

Racial Reconciliation

Recommendation 1: Promotion of diversity in the workforce and in management in Mississippi businesses through training and by joining national and global business networks which promote the common good.

Justification: The global economy, bolstered by the Internet, has shown how connected markets and people actually are. Increasingly, businesses are able to hire workers outside of their own country's borders and most often their productivity increases due to the influx of new ideas. By helping to diversify our workforce and management, Mississippi businesses will be better able to compete in this global economy, as well as help to develop and use its own home-grown talent.

In addition, Bill Gates has called on the business community to do work that promotes the common good. Others have identified "contributory capitalism," in which consumers who are more informed about how businesses are engaged in such work will make choices about products based increasingly on how much a business contributes to the common good. Perhaps there might ultimately be a "racial reconciliation index" that businesses participate in to show how actively engaged they are in supporting diversity and community engagement.

Best Practices:

The Boston Indicators Project "offers new ways to understand Boston and its neighborhoods in a regional, national and global context. It aims to democratize access to information, foster informed public discourse, track progress on shared civic goals, and report on change in 10 sectors: Civic Vitality, Cultural Life and the Arts, the Economy, Education, the Environment, Health, Housing, Public Safety, Technology, and Transportation.

Through its interactions with the broad civic community, the Project also works to develop a shared Civic Agenda reflecting the perspectives of thousands of participants—from school children and engaged residents to academic and community-based experts to public officials and policymakers."

<http://www.bostonindicators.org/Indicators2008/>

The Kirwin Institute provides understanding of how implicit bias works in the human brain to proscribe interactions. With such understanding, all of us can learn tools to reach out to others more intentionally, in ways that overcome our brains' tendencies to pre-judge others. <http://www.kirwaninstitute.org/>

The Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation provides support to communities who seek to bridge historic divisions in order to build positive community relations and inclusive, equitable community development. www.winterinstitute.org

The Business of a Better World: “At BSR, our mission is clear: We work with business to create a just and sustainable world.

A leader in corporate responsibility since 1992, BSR works with its global network of more than [250 member companies](#) to develop sustainable business strategies and solutions through [consulting](#), [research](#), and [cross-sector collaboration](#).

With offices in Asia, Europe, and North America, BSR uses its expertise in environment, human rights, economic development, and governance and accountability to guide global companies toward creating a just and sustainable world.” <http://www.bsr.org/>

Implementation:

Training programs on implicit bias as well as programs that create safe spaces for relationship building.

Joining a network such as BSR.

Recommendation 2: Invest in local community building projects that promote interracial cooperation.

Justification: Blueprint Mississippi's own survey has shown that communities who believe they have negative race relations are also the communities who believe they are the least economically competitive. This self-image is reinforced to outside investors as well. By encouraging interracial cooperation in community projects and by being involved in them, businesses can help increase trust in communities, which will in turn promote more economic competitiveness and outside investment.

Specifically, the business community should invest public, business-driven initiatives to build sound, healthy race relations. No outside investors want to invest in or bring their employees to places where those employees will not feel safe. In June in Jackson, a black auto worker was attacked and murdered on his way to work by white teenagers allegedly looking for an African American person to assault. It seems clear that these young people believed such an attack would be acceptable to the larger community.

The business community, as well as other Mississippi institutions, must be clear to condemn such attacks and the attitudes that promote them and to invest in programs that counter them by promoting local interracial cooperation. Such efforts will, in turn, create healthier communities and a better image for the state.

Best practices:

The Philadelphia Coalition is a multiracial group that promoted recognition of its community's haunted racial past. The president of the local chamber of commerce as well as many public officials are active in supporting the group's work, which has, in turn, transformed Philadelphia's image to one that is more positive. As a result, there are now better public relationships to promote Philadelphia, as well as increased business investment from beyond the community. (Initial investment was \$5000.00 from the chamber).

Implementation:

Develop partnerships with local, interracial community groups working to promote the common good.

Support those groups with expertise and financial support for local projects.

Recommendation 3: *Invest in youth programs that promote interracial cooperation in order to ensure future generations of leadership.*

Justification: There is still a degree of segregation within the public school system in Mississippi. Often a college experience is the first time that young people are in a multiracial environment. Mississippi college campuses have witnessed the altercations that can occur between students who do not know or trust each other. The training ground for our future leaders should be devoted to learning and personal development, not to negotiating racially-tense situations. These situations could be prevented by programs in early childhood and in high school that promote interracial interaction and cooperation.

Best Practices:

The **Summer Youth Institute** a 10-day institute cosponsored by the Winter Institute and the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute. Bringing together rising high school sophomores and juniors, the institute provides training in leadership and community building as well as civil rights history. It includes workshops and field trips and focuses on providing tools to participants so that they can support local community improvement.

Implementation:

Invest in the Mississippi Racial Reconciliation Conference, an idea conceived by an SYI 2011 graduate to bring together Mississippi high school students around building positive race relations.

Invest in the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, which will have programs designated for young people.

Support the implementation of SB2718, which mandates teaching civil and human rights history in all Mississippi classrooms.