

# NATIONAL DAYS OF DIALOGUE ON RACE RELATIONS

*Please join us for a facilitated dialogue on how we can increase understanding and cooperative action between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds in our community.*

di•a•logue: an exchange  
of ideas and opinions

di•a•logue: a conversation  
between two or more persons

Thursday, January 15, 1998  
Lutheran Inner City Ministries  
4219 NE MLK Jr. Blvd.  
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Sponsored by:

  
**METROPOLITAN  
HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER**  
1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Rm. 516  
Portland, Oregon 97204-1989

City of Portland  
Multnomah County

(503) 823-5136/Voice/TTY Fax 823-0119  
Email: mhrc@ci.portland.or.us



**Urban League  
of Portland**

Please RSVP to 823-5136

If you are a person with a disability who needs accomodation, please call at least 48 hours in advance.

**CAN  
WE  
TALK**

**?**

**IF THE  
SUBJECT  
IS RACE RELATIONS  
MAYBE NOT!**

# WE NEED

Participate in  
Dialogue on  
January

National Days of  
Race Relations  
14-19, 1998

# TO TALK

## **We Need to Talk, And Listen, And Work Together, Our Country's Health and Vitality Depend on it!**

From January 14th through 19th, 1998, the five days preceding the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, thousands of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds will come together for the first **National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations.**

In small groups, in their own communities, these concerned citizens will take time to:

- Increase understanding between citizens of different racial and ethnic groups.
- Strengthen personal relationships with others who are committed to improving race relations, and
- Identify specific ways to work together.

Each dialogue will be tailored to meet local needs, yet they'll all have certain things in common:

- They will be structured conversations that emphasize respect, listening, and the importance of common ground.
- The dialogues will take place in small groups, which will allow every voice to be heard.
- An experienced facilitator will create a "safe space" for participants to talk openly.

## **How will these dialogues lead to real change in the long run?**

National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations will not be a "one time deal." As participants move through their experience of dialogue, the following question will be at the center of the conversation:

"How can we increase understanding and cooperative action between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds in our community?"



Dialogue facilitators will keep careful records of the answers that their groups develop. Then, using the answers from each group, concerned citizens and community leaders can begin developing specific action plans. Action stimulated through community dialogue, or a series of dialogues, is much more likely to have united community support.

## **Who's organizing this national program?**

During the past few years, numerous organizations throughout the country have been working to improve interracial communication. For National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations, many of these groups are uniting to issue a joint call for meaningful dialogue. The Days of Dialogue offer an opportunity to build on what has already been done and to invite others to join in these ongoing efforts.

Groups cooperating to help organize the **National Days of Dialogue of Race Relations** include:

Faith and Politics Institute  
Leadership Education for Asian Pacific s (LEAP)  
Los Angeles Days of Dialogue  
National Association for Community Mediation  
Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR)  
Project Victory  
National Council Of La Raza  
National Urban League

## **Here's How You Can Help!**

The National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations can be the start of real positive change in communities across our nation. Here are some steps you can take to ensure the project's initial success and continuing impact in your area.

### **You can:**

- Participate in a dialogue in your community,
- Tell others about the National Days of Dialogue,
- Help organize local dialogues,
- Make a donation to support this national organizing effort,
- Make a personal commitment to participate in ongoing dialogue and cooperative action in your community.

Want to get involved?  
Need more information?

Contact the National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations organizing office in Washington, DC:

National Days of Dialogue  
1322 18th St. NW #26  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 822-6343  
Dialogdays@aol.com



## **National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations**

National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations is a coordinated effort by several national organizations to invite people throughout America to join in community dialogues on race relations in the five days preceding the Martin Luther King Holiday in January of 1998. Among the groups are the National Urban League, the National Association for Community Mediation and the Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR).

The overall purpose of the event is to bring citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds together for dialogues which seek to increase understanding and cooperative action in local communities. Hundreds of facilitated dialogues will take place in schools, churches, homes, businesses, and community organizations in cities throughout America.

**The Metropolitan Human Rights Center and the Urban League of Portland are sponsoring a local evening of dialogue on January 15 from 7 to 9 P.M. at the Lutheran Inner Cities Ministries, 4219 N. E. Martin Luther King Blvd.**

Please join other members of the community to share insights as we discuss the question: *"How can we increase understanding and cooperative action between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds in our community?"*

Please call the Metropolitan Human Rights Center at 823-5136 if you plan to attend.

 METROPOLITAN HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER  
1120 SW Fifth Ave. Rm. 516  
Portland, OR 97204-1989

City of Portland/Multnomah County

January 2, 1998

Mayor Vera Katz  
1400 SW Fifth Avenue Room 501  
Portland, Oregon 97204

Dear Mayor Katz,

**The Metropolitan Human Rights Center and the Urban League of Portland are sponsoring a local evening of Dialogue on Race Relations on January 15 from 7 to 9 P.M. at the Lutheran Inner Cities Ministries, 4219 N. E. Martin Luther King Blvd.**

The event is part of the National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations, a coordinated effort by several national organizations to invite people throughout America to join in community dialogues on race relations in the five days preceding the Martin Luther King Holiday in January of 1998.

The overall purpose of the event is to bring citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds together for facilitated dialogues which seek to increase understanding and cooperative action in local communities.

We invite you to join other members of the community to share insights as we discuss the question: *"How can we increase understanding and cooperative action between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds in our community?"*

We realize that this is very short notice, especially given the busy schedules of elected officials. We will be sending out a report of the proceedings to all of the participants. We will be happy to send you a copy. Please let us know if you or any of your staff will attend by calling 823-5136.

Thank you for your continued support of the Metropolitan Human Rights Center.

Sincerely,



Helen Cheek  
Director

bc with distribution (on reverse) and enclosures:

*from Suri*

## **AGREEMENT FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

*Talk about public issues can bring out strong emotions, because many of our beliefs are a large part of how we identify ourselves. ~~You~~<sup>We</sup> can respect another's feelings without necessarily agreeing with the conclusions that person has come to.*

**Look for the value in what each person is saying**, honoring the highest intent of the speaker.

**Stay open** to views and experiences that differ from your own.

Speak your mind freely, but **respect time limits** so that all may have opportunity to speak.

**Stay focused** on the topic the group has agreed to discuss.

**RESPECT** requests for confidentiality from people within the group.

*Remember, we are here for dialogue, not debate!*

In *dialogue*, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning and find agreement.

In *debate*, one listens to the other side to find flaws and to counter its arguments.

In *dialogue*, finding common ground is the goal.

In *debate*, winning is the goal.

*Your cooperation is requested throughout the dialogue.*

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# National Days Of Dialogue On Race Relations

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1322 18th St. NW, #26, Washington DC 20036

Phone (202) 822-6343, Fax (202) 822-9828

Dialogdays@aol.com

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November 18, 1997

Dear Friends:

We are pleased that you are interested in participating in the National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations taking place January 14-19, 1998. The events organized around this week will provide an opportunity for individuals and organizations to highlight the efforts that are already underway in communities across America and to broaden the community of people committed to race relations.

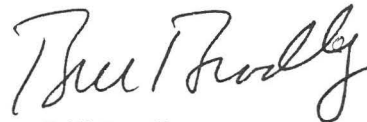
In a world that is more and more frequently dividing along ethnic and racial fault-lines, the inherent diversity of American society is one of our greatest strengths. But that diversity also challenges us every day to find common ground as we interact with one another. By participating in the National Days of Dialogue, you will be joining tens of thousands of other Americans in building a broader dialogue on the universal values that unite us.

Thank you for your commitment to join this effort and for your leadership in taking this important step to increase understanding and cooperative action across racial and ethnic lines.

Best wishes,



Mark Ridley-Thomas  
National Co-Chair



Bill Bradley  
National Co-Chair

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# National Days Of Dialogue On Race Relations

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1322 18th St. NW, #26, Washington DC 20036

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT NATIONAL DAYS OF DIALOGUE ON RACE RELATIONS JANUARY 14-19, 1998

### **What is the purpose of National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations?**

National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations is a coordinated effort by several national organizations to invite people throughout America to join in community dialogues on race relations in the five days preceding the Martin Luther King Holiday in January of 1998. The overall purpose of the event is to bring citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds together for dialogues which seek to increase understanding and cooperative action in local communities.

### **Why is it so important to have dialogues between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds?**

Dialogue is an essential ingredient in our nation's ongoing endeavor to improve race relations. Respectful dialogue that emphasizes listening and seeks to identify areas of agreement is one of the most effective ways to bridge the divide that separates Americans of different races and ethnic backgrounds. Dialogue creates understanding that can serve as the foundation for personal relationships. Dialogue changes people because it informs and sensitizes them to other points of view. Dialogue can also change communities---and our nation---if the common concerns that are identified become the basis for cooperative action.

In addition to increasing understanding and cooperation, dialogue creates a context in which people can develop empathy and compassion for each other. At the heart of dialogue is the ethic of the Golden Rule which compels us to treat each person the way we would like to be treated. Dialogue helps people to see each other as unique individual---not just as someone who is a particular color, race, or creed.

### **What will actually happen during the Days of Dialogue?**

From Wednesday, January 14 to Monday, January 19, 1998, hundreds of facilitated dialogues on how to improve race relations will take place in schools, churches, homes, businesses, and community organizations in cities throughout America. Most dialogues will be between two and three hours in length and they will be structured around a basic format that emphasizes listening, mutual respect, sharing time equitably, and the importance of focusing on common ground. Each dialogue will also have a facilitator who makes sure the dialogue ground rules are followed and that the group stays focused on its purpose.

### **What will people talk about in these dialogues?**

Dialogues will focus on local issues and concerns and will undoubtedly cover a range of topics. At the same time, all participants will be asked to discuss a central question that is at the heart of the National Days of Dialogue. That question is:

*“How can we increase understanding and cooperative action between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds in our community?”*

Citizens will be encouraged to talk openly about what is happening in their city and to share ideas about what could be done to improve race relations. Records will be kept of the insights and suggestions that are identified, and a report will be produced on each dialogue.

### **What is the intended result of all of these community dialogues?**

These National Days of Dialogue are not intended as a “one shot deal” which gets attention and then fades away. On the contrary, the purpose is to help lay the groundwork for the ongoing cooperation that is needed to solve difficult problems that exist in our local communities. The Days of Dialogue can do this by producing four specific results.

1. A greatly increased understanding of the importance of inter-racial dialogue and cooperative action;
2. Improved relationships between key leaders of different races and ethnic backgrounds;
3. Ideas for specific action projects which address common problems; and
4. Identification of a network of people who are committed to ongoing efforts to increase understanding and cooperation

### **Who is organizing the National Days of Dialogue?**

The plan for these National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations has grown out of numerous successful community dialogue campaigns that have taken place during the past few years. Several of the national groups that have helped to organize these local efforts are now working to create dialogues simultaneously in cities across the country. Groups cooperating to organize these Days of Dialogue include: the Faith and Politics Institute, Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP), Los Angeles Days of Dialogue, National Association for Community Mediation, National Council of La Raza, National Urban League, Project Victory, and Society for Professional in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR). In addition, many other national organizations are assisting the organizing effort by sharing information with members across the country.

The national co-chairs of the Days of Dialogue are Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas and former Senator Bill Bradley. Many other prominent individuals throughout the country are also actively supporting this effort.

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# National Days Of Dialogue On Race Relations

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1322 18th St. NW, #26, Washington DC 20036

Phone (202) 822-6343, Fax (202) 822-9828

Dialogdays@aol.com

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November 18, 1997

Dear Days of Dialogue Supporter,

This Organizing Kit has been developed for those who are interested in helping to create community dialogues during National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations, January 14-19, 1997. This kit includes:

- Basic information about National Days of Dialogues on Race Relations,
- General suggestions about how to invite people to participate,
- A description of the type of dialogues we want to organize,
- Forms which you can use to plan your activities,
- Some brochures which you can use to invite people to participate, and
- A flyer with questions and answers about National Days of Dialogue that can be easily reproduced.

In addition to this Organizing Kit, we are preparing a Facilitator's Manual which can be used to lead the dialogues that will take place in January. This Facilitators Manual will provide a variety of ideas about ways for participants to discuss race relations in your community. It will also explain how to gather information about the insights and suggestions that emerge from each dialogue so that they can become the basis for future cooperative action. This Facilitators Manual will be available in mid-December and will be free of charge.

Thank you for your interest in National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations and for anything you can do to help create dialogues in your community. Please let me or others in our organizing office know if there are specific ways we can assist your efforts.

Sincerely yours,



Theo Brown  
Project Coordinator

City\_\_\_\_\_

## KEY CONTACT LIST

Compile a list with the names, addresses and phone numbers of key people in your community who need early notification about National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations. This list should include individuals who are already involved in efforts to achieve understanding and cooperation across racial and ethnic lines as well as leaders from various areas of community life, including: local government, education, religion, business, ethnic organizations, and miscellaneous civic groups.

Local Government Officials- (Local elected officials and representatives of key agencies)

Education (School board members and/or staff, teachers' unions, principals, university administrators, professors and/or student leaders.

Religion (Ministers, priests, rabbis, and leaders of other religious organizations)

## LOCAL ORGANIZING PLAN

In \_\_\_\_\_, we will contact the following groups and individuals in  
(city)  
our efforts to organize community dialogues.

### 1) Dialogues Within Existing Groups

<u>Group</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>
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### 2) Dialogues Which Bring Together Two (or More) Similar Groups

<u>Group</u>	<u>Contact Person</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>
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# **COMMUNITY LEADER DIALOGUE**

## **PLANNING FORM**

**Date & Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Examples of Individuals To Invite :**

- Ministers, priests and rabbis from prominent congregations
- Representatives of ethnic organizations representing citizens of many different backgrounds, such as: Chinese, African, Mexican, Eastern European, Vietnamese, Arabic, Japanese, Caribbean, Irish, Salvadoran, Korean, etc.
- Leaders of business associations and heads of specific companies
- Local elected and appointed officials
- Professors, teachers, and administrators in both public and private educational institutions
- Leaders of important neighborhood organizations
- Local representatives of major national civil rights organizations

**List the names, addresses, and telephone numbers below (and on other attached sheets if necessary) of those who will be invited to attend a community leader dialogue.**

**Name**

**Address**

**Phone**

# **SUGGESTIONS OF GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS TO CONTACT ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL DAYS OF DIALOGUE ON RACE RELATIONS**

## **Existing Groups and Organizations That Might Want To Sponsor A Dialogue**

- Secondary schools (public and private)--social studies classes, student government, parent-teacher associations
- Colleges and universities--student government organizations, classes in relevant subjects (government, sociology, history, ethnic studies, etc.)
- Churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious institutions
- Youth organizations--YWCA, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, recreation centers, etc.
- Government offices--Employees in various federal, state and local government agencies
- Business--Companies, factories, private offices and other places of employment

## **Groups and Organizations That Might Want To Pair With Others For A Dialogue**

- Students from an historical Black college and a local state university
- Members of congregations that are primarily African American, White, Latino and/or Asian American
- Business associations that are made up of business people of a particular ethnic group
- Professional associations (such as social workers, journalists or lawyers) that represent specific ethnic groups
- Clergy who represent primarily African American, White, Asian American and/or White ministerial associations.
- Community associations that represent adjoining neighborhoods
- Members of a synagogue and an African American church

## Master List of Available Facilitators

Many people in your community are trained as dialogue facilitators (i.e. people affiliated with local mediation centers or members of Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution) and others (such as ministers, teachers, counselors and social workers) may have experience that makes them qualified to lead these dialogues. Make a list below of those who have agreed to serve as dialogue facilitators.

Name

Address

Phone

## Sample Invitation Letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to invite (organization name) to participate in National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations which will take place on the five days preceding the Martin Luther King Holiday, January 14-19, 1998. These Days of Dialogue are being organized in communities across the country in order to involve more people in the important task of improving relations between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds.

Although the focus of these National Days of Dialogue is on coming together to talk and listen, the ultimate goal is community action. It is increasingly obvious that understanding and cooperative action across racial lines is essential to the future success of our city---and our nation. The programs organized during these national Days of Dialogue will focus on specific things that can be done to improve race relations in (name of city). All groups participating in these dialogues will be asked to consider the same central question: "How can we increase understanding and cooperative action between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds in our community?"

There are several ways that you and other members of \_\_\_\_\_ can participate in National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations. You can schedule a dialogue (or more than one) with members of your group. This dialogue could be at a regular meeting you have scheduled in mid-January or you could invite some of your members to attend a special program during the Days of Dialogue. Another possibility is to pair with a group or organization that is similar to yours, but that has members who are of a different race or ethnic background. For instance, you could pair with \_\_\_\_\_ and invite representatives of your two groups to meet together.

I hope you will take advantage of this important opportunity and schedule a dialogue during (or close to) the National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations. If you are interested, contact me at \_\_\_\_\_ and I will give you more information and do what I can to help you set up your program. We have materials you can use to guide your discussion and experienced facilitators who are available to lead the dialogue. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

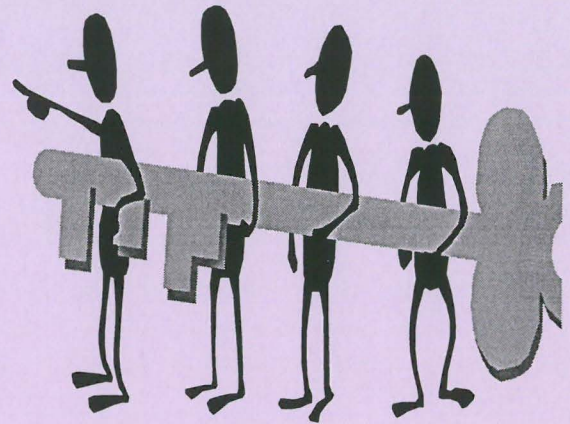
# The Dialogue Model

## Why Do We Need Facilitated Dialogue?

It is important to have conversations on race relations, but it is often difficult to do so. Discussions which focus on race can evoke strong emotions and many people are reluctant to take part in them. Some fear that the conversation will become heated, contentious and confrontational. Others are afraid they will say the wrong thing and be perceived as insensitive or "politically incorrect." As a result, discussions of race relations that are open, candid and respectful are far too limited.

Because of these difficulties, it is helpful to approach conversations about race with a dialogue model that helps break some of the patterns people fall into and that emphasizes the importance of talking openly with each other in a respectful manner. Dialogues that emphasize the importance of looking for ways to work together also help participants focus on what they have in common rather than what divides them.

# Dialogue is the **Key** to Democracy



## **Values inherent in the dialogue model**

The dialogue model that will be used during National Days of Dialogue is based on values that are at the heart of our democratic system. These values also reflect many of the core spiritual beliefs that are found in the world's great spiritual traditions.

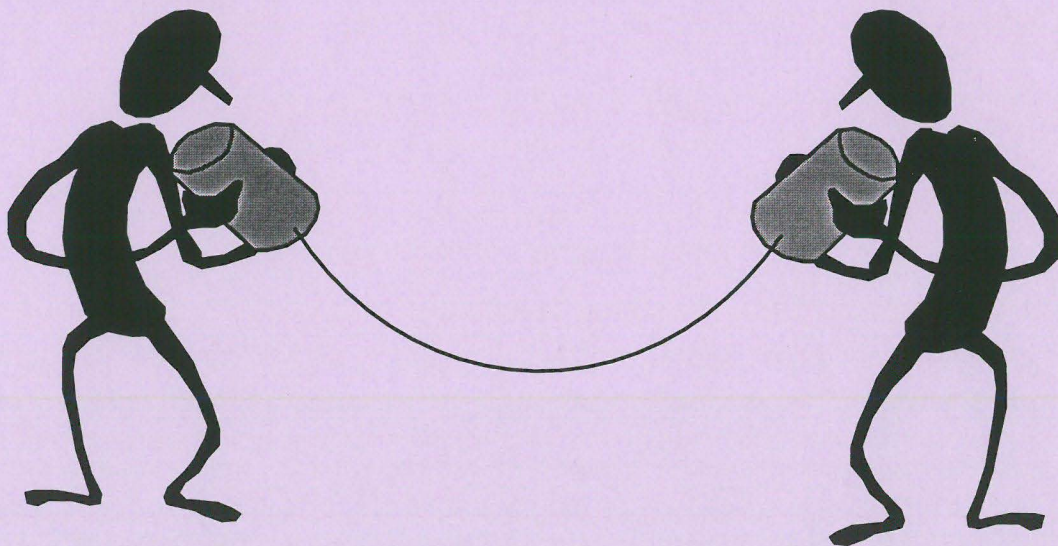
Dialogue affirms the democratic principles of our society because it emphasizes the need for each citizen to help find solutions to the problems we face and underscore the importance of every person's views. Dialogue, like democracy, is based on the premise that the decisions we make as a society are always better when an informed public is actively involved in making them.

Facilitated dialogues also embody many spiritual values. In many ways, dialogues are structured around what we often call "The Golden Rule." That is, dialogues seek to create interactions in which participants treat each other the way they would like to be treated. This important insight about how people should relate to each other is the basis for a whole range of values, including: respect, honesty, fairness, cooperation and forgiveness.

## Four Characteristics of Facilitated Dialogue

There are four basic characteristics of the dialogue model that will be used during National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations. Dialogues with these characteristics have been conducted successfully in numerous cities across the country by a wide variety of organizations. In this model, the topic, format and focus may vary, but all dialogues have the following elements in common:

1. The clearly stated purpose of increasing understanding and cooperation,
2. A set of ground rules that emphasizes respect, listening, honesty and the importance of sharing time equitably,
3. A facilitator who conducts the meeting according to the ground rules and helps to keep participants focused on their purpose, and
4. The use of questions and discussion exercises to help structure the dialogue.



## Dialogue Structure and Format

**The format used for the dialogues will vary somewhat depending on the individuals and groups involved and the scope of what they hope to accomplish.** Organizers of each dialogue will have to make decisions about the number of participants, the length of the dialogue, where the dialogues will be held, and whether the dialogue is a one time event or part of a series of meetings.

**Facilitated dialogues on race relations generally work best when they take place in small groups of 10-25 people.** In dialogues of this size, it is easier for each participant to be heard and to develop personal relationships that can be of value in many future interactions. Groups larger than 25 can also have effective dialogues, but they may want to consider a format where participants divide into smaller groups during at least some of the time they are together.

**Most dialogues will vary in length from two to four hours and groups will need to decide what is appropriate and/or possible for them.** Generally, two hours is the minimum time needed to get to know each other and still have adequate time to begin exploring the views of those present. Many groups will need even more time and dialogues that are closer to three hours (or maybe even longer) will usually be more successful at generating full participation and open sharing.

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**The location and setting for each dialogue also has a significant impact on the outcome that is achieved.** Dialogues are most effective when they occur in places where participants feel comfortable and where an informal atmosphere encourages open and honest responses.

**Groups participating in National Days of Dialogue also need to decide whether they want to have one dialogue or arrange a series of dialogue sessions.** Some groups may know in advance what they want to do and others may not be certain until they have participated in a dialogue. For organizing purposes, it will usually be easier to get people to commit to one dialogue and those who want to do more can later arrange other sessions.



**Juggling the  
Tasks & Logistics  
of a Dialogue  
is Easy with a Little  
Structure & Planning**

## Dialogue Results

Just getting concerned citizens together to talk about how to improve race relations in their communities can be of great value. A good dialogue can improve understanding and help to build relationships that can be valuable in many future situations. At the same time, **dialogues are generally more effective if they emphasize the importance of ongoing efforts to improve understanding and cooperation across racial lines.**

One of the goals of each dialogue that will take place during National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations will be to identify specific ideas about how citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds can work together in the future. In order to do this, dialogue participants need to keep records of the common insights and/or specific ideas that are identified during their time together. This can be done by asking one or two participants to keep basic notes or by getting a few volunteers to work together after the dialogue to compile a summary of the major points that were raised.

**The written summaries for each dialogue will be collected by National Days of Dialogue organizers and put together with others in the same community.**

**The result will be a report which identifies the most common suggestions about how citizens can deepen understanding and work together in the future.** These dialogue reports will be shared with local and/or national groups that have an interest in supporting ongoing cooperative action.



**NATIONAL DAYS  
OF DIALOGUE  
ON RACE RELATIONS**

**JANUARY 14-19, 1998**

**ORGANIZING KIT**



# Overview of National Days of Dialogue On Race Relations

## Purpose

National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations is a coordinated effort by several national organizations to invite people throughout America to join in community dialogues on how to improve race relations. These National Days of Dialogue will take place during the six days leading up to and including the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday in January of 1998.

The groups and individuals organizing National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations believe that race relations will not improve in our country until many more citizens take personal responsibility to make that happen. Therefore, **the primary goal of National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations is to significantly increase the number of people in communities across the country who are involved in efforts to improve understanding and cooperation between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds.**

## What National Days of Dialogue Can Do

To achieve its purpose, those working to promote National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations will do three basic things:

1. Highlight and support existing community efforts to promote interracial dialogue,
2. Invite large numbers of citizens to become involved with dialogues which increase understanding and cooperative action between people of different races and ethnic backgrounds, and
3. Help dialogue participants identify specific ways they can work together in the future.



**National  
Days of Dialogue  
wants to help  
community efforts  
take off!**

## **Origin of National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations**

The plan for these National Days of Dialogue has grown out of several successful community dialogue campaigns that have taken place during the past few years. Examples of these local efforts include the Days of Dialogue that were organized in Los Angeles after the O.J. Simpson trial and a variety of other similar dialogues organized in cities around the country by groups as varied as the National Conference, the Faith and Politics Institute, Project Victory, the Study Circles Resource Center and local chapters of the Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR).

Early in 1997, representatives of some of the groups involved in these local efforts began to talk about how to build on these endeavors and highlight opportunities for citizens across the country to participate in similar dialogues. It was suggested that the days preceding the Martin Luther King holiday would be an excellent time to conduct a nationwide effort to involve more people in dialogue and, shortly after that, the idea for National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations was born. Organizers from several different groups then began to work together to develop the plans for National Days of Dialogue and generate the resources needed to create them. By the end of August, enough support had been found to make this idea a reality and, after Labor Day, organizing began for the National Days of Dialogue.

## Key Individuals and Participating Groups

The Los Angeles Days of Dialogue organization has played a central role throughout the planning process and the success of the programs they organized in the fall of 1995 has inspired much of the planning behind National Days of Dialogue. The leader of that effort, Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, has agreed to serve as a Co-Chair for these National Days of Dialogue and he is joined in that leadership role by former Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey.

Several national organizations that have broad experience creating dialogues on race relations are also cooperating in this endeavor, including:

- Faith and Politics Institute
- Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP)
- National Association for Community Mediation
- National Council of La Raza
- National Urban League
- Project Victory
- Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution (SPIDR)

These organizations have created a national organizing office to support the efforts of all the groups involved and to help organize the various dialogues that will take place across the country. An organizing center has been established in the Project Victory office in Washington, D.C. and Project Victory's Executive Director, Theo Brown, is serving as Project Coordinator.

## A Summary of What Will Take Place

From January 14 to 19th, 1998, thousands of individuals of different races and ethnic backgrounds will come together for small group facilitated dialogues in schools, churches, homes, businesses, and community organizations across the country. Most of these small group dialogues will be between two and four hours long and structured around a basic format that emphasizes listening, mutual respect and the importance of focusing on common ground.

X **The intended result of the National Days of Dialogue is to increase understanding between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds and identify specific ways that can work together in the future on issues of common concern.** All invitations to participate in local programs should make it clear that this is the purpose of the dialogues and the facilitators will remind participants of that throughout their time together.

### The Central Question

At the heart of all National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations activity is a broad question which emphasizes the purpose of this endeavor. That question is:

***How can we increase understanding and cooperative action  
between citizens of different races and ethnic backgrounds in our community?***

It is suggested that all groups that meet together during the Days of Dialogue consider this question. Participants will record the insights and agreements that emerge during their discussion so that the results of the dialogues can be the basis for future cooperative action.

## **A Vision of What These Days of Dialogue Can Accomplish**

National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations is being organized to encourage individuals to be more involved in efforts to improve race relations in their communities. We hope that by bringing thousands of people together at the same time to participate in dialogues across the country, national attention will focus on the need for greater community involvement on this vital issue. In recent years, several simultaneous national activities (i.e., Earth Day, Ground Zero Week and Hands Across America) have taken place which generated tremendous nationwide publicity and marked the beginning of a new level of citizen activity on issues that are important to our country's future. Our hope is that National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations can have a similar impact and bring large numbers of new people to the ongoing effort to achieve greater understanding and cooperation across racial and ethnic lines.



**Through Dialogue  
the sky  
is the limit**

# Organizing Days of Dialogue in Your Community

## Local Organizing Efforts

In each community, those people helping to organize participation in National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations should work together to divide responsibilities in an effective manner. In some communities, a small number of people (perhaps only 2-4) will work together informally to identify potential participants and invite them to take part in the Days of Dialogue. In other places, a more formal organizing committee that works together to plan the outreach activities.

It is important for local organizers to stay in close touch with the organizing office for National Days of Dialogue in Washington, D.C. This office will have a staff person assigned to work with each of the focus cities as well as other communities where significant activity develops. The national office is a source for the basic materials needed to organize and facilitate dialogues and can also help to organize some local activities. The national office will play an important role in obtaining media coverage for programs that take place during the Days of Dialogue, therefore it is important to maintain clear communication about where and when programs are scheduled.

## The Community Plan

Organizers who are working together to plan dialogues may find it helpful to develop a general plan for what they hope to create in their communities. This plan should indicate how many ongoing local projects will conduct dialogues during the January 14-19 time period and address ideas about how to reach as many new people as possible with invitations to participate.

Questions to ask in developing a local plan include:

- Who is already working to create community dialogues on race relations?
- Which groups and individuals might be interested in helping invite others to participate?
- Which invitations to participate will offer the greatest hope of reaching large numbers of people in a short period of time?
- What type of dialogues would have the largest impact in your community?

**Together --  
communities  
can achieve  
greatness!**



## **Examples of Types of Dialogues That Can Be Organized**

During the January 14-19 period, dialogues will take place in a variety of settings and involve a wide range of different groups and individuals. In each community, the first goal will be for groups that are already active in promoting inter-racial dialogue to schedule programs that reflect what they are doing. At the same time, local individuals who support the Days of Dialogue will work with the national organizing office to invite large numbers of new people to join in similar dialogues. Examples of some dialogues that can be organized are listed below.

### **1) Dialogues within existing groups**

In every community in America there are literally hundreds (in some places thousands!) of groups, organizations, businesses, schools, associations and faith communities where people meet together on a regular basis. (A sample list of these is included in this kit). Many of these groups are interested in race relations and will be very open to the idea of participating in National Days of Dialogue. They should be invited to have a special program during the National Days of Dialogue or schedule a dialogue at one of their regular meetings that is close to the mid-January time period.

In most instances, these dialogues within existing groups will be most valuable if the participants are racially and/or ethnically mixed. An effort should be made to identify and reach out to those groups in your community that have the most diversity in their memberships. However, there may be some groups of people who will find it valuable to have a dialogue even though their members are all (or almost all) from one race or ethnic group.

## **2) Dialogues which pair two or more existing groups**

Some groups, particularly those that are not very mixed racially, may prefer to pair with one (or more) other group to have a dialogue. This may be particularly appealing if the groups that get together are similar in purpose. All cities have many groups that are organized along parallel lines by race and ethnicity. For example, there may be Baptist churches that are primarily White, African American, Latino, and/or Asian American in one community. Also, many cities have Latino, Asian or Black business groups that exist along side of the local Chamber of Commerce.

## **3) Dialogues for ad hoc groups of community leaders**

In addition to any dialogues that are organized which involve existing groups, **each community should organize at least one dialogue that brings together leaders of groups and organizations from many different segments of community life.** In some ways, these community leader dialogues are the most important part of local Days of Dialogue activities. They bring together people who represent important constituencies and provide an opportunity to create personal and organizational connections which can have important impact in the future. (A form enclosed in this kit has specific suggestions about who to invite).

Some areas may have just one community leader dialogue that brings together people from many different occupations as well as races and ethnic backgrounds. However, some communities may wish to have several dialogues that bring together leaders from specific areas such as business, religion, or education.

#### **4) Open dialogues which invite all interested people to attend**

In some communities it may be a good idea to sponsor open community (or neighborhood) dialogues where all citizens are invited to participate. These dialogues offer an opportunity for all interested people to participate and they may be the only way to reach out to those who are not involved with the groups and organizations we are contacting. At the same time, the uncertainty over who (and how many) will attend creates some planning difficulties and often makes it more difficult to recruit a racially balanced group of participants.

## **Dialogue Facilitators**

Good facilitators are an essential element in the success of any dialogue. Fortunately, there are numerous individuals in every community who have training and/or experience facilitating dialogues like the ones that will be conducted during National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations. An important part of preparing for the Days of Dialogue in your community is making sure that enough facilitators are available to lead all of the dialogues that are arranged.

The National Days of Dialogue office in Washington, D.C. already has the names of hundreds of facilitators around the country who are available to lead dialogues and many others are also being recruited. These people are affiliated with groups like the National Association for Community Mediation, Society for Professionals in Dispute Resolution, Project Victory, Search for Common Ground and similar organizations. The organizers in the national office will give you names of facilitators in your area.

## Ten Step Organizing Process

1. **Identify** those individuals who might be most interested in working together to plan activities for National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations.
2. **Fill out** a key contact list for your community
  - Who are the 25-50 people who should be contacted first?
  - Refer to the list in this organizer's kit for suggestions of who to contact.
3. **Mail** brochures and invitations to all people on the key contact list.
4. **Make follow up calls** with selected key contacts.
  - Call those who are most likely to want to help.
  - Ask each person if they have ideas about who might want to have a dialogue.
5. **Plan** who to invite to participate in your community.
  - Which groups should be invited to have dialogues?
  - Which groups might want to pair with other groups for dialogue?
  - Who should be invited to the community leader dialogue(s)?
  - When and where should the community leader dialogue(s) be held?
6. **Send** invitations to groups that are listed in your organizing plan.
7. **Make follow up calls** to group representatives.
  - Call those that seem most promising.
  - Gather data on those who are interested in having a dialogue.
8. **Send** letters to those individuals you are inviting to a community leader dialogue.
9. **Review** logistics check list for each dialogue.
10. **Compile and distribute** information to press and public about the dialogues that are scheduled.

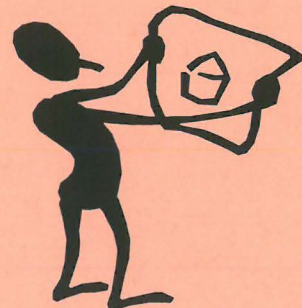
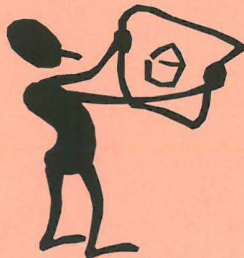
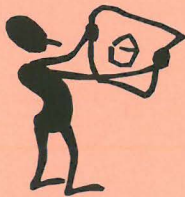
## Publicity and News Coverage

The main purpose of National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations is to strengthen and expand the interracial dialogue efforts in your community. One of the best ways to do this is to obtain publicity that makes people aware of this type of dialogue and demonstrates the importance of it in the future.

**A primary goal of the National Days of Dialogue organizing effort is to help you achieve good press coverage of the dialogues that will take place in your community.** In order to do this, we have enlisted the services of a professional company in Washington, D.C. that specializes in publicity for public interest organizations. This group is already laying the groundwork for national press coverage of the National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations and will also assist in making contacts with regional and local media---particularly in the twenty focus cities where most of our organizing will take place.

The organizers in our national office will also assist you in your efforts to obtain favorable press coverage before and during the National Days of Dialogue.

**Specific suggestions about how to approach your local media are being prepared and will be sent separately to you and all others who receive this Organizer's Kit.**



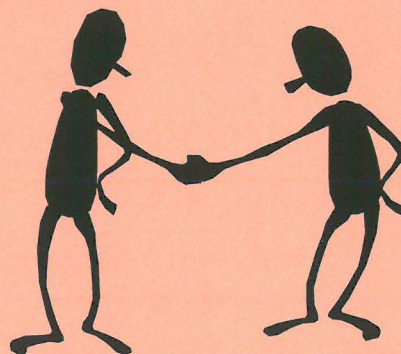
## After The National Days of Dialogue: What Next?

The National Days of Dialogue on Race Relations are not an end in themselves. They are intended as a means to involve more citizens in *ongoing efforts* to increase understanding and cooperative action in their communities. The individuals and national groups who organized the National Days on Dialogue will generate many new ideas about how to improve race relations in your community and those ideas will be put into action in the days and months to come.

As a result of the National Days on Dialogue, your community may decide to continue public conversations about race relations in your town. Or you may decide to initiate new projects that bring together individuals of diverse racial and ethnic groups for cooperative action.

The national groups that are cooperating to organize the National Days on Dialogue are already engaged in discussions about how to build upon the insights and ideas that emerge from the many community dialogues. Our plan is to identify and secure the resources needed to help support activities in each of the participating communities. We hope to continue working with communities to help promote ongoing activities that result in improved race relations throughout the nation.

***After Dialogue,  
New Partnerships  
& Understandings  
will be forged***



## **An Example of a Community Wide Days of Dialogue Program**

An example of how different types of dialogues might fit together to form Days of Dialogue activity in a local community is given below. Many communities may not be able to organize a program that is this extensive and others may find they are able to do even more.

### **Tuesday, January 13**

- A press statement and/or press release announces the dialogues that are scheduled.

### **Wednesday, January 14**

- Dialogues begin in high school social studies classes.
- A dialogue is held at a lunch meeting of a local service club.
- Four dialogues are held which pair churches whose members are of different races.

### **Thursday, January 15**

- Dialogues continue in high school social studies classes.
- Employee dialogues are held over brown bag lunches in several government offices.
- Leaders representing business groups from different ethnic backgrounds have a dialogue.
- Student government leaders and representatives of several ethnic organizations come together for a dialogue on a local campus.

**Friday, January 16**

- Dialogues in high school classes conclude.
- Numerous businesses have lunch time dialogues for their employees.
- A community leaders dialogue brings together twenty people from many different organizations and institutions.

**Saturday, January 17**

- Clergy and other representatives of faith communities meet for a dialogue.
- Representatives of several neighborhood associations have a dialogue in the morning and then work together on a community cleanup project.

**Sunday, January 18**

- Several churches conduct dialogues as part of their Sunday School and/or adult education programs.
- A local TV or radio station broadcasts a dialogue between prominent community leaders.

**Monday, January 19**

- A community wide celebration that features music, inspirational talks and small group dialogues conclude the Days of Dialogue activities.
- Local newspapers report on what happened during the various Days of Dialogue activities.