

# **FACTS INTO ACTS**

**ACTION AND RESEARCH ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

**JUNE 2003**

**WORKING GROUP ON RACIAL EQUITY**

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY**

# **FACTS INTO ACTS**

**ACTION AND RESEARCH ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

**JUNE 2003**

**WORKING GROUP ON RACIAL EQUITY**

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROVIDED BY**

# Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction .....	1
1.1 History .....	1
1.2 Background .....	2
2.0 <i>Unfurling The Flag</i> (1999-2000) .....	4
2.1 Goals .....	4
2.2 Expected Results .....	4
2.3 Expected Outcomes .....	4
2.4 Methodology .....	5
2.5 Findings .....	9
2.6 Individual Barriers .....	9
2.7 Campaign Barriers .....	10
2.8 Community Barriers .....	10
2.9 Systemic Barriers .....	11
3.0 <i>Levelling The Field</i> (2001-2003) .....	11
3.1 Goals .....	11
3.2 Objectives .....	12
3.3 Action .....	12
3.4 Results of <i>Levelling The Field</i> .....	18
4.0 Political Participation .....	20
4.1 Why Participation? .....	22
4.2 The Canadian State and Some Ideas of Citizenship .....	23
4.3 Hamilton and the Municipal Experience .....	34
4.4 Racial Minorities and Municipal Political Participation .....	52
5.0 Social Participation .....	78
5.1 Introduction to Social Participation .....	78
5.2 Service Responses .....	85
5.3 Other Local Responses .....	90
5.4 Leadership Initiatives .....	101
5.5 Identity Markers and Social Participation .....	104
5.6 Community Organisation and Social Participation .....	109
5.7 Racial Minorities in Hamilton .....	116
6.0 Economic Participation .....	129
6.1 Local Economy .....	129
6.2 The Economy, the Individual, and Participation .....	133
7.0 Acknowledgments .....	140
8.0 Bibliography .....	142

**Appendix A:** Working Group on Racial Equity's Submission to Hamilton City Council's Working Group on Citizen Committees

**Appendix B:** Working Group on Racial Equity's Submission to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities

**Appendix C:** Summary Notes From Networking Session of March *Colouring The City* Training

**Appendix D:** *Colouring The City* Participant Demographics

**Appendix E:** Articles About Racism in Hamilton

**Appendix F:** Articles by Working Group on Racial Equity and its Members

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 History

In 1998, the Working Group on Racial Equity (WGRE) came together as an *ad hoc* task-focused group, loosely formed to address the issues of racial inequity and to guide and support capacity-building initiatives in racial minority communities in Hamilton-Wentworth.

The group's objectives were:

- to gather information about, to promote awareness about, and to act as a resource on public participation of racial minority communities in the new city of Hamilton and beyond;
- to guide and support capacity-building initiatives to empower vulnerable sectors of racial minority communities in the new city of Hamilton and beyond; and
- to implement key change programs and strategies designed to facilitate racial minority participation in the public and institutional life of the new city of Hamilton and beyond.

The group that cohered as WGRE was made up of Harish Jain, Jane Mulkewich, Jacob Joseph, with Ahmad Saidullah as the project leader.

Among its first actions, the Working Group sponsored a research project on racial minority participation in municipal politics in Hamilton-Wentworth called *Unfurling the Flag* in 1999. The project which, was funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage, ended in March 2000. The report was well received.

The *Unfurling the Flag* study included a number of recommendations on implementing programs, partnerships and change strategies to develop leadership participation in the region. It became obvious from scans, responses and consultations that such change would have to be facilitated, phased and carefully supported and monitored over the long-term in the new City of Hamilton.

In 2000, the Working Group submitted a 3-year community-action proposal called *Levelling the Field* to the Department of Canadian Heritage to implement the recommendations in *Unfurling The Flag* report. There would be a focus on developing leadership potential among racial minority communities in the new city of Hamilton, with specific focus on youth and women, and in leveraging change at City Hall. The *Levelling The Field* project began in 2001 and ended in 2003.

The ad hoc Working Group for the *Levelling The Field* project had seven members from a variety of backgrounds and professions. For the *Levelling The Field* project, the members were Michelle Cho, Zahra Grant, Harish Jain, Jacob Joseph, Michelle Myrie, Scott Neigh, Rabea Murtaza and project director Ahmad Saidullah.

Information on the Working Group on Racial Equity and its work can be found on <http://wgre.tripod.com/wgre.html>. All project and Working Group enquiries should be emailed to Ahmad Saidullah at [ahmad@spectranet.ca](mailto:ahmad@spectranet.ca).

## **1.2 Background**

This is the combined report of the Working Group on Racial Equity's two projects on civic participation. This document also presents updated and revised discussion of the findings of the *Unfurling The Flag* report which bears the name of the Working Group's research project on racial minority civic participation, which ran from July 1999 to March 2000. This material can be found in the Political Participation, Social Participation, and Economic Participation sections of this report. The *Levelling The Field* section of this report presents a description of the actions taken during the course of that initiative, a community action project on civic participation, which ran from April 2001 to March 2003. Both projects were sponsored by the Working Group on Racial Equity and supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

The actions in the more recent project, *Levelling The Field*, were built on the recommendations that emerged from the findings of *Unfurling The Flag*. The research had examined, in the existing literature and other projects, a number of factors that had impeded or promoted racial minority political participation at the municipal level in Hamilton-Wentworth since the time of regionalisation. It had also systematically used racial minority candidates' experiences and learnings to isolate dynamic factors that inhibited their political participation in municipal politics in Hamilton-Wentworth. The study also shed light on the highly complex issues of leadership among racially marginalised communities in this region and also identified various needs of the racial minority communities for them to be able to function at full capacity and to enjoy real choices that a level playing field and a true equality of opportunity would create.

All *Unfurling The Flag* participants thought the issue of racial minority political participation important and one that had not been addressed to date in the region. The project identified several organisational, training and program needs as being critical to raising awareness and to mobilising communities on issues that are necessary for their survival, integration and advancement. Other participants during the study also felt that the lack of political representation or effective leadership in the city was a major cause of their issues not being addressed.

The *Unfurling the Flag* study was a community needs assessment of racial minority political participation in the region. It had identified the lack of social, economic, cultural and political integration of different racial minority communities in the region of Hamilton-Wentworth as a major municipal failure. The study outlined a number of actions and recommendations in order to eliminate the four major types of identified barriers (Individual, Campaign, Community and Systemic) that continue to limit racial minority communities' life chances.

It also became clear during the course of the previous study that most of these recommended actions and outcomes would have to be phased in gradually with independent resources, supports and guidance. There were also factors internal to communities that needed to be acted upon. For example, an analysis of campaigns

showed a lack of leadership skill sets and strategic planning. In other words, racial communities' historical experiences with racial and other forms of discrimination may have prevented these communities from accumulating their social capital, skills and resources to the fullest that would allow them to participate successfully in mainstream public decision making.

The *Unfurling the Flag* study achieved its aims of filling the gap in research about the reasons why and the dynamics of how racial minorities in Hamilton-Wentworth continue to be shut out of the political process. The learnings once put into action in the community were instrumental in enabling unintegrated racial minority populations to change enormously powerful political processes and systems. There are early steps in reversing the situation where the mainstream continues to make decisions for racially marginalised communities without their significant participation or representation. Given the current political climate where racial minorities' claims to equal treatment continue to be rolled back in places, such an investment in a capacity-building community action project was needed more than ever.

John Biles at the Third Metropolis Conference in Israel noted that, during municipal restructuring and transition phases, fiscal austerity measures have overruled issues that are faced daily by racial minority communities. This argues for a fairly heavy degree of community organising and public and policy interventions. Given that community fragmentation was one of the findings of our previous study, external resources and skills needed to be invested in developing community capacity around issues of community awareness, capacity building, community organisation, community programs and skills as identified in the report. With the existing community leadership issues as noted by the respondents, initiatives needed to target youth and women in particular.

The *Unfurling The Flag* study found that restructuring the municipal apparatus and the redefinition of electoral boundaries were likely to have negative implications for the mobilisation of racially marginalised communities in the region unless something was done to raise awareness among politicians and other powerful stakeholders in the region.

The *Levelling The Field* project acted on civic participation issues at city hall through community trainings.

The Working Group on Racial Equity used a variety of tools, including written briefs, oral presentations, individual meetings with politicians and staff, and newspaper articles to foster the inclusion of structures within the new City of Hamilton to promote racial equity. The city ultimately created an Access and Equity Office staffed with a coordinator whose first priority was to be anti-racism. As well, the amalgamated municipality's structures for citizen input at city hall included a standalone Committee Against Racism. The Working Group consulted with city staff during the creation of the committee and the office and offered to be part of the recruitment process.

At the heart of the project was *Colouring The City*, a three-day anti-racist political skills training program, held three times in 2002. Three experienced anti-racism trainers developed the curriculum and delivered the trainings, in conjunction with the Working Group. 61 racial minority women and youth graduated from this program. Graduates

were also given the opportunity to participate in a number of educational and networking opportunities, including formal and informal networking sessions, and municipal information workshops co-sponsored with the City of Hamilton. Through our training outreach, a strong push was made to mobilise the target communities on these issues to ensure representation and a voice in the new city. Towards the end of *Levelling The Field*, the WGRE proposed a twelve-week internship program at city hall for interested *Colouring The City* graduates. The city agreed to implement such a program

During the course of the project, the Working Group also intervened at a number of other sites to promote anti-racist change. Consultation with the Hamilton Public Library resulted in a variety of policy changes enhancing access and equity for racial minorities. When the annual conference of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, a policy brief was submitted to that body. The anti-racism policy of the Hamilton District School Board, which is currently under development, was reviewed and input provided. As well, Working Group members have participated in the Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative and other community efforts concerned with racism in Hamilton.

## ***2.0 Unfurling The Flag (1999-2000)***

For discussion of recommendations from *Unfurling The Flag* please see section 3.3 Action.

### **2.1 Goals**

The goals of the *Unfurling The Flag* project were:

- to develop an improved understanding of the barriers and factors experienced by racial minority male and female participants in municipal politics in Hamilton-Wentworth between 1974 and 1997; and
- to facilitate the development of a community action plan(s) to promote and increase civic participation in municipal politics in the newly amalgamated City of Hamilton (formerly the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth.)

### **2.2 Expected Results**

The *Unfurling The Flag* project was expected to

- develop learnings that would promote public awareness, understanding of and informed dialogue about multiculturalism, racial and cultural diversity in Canada;
- provide research data, analyses, recommendations and action strategies for empowering everyone to participate fully and actively in Canadian society; and to
- enhance the abilities of public institutions to reach out to and include everyone in the political life in the city even more effectively.

### **2.3 Expected Outcomes**

- the development of resources and strategies for future elections
- the development of community leadership



- increase in civic participation
- more inclusive and responsive municipal decision-making bodies

## **2.4 Methodology**

The participatory research study interviewed past candidates from racial minority communities about their experiences running for municipal office in Hamilton-Wentworth since it became a region in 1974. The project included a planning session with the past candidates, and a roundtable with the community to develop community action plans for increasing racial minority participation in the following elections.

### **2.4.1 Tools**

The research was done using a variety of tools to acquire information:

- a partial *literature review* of materials around political participation, racism, racial minority history in Canada and in the Hamilton area, and journalism relating to municipal politics and racial minorities published in Hamilton;
- key informant *interviews* with former racial minority candidates for political office at either the municipal council or school board level within the former Region of Hamilton-Wentworth;
- a *planning session* with former candidates to discuss the draft findings, offer input, and strategize about future action;
- a *community roundtable* to solicit input around analysis and action from Hamiltonians belonging to a variety of racial minority communities.

The bulk of the original research findings are derived from careful analysis of the interviews with former candidates. The study used a variety of research methods to collect, analyse and evaluate different stages of the project. Participatory research strategies were used to collect experiential data. Data was qualitative and was checked against existing literature where possible. The interviews were semi-structured. A conversational style was used. Racial minority facilitators were brought in for the planning session and the roundtable. The focus was on community empowerment and planning for concrete social actions that would produce change. Cultural interpreters and translations were used. The processes used for each phase are described in detail in this section.

### **2.4.2 Assumptions**

Key strategic assumptions drove the development of research processes for the study.

#### ***Experiences***

To develop the desired learning successfully, it was critical that the research processes encouraged past municipal candidates and members of racial minority communities to talk about their experiences. The study needed to ensure a process that could enable people to discuss the impacts of barriers without denial, without minimising them necessarily as cultural differences, and without dismissing them as ignorance, as human nature, or as a lack of sensitivity.

Research methods were devised to accommodate those who may be uncomfortable about discussing their identities, perceptions, practices, prejudices or the barriers they

may have experienced. Stress was laid on giving primacy to and validating these experiences critically and on ensuring that people were heard during the data collection processes in a safe, welcoming environment that would reduce defensiveness and denial.

Given that the goals were outcomes-focused, participatory research methods and a social action approach were used to facilitate data gathering, action planning, analysis and evaluation.

#### *Other Considerations*

In addition, the study facilitated the development of strategies for incorporating the following:

- The implications of the new municipal restructuring proposals for racial minority participation in the region and for this study.
- The means of supporting a community-led network(s) or another body to promote racial minority political participation after the end of the project.
- The need to address the training and development needs that may be identified as necessary for eliminating the barriers to racial minority political participation.
- A structure for following up on policy recommendations that may have broad and deep implications for the racial minority communities' future political involvement.
- Strategies for the prevention of the stigmatisation of the subject of the study and of the issue of racism in the current climate.

### **2.4.3 Scope of Research**

#### *Sample Size*

The time period of this study (1974 to 1997) spanned all the elections held in Hamilton-Wentworth from the beginning to the end of its existence as a regional municipality. There were ten municipal elections during that period (1974, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994 and 1997) not counting by-elections. It should be noted that the election term changed from a two-year to a three-year frequency in 1982.

The total pool of racial minority candidates for school board trustee or aldermanic positions in Hamilton-Wentworth from 1974 to 1997 was just 23. The number of respondents in the study represents nearly half the total available pool, a participation rate that is much higher than our projected 30%. However, the number of interviews (11) forming the core of the original research is undeniably small for this kind of study.

The small pool from which to draw the sample of respondents in and of itself is evidence of the existence of the very barriers that this study is meant to identify, and actually adds weight to the importance of understanding and addressing the experienced barriers to racial minorities participating in the political process.

An average of 1.7 racial minority candidates per election in the region until 1991. After 1991, there have been 7.6 on average. The 23 candidates ran 36 campaigns. There was one acclamation.

The eligible respondents included men and women from the South Asian Canadian

(including Indo-Caribbean), Black Canadian (African Canadian, West Indian Black Canadian and Canadian-born Blacks), East Asian Canadian, West Asian Canadian, and South and Central American Canadian communities.

Although this study was limited to municipal candidacy, including school trustees, the scope of representation in municipal government can be extended to municipal employees, and to agencies, boards and commissions (Saidullah, 1993: 14).

Year	Public School Board	Catholic School Board	Hamilton City Council	Suburban Councils	Total
1974					0
1976	1*		1 (by-election)		2
1978	1*				1
1980	1*				1
1982	3 (1*)				3
1985	2 (1*)				2
1988		1*	2 (1*)		3
1990			1 (by-election)		1
1991	3	1*	3 (1*)	2	9
1994	3	1*	2 (1*)	2	8
1995			1 (by-election)		1
1997	1	2 (1*)	2 (1*)	1*	6

**Racial Minority Candidates in Hamilton-Wentworth elections since 1974**

(\* indicates a successful bid)

### *Electoral Records*

In Ontario, data from municipal elections are not centralised so that "municipal clerks are the sole source of information, making data collection especially time consuming and often frustrating" (Kushner et al.: 540). While some city halls as in Hamilton were helpful, others such as Stoney Creek were uncooperative. In general, the election results were not well documented. Even in Hamilton, the election results for 1973 and 1976 were handwritten, and omitted some information (such as first names, or sometimes entire wards). On the other hand, there was relatively easy access to election results for both Hamilton and Toronto, considering that provincial legislation does not require municipalities to retain election data for more than one election period. Many of the smaller municipalities in Hamilton-Wentworth had not kept all the election results before 1995 or 1997. Municipalities are not required to record other useful or relevant information such as voter turnout.

### *Newspaper Archives*

Due to the lack of available studies, the research for this study relied heavily on articles from *The Hamilton Spectator*, Hamilton's only daily newspaper, which is the main print news source for the region. *The Spectator* does not allow public access to its archives. Articles were obtained from personal collections, from the Special Collections section of the Hamilton Public Library, and from the Newscan service available at the Hamilton Public Library. The election information on the World Wide Web is scanty. Web-based searches proved fruitless for tracking candidates.

#### **2.4.4 Data Collection**

For his study on mass politics, Jerome Black (1997) used a variety of means for identifying racial minorities. These included looking at photographs, names and biographies. John Biles (1998) is critical of this approach. At the third Metropolis Conference, he noted that "ascription of identity leads to a variety of complications, not the least of which is the contradiction of defining an individual's identity, when ethnicity is usually held to be a self-defined category."

Although municipal records were checked for names, campaign photos, media stories and literature examined, the key strategy used to identify potential respondents for this project was community contacts and referrals. The approach was to talk to people in racial minority communities and others to see if they knew who had run for municipal office. This information was checked against election records. After contact, project information was sent out setting out eligibility requirements.

Seven of the 23 who were eligible were untraceable. In addition, one candidate died two months before the project started. Another was very ill for a while and unable to talk; yet another was out of the country. Community referrals advised against interviewing the eighth. Of the remaining 12, not a single refusal was encountered, although one who had expressed an interest failed to participate. The response was considerably higher than our estimated 30% participation sampling rate from the pool of eligible respondents.

All interviews, except two, took place in the city of Hamilton. One interview was held in Toronto and another in Windsor with candidates who had since moved out of the city. Participants chose the site of the interview. A confidentiality form was signed and collected.

All interviews except one were tape-recorded. Interviews lasted for about 1.5 hours on average. Questions were semi-structured and open-ended. An informal conversational style was used. Some questions were omitted if the respondent had already supplied the details. Probes were often used for the needed information. The questions ranged from an inquiry into the person's history in Canada and Hamilton-Wentworth to discussing elements of their campaign and their experiences. Participants were asked to identify barriers that they had experienced as a candidate. They were asked to suggest strategies for eliminating these barriers. Notes were kept on the setting, the candidates' behaviours and comfort level and on other extralinguistic responses.

Five of the 11 former candidates who participated in the study attended a follow-up planning session, run by an outside facilitator. The purpose was to produce an outline for possible action. Participants discussed and prioritised the barriers identified by the researchers based on the initial series of interviews. It was decided to target the November 2003 elections in the short-term, with continued focus on elections in the medium- and long-term. Candidates suggested whom to invite to the community roundtable, and offered suggestions about how a community-based, municipally-focused process might be guided.

The event was planned through extensive consultation between the researchers and two external facilitators. Outreach materials were translated into 8 languages, and a multi-contact outreach strategy was followed. The event was attended by 13 persons, from the

African Canadian, Laotian Canadian, Czech-speaking Roma, Hungarian-speaking Roma, Assyrian Canadian, and Palestinian Arab Canadian communities, as well as by an alderman and the funder. Two cultural interpreters were also present.

After some introductory remarks by Dr. Harish Jain, a member of the Working Group and also of the Canadian Human Rights Commission panel constituted to review the Canadian Human Rights Act, the group reviewed the key barriers identified in the planning session. In small groups, the participants prioritized issues of greatest concern to their communities, and then discussed them in the full group. Again, in the small groups, participants developed action plans for addressing these issues, which were also discussed in the full group.

## **2.5 Findings**

The *Unfurling The Flag* study found that male and female racial minority respondents faced several barriers in their bid to share power at the municipal level in the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth.

This summary also presents the barriers on their own, as discussed in the original *Unfurling The Flag* report. That study isolated four types of major barriers that the respondents encountered in the regional political process. The barrier types are: Individual, Campaign, Community and Systemic.

## **2.6 Individual Barriers**

AGE  
NAME  
GENDER  
RACIAL IDENTITY  
LEVELS OF ACCULTURATION  
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Some individual characteristics were related to barriers to participation. These did not affect participants in a uniform way, but age, for instance, correlated to various factors such as life-stage, employment, and family commitments, which have an impact on the potential for participation. In particular, age intersected with gender in observations about the potentially unwelcoming environment for older women at city hall. Gender on its own was a key determinant of racial minority experiences in campaigns. Nearly half of the respondents explicitly named racial identity (i.e. racism) as a barrier, and many of the others cited examples of systemic and overt racial discrimination. Level of acculturation, particularly English proficiency and accent, were seen as potential barriers, but name did not appear to be an important factor as experienced by the respondents. Socioeconomic status was a key determinant of the ability to contribute one's own funds to a campaign, to taking time away from employment to run a campaign, and to having access to funds through personal networks.

## **2.7 Campaign Barriers**

PREVIOUS POLITICAL EXPERIENCE  
MOTIVATION  
PLATFORMS AND ISSUES  
FAMILY AND SUPPORT NETWORKS  
RACIAL IDENTIFYING  
CAMPAIGN PLANNING AND STRATEGY  
CAMPAIGN TACTICS / VOTER CONTACT TECHNIQUES  
FUNDRAISING AND LEVEL OF CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURE  
CAMPAIGN WORKERS' INVOLVEMENT  
OVERT RACISM AND SEXISM  
POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT  
UNION SUPPORT

Studying the election campaigns provided useful data on determinants of the success or failure of municipal participation. The importance laid on previous public involvement and individual motivation for deciding to run varied with respondents but there seemed to be some correlation between previous involvement and the decision to run. Respondents identified a wide range of issues in their campaign platforms. Most identified themselves as racial minorities but avoided race as a subjects in campaigns. Lack of political party support was seen as a key barrier to successful participation, though some candidates were opposed to partisan membership because of elitism within the party system. Particularly for those lacking such forms of support, family networks proved to be important mainstays in election campaigns. This kind of support was not available to some candidates who were recent immigrants to Canada or to Hamilton, and who did not have an extended family network in the area. Friends and family were the most common source of campaign workers. Respondents identified weaknesses in both strategic planning and tactical enactment of their campaigns, tied tightly to a lack of community resources for gaining the necessary knowledge and skills. Campaign budgets varied widely. Most respondents were forced to contribute to money to their own campaigns. None received donations from unions or businesses. Almost all had difficulties raising funds in their communities. Only one candidate sought union endorsement but did not get it. Several candidates experienced overt racism and sexism during their campaigns.

## **2.8 Community Barriers**

LACK OF ROLE MODELS / MENTORS  
COMMUNITY MAPPING AND GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSAL  
LACK OF A COMMUNITY CENTRE  
LACK OF COMMUNITY POLITICAL ORGANISATION  
COMMUNITY PRESENCE/ FAILURE TO EXERT POWER  
COMMUNITY TOXICITY AND TENSIONS

There are few racial minority politicians in Canada who can serve as role models to aspirants. Most respondents seemed to have little awareness of them, although some were critical of certain leaders. Unlike many American cities and Toronto, Hamilton does not have concentrations of racial minorities in specific wards, although some do have higher percentages but not enough to make a strategic difference. This reduces the

chances of community support and increases dependence on support from the majority. The creation of some sort of community centre was seen by some respondents as important for community cohesion and community organising. The lack of politically organised groups within racial minority communities was seen as a critical weakness. Some respondents voiced criticisms of community leadership formation, which contributes to a failure to make demands even in those areas where marginalised communities have power that could be exerted. There were mixed responses about other intra- and inter-community tensions, including fragmentation and lack of cooperation.

## **2.9 Systemic Barriers**

DISINCENTIVES TO RUN  
INCUMBENCY  
FAMILY TIES / NAME RECOGNITION  
COLONIALISM AND PAROCHIALISM: "NOT CANADIAN  
ENOUGH"  
RELIGION  
THE MEDIA  
THE CULTURE OF MUNICIPAL POLITICS  
THE MAYOR'S COMMITTEE AGAINST RACISM AND  
DISCRIMINATION  
ELECTORAL SYSTEMS  
RESTRUCTURING

The financial burden of conducting a campaign without extensive external support and the culture of campaigning itself, were seen by respondents as disincentives to running. The strong hold of incumbents in municipal politics in the region, the importance of family connections and name recognition, were barriers to success. Several respondents reported experiencing underlying colonial attitudes and assumptions that still exist in Canada, and being treated as "not Canadian enough". The lack of access to the media was seen as a key barrier, with difficulties in receiving air time or space in local, corporate mass media. The absence of local, community-specific or multicultural media. The culture of municipal politics itself was seen as exclusive and parochial. The Mayor's Committee Against Racism and Discrimination did not provide significant support to those racial minorities who were interested in becoming candidates. Most respondents had not thoroughly analysed the potential impact of municipal restructuring, but generally thought that it would have negative impacts on the chances of racial minority candidates seeking public office.

## **3.0 *Levelling The Field* (2001-2003)**

### **3.1 Goals**

In the *Levelling The Field* project, the Working Group on Racial Equity provided the skills, supports and resources

- to promote the completion and phased implementation of the action steps and recommendations as tabled in the final report of the *Unfurling the Flag* project by liaising and working with the various bodies mentioned in the report.
- to facilitate the development of civic leadership skills and resources among targeted racial minority communities in the region, specifically among racial minority youth and women.
- to facilitate the development of racial minority communities' capacity on issues of training, coalition work, and other aspects of community organisation and networking.
- to facilitate racial minority community awareness of the issue of political participation and to mobilise communities locally.

### **3.2 Objectives**

- to gather information about, to promote awareness about, and to act as a resource on public participation of racial minority communities in the new city of Hamilton and beyond;
- to guide and support capacity-building initiatives to empower vulnerable sectors of racial minority communities in the new city of Hamilton and beyond; and
- to implement key change programs and strategies designed to facilitate racial minority participation in the public and institutional life of the new city of Hamilton and beyond.

The *Levelling The Field* project grew out of the need to act on the recommendations tabled in the *Unfurling The Flag* report. The project was originally slated to be a three-year process but was truncated into a two-year span, because of funding delays. At the start, the Working Group on Racial Equity was expanded and adapted a developmental approach to accommodate within its structure graduates from the training programs. There was a clear sense that change would not happen overnight and that there should be a focus on phasing changes to the infrastructure of the city, in addition to developing the leadership capacity of the youth and women being trained. It grounded its work in the understanding that participation has to be addressed in its three dimensions: political, social and economic. All three are linked dialectically.

### **3.3 Action**

The research in *Unfurling The Flag* resulted many recommendations for action in the community. WGRE acquired multiyear funding from the Department of Canadian Heritage for the current project as a way of realizing these recommendations.

One important basis for this work is the understanding that different barriers to social, economic, and political participation, including municipal political participation, can be found in many places in the community. No single, all-encompassing change in any one place will result in the disappearance of barriers. Rather, deliberate, targeted efforts to address barriers where they exist, at many different levels, are needed to allow racial minority communities sufficient space to play the role to which they are entitled in the political life of the city.



WGRE made different kinds of efforts to reduce barriers to participation. It intervened at city hall to promote the creation of the Access and Equity Office and a standalone Committee Against Racism, and to initiate an internship program for racial minority youth. WGRE offered three anti-racist political skills trainings for racial minority youth and women. It worked with the Hamilton Public Library, submitted a proposal to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and intervened at the Hamilton Public School Board to facilitate anti-racist change at each of those locations. WGRE also supported other anti-racism initiatives in the community.

### ***3.3.1 Actions on Recommendations Directed At Community***

In the *Unfurling The Flag* report, WGRE had recommended that a committee be struck of past candidates to oversee the implementation of the recommendations, particularly those with a community focus. The committee would promote change at city hall, foster connection with other racial minority community organisations, and establish a cross-community, non-partisan political organisation. It was recommended that this organisation facilitate skills development among prospective candidates, support platform development and campaigns, and otherwise work to address directly the barriers experienced by racial minority community candidates.

At the start of the *Levelling The Field* project, there was insufficient interest on the part of past candidates to form the base committee. It was not possible for this committee to grow into the broader alliance as originally envisioned. However, because of the centrality of this work to the recommendations, WGRE played a more direct role in facilitating skills development among racial minority youth and women with an interest in this area. As described in the research section of this report, there are barriers to racial minority participation in local politics in local municipal structures, municipal political culture, and many other systemic factors. However, WGRE recognised that, with the greater understanding of these barriers as published in *Unfurling The Flag* and in this report, communities would be able to make better decisions about how to address these barriers in their political practice. Therefore, a central piece of this project was the creation of anti-racist political skills trainings called *Colouring The City*, which put particular emphasis on fostering broad, inclusive, sustainable leadership through focusing on racial minority women and youth.

In fact, despite the shortened timeframe for the project, the number of training support programs was actually increased from what was originally intended, with three three-day *Colouring The City* events, two networking sessions, five casual drop-ins for graduates, three civics trainings co-sponsored with the City of Hamilton, referrals of graduates to other trainings, and the 12 week-long internship program at City Hall.

#### ***Training Outreach and Intake***

An average of 80 applicants were submitted for 35 places in each of WGRE's three *Colouring The City* training programs. These included a mix of ages, races, genders, orientations, classes, religions, and geographical locations (see Appendix D). 61 racial minority youth and women graduated from the program. Since completion of the program, various graduates have gone on to participate in community activities. One became student president at McMaster University, while others have participated in the *Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative* or taken part in an anti-racist media training in Toronto, and in other work.

Different outreach strategies were used. McMaster University and Mohawk College were used primarily for approaching applicants individually and through student organisations. Persons were approached on the street and at racial minority community events. Some applicants approached WGRE after hearing about the training through the media or the community. Others were referred by people in the community or, for the later trainings, by graduates. As well, several hundred faxes, emails, and flyers were used to promote the trainings.

For the racial minority youth trainings, time at the educational institutions was approximately a quarter of that spent by the lead outreach worker, and accounted for about one-sixth of *Colouring The City* graduates for the first training, but only one out of 24 for the second training. "Buttonholing" individuals on the street took 21% of the lead outreach worker's time for the first training, and produced one-sixth of the successful graduates and 29% for the second training, resulting in 10 of 24 grads. Referrals from community members and self-referral took 37% of the effort for the first training, and resulted in 10 of 23 graduates. Those categories plus referrals from graduates took slightly less time in the second outreach process (around 33%) but resulted in contacts with the same numbers who ultimately completed the training.

A youth intern participated in outreach activities for the second and third trainings. Of the 10 participants in the second training which came from her work, one was through a community referral, six through extended personal networks, and five through direct solicitation at various sites in the community.

For the third training, community events and approaching persons on the street took 25% and 30% of the lead outreach worker's time, respectively, and resulted in four of the 14 training graduates. Community referrals occupied 17% of her time, but resulted in no graduates. Two of the 14 came from the efforts at post-secondary institutions, which took 15% of the time. Referrals by earlier graduates produced contact with two women who ultimately completed the course. The youth intern's initial contact with women who finished the training included 50% at community events, 10% through extended personal networks, 10% through the media, and 30% through direct solicitation.

#### *Trainers and Training Design*

WGRC employed anti-racism trainers from Toronto to design and deliver the course. The focus was on addressing racism, creating a safe environment, and local municipal content, with sustainable networks and results. Appendix C contains the summary notes for the March 2002 *Colouring The City* training for youth of colour, and a summary of the differences between the March, June, and October trainings.

Formal evaluations by participants indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the training programs and learnings.

#### *Networking Sessions*

Half-day networking sessions were held after the first two *Colouring The City* trainings. They were facilitated by one of the trainers from the original 3-day session. The content included an exercise identifying barriers and supports in the municipal political realm, mapping the network of individuals who attended both geographically and socially,

reaffirming the anti-racism framework, and brainstorming about future actions and events. As well, a lunch break provided an opportunity for informal, social networking. For the final *Colouring The City* training, essential elements of the networking session were collapsed into the initial, 3-day training.

#### ***Understanding City Government Trainings***

After each *Colouring The City* training, the Working Group partnered with the City of Hamilton, including staff and city councillors who volunteered their time, to provide training to graduates on understanding city government and elections.

One or two councillors attended all three events. They spoke about their challenges and motivations, their experiences in campaigning, serving as elected representatives, and answered questions. The first two *Understanding City Government* trainings included formal presentations from city staff on election processes and municipal government structures. The final workshop had a shortened presentation and an exercise in which small groups used resources to think about and plan campaigns.

All three concluded with a role-play session of council, held in the council chambers at Hamilton City Hall. The role players were divided into three groups. One played a community group which made a presentation for the creation of an Access and Equity Office within the city administration. One played a group arguing against it, and the rest were city councillors who debated the issue. This gave participants a sense of how to intervene in civic affairs, and of the actual processes of how council works. For information on the municipal election process please contact the office of the City Clerk or consult the city's web site at <http://www.hamilton.ca/Clerk/election/default.asp>.

In May 2003, *Colouring The City* graduates were honoured in an evening of recognition at the council chambers, co-hosted and jointly sponsored by the City of Hamilton and the Working Group on Racial Equity. The event involved the mayor, city councillors, and staff.

#### ***3.3.2 Actions on Recommendations Directed at City Hall***

In the *Unfurling The Flag* recommendations, WGRE asked city council to take measures to make services more accessible, through such actions as translation, and by initiating regular consultations with racial minority communities and creating a standalone citizen anti-racism committee. WGRE also recommended creating an Access and Equity Office staffed by an anti-racism coordinator, to do training and organisational change within the city administration. Recommendations were also made directly to the mayor on issues of publicly naming and opposing racism, and ensuring adequate city resources to address such issues. WGRE also recommended that the new anti-racism committee at city hall become involved in supporting racial minority political participation at the local level, and that an internship program at city hall be created for *Colouring The City* graduates.

Immediately before and during the *Levelling The Field* project, the City of Hamilton underwent significant changes. The former Region of Hamilton-Wentworth and its constituent area municipalities were amalgamated into a single City of Hamilton on 1 January 2001. Though there were serious concerns about the possible outcomes of amalgamation, the presence of such high levels of change and uncertainty presented openings for inclusion of issues of anti-racism in municipal practice.

The transition from region to city was overseen by a provincially appointed board. WGRE made a submission to the Transition Board supporting efforts to address racial equity in whatever administrative structures were proposed for the new city.

Early in the new term of council, WGRE took an active role in educating city council about the important role the city could play around issues of racial equity. These actions included:

- Submitting a brief to the Working Group on Citizen Committees, an *ad hoc* committee of city council studying how to get citizens involved in city hall.
- Submitting briefs to the Mayor and City Council on creating an Access and Equity Office and a Committee Against Racism
- Addressing the Hearings Sub-committee of City Council
- Contacting and meeting with individual councillors for support
- Attending City Council and Committee of the Whole meetings in support of written and oral briefs

Margins of voting on WGRE-sponsored proposals at city council were highly supportive. There was significant awareness raising done among politicians and staff, and the media publicity resulted in raised public consciousness of these issues.

The Access and Equity Office was promoted because it would provide a focus for internal anti-racism activity within the city administration, as well as support for community-based initiatives. Both the committee and the Office would provide an avenue for racial minority Hamiltonians to present their concerns to City Council. In the various written and oral material supporting these changes, WGRE emphasised a business case for change, noting the diversity of Hamilton, the persistence and negative impact of racism on the Hamilton community, and the advantages, in a variety of areas, of being a city that tackles its obligations for addressing racism head-on.

During this initial period of discussion on the topic, material was published on the opinion/editorial page of *The Hamilton Spectator* presenting the case for these structures at city hall (Working Group on Racial Equity, 2001b: A11).

WGRE's efforts led to City Council requesting that staff study the issues, and return with recommendations. WGRE decided to continue in its role as a resource for both staff and politicians while these decisions were being made. City staff recommended the creation of a citizen "racism and discrimination" committee. Further efforts were made to educate councillors on the importance of having a committee with racism as its exclusive focus. Council proved willing to make this change, and unanimously voted to create a Committee Against Racism. Though there were delays in selecting members for the various citizen participation committees that were created, two WGRE members were accepted on the Committee Against Racism.

During staff deliberations on the proposed Access and Equity Office, WGRE members met with the staff working group to discuss the shape that the office might take. The WGRE also proposed terms of reference for the Office. Again, the op/ed page of the *Spectator* was used by the WGRE as a tool for public education on the issue (Working

Group on Racial Equity, 2001c: A13). When the staff report on the Access and Equity Office came to council, it had partially implemented the WGRE's recommendations. They recommended that the office be created, but that the employee in the office have a general Access and Equity mandate. WGRE's preference was for an anti-racism coordinator, and concerns along these lines were brought to council. The result was a compromise: City council voted unanimously to create the Office, staffed by an access and equity coordinator whose priority would be anti-racism.

During the process of hiring the coordinator, members of the WGRE met with Human Resources staff from the City, to ensure that equity concerns were given full consideration. After the hiring, WGRE members consulted with city staff on the setting of goals and timetables for the work of the Access and Equity Office.

Towards the end of the project, WGRE made written and oral submissions to the Hearings Sub-committee of City Council requesting that an internship program be created for *Colouring The City* graduates. City Council agreed to internships for six graduates over the course of 2003-2004, as proposed. The internships will be with councillors and staff, and will provide participants with hands-on community development, enhanced leadership skills with politicians and public administrators, and are intended to be one step in making city hall more responsive to racial minorities. The positions will be part-time for 12 weeks. WGRE will assist with outreach and selection, as well as with supporting and guiding the interns during the process.

### ***3.3.3 Actions on Recommendations Directed At School Boards***

In *Unfurling The Flag*, WGRE recommended that school boards develop and implement anti-racism policies, internally and in the curriculum. As well, school boards were encouraged to provide support and leadership for a youth leadership program that targets racial minority communities.

The school board has been drafting an anti-racism policy for at least three years, and expects the work to continue for another year. WGRE offered comments and input on the anti-racism component of the existing policy.

### ***3.3.4 Actions on Recommendations Directed At The Federal Government***

The *Unfurling The Flag* report had recommended that the federal government substantially increase the resources currently allocated to building racial minority community capacity in Hamilton through civic leadership programs, a conference, research, and community-specific media and social services. WGRE also recommended that Statistics Canada clarify its race-related categories in the census, and that it publish data in formats that reflect existing political jurisdictions. As well, the federal government was encouraged to introduce tax incentives to encourage wider participation in municipal politics. Due to the shortened project timeframe, WGRE hopes that the federal government will read this report and develop measures to strengthen the model.

### ***3.3.5 Actions on Recommendations Directed at Other Institutions***

The *Unfurling The Flag* report made recommendations to non-governmental institutions in the city. Because of the focus of *Levelling The Field* on direct issues of political

participation, it was not possible to do extensive follow-up with these organisations to promote and support anti-racist change work. However, it is hoped that these institutions will proactively and independently seek ways to foster racial equity in their own practices and structures.

No recommendations were made in *Unfurling The Flag* with respect to the Hamilton Public Library, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Community Coalition Against Racism, or the Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative. Nonetheless, in response to emerging issues in the community, WGRE took action with respect to all of these institutions or groups in the course of the *Levelling The Field* project as noted elsewhere in this report.

WGRE encouraged the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) to involve racial minority communities in research, and to produce geographic, socioeconomic, and other community-based research in partnership with those communities.

WGRE recommended that the Hamilton and District Labour Council engage in internal change work to foster racial minority leadership within the labour movement locally; that it design and support a plan for anti-racism and anti-oppression training in local unions; that it include an anti-racism focused course in the labour studies curriculum at McMaster University and Mohawk College; and that it work to support racial minority candidates in local elections.

WGRE recommended that all major political parties in the city declare their commitment to fielding racial minority candidates in all elections, and that they engage in candidate search and nomination processes that would support willing and qualified racial minority Hamiltonians in running for office.

WGRE worked with the Hamilton Public Library, which is funded by the City of Hamilton, on resolving issues faced by community users from racial minority backgrounds. After some initial dialogue in summer 2002, draft policies were submitted to the library in a cooperative and proactive spirit. In fall 2002, WGRE members met with senior management from the library to approve augmentations and expansions of its room-use policies as proposed by WGRE. Copies of the final draft were sent to WGRE. Support from one city councillor played an important role in this resolution, as did the willingness of senior managers at the library.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities held its annual conference and municipal expo in Hamilton in May and June 2002. The Working Group on Racial Equity submitted a brief on racialised access and equity at the municipal level for the consideration of the Federation. We requested to present the brief in person, and to participate in a meeting with the FCM's Standing Committee on Race Relations, though this did not happen.

### **3.4 Results of *Levelling The Field***

#### **3.4.1 Outputs**

- Creation of all project outputs in 2 years, 2 months instead of original 3-year timeframe.

- Repeated contacts with, presentations to and communications in all forms with city politicians and staff on the need for specific changes to city structures, policies, programs and practices, with many specifying their commitment in their responses
- Several hundred faxes, emails, posters, flyers, telephone calls, direct contact tactics used as part of outreach for WGRE training to targeted cohorts from racial minority communities using 2 outreach workers (see outreach report for breakdown of hours/strategies and success rates)
- Increase in the numbers of training support programs provided by WGRE (3 x 3 days of CTC training, 2 Networking sessions, 5 drop ins, 3 City trainings, 12-week-long internship program, referrals to grads to other trainings) over the course of the project.
- Average of 80 applicants to each of WGRE's three Colouring the City training programs includes a mix of ages, races, genders, orientations, classes, religions and locations.
- Overall, participants' formal evaluations of indicated very high satisfaction levels with WGRE's training programs and learnings.
- Enquiries into WGRE project from academics, would-be politicians, social developers, research bodies and activists from Toronto, Ottawa, Kitchener-Waterloo, Sudbury, and Halton.
- Invitations to WGRE members to participate in conferences, conduct trainings and to give talks in Hamilton and elsewhere
- Informal high praise from trainers, participants, observers, councilors, city staff, and others for WGRE, its programs and results.
- One head of a national leadership program in Toronto described *Unfurling The Flag* report as "groundbreaking" and an inspiration for the new program.
- Reported interest among a group of academics in Toronto to make political participation the subject of a million-dollar research project.
- Interest expressed by an academic group (IRRA) in holding a National Conference on Participation in Hamilton in 2004 autumn.
- Considerable amount of publicity generated by WGRE and its programs generated in Hamilton. Publicity includes radio and TV interviews and spots, written articles on and by the WGRE and its members, electronic promotions, posters, faxes, calls, etc.
- WGRE input given on school board anti-racism component of equity policy.

#### **3.4.2 Outcomes**

- Formation of Committee Against Racism at City Hall as proposed by WGRE. (Unanimously approved by Council)
- Creation of an Access and Equity Office as proposed by WGRE. (Unanimously approved by Council)
- The hiring of a permanent Access and Equity Coordinator with a focus on anti-racism at City Hall as proposed by WGRE. (Unanimously approved by Council)
- Council approval for an internship program for CTC grads at the city as proposed by WGRE. (Unanimously approved)
- Three joint civics training programs partnership with the city in 2002 involving city councillors, staff, WGRE for CTC grads.

- Leadership of mayor and city councillors and staff in recognising CTC graduates at a ceremony hosted and paid for by the city in May 2003, including TV/media coverage.
- Changes to community relations policies at the Hamilton Public Library as proposed by WGRE.
- Over 240 applicants to WGRE's training programs. 61 graduated from the program.
- High margins of supportive voting on WGRE proposals to city hall, raised awareness at City Hall, and in the public consciousness as a result of media publicity.
- Additional WGRE involvement and leadership in Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative and its work
- Some successful grad involvement in Hamilton community initiatives and in other trainings (SCHI, student president at McMaster, student council, antiracist media trainings in Toronto, WGRE training in OPIRG)
- Usage increase of 20% in WGRE web site over the course of the project

#### ***3.4.3 Expected Long Term Outcomes (Impacts)***

- Inclusionary changes to city structures, policies, programs and practices as a result of Access and Equity initiatives (as recommended by WGRE) to result in better access for racial minorities to city funds, services, employment and resources
- Increased workforce diversity at all levels in the city workforce to result from survey.
- Increased racial minority participation in 2003 municipal elections and beyond
- Increased racial minority community media outlets
- 6 CTC grads to be interns at City Hall during first year of pilot program.
- Amount of permanent funding received for internship program beyond pilot year and the number of applicants it attracts.
- Leadership role on access and equity issues for the City of Hamilton in Canada.
- Community media outlet for issues faced by racial minorities and new immigrants.
- Decrease in racism incidents in schools as a result of an effective anti-racism policy at the school board level.