

# **Congressional Conversations on Race Final Evaluation Report**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Project Background

Congressional Conversations on Race (CCR) is a program of *Search for Common Ground* and *The Faith & Politics Institute* that provides support to Members of Congress to constructively address race-related challenges in their districts. Acknowledging that many Members do want to provide leadership around racial reconciliation but do not often have the resources or platform to do so, CCR supports Members by providing and holding constructive spaces for discussing difficult race related topics and issues along with key constituents at the district level. Ultimately, the process is designed in a way that supports the Member's concerns and desires with regard to racial healing in their district.

The project has hosted eight CCR events over a three-year grant period with the following primary objectives:

- Increased leadership by Members of Congress on race related challenges in their districts
- Increased willingness by CCR participants to improve race-relations in their congressional district

### Evaluation Goals

Now that the grant period has concluded, SFCG and FPI would like to assess how the project was implemented and to what extent the project objectives were achieved. The evaluation of the CCR project therefore has the following objectives:

1. Assess the effectiveness of the project (i.e., the extent to which the project stated objectives have been achieved).
2. Assess the impact of the project within four CCR districts (Rocky Mount, NC; Oakland, CA; New Orleans, LO; and St. Louis, MO).
3. Assess the strength of the process of project implementation amongst the CCR planning team.

The evaluation data draws primarily from 48 in-person key-informant interviews with CCR participants, Members of Congress, District office staff, and the CCR Planning Team.

### Overview of Findings

Overall, the CCR program format in all districts was effective in strengthening relationships between key community stakeholders. Additionally, the project was effective in increasing participants' willingness to improve race relations in their district. However, the program design (particularly in St. Louis and Oakland) was generally not effective in transforming this willingness into tangible behavior change among CCR participants to address racial challenges within their districts. The primary theme that emerged from the interviews and survey data across all districts is importance of incorporating timely and meaningful follow-up into any CCR event in order to translate conversations into action. The lack of follow-up hindered possibilities for sustainable and wide-reaching impact within the districts.

Specific findings include:

- The project was most effective in providing participants with greater awareness of their district's racial history and racial dynamics in St. Louis and in Rocky Mount
- The project goal for increased leadership by Members of Congress was most effectively met in New Orleans with Congressman Richmond
- The project had the greatest impact in North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, based on the number of tangible actions by CCR participants as a result of the CCR events
- Some of the most notable and tangible post-CCR event actions include:
  - Establishment of a community garden by a Vidant Medical Center administrator (Rocky Mount, NC)
  - Creation of ongoing collaborative partnerships between the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN) and the Center for Health Disparities Research at East Carolina University and subsequent co-authored grant proposals (Rocky Mount, NC)
  - Partnership between AMEXCAN and the Community Development Center in Greenville to host several community dialogues (Rocky Mount, NC)
  - \$700,000 in special funding from the USDA to rural farmers in North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District (Rocky Mount, NC)
  - Dialogue on high school drop out rates as related to race, lead by the members of the Congressional Youth Cabinet (St. Louis, MO)
  - Partnership between the Mathews-Dickey Boys' & Girls' Club and the AKA Sorority on MLK "40 Days of Peace" event (St. Louis, MO)
- The interactive and experiential components of the CCR events were effective in meeting the project's objectives. Specifically, the bus tours and the small group dialogue format were both memorable and informative
- One-time conversations do not go far enough to effectively meet the CCR project objectives
- Lack of clarity in all districts about leadership and responsibility for post-CCR next steps
- General sense of disappointment among CCR participants at the lack of meaningful follow-up
- More diversity needed among CCR participants across all districts, particularly in terms of race, socio-economic status, age, and sector
- Lack of clarity about Planning Team roles, responsibilities, structures of accountability, shared goals, and philosophical approach hindered the effectiveness of the overall project

### Overview of Recommendations

- Any future CCR events should have a clear process for follow-up as part of grant proposals, project design, and as part of the initial CCR planning

- Clarify leadership and responsibility for follow-up events and action planning within each district and among the district offices
- Implement more effective collaboration between district staff and the CCR Planning Team to ensure a diverse collection of participants is invited to the CCR event—specifically in regards to racial diversity
- More effectively incorporate participant recruitment strategies into the project timeline
- Emphasize the importance of direct and meaningful participation by Members of Congress in the event, above and beyond an appearance for opening remarks and returning for closing remarks
- More effectively leverage the Search for Common Ground CCR project website to engage CCR participants within and across districts
- Hold a series of CCR Planning Team meetings to establish clear roles, responsibilities, structures of accountability, and shared goals before any future project planning or design begins

## INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report includes data collected from evaluation fieldwork in Rocky Mount, North Carolina; Oakland, California; St. Louis, Missouri; and New Orleans, Louisiana. The report draws primarily from in-person interviews with CCR participants in each of the four districts, five of the six CCR Planning Team members, and three Members of Congress. The report includes key themes and findings within and across these districts, analyses and conclusions, and a list of recommendations. The key themes that emerged from these interviews are organized roughly according to the interview question topics, and are grouped under the evaluation criteria and lines of inquiry—effectiveness, impact, and relevance.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Congressional Conversations on Race (CCR) is a program of *Search for Common Ground* and *The Faith & Politics Institute* that provides support to Members of Congress to constructively address race-related challenges in their districts. Acknowledging that many Members do want to provide leadership around racial reconciliation but do not often have the resources or platform to do so, CCR supports Members by providing and holding constructive spaces for discussing difficult race related topics and issues along with key constituents at the district level. Ultimately, the process is designed in a way that supports the Member's concerns and desires with regard to racial healing in their district.

The project has hosted eight CCR events over the three-year grant period: Oakland, California; Rocky Mount, North Carolina; New Orleans, Louisiana; St. Louis, Missouri; two conversations exclusively for members of Congress, one in Washington, DC and one in Birmingham, Alabama; and two film screenings with post-film facilitated dialogue held in Washington DC. The primary objectives of the project are:

- Increased leadership by Members of Congress on race related challenges in their districts
- Increased willingness by CCR participants to improve race-relations in their congressional district

Now that the grant period has concluded, SFCG and FPI would like to assess how the project was implemented and to what extent the project objectives were achieved. The evaluation of the CCR project therefore has the following objectives:

4. Assess the effectiveness of the project (i.e., the extent to which the project stated objectives have been achieved).
5. Assess the impact of the project within four CCR districts (Rocky Mount, NC; Oakland, CA; New Orleans, LO; and St. Louis, MO).
6. Assess the strength of the process of project implementation amongst the CCR planning team.

## EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology comprised a mix of field visits and observation, semi-structured in-person interviews, filming of key informants' stories (only in the case of Rocky Mount, North Carolina) and a review of existing project-related documents. This evaluation makes use of both quantitative and qualitative methods, but focuses primarily on qualitative methods. The primary focus for this evaluation process focused on the collection of qualitative information through in-person key informant interviews, including:

- CCR participants
- Key district constituents
- Members of Congress
- District office staff
- CCR Planning Team members (SFCG and FPI)

All in-person interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The interview notes and transcriptions were then reviewed and analyzed to draw forward common or divergent themes amongst CCR interviewees and across districts. Further detail about data collection methods for each evaluation question, data source, and sampling can be seen in the evaluation-planning matrix (Appendix A). Interview questions for CCR participants, district staff, CCR Planning Team members, and Members of Congress can be seen in Appendix B, Appendix C, Appendix D, and Appendix E respectively.

In total, the interview sample included 48 in-person interviews, and one written evaluation: 34 CCR participants, three Members of Congress (one via written evaluation), seven district office staff, and five CCR planning team members. The selection of interviewees was decided in coordination with the CCR Project Director and endeavored to balance diversity of age, race, gender, and sector in the interviewee pool.

As the Evaluation Consultant, I spent several days in each of the four districts to conduct in-person interviews. I was joined by the CCR Project Director, and in the case of North Carolina, a member of Common Ground Productions accompanied us to film key interviews. The CCR Project Director accompanied the field visits to help coordinate logistics and follow up meetings, but did not participate in any of the interviews. Three Members of Congress were included in the interview pool: Congressman Lacy Clay, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and Congressman Cedric Richmond. Interviews with Clay and Lee were conducted in Washington DC, while Richmond offered his responses to the evaluation questions via a written survey. I was unable to interview Congressman Butterfield due to scheduling conflicts.

The St. Louis CCR event included a large number of youth participants. Therefore, the St. Louis interview sample also included a large number of youth interviewees (six middle school students, three high school students from the Congressional Youth Cabinet, and three university students). For the interviewees under 18 years of age, parents/guardians and the youth interviewee signed consent forms before proceeding with the interviews. All adult interviewees for all districts gave their verbal consent before participating in the interviews, and were given the option of remaining anonymous in this report.

The following is an overview of the interviews conducted in each district:

Rocky Mount, North Carolina

Evaluation dates: July 30-31, 2012

CCR participants interviewed: 7

District office staff interviewed: 2

\*Unable to schedule an interview with Congressman Butterfield

Oakland, California

Evaluation dates: October 22-23, 2012

CCR participants interviewed: 4

District office staff interviewed: 3

Member of Congress interviewed: Congresswoman Barbara Lee

St. Louis, Missouri

Evaluation dates: January 18-19, 2013

CCR participants interviewed: 16\*

District office staff interviewed: 1

Member of Congress interviewed: Congressman Lacy Clay

\*Several of the youth interviews were conducted jointly, with 2 or 3 youth interviewees per interview session

New Orleans, Louisiana

Evaluation dates: May 10-11, 2013

CCR participants interviewed: 7

District office staff interviewed: 1

Member of Congress interviewed: Congressman Cedric Richmond completed a written evaluation survey

CCR Planning Team

The interviews with CCR Planning Team members were conducted at the convenience of the planning team members—either in the Search for Common Ground office, at a coffee shop or in two instances due to geographic distance, on the phone or Skype. These interviews took place over the course of the evaluation period. I was unable to confirm an interview with one of the Faith and Politics Planning Team members due to scheduling conflicts.



# ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA

The all-day CCR event in North Carolina’s 1st Congressional District focused on issues of health, poverty, and food access as related to race in Eastern North Carolina. The event included a bus tour of historically significant sites in and around Rocky Mount, presentations by local experts, facilitated dialogue, and small breakout group sessions focused on action planning to address racial disparities.

## FINDINGS

### *Motivation for Participation*

57% (four out of seven) interviewees mentioned Congressman Butterfield as their primary motivation for attending the Rocky Mount CCR. For these interviewees, the Congressman has a strong reputation—his name and office carry influence in the district and they respect his work. Many of the interviewees appreciate the relationship they have with him and/or his district office and attended the CCR event because of this relationship. Four out of seven interviewees participated in the CCR in part or primarily because of their interest in the topic of race relations, or their interest in some of the specific topic areas—health, poverty and food. One interviewee (a program officer for the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation) attended in order to learn more about the district and to meet key community stakeholders.

<b>Effectiveness</b>
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### *Most Memorable*

70% of the CCR participants interviewed (five out of seven) identified the presentations and the presenters as the most memorable aspect of their experience. Many noted the expertise of the presenters and their ability to successfully relay important data to a primarily non-academic audience. Jehan Benton Clark, a program officer for the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation, described the impact of the data shared during the presentations: “One thing that I remember to this day, Pitt County has the highest number of fast food restaurants per capita in the US. I’ve heard people [CCR participants] repeat that statement in other meetings I’ve attended, because they took that with them.” Carolyn Fleming-Sawyers, a local hospital administrator, further described the impact of the presentations: “There were also some dynamic speakers from the university who gave some inspirational and challenging reports. Pushed us to do more. Not just sit there, but to move out into the community to impact change in the areas in which we work.” Three interviewees specifically mentioned their alarm in learning of the health and poverty disparities in the district—as Larry Auld, a former professor, noted, “I knew things were bad, but I didn’t know how bad.”

Two interviewees mentioned meeting people from diverse backgrounds, both racially but also in terms of sector, as one of the most memorable aspects of their experience. Juvencio Roche Peralta, the president of a Latino community-based organization (Association of Mexicans in North Carolina) said, “We had a good combination of stakeholders from public office to community activists to researchers. To me, that’s a good combination and not

something that happens all the time. For a community like Eastern North Carolina, having these different stakeholders come together to talk about this particular area, to me that was really very good.”

#### *Race Related Insights and Greater Awareness of Racial History*

Based on the post-event participant surveys, 89% of participants (17 out of 19) who completed a survey agreed or strongly agreed that the CCR increased their awareness of the race related history and dynamics in the North Carolina’s 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District. Similarly, many of those interviewed expressed greater awareness of the area’s racial history and identified new race related insights in their interviews.

Two interviewees shared their realization that many racial groups in the congressional district are faced with similar challenges, particularly around issues of poverty, and that their needs intersect in ways they hadn’t realized previously. Juvencio appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the Native American community and of the challenges they shared related to health disparities: “the other piece that was interesting to me was the issues of Native Americans around this district [related to health disparities]. That for me was the highlight, and the most important.” As a result, both interviewees saw new ways that these groups could collaborate around shared interests.

Two interviewees noted greater awareness about the health disparities and the extent of poverty in the district. Juvencio specifically stated, “I knew there was poverty in our communities, but I never realized how much poverty there was in this area... Nash was highlighted as one of the poorest counties in the country. To me that’s a new awareness.”

Four of the seven CCR participants interviewed left the event with greater awareness of the area’s racial history. Some noted the role of tobacco industry in shaping past and current racial dynamics. Others mentioned new awareness about the divisions that separated black and white communities—the railway tracks and the development of neighborhoods—that continue to have relevance with regards to present-day divisions between these communities.

Three interviewees, one who grew up and lived his entire life in Tarboro, NC and one who grew up and lived her life in Greenville, NC, said the event did not provide them with any new awareness. For two of these three interviewees, they said the event reinforced what they already knew about the area’s racial history.

#### *Relation to Current Work*

All but one of those interviewed agreed that the CCR event was helpful in supporting their current work, either directly or indirectly. 60% of the CCR participants interviewed mentioned the benefits of meeting diverse community stakeholders, networking and building new or existing relationships. Rudolph Knight, a retired professor and community activist said, “It provided an area for networking and that’s always helpful. We developed more contacts and shared what we do in our community and then were able to compare that to what other people are doing in their community.” Pat Dunn, the former mayor of Greenville did not find the event helpful in supporting their current work. She said that the CCR was generally beneficial in bringing members of the community together, but not specifically beneficial in her current work.

*Program Format – What Worked Well*

Overall, interviewees agreed that the program format worked well, and was well organized and well facilitated. Four interviewees specifically noted the small group sessions by topic area and the roundtable discussions as important aspects of the program format that allowed participants needed opportunities to engage in conversation and work in a variety of formats (large group and small group work). As previously noted, 70% of the participants identified the presenters as providing informative and memorable presentations that benefitted their understanding of the issues (poverty, food and health) in their region. Two interviewees, including the Kate B. Reynolds program officer, also mentioned the bus tour segment of the program as beneficial in contributing to their understanding of key issues facing the district in regards to food deserts and poverty and in gaining new insights related to the area’s racial history.

*Program Format—What Could Be Improved*

Four interviewees noted increased diversity amongst the CCR participants as an area for improvement, primarily with regards to racial diversity. Rudolph Knight said, “The people who needed to be there [white people] were not present.” Larry Auld agreed with his partner, “Most of the participants were already in agreement that there is a problem. The event was preaching to the choir. There needs to be communication to a broader group.” One participant also expressed a desire to have more socio-economic and age/generational diversity in the room.

Four interviewees described the need for follow-up and a clear framework for next steps. One participant suggested informing participants at the end of the January CCR that there would be a follow-up meeting in 6-8 months. Another interviewee mentioned the importance of having a deadline. Both a meeting and/or a deadline would help the subgroups that formed have a common goal to work toward, and maintain the momentum of the conversation that began in January 2012.

Al Richard, a tribal administrator, indicated his desire to have the Congressman present for more of the program: “I would have liked to see the Congressman more. I realize his time is limited, but something of that nature is a very heavy subject to discuss. I think it carries more weight and importance when you have the Congressman engaged in it.”

<b>Impact</b>
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*Activities or Actions as a Result of the CCR*

Several of the interviewees identified actions they have taken as a result of the CCR—some subtle such as a shift in awareness, and others more tangible, such as the creation of a community garden. Al Richardson, the tribal administrator for the Haliwa-Saponi tribe, developed greater awareness about addressing diversity in his tribal work related to economic development. He has begun talking with his tribal council, encouraging them to incorporate this framework into their community work: “We’ve got to include a good cross section of our

community in order to be successful. If we're going to create economic development, we can't create it on our own...it's not just about us as a tribe, it's got to be about us as a community. We're including that in our grant writing now as well. Including the dynamics of our population—not just the Indian community. If we have a health fair there, it's just not isolated to our community, it's for everyone.”

As a result of the CCR Juvencio, the president of AMEXCAN, has begun holding regular meetings with one of the CCR keynote speakers who is doing work on health disparities through the Center for Health Disparities Research at East Carolina University. They are working together to further address health disparities within the Latino community. They are also sharing an intern to continue the connection between their organizations. Additionally, the keynote speaker and her center are helping AMEXCAN write grants to further support their work.

Carolyn Fleming-Sawyer, a relatively new resident of the district, was inspired by the CCR to establish a community garden. “I was challenged from some of the conversations to do something more, even though I've only been back in the area for a year and a half.” Following the CCR Carolyn, an administrator at Vidant Medical Center (a major hospital and employer in the area), developed a proposal for an employee garden that is therapeutic in nature, “a place for meditation, to think and gather oneself.” She presented her proposal to the medical center's president and it was approved. She has now secured land for the garden on hospital property and is currently designing the garden in consultation with local community members. The garden is located next to a hospice center and an educational facility for youth. Carolyn envisions that the garden will serve both of these populations and has plans for youth classes: “Hopefully the kids in the area will learn to put their hands in the soil and create...My hope is that this will be a project where we'll be able to marry some of the community activities with the hospital.”

Several participants of the health subgroup have attempted to meet following the initial CCR gathering, but have encountered scheduling difficulties. They have found it challenging to maintain the momentum of the initial meeting and a have lack of clarity about what exactly their goals are related to the CCR initiative. Larry Auld said, “In my committee, we tried to meet twice, and it never happened. We didn't have very clear directions about how to go about it. I think there was a lot of passion, but there was not a lot of framework about how to follow-up.”

### *Unanticipated Positive Effects*

Two interviewees mentioned the positive effects of having members of the community who had never previously met now connecting as a result of the CCR, particularly those from different industries and sectors, “groups are communicating that didn't necessarily communicate before.” Juvencio added, “There is nothing like this happening in Eastern North Carolina. People I met there are still talking about it and we exchange emails or call one another. That's a very positive impact.”

Several interviewees mentioned the potential positive impact of having a Food Lion representative present during the bus tour and conversations about food deserts in the area. These interviewees acknowledged the benefit of connecting this representative with members of the local community and to have him witness the neighborhoods impacted by food deserts, to hear their stories and hopefully to take action by bringing a grocery store into some of the

areas most affected by food deserts. Jehan Benton Clark described her experience of having that representative present:

“We actually also had a representative from one of the major grocery chains. His job was to work on moving into low-income neighborhoods and creating a sustainable model. It was interesting, because there were conversations on the bus happening in regards to specific grocery stores and this grocery store kept being talked about on the bus. I don’t think anyone actually knew that this person was from that grocery store because his nametag had the overall managing company’s name on it. The only reason I knew who it was is because my husband’s friend works for the same company. So I walked up to him during the bus tour and asked him what he thought about the conversations, because I knew that’s where he worked. It was actually very valuable to have that anonymity standpoint, because people were being open and talked about the challenges that they’ve had. Later on, when we got back together as a group and processed the bus tour what we saw, this gentleman spoke up and was able to give insight into what the challenges have been when they try to move into certain neighborhoods and needing the community support. I think it was really interesting to have that perspective in the room as well.”

According to the district staff, there were several follow-up meetings with the representative from Food Lion who participated in the CCR about installing a grocery store in an identified food desert neighborhood. However, the meetings were not successful in establishing a Food Lion grocery store in the Rocky Mount community. The district staff were not able to specify why the meeting was not successful, but mentioned their hope that the conversations may lead to other grocery store companies filling this need.

As a result of what she learned during the CCR, particularly around health disparities within the African American community, Carolyn Fleming-Sawyer “left with a greater commitment...to preventative care and health maintenance. I think with the awareness of it, now I don’t take things for granted. I even started to look at the way that I engage in physical activity as well as my own personal eating habits. I looked at that differently, and beefed up my exercise regiment.” The event impacted Carolyn personally in ways she hadn’t anticipated.

### *Unanticipated Negative Effects*

Most interviewees were not aware of any negative effects. However, two interviewees mentioned talking with people who were upset about not being invited to the CCR gathering. The district staff also mentioned the difficulty and political challenges they faced in balancing the needs of the entire district and the interests of Rocky Mount residents and city and county political leaders, as the actual CCR event was held in Rocky Mount.

### *New Collaborative Relationships*

As a result of the CCR, AMEXCAN is now working closely with the Community Development Center in Greenville. They are partnering to hold several community dialogues with the Latino community in Nash County. The Community Development Center has now offered the AMEXCAN use of their space to host additional community events in Nash County. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the president of AMEXCAN is now working closely with the Center for Health Disparities Research at East Carolina University, collaborating together on

work related to health disparities in the Latino community. Following the CCR, AMEXCAN also strengthened relationships with the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation and is now working to submit a proposal to the Foundation about health disparities in the Latino community.

Jehan Benton Clark, program officer from the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation, appreciated meeting key stakeholders in the community and strengthening already existing relationships: “It helps us understand the context when people apply for grant applications and talk to us about the needs in their community...It was a great place for me to meet and network with individuals to hear their stories.”

Two of the district staff members described the benefit of the CCR in indirectly helping to build new relationships with local area farmers, particularly farmers of color, and strengthening their work in growing the local food economy. Russ Haddad, former Director of Economic Development and Business Outreach in Congressman Butterfield’s district office, identified the benefit to the Congressman’s office of creating new relationships with AMEXCAN: “that’s been helpful in reaching a constituency that is burgeoning there in the district that’s not huge but it gets us on the ground floor of something that’s growing.”

### *Impact on the District*

In speaking with two of Congressman Butterfield’s district staff members about the impact the CCR has had on their district, both staff members identified the importance of building relationships with their constituents. Because of these deepened relationships, Ray Roger, the District Director said, “The CCR was influential in terms of impacting policy and decisions for the future.” Another staff member said of the CCR, “It gives the office...a lot of credibility on issues that the 1st district is facing—poverty, hunger and things like that.”

As a result of the CCR, the district office set up meetings with the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation and the Golden Leaf Foundation to collaborate on the Congressman’s local food initiative (an initiative that started prior to the CCR)—to connect local farmers and local produce to local restaurants and schools. Russ Haddad said of those meetings, “It opened up our eyes, to start building relationships with different types of funders that we could potentially bring to the district.”

Following the CCR and the conversations about poverty, food deserts and growing the local food economy, the district office also became more deliberate about connecting with rural farmers. In July the 1<sup>st</sup> district received \$700,000 in special funding from the USDA to support local farmers from disadvantaged backgrounds. While not directly connected to the CCR, the district director explained that the Congressman received the funding because of his ability to reach out to rural African American farmers—a population the USDA has had difficulty reaching.

<b>Relevance</b>
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### *Racial Healing*

When asked whether the CCR event helped to meet the needs of the community in addressing racial healing, most didn’t think the event went far enough. Jehan Benton Clark’s

comment, “I think it’s a starting place. It needs to be a little bit more often, but this was a good first step for the community,” was a common sentiment amongst all interviewees. Several interviewees mentioned the need for concrete actions and follow-up steps in order to more fully address the multi-layered task of racial healing. Rudolph Knight said, “We have talked about all of this...but talk is not solving things. Where is the action? We need specifics and direction to be able to resolve some of these issues in our community. So I think this follow-up meeting, perhaps we’ll get some, or we’re anticipating getting some direction from the Congressman’s office.” Several interviewees indicated their desire for further leadership from the Congressman’s office in order to continue the conversations that started in January and to bring about concrete shifts in their community.

Pat Dunn was unclear as to what the main objective of the CCR was: “I wasn’t sure when it came to the conversation about race really where this was trying to go,” and expressed skepticism about the CCR achieving concrete and actionable steps for addressing racial healing.

Al Richardson believed the event was helpful in addressing racial healing in a general sense: “I think it was important because there are things in the social fabric of our lives that we’d rather not talk about and when you bring it into the light of day you achieve more understanding.”

### *Recommendations*

In reflecting on recommendations for future CCR events in other districts, five interviewees mentioned the importance of having a diverse group of participants, particularly in terms of racial background. In particular, interviewees identified the challenges of bringing white participants to the table and engaging them in meaningful ways. Several interviewees also mentioned the value of having Native American and Latino voices represented in the conversation.

In discussing recommendations for future events in North Carolina’s 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, noting the large size of the district, four interviewees suggested holding follow-up events in other counties throughout the district in order to engage a broader range of district members. Three interviewees mentioned having regular meetings (quarterly or twice per year) to allow community members to report on their activities, continue collaboration with one another and communicate with the Congressman’s office.

As mentioned above, five interviewees identified the importance of having a clear plan in place for follow-up, both in future districts and also in North Carolina’s 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District. Two interviewees expressed frustration that there were not clear goals or deadlines stated at the close of the January CCR, or specific point people taking responsibility for follow-up steps. Russ Haddad former district staff member said, “Its fine to have meetings but if there’s no follow-up action even though we’ve seen some good action, its gotta keep going, or else it just becomes what a lot of people said during the conversation on race--another program that just fades away, another meeting that was just a meeting.”

Pat Dunn, a former Greenville mayor suggested having a micro approach as opposed to a macro approach for future CCRs: “we are looking for some magic bullet to do this...some policy that will be passed, some act...but building human relationships is done at the grassroots level, one on one. Not by some massive program.”

## **ANALYSIS and CONCLUSIONS – ROCKY MOUNT, NC**

Based on the interview data, survey results and observations for the Rocky Mount CCR, I conclude that the project was effective in meeting its primary objectives--increasing leadership by Congressman Butterfield on race related challenges in his congressional district and encouraging CCR participants to engage in efforts to improve race relations in the district. The first objective, increasing leadership by Congressman Butterfield, was difficult to evaluate with confidence, as the objective was measured based on a small sample—primarily through interviews with two of his district staff, and interviews with CCR Planning Team members. Unfortunately, I was not able to schedule an interview with Congressman Butterfield to evaluate his sense of increased leadership, or lack thereof, on the topic. In my judgment, the second objective was more effectively met than the first objective, as evidenced by the interviewee's acknowledgement of increased awareness and actions taken as a result of the CCR. However, because many of the CCR participants were already involved in race related work or efforts to improve disparate community outcomes, the CCR was not necessarily effective in encouraging behavior change amongst district residents without an already-stated interest in addressing race related challenges in North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District. As such, the CCR events (in January and in July 2012) supported the work of most CCR participants, either directly or indirectly, but did not engage those not already doing work in these areas. As one interviewee said, the event was ultimately "preaching to the choir."

One theme that emerged amongst interviews with CCR participants and with district staff is the lack of clarity about leadership for post-CCR next steps. Three interviewees explicitly stated their desire for more leadership from Congressman Butterfield regarding next steps for the sub-group work and larger conversations about race in the district. As one interviewee stated, "He [the Congressman] initiated this, so he has something in mind. There should be something forthcoming to let us know what the next step will be." However, in speaking with the district staff, it is clear that the district office wants the community to take leadership and to take responsibility for next steps: "Our role in this process was not to take on another layer of responsibility but rather to use that [the CCR] as a tool...a launching pad for community leaders." The District Director would like to identify several individuals or one organizational leader in the community to take leadership of the project going forward. Thus through the interviews, there emerges a clear disconnection between the CCR participants' understanding of next steps, and the district office's desire for the community to take responsibility for next steps. Based on the interviews, it is also unclear to both the district staff and the CCR Planning Team what role SFCG and FPI will play in future CCR related activities in North Carolina.

Another theme relates to the racial background of the interviewee sample. The majority of the nine people interviewed in Rocky Mount and Wilson North Carolina are people of color. One of the White interviewees has a Black partner, is actively engaged in race related research in Edgecombe County and his interview comments aligned closely with many of the interviewees of color. The other White interviewee's comments however do not align with the majority of interviewees' impressions and experiences of the event. She was skeptical of the short-term benefits of the CCR or the long-term impacts of the CCR project. In analyzing the interview data based on the racial background of the interviewees, there appears to be a



pattern of general support of the CCR amongst CCR participants of color, and general skepticism amongst white CCR participants. However, I am not able to make this conclusion with confidence, as there was a notable lack of racial diversity amongst the interview sample.

### **Effectiveness**

According to the interview data, the Rocky Mount CCR program format was effective in bringing members of the community together, providing a platform for networking and relationship building, and raising awareness of key district issues (health disparities, food deserts and poverty). Additionally, in my judgment, the CCR was effective in meeting the project objectives of increasing participant awareness of race related history and dynamics in the district. Based on the interview results, the CCR provided 67% of those interviewed and 89% of those who completed a post-event survey, with new race related insights and greater awareness of the race related history and dynamics in North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District. The presentations by three keynote speakers and the bus tour appear to be the primary sources for participants' new insights and greater awareness of the area's racial dynamics. The conversations throughout the CCR gathering, both formal and informal, and the stories shared amongst participants are a secondary source for new race related insights.

Based on the interview data with district staff, I'm not able to conclusively judge the effectiveness of the project in contributing to greater leadership on issues of race on the part of Members of Congress, particularly because I was not able to interview Congressman Butterfield. However, the limited data I have suggests that the project was effective in providing a platform to address the difficult topic of race with their constituents. The personal stories shared by Congressman Butterfield, according to Doug Tanner, "was the window onto the kind of leadership that we could see was rare and precious and could be called forth and cultivated."

### **Impact**

Based on the evaluation data, I conclude that the Rocky Mount CCR had a moderate impact on the district. The CCR participants and the district staff members that I interviewed identified several tangible actions as a result of the CCR gathering. These actions indicate that the CCR project was successful in meeting its broad objective of addressing race related challenges within the district. These actions include: Establishment of a community garden by a Vidant Medical Center administrator; the creation of working partnerships between the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN) and the Center for Health Disparities Research at East Carolina University and subsequent co-authored grant proposals; strengthened relationships between key community stakeholders within the district; and

indirectly, \$700,000 in special funding from the USDA to rural farmers in North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District. Of these actions, the USDA special funding has the most direct, far-reaching, and tangible impact within the district, particularly for rural farmers of color, and relates closely to the CCR focus on addressing poverty and access to healthy foods in Eastern North Carolina.

Due to the program format, the CCR was effective in building relationships amongst CCR participants—both in connecting those who had never met and in strengthening relationships between those who already knew one another. Some of these new collaborative relationships have led to tangible actions (mentioned above). However, most have not led to any direct or tangible outcomes. While the above-mentioned actions are positive, 56% of those interviewed also point out that the program did not go far enough to address the core challenges of poverty, health disparities, and food deserts. Specifically, there was no clear plan for follow-up, which hinders the possibility for sustained and tangible action. A common theme that emerged from the interviews is the interest and excitement generated during the CCR gathering but interviewees also shared a general sense of disappointment that more hasn't happened in terms of follow-up. In my judgment, not having a clear plan in place for follow-up may lead to disillusionment amongst CCR participants—a feeling that the CCR was “just another program”—which may lead to unanticipated negative impacts for future CCR efforts in North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District.

### Relevance

Overall, it does not appear that the CCR was helping in meeting the needs of the Eastern North Carolina community with regards to racial healing. The majority of interviewees believe the CCR was a good first step, but did not go far enough to fully address the community's needs for racial healing. For some interviewees, the CCR was relevant in supporting their current work, but didn't necessarily extend beyond that to meet the needs of their community. Some of these results may be connected to difference in the language used by the CCR planning team, the district office, and the evaluation tools. In the interviews I conducted, I asked specifically about racial healing, whereas the planning team and the district office did not necessarily describe racial healing as a focus of the CCR.

However, according to the district staff, the CCR was helpful and relevant in meeting the needs of the Congressman's office with regards to addressing race related challenges in the district. Ray Roger, the District Director stated, “I would encourage any Congressional person, anybody that has any kind of desire whatsoever to improve race relations to do this. This is a healthy process, it really is. It's time consuming...all the planning and so forth, but it's worth it. It's about bettering our communities.”

## OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

The Oakland CCR took place over two days, starting with a bus tour of important race related sites and neighborhoods, and a facilitated dialogue. The second day included presentations by local community leaders, and moderated discussions with community stakeholders focused on education, youth violence, unemployment, and public safety.

### FINDINGS

#### *Motivation for Participation*

Three out of the four CCR participant interviewees mentioned Congresswoman Lee as their primary motivation for attending the Oakland CCR. For these interviewees, the Congresswoman's name carries influence in the district; they appreciate and support her political work and expressed appreciation for her role in convening the conversation. Several interviewees had a more positive impression of Congresswoman Lee following the CCR: "This has always been an issue that people want to talk about, but many are afraid to start the conversation. So I'm really glad that Congresswoman Lee is taking that leadership. I wouldn't say that many of us were avoiding it, but we didn't know how to get this started."

One participant mentioned his interest in the general topic as the primary reason for his participation: "I think any time there's a conversation about race I think we all need to participate. It's a very critical issue in our life and times. I felt compelled to be a part of any conversation that's happening on race."

<b>Effectiveness</b>
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#### *Most Memorable*

43% (three out of seven) of the Oakland interviewees mentioned gathering together with diverse participants and key stakeholders from the community as the most memorable aspect of their experience. Gerald Lenoir, Executive Director of Black Alliance for Just Immigration, described this common sentiment: "Being in a room with many people from different sectors. It was very good hearing diverse views, coming from different people, coming from different points of view. To learn about some of their work."

Carl Chan, Chairman of the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce and active community member, identified the bus tour and the conversations that resulted as part of that shared experience with CCR participants as the most memorable aspect of his CCR experience: "It [the bust tour] gave me another eye opening experience, especially people sharing what they have gone through. It had a lot of impact on my understanding about race."

#### *Race Related Insights and Greater Awareness of Racial History*

Most interviewees were very familiar with the racial history of Oakland, and therefore did not gain new awareness about the racial history of the area as a result of the CCR. However,

most interviewees expressed appreciation for the opportunity to revisit local history. Karen Bohlke, Development Director of the MLK Freedom Center, summarizes this sentiment: “the CCR wasn’t necessarily new information, but was a good experience to sit with colleagues from other community based organizations to hear the history in context, for example the Fruitvale District.” The one exception was Carl Chan, for whom the bus tour provided new awareness and understanding of the racial history of neighboring communities.

#### *Relation to Current Work*

All of the interviewees agreed that the CCR event was helpful in supporting their current work, either directly or indirectly. David Muhammad, an Oakland Probation Officer, was able to make connections with CCR participants to support his current violence prevention work: “I am always looking to get people involved in a volunteer capacity in my violence prevention work—half of all people on probation live in Oakland. I had some positive responses from attendees to volunteering in juvenile detention centers following the CCR.”

Karen Bohlke found the event particularly relevant and helpful in her work with the MLK Freedom Center in bringing together key constituents:

“Yes, I think it [the CCR] was very helpful. Because of class and race divides in this country, we tend to have a lot of silos, and I think that’s true all across the country. Every so often leaders come along that are able to bring key stakeholders to the room, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee is one of those leaders. So that forum [the CCR event] provided a setting that would not organically otherwise happen. We all work hard and we all do good work but we don’t get the opportunity to be together, to talk about that work, and I think on behalf of the Freedom Center and our staff we tend to view that as one of the most important things needing to happen in this country right now. You know sometimes people will say ‘Well you’re just preaching to the choir.’ We have a lot of singers but we don’t necessarily have a choir. We don’t necessarily have an orchestrated way to support one another, and I thought that that particular afternoon gave us all an opportunity to do that, which was very helpful in our community based organizing work regionally.”

#### *Program Format – What Worked Well*

Overall, interviewees acknowledged the effectiveness of the program format. Anne Taylor, Congresswoman Lee’s District Director, identified the benefit of bringing together a diverse range of constituents and communities members: “I think it brought together a lot of groups that would not have been together at the same time, in the same place, and it allowed people to ask questions freely and I think it was very beneficial. I think it helped people to understand the issue much better, including myself.”

Carl Chan identified the opportunity to share personal stories and visit different communities and neighborhoods via the bus tour as an aspect of the program format that worked particularly well: “How many of us really truly go into a different community? It was eye opening.” He also acknowledged the important role that Congresswoman Lee had in effectively bringing together community leaders in Oakland: “She was able to get a lot of people together and everyone knows she has the best intentions for everybody and that

actually carried a lot of weight. It's not that it doesn't work by sending someone from Washington DC, but you don't get the true endorsement because we don't know you well. We know our Congresswoman well. So that opens all the doors."

#### *Program Format – What Could Be Improved*

Gerald Lenoir voiced a common sentiment among interviewees about the need for follow up: "To me it was a problem that it was just that one day. Then people went their own ways...Need to have follow up...I think people are hungry for these kinds of conversations, so I want it to be more than just a one shot thing. I want it to be a continuing feature that we come together to talk about this because it's so critical to whatever area of work you're in trying to deal with these issues. Like I said I applaud the Congresswoman's leadership, but I want more."

Karen Bohlke and Sandra Andrews, Congresswoman Lee's Senior Field Representative, agreed that participants needed more time, both during the post-bus tour circle discussion and the 2<sup>nd</sup> day's breakout sessions: "to me that conversation was just getting into the meat of the matter and pow it was over." (Karen Bohlke) Sandra elaborated: we "need time for people to warm up. In my case, it takes a little while for me to know that it's ok, that I can talk in front of you and I won't offend you."

Several interviewees mentioned the timing and structure of the two-day format as a challenge. David Muhammad noted, "Starting at 9:00am on Saturday, the program is unlikely to draw a diverse and large range of community members...although attendance wasn't bad but it was the complete usual suspects. I think I knew every single person in the church. So if you really want to get to the community, you have to do it at a little later hour on a Saturday." Carl Chan and Katherine Kwong, Congresswoman Lee's Congressional Aide suggested condensing the event into one day: "we lost people on the second day, especially key stakeholders, because it was two days."

<b>Impact</b>
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#### *Activities or Actions as a Result of the CCR*

Overall, very few direct and tangible actions resulted from the CCR event. Only Karen Bohlke and Sandra Andrews identified specific follow-up activities: "Through the Congresswoman's and Sandra's invitation, the Freedom Center did some follow-up meetings with several of the key stakeholders (4 or 5 in total) who were there [at the CCR event] asking the question: 'If there was to be follow-up would you be interested? What would you like to see it look like?' And we took the work that's on your website, the report backs from Saturday and we offered 2 or 3 of those as potential areas of subsequent work." The Freedom Center ultimately developed a one-page proposal for a full year of programming as follow-up to the CCR event, involving young people from local community-based organizations to facilitate trainings together, and host three different events throughout Oakland. The Center also conducted some preliminary work on funding opportunities, identifying foundations that might be instrumental in the follow-up work. However, the efforts of the Freedom Center to initiate

these follow-up steps are currently on pause due to lack of funding. Additionally, as Karen describes, “it’s really hard to step out too much more programmatically unless there’s some infrastructure to hold it.”

Saundra Andrews further elaborates on the partnership between the Freedom Center and district office: “The Freedom Center was basically given the charge to follow-up, to work with the Conversation on Race Project to see where we could go from here. And then our office was to work with the Freedom Center and the Conversation on Race Project and to see where we should go next or what we might do next and whether to continue this and not let this be a feel good event, but no work after it.” According to Saundra, the district office is ready to move forward but is waiting on direction and funding: “We need to know what our next steps are and what our charge is. We’re waiting on a pilot project that Jeanne and Karen are working on. Cause we’re ready, this office is ready to move forward.”

#### *Unanticipated Positive Effects*

Only one interviewee mentioned an unanticipated positive effect of gaining more media attention for the event: “I think it got some really good media attention from what I remember. I think positive attention around race and the challenges of the community is good.”

#### *Unanticipated Negative Effects*

David Muhammad mentioned the lack of follow up as a potentially negative effect on the momentum and stated goals of the CCR event: “Was this just an event to feel good? I don’t know if it’s a negative consequence other than people saying ‘hey, what was the result of this?’” David’s comment was shared by several other interviewees, as illustrated in the “what about the program format could be improved” section above.

#### *New Collaborative Relationships*

None of the interviewees formed *new* collaborative relationships, but 71% of interviewees said that the CCR event helped to strengthen or deepen existing relationships. Many interviewees see their fellow CCR participants at other events and venues in Oakland, so the CCR offered a shared experience to reference and from which to further build relationships: “anytime you’re involved in that kind of a conversation with folks that you know it helps to strengthen the relationship, because a lot of what we talk about is race in the work that we do” (Gerald Lenoir).

#### *Impact on District*

Based on interviews with three of the district office staff members, staffers identified mixed results in terms of the CCR’s impact on the district. Katherine Kwong felt that the impact was limited: “The community response was positive, but the impact felt short lived. Didn’t make an impact on some of the continuing issues in Oakland—crime, unemployment etc.” Whereas Saundra Andrews felt there was significant impact: “a lot of partnerships were formed, of people working together and wanting to get involved. And I think that’s wonderful for the community.” Congresswoman Lee believes the CCR event allowed her constituents (both those who attended and others who heard about the event) to see the benefit of having

conversations on race: “I think the impact is that it's okay to talk about race. They see other people doing it, their Congressman doing it, so it becomes ok.” She further elaborated that any impact is limited if action is not taken following the initial conversation: “I think the real issue is what we do about it...how do we move forward? I think people are ready—you don't want to leave people hanging, thinking there's things to be done when there's not.”

## Relevance

### *Racial Healing*

None of the interviewees believed that the CCR effectively addressed Oakland's racial healing needs, but most interviewees acknowledged the importance of an event like the CCR toward the broad goal of addressing racial challenges: “I think one of the things our country really needs right now is examples that are working. I think the CCR offers a beautiful example of what's working” (Karen Bohlke). While Gerald Lenoir didn't think the event went far enough to meaningfully engage issues of racial healing, he acknowledged the importance of having the conversation and the role that Congresswoman Lee played in the conversation: “I applaud her for putting this together. I think its really important and I think that especially in the age of Obama, when the issue of race is so undercover with this attitude that we are in a post racial society when the evidence of racism is around us every day, I think it's really important that folks like her step up and make this an issue. So I appreciate her leadership on that and I want her to do more.”

### *Recommendations*

In reflecting on recommendations to offer for future CCR events, either in their district or other districts across the country, CCR participants and district staff had several suggestions. As mentioned in previous sections, many Oakland CCR interviewees highlight the importance of follow-up. Gerald Lenoir believes strongly that: “It would have been good to follow-up, particularly in the groups where a lot of good ideas were being generated in the small group sessions...the expectations and plans for follow up were unclear. A conversation without follow up is not helpful.” David Muhammad echoed Gerald's suggestion: “I think that having some specific plan or goal or follow-up that was going to be consistent and communicated well, so as not to just be another 'thing.' I think I received one email about it afterward but I don't remember any consistency. Didn't get emails, didn't see anything, nothing.”

Several participants also recommended increasing the diversity among participants: “One thing that I noted was that it was largely African American. I think the outreach could have been better to bring in Latinos and Native Americans and Asian folk and even Arab and Muslim folk.”

Three participants recommended holding a youth focused or youth driven event: “they would help to bring new content and new ideas to the table” (Katherine Kwong). Sandra Andrews, and Karen Bohlke also voiced support for a youth focused event, and in their work toward post-CCR next steps, are hoping to involve youth in a central and meaningful role.

## ANALYSIS and CONCLUSIONS – OAKLAND, CA

Based on the interview data for the Oakland CCR, I conclude that the project was minimally effective in meeting its primary objectives, particularly in encouraging CCR participants to engage in efforts to improve race relations in the district. While it appears that participants had a positive experience at the CCR event, not having a no clear plan in place for follow-up has hindered and greatly limited the impact of the CCR project in encouraging or supporting participants in efforts to improve race relations in their district. Efforts identified by CCR participants to address race related challenges are based on initiatives or projects that they are organizing in their professional roles, and not necessarily as a result of their participation in the CCR event. Congresswoman Lee also reflected on this point: “I think the big gap is the follow-up—giving people something to do, letting them know where the resources are, what they can do.”

A notable challenge in effectively evaluating the Oakland CCR was the significant amount of time between the initial CCR event and the date of the in-person interviews—exactly one year. As a result, participants did not have impressions and insights from the CCT fresh in their minds. It was difficult for many of the interviewees to recall specific examples from their CCR experience, and thus their limited responses impacted the depth of the evaluation analysis. One participant specifically noted: “It’s almost a year after and we are just now evaluating it. I just think that things need to be done more timely.” An additional challenge in effectively evaluating the Oakland CCR was the small interview sample (only four CCR participants, and three district staff members), and the lack of racial diversity among the sample size (five of the seven interviewees are people of color).

One key theme that emerged across the interviews is the important role that Congresswoman Lee plays in bringing together key constituents to have conversations about race in California’s 13<sup>th</sup> district. Because Congresswoman Lee is well respected, particularly in Oakland, for her long-standing progressive work in politics, all interviewees noted the convening power that she holds on issues of race. Additionally, due to this convening power, interviewees acknowledged the value of attending the CCR event with a diverse range of stakeholders and constituents. As one participant mentioned: “Every so often leaders come along that are able to bring key stakeholders to the room, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee is one of those leaders. So that forum [the CCR event] provided a setting that would not organically otherwise happen.”

### Effectiveness

Based on the interview data, I conclude that the Oakland CCR was not effective in *increasing* Congresswoman Lee’s leadership on race related challenges in her district. As she noted in her interview, she has raised these topics time and time again over the course of her political career and will continue to do so. However, I conclude that the CCR event did *support*



Congresswoman Lee’s leadership on issues of race, both within her district and within Congress. As Karen Bohlke notes, “Congresswoman Barbara Lee brings people from the West coast into the discussion, it’s not just her own congressional district. And I think nationally because of her courageous voice in Congress. Congresswoman Barbara Lee has the ability to bring people into a room like no one else has the ability to bring people in. So this [the CCR event] became a vehicle or a tool to help support her in her work.”

Congresswoman Lee also acknowledged that she had wanted to host a Congressional Conversation on Race for many years, and appreciated the role of Faith and Politics in actualizing her desire. In her interview she further highlighted the CCR in her current congressional work: “It’s a bold project, and that the time is now to rev it up. I think maybe we need to do a press thing. Let the country know this is taking place. I raised it [the CCR project] at the hearing on race and justice yesterday [The House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee hosted a hearing entitled "A Conversation on Race and Justice in America on July 30, 2013] and I mentioned how Faith and Politics was handling it. Every chance we get you should insert this into Members of Congress’ talking points and ask them to talk about it so people know that you’re doing it. “

### Impact

Based on the interview data, I conclude that the Oakland CCR had very limited impact in the district. While there was initially positive feedback about the experience of participating in the CCR, there were very few tangible actions or outcomes that resulted from the CCR events. As mentioned above, I believe that because there wasn’t a clear plan for follow up, the overall impact on the district was minimal.

A theme that emerged from the interviewees was the importance of follow-up, to build on the momentum, ideas, and goodwill that were generated during the CCR event. All interviewees, participants, district office staff, and the Congresswoman expressed varying degrees of frustration about the lack of follow-up and tangible actions steps as a result of the CCR. Given that a year had lapsed between the initial CCR event and the date of the evaluation fieldwork, my judgment is that several CCR participants are disillusioned with the prospect for follow up action, and have now identified the CCR as “just another event” without meaningful steps toward addressing the district’s ongoing race related challenges.

Based on the interview data, there appears to be a lack of clarity about who is responsible for next steps. The district office has asked the MLK Freedom Center to take the lead on planning and organizing a follow up event. The MLK Freedom Center has done some initial research and has written a proposal for follow-up, but is not able to go further without funding. Search for Common Ground and the CCR Project Director would like to support follow up efforts in the district, but would like the district to take leadership. Congresswoman Lee acknowledges the importance of follow up, but notes that her office is not able to take the lead: “We can’t do it out of our office. There’s a big gap between Search for Common Ground and the congressional staff, so we need more follow-up. Members of Congress can’t take it on our own. I think if we had a staff person, or the resources to hire someone, or an

organization that's going to be present that'll be responsible for the follow-up, that would help...we've done a lot of follow-up at the congressional office on issues of race, but not specifically on the action plan [from the CCR event]." This based on the interviews, my analysis is that gaining clarity about who is responsible for next steps will be important for any future events. Additionally, securing funding is needed in order to carry out follow-up action steps—either through the proposal developed by the Freedom Center, or through another initiative. It will be important to secure financial support to hire a project manager or program coordinator, either out of the Freedom Center or another organization based in Oakland, in order to effectively implement follow up steps that have wider reaching impact in the district.

<b>Relevance</b>
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After reviewing the interview data, I conclude that the Oakland CCR events were helpful in bringing key stakeholders together to discuss issues of race and deepening existing relationships among district constituents and community leaders. However the events did not go far enough in addressing deep-seated issues related to racial healing.

## ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

The St. Louis CCR focused on understanding the connection between race and youth violence. The event took place over one full day, and included an interactive tour, speakers, facilitated dialogue, and brainstorming breakout groups. At the request of Congressman Clay, the CCR event involved a large number of youth participants, given the focus on youth violence. The youth participants under 18 years of age will remain anonymous within the specific findings of this report.

## FINDINGS

### Effectiveness

#### *Most Memorable*

76% (13 out of 17) interviewees identified the interactive nature of the CCR, the tour, as the most memorable aspect of their experience. Of those 13, 7 participants specifically identified the one-woman dramatization by Angela DaSilva of the National Black Tourism Network, as the most memorable aspect of their overall experience. Many, particularly the youth interviewees, described the vivid and emotional portrayal of slavery illustrated in Angela's skit as both memorable and informative.

#### *Race Related Insights and Greater Awareness of Racial History*

Based on the interviews, 70% (12 out of 17) interviewees gained new race related insights and a greater awareness of racial history in St. Louis as a result of the CCR. Seven interviewees specifically identified the experience of visiting the Mary Meachum Freedom Crossing as an important new awareness of St. Louis' racial history. Many had never visited the riverbank or knew the significance of river in relation to the Underground Railroad. Two youth in particular shared their experience of visiting the Mississippi riverbank: "The slave border, I don't think I'll ever forget that. It's just a crazy kind of concept to me. I don't know how such a very short distance could determine your fate." A middle school student said, "I remember standing on the Mississippi River bank, just imagining that we were slaves looking at the other side, at freedom...I didn't know that St. Louis was a big part of slavery. I thought it was just down South. So that was a new realization."

Many interviewees also mentioned learning new aspects of the city's history by visiting various sites that some had grown up around, but had not known their historical or racial significance (Benton Barracks, the Swimming Pool at Fairground Park, and The Old Courthouse).

Several older interviewees did not gain new insights, but shared that the event reinforced and confirmed some of their previously held insights: "More confirmation than anything...it reinforced why St. Louis is the way it is. Our people need to be aware that this is sacred ground; a lot of people don't know that here in St. Louis, especially young people." (Tim Hughes, Founder of Youth Development Services Inc.) Congressman Clay echoed this sentiment: "I don't think I heard a lot of anything new, but it did confirm my own instincts that

this is still a big problem and that we have failed to address it and address the issue of race as a nation.”

#### *Relation to Current Work*

Nearly all of the interviewees said that the CCR was helpful in supporting their current work, though the six middle school interviewees had less tangible connections to their current life. Jamie Dennis, a Youth and Music Coordinator at the Mathews-Dickey Boys' & Girls' Club who works directly with the six middle school interviewees, expressed that the CCR was helpful in exposing the kids to the history of St. Louis, thereby influencing their perspectives and their music. The experience, and the tour specifically, supported the work that Jamie is currently doing with the Boys & Girls' Club youth music program.

All of the Congressional Youth Cabinet (CYC) Members interviewed had positive feedback about the experience. When asked whether the event was helpful in the CYC's work, Jordan Mosley said: “Absolutely. I think one of our primary goals in the CYC is to make Missouri and the St. Louis area a more cohesive environment for people. So I think events like this really help facilitate those types of changes.”

#### *Program Format – What Worked Well*

Overall, all 17 interviewees agreed that the program format worked well, and was well organized. However, interviewees identified varying aspects of the program that they thought worked particularly well: the tour, inter-generational mix of attendees, the speakers, and the brainstorming session. One middle school student said he was very engaged in the program (something that is difficult for him in the course of an average school day): “I didn't really want to leave. I wanted to learn more about the racial history.”

#### *Program Format – What Could Be Improved*

In thinking about what could be improved about the CCR program format, several of the youth participants mentioned needing more of a balance between historical and present day issues, and more emphasis on how the two are connected. According to Christopher, a Webster University student, there was a strong focus on the historical past, but not much focus on the influence of history on present-day issues:

“We went through the entire day and we learned about the history, and then it wasn't until the last part of the day that we were asked, ‘how does this work with your life today?’ When you're going through a tour like that, and you're learning about so much so quickly, it gets overwhelming. It would be better if you learn about a couple things, and then you figure out how to connect it [to our lives today], ...because by the end of the day, when we were in our small round-table groups, and then we had to figure out how to connect these things, it was kind of like, okay, what happened today?”

Collette Cummings, Director of the Webster University Multicultural Center, also echoed the challenge that some of the university students had with the program format: “During the last sessions, the speakers were great, but something was lost in translation. I don't think the college students got much out of that session. They got stuff out of the session because of the speakers, but in terms of coming up with ideas to implement I think it was difficult for them to do that.”

Several interviewees, particularly youth, also mentioned wanting smaller breakout groups, both during the tour and in the last brainstorming session. One high school student said, "I'm more of an introvert, so even though our group was cut in half I didn't speak and participate as much as I would have liked to because I work more comfortably in small, very small groups."

A common sentiment among interviewees was the need for additional follow-up to the CCR event. Annette Curdt, Interim Director of the Office of Student Activities at Harris-Stowe State University reflected this point: "I think they should have more. One wasn't enough. We need more discussions and we need more talks. We need, especially here in St. Louis, people coming together to start talking about these issues." Jordan Mosley also suggested follow-up conversations as an area for improvement: "One thing would be to keep these conversations going, to have some follow-up with sessions where we see those ideas put into place or take further time to develop our ideas. Or reach out to the community and publish what we've found or what we think and get some feedback from them."

## Impact

### *Activities or Actions as a Result of the CCR*

Overall, only a handful of the interviewees have initiated actions or activities as a result of their CCR experience. For the middle school students from the Boys and Girls Club, their experience at the CCR influenced the song writing process for the group. According to the interviews, they have incorporated lyrics related to the bus tour, and their overall CCR insights: "We're working on a history rap album. We're going to bring up the historical people in all our raps, from Civil Rights history. It's called The Dread Scott Song."

Jasmina Hadzic, a district office staff member and coordinator of the Congressional Youth Cabinet described one key initiative that resulted from the CCR: "CYC will host a conversation on high school drop out rates as related to race. This topic came out of some discussions that took place during the CCR. One of the CYC members felt particularly passionate about the topic, and wanted to involve the CYC in taking action. We will organize a dialogue, and make visits to local high schools to discuss the issue and raise awareness."

### *Unanticipated Positive Effects*

Annette Curdt was inspired by her experience at the CCR, and decided to include a bus tour, similar to the one organized during the CCR, as part of Harris-Stowe University's Black History Month programming. She identified the CCR as unexpectedly spurring her desire to incorporate an interactive and historical element into her heritage month programming.

Based on the success of the CCR, Jasmina Hadzic is working to expand the Congressional Youth Council to involve college students. After the CCR many college students approached Jasmina to ask how they could become involved with the CYC (a youth body specifically for high school students). "I talked with...some of my higher-ups to see if there's any way that we can incorporate the community colleges and the university students that reached out and that wanted to be part of the CYC. I want to include them somehow in this second term, where they

can serve as mentors to these high school students.” Jasmina hadn’t anticipated expanding the program in this way, but the CCR and the positive response to the event from youth participants inspired her to expand the current CYC format.

#### *Unanticipated Negative Effects*

100% of the interviewees did not experience or are aware of any negative effects of the St. Louis CCR.

#### *New Collaborative Relationships*

Overall, interviewees appreciated meeting new people through this experience, but did not develop many new collaborative relationships. High school students made connections with college students and stayed in touch through social media, but did not collaborate on any new projects together as a result of the CCR. The one exception was a relationship that resulted between the members of the Boys and Girls Club (Jamie Dennis and his middle school students) and members of the AKA Sorority. After meeting at the CCR event, they developed a partnership on a specific project: “The kids and I were working with the AKA Sorority, doing a tribute to Dr. King and his 40 Days of Peace. My students and I developed a theme-song for the 40 Days of Peace event.”

#### *Impact on the District*

In speaking with a district office staffer, Jasmina Hadzic believes the CCR had a positive impact on the district:

“Having this type of dialogue, it brought the community together, it brought the students together, and then also it helped give us ideas for the near future, with follow-up events, and it helped me make those connections. I think that was one of the biggest impacts, the fact that it hasn't happened before. We [as a district] haven't had this level of commitment or the amount of time we spent that day, discussing issues related to race.”

Congressman Clay is not sure what impact, if any, the CCR had in the district: “It's too soon to say. I think it helped confirm to the young people that participated that yes, race is still an issue, and it's something that we have to grapple with.” He continued by saying that the CCR “did reinvigorate our efforts to help young people, and to see that healing, racial healing, begins with looking at our history, both the good and the bad of our history, understanding that, and then moving beyond that, moving forward, and trying to make things better.”

<b>Relevance</b>
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#### *Racial Healing*

Interviewees overall believed that the CCR was a starting point for racial healing, but did not provide any substantive or tangible impacts in terms of healing. Collette Cummings reflected: “I think it’s a step, but St. Louis is so racially divided any baby step is major. So it raised awareness, yes. But we are so far apart.”

Congressman Clay however did believe that the CCR event was helpful in meeting the needs of his district in terms of racial healing: “For sure. Any time you hear radio or TV coverage, people that maybe did not participate [in the CCR] but they see that, it lets them know that hey, somebody is discussing this tough issue that has been a part of our history since the founding of this country. Somebody cares about finding the solution to the problem of racial division. So that's the positive of the CCR.”

### *Recommendations*

Overall, interviewees’ recommendations focused on incorporating follow-up and next steps more effectively into the CCR format. Annette Curdt shared her belief that the CCR should not be a one-time event: “Ok you’re opening our eyes, now what else are you going to do?” I think it’s going to take more than just this little group of people, it’s going to take a lot more...I think it’s a start but it’s just the tip of the iceberg. The awareness has to be out to the whole community and really start to make an impact on them, and that we need to come together as a community and stop these things—stop the racial disharmony and the killing and the violence.” Annette went on to suggest that Congressman Clay create working groups in the community to further spread the impact of the CCR and conversations about race. She suggested training people to lead conversations about racial awareness, starting in the schools and moving outward to community groups.

Similarly, several interviewees identified the need to have a concrete plan of action in place at the end of the CCR. CYC member Hayley Mayenkar shared her thoughts on this topic: “We had a good introduction about what are the main issues, but it’s easy just to go on with your life . . . sometimes we forget to form a plan of action to go forward. Which is one of the reasons we joined the CYC in the first place—to move forward with these plans of actions.” Fellow CYC member Daniel Blash echoed Mayenkar’s sentiments with this recommendation: “Create some sort of accountability system, so we make sure, ‘hey, how did you do with your part of the plan?’ So we can build each other up.”

Congressman Clay suggested having more youth focused events: “older generations need to take a step back and look at what the young people are advocating, which tells me that the situation is getting better for younger generations.” However, Collette Cummings recommended having separate events or tracks for various age groups: “The age difference between the middle school students and the college age students was significant. It would have been more effective to have two groups, or two separate tracks—one for younger youth, and one for college age students.”

Several interviewees recommended having more diversity among the CCR attendees, specifically in terms of greater socio-economic and racial diversity: “I think they should make it a little more diverse. A lot of the people that attended were African American, and I think that has an effect on the type of responses that you get from the day” (Christopher Whitmore). One Washington University student suggested including “kids from higher income areas so they can see the problem themselves.”

## **ANALYSIS and CONCLUSIONS – St. LOUIS, MO**

Based on the interview data and survey results for the St. Louis CCR, I conclude that the project was moderately effective in meeting its primary objectives--increasing leadership by Congressman Clay on race related challenges in his congressional district and encouraging CCR participants to engage in efforts to improve race relations in the district. Based on my interview with Congressman Clay and his district office staffer, Jasmina Hadzic, my analysis is that the CCR did not increase Congressman Clay's leadership on race related challenges in his district, as he was already committed to conversations about race prior to the CCR: "Engaging in conversations about race is something that I've never had an issue doing. I've spoken about race honestly throughout my years of public service, and people know me as being very blunt about it--that is never been something that I've shied away from." However, the CCR event does appear to have made an impact in the district in terms of increased visibility of the Congressman's desire to open space for challenging conversations about race broadly, and in Missouri's 1<sup>st</sup> congressional district specifically. In my judgment, the second objective was more effectively met than the first objective, as evidenced by the interviewee's acknowledgement of increased awareness and actions taken as a result of the CCR.

One theme that emerged through the interviews with St. Louis CCR participants was an appreciation for the youth-focused event and the opportunity to engage in inter-generational dialogue. Youth voiced their appreciation to speak with elders in the community about race-related challenges, college students appreciated the opportunity to hear from middle school students and to provide mentorship, and adult participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to hear from youth about their perspectives on shared challenges within the community.

### **Effectiveness**

According to the interview data, the St. Louis CCR event was particularly effective in bringing members of the community together in an inter-generational context and providing memorable information about the area's racial history in an interactive format. In my judgment, the CCR was effective in meeting the project objectives of increasing participant awareness of race related history and dynamics in the district. Based on the interview results, the CCR provided 70% of those interviewed and 96% of those who completed a post-event survey, with new race related insights and greater awareness of the race related history and dynamics in St. Louis. The interactive tour (including the one-woman dramatization, meeting Dredd Scott's descendants, and visiting key historic sites in St. Louis) appears to be the primary source for participants' new insights and greater awareness of the area's racial dynamics. Based on the interviews with CCR participants, the CCR event was particularly effective in engaging youth in this interactive format.

In analyzing the post-event surveys, several participants mentioned that the main themes of the event (racial history of St. Louis and youth violence) were not cohesively



connected or incorporated throughout the program. The event seemed to be primarily focused on the racial history of the area, and not on youth violence, or how these two themes were related. Despite this, 93% of participants who completed a post-event survey indicated an increased interest in addressing race related challenges in their district. However, the increased interest does not seem to have translated to tangible impacts within the district.

### **Impact**

Based on the evaluation data, I conclude that the St. Louis CCR had limited impact on the district. The CCR participants that I interviewed identified a handful of tangible actions as a result of the CCR gathering. These actions indicate that the CCR project was somewhat successful in meeting its broad objective of addressing race related challenges within the district. These actions include: a new music initiative in the Mathews-Dickey Boys & Girls Club music program, a collaborative partnership between the Boys & Girls Club and the AKA Sorority, and a Congressional Youth Cabinet sponsored dialogue on high school drop out rates as related to race. However, overall there were very few tangible actions or changes that resulted from the CCR event.

The CCR was effective in providing participants with greater awareness of St. Louis' race related history, and also in providing opportunities for connection among St. Louis community members, particularly among the youth participants. Some of these new relationships have led to tangible actions (mentioned above). However, most have not led to any direct or tangible outcomes, and the depth of the connection remains limited and superficial (i.e. through Facebook). Because a large number of the CCR participants were youth, and because there was no clear plan for ongoing support of any ideas generated during the group brainstorming sessions, my analysis is that the youth participants in particular were limited in their ability to take meaningful actions as a result of the CCR. Some mentioned speaking about their CCR experience with friends, and selecting a topic for a research paper based on a topic explored during the CCR. Therefore, the impact remained limited to the attendees, without opportunities for the youth participants to feel empowered to take wider-reaching actions based on their insights and new awareness. Similar to the CCR events in other districts, there was no clear plan for follow-up, which hinders the possibility for sustained and tangible action.

### **Relevance**

Overall, it does not appear that the CCR was helping in meeting the needs of the St. Louis community with regards to racial healing. The majority of interviewees believe the CCR was a good first step, but did not go far enough to fully address the community's needs for racial healing. However, according to Congressman Clay, the CCR was helpful and relevant in meeting the needs of the district office with regards to addressing race related challenges, and he recommends the CCR to other Members of Congress: "I hope other Members of Congress

take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. I think it was a valuable experience for the young people that participated. I'd say everyone could benefit throughout the country, especially in this time right after the Trayvon Martin trial. I just want to thank the CCR for working with us, for bringing the conversation to St. Louis. I would do it again."

# NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

The New Orleans CCR focused on trust building between citizens and New Orleans Police, post-Katrina racial disparities, youth development, and education. The CCR took place over two days, with two separate events. The first event brought together key stakeholders in Louisiana’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District for a facilitated conversation at Dookey Chase Restaurant, a beloved historic landmark in New Orleans. The second event was open to the public, and included a panel of speakers and small focus group break out sessions for action planning.

## FINDINGS

### *Motivation for Participation*

50% (four out of eight) of the interviewees participated in the New Orleans CCR because of Congressman Richmond and his invitation. For five of the eight interviewees, their main motivation for participating in the CCR was due to their interest in the topic of race relations in New Orleans. Calvin Mackie, author and motivational speaker shared, “I decided to participate because I felt it's exactly what's needed. There's a lot of action that's needed, but we're not even having the type of conversations that are necessary; we can't have the action unless we actually put the issue on the table.”

<b>Effectiveness</b>
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### *Most Memorable*

63% (five out of eight) interviewees identified the personal stories that were shared during the first day of the CCR at Dookey Chase restaurant as the most memorable aspect of their experience. Specifically, interviewees identified the stories about participants’ first awareness of race as being both memorable and impactful. Pastor David Crosby of the First Baptist Church of New Orleans said that the stories “were very moving and powerful narratives that they [participants] remember from their childhood. These things have life-long impact.”

### *Race Related Insights and Greater Awareness of Racial History*

75% of those interviewed left the CCR event with new race related insights. Enix Smith, Congressman Richmond’s District Director shared a valuable new insight as a result of his experience: “Growing up as a Black male, I always thought it was just an African American problem. But at the conversation we had for stakeholders in the community, hearing some of the people speak out who weren't Black but who were having some of the same problems—Asian, and even some White people—it was interesting to hear that, that it's not just funneled in one direction.” Aneesha Marwah, a Legislative Aide to Louisiana Representative Jared Brossett, also reflected on a new insight she gained as a result of the CCR: “Having the Vietnamese community represented was really good...I think that people do sometimes forget that they exist. They've been left out of a lot of the conversation.”

Of those interviewed, only 38% gained a greater awareness of the racial history in the area. Many claimed that they were already very familiar with New Orleans' racial history prior to the event. However, 61% of those who completed a post-event survey (27 out of 44) agreed or strongly agreed that the event provided them with greater awareness of New Orleans' racial history.<sup>1</sup>

### *Relation to Current Work*

Five interviewees agreed that the CCR event was helpful in supporting their current work. Minh Nguyen, Executive Director of VAYLA (The Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association), found the event particularly helpful as a leader of a small community based non-profit to meet with elected officials: "I got to sit next to one of the councilwomen. And sitting next someone who makes a lot of decisions was great, because she was able to listen to some things I wanted to talk about. And I was able to hear what she wanted to talk about...Normally I'd have to schedule and have this really official meeting, and I did have that kind of meeting with her to fight about some of her policies, but this was different. It didn't feel work-related, even though it was about work...I know that it benefit me a lot to have face-time with all those people."

However, two interviewees did not believe the event was helpful, and one interviewee in particular had strong negative opinions about the event: "It was a one-time event, it followed the typical model of conversations about race, and the usual strain that people feel in talking about race was present in the room, at least to my observation. It didn't really get to the deeper issues that need to be addressed when you talk about race, and it was disconnected . . . even if there had been five events following it would not even have begun to address the issue appropriately."

### *Program Format – What Worked Well*

Five out of eight interviewees agreed that the program format worked well, specifically bringing together key stakeholders and sharing personal stories. Enix Smith acknowledged the value of the CCR format by saying: "They had people who wouldn't have been caught in the same room together otherwise. The Congressman, because of his position, wanted to bring some people together. I think it allowed both of the people that I'm thinking about, even though there was some yelling, to hear what the other had to say, and that they wouldn't have heard before." MK Nguyen, Deputy Director of VAYLA, also spoke about bringing politicians and stakeholders together: "in New Orleans politicians don't talk about race a lot, and I got to see them all together doing that, so that was great." She went on to talk specifically about what she felt worked well about the program format: "Starting with the personal and then leading towards a conversation about the political is always a great formula. So it was helpful for folks to be able to personally engage and connect, and then see the history, and then all those

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<sup>1</sup> It is relevant to note that the post-event survey results are only available for participants of the community forum from the second day of the CCR event (April 4, 2012), whereas the majority of those interviewed were participants of the stakeholder meeting on the first day of the CCR (April 5, 2012).

videos, and being able to use that as a tool to explain and contextualize on a national level, that was helpful.”

Two interviewees mentioned the venue for the first event, the Dookey Chase restaurant, as particularly beneficial: “I think Dookey Chase was a great restaurant to have chosen, just because of the historical connections to it, as a local place.” Two interviewees also identified the video that was created to generate dialogue on the topic (shared during both CCR events) as effective in setting the tone for the event, providing helpful information, and generating topics for conversation.

#### *Program Format – What Could Be Improved*

Several interviewees described the need for follow-up, and pointed out that any effort to meaningfully address race related challenges in New Orleans needs to be more than a one-time event. Aneesha Marwah shared her disappointment with the lack of follow-up: “I didn't see any follow-up from it [the CCR event]. We had this really dynamic conversation with some of the biggest players in New Orleans and there was no kind of follow-up—no report that was released afterwards, or media attention.” MK Nguyen further elaborated on this point: “There's plenty of follow-up that we could have done together to tie this conversation to actual, real, on-the-ground stuff that we're all thinking about. But I've been in so many spaces where we just talk about it and we don't do anything about it, and I have real issues about it. Because I see the impact that different decisions make in our community. We need to know how that conversation is going to translate into action.”

Two interviewees suggested having smaller groups to engage in deeper dialogue on these sensitive topics. In reflecting on the stakeholder meeting the first day of the CCR event, Joe Rochelle, Councilmember Jacquelyn Clarkson's Legislative Director said, “it would have helped me to have small group discussions, because I think people are uncomfortable standing up in front of a lot of people and discussing things with them, especially about race.”

One interviewee, who wished to remain anonymous, had three specific areas that he believed the program format and the project overall failed to address:

“It felt that it was top-down, so it came out of the blue. There was no partnership, consultation, or co-creation, and I think it suffered because of that. Secondly, there was no real theory of change behind it. The idea that you might have one or two events or discussions in the city, and that you're going to even jiggle the needle on the issue is just a non-starter. It just doesn't work that way...The third one is that it didn't show that it had learned from the lessons of past, failed conversations on race. The highway of good intentions is littered with trainings on racial sensitivity that were completely fiascos, because facilitation wasn't good, because of all of the above. It's a fraught subject in this city, and the idea that all of a sudden putting twenty people in a room, however much leadership they have, and that somehow that's going to set in motion anything, is pie in the sky.”

## Impact

### *Activities or Actions as a Result of the CCR*

Only two interviewees identified any actions or initiatives taken as a result of the CCR. Through his participation in the CCR events and based on the conversations that took place during the community forum, Calvin Mackie has begun working more closely on juvenile justice issues in New Orleans and in mentoring juvenile ex-offenders: “I’ve been working with the juvenile judges on how we can better serve the young men coming through the courts. What came up that day was that cultural relevance is importance—not just that you throw someone in because they did a crime. Sometimes who they are and where they’re from is very important in stopping them from coming back into the system. So since then I’ve begun to work with organizations like Goodwill in terms of young men and women coming out of the penal system back to the communities. That was a direct thing out of the CCR.”

Enix Smith credits the first CCR event with deepening a relationship with the Vietnamese community in East New Orleans. As a result of this relationship, Enix was able to facilitate a meeting with Vietnamese community leaders and the Chief of Police to address issues of concern in the community: “I did establish a relationship with our Vietnamese community a little more. I went to one of their community meetings. They expressed some communication issues with the police—being neglected, things like that, off in the East part of our city. So it allowed me to get a better understanding of what’s going on there...I spoke to the Chief of Police for that district. We had a conversation and we have resolved some issues they were having with some (mechanics) that were causing problems in their neighborhood. I think the involvement of our office helped communicate exactly what was going on and improved their relationship with some of the cops that were patrolling the area; the commander got involved a little bit more.”

### *Unanticipated Positive Effects*

A few of the interviewees identified several unanticipated positive effects of the CCR event. MK Nguyen described an unexpected and enlightening conversation that occurred between adult and youth members of her community: “I brought some community members to Day Two, and we had a really rich conversation in the car [after the event] about the current education system—our youth members and adult members connecting on that topic. They all had the chance to see each other in a different light. So I think, for the people that attended the CCR event on Day Two, some rich, beautiful conversations got kick-started as a result.”

### *Unanticipated Negative Effects*

Interviewees unanimously agreed that there were no unanticipated negative effects of the CCR events in their communities or in the district at large.

### *New Collaborative Relationships*

Half of those interviewed did not develop any new collaborative relationships as a result of the CCR events. The other half of the interviewees described building on existing

relationships following the CCR. Aneesha Marwah described the benefit of developing relationships between officials and staffers at both the city and state levels: “with Congressman Richmond's office we're always talking on the phone, and I was able to finally put faces to names. It was good to get to know them better. It's a good way to mix up different city and state people to work together. Besides some mutual fundraisers there's never anything that connects those two levels of government.”

As mentioned above, Calvin Mackie developed new relationships with other community leaders at the CCR around supporting juvenile ex-offenders, and as a result, Calvin has formed a partnership with Goodwill, several community-based organizations, and several judges in the juvenile court system. Calvin credits the CCR format with the opportunity to develop these relationships: “I got to know what programs exist, and instead of putting these young men in jail what we can do with them to avoid the system...there were relationships made in that room that otherwise I don't think would have happened. I've had conversations with those people about race that otherwise wouldn't have happened.”

### *Impact on the District*

In speaking with Enix Smith, Congressman Richmond's District Director, Enix believes the CCR has had a positive impact on the district, specifically through the elected leaders who were present at the first event: “I think the law-makers who were there were definitely impacted. They know that they're here to serve the community, and should be doing so in the best interest of the community, and not because of one particular race, may it be the majority or the minority; that we're all one, and we're either going to succeed together or fail together.” Congressman Richmond also believes that the CCR had an important impact on the district: “The CCR was an eye opener for people of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District. It reminded some that we still have work to do and it educated some that work needs to be done.”

<b>Relevance</b>
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### *Racial Healing*

Three interviewees believed that the CCR events were helpful in addressing the needs of the New Orleans community with regards to racial healing. Among these three, Calvin Mackie believed the events and conversations were helpful but that more is needed, particularly in the context of post-Hurricane Katrina: “I definitely think it was helpful, but we need more. It needs to be ongoing. That's something that we've never had, and post-Hurricane Katrina it's definitely needed. One conversation is good to say we have a problem, but it needs to be on-going; people feel like things are being done to them, not with them.”

### *Recommendations*

In reflecting on their experience in the CCR event overall, most interviewees had recommendations to offer, centering primarily on the need to expand the CCR, offering more than a one-time event. Several participants suggested hosting on-going conversations or events in different parts of the district: “Have staged events, minimally once a quarter, which address

some type of issue that's important to the community...there has to be something on-going to allow people to come to the table and express their frustration and have the powers that be lay out at least a vision and a goal. Give people the opportunity to see how they can participate...and people have to know it's a safe space and their voice is being heard...it can't be a top-level conversation” (Calvin Mackie).

MK Nguyen commented on the importance of partnering with local community groups who have a history of hosting conversations on race, rather than having external groups like Search for Common Ground and Faith and Politics Institute “parachute” into a community: “Contact people who are already facilitating these kinds of conversations locally. A big principle that we have in this organization [VAYLA] is that if you're talking about us without engaging us it's not for us...so figuring out a way to not parachute down would be great. Figuring out the local conversations and then how you fit into it would be helpful.”

One interviewee, who wished to remain anonymous, had very specific suggestions and recommendations for future CCR events: “You need a clear, plausible, theory of change for how this is supposed to shift what. A more sustained effort, greater buy-in, collaboration, partnership, thinking about how to make it work, instead of being top-down, and also a much longer process. Clear goals for what it is you think you can accomplish. Reasonable goals. Goals that are adjusted to the size of the effort.”

## **ANALYSIS and CONCLUSIONS – NEW ORLEANS, LA**

Based on the interview data and survey results for the New Orleans CCR, I conclude that the project was reasonably effective in meeting its primary objectives—increasing leadership by Congressman Richmond on race related challenges in his congressional district and encouraging CCR participants to engage in efforts to improve race relations in the district. In my judgment, the CCR was most effective in supporting Congressman Richmond to take leadership on race related challenges. At the time of the CCR event, Congressman Richmond was still fairly new in his congressional tenure, and thus the CCR was the first well-publicized event that he had convened to discuss race, particularly with other elected officials in the district. As Congressman Richmond noted, “I have always been vocal in regards to divisive issues in my district, but thanks to the CCR, it has given me an avenue to candidly speak with other elected officials who participated in the event.” Based on the interview with Enix Smith, the CCR provided a platform for Congressman Richmond to take a step that he may not otherwise have taken given the political risks involved: “One thing we do have to be honest about—when he did this, this was a large step for him. Some people, even though it's something that has to be talked about, they don't want you to talk about it. So, politically, it may not be the best decision [to have another CCR event]. I have to commend him for taking that first step.” However, I am unable to draw a conclusive analysis about the role of the CCR project in increasing Congressman Richmond’s leadership in issues of race, as I was unable to conduct an in-person interview with him and my analysis is based on his brief written evaluation survey.



## Effectiveness

Based on the interview data and post-event survey data, I conclude that the CCR events were minimally effective in encouraging participants to engage in efforts to improve race relations in New Orleans. 75% of those interviewed and 82% of participants who completed a post-event survey left the CCR event with new race related insights. However, these numbers have not necessarily translated to changes in behavior or tangible actions.

My analysis of the stakeholder meeting is that it met the needs of the community to address some underlying tensions, and was helpful in bringing elected officials together who may not otherwise have had a conversation, let alone a conversation about race. Aneesha Marwah noted the particular value in bringing together city council members: “I think it was good to have some of the council members in the room together to share their views, because a lot of them fight all the time. Hearing them hash out different issues was good because I know from experience that they don’t often get along.” That council members and other elected officials were able to have productive conversations and as Enix Smith said, really “hear one another,” reflects the effective nature of the program format and of the dialogue facilitation. The participants from the stakeholder meeting who were not elected officials seemed to have benefited from the experience of sitting together in the same room, and having candid conversations about race. Minh Nguyen reflected on his experience during the first CCR event: “You know, hearing these conversations changed my mind about some of these officials...The fact that everyone was able to talk about race really humanized them. I didn't see them as officials, I saw them as human beings who also faced racism.”

My analysis of the community forum on the second day is that it did not meet the needs of the community as fully as it could have, given more time for small group conversation, and a plan for follow-up. Additionally, according to some interviewees, the session was not well facilitated: “The facilitators weren't well-trained...If we’d had better facilitators maybe the conversation would have been richer. It felt really rushed, too.”

## Impact

Based on the evaluation data, I conclude that the New Orleans CCR had limited impact on the district. According to the interviews, there were only two tangible actions that took place as a result of the CCR gathering. These actions indicate that the CCR project was only minimally successful in meeting its broad objective of addressing race related challenges within the district. These actions include: a partnership between Calvin Mackie, Goodwill, and juvenile justice judges to support juvenile ex-offenders; and a meeting between Vietnamese community leaders and the Chief of Police to address challenges in the community.

A common sentiment shared by many interviewees was the disappointment at the lack of follow-up and tangible actions as a result of the CCR. MK Nguyen expressed this disappointment in her closing comments: “I'm just really disappointed with not continuing the

conversation, and not grounding it in action. Why did I spend my time there then? I wish there were more positive impacts that would have come out of it.”

Based on my interviews with the District Director and some of the CCR Planning Team members, some conversations have taken place about holding a follow-up event in New Orleans to build on the groundwork that was laid during the April 2012 events. However, from the perspective of Congressman Richmond’s District Director, any follow up event needs to take into account the political context: “We have had conversations prior to this about having another stake-holder meeting with elected officials. Last year was an election year, so it was hectic to try to pull something together when we started the conversation, so it kind of died. I think we may come back and talk about doing it this year, if possible—if it’s in the budget. But I think bringing that same group back together to refresh their memory again would probably be a good idea...I’m definitely open to discussing it with the Congressman.” Enix goes on to say: “For us, we have a majority African American Democratic district. So those constituents are more understanding about those issues. If the district would change from that, I honestly wouldn’t recommend he [Congressman Richmond] do it again, because he probably wouldn’t be elected again. So I think he knew where he stood in the district, and that he could pull it off and still maintain his seat. He’s one of the few, probably.”

### Relevance

Most interviewees did not believe that the CCR events went far enough to address the community’s racial healing needs. However, several interviewees acknowledged the importance of taking a step in the right direction. According to the District Director, the CCR was helpful in supporting the district office’s work within the district: “I thank you guys for doing this, not only here in our district, but nation-wide. It’s definitely a conversation that sometimes has to be forced. And when you have that conversation it allows you to get out of that bubble that you might be in and see what’s really going on.”

## ANALYSIS and CONCLUSIONS – ALL DISTRICTS

This section analyzes common and divergent themes across all four districts and summarizes key themes and findings.

### Effectiveness

In comparing each of the four districts, I conclude that the CCR project was most effective in meeting the overall stated project objectives in North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District (Rocky Mount). Whereas the project was moderately effective in Missouri's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District (St. Louis), and Louisiana's 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District (New Orleans), and minimally effective in California's 13<sup>th</sup> Congressional District (Oakland).

In St. Louis, the project was effective in providing participants with greater awareness of St. Louis's racial history and racial dynamics. While this has translated to increasing participants' willingness to improve race relations in their district (the stated project objective), it did not translate to actual steps taken to improve race relations in the district. The overall program design, particularly in St. Louis and Oakland, was not effective in transforming conversations into behavior change among CCR participants to address racial challenges. My analysis is that the project objective to increase leadership by Members of Congress was most effectively met in New Orleans with Congressman Richmond. In actuality, Congressman Richmond was already very supportive of addressing race relations in his district prior to his work with the CCR project, but the CCR events provided a platform to extend his leadership. Additionally, the New Orleans CCR events filled an important need in the district to bring together elected officials who may not otherwise (according to district office staff) have had any constructive conversation, let alone a constructive conversation about race. According to the CCR Planning Team, Congressman Richmond had the most meaningful direct participation in the CCR project, when compared with the other Members of Congress. He spent the longest amount of time at the CCR events, and served as a role model for authentic conversation, sharing personal stories about his experiences with race in New Orleans. Doug Tanner describes Richmond's leadership during these conversations: "that was the window onto the kind of leadership that we could see was rare and precious and could be called forth and cultivated." Additionally, CCR Planning Team members noted Congressman Richmond's willingness to reach out to his colleagues, which served to support the CCR project objectives, but also in extending his own leadership capacity.

However, all four Members of Congress who convened CCR events in their districts were generally speaking, already favorable to engaging in conversations about race. While the CCR project supported each member in different ways to further their leadership on this issue, the project could have been more effective and had a greater impact in shifting conversations about race had the CCR Planning Team involved Members of Congress not already supportive of these types of conversations.

### *Experiential Format*

Based on the evaluation data across all districts, the interactive and experiential components of the CCR events were effective in meeting the project's objectives. Specifically, participants in all districts pointed to the bus tours, small group dialogue format, video, and one-woman skit as elements of the CCR events that were both memorable and informative. In St. Louis, where youth comprised a large percentage of the participants, the experiential format worked particularly well to engage youth participants throughout the day and keep their attention. That one middle school student participant acknowledged that he "didn't get bored" and wanted to "learn more about the racial history" at the end of a long day (after admitting that he often struggles with boredom in class), illustrates the success of effectively hosting an event that worked well for both youth participants and adults.

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The CCR events in all districts resulted in strengthened relationships between key community stakeholders within the district. However, very few of these strengthened relationships led to new collaborative partnerships or tangible actions. Looking at the tangible actions that have resulted from all CCR events evaluated in this report, I conclude that the CCR project had the greatest impact in Rocky Mount, North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District. Some of the most notable actions include: establishment of a community garden by a Vidant Medical Center administrator; the creation of ongoing collaborative partnerships between the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN) and the Center for Health Disparities Research at East Carolina University and subsequent co-authored grant proposals focused on health disparities in the Latino community; partnership between AMEXCAN and the Community Development Center in Greenville to host several community dialogues; and indirectly, \$700,000 in special funding from the USDA to rural farmers in North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District. Through partnership with the district office, the CCR process facilitated several concrete results within the district.

The small size of Rocky Mount and North Carolina's 1<sup>st</sup> Congressional District (the smallest district of the four) may be a factor in determining overall impact. With a smaller constituent population, it may be easier to gather together key stakeholders and implement follow-up steps and action plans. Additionally, in a smaller community, there are fewer events that are organized explicitly to bring together community members to discuss issues of race. As Juvencio Roche Peralta, president of Association of Mexicans in North Carolina describes, "there is nothing like this happening in Eastern North Carolina. People I met there are still talking about it and we exchange emails or call one another. That's a very positive impact." However, given the relatively small data sample population, I am not able to conclude with confidence that the small size of the district was the primary factor influencing overall impact.

Additionally, the district office staff played a proactive role in organizing follow up activities, collaborating with SFCG and FPI to host a dinner and conversation, "Overcoming the

Impact of Race on Our Community” on July 30, 2012, six months after the initial CCR events. To date, Rocky Mount is the only district that has hosted a follow-up effort. Based on the interviews with district office staffers, they saw the value that CCR brought to their district, and were eager to continue build on the momentum of the CCR conversations: “the CCR was influential in terms of impacting policy and decisions for the future.” Another staff member said of the CCR, “it gives the office...a lot of credibility on issues that the 1st district is facing—poverty, hunger, and things like that.”

### *Follow-Up*

The primary theme that emerged from interviews and survey data across all districts is the need for follow-up. Interviewees again and again identified the importance of incorporating timely and meaningful follow-up into any CCR event in order to translate conversations into action. The lack of follow-up greatly hindered possibilities for positive, long-lasting impact in the districts.

In my judgment, not having a clear plan in place for follow-up has led to disillusionment among some CCR participants, particularly in Oakland. Many CCR participants expressed a belief that the CCR was “just another program” without any meaningful steps toward addressing deep-seated issues of unemployment, health and educational disparities, or youth violence, let alone racial healing. As Russ Haddad, former district staffer in Congressman Butterfield’s office, points out, “It’s gotta keep going, or else it just becomes...another program that just fades away, another meeting that was just a meeting.” Many CCR participants are already deeply engaged in racial healing efforts in their communities and are savvy about what programs are effective and what is needed in their communities. While there appears to have been initial excitement about the CCR program, any momentum or goodwill that was generated through the CCR events has now dwindled and in some cases, is no longer present. Such sentiments may negatively impact any future CCR efforts to convene conversations or follow-up actions, which may be seen as “too little, too late.”

Additionally, it is clear from the evaluation data that one-time conversations do not go far enough in effectively meeting the objectives of the CCR project. While interviewees across all districts acknowledged the valuable space that was created for authentic dialogue, most also recognized the limitations imposed by a one-time event. In some cases, as MK Nguyen shared, asking participants to share painful stories about race without having sufficient time to address healing, can be detrimental: “They need to honor peoples' processes a little more. Talking about race can be painful, and can trigger and surface memories that people have for many reasons buried deeply.” Having meaningful conversations about race “is a challenging task and cannot be done in a few hours. And so if we want to have a real conversation about race, we need to make time for that, for people's ability to process that stuff, and we'll learn how to talk to each other and articulate it in a way that's respectful, and to remove all the defenses that make it difficult for us to have real conversations on race.”

The sense of disappointment by many CCR participants, as expressed by one interviewee, “I’m just really disappointed with not continuing the conversation, and not grounding it in action. Why did I spend my time there then?” can also negatively impact the public reputation of SFCG and FPI. Many CCR participants seem to place the responsibility for follow-up, or the lack thereof, at the feet of SFCG and FPI. This further illustrates the lack of

clarity about who is ultimately responsible for next steps. While the stated role of SFCG and FPI has been to support Members of Congress and their district offices to convene conversations with their constituents, and not necessarily to organize follow-up events, the public perception is that SFCG and FPI have failed in their responsibility to cultivate meaningful impact in these districts. Contrastingly, all district offices and Members of Congress appear to have very positive impressions of SFCG and FPI. The experience of working with the CCR Planning Team seems to have strengthened the reputation of both SFCG and FPI. Sandra Andrews, Congresswoman Lee’s district staffer said of the CCR Planning Team: “They know protocol and they act accordingly with it, they are very professional and very respectful. They were not an outsider here. So often we get outsiders that come in and change everything that we do without checking how we do it from the inside. They can come back here anytime.”

### Relevance

Across all districts, the CCR project did not fully meet the needs of the community with regards to racial healing. While the majority of interviewees believe the CCR was a good first step, my analysis is that the project design was flawed from the beginning by being based on a one to two day event format without a plan or framework for follow-up events. Effective racial healing processes require time (much more than a day or two), ongoing relationship and trust building, and clear steps to move from conversation to action. However, most of the CCR participants were not aware that racial healing was the ultimate goal of the project. Additionally, the CCR Planning Team and the District Office did not use the language of “racial healing” when describing the focus of the CCR project. Therefore it is possible that the evaluation tools were not accurately designed to account for the project’s focus (or lack thereof) on racial healing.

### *Diversity*

Another common theme that emerged from the interviews across all districts was the desire for more diversity among CCR participants, particularly in terms of racial background, but also socio-economic status, age, and sector. Larry Auld, a CCR participant in Rocky Mount, NC voiced a common sentiment among many CCR interviewees: “Most of the participants were already in agreement that there is a problem. The event was preaching to the choir. There needs to be communication to a broader group.” Because of this, my analysis is that the CCR project was not able to fully meet the intended objective of bringing together a diverse collection of district constituents to collectively and constructively address shared racial challenges. Without a diverse participant base, the conversations and any action steps that result may not be relevant to some populations within the district (namely, White district members). Out of 41 interviewees (both CCR participants and district office staffers), 11 interviewees are White and 28 are interviewees of color. I do not have data that reflects the racial diversity of all the participants at each CCR event within each district. However, based on the interview data, it appears that the majority of participants were people of color. Thus the interview pool may also reflect a similar ratio, further illustrating the importance of increasing the racial diversity of those invited to CCR events.

## CCR PLANNING TEAM

The following section highlights key themes from interviews with five of the six CCR Planning Team members. The themes are organized according to the evaluation criteria—effectiveness, project design, and implementation and impact.

### FINDINGS

#### Effectiveness

In addition the CCR participants, the CCR Planning Team members also gained new race related insights as a result of their involvement with the project. Shawn Dunning, one of the CCR facilitators, reflected on the social barriers that keep people from attending events like the CCR. He noted a design challenge in what to name the project—with an explicit mention of race, many people (namely, white people) will not show up: “There is a natural desire or tendency to want to experience ‘the other’ but it’s our social norms that are the walls. It’s the social norm that prevents probably half the people from coming to one of these meetings that would otherwise come.” Milagros Phillips, another CCR facilitator, commented on her insight, further reinforced through the CCR project, of the importance of understanding history in having conversations about race: “What was re-enforced is that it’s really hard for people to move forward without understanding the history. And so little of that history has been told through our educational system. Without that history it’s hard for people to understand why they’re where they are today.”

CCR Planning Team members generally agreed that the team was successful in meeting the project objectives of increasing leadership by Members of Congress on race related challenges and in increasing CCR participants’ willingness to improve race-relations in their district. Though each planning team member noted that there were key challenges that inhibited their ability to fully meet the project objectives (described further below).

Doug Tanner, Faith and Politics Institute Senior Advisor, agreed that the CCR project was helpful for Members of Congress: “I think simply providing the members an avenue and a structure to step up to this role has been valuable for them. I think the approach of looking at the history and getting people in touch with the history of each place and some open honest story telling as part of the process, telling ones own story is very valuable...I don’t think they have a lot of occasion to tell their own stories to an integrated group and that begins to change the dynamic. That in and of itself offers them an often untapped and perhaps to some degree unfelt style of leadership.”

Jeanné Isler, the SFCG on Race Project Director, agreed with Doug that the team increased the leadership capacity of Members of Congress by “gently challenging” them to use a process that was new to them: “we engaged them in ways that were different from what they are used to.” However, she adds that the project’s effectiveness was limited due to the different messages being communicated by the planning team to Members of Congress and their staff (related to expectations). She believes the challenge of communicating consistent

messages to Members was a reflection of the ongoing challenges the team experiences regarding clarity about the project goals.

Milagros Phillips commented specifically on the effectiveness of increasing CCR participants' willingness to improve race-relations in their district: "Hearing people talking about incarceration rates and wanting to do something about that, and people wanting to do something for black farmers . . . we're getting people to have conversations that they weren't necessarily having before. So in that respect I think we were very successful."

## **Project Design and Implementation**

### *Team Structure and Roles*

All five planning team members interviewed identified several core challenges that severely impacted the effectiveness of both the project, but also the team dynamics: lack of clarity and agreement regarding project goals, process, facilitation approach and team members' roles and expectations.

In reflecting on what didn't work well about the structure of the planning team, Jeanné said, "I don't think all team members were committed to the same goal...the goals of the project by the team were compromised in the most technical sense of compromise. Everybody gave something up in order to find something we could agree on, and so the level of commitment to that thing that we could agree on was low." Shawn agreed with Jeanné in his reflections of what didn't work well about the planning team structure: "We did not have a genuine consensus of what we were working toward."

In their interviews, all team members identified a lack of clarity about team roles. Jeanné stated, "I feel like there was a sense of ambiguity around roles on the team...clear expectations were not set at the outset of what each person's role would be and an opportunity to agree with that or disagree...from the outset there was just a lot of ambiguity and mixed expectations that were never clarified. After I got here I think that ambiguity stayed until we had our retreat in August 2011 where we got a lot more clarity. But because we were a year and a half into the project my sense is that patterns are already set, expectations, and so it's really difficult to shift those things even if you have a two day retreat and everybody agrees." Adwoa Ansah, Faith and Politics Institute Congressional Consultant (now no longer with the CCR Planning Team), agreed with Jeanné, "we didn't have any defined roles...even when I left there weren't any defined roles." Milagros also identified the importance of clarifying roles and team leadership: "taking the time to build a strong team where everyone is on the same page upfront and is also clearly behind the leadership and leadership roles I think is really important...I think from the beginning I wasn't very clear about the leadership." Doug further shared that the team structure and roles were "terribly confusing for a while...the structure was murky and problematic initially." This lack of clarity about team roles often led to tension amongst team members.

Additionally, there were clear differences in philosophical approach and design methodology, which caused conflict amongst team members. Some of the conflict surfaced



around different philosophical approaches to race work, and the core philosophies of Faith and Politics Institute and Search for Common Ground. Shawn described a central disagreement amongst team members on using a common ground approach: “I was constantly a minority, like a single voice at times in the group when I would speak about the importance of this being a common ground process, where we are not advocating for one side but rather we are bringing all those involved in the conflict together so that together we can find a solution that works for everybody. That kind of philosophy was seen as naïve by some members of our group...I think we were constantly running into this, my advocating for this being a common ground approach and Doug advocating for this to be an advocacy approach, and Doug and I butted heads quite a bit on that.”

Doug acknowledged the disagreement and described his reservations about using a common ground approach with issues of race in America when some people do not believe there is a conflict: “I think that probably works best when you have a clear crisis, a crisis that’s clear in everybody’s mind.” However, he continued, “you’ve got a lot of people who think it’s all fine and we’re past any problems...So applying a conflict resolution approach and wisdom where some people think there isn’t any conflict or need for any conflict is a particular challenge.”

Shawn further highlighted the team dynamics in addressing this central conflict: “I don’t think that at the end of the day the Faith and Politics methodology or mission, and Search’s methodology and mission contradict each other at all. They are different, but because we failed to achieve consensus on the fundamentals, I think we individually defaulted back to what we know, rather than defaulting back to something that was clearly shared and agreed upon.” Shawn did not doubt the intentions of his team members, yet believes that without agreement on a shared approach, the project’s effectiveness will be limited: “I know that everybody involved in this really believes in it, I’ve no question whatsoever that everyone involved believes in the vision. At the same time I’m 100% confident that we don’t have consensus on our approach and until we get that we will not be able to achieve what we are capable of.”

Some of the conflict in different philosophical approach surfaced in the facilitation relationship between CCR co-facilitators, Shawn and Milagros. Shawn shared some of his concerns: “I have been and remain very concerned about her [Milagros’] abilities or tendencies to facilitate in a common ground manner.” He noted the difference in their professional approach—Shawn makes use of a common ground approach, whereas Milagros makes use of an advocacy approach—which at times in their working relationship, caused a great deal of difficulty. While Jeanné also identified a “huge conflict” between Shawn and Milagros, Milagros did not describe her working relationship with Shawn in the same vein: “Working with Shawn was fine. There were times when we had clashes, and I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that race is not Shawn’s expertise. So he was doing and learning at the same time. So it was a different curve, at least from my perspective, which sometimes was frustrating.”

### *Planning and Implementation*

Reflecting on what went well with the planning and implementation of CCR activities within the districts, both Jeanné and Doug identified the benefit of the preliminary trips to districts, and the value of meeting in person with district staff and community members prior to the CCR event. Milagros described the importance of building relationships with both Members

of Congress and district staff: “Relationships were huge. Where we were able to establish a good relationship right up front, and where we were clear about objectives and we could share those objectives with both the Member of Congress and the district office, I think was most successful.”

Despite a lack of shared goals and clearly defined roles, Adwoa noted the value of the organizational partnership between Faith and Politics Institute and Search for Common Ground: “I think the partnership between Faith and Politics and Search for Common Ground was good. They created a nice balance in the program piece and the relationship with members. Each of the organizations brought something important to the project. I thought that was good.”

Shawn stated that despite the challenges, he ultimately feels proud of his work with the planning team, “I feel good about what we’ve done. We’ve demonstrated a glimmer of what’s possible. I think the real potential lies in taking that to scale and involving more people and more places.”

Milagros also shared her appreciation for her fellow CCR Planning Team members: “I think we became more structured once Jeanné came on board. I always appreciated her leadership on this project in getting us focused...I think everyone on the team had a big heart, and even when things got tough people had some sense of compassion for the other members of the group...I really appreciate the fact that everyone wanted this project to be successful, and I always had the sense of that.”

In reflecting on what could be improved regarding project planning and implementation, Doug, Jeanné and Shawn each identified the importance of expanding and diversifying the pool of involved members to specifically include white and republican members. At present, Black Democratic members have convened all four CCR district level events. Doug described his desire to involve white Republican members and to prioritize involving them in the project. Shawn further elaborated: “Something I’m frankly very disappointed about is that we collectively as a group did not appear to have the confidence and will to pursue members that might not have been so easily predisposed to this kind of process.”

Both Jeanné and Shawn identified the need to balance deference to Members of Congress and their desires and cultivating their leadership with asserting the team’s expertise in convening conversations about race. Additionally, Shawn noted, “The direct participation of the member is critical. The idea of a member kind of making an appearance, this just being one more thing on their agenda...we’re talking about something potentially transformative and it’s not about a PR occasion, its about actual leadership engagement. So I think we need to do a better job communicating that to the member and getting their buy in about that and being direct about it.” Milagros further described the importance of maintaining consistency in the planning and agenda design process: “the people who were setting the agenda and planning need to meet with the people who are setting the goals. When we didn't have those one-on-one meetings with them it was hard to remember the goal.”

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Some members of the team, including Adwoa, did not believe there was enough information yet gathered to determine the full impact of the CCR project on each district.

However, Jeanné, Shawn, and Milagros agreed that in general terms, the CCR has had a positive impact on the districts, on community members and on Members of Congress. Jeanné described her perception of this impact: “People have sort of relearned their own history. People were learning things about the places that they lived that they did not previously know, meeting people that they had not previously known, reintroducing themselves to people that they had known.” Additionally, “People learned more about their Member of Congress, and it gave members the space to share more about their personal experiences, as well as demonstrate their leadership capacity about race and other issues in their district.” Milagros believes the CCR laid a helpful foundation for follow up work with Members: “I think it [the project] laid the groundwork for doing deeper work with Members.” She continued by saying, “I also feel that where the Member of Congress took real leadership and reached out to their colleagues, that was hugely helpful...One of the most successful CCRs that we did was in New Orleans, and that's because Congressman Richmond did reach out to his colleagues. So that leadership, and our clarity around who we needed to have on board, the help that we needed from the district office, was important. He [Congressman Richmond] was also willing to give us more time, which was helpful.”

## **ANALYSIS and CONCLUSIONS – CCR PLANNING TEAM**

Based on the interview data with the CCR Planning Team, several foundational challenges clearly emerged regarding project goals, facilitation approach and team roles and expectations. I believe these challenges originate partly from the ambiguity written into the initial grant proposal to the Kellogg Foundation and from shifts and transitions in the makeup of the team in the first year of the project. Without clearly stated roles for planning team members, or a clearly articulated partnership plan between the Faith and Politics Institute and Search for Common Ground, current team members inherited logistical and organizational obstacles that continued to be a challenge throughout the duration of the project. Additionally, because the current team was not able to come to consensus about the project goals, approach, and process for accountability early on in their work together, differences of opinion and expectations resulted in tension and conflict. In my judgment, these conflicts impacted the effectiveness of the overall project. Valuable time and energy was spent trying to resolve conflicts that arose in the planning process, rather than spending team members’ collective energy on thinking creatively about how best to meet the project goals and generate meaningful and long lasting impact within districts. Additionally, core differences in philosophical approach negatively affected the overall strength of the CCR project. All team members made compromises in order to work together, rather than collectively engaging in a shared process that brought forward their individual and collective strengths in ways that meaningfully facilitated the overarching vision for racial reconciliation that they each desired.

Despite the challenges related to roles and expectations, the CCR Planning Team was able to meet the project goals, holding eight CCR events in the course of the grant period. Each team member acknowledged the willingness and ability of the team to pull together when needed, to organize a successful CCR event. Additionally, the team was able to achieve the

project's primary objectives of engaging Members of Congress and CCR participants in conversations about race related challenges in their communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation results, interviews and survey data, I offer several recommendations below.

### *Follow-Up*

Throughout the evaluation process, interviewees described the need for follow-up and a clear framework for next steps in order to more effectively meet the needs of their community. Therefore, any future CCR events should have a clear process for follow-up as part of grant proposals, project design, and as part of the initial CCR planning. When meeting with Members of Congress to plan the CCR event, the conversation should include both an initial event, but also a follow-up meeting/event to be held within 6 months. The follow-up meeting/event should be incorporated into the program and agenda design so that participants can begin the work of action planning during the initial CCR event, with an expectation that there will be a meeting or event to follow up on their collective and individual commitments. The framework for post-CCR event next steps should include goal setting, an action plan, a realistic timeline, and a clear understanding about who is taking responsibility for each action step. It is clear from the evaluation data that one-time events within the district are not sufficient to fully achieve meaningful change in terms of racial healing.

Additionally, if any follow-up events are planned in the future, they will need to explicitly address the collective sense of disappointment among CCR participants. My recommendation is that follow up events *not* be held unless they are meaningfully planned, with the intention of continuing beyond another one-time event. Any follow-up events need to have financial and staff resources committed before the planning begins in order to develop meaningful and sustainable follow up programs with the goal of ultimately having the community develop ongoing programs and initiatives to address race related challenges in their district. Additionally, it would be wise to develop relationships with local, on the ground, community based organizations within each district that are already involved in racial healing efforts to collaboratively plan and implement follow-up events.

In the time since many of the interviews were conducted, Search for Common Ground has established a more robust website to house the CCR project. If any future follow were to be planned, I recommend leveraging the website more effectively to post notes, action plans, timelines, goals, and incorporate blog-like functionality to allow participants from various districts to connect with one another, share ideas, and best practices to encourage collaboration within and across districts, thereby extending the reach and impact of the project.

### *Increased Racial Diversity*

For future CCR events, key members of the CCR Planning Team should meet with potential Members of Congress *and* their district staff in order to ensure a shared vision for the CCR, and begin building relationships with the district staff immediately following the initial meeting. The planning team should then work closely with the district staff to ensure a diverse collection of participants is invited to the CCR event—specifically in regards to racial diversity. This process should start early in the planning stages. Interviewees consistently referenced the need for increased diversity amongst the CCR participants, as the potential opportunities for new insights and collaboration that come out of such a gathering are heavily dependent on *who*

is in the room. Participant recruitment strategies with a focus on diversity can be more effectively developed within the project timeline by communicating these priorities clearly at the beginning of the planning process, and eliciting suggestions from local community-based organizations through collaborative planning processes.

### *Members of Congress*

For any future CCR events involving Members of Congress, it will be important to communicate effectively and clearly about the commitment and expectations involved in convening a Congressional Conversation on Race. Specifically, I recommend emphasizing the importance of direct participation in the event, above and beyond an appearance for opening remarks and returning for closing remarks. Where Members of Congress were more directly and involved throughout the duration of the CCR event, the more effective the project was in achieving the project's stated goals. Additionally, Member's direct participation in CCR events demonstrated leadership that was noted and appreciated by CCR participants, motivating constituents and stakeholders to take greater steps toward addressing racial challenges within the district. Members play a key role in the overall success of the CCR project, and having their meaningful participation in the process, from planning through event implementation, and in any follow up activities will be critical to ensuring success for any future CCR events.

### *Planning Team*

Because the CCR project has reached the end of the three-year grant cycle, recommendations about the past current structure of the CCR Planning Team may not longer be relevant. However, if any future events are planned, it will be important to host a series of meetings and conversations (ideally lead by an outside facilitator) before the start of the project to clarify roles, responsibilities, and structures of accountability, the team's shared goals and philosophical approach. I recommend that these conversations begin before any future CCR events are planned. By having a shared vision and approach to the planning process, the CCR Planning Team can focus their energy on effectively impacting race relations within congressional districts, as opposed to resolving tensions, conflicts, and disagreements that arise as a result of ambiguous roles, goals, and philosophical approaches.