



OUR STEPS TOWARDS RACIAL EQUITY

DIALOGUES ON RACE

CASE STUDY INFORMATION

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Mural, Billy Earl Dade Middle School, Dialogues on Race



Community Dialogue, UTD Central Trak, Dialogues on Race

DATE
January 19, 2016

CONTACT PERSON

Janeil Engelstad
TITLE

Founding Director

ORGANIZATION

Make Art with Purpose

ORGANIZATION URL

www.makeartwithpurpose.net



Dialogues on Race billboard, Christopher Blay and Gerardo Robles

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION ON CASE STUDY QUESTIONS

- 1.Has a representative from your organization participated in a Racial Justice Leadership Institute Training sponsored by Dallas Faces Race? YES
- 2.Did a representative from your organization attend the 2014 Facing Race Conference in Dallas? YES
- 3.What is your organization's area of focus? Using art, design and cultural programs to spark positive social and environmental change (aka Social Practice)
- 4.How many Dallas-area individuals are affiliated with your organization? 100+
- 5.Organization's constituents are... everyone, we have a broad reach that even includes programs for pre-K children whose parents participate in our workshops.
- 6.What geographic area does your organization serve? We are an international organization, the subject of this case study is a greater Dallas area project.

THE CHALLENGE

- 1.The Challenge your Case Study addresses is... lack of awareness and lack of opportunities for productive dialogue between different racial groups. local and national racial concerns; lack of opportunities for people from different backgrounds, ages, neighborhoods, professions, etc., gather and talk about race; and a lack of opportunities for arts and designers from different racial backgrounds to work together on a social justice project
- 2.What racial justice issue does your Case Study address?
- 3.Please describe the racial justice challenge you decided to address and why.



Hispanic and African American students working on Dialogues on Race mural at Dade Middle School with guidance of MAP Program Manager, Alpha Thomas

APPROACH

Please describe what your organization did to advance racial justice. What solution did you create and implement to address the Challenge?

Taking place across the span of a year, the first action of Dialogues on Race was a mural located inside of one of the entrances of Billy Early Dade Middle School in South Dallas. The students who designed and painted the mural (in total there were fifteen participants) were Hispanic and African American. Meeting five days a week from 9AM – 12PM the group created a work of art that explored their shared social justice history and celebrated four social justice leaders that the students wanted to honor: Martin Luther King; Harriet Tubman; Cesar Chavez; and Dolores Huerta. The project had two distinct areas of study that took place throughout the summer: the history of social justice and the design and creative aspects of producing a mural. The students also designed a public program to launch the piece to the greater Dallas community, which included the reading of essays that explained their part in creating the mural.

The second mural was produced from September 2013 – June 2014. Eight Hispanic students from Griener and Jose Garcia middle schools in Oak Cliff designed and painted the mural on two exterior walls of the office of the North Texas Dream Team, a social service agency that outreaches to Hispanic immigrants and undocumented people in need of legal and education services. The mural documented the journey from Mexico and Central America to the States and the pride of the student's personal narratives. The reception for this mural will be held in the fall of 2015.

Four teams of artists, each team made up of two people from different racial, and/or ethnic backgrounds, designed the four billboards. The billboard themes included: a statement about the recent killing of black men in Florida, Oakland and Ferguson; the common human genome, traced to ancient people in Africa, that people of all races share; the fact that people who receive human organ donations for transplant do not have to be the same race as their donor; and the experience of using the question,

“are Muslims . . .?” as an internet search engine query resulting in derogatory and racist content. The billboards were installed for four months, October 2014 – January 2015 in 14 locations throughout the greater Dallas metroplex.

The Dialogues on Race community conversation was held in the round in January 2015. The participants included the billboard artists and Roberto Corona, Community Outreach Coordinator, Embrey Human Rights Program, Southern Methodist University; Alia Salem, Executive Director, DFW chapter of the Council on American –Islamic Relations, Suzy Miller, Executive Director of Donate Life Texas, and Alpha Thomas South Dallas Community Organizer and teacher of the MAP mural program at Billy Earl Dade Middle School. Nearly 50 community members, including people from the arts and academia, government administrators, activists, and other professionals, attended the event.

RESOURCES & STRATEGY

1. What organization resources did you use to create your solution? MAP used \$20,000 in cash to help produce this year long program. Additionally, MAP used the expertise and counsel of policy experts and community activists that address race through their work. Their thoughts and ideas helped to shape and guide the project. This included Dallas Faces Race. The website was a productive resource and Program Officer Chantel Jones was helping in guiding us through a challenging time at Dade Middle School, when Latino and African American students were in conflict over issues connected to their race and ethnicity.

The staff and artists that MAP recruited to create cultural content and to help produce and manage the project brought years of experience and a wealth of knowledge in social justice work and the culture of Latinos, African Americans, Muslim Americans and Asian Americans. Please describe how you used organization assets to create and implement the solution. (i.e. activities, tactics, timeline)

Community resources that were instrumental in producing this project was collaboration with DISD (supporting the creation of the two murals); support from Clear Channel Outdoor (providing billboard space at PSA rates); and support from UTD, Central Trak providing people and space for our community dialog.

Additionally, the media coverage of this project helped to publicize it to a much larger audience, taking the conversation to people further and further outside of the liberal and cultural bubble.

2. Please describe how you used organization assets to create and implement the solution. (i.e. activities, tactics, timeline)

We used our collaboration building ability to create a project that engaged many different organizations, many who have not made this kind of work a centerpiece of their activity (e.g. UTD CentralTrak). This was then a platform for individuals, teams and organizations to meet each other – i.e. new relationships were created across missions, disciplines, race and ethnicity.

Opportunities for cross cultural engagement were built into the project. For example, the curriculum for the students creating the mural at Dade Middle School included lessons that illustrated the shared experiences and social justice history of African Americans and Hispanics. We also celebrated what is unique about each culture and how we can richen our own experiences by learning about the unique aspects of other cultures.

The time line for this project was a valuable asset as we were able to spread the project across a year, which provided extended exposure in the media – it kept the conversation going and MAP was able to continually reach an expanded audience



Dialogues on Race mural, adjacent to the office of the North Texas Dream Team, an advocacy organization for Latinos. Creating this outdoor mural in the midst of an active Neighborhood and business area generated many opportunities with community members about the mission of the overall project.

LIMITATIONS

What challenges did you face in creating and implementing the solution?

Race is a loaded issue and there are many different experiences and opinions about how we should talk about and work through opportunities and concerns. Work created by African American Artists, which raised issues of concern to that artist, was challenged and questioned by other African American artists as to being valid or worthy or truthful. Navigating the middle road of this conversation, as the project leader and a white person was challenging. At times I just listened, at other times I was able to raise questions, mostly I just held the space and that is something – to create and hold the space for the conversation to happen.

Time was a challenge – keeping to the timeline that I proposed to my funders, but in the end the fact that certain aspects of the project took more time than planned helped the project to have more staying Power, it tuned into an asset. Rather than abandon a group, and idea, a location (e.g. the Oak Cliff mural) we stayed committed to our vision, adapting to the needs and rhythm of the community.

SOLUTIONS

See above



Dialogues on Race billboard, Rebecca Carter and Daryl Ratcliff

BEST PRACTICES

Please share any best practices from your work that can be shared. (i.e. What worked?)

What I most appreciated about this project is that I was actually given the capital to create an in-depth program that reached across the city and valued people for their work. There is a long held idea that cultural programming should operate on a shoe string budget and I can tell that does not work when you want to institute change in equity and justice. This work needs the energy of capital behind it, much like a political campaign, or a sports team working to create a championship. Will, talent, commitment are integral, but you will only get so far if you do not have the financial resources to create an in-depth program where there is room for learning, adaption and change.

The most valuable thing that we can do as cultural producers committed to racial and social justice through our work is to create opportunities for collaboration, dialogue, exchange and audience engagement across race and ethnicities. With this platform exists spaces that would not be there otherwise. While valuable, each training, conference, round table, white paper on the issue that I have participated in or attended the greatest potential for a shift or change comes when I am doing the work. This change begins with me – with each project, I have been doing this work around the globe for over two decades I grow. What I learned in Dallas through Dialogues on Race I am implementing in other cities where the project is taking place.



MAP teaching artist Sal Barron with student muralist, Jasmine, Oak Cliff

LEARNED PRACTICES

Have you learned any valuable lessons or experienced any big challenges that can be shared with others? (i.e. I wish I'd known X before I started this)

As I continue to do this work, as a white person, I continue to evolve and deepen my understanding of my own racial bias. When I first began working with African American and Latinos I did so because I saw a need and the majority of the population that I was outreaching to were youth of color – homeless youth in NYC and then inner city youth, many of them former gang members in Los Angeles and Chicago. In my 20s, I was aware of the advantages that I had as a Caucasian, but I did not understand the depth of it and how my actions and inactions impacted racial equity. For example, while I saw and owned my advantages I would have never attributed the words “White Privilege” to the place that I occupy in society. It took some time to evolve to this place. As I have grown, not only in regards to my understanding of race and my own role in concerns connected to race, but in a deeper understanding of my truth, how I was shaped, that I choose my emotions, etc., ways of being, thought processes, biases, I continue to get to the root of these things as I do “the work”. Thus, years later, in “Dialogues on Race” my ‘stuff’ came up, but with time, experience, training, education and experience, I see that through it all, I was able to listen more deeply (to myself and others), express greater grace, deeper compassion, and thus deepen understanding. I take this experience and growth and use it to shape the next projects and programs – leading with an ever greater openness that is less threatened, less ego driven, emanating from the heart. In other words, I would share with anyone doing this work to honor and value their own process and stay committed – evolution happens.



Bus Shelter Poster, Los Angeles,
Taneisha Butler and Janeil Engelstad, 1999

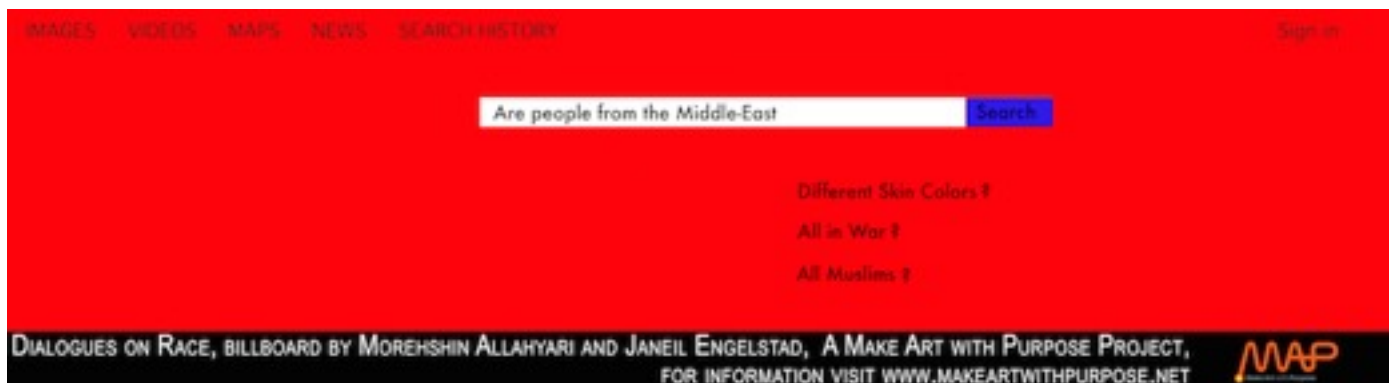
NEXT STEPS

What are your organizations highest priorities for racial justice capacity building? Please rank them with #1 being your highest priority.

1. Create opportunities for people from different racial and ethnic background to work together on projects that provide space for dialogue,, exchange, creative expression, learning, understanding and growth.
2. continue to grow and diversify our board of directors and staff.
3. Provide opportunities for board, staff and MAP affiliate artists to increase their racial equity knowledge.
4. Show up, even when I want to do something else, stay committed.

NEEDED RESOURCES

What racial justice resources does your organization need? Funding is the number one need this would allow us to continue innovative and successful programs as we as build our organization with a dedicated part – full time staff person whose role is to manage MAP programs that address inequity and other concerns connected to race. Additionally, opportunities and materials for staff and affiliate artists, most of whom are not going to seek this work out, they need support and hand holding.



Dialogues on Race electronic billboard, Morehshin Allahyari and Janeil Engelstad

MAP Social Media:

www.makeartwithpurpose.net

<https://www.instagram.com/makeartwithpurpose>

<https://twitter.com/makeartwpurpose>

<http://makeartwpurpose.tumblr.com>