

Regaining trust in the police department and in the community

Amidst growing racial tensions, community leaders in Hopkinsville, Ky., realized they needed to look for innovative solutions to help diverse city residents work together. In 2007, the Human Relations Commission launched “Hoptown-Our Town,” a large-scale community dialogue to pave the way for change. In their first two rounds of dialogues, participants discussed race relations and closing the achievement gap.



It was clear there was another issue brewing under the surface. Participants were concerned with possible racial profiling and the amount of contact police have with people of color. Roughly 35% of city residents are people of color, yet nearly half of the prison inmates in the region are people of color.



Learn more by visiting
<http://bit.ly/hoptownourtown>

In 2009, Hoptown’s third round of dialogues focused on police-community relations. Among other things, participants took a hard look at the root causes of racial inequities in the criminal justice system. “We hoped that we worked together to help bridge differences and show that we’re all human and we all deserve respect,” noted Sandy Carpenter, a dialogue participant.

Recent successes from the dialogues include:

- The Hopkinsville Police Department implemented diversity training.
- The police chief has taken steps to increase trust between police officers and the community, including advocating for body cameras, running a citizens’ police academy, and establishing two community positions on the five-person hiring committee.
- The city has hosted an international diversity festival over the last six years, with attendance reaching up to 3,000 people and continuing to grow each year.
- Seven small grants were awarded to local organizations with the aim of improving community-police relations.

Looking ahead, Hoptown-Our Town has plans to broaden participation in the dialogues, conduct community surveys to find out how people feel about the criminal justice system, and develop recommendations to help local agencies reduce the number of people of color in the penal system.

About Everyday Democracy

A national leader in the field of civic participation and community change, Everyday Democracy helps people of different backgrounds and views talk and work together to create communities that work for everyone.

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