

Healing Racism in Anchorage

Obama Election The End of Racism?



The election of Barack Obama is recognized as historic around the world. People believe it is a new era. For an organization dedicated to healing racism, the election of an African-American is a time of great joy but also a time of reflection. What does Obama's election mean? Is it a great change or is it merely the indicator of the change that has been slowly happening for years and years? Can we relax now? Or will Obama's election stir a backlash? Will there be new forms of racial discrimination? **Continued** on page 3

Healing Racism in Anchorage Works with Radio Station and Library

In August HRA steering committee members conducted a workshop for 81 Municipal public library staff members.

When a local radio station was strongly criticized for on-air racist comments, HRA was among the groups called in to work with staff of the station.

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Looks at what it's like being on the Steering Committee and some transitions

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Meet Linda McLaughlin

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STEERING COMMITTEE TRANSITIONS

Being on the HRA steering committee is more like being part of a family than being on a board. Members frequently comment that our monthly meetings are a safe place to talk about things they can't talk about in most settings. At our meetings we know that people will understand the issues we raise, whether it was something that happened at work, on a television show, or even with a family member.

Our members have been with us a long time. In this last year, two members - Shirley Mae Springer Staten and Norwood Eggeling - have moved on. Both have made enormous contributions to our group and continue to check up on us. We thank them for their long, dedicated service to our programs.

We also have some new members - Kiatcha Benson, Dennis Arashiro, and Linda McLaughlin.

NEW BOARD MEMBER - LINDA MCLAUGHLIN

Linda was born in Juneau, Alaska, but spent some years out of state in Washington, and Montana. She has lived longer in Anchorage than any other town.

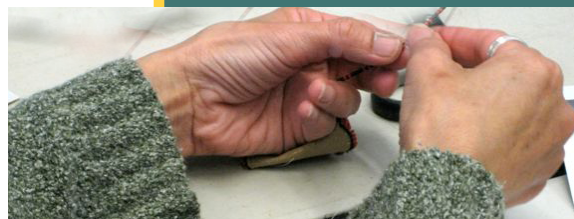
She attended the first showing of "Anchorage is Our Home," the award winning video made for us by a Leadership Anchorage project team, at the Anchorage Museum in the Spring of 2007. That experience led her to become active with HRA. She attended the next discussion group and joined the Steering Committee in September of 2007. "I find the subtle racism that does exist more difficult to deal with, but change is possible through participating in awareness education through groups like HRA."



Trying a Shorter Discussion Session

Our discussion groups have traditionally been nine week encounters with ideas, books, movies, exercises, and our own conceptions of race and racism in the United States. This year we experimented with a five week program. Although Healing Racism in Anchorage board members involved with the workshop were not completely satisfied, the feedback we received from participants was more positive.

Nevertheless, we are carefully reviewing the workshop length, the materials, the order of the materials, and presentation style so that the workshops continue to be challenging and ultimately rewarding experiences for all participants. This is not an easy topic, and everyone is likely to be uncomfortable at some point in the learning process. But in the end, participants should feel good about the process and about themselves.





Obama's first day in office with guests

Picture created by Steve Aufrecht

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Or does this portend a time when people have a new comfort level? Have white folks begun to look at their African-American colleagues and neighbors a little differently? Do African-Americans walk with a little more spring in their step? What about other ethnic groups?

Does this mean that Healing Racism in Anchorage's mission needs to change? Or that we need to change how we carry out the mission?

These are all questions that we'll be seeking answers to in the next year. But what we do know is this: An African-American man was elected by a majority of the voters in the United States to be our new President. We also know that the rest of the world has reacted with great joy. Whether someone is a Democrat or a Republican or neither, we should all take great pleasure in the fact that the people of our country looked past race and elected Barack Obama.

It's Tomorrow

I, too, am America.

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the
kitchen

When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.

Nobody'll dare

Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed

- Langston Hughes

Continued from Page 1 HRA worked with the Alaska Native Heritage Center on the radio workshop and the feedback, a month afterward, shows the power of a good educational program. Some sample comments:

- “Thanks for allowing me to participate in a such a refreshing look at the many concerns within our community. I really think a continued group session would certainly be a good idea; perhaps another series of sessions but spaced out over time during the next year. I'm all in.”
- “Personally, I look at the training as a terrific experience on several levels. I got to meet and learn from a group of new and interesting people. The historical information was enlightening. I learned new things about my peers with whom I've worked for so many years. Finally, I was encouraged to look within myself, and challenged to be a better person.”
- “Overall, we're better people and a better organization for having participated in the workshops. The substance and presentation were both outstanding.”
- “The entire time we were participating in the workshops I felt uncomfortable and really ‘out of my element’ . . . I have come to the realization that was probably a good thing. If it would have been easy I probably wouldn't have got as much out of it. I don't know if that makes any sense, but the fact that I was on edge for most of the process meant that I was delving into uncharted territory and experiencing something new which is always ultimately a good thing. I now am finding I notice and pay greater attention to things that before the training sessions, might have gone, for the most part, unnoticed.”
- “Quick story -- I was accompanying my son to college for the first time. During the orientation process we met a young man from [an Alaskan village]. . . Because of the training we took this year, I was so much more aware of the challenges of native youth adapting from life in the village. My son made it a point to connect with this kid over the weekend to ease the transition. Something that probably wouldn't have happened had we not spent all those hours learning this summer. “

Healing Racism in Anchorage

P.O. Box 92086

Anchorage, AK 99509-2086

Providing educational experiences to help understand and interrupt the cycle of racism.

TO:

Renew Your HRA Membership

Healing Racism in Anchorage

depends on donations and grants for its programs and products (such as the video *Anchorage is Our Home*.) Check out the membership information on our web site and join today!



www.anchoragehealingracism.org