

A Window and a Mirror: Looking Out, Looking In

A Case Study of The Saint Paul Foundation: Documenting a Comprehensive, Institution-Wide Commitment to Anti-Racism

Executive Summary

In 2008, The Saint Paul Foundation commissioned a case study of its internal and external practices over the previous decade to become and remain an anti-racist organization. In the study, the Foundation's efforts to create and support an anti-racist organization and community were examined. The full 23-page case study can be found online at www.saintpaulfoundation.org.

The case study is historical and qualitative in nature, detailing the genesis of the Foundation's formal commitment to ending racism. It outlines the steps the Foundation took—both externally and internally—in carrying out this work. The information is presented chronologically in an effort to identify a clear period of time—thereby demonstrating a starting point for formal anti-racism efforts and related progress as tied to key events. The study also establishes a baseline related to the Foundation's anti-racism efforts and includes next steps to consider for moving forward as an organization committed to ending racism.

Interviews were conducted with 15 Foundation employees—representing a broad mix of departments, job longevity and exempt/non-exempt status—as well as with all members of the Foundation's management team. Additionally, four members (two past and two present) of the board of directors were interviewed. All Foundation senior managers, as well as other staff members, provided a wealth of insight and shared documents pertaining to the Foundation's anti-racism efforts from 1998 to 2008.

The independent consultant who conducted the case study concluded that The Saint Paul Foundation made significant efforts and took numerous steps to create an anti-racist organization and region. Findings from the study fall into six thematic areas: accountability to constituents; messages to the community; community initiatives; individual employees; systems and departments; and leadership. While the Foundation made great strides internally and externally, all those interviewed agreed much work remains to be done.

As the work moves forward, it is important for the Foundation to continue its commitment to model leadership for addressing the issue of racism—specifically through an internal organizational focus while also working with the larger community to address the issue externally. This summary provides an overview of the Foundation's key initiatives and projects as well as conclusions about the overall anti-racism efforts.

Background and History (1992-1998)

The Saint Paul Foundation recognizes racism as “fostering dominance and control of one group over another based on social definitions of race.” An anti-racist community is one that acknowledges the pervasiveness of racism at both overt and covert levels, and actively works to combat its various forms. Furthermore, an anti-racist community works to counter racism at all levels: discriminatory beliefs and behaviors of individuals and organizations, the involuntary segregation of racial/cultural groups, institutional and structural barriers to equal opportunity, and negative cultural stereotypes and images.

As early as the late 1980s, when the demographics in the Saint Paul Public Schools began to change dramatically, it became apparent to the Foundation that the face of the entire community was changing. The Foundation came to understand that it would need to embrace these demographics in order to stay relevant and connected to the community.

In 1996, the Foundation embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process to guide its unrestricted grantmaking. An integral part of this effort was the creation of the **Community Advisory Committee**, a 27-member grassroots-based group consisting of members of the board and of major cultural and geographic communities committed to action. It was charged with identifying the region's critical issues that would become the focus of the Foundation's grantmaking in the following decade. As part of its work with the Community Advisory Committee, the Foundation interviewed more than 200 people in a series of 19 community meetings that were held throughout the East Metro area.

Using the recommendations of the Community Advisory Committee, the Foundation worked on developing, shaping and writing the Strategic Plan for Grantmaking, entitled *Connections: Commitment to Community*. In November 1998, the board of directors approved the plan, which would directly affect the distribution of The Saint Paul Foundation's Unrestricted and Field of Interest Funds, as well as funding of community initiatives operated by the Foundation. The *Connections* plan was significant, particularly because of the community-based process that was used to advise the Foundation on how it should focus and carry out its grantmaking programs and practices.

Also of note during this time period was the board's adoption of a **Staff Diversity Plan** in June 1997, which prompted development of a Diversity Tracking Matrix (a tool that monitored the racial composition of the staff). Furthermore, the board approved the creation of a full Recruitment and Hiring Practices plan with the goal of assuring the Foundation took intentional action in its hiring practices to establish a more diverse workforce.

Building on Momentum and a Renewed Commitment (1999-2002)

In 1999, The Saint Paul Foundation began implementation of the newly-adopted strategic grantmaking plan, *Connections: Commitment to Community*, which focused on four long-range goals:

1. Creating an anti-racist community;
2. Economic development for all segments of the East Metro;
3. Strong families that provide healthy beginnings for children and youth;
4. Quality education for all.

The stated **anti-racism goal** was: To reduce racism at both the individual and institutional level through education, direct action and/or increased dialogue and understanding.

The Saint Paul Foundation also committed to allocating a minimum of 50 percent of its unrestricted grant funds to meeting these goals and strategies outlined in the plan.

During this time, the Foundation introduced **Words Work!**, an early childhood community initiative that (though not started as a specific anti-racism project) supported children and families from communities of color who comprised 90 percent or more of the population served. The **Management Improvement Fund**, a community initiative that helps build organizational capacity of nonprofits, adopted the goals of the strategic grantmaking plan, paying particular attention to creating an anti-racist community. In 2000, the Foundation's board of directors approved a **Diversity and Investment Policy**, which established goals to communicate the Foundation's value of diversity to existing and prospective investment managers. The policy also called for periodically surveying and discussing the managers' diversity practices and making a good faith effort to include all qualified minority investment managers for consideration in the search process.

Continued Advancement: Internal and External Progress (2003-2007)

The Community Advisory Committee Report (1997) noted, “The community needs models of major organizations taking a public stand against racism and working toward dismantling it.” It went on to state, “By changing its organizational culture and identity to be anti-racist, and by challenging others to change, the Foundation can demonstrate leadership on this issue.” A more intentional effort to address the Foundation’s internal culture and practices—as a complement to the work the Foundation was doing externally—began in 2003 under the leadership of the Foundation’s new president, Carleen Rhodes.

INTERNAL WORK

A full-day staff retreat was held in March 2004. It was the first required all-staff training on the subject of racism conducted by the Foundation. Seeing strong interest in learning more about race and racism, president Carleen Rhodes invited staff to join a task force she would convene to discuss next steps—determining what should be done to build on the learning day. The **Anti-Racism Task Force**, comprised of 18 interested members of the staff, was officially created in May 2004. It was charged with providing direction and communication—including recommending policy and procedural changes to Foundation leadership—during the design and implementation of the internal commitment to combating racism.

In April 2005, Foundation staff members submitted a proposal to the management team suggesting a new organizational model be established for proceeding with the Foundation’s internal racism work. The Task Force was disbanded and the three former subcommittees became stand-alone teams: the **Office Environment and Culture Committee**, the **Institutional Policies and Procedures Committee** and the **Learning Opportunities and Training (LOT) Committee**.

EXTERNAL WORK

In 2004, the Foundation and its advisory committee created a community-wide anti-racism initiative,

which became known as **Facing Race**. Wilder Research Center and the Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey Institute conducted research on experiences and perceptions of community members in identifying and dealing with racism. Based on findings from this research, it was decided to start where the majority of people were at with regard to racism. A tool called *New Conversations about Race and Racism* was completed through the Facing Race initiative, and the annual **Facing Race Ambassador Award** was created through funding received from an anonymous donor.

Also during this time, GrayHall completed an **analysis of grantmaking from 1994–2004** at The Saint Paul Foundation, primarily to determine the number and amount of Foundation grants awarded to organizations led by and primarily serving people of color. Overall, the Foundation’s grantmaking to organizations of color was above average compared to national and state giving statistics. On a similar note, the Center for Effective Philanthropy completed a **Grantee Perception Report** for The Saint Paul Foundation in July 2005, comparing the responses to those from other foundations throughout the nation. Again, the Foundation was rated highly in its impact on and understanding of grantees’ local communities.

Current State of the Anti-Racism Initiative (2008)

The Saint Paul Foundation remains committed to its anti-racism work in 2008. Both internal and external efforts continue to be expanded, and the intentionality of the Foundation’s anti-racism work is demonstrated in multiple ways. The work is monitored in the following areas:

- Expectations of staff
- Recruiting practices
- Staff and board composition
- Community initiatives
- Grantmaking
- Investment practices
- Communications
- Strategic planning

Conclusions

Though it is often at the individual level that discrimination, prejudice and hatred may be displayed, racism involves much more than interpersonal relationships and feelings. It is also a pervasive part of the institutional structures of society. Institutional racism is seldom acknowledged or confronted. While some discriminatory practices have been eliminated by civil rights changes, racial bias remains a reality in social and institutional life. If racism puts people from communities of color at a disadvantage, the corollary—that racism puts whites at an advantage (also known as “white privilege”)—is seldom acknowledged and remains a mostly-invisible part of institutions and society.

Overall, The Saint Paul Foundation’s 10-year commitment to creating an anti-racist organization and region has resulted in visible and significant results. The staff and board demographics are more ethnically diverse in 2008 than in 1998; large percentages of the Foundation’s Unrestricted Funds go to support community efforts and projects working to end racism; the public and donors are engaged as accountable partners in ending racism;

and selecting investment managers is done in a racially-conscious way. Perhaps most importantly, the Foundation is intentionally inviting scrutiny of its anti-racism practices, by openly sharing the findings and lessons learned with staff, donors, constituents, local communities and national colleagues.

At the same time, there is much work left to do, and the awareness level and personal feelings about The Saint Paul Foundation’s commitment to anti-racism efforts varies widely across the organization. Similarly, while all members of the Foundation’s management team articulated that creating an anti-racist community and organization was a goal of the Foundation, the level of understanding of what that meant—particularly with regard to their individual roles for leading and modeling—varied widely.

For more detailed information on learning, outcomes and recommendations for future anti-racism work by The Saint Paul Foundation, please access the full case study online at www.saintpaulfoundation.org. This study was completed by Alicia Cordes, an independent consultant, in July 2008.



55 Fifth Street East – Suite 600, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101-1797
651.224.5463 • www.saintpaulfoundation.org