

Connections

Across the racial divide

Nonprofit leaders look to remedy poor race relations

Representatives of North Carolina nonprofits and foundations were not surprised by the results of a survey released last month showing blacks and whites are growing apart. While some community leaders see a need to confront race relations head on, others say efforts to eliminate racism should be incorporated into work on issues such as housing, health care and welfare reform.

By BARBARA SOLOW

A survey commissioned by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation of Winston-Salem has raised some disturbing questions for leaders of grassroots and organized philanthropy.

The survey, based on focus group interviews and a telephone poll, showed that while a majority of

North Carolinians agree that racial prejudice is a serious problem, fear and mistrust between blacks and whites are growing.

Following release of the survey last month, the *Philanthropy Journal* interviewed more than two dozen leaders of Tar Heel nonprofits and foundations to gauge their reactions and tap their ideas for ways to bridge the racial divide.

For many people working in education, health care, religion, the arts, foundations and social change organizations, the significance of the Z. Smith Reynolds report lies not in what it shows but in what it reaffirms.

"I think it verbalizes a lot of the conclusions people have drawn on their own," says Elizabeth Fentress, executive director of the North Carolina Community Foundation. "It should serve to coalesce people and put the people of North Carolina on notice that we do have a problem."

John Hood, vice president of the

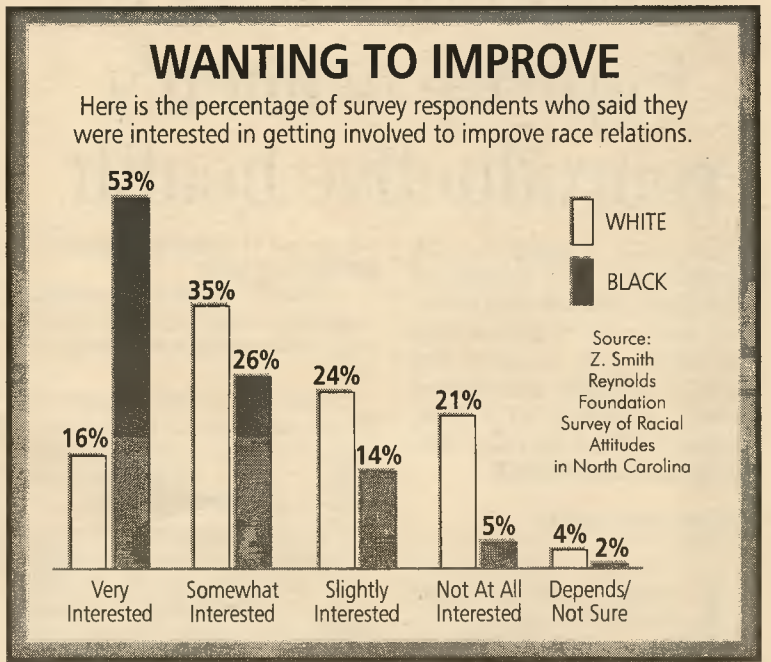
John Locke Foundation in Raleigh, hopes the report will encourage political leaders to review past anti-discrimination strategies such as busing and affirmative action - strategies that he believes have failed.

"One positive aspect of this study is that it moves us in the direction of talking about the implications of policy," Hood says. "We ought to be judging policies by what they accomplish. If we don't see specific results, we should change our policies."

Others see the report as a wake-up call for the nonprofit sector.

"The voluntary organizations where people live their public lives are highly segregated, but they also have a deep and abiding commitment to social justice," says Gayle Dorman, executive director of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation in Winston-Salem. "In my view, the issues raised in this report are some of the critical issues of our time. And

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Statement of values

Hopkins offers nonprofit principles

A just-released international statement of principles for the nonprofit sector promises to be both a road map for the fledgling sector in emerging democracies and developing countries, and a thought-provoking document in the U.S.

By KATHERINE NOBLE

The nonprofit sector now has a statement of principles to guide its growth and change in the U.S. and abroad.

Recently released by The Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies, the "International Statement of

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Statewide philanthropy conference planned

Philanthropy '94

The News and Observer Foundation and the *Philanthropy Journal* of North Carolina will hold a major conference in October on Tar Heel philanthropy. Nannerl O. Keohane, president of Duke University, will be the keynote speaker.

Stewardship will be the theme of a major conference on philanthropy this fall.

Nannerl O. Keohane, president of Duke University, will deliver the keynote address for the conference, to be held at a North Carolina location to be announced soon.

Sponsored by The News and Observer Foundation in Raleigh and the *Philanthropy Journal* of North Carolina, "Philanthropy '94" will be designed mainly for board and staff members of nonprofits and foundations throughout the state. It also will address issues involving partnerships with the public and for-profit sectors.

The conference will feature speakers, workshops and panels devoted to issues of leadership and accountability.

It also will feature the first presentation of the "North Carolina

STEWARDSHIP

Philanthropist of the Year" award, which will go to an individual or organization.

James Johnson, director of the Urban Enterprise Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, will address the conference on the issue of leadership.

The subject of leadership also will be addressed in sessions that examine selecting, developing and involving board members in an organization; strategic planning; and fundraising.

William Rogers, president of Guilford College in Greensboro and chairman of the board of trustees of

the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation in Winston-Salem, will address the conference on the issue of accountability. That subject also will be examined in panel discussions on board-staff relations, and working with the media.

The News and Observer Foundation and the *Philanthropy Journal* plan to make the conference and presentation of the philanthropy award an annual event.

The size of this year's conference will be limited, with early registration this spring. Full details will be announced soon.

For information, call Marguerite LeBlanc at (919) 829-8991.

At the wheel

On information highway, driving is up to you

The challenge for architects of the information highway is to design a system that lets users do the steering and not simply be passengers.

By KAY MCFADDEN

Several years ago, I visited an elementary school in one of Washington's tougher neighborhoods. Seated in a tiny chair at a tiny desk, I heard third-grade teachers tell of their frustrations with the existing curriculum and its static, lecture-based approach.

"Kids these days are far more fidgety," said one snowy-haired veteran. "They grow up in homes with all kinds of distractions that keep them hyped up. They can't sit for hours with their hands folded while we talk at them."

Rather than bend pupils to the curriculum, those teachers took matters into their own hands and bent the curriculum to reality. New methods were invented, ad hoc, that invited the students to talk, to stand up, to move around, as part of their learning process.

Two discoveries emerged. The first was that pupils began performing better, partly because a bunch of

kids no longer were unnaturally chained to their desks for adult-sized periods better suited to a university.

Second and more important was the realization that the greater degree of participation gave children a proprietary feeling about their education. The mode had shifted from "talked at" to interactive. Suddenly, kids cared more.

Since last May, North Carolina residents have heard a great deal about the information highway and its promise: A high-speed communications network that can reduce educational inequities by making the same chemistry class, for instance, simultaneously available to poor schools as well as rich ones.

The technological ability to deliver such benefits is no longer in doubt. And while money is a significant consideration, Gov. Jim Hunt already has shown education is a cornerstone priority by twisting

TECHNOLOGY

The technology that enables long-distance learning can be a titanic enhancement toward giving children and teachers a similar role in classroom education.

arms in the General Assembly for its funding.

The dangerous trip-wire on the information highway lies in what we mean by "interactive." If educators and government officials merely see the highway as another delivery system — a sort of high-tech trickle-down — then children simply

will experience an electronic form of passivity.

Even marketers recognize that won't work for today's kids, or adults. Computer video games are not to be sneered at, for at least their creators have recognized that inherently powerless boys and girls love the sense of control they can exercise in such games.

The technology that enables long-distance learning can be a titanic enhancement toward giving children and teachers a similar role in classroom education. If leading a class discussion engages an 8-year-old,

imagine the empowerment that can come from sharing his or her ideas with peers in another part of the state, nation or world.

And if knowing that there are other kids out there like you helps the self-esteem of a lonely or troubled child, then using a computer to find those others without the open exposure of a classroom can be marvelously reassuring to the timid.

For others, interactive technology can have the same benefits. A computer allows a tiny, underfunded nonprofit to aggressively seek out sources of money, discover its role in a community of similar groups, and organize itself — an important step toward self-command. Just like the children in Washington, nonprofits — and those whom they serve — can be psychologically transformed from passivity to activity.

The key to success lies in a philosophical, not technical, understanding of interactive technology. Barry Diller, founder of the QVC home shopping empire, understood consumers would relish a chance to exercise preference at their whim and not that of some rude sales clerk in a big store. Again, an example of proactive behavior's powerful allure.

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