GBJWS.
PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE:

TIFFANY

Tiffany is a seventeen-year-old African-American who has lived in Southfield since the age of three. She lives with her mother and enjoys high school life, but feels that her school is not diverse enough. She describes Southfield as a place for Blacks with money, and wishes that she could be exposed to a variety of people instead of just one race on a daily basis. During her time living in Southfield, she has witnessed a significant change in the demographics of her city; her neighborhood was originally half Black, half Jewish and Chaldean, but as time went on more African-Americans began to move in and the other races began to move out. She has witnessed first-hand the racism of some members of her community, and this has shaped her views in many ways.

Tiffany feels that race is more of a problem in society than a positive factor. She has seen how race divides and segregates us in her own community, so she believes that race is an issue that must be resolved. She realizes that many people consider race to have a strong affect on one's traditions and beliefs, and that most people relate best to others of their own race because they have been through some of the same experiences and struggles. However, Tiffany feels that if a person simply opens up to someone of another race and hears what they have to say, they will realize that everyone goes through the same trials and tribulations – all we have to do is be willing to talk.

Becoming involved in the Youth Dialogues program was just the outlet Tiffany needed to speak with other races and increase understanding between different ethnic groups. At first, Tiffany was nervous to meet the other group because she felt she had to avoid acting a certain way in order to combat the stereotypes she assumed the Arab group had of her race. Yet Tiffany herself had some preconceived notions of the Arab group: that the males wouldn’t open up to her because she is a female, and that they wouldn’t know English very well. When she met the group, stereotypes went out the window, and Tiffany immediately saw how much the two groups had in common – both are discriminated against in their daily lives simply because of things that had happened in the past (slavery for the African-Americans, 9/11 for the Arab-Americans). The dialogues made Tiffany realize that she had allies of all races in the fight against racism, and that she has even more in common with other races than she previously thought.

The Dialogues have given Tiffany hope for the future, because she has seen that the more you talk with another race, the more you can accomplish. She feels that more people must participate in similar programs, so that any racist views can be brought to the forefront and changed, instead of being passed down to future generations. People must learn to go outside their comfort zones in
order to see a change, in Tiffany’s opinion, and in her daily life she plans to try to teach others about the importance of opening up to people who don’t necessarily share your ethnic background.
PARTICIPANTS

Participant Demographics

Sixty-seven young people participated in the 2006 SYD program. Of the participants, 39% were from Detroit neighborhoods and 61% were from various suburbs of Metropolitan Detroit (see Chart 1 for breakdown of participants by community). As described previously, 12 community-based agency teams, comprised of participants from distinct racial/ethnic groups, participated in the program.

The mean age of participants was 16 (SD = .92), with a range of 14 to 18 years of age. The majority of the participants were going into grades 11 or 12 (72% of the sample) for the upcoming academic year (see Chart 2 for breakdown of participants by grade). Approximately, 41% of the participants were male, and 59% were female.

A majority of the participants (78%) were born in the United States. Those listing their birth as “outside the United States” listed the following countries as their birthplace: Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Thailand, the Philippines, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic.

The SES for the participants was roughly evenly distributed: 28.6% of the participants described themselves as coming from a lower SES background, 40.8% described a middle SES background, and 30.6% described a higher SES background.

The self-reported racial composition of participants (based on the sample from the pre-test/post-test) was as follows: African American (36%); European American (18%); Arab American (16%); Latino/a (12%); Asian American (8%); and multi-racial (10%) (see Chart 3 for racial/ethnic breakdown).

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5 Participant demographics are based on the population sample from the pre-test/post test, which comprised 49 individuals who completed both surveys. All demographic measures are self-reported.
6 Participant numbers include those who started late and those who left before the program’s end.
7 Individual participants’ socio-economic status level was measured using a composite of questions about family life and was also determined in relation to other participants’ SES levels.
Chart 1: Participants by Community

Chart 2: Grade Level Distribution of Participants
Their Description of Growing Up in Metro Detroit

The participants of the SYD program recognized that they live in segregated communities, and that segregation impacts the way they perceive their respective communities. According to the participants, almost all lived in neighborhoods that were segregated by race. Only 8.2% of participants reported growing up in neighborhoods that were of mixed racial and ethnic identities. Similarly, most participants described that their schools were also racially segregated (See Chart 4).

Chart 4: Neighborhood and School Composition as Reported by Participants
Many of the participants described that their attitudes toward their community have been shaped by racial and ethnic stereotypes:

- “As the Jews - or I don’t know if it was just Jews, I think it was Chaldeans too - as they moved out of the neighborhood, Blacks started moving in, and I heard the comment that Black people are like roaches, once one comes, a lot of people come. And I feel like whites or Jewish people feel like if they live in a neighborhood with Black people they really don’t want to be here because it’s not their priority, it’s not what they would want to do.”

- “Well I’ve never experienced any, but I don’t know if people would feel like... like if a Black family was to move in, in the neighborhood, there would probably be a lot of people who would talk about it behind their back and be like “No way... they’re moving here, in THIS neighborhood?” I just believe people would talk about that.”

From the participants’ perspectives, being segregated from one another impacts the way young people conceptualize their own identity. For example:

- “Races are divided though they try to make out like its not, it is...when I go out I’m always self conscious of how I present myself, especially when I go to “white places” because they look at me and base what I do on our entire race.”

This seems especially true for the European American participants, many of whom described that prior to the dialogues they never thought about race or their own racial identity:

- “It’s funny, when you think about it, whites usually aren’t asked what their background is and if they are, most of the time they cannot answer because of the numerous European countries they came from, but still they continue to question the non-Caucasian society surrounding them, which is a whole other topic”

In general, for the participants in the Dialogues, the lack of diversity within communities leads to a lack of knowledge about those who are racially and ethnically different. This seems to be exacerbated by parental and media influences.

- “I was not around many people so I thought what my mother thought. I was raised not to trust white people and to be wary of other races besides my own.”
“Well I guess...I’m far away from other types of races so it makes it hard to know about them and stuff...because I do live in St. Clair... so I guess I just don’t know too much about other races.”

“The media is all I have to work off of because that is the only thing that we are exposed to. The fact that I have to work off of that makes me feel really bad on the inside. I don’t like the fact that the media is the only connection I have to see and learn about other races. The media isn’t honest.”

“I feel like the media influences everybody’s opinion of race, not only mine! If you see somebody on TV who’s committing a crime, like a Black person, and you never met a Black person in your life, you’re going to assume that all Black people are criminals, because you don’t know Black people. So the media is some people’s, in certain cases, only outlet to another race.”

In addition, the youth evaluators discovered that a number of the participants of color had experienced at least one hate crime. This correlates with the statistic that hate crimes are rising in the state of Michigan. No doubt, this also has a strong impact on the way young people and their families experience race. Below are a few of the examples of hate crimes or fear of hate crimes as described by SYD participants:

“Yeah, one time, me and my mom (we just came to the states) Ahh we didn’t know much English. We were going to get some shopping from Kroger. And we were backing up in the car. There was a cart and a lady and we slid the brakes and the ice slipped the thing and we hit the cart—and it hit her cart, it did not touch her. She was like ‘you almost killed me, you Arabs’, and she threw the bottle at the window and it cracked. And uhh, she was really getting like dangerous. Some Arabic guy came and stopped it. She called us “sand n*****” everything you could think of... ‘go back to your country’ Just for that little mistake that didn’t even hurt her. And every person that is African American stood by her side. They didn’t even see, just came out of the store and said ‘no we saw it’.”

“I wouldn’t call it a hate crime, I would just call it someone’s ignorance. I was at summer camp one year, and it was like a talent competition, and this boy screamed out, ‘yeah, just like the n*****’ or something like that. I looked back, and I couldn’t believe he said that. I don’t think he saw me but just to see that somebody would say those words so openly and out where just everybody could hear them just kind of hurt me. [It happened] about two years ago.....When you see things on the news, well in the media, like if you see on the news that there’s a certain town that was historically known for the KKK being a major part of it, I would definitely feel awkward and kind of scared going into that town, like ‘who’s watching me? What are they thinking about me?’ and things like that.”
“They say that Detroit is the most segregated place in the US. I’m one of those people that are very paranoid. I always look behind me when there’s nothing really there. For a while, I did have weapons under my bed. I would always be ready; I thought about it a lot.”

Growing up in segregation with little access to learn about others is the norm for most young people in Metro Detroit. It is propelled by parental and media stereotypes, and leads to a lack of understanding. For some young people, it also leads to violence or fear of being the victim of a hate crime.

**Their Participation in the Summer Youth Dialogues**

The youth evaluators gathered information about the youth participant’s feelings about why they participated and what their feelings were about the process.

According to those interviewed, most young people participated in the program for a number of reasons, including the following: 1) they thought it would be interesting, 2) they were asked by someone to participate, 3) they liked to meet new people, and/or 4) they wanted to learn about another culture.

In general, many of the youth participants described that they had little or no experience or interaction with other races prior to the first intergroup dialogue. Some described that this impacted their perception of what would happen when meeting the other group. While a few kept an open mind, many drew their perceptions (about what to expect from the other group) from the media. For example:

- “I didn’t really know a lot about Latinos and Latinas before hand; I based my knowledge from stereotypes and what I see on T.V so I thought they all didn’t know how to speak English. As I work with them, I’m really glad I did because they are really easy to open up to and out going. Even though they are a different racial group than I am, we can relate with so many ways and I learn so much from them.”

- “My perception of the other group is that they’ll be rich and vain. I know this perception is wrong but the reason why I see it this way is because all of the images of white people on TV shows like the O.C. and Laguna Beach”

Some also said that their lack of knowledge about the other group impacted the way they interacted in the first intergroup because they didn’t want to fall into the stereotypes that others would have of them:
“At first, I thought that Arab people didn’t like black people, so I’m like, I hope they like me! I didn’t want to be a stereotype. I didn’t want to be what they expected me to be, I didn’t want them to be like, “oh yeah, she’s just like a black girl I see on television.” That was one thing I was really scared about, like I didn’t want to go in loud and obnoxious, like, “Oh yeah, she’s just like Monique off The Parkers,” you know? I didn’t want to be like that.”

In the beginning of the dialogues, many participants stated that they were shy and that it was difficult to really open up to the other group. They described themselves as sticking to their own group as opposed to mingling with young people from another race or ethnicity from the other agency team:

“To tell you the truth, I was very nervous in the beginning for some strange reason I thought the other group was going to be hostile toward us, but their politeness proved otherwise. There was this awkward silence on the table...”

“It was really awkward at first. At the first meeting, no one really talked or anything. I think it was because we didn’t really know each other yet and we didn’t really know what to expect from each other. At first we were like really quiet no one really said anything.”

In fact, some of the young people mentioned that facilitators really had to push them to talk earnestly about issues of race and ethnicity rather than just “sugar coating” the issues.

“Just the last dialogue, our facilitators brought up how our dialogues aren’t going very well and they described at as “sugar coating” everything that we say and I really thought about that and I discovered that I am not really opening up as much as I could be or should be and so I think after that our facilitators said we changed a lot and so the last dialogue changed me.”

Over the course of the nine weeks, however, the participants started to open up and they collectively built a level of comfort in which they could learn from one another. They worked through the curriculum, dialogued with one another, planned community service action projects, participated in the program’s social activities, and learned about race and ethnicity in Metropolitan Detroit.
METRO DETROIT THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUNG PEOPLE
The Youth Evaluators asked youth participants to capture their respective communities through photographs. Here is a mosaic of their pictures:
METRO DETROIT THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The Youth Evaluators asked youth participants to capture their respective communities through photographs. Here is a mosaic of their pictures:
Based on the evaluation, the SYD program had four major impacts on the youth who participated:

1) Young people increased their understanding of their own racial and ethnic identities;
2) Young people increased their knowledge about others who are racially and ethnically different from themselves;
3) Young people increased their knowledge about racism as a force that affects them; and
4) Young people increased their awareness of how to take action around issues of racism and segregation in their communities.

1) Young people increased their understanding of their own racial and ethnic identities

First, young people increased their understanding of their own racial and ethnic identities. While many of the participants in the program had strong racial and ethnic identities prior to this dialogue program, others had little if any identification to their own racial or ethnic background. Thus, it is apparent that for some, participating in the SYD program offered participants an opportunity to recognize the complexity of their respective racial and ethnic identities.

For the participants of European American heritage especially, it seems that their racial identification transformed to become one of ethnic identification. Many of the young people who identified as “Caucasian”, “white”, or gave no response in the pre-test survey identified themselves as “European American” in the post-test survey. One participant even identified him/herself as “North Central European American”.

For Asian American participants, many initially identified with their specific ethnic sub-group (e.g., “Korean American”, “Asian/Filipino”) in the pre-test survey and identified themselves as “Asian American” in the post-test survey. It seems that for some participants, being in the dialogue team in the SYD program influenced them to adapt the category of “Asian American”, which might be a reaction to the SYD program where these differences across ethnicities in a particular racial category are lessened in comparison to racial/ethnic differences in their partner dialogue team.

For participants who were unsure or ambiguous about their identities, it appeared that they were encouraged to be more specific and direct about their mixed heritage backgrounds. For example amongst the Latino/a participants, all noted
their specific ethnic subgroups in the pre-test surveys (e.g., “Dominican/Hispanic”), whereas some moved their identity to a broader “Latino/Hispanic” category in the post-test survey.

It is also interesting to note that two participants identified themselves solely as “American” in the pre-test and in the post-test identified themselves by a specific race and/or ethnicity (e.g., “American black” and “American, Chinese, Yugoslavian, French, & Irish”). It seems that for these two, participation in the SYD program increased the racial and/or ethnic complexity of how they self-identified.

For two groups, participation in the dialogues led to a reconceptualization of their community and the creation of a “new” community. During the post-test, the intergroup dialogue pair from St. Clair and Dearborn (ACCESS) listed their group affiliation as “Clairborn.” When asked about this, the Arab-American and European-American young people described the close ties that they had developed with one another such that they saw themselves as creating a new category through which to identify themselves.

We attribute these changes to learning in the curriculum of the dialogues that enabled young people to explore their own racial and ethnic background, but also to an appreciation of the broader political racial and ethnic groups of which they are apart. At the same time, young people developed strong relationships which allowed them to dream new possibilities for the future—such as “Clairborn.” Additionally, according to one of the facilitators, the dialogues helped young people develop their identity with a critical eye to the larger stereotypical messages from society, “It (the dialogues) has had a huge impact on the youth in developing their identity in today’s society. It also helps them be aware and examine what messages they are receiving from outside sources and figure out who and what they are about.”

2) Young people increased their knowledge about others who are racially and ethnically different from themselves

Secondly, young people increased their knowledge about others who were racially and ethnically different from themselves. They not only learned content knowledge about the subject of racism, segregation, and race and ethnicity, but they also learned about what it is like for other young people growing up in Metropolitan Detroit. They came to realize their similarities, appreciate their differences, and develop friendships along the way. Indeed, findings from the pre- and post-tests demonstrated that participants’ comfort level with conflict increased throughout the program. This suggests that participants became more able to learn about the experiences of others and challenge their own ideas.

Drawing on the words of the participants, they described their learning in the following ways:
“Well like if I wasn’t in St. Clair, maybe I wouldn’t even do Youth Dialogues, because I wouldn’t know (about diversity), I wouldn’t be as curious if I was in a more racially different school. I would know more.”

“I want you to know that I did learn a lot about being aware of other people and how segregation affects them instead of my own identity.”

“I think (the Youth Dialogues) has a lot of impact because coming in I thought a lot of things that were changed about Asians because that’s who we (worked) with. I thought they were quiet and were perfectionists and smart. They didn’t say they were stupid but they did not say that everyone was smart. They are a minority as much as I am.”

“Just meeting other people encouraged me to go out my community and be aware of racial issues. The privilege to come and be among so many other races was the learning experience I most appreciate.”

Among the things that participants stated was that they realized that they were more similar than different to the other racial group within their dialogue team pairings (that they had more in common):

“Yeah, maybe not just because it was social, but my favorite part was our break because we all got to talk to each about things other than racial comments and stuff and we just started talking about us and like what we like to do. And then we all realized how much stuff in common we actually had, and I feel like I gained almost friendships when we all like talking and laughing and you gain a sense of power like knowing, hey these people are like me and we’re having fun. And its kind of amazing and enlightening I guess.”

“I learned about other minorities and how we have so much in common. It will help me to be less judgmental.”

For example, one of the similarities that some participants, especially participants of color, described was that they came to realize that other racial and ethnic groups also faced discrimination. For example,

“I was nervous at first, but as we started talking we found similarities within our two groups, like what I go through on a daily basis they do too because of things like 9/11. People look at them like they’re inferior because of things that happened in the past as well.”
“Yeah, because I used to think that my community was the only one like this, was the only one that was majority-minority. The ACC people said the same thing, their community is 90% Arab and they live in Dearborn. I feel like people are going through the same thing and we need to just resolve it.”

Participant learning was facilitated by the relationships that developed during the dialogue sessions. Participants described that throughout the dialogue program they grew closer to those who were different from themselves and that this had an impact on their learning:

- “When these people opened up so much that they started crying. One of started to cry, two of them started to cry about a past racist time that they were reading about. That was really interesting cuz I’m thinking that—wow these guys are really opening up to us. And when I learned everything they experienced, I put myself in their shoes.”

- “I feel like we've become a lot closer, people are actually talking and expressing their views, because at first they were kind of scared and afraid that they were going to hurt people’s feelings. I feel like they’ve really come out of their shells, and [we’ve]come out of [our] shells.”

- “Now we’re all much more comfortable and we’re not worried about being politically correct, we’re just learning off each other and are more concerned with having the correct perception.”

3) Young people increased their knowledge about racism as a force that affects them

A third key impact was that participants increased their knowledge about racism as a force that affects them. While levels of awareness about racism and, in particular, institutional racism varied prior to entering the program, many young people across dialogue teams came to recognize racism more broadly in themselves, their families, their peers, and in their communities. They developed more sophisticated beliefs about racism and segregation, and in doing so began to challenge some of their own ideas and practices.

In the words of the youth participants:

- “First, I would like to say that through this program I started to understand what people mean when they say the white people automatically have privilege; this seemed a very foreign and close-minded idea at first, but I’ve begun
to see the sense in it. I still feel a little bit that I’m automatically the bad guy, but I want to grow as much as possible because I don’t want to be close-minded either.”

- “Everything now, I look at it, I know what’s racism and what’s not. If I gotta say something I watch myself, like cuz some comments really hurt, and they’re just like helping spread the racism across. And um, I really like this program and it’s really taught me a lot.”

- “[I came to realize that …] I think that racist people aren’t racist because it’s their choice, I think they’re racist because they don’t know and they’re ignorant. If someone teaches them and educates them and they’re smart enough to listen and learn, they’re going to be okay. They can figure it out themselves.”

- “I’m more conscious of racist jokes, I’m more careful and I realize that you don’t know who you might offend if you laugh.”

- “After the dialogues, I see that racism may have been more of a problem than I thought...”

- “Racism is a problem in our society today. If it weren’t we would not have programs like Youth Dialogues. If racism were not a problem, there would be a lot less segregation in the United States, especially in Detroit. The crimes some may consider hate crimes [at least those associated with race] would not happen. People of color would not be worried of being stereotyped by society. Racist jokes and slurs wouldn’t exist if racism didn’t. All these things are currently components of our society, which is why racism is a problem in our society today......”

- “They [family and friends] used to say a lot of racial comments and stuff like that to themselves. Since this [the dialogues], they haven’t anymore because they know now that it’s not that funny and they’re starting to understand and stuff now that I’m talking to them about this stuff.”

- “I have learned that I can’t live in my sheltered life and believe that the world is perfect and that class and racism doesn’t matter [which is] something my dad has always taught me...”

- “I learned that racism does exist, and it is almost as bad to deny its existence as it is to be racist. The program has in a sense ‘opened’ my eyes to the world.”

The pre- and post-survey results reflect this increased knowledge about racism and their attitudes about social justice and fairness. The survey used the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS) scale, a scale which asked young people to
measure the level to which they viewed the world in color-blind terms versus viewing the world in ways that take race into account. Similarly, the Global Belief in a Just World Scale (GBJWS) measured the level to which young people saw discrimination as being brought on by the individual versus as a result of a structurally unjust society. The pre- and post-test findings from the CoBRAS and the GBJWS suggest that young people who participated in the dialogues decreased their overall level of color-blindness and the extent to which they saw the world as being fair. This suggests that they became more cognizant of racism, institutional racism, and the general pervasiveness of racial discrimination in society.

There were some interesting differences in how agencies scored on the CoBRAS between the pre- and post-tests. It was not surprising that some of the teams who initially scored as “more color-blind” in the pre-test scored as “less color-blind” and therefore more cognizant of racism in the post-test. However, it was surprising to us that one team (ACCESS) who scored “less color-blind” and thus were more cognizant of racism in the pre-test, scored slightly more “color-blind” and thus seemingly less aware of racism in the post-test. We attribute this to the fact that these young people, who were very cognizant of racism prior to the dialogues, became more understanding of the transmission of racism when paired with a team from a small rural community who had never been exposed to Arab American young people. Thus, we suspect that over the course of the dialogues, ACCESS youth became more understanding of the experiences of young people from St. Clair who had little if no exposure to Arab American youth prior to the dialogues. This understanding is reflected in the comment by one young person from ACCESS who stated that he could now, “see it through their eyes that they have really no opportunity to learn about other races so we can’t hold it against them.”

Another measurable impact of the program was the sophistication in which young people were able to talk about racism. In the survey participants were asked “Do you think racism is a problem in society today? Please explain why or why not” (Chart 5 depicts the level of responses pre- and post-test to this question). In the pre-test, participants stressed ignorance as reason for why racism is a problem in society today. In the post-test, participants stressed that stereotypes, judging other people without talking to them first, and the covert nature of racism are reasons why racism is a problem in society today. The emphasis that participants put on the covert nature of racism in post-test responses indicates that participation in the SYD program became more sophisticated in their awareness levels. In fact, in the post-test responses, participants stressed that in order to alleviate racism, it is first necessary to recognize that racism exists.
4) **Young people increased their awareness of how to take action around issues of racism and segregation in their community**

A fourth impact of the dialogues was that young people developed their own awareness of how to take action around issues of racism and segregation in their communities. Although some young people came into the program with a sense of how to create change in their community, many others developed these skills as a result of their participation. In particular, young people described that, as a result of their participation, they learned practical skills for developing and implementing programs. They also described that they had a better sense of how to address issues of racism in their community. Most importantly, however, young people described the development of self-confidence and empowerment
needed to create changes in their community around issues of racism and segregation. Part of this ability to take action and create change came from developing concrete skills during the three-day campus retreat. The retreat included activities on brainstorming ideas and planning programs to address racism and segregation. At the end of the retreat, young people formed teams to create plans for how to carry out their action plans upon returning home.

According to the evaluation, young people felt very positive about their experience at the retreat\(^8\) (See Table 1).

**TABLE 1: Retreat Evaluations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percentage of participants who responded with “Agree: or “Strongly Agree”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The retreat helped me to better understand the issues discussed during my weekly dialogues.</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the retreat I developed skills on how to create an action plan.</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The retreat will help me to address issues of race and ethnicity in my community.</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the retreat I gained skills about forming coalitions.</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through the retreat, young people came to see themselves as part of a larger community who could, as a group, create change. Young people described a growth in their own confidence, empowerment, and ability to reach out to others:

- [Describing what she/he will take away from the retreat]... “I will take back a larger sense of belonging to a group of people who genuinely care about solving problems concerning race and ethnicity. I’ve been given further power and belief in myself to follow what I believe in.”

- “I learned that there is power in numbers. I learned that yes I can make change!! This program empowered me, gave me the resources, skills, and introduced me to others like me who want to change, but just don’t know how.”

- “I will take back: a stereotype free mind, a more outgoing person, and lots of new friends”

\(^8\) 58 young people participated in the evaluation of the retreat, including all 49 participants included in the pre- and post-test survey’s quantitative analysis.
“I learned how to get along with other people and find our common interest. I know during the retreat developing my action planning skills will help in my future career. I found a place where I could release my positive energy and enthusiasm on a creative project. I also met some good friends and expanded on my networking skills.”

“Just meeting other people encouraged me to go out in my community and be aware of racial issues. The privilege to come and be among so many other races was the learning experience I most appreciate.”

Overall, young people described that as a result of the dialogues, they now had concrete actions that they could take back to their communities.

“I know I can’t sit back and let people make my decisions for me, like I can’t sit back and let people say “well um, Arab people are mean!” I have to step up and tell them, “well, you don’t know that!” I feel like I need to speak up more and try to educate people because if you don’t then they’re going to be ignorant, and if they’re ignorant then that doesn’t solve anything, it’s just making the situation worse.

[Describing one concrete thing they plan to do as a result of the dialogues]… To tell people at my school and people that I interact with on a daily basis that their judgments are wrong! That you can’t base your opinions on something that you don’t know. You can’t base your opinions on something your mother said her friend said! You have to go for yourself. You can’t be somebody’s puppet, you have to figure it out for yourself. So I’m going to really express that to people and try to educate them.”

“I plan on taking back to my community a new understanding of what race and ethnic problems are. I also plan to inform myself more about public policy.…”

“I will definitely get my family, friends, and peers talking about racial/ethnic issues in Metro Detroit. And I will also try to get them involved in political action and public policy issues.
PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE:

VALERIE

Valerie is a Latina high school freshman who lives in Southwest Detroit. Her parents came from Mexico, so she has an especially strong connection to her heritage, and she says that the many trips her family has taken to Mexico have really shaped her personality and views. Her community and school are mostly made up of other Latino/as, but usually Valerie hangs out with the few African-Americans that go to her school. Valerie’s community is very traditional, as many Mexican immigrants to the area brought with them the ways of their native country. While Valerie has enjoyed experiencing her culture in this way, she feels as though she has been sheltered from many of the racial problems going on in the community around her.

When Valerie thinks about race, she automatically thinks about family. She feels that regardless of blood connections, other Latinos and Latinas are all related because they have gone through the same struggles. Members of her race are supposed to help one another out as brothers and sisters, no matter what. Valerie has experienced some racism, but she feels that living in a segregated community where almost everyone was of the same racial background has insulated her from many of the hardships that some minorities face. However, being friends with some African-American and White classmates has helped her to understand the views of other races.

Valerie was excited to start the Youth Dialogues in order to learn more about racial issues, but for another reason as well. She was in the middle of moving to a predominantly Black high school, and she felt that meeting with a Black group would increase her understanding and make her more outgoing when she starts school. The Dialogues changed Valerie’s perception that all Black people were “ghetto,” and also made her more conscious of the segregation that exists in Detroit. However, she oftentimes had problems relating to the African-American participants because she felt that they had been through more racial discrimination in their lives than she had, and that racial slurs for Mexican didn’t even come close to the n-word. Even so, now that Valerie has been though the Dialogues, she is aware of the discrimination that affects every racial group, and knows how to combat it.

The Dialogues made Valerie realize that change has to start in one’s own community. She sees how the older generation influences the younger one, so she knows that it’s important to work with people of all ages in order to have an effect on the entire community. Valerie has begun to see a need to change old ways and traditions in order to embrace people of every ethnicity, and she knows that she can be a positive example of tolerance and respect to all those who look up to her.
METRO DETROIT THROUGH THE EYES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The Youth Evaluators asked youth participants to capture their respective communities through photographs. Here is a mosaic of their pictures:
CREATING CHANGE WITH THEIR OWN TWO HANDS: CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SUMMER YOUTH DIALOGUES PROGRAM

“Thank you more because even though I can see that there is no major difference in my answers from the beginning and now...[on the pre- and post-test surveys].... I want you to know that I did learn a lot about being aware of other people and how segregation affects them instead of my own identity. I’m sure that there would be an even bigger growth. But what you’re not measuring is what I grew in the most, confidence, when I came into this I really barely talked my ideas and I’ve changed and I’m more confident and more willing to share and that is why I want to thank you.”

-youth participant

Participation in the 2006 SYD program had a powerful impact on the youth who participated. It is clear that, as a result of participation, that young people learned and grew in their own knowledge. They developed new understandings of their own identity and that of others. They became more cognizant of the forces of racism. They learned how to take action in their own lives, within their families, and in their broader communities.

Although the levels of growth differed, as some young people were more cognizant than others when entering the program and the program impacted participants in different ways, all seemed to experience some level of growth and change. The real power of the program can be seen in the individual changes--the everyday changes in themselves, their families, their peers--and the action plans that they created to begin to address system changes.

At the close of the SYD, most young people recognized the importance of what they experienced and how the dialogues and increased education would be beneficial for others. All seemed to want to envision a world that was different and to
work toward change. While ready to take action, there was a sense of fear among some participants of what would happen next--when the dialogues ended and the reality of living in segregated communities remained.

To the evaluation team this highlights the importance of programs like the SYD. It is a unique program that provides a space for young people to explore difference and a place to begin to make change. As one of the facilitators stated, “This program is especially important for these students because they are impacted by stereotypes and racial segregation every day. In no other space would they be allowed to speak freely about racial segregation with youth of a different race. This program will help break down walls between races, and since this is a young generation being impacted by this program it could have a profound impact on society in the future.” One of the directors of the SYD concurred stating that, “For a period of time we create a world that does not yet exist.”

Young people in Metropolitan Detroit are seeking this world. They want to have a chance to explore their ideas, and they want to be part of creating the change in their families and in their communities. The SYD helps young people to begin to make connections, develop knowledge, and create changes with their “own two hands.”

As one young person summed up the power of the experience:

If there is something I learned in this program, it is that racism still lives among us and within us. I saw it in the stories and experiences of others in this program. Before this program, I always thought of racism that applies to me [Muslim and Arab American]. But now I know how it feels for people of other races as well.....It is programs like this that spark revolution.... I never imagined that I would ever be part of a change or can contribute to it. This program has empowered me, gave me the resources and connections to make it happen. I am sure there are many out there just waiting for the opportunity to break out.... I will spread the message because change begins here!!!