

**A Decade of Difference:
Racial Attitudes in Our Community, 2004-2013**

**A Special Tenth Year Anniversary Report:
Chancellor Anderson, Racial Attitudes, and a Community Conversation**

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

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Differences across the Decade

Race is a part of the social fabric that composes the societal quilt of the United States; it is a key component for understanding the myriad of American communities spread across the country. Community after community have contributed to America's unique and long racial history, and Little Rock is no exception – the nation's racial disposition is informed magnificently by events in Little Rock. That our community is one of many communities providing a focal point for the history of race in America lends ever more credibility to having it engaging in a dialogue on race.

Though long discussed informally in dining rooms, board rooms, school rooms, and back rooms, Chancellor Joel Anderson decided it time to discuss race out loud and in public. To do so, he initiated a "Community Conversation about Race" and moved the discussion to the community stage. In his challenge to the citizens of Little Rock, Dr. Anderson recognized race as an obstacle and essentially declared it one that can be fixed, if faced. Thus, Dr. Anderson dedicated a myriad of UALR resources to this dialogue for understanding community perspectives about race and its implications for the community. After ten years, this commitment has provided us with invaluable perspectives on racial disparities and similarities in Little Rock and Pulaski County. Reflecting upon this decade, we find differences do persist, but progress in many areas is noticeable.

While many choose to avoid the toughest issues, leaders tend to confront these – Dr. Anderson chose to confront this issue and is leading this conversation; his efforts have yielded a 'decade of difference' in race relations for our community. Though nearly 50 years removed from the Little Rock 9's integration of Central High School, Dr. Anderson's bold declaration of "**you have to face it to fix it**" remains the challenge, but that challenge is now an informed conversation and the community is better because of his willingness to embrace this ongoing conversation about race.

Introduction

Shortly after Little Rock was beginning its conversation on race in 2003, an international Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) identified selected items as “key principles” required for harmonious race relations; these are:

- Equality – equal rights and opportunities for everyone in all areas of activity.
- Respect – acceptance of the individual right to identify with, maintain and develop one’s particular cultural heritage, and to explore other cultures.
- Security – a safe environment, free from racism, for all.
- Unity – acceptance of belonging to a wider community, and of shared values and responsibilities, rooted in common citizenship and humanity.
- Cooperation – interaction by individuals and group (Johnson and Tatum 2009: 4).

These principles serve as focal points for summarizing racial attitudes prevailing in Little Rock over the past decade. Each key principle is part of the larger community puzzle we continue to assemble in our collective effort to understand and embrace each other. Though this understanding is underdeveloped, it is being advanced through these ongoing community conversations catalyzed by Dr. Anderson. From his Decade of Dialogue, we can identify five broad topic areas pertinent to understanding our collective development and identity as a community; these are:

- Trust (among people, government, and institutions,)
- Integration (equal opportunity and civil rights)
- Race Relations (equality, equal treatment, and discrimination)
- Sense of Community (socializing, satisfaction, community, and volunteerism)
- Opportunity and Advancement (education and social conditions).

As evident, the CRE’s key principles serve as common anchors across these topics. In fact, these key principles, while tendered by the CRE, actually transcend race relations to become aspects of guiding principles for humanity. Interestingly, as we continue this dialogue on racial attitudes in Little Rock, we hope a recapitulation of where we have been makes us realize what remains

and recognize the ever continuing struggle depends on how we as a community understand, interact with, and embrace each other as people, not as races or cultures, and respect those nuances that create a cohesive community.

Charting the Community Conversation¹

Trust

As we live together in our community, our trust in others is fundamental for creating a community bond, or trust among us. In Little Rock, this trust in others and institutions is promising. Since a key aspect of where public trust stands today is provided through peoples' trust in local government; an open local environment begets institutional structures based on mutual trust between the government and the governed. Community trust results from having viable modes of participation and engagement available for citizens, as well as institutional structures that create an environment of heightened trust among members of the community. Yet, cultivating and sustaining an active citizenry must be embraced as a community norm if it is to endeavor participation; citizen involvement promotes inclusion, discourse, and input across neighborhood organizations, civic groups, and business/industry interests. As Walzer (1970: 210) observes "if the citizen is a passive figure, there is no political community" and, if there is no political community, trust will wane. Moreover, though Welch et. al. (2004) show that there is a decline in public trust in government over the past decades, which creates challenges for public services and community building, Little Rock's situation is not so dire. Albeit slight, progress has been made in the Black community with regard to "trusting others" (i.e., indicating that 'most people can be trusted'). When this conversation on race ensued, 18 percent of Blacks indicated that most people can be trusted, whereas 56 percent of Whites felt this way. By the close of the decade, Whites remained unchanged with regard to trusting others, while trust in others by Blacks increased 7 percent. While seven percentage points do not represent

¹Though this conversation has expanded to include Hispanic populations, this discussion herein draws on comparisons between only *Little Rock Blacks and Whites*. Though the conversation has ensued for over a decade, Hispanics oversampling commenced only in 2011; as a result, a few more years are required to draw gainful inferences over time about this population.

any magnitude of improvement, it becomes much more pronounced when viewed relative to history and events in Little Rock over the past half-century. In fact, these percentages attributed to Blacks are similar to those found for Blacks nationally (Taylor et al. 2007). Moreover, as far as levels of trust extend into the community, the high degree of neighborhood segregation in the area may impede the development of inter-group trust. For Blacks in particular, studies show that neighborhood racial heterogeneity and neighborhood sociability increase Blacks' propensity to trust others (Marschall and Stolle 2004; Stolle et al. 2008). Across other measures of trust – with people they work with, neighbors, and other races – people of Little Rock resemble those of other communities in which about half trust and half don't. Only when inquiring about trust in institutions – government, religious, commercial, education, etc. – do we observe more trust across the community. Again, while Whites display a greater proclivity to trust institutions, Black trust of institutions, though problematic, is improving. Over the decade, doctors emerge as the most trusted 'institution' by Blacks, while teachers prove the next most trusted institution. Lagging well behind in trust are government and political leaders, for whom Blacks do not demonstrate much trust.

Trust in institutions, particularly in government and political leaders are important aspects of community trust. Research shows that such trust is related to one's civic engagement, thus we can presume that the Black community feels disenfranchised. However, once engaged, citizens' trust improves as does the community's esprit de corps. Citizens and institutions in Little Rock can look to Lummis for guidance in improving and sustaining our community trust; as Lummis eloquently relates,

“It is the decision to believe in what people can be on the basis of what they are sometimes. It is the decision to believe that each polity and each person contains the possibility of a democratic version of itself.”

(Lummis 1996: 155).

Our community trust, thus is a representative depiction of the trust we all have for each other.

Integration & Equal Opportunity

Integration and equal opportunity possess different meanings and sentiments between races, thereby generating controversy that oftentimes is intense. Hero and Tolbert (2005) and Reckhow (2006), in their research on social diversity and ethnic group mobilization across the United States, find race and ethnicity remain substantive mitigating factors to community participation and civic engagement. Yet, without integration, community building cannot occur, i.e., there will be no cohesion in the community. Consequently, opinions on integration and equal opportunity foretell the possibilities of community cohesion and, unfortunately, in Little Rock these views do not follow conventional perspectives found among urban residents, whose perspectives tend to be more progressive and tolerant. Though most people are comfortable interacting with members of another race, disparities in opinions between Blacks and Whites emerge with regard to equal opportunity. Blacks tend to express opinions of their being disadvantaged in specific settings (e.g., higher education admissions); however, Blacks enthusiastically support merit considerations. In fact, Blacks and Whites in Little Rock share similar sentiments about race being used as a consideration for college admissions decisions – approximately one-quarter of both races support and three-quarters do not support using race as an admissions consideration. These perspectives have remained fairly consistent over the study period. Despite these divergent perspectives about equal opportunity, citizens of Little Rock, both Black and White, embrace integration and acknowledge its benefits for the community, particularly for education. Recognition of the benefits of integrative practices in the workplace, education, and business has improved approximately 20 percent during the decade in which this conversation has taken place.

Another aspect of integration is individual and neighborhood social interaction, which is largely of one's own volition, thus is more indicative of true integration; i.e., such interaction is a result of one's choice of where to live and with whom to socialize and not forced interaction experienced through schools and employment. With this in mind, we find that Blacks and

Whites share similar sentiments with regard to the importance placed on children being able to socialize with children of different races; early in the decade, about three-fourths to four-fifths of citizens see this as very important. During this same time frame, the results reveal that Blacks are more likely than Whites to ‘regularly socialize with members of another race’. Yet, despite this promising percentage on interaction, when Blacks and Whites are pressed to identify the number of times they have visited with, or been visited by a person of another race, slightly less than one-third of each race had done so more than ten times during the year, or less than once per month on average; similar figures are evident for enjoying the company of a person of another race at an entertainment venue (e.g., restaurant, bar, theatre, etc.). Though the Little Rock metropolitan area’s demographics suggest such interactions are more prevalent, the interaction of Blacks and Whites is rather muted, at least during the beginning of this conversation on race. Such results suggest a population that is a bit intolerant of situations or activities with which they are unfamiliar, which is in keeping with southern conservatism that often values tradition over change. In essence, the community appreciates what it understands and is reluctant to embrace anything unfamiliar or unusual, i.e., outside of the accepted community standard. Simply put, integration is the glue that holds the community together and enables cooperation and collective action between and among various groups of stakeholders in the community (Marschall and Stolle 2004). Put another way, integration becomes the lubricant of civil society, reducing transaction costs and facilitating cooperation in solving collective action problems (Putnam 2000). In segregated communities, however, it is difficult to achieve cooperation and collective action when constituent groups do not trust each other. If they do not trust each other, they will not interact (and *vice versa*). In turn, this creates a reinforcing feedback loop (or “vicious cycle”) that is difficult to break. The literature is clear that intergroup interaction is key to breaking cycles of mistrust and prejudice. Where interracial contact occurs, it often results in a positive change in Whites’ attitudes towards minorities; it also seems reasonable to assume that interracial contact has the same effect on Blacks’ attitudes toward Whites (Rudolph and Popp 2010; Stein et al. 2000; Welch and Sigelman 1993). Unfortunately, the literature does not offer policy prescriptions for inducing more

interracial contact and interaction in divided communities, as only communities, through conversations such as this, can effectuate positive community change.

Race Relations

Healthy communities and community cohesion is lacking if citizens of the community do not interact or trust one another, thus community conditions precipitate the lack of integration and trust across the greater Little Rock area. Generally, historical transgressions created long and enduring memories among Blacks, especially across the South, that even to this day remain a challenge to confront and even more difficult to overcome. In fact, racial relations are at the core of this community conversation as the discussions over the decade attempt to explore racial differences and disparities across several community issues that, to paraphrase, “must be faced to be fixed”.

Assessing race relations in Little Rock is done simply by asking residents about relations among Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics over the decade. During the decade there is evidence that race relations are good enough for this community. At the beginning of this conversation, race relations are deemed ‘very good’ or ‘somewhat good’ by eight-out-of-ten Blacks and Whites (~80%). While not much improvement on these figures is possible, we see this in peoples’ perspectives on race relations by the end of the decade as nine-out-of-ten Blacks and Whites deem race relations ‘very good’ or ‘somewhat good’. Race relations appear to be an area in which both Blacks and Whites feel comfortable rating these affairs positively throughout the community.

Yet, with an overall positive perspective, the nuances of race relations in the community reveal some less positive perspectives from community members. Though these nuances are manifest in reprehensible and immoral incidents, these incidents (e.g., racial profiling), albeit sporadic and anomalous, periodically arise in our community. Acquiring a sense of the prevalence of such incidents or acts is critical to facing this issue, which is at the heart of this community

conversation on race. For example, racial profiling often serves as a proxy for determining how good or bad race relations are in a community. Though having its origin in inappropriate activities associated with law enforcement agencies, profiling can be broadly described as identifying a person for engaging in illicit behaviors based on elements of his or her appearance (race, gender, age, national origin, etc.). Gauging community perspectives of the prevalence of racial profiling provides insight about race relations in a community; if a group perceives there to be a prevalence of such profiling occurring in a community, it suggests that relations can easily be strained among or between groups. Though there are wide disparities between Blacks and Whites perspectives on the prevalence of profiling in our community, the perception of this prevalence has waned among Blacks, whose perspective of such incidents being ‘widespread’ declined on average 12 percent during the decade; this decline among Little Rock Blacks occurred despite research showing Blacks as a group are disproportionately victimized by such profiling (ACLU 2009; Weitzer and Tuch 2005; Weitzer and Tuch 2004).

Another nuanced area definitive of race relations for communities is citizens’ perspectives on equal treatment across races. Citizens are asked to compare the treatment of other races to that of the majority race (or Whites). Perspectives on how Blacks are treated vis-à-vis Whites vary based on one’s race. Throughout the decade perspectives on this issue have remained overall fairly steady, as only about one-third of Blacks believe ‘Blacks are treated the same as Whites’, but Whites’ perspectives are quite different – approximately half of all Whites believe ‘Blacks are treated the same as Whites’. Promising results emerge, however, when specific situations are used as comparisons (i.e., compared to ‘how Whites are treated’). In these various comparative situations –while at work, shopping, driving, and out at restaurants – Blacks view their treatment better than their overall perspective of treatment. Across the decade, we see results in these situations improve on average about ten percentage points; then percentages drop to only about one-half of Blacks who perceive their treatment different from Whites (from two-thirds). As a result, though racial disparities in perceptions of treatment between races remain largely unchanged, there are improvements in the nuanced aspects of Black perceptions of their treatment in the community. Moving this perspective among those

perceived to be treated worse (Blacks) in the community is definitely a point of celebration; those in our community who have suffered historically are, to some extent, finally believing they can be treated equally.

Discrimination is another element of understanding race relations throughout our community. Discrimination is the different and unfair treatment of a person because of her or him being identified as a member of a certain group or category of people and, in this conversation, that identification is based on one's race or ethnicity. Discrimination is typically used to exclude certain members of society from specific activities or privileges – employment, housing, education, entertainment, etc. – readily available to all citizens; such practices, though not uncommon, are illegal. In our conversation on race, discrimination is explored in general and across a few areas (employment, education, housing, entertainment venues, and while driving) to determine its existence and prevalence in the community (that the literature addresses, for example, see Timberlake 2000; Massey and Lundy 2001; Dawkins 2004). Overall, we observe similar disparate patterns between Blacks and Whites on these issues; Blacks affirm their encounters with racism, as nearly one-third of Blacks have been victims of discrimination, while Whites rarely encounter such discrimination (generally less than ten percent of Whites affirm some type of discrimination). Yet again, when viewing nuances of these issues we see improvement across the decade. At the beginning of the decade, Blacks affirmed their being discriminated against in education, housing, and employment practices as one-third to one-half of Blacks experienced discrimination (education 31%; housing 29%; employment 48%). Promising for our community are results from the latter part of this decade in which we witness such experiences by Blacks declining by about ten percentage points for each type of discrimination (education 21%; housing 21%; employment 38%). Consequently, though no cause and effect can be attributed to this decade of conversations on race, it is clearly apparent that, as this conversation has progressed, discrimination against Blacks has declined.

Sense of Community

One's sense of community is a composite of a community's culture – politically, governmentally, economically, and socially – that is believed important for explaining why things are done in specific ways based on community customs, practices, and norms. Feeling a part of the community is based on accepting, acclimating, or acculturating to some set of corresponding common, shared, or accepted community customs, values, and norms. As a critical mass accedes to these customs, values, and norms, it forms a commonality across citizens to create a sense of community. Community bonds and cohesion are powerful and pivotal elements of determining local cultural and societal norms and thus a community esprit de corps.

Early in the conversation on race, the notion of community is explored to determine what, if any, factors emerge to form a community consensus across Little Rock citizens. Again, we find Black and Whites in Little Rock differ in their perspectives of 'community', both overall and across various nuances of the community. Overall, there is a difference in how Blacks and Whites rate the community 'as a place to live' – 73 percent of Blacks rate the community as an excellent (21%) or good (52%) place to live compared to 87 percent of Whites who do (excellent-40% and good-47%). Thus, there is a nearly 15 percent disparity in perceptions of the community as being either excellent or good and a similar disparity in the percentages rating the community as 'only fair', which is the rating that 21 percent of Blacks and 10 percent of Whites provided. Interesting in these ratings is the role of one's tenure in the community (based on years lived here) for both Blacks and Whites; among Blacks most of the better ratings of the community are among those living here 20 years or less, while for Whites, though spread more across community tenure, most of the better ratings are among those living here for 11 years of more. Consequently, one's tenure in the community is a factor in assessing how different races rate the community on a scale of excellent, good, fair, and poor.

Like those results observed for other areas of these surveys, these distinctions about the community in which we reside moderate considerably as we begin to explore the various facets that constitute a community. When posed questions about ‘what gives you a sense of community or a sense of feeling or belonging’ across a host of components – friends, neighborhood, worship, work or school, ethnic background, or online communities – we witness more cohesive sentiments between Blacks and Whites; any differences between Blacks and Whites among these components is negligible. The percent difference for each ‘sense of community’ component is as follows:

- friends - 10 percent difference (Black=84%/White=94%);
- neighborhood - 6 percent difference (Black=70%/White=76%);
- worship - 8 percent difference (Black=92%/White=84%);
- work or school- 1 percent difference (Black=62%/White=63%);
- ethnic background - 16 percent difference (Black=81%/White=65%); or,
- online communities- 1 percent difference (Black=10%/White=9%).

Given these results, which are consistent with the literature (Hero 2007; BeLue, et al. 2006; Marschall and Stolle 2004), it is easy to surmise that Blacks and Whites have similar perspectives of these community components providing them with a sense of belonging or community; thus, these components prove to be common or shared cultural and societal norms of our community.

Another facet for understanding or assessing peoples’ sense of community is to determine how satisfied they are with various community components that meet their needs and expectations for community (see Anderson and Milligan 2006, for an excellent summary of community building components). Several ‘aspects of your life’ are assessed according to citizens’ satisfaction with these items, which include: community as a place to live, housing, education, family life, financial situation, health, safety, general happiness. Across these community components, we witness an overall satisfaction level of approximately 90 percent for both Blacks and Whites. In fact, we see much congruence in peoples’ satisfaction (very and somewhat satisfied) by race; only for their financial situations do we see a disparity between

Blacks and Whites. As noted, Blacks and Whites appear quite satisfied with the lives they are leading in Little Rock; the percentage distributions for community satisfaction are as follows:

community as a place to live - Black=87%/White=93%;

housing - Black=90%/White=96%;

education - Black=90%/White=95%;

family life - Black=94%/White=95%;

financial situation - Black=69%/White=85%;

health - Black=88%/White=89%;

safety - Black=86%/White=93%;

general happiness - Black=93%/White=99%.

As is apparent in these results, citizens of Little Rock are quite satisfied with how things are going in their community and feel largely satisfied with their personal plights.

Another aspect of community is estimating its members' commitment to the community, which can be loosely approximated through their proclivity to volunteer in and give back to the community. Volunteerism and giving among community members is viewed as a community asset that speaks to a community's social capital via the existence of a civic network among its citizens (Putnam 2000). Such communitarian activities point to a community steeped in volunteering and giving, as well as group and faith-based involvement (Bacot 2008), which is a community trait particularly associated with Southern communities. As is expected of a community like Little Rock, its citizens volunteer or give willingly and frequently; when asked about their volunteer activities over the year, both Blacks and Whites indicated that they volunteered about 25 times, or more than twice monthly during that time frame. Though there are a few exceptions, Blacks and Whites tend to volunteer equal amounts for various groups or organizations. The exceptions, however, are notable for Blacks who volunteer; on average, Blacks tend to volunteer or give more of their time to their 'place of worship', 'schools and youth programs', and to 'neighborhood or civic groups' in the community compared to Whites (approximately 13% more on average). Both races, however, nearly double the national and state averages for volunteering or giving. These high rates of giving are important for

understanding community commitment, which is more than sufficient for both races, and the notion of community such activities represent. It is easy to conclude that community commitment is high among all citizens of Little Rock.

Opportunity and Advancement

Understanding community perspectives with regard to opportunities for advancement in our community and society includes addressing inequities of opportunity (see above discussion) and income disparities (particularly causes and consequences of poverty). Improving the socio-economic status of citizens generally involves positive change to their incomes, which is tied to one's level of education – education and income are highly correlated, hence higher levels of education tend to result in higher incomes. One only has to look to the evidence:

In 2010, the median of earnings for young adults with a *bachelor's degree* was \$45,000, while the median was \$21,000 for those without a high school diploma or its equivalent, \$29,900 for those with a high school diploma or its equivalent, and \$37,000 for those with an associate's degree. In other words, young adults with ***a bachelor's degree earned more than twice as much as those without a high school diploma*** or its equivalent in 2010 (i.e., ***114 percent more***), 50 percent more than young adult High school completers, and 22 percent more than young adults with an associate's degree. In 2010, the median of earnings for young adults with a master's degree or higher was \$54,700, some 21 percent more than the median for young adults with a bachelor's degree (emphasis added; US Department of Education 2012).

Another critical component for advancing the socio-economic situations of citizens is to improve their social conditions; social conditions for citizens revolve around their environments and typically include such considerations as the family structure, housing, and the neighborhood in which they reside. Understanding perceptions of Blacks and Whites on their

social conditions can aid in assessing whether citizens feel like opportunities and advancement exist in Little Rock. Perception of such opportunity and advancement can provide insight into the likely long-term outlook for socio-economic mobility in our community.

Research shows that education is a fundamental aspect of social mobility. In fact, a recent report by the Economic Mobility Project states that “[d]ata covering the last four decades show that adults who have degrees from two-year or four-year colleges have far higher family incomes than do adults who have only a high school degree or are high school dropouts” (Haskins et al 2009: 5). Both Blacks and Whites recognize the importance of having a college education to succeed, as 81 percent of Blacks identify it as ‘very important’ and 72 percent of Whites find it ‘very important’ as well. Yet, despite this acknowledgement of the importance of college, there is a tremendous disparity in self-reported college graduates among Blacks and Whites in Little Rock; 25 percent of Blacks indicate they are college graduates (or more), while this number is more than doubled for Whites (60%). Given the data and these results, the conversation about race can effectuate awareness of this disparity and the consequences for social mobility for citizens of Little Rock, but especially the challenge faced by the high percentage of Blacks not having college degrees.

To have the opportunity to obtain a college degree requires quality educational experiences for elementary and secondary school students. In Little Rock, such quality, based on results surrounding an evaluation of local educational opportunities, is elusive. As nearly 60 percent of Blacks attended schools locally, less than half of all Blacks indicate they are ‘completely satisfied’ with the quality of their education (and far fewer Whites, 35 percent, attended schools locally). It is also possible to ascertain citizens’ satisfaction with local public schools by assessing their choices of public or private school education. Though admittedly not as sufficient as questions specific to the quality of education in the Little Rock School System, sentiments about school satisfaction provide insights into the public’s perception of public and private education in our community. While overlap exists (e.g., a family can send one child to public elementary and send another to private high school), of those citizens with school aged

children, nearly all Blacks attend public school (98%), while far fewer Whites attend public schools (61%) and nearly half of Whites (49%) send their children to private school. These figures are confirmed by Little Rock School District figures that show more than half of all elementary students (~60%) do not remain in the system's middle schools, which is a substantial decline in public school enrollment past elementary school (LRSD Annual Report 2012: 1). While other factors (relocation, special needs, change in family dynamics, etc.) may contribute to this high percentage of Whites abandoning public schools after elementary school, the facts are clear – there is far less White enrollment in grades 6 through 12 in Little Rock public schools.

To assess perceptions of the 'social condition' of the community a series of questions are posed about respondents' 'general situation'; several of these questions are based on factors that affect or 'improve conditions' for Americans in general. A few of these 'social condition' questions are race-specific, i.e., these queries seek to understand if certain factors "improve conditions for Black Americans." Such questions about community conditions are valuable for understanding opportunities for advancement, whether these exist and, if so, how prevalent are these perceptions across the community. In assessing such social conditions, it is interesting to observe how people perceive future situations; when asked to evaluate the 'general situation for blacks' in five years, we find that Blacks and Whites evaluate this situation fairly similarly. The only divergence in opinions lies with those Blacks and Whites assessing the situation as 'worse' in which 15 percent of Blacks see their situation as worse, while only 5 percent of Whites see the 'situation for blacks' being worse in five years. Yet, such disparity in opinion with regard to improving conditions among Blacks is the exception; in fact, when assessing this topic early in the decade, there is little divergence of note between Blacks and Whites across a host of factors examined. In other words, Blacks and Whites share similar perspectives of their shared social conditions and factors that affect their own well-being within the community.

Another effort to assess perspectives of the community social condition is to ask citizens about their experiences and expectations with regard to the “American Dream”, their prospects about their financial health and well-being, or their wealth, housing, and financial success. Midway through the decade of having this community conversation, such social condition questions are posed to the community. From these queries, we find Blacks much more optimistic about their current and future situations – well over half of Blacks believe they ‘will reach it (the American Dream) in their lifetime’ (61%) – compared to about one-third of Whites (33%). Such attitudes continue to prevail among Blacks. For example, Blacks believe they are ‘very likely’ or ‘somewhat likely’ to become financially wealthy (64% compared to 54% of Whites); Blacks believe their children will enjoy ‘much better’ standards of living (52% compared to 22% of Whites). However, racial disparities emerge when questions turn to address situations involving personal and family connections that often portend success. Far fewer Whites believe ‘coming from a wealthy family’ is important for succeeding – 20 percent of Whites believe this ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ – compared to 46 percent of Blacks who view this as ‘essential’ or ‘very important’. Similar results emerge from a similar query on the importance of ‘knowing the right people’ is posed; here again there are substantial differences between Blacks (67% believe this ‘essential’ or ‘very important’) and Whites (45% believe this ‘essential’ or ‘very important’). These divergent sentiments continue across questions involving incomes and opportunities; for example, when asked to compare ‘standards of living’ between blacks and whites, the difference between races is about 20 percent – for those believing this gap is growing wider (Blacks-36%, Whites-17%), as well as those believing this gap is narrowing (Blacks-55%, Whites-73%). This difference in perception is confirmed by a question delving into respondents’ assessments of their personal financial situations in which we find that about 30 percent of Blacks report they ‘live comfortably’ compared to 50 percent of Whites who do so. In addition, consistent with the literature finding that in metropolitan areas in which the Black population is greater in size, there tends to be greater earnings disparities between races; in fact, in such circumstances, whites tend to have higher earnings than blacks (Cohen 2007; Cohen 2001; McCall 2001; Badel 2010). In our community, at more than twice the percentages, Blacks report higher percentages of financial situations that fall below, or are only just enough to meet

their basic obligations ('not enough to meet living expense': Blacks-11%, Whites-2%, and 'just meet basic living expense': Blacks-24%, Whites-12%). As we find in other areas defining our race relations, so too do we find here: overall, there appears a community in unison, but when the more nuanced, or covert aspects of situations are revealed, we find discrepancies in perspectives on the opportunities for advancement in our community – the meaning, the perception, and the contributing factors.

Continuity & Change: Observations on the Tenth Anniversary

Though a definitive link is not possible, we can presume that changes in perceptions among Blacks and Whites are affected by having this conversation – at the community level. A magnificent challenge though it is, Dr. Anderson did not shy from it. Every member of this community owes some gratitude to him for his vision, leadership, and faith in our community; yet, the community should also be equally recognized for embracing the challenge to discuss our racial issues – at the community level. This decade of discussing race – facing it – appears to have facilitated changing attitudes in the community, whether nuanced or overall, or for good or ill.

More importantly, we, as a community, are discussing this issue that makes so many of us uncomfortable. In fact, it appears from these surveys that our community – though still uneasy with it overall – is becoming more comfortable with these discussions. From these conversations, we are finding more nuances of race relations about which to discuss, and these are just as, if not more uncomfortable things to inject into this rather difficult and sometimes awkward talk we are having among ourselves. In fact, many of these nuanced elements finding their way into our conversation have long been known, but not discussed and, due to this conversation, are being integrated into our discussions. Whether we as a community like it or not, we must face it to fix it.

Many in our community see these annual conversations as celebrations of our community's 'victory over racial issues', while others see these conversations as confirmation of what they 'have known all along', but regardless of perspective, these conversations are providing the impetus for these perspectives to emerge across the community and in public – no longer restricted to dining rooms, board rooms, school rooms, and back rooms. Let us continue to openly face what we can only fix as a community.

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