

The Organizing Apprenticeship Project

Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity

Key Sources

Jermaine Toney is the lead researcher with the Organizing Apprenticeship Project. He is a graduate of Patrick Henry High School in Minneapolis, MN. He received his B.A. from University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. Toney received his M.S. from New School for Social Research in NYC. He has worked for Phillips Neighborhood Healthy Housing Collaborative, conducted policy research while in school for Bedford Stuyvesant Family Health Center, Drum Major Institute for Public Policy, NYC Department of Transportation and Central Community Housing Trust.

Ph: 612-746-4224

e-mail: toney@oaproject.org

Javier Morillo-Alicea is the President of SEIU 26, which represents over 5,000 janitors, security officers, window cleaners, jewelry workers and leather workers in the Minneapolis-St Paul metro area. Before joining SEIU 26, Javier taught history and anthropology at Macalester and Carleton Colleges. He did his graduate work at the University of Michigan and received his BA from Yale University.

Ph: 612-331-8336

e-mail: jmorillo@seiu26.org

Hussein Samatar is the founder and executive director of the African Development Center.

Previously, Hussein worked as a senior lender for the Neighborhood Development Center and a commercial lender with Wells Fargo and Norwest Banks. A Humphrey Institute Policy Fellow in 2003-2004, Hussein holds an M.B.A. from St. Thomas University, and sits on the board of the Minneapolis Foundation, Minneapolis Public Library, Minneapolis Consortium of Community Developers, Payne-Lake Community Partners, Emerging Markets Homeownership Initiative, and the Lake Street Project Advisory Committee. A Somali native, Hussein came to Minnesota in 1994.

Ph: 612-333-4772

e-mail: hsamatar@adcmnnesota.org

Jennifer Godinez, is the Associate Director of the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership and Director Minnesota College Access Network. She helped develop and served as Executive Director of La Escuelita, a youth service organization nationally recognized as an exemplary after-school model for Latino youth in Minneapolis. Jennifer sits on the boards of the Latino Economic Development Corporation, the Minnesota Council of NonProfits and the alumnae board of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Jennifer received her B.A. in Sociology from Drake University, Masters Degree in Public Policy with concentrations in education policy and nonprofit management from the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

Phone: 651-645-7400

e-mail: jgodinez@mmep.net

Pastor Chris Becker is Pastor at Peace Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights and chair of the Clergy and Religious Leaders Caucus of ISAIAH, a faith based organization representing over 80 congregations in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and St. Cloud. Pastor Becker has served at Peace since 1997, and his ministry has included 30 years of experience at three very different communities of faith. He has served as Chair of the Housing Task Force in Inver Grove Heights. Pastor Becker received his doctorate degree from Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

Phone: 651-455-0093

e-mail: pastorchris@peaceigh.org

Ron Hick is Chair of the Board of Directors of the Organizing Apprenticeship Project, and the Coordinator of the Bryant Village Initiative, an innovative public service re-design project based in South Minneapolis. Ron has helped create and lead a model neighborhood organization in St. Paul, and led a Minneapolis Foundation program focused on strengthening neighborhood organizations in the Twin Cities metropolitan area for 10 years. He has helped create many successful and effective non profit organizations in the region, and currently serves on the board of African Community Services. He received his B.A. degree in Urban Studies from the University of Minnesota.

Phone: 612-823-7791

Jamie Edwards is the legislative liason for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.

Ph: 612-850-2124

email: jsedwards@locklaw.com

Tammy Johnson is the Director of the [Race and Public Policy Program \(RAPP\)](#) of the Applied Research Center (ARC) has many years experience as a community organizer, trainer and writer versed in race and public policy. Johnson also has many years of community experience working on public education, welfare and election reform issues. She has authored several reports on race and equity issues, *and her* articles have appeared in a number of publications, including *Leadership* and [ColorLines](#) magazines.

State Representative Neva Walker represents District 61B in the House of Representatives. She is the first African American woman elected to the Minnesota State Legislature. Representative Walker is a member of the national Black Caucus of State Legislators, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Minneapolis Advisory Committee) and the Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board. As a legislator, she has focused on affordable housing, affordable health care and health disparities, education, out-of-home placement and racial profiling issues. She is one of five Point Leaders in The Racial Equity Report Card's assessment of 2005/2006 leadership for racial equity in Minnesota, and one of 20 Legislators included in eh Reports Racial Equity Honor Roll.

Ph: 651-296-7152

email: rep.neva.walker@house.mn

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Contact:

Alondra Espejel, Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP)
612-250-5926

Minnesota Leads Nation in Quality of Life, but Its Lawmakers Fail on Racial Justice

Organizing Apprenticeship Project Report Challenges Legislators

(Minneapolis, MN) - In the wake of state and local elections, the Organizing Apprenticeship Project in conjunction with the Applied Research Center presented findings this morning from the **Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity** evaluating the Governor and state legislature on key legislation effecting communities of color. Legislators and community organizations from across the state delivered the grades to the Minnesota State Legislature, criticizing a marked failure to advance racial equity in Minnesota.

“Race matters in Minnesota. But as demographics shift, the unprecedented growth in communities of color is not being echoed in the policy decisions of the governor and state legislature,” said Jermaine Toney, policy analyst with the Organizing Apprenticeship Project and the report’s author. **“Disparities in opportunity, access and outcomes between white Minnesotans and Minnesotans of color are stark – in some cases, among the worst in the nation. While a few leaders championed laws for all, missed opportunities in health, education and criminal justice crippled this legislative session,”** asserted Toney.

The Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity (2005-2006) evaluates and grades Governor Tim Pawlenty and members of the Legislature on their support for racial equity by analyzing 22 bills that, if passed, would have a strong positive impact on communities of color.

Key trends in the report:

Governor Tim Pawlenty received a C- on racial equity legislation. The Governor vetoed three of the ten bills that reached his desk (70 percent).

The Legislature received an F. Seven of 22 (32 percent) bills that were considered for this report became law. Ten bills reached the governor’s desk. The other 12 bills became missed opportunities.

Minnesota lawmakers are failing on racial equity but champions are emerging. Strongest leadership comes from legislators in districts with people of color majorities.

The honor roll for racial equity cuts across geography, party affiliation and racial group. Legislators were from Twin Cities and greater Minnesota. There were two republican legislators, though a majority of legislators were from the democratic party. There were three legislators of color, but the majority of legislators were white.

Missed Opportunities:

Although real policy solutions were put forward in this session to address Minnesota’s racial divide, many pieces of legislation ended the term as “missed opportunities.” These were policy proposals that were either rejected by the Legislature or vetoed by the Governor. Below are two examples:

Education-Governor Pawlenty vetoed the Quality Rating for Early Learning Centers bill which would have set standards for pre-kindergarten early learning centers and help parents evaluate childcare choices.

Criminal Justice-tens of thousands of people of color who were arrested, but whose cases were dismissed in court, would have had their records cleaned if the Legislature had passed HF 1715.

This bill would have removed a significant racial barrier to employment and housing.

Despite the multiple missed opportunities in the legislative cycle, advocates and legislators also heralded policy makers who did take substantial steps to close the racial gap in key issue areas.

“Racial justice should speak deeply to Minnesota’s egalitarian tradition of developing legislative tools to create equal opportunities in jobs, education, health care and criminal justice,” noted Congressman-elect Keith Ellison. **“I hope the report findings serve to inspire the Minnesota State Legislature to step up and lead for racial equity in our state,”** stated Ellison.

“While racial disparities are pervasive in Minnesota, they need not be permanent. For this state, the time has come to begin facing race,” said Pastor Christopher Becker, from Peace Lutheran Church in Inver Grove Heights.

The Organizing Apprenticeship Project (OAP) works to strengthen community organizing in Minnesota by increasing the number, effectiveness and diversity of community organizers, leaders and organizing projects in the state. This report is intended to be the first annual report on racial equity, with the second report coming out next year.

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