The University's Role in Advancing Race Relations: Reflections from the Community

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Abstract

This research paper involved thematic analysis of interview responses from local citizens regarding the university's role in improving race relations. The paper addressed these questions: (1) What themes emerged from participant responses regarding UALR's role in improving race relations? and (2) What themes emerged from participant responses regarding how to make the issue of race fresher? Themes from the interviews include continue current efforts, create local partnerships, reflect diversity, and sponsor educational programs.

In his 2003 inaugural address, University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) Chancellor Joel Anderson identified race as a major focus of the university. He said, "This is a difficult issue that in many communities, not just here, has been cloaked by a code of silence, which makes it easier to pretend it does not exist . . . You have to face it to fix it" (Taking on Arkansas' Biggest Problem 2011, 19). Anderson noted that in Arkansas race is a significant component of most of the major issues with which the state deals and that race relations is not an issue best ignored. For movement on the issue, there must be leadership to affect change sooner (Taking on Arkansas' Biggest Problem 2011).

To solidify its commitment to issues concerning race, the university's strategic plan in 2005, *UALR Fast Forward*, pledged to external and internal stakeholders that UALR would be "a keeper of the flame on the subject of race." In 2006 the chancellor invited members of the campus community to meet with him to discuss the economics of race. The result was the development of the Chancellor's Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CCRE), a voluntary, diverse group of faculty and staff who have meet almost weekly since that initial 2006 gathering to share questions, ideas, papers, videos, and visitors' presentations as a basis for open, uncensored discussions of race and ethnicity. The group includes junior faculty, senior faculty, program chairs, deans, vice chancellors and other university personnel.

While meeting to openly and honestly share ideas and personal accounts of race matters was an important step forward, CCRE members wanted more from their weekly gatherings; ways to engage the community at large, tangible products such as research efforts and/or position papers, and a more visible way to institutionalize the university's commitment to race and ethnicity issues. One result was the creation of a race blog/web-page where people could share personal stories and news about racism

and ethnic injustice issues. In addition, the CCRE developed a research project involving interviews with members of the Little Rock community about race issues. Finally, in 2009, the CCRE concluded the best way to institutionalize UALR's commitment to a sustained attack on racism and ethnic injustice was through the work of an institute. The institute idea stemmed partly from general discussion among committee members as well as results of the interview project completed by the CCRE during the spring 2009 semester.

The spring 2009 interview project was designed to gain information from thoughtful individuals in the Little Rock community about improving race relations, especially among black and white residents of Arkansas and to develop a fresh agenda on the issue of race. This paper reports the results of the CCRE Spring 2009 Interview project which involved in-depth conversations with a cross section of community members. Specifically, it focuses on two questions related to the university's role in improving race relations issues: (1) What themes emerged from participant responses regarding UALR's role in improving race relations? and (2) What themes emerged from participant responses regarding how to make the issue of race fresher so people will recognize its importance?

Literature Review

University Leadership and Civic/Community Engagement. Why should a university take the lead on such a seemingly intractable issue as race? College campuses serve as microcosms of the "real" world, and hence cannot retreat from the battles that the larger society faces (Anderson 2007). Moreover, college campuses are a major component of the communities in which they reside, and "provide vital services in the form of research and information to the people living in those communities" (Anderson 2007). In addition, colleges and universities can be "a place where people come together to discuss controversial and sensitive topics" (Anderson 2007).

In fact, the 1999 Presidents' Fourth of July Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education which was signed by 539 college and university presidents, stated, "College and university leaders have the fundamental task of renewing the role of college and universities as agents of our democracy" (O'Connor 2006, 57). Likewise, Boyer called on higher education to renew community engagement endeavors by using its significant resources to address the most pertinent social, civic and ethical problems faced by cities, schools, teachers and children (Bringle and Hatcher 2002).

When it comes to renewing community engagement endeavors and developing university-community partnerships, one of the most important factors in the success of such endeavors is institutional leadership and organizational buy-in. "University presidents play a vital role in encouraging university involvement in democratic partnerships. Despite the significant challenges, such efforts enable universities to fulfill their academic and civic purposes" (Harris III 2009, 107). Universities can encourage the development of community partnerships either large or small. However, in doing so, the institution leadership must see the community-based research and practice as vital

to both student learning and the larger community (Anyon and Fernandez 2007). Harris III (2009) suggests that making a commitment to resolve some of society's biggest challenges and developing partnerships in that process is difficult work that requires long-term goals and leadership that will accept the challenge.

Those leaders who want to create community partnerships and collaborations must answer whether it is worth the time, money, and the effort committed (Harris III 2009). Moreover, leadership at the executive level is needed to strategically pull together the various factors that influence the implementation of university-community partnerships (Mulroy 2004). The relationship between programs and institutional leadership is vital for successful civic engagement projects. Without support from institutional leaders including board of trustee support, civic programs may not survive. "College and university administrations come and go, but institutional commitment to an underlying mission of civic engagement is much longer lasting" (Caputo 2005, 8).

University faculty and civic/community engagement. Another key leadership area important to community engagement being seen as viable is faculty buy-in. Faculty must realize that community engagement is not an add-on but a part of who they are as academicians (Butin 2007). Civic engagement must be seen as the bedrock of a college or university's mission to educate students for a life beyond a career. Also, civic engagement must be viewed as a core value that is intertwined in an institution's goals (Caputo 2005). At its best, community engagement serves faculty members' goals of being good scholars who search for and develop more effective tools to conduct research, teach, and share knowledge (Butin 2007).

"An engaged campus not only serves the public and provides outreach to the community by honouring the assets, skills and expertise of the community partners, . . . it sees its direct engagement with the public as a vehicle for conducting more significant research, more effective teaching and more impactful outreach and service" (Furco 2010, 388). In addition, developing community-university partnerships have great promise for not only generating cutting-edge research or transforming the community but creating and developing future academic and community leaders (Anyon and Fernandez, 2007). Ultimately, university-community partnerships can provide students with a well-rounded education, widen an institution's knowledge base, and empower investment in community growth and change (Peterson 2009).

Universities and their community partners. To establish legitimacy for its partnerships with community organizations, a college or university must have an institutional history of active participation in the community to build a foundation that extends the nature and type of links to community-based organizations (Mulroy 2004). There are four distinctive models of community engagement generally employed by universities: the technical, cultural, political and anti-foundational models. Each model is distinctive and has its own limits and possibilities (Butin 2007). A project, program or university that follows the political model focuses on social and political activism which attempts to garner a more just and equitable society for individuals and groups

that have been left at the margins. The political model is particularly appropriate for grass-roots efforts. Campus-community partnerships can utilize both campus and community resources to address critical social issues at the local level (Bringle and Hatcher 2002).

When universities and community organizations enter partnerships, regardless of what model is being employed, a shared vision and set of goals will ultimately determine the level of success for the partnership. Consensus and clear goals help partners think more universally and freely about ways to advance the vision (Askew 2001). University-community partnerships that are fully functioning have several common elements including the inclusion of concerns of the community "as legitimate expectations" around the goals and outcomes of the relationship (Fahey and Landow 2005). "Communities that have willing university partners should act to solidify their relationships. With imagination and effort, these partnerships can bring out the best in each organization and ...make the community a better, safer, happier place to live" (Fahey and Landow 2005, 59).

According to Askew (2001), one of the most important factors in developing community and university partnerships is timing which is a combination of luck, preparation and courage to act. Catastrophic campus events sometimes create opportunities for unique collaborations, while other times the collaboration may be due to a change in university leadership. "A new leader may have new priorities, reward collaboration by staff members, and create new relationships that increase the likelihood of collective action (Askew 2001, 80). University-community partnerships entail interpersonal relationships between college and university administrators, faculty, staff and students, and leaders in local communities, non-profit agency personnel and members of the community at large (Bringle and Hatcher 2002).

"To be engaged both in the study of social problems and the envisioning of possible solutions in the company of scholars and activists in our local communities, we learn a great deal about ourselves, our neighbors, our capacities for change . . . In nurturing our diverse communities, we aim to move beyond the confines of the academy or insular organizational interests as we imagine a new world into being and actively collaborate in its creation" (Peterson 2009, 54–55).

Methodology

For this particular research project, twelve teams consisting of members of the CCRE as well as other interested faculty and staff were divided into pairs, with one black member and one white member. Each team was assigned to interview three to five individuals. Potential interviewees were identified in CCRE discussions based on their involvement in the life of the Little Rock community versus being in any formal authority.

Consequently, a cross section of people were identified as potential interviewees including clergy, educators, community organizers and volunteers, small business owners and corporate leaders, government officials, and average citizens. Potential

interviewees represented every aspect of civic life; education, business, politics, religion, non-profit. Half of the interviewees were to be white and half black. Members of the interview pool received a letter from the Chancellor's office which explained the project and asked if they would be willing to participate. Once identified, the interviewees were contacted by each team and interview dates and times were established.

The interviews took place in a comfortable setting, normally in the place of employment or home of the interviewees, and were audio-taped. In some instances, the race of the interviewee and the interviewers were the same. The interviews took place between January and March 2009 with results being shared and discussed in CCRE meetings.

After all interviews had been conducted and tapes transcribed, the analysis involved developing common themes, language and concepts around the questions asked during the interview. The guiding questions used by the interviewers included the following:

1. How would you describe race relations in Little Rock?

2. Do you feel optimistic about the future of race relations in Little Rock? Why or why not?

3. What are your personal experiences in interacting with individuals of a different race from your own? What about in this community? (Probe: If they have given all positive experiences, ask if there have been negative experiences as well. If they have listed negative, do the reverse.)

4. Are there issues that are still problematic regarding race in central Arkansas?

5. What are efforts you know of that are making a difference in race relations? What is working?

6. What could be the role of UALR in improving race relations?

7. For many individuals, the issue of race has become stale and taken for granted. How can we make the issue of race fresher for more individuals to recognize its importance and how it personally affects them?

8. If you had a magic wand and could change anything, what would you do to improve race relations in central Arkansas?

9. Are there any other ideas you would like to share?

This research paper involves thematic analysis of the interview responses. The results being reported deal with questions six and seven. Exemplars are taken from the transcripts of twenty-one transcribed or partially transcribed interviews. In some

instances, responses to interview questions overlapped. When known, the race and gender of the participants were included with the responses.

Results of Research Question One

For research question one (What themes emerged from participant responses regarding UALR's role in improving race relations?), five major themes emerged from the interviews: continue current efforts; reflect diversity; sponsor public programs; create local partnerships; develop a curricular focus.

Continue Current Efforts

The participants in this research project were keenly aware of the university's efforts in dealing with race and race relations issues in the community. In terms of continuing those efforts, respondents suggested the university maintain and enhance academic programs that address diversity issues; continue the annual racial attitudes survey; continue the racial attitudes conference, and continue CCRE efforts under the leadership of the chancellor.

According to a white married couple interviewed during the project, the racial attitudes survey conducted by the university annually is making a difference because "it acts as a yearly reminder where the community is regarding race." He said the survey has "started to raise the visibility of the issue and create awareness of issues. This project should be continued." A female respondent suggested the questionnaire be followed up with focus groups because now that it is not acceptable to be racist, people know how to answer questions (on a survey) to mask their racism. Also, a white male interviewee recommended conducting or adding cause and effects types studies to what is currently being done with the Racial Attitudes Survey. "The racial attitudes survey was designed to give some picture of where we were . . . [and] would be a way to look at some best practice kinds of things that have shown to make a difference . . . if . . . over . . . five years . . . we had made progress . . . would we have any idea of why we had made progress," he said.

While respondents urged the university to continue its current efforts, there were others who agreed but suggested researchers proceed with caution. A female respondent replied "Be careful about the research you do. Don't strengthen the walls." Another pointed out that sociologists often describe the realities of race and ethnic differences but don't necessarily provide solutions for those problems.

UALR Must Reflect Diversity

Another theme to emerge from the participants is that the university must reflect diversity. Respondents said this reflection of diversity must be seen in the faculty and staff especially in leadership positions such as department chairs, program directors, deans and vice chancellors. Also, respondents noted that UALR must model the message of the chancellor, and UALR must show its constituents that diversity is important. One male respondent said, "You could recruit a diverse faculty. By diverse I

mean race, sex, views, liberal, and conservative to give a round, balanced perspective." A black male replied, "UALR needs to announce itself as a school interested in diversity without using the word." Still, another black male respondent noted diversity and inclusion were two different concepts; that moving beyond just having a lot of different people in a place (diversity) would be the goal. "Inclusion is power-sharing, decision-making. Do people of color share power with white people on any significant level in any ongoing enterprise?" he asked.

Sponsor Public Programs
Respondents noted UALR is uniquely positioned as an institute that has been involved in the community to impact the issue of race relations by sponsoring programs that are open to the public. Many saw UALR as a catalyst for change and an anchor for the community and must use this responsibility wisely. Programs such as speakers, arts events, role playing workshops, forums on race, dinners that bring diverse populations together, and educational panels involving faculty were all suggestions made by interview participants. "It would be good for UALR to sponsor confrontational exercises, forums where people have to address the hard questions, exposing the raw feelings and not tippy-toe around the issues," said one male participant. A white male suggested the university sponsor a marketing campaign featuring churches, hospitals, and schools where stories are told about people and organizations making a significant impact in race relations.

Others suggested outreach programs that involved UALR students such as tutoring. One way of impacting race and racial perceptions, replied one female, would include interracially pairing these students when they were in the schools volunteering their time to tutor students in need. Still, others suggested that UALR provide a forum for a serious discussion on race. "We need to bring people together to talk by geographic region, employment, etc.," said a male interviewee. "Anything that UALR can do to promote dialogue is good, such as the Healing Racism Institute," said one female noting that the dialogue about race and race relations must be on-going. Finally, a female participant said the university should support activities that make people aware of cultural difference.

Work with Local Organizations
UALR should partner with other community organizations to tackle the problem and race and ethnic injustice, according to the respondents. One of the local organizations the university should collaborate with, according to one respondent, is the Little Rock Racial & Cultural Diversity Commission. This commission is a city government entity responsible for promoting racial and cultural diversity. It has sponsored various programs through the years including an international celebration known as WorldFest. Although it did not emerge specifically from the question of UALR's role in improving race relations, one respondent said a partnership between UALR, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce had the potential to impact the community in a positive way.

Focus on Curriculum

The final theme to emerge from question six relates to the university's curriculum. Respondents suggested that diversity must occur in the curriculum in terms of race and ethnicity. One said respect for a race-related curriculum must be valued by all at UALR especially publicly.

Results for Research Question Two

For research question two (What themes emerged from participant responses regarding how to make the issue of race fresher so people will recognize its importance?), two major themes emerged from the responses: provide more organized efforts to put race in the public mind and as a priority and provide more recognition of individual efforts to not negate race in the public mind and to model the value of positive race relations.

Organized Efforts to Put Race in the Public Mind and as a Priority

"Race relations are not a matter of priority. The force for change must come from commercial interests: Visionary people of commerce, prodded by conscientious people of faith," is how one black male participate characterized the issue. Other interviewees brought up the church's role or lack thereof in trying to deal with the issue of race in the community. A white married couple maintained Little Rock churches needed to promote acceptance to a much greater degree than they are currently doing. A male respondent suggested it is difficult to have a black/white discussion because of community history and other factors including the fact that serious racial discussions do not happen in churches anymore. A black male said "We don't talk about race because we don't know how. We don't have language or the common experiences. Blacks forgive, but we have not forgotten. We need to see that whites have an interest in relationships, that they are [not] afraid of black people or uncomfortable around them."

For this theme, respondents suggested the university sponsor community events, develop work-related programs that teach the importance of tolerance and the positive outcomes of diversity, develop education programs other than Black History Month that highlight the contributions of various cultures, and use the media to educate the public.

One respondent noted Little Rock's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Parade as an opportunity for the races to come together, but it is seen as a "black event" with few whites attending or participating.

A male participant said, "Statistics on jobs, health, education and wealth need to be highlighted more, especially on television. This needs to contrast blacks and whites and educate people. We need to develop more history that reveals more about the achievements of Black citizens." Similarly, a black male replied, "Racism is taught so use media, e.g., television, to get the word out that [we] want to bridge the gap between the races, letting people know they are important to the dialogue. It is very important to show that you care." A white female suggested using the newspaper to disseminate information about race and racial issues. Moreover, she proposed letting

students be involved in the creation of a column or a newsletter with informative articles included. Another suggestion for making the conversation fresher was more research and even more dialogue.

Even when they weren't addressing the specific question of what could be done to make the issue of race fresher, many respondents focused on educating the public to address current and future views on race and racism. Suggestions included discussions about race in the curriculum, beginning those discussions at an early age such as elementary school, discussions about stereotypes, and mandating race-related training and dialogue for employees in the work environment. "Education is always the key to change," said a white female.

Individual Efforts to Not Negate Race in the Public Mind and to Model the Value of Positive Race Relations

"Because we have made progress, the discussion has become polite rather than honest," said one male respondent when asked about how to make the issue of race more fresh and appealing. A female participant said, "Words are powerful, so race relations may need a new term. It's more about interaction." One white male concluded "stale" was the wrong word to describe the current context of race relations. He went on to say most people are sensitized to the issue on some interpersonal level which is a good thing. However, because of the higher sensitivity, many people believe it is safer not to speak up and not to engage on the race issue.

For this theme, respondents reported each citizen has a personal responsibility for helping to end racism and to help foster better racial harmony. They suggested people must intervene to stop the negative racial comments made by others, and those who claimed to be spiritual and religious must practice what they preach, and not let their actions contradict their language and rhetoric.

A male participate replied one thing that would improve race relations is spirituality. A white male agreed saying racism is a spiritual problem that can't be cured through education and legislation. "People need to see pictures and stories showing that this (positive racial interaction) is happening . . . it's not a dream any more . . . it's happening," he added. A black male respondent called for an end to hypocrisy on the issue. "I have a low tolerance for hypocrisy on the issue of race. I see lots of motion but no movement. . . . I wish clergy would become engaged! They are drinking the Kool-Aid of the business community [without] principled positions." The white married couple called on churches in the community to have joint black-white worship services, develop other means to lessen their own segregation as well as create joint black-white service projects.

Moreover, a female participant noted children may not know how they should relate with people if they are not learning from their parents or the church. Another female interviewee said early experiences are influential in shaping positive attitudes toward race relations and that her parents knew from church that segregation was wrong. A

black female said people would like to see an improvement in race relations but often pull back when it comes to making personal sacrifices. The question is, "How much do I have to give up?" she said. Finally, a male interviewee said positive reinforcement always works no matter what, which echoes the sentiment of another respondent who said, "The overarching message would be get right or get left."

Conclusion

The results of the research project carried out by the CCRE in 2009 indicate there are thoughtful people at all levels of citizenry who have considered the issue of race relations and how to improve them. Their responses to the interview questions were reasoned, and their suggestions for doing more to combat racism were practical, logical ones. Their generally positive outlook and can do/must do attitude reinforced their selection as interviewees. The goal of the project was to seek opinions from a cross-section of respondents from various backgrounds and lifestyles. Despite their varying degrees of community involvement, formal education and professional endeavors, they proved that there are some issues as it relates to race relations that are universal in scope.

When it comes to their attitudes about the role of a higher education institution in solving the seemingly intractable issue of race relations in Little Rock, Pulaski County and Arkansas, they see it as paramount. Specifically, the respondents place a great deal of responsibility on the university because they see it as an anchor institution in the committee. Moreover, many are familiar with the university's racial attitudes survey and mini-conference and feel it is a worthy endeavor that should continue. The fact many respondents noted the racial attitudes survey and urged the university to continue its research efforts bodes well for the university and its ability to communicate mission and priorities beyond the university community.

UALR's record of promoting programs and activities related to the issues of race and ethnicity, and its role in resolving other important community issues are reasons why the respondents see the university as an agent of change. For example, university faculty and staff have produced programs and exhibits on Arkansas civil rights history, Japanese World War II Internment Camps in Arkansas, Mexican Independence Bicentennial programs, and operate the Sequoyah National Research Center, which is the largest collection of Native American expression in the world including an Art Gallery and press archives. Examples of issues in which the university has engaged along with partner institutions include education, transportation, drinking water, wastewater, community revitalization, economic development, and jail overcrowding to name a few. These efforts have received significant media coverage which brings into focus for the community at large the university's commitment to use its human capital to help solve local issues. Because of its work with local organizations and sustained record of outreach, the university earned inclusion in the selective Carnegie Classification of Engaged Universities. As Mulroy (2004) suggests, an institutional history of active participation in the community is vital for any university-community partnership to work.

It comes as no surprise that many respondents suggested more educational programs to address race and ethnic justice. The university also has relationships with organizations that sponsor educational programs on race and ethnicity such as the Arkansas History Commission, Just Communities of Arkansas, and the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center.

What's Happened Since the 2009 Project?

After the 2009 Interview Project, the CCRE, with the leadership of the chancellor, established the UALR Institute on Race and Ethnicity to formalize the university's commitment to racial and ethnic justice. The 2010 launch was the culmination of four years of internal and community conversations, research, and outreach including a two-day summit that included representatives from the university, clergy, civic and non-profit organizations, city of Little Rock officials and business leaders. The institute's kickoff event was presenting sponsor of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Freedom Riders. The institute has sponsored lecture series, facilitated racial reconciliation and healing forums in cities throughout Arkansas and has formed partnerships with the city of Little Rock, University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences among others. In addition, the IRE has provided mini-grants for faculty interested in race-related research.

Shortly after completing the spring research project, a subcommittee of the CCRE began a feasibility study for a minor in race and ethnicity. A campus-wide call was made to academic programs and departments requesting a list of courses in their disciplines that dealt with race and ethnicity issues. After a lengthy review of course syllabi based on the response from the campus-wide request, an eighteen-hour, interdisciplinary minor in race and ethnicity was developed, reviewed and approved by campus curriculum committees and became effective fall 2011. In addition, educational programs that deal with race and ethnicity are sponsored by the Institute on Race and Ethnicity as well as the Office of Campus Life including Black History and Hispanic Heritage months and various programs that focus on international cultures.

Respondents urged the university to continue the Racial Attitudes Survey that began in 2003 and four such surveys have been completed since 2009. UALR's Institute of Government has conducted the annual survey on a variety of topics connected to racial attitudes. Each year, the survey focuses on a different topic including education, health and health care, economics, crime, and local government. During the first eight years, nearly 1,600 telephone interviews have been completed with an equal number of Black and White residents of Pulaski County. In year eight, Latinos were added to the survey population. Data from the surveys are available for use by researchers, community leaders, faculty and media. The results of each year's survey are released at a mini conference where local experts discuss the results. The mini conference is open to anyone in the community. The results of the survey and the conference receive substantial coverage from the university's public radio station, its cable television station, local radio and television news as well as coverage in the state's daily newspaper. The survey was implemented to gather information about attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and blacks and whites; to focus sustained attention on the issue of race;

and to provide a neutral site for discussion and dialogue. Survey data is made available to faculty for research purposes, and survey results are placed online for public access.

Since 2009, the university has implemented retention programs for generally underrepresented audiences in higher education. Those include the African American Male Initiative, the African American Female Initiative and the Hispanic Students Initiative.

Recommendations

For colleges and universities interested in focusing attention on race and ethnic justice or related issues, leadership at the highest level is paramount. The leadership from the chancellor was instrumental not only in the development of the committee on race but in the establishment of the institute and selling the initiative to on-campus and off-campus constituents including the approval of the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees.

His office provided funding for groups of faculty to visit other established centers/institutes across the country for research purposes. Additionally, the office of the chancellor funded the two-day retreat and planning summit for the Institute, brought in consultants who met with the committee, hired the founding director of the institute and was an active participant in the development of the mission and goals of the institute.

The chancellor was advised that he should consider not pushing the race agenda. Some faculty asked if there had been an incident on campus to prompt his focus on race and ethnicity and why the university needed such a focus. The chancellor successfully garnered a $200,000 grant to start the IRE.

Any initiative such as the ones discussed in this paper should have broad support and interest from/among faculty, staff and students on campus. An institute/center should be a university commitment rather than an isolated program or office. That helps guarantee the work of the institute/center will outlive any one director, president or chancellor.

Endorsement and support beyond the campus is also vital. Because an institute such as the UALR Institute on Race and Ethnicity takes a grass roots approach to problem-solving, community partnerships are even more important. As noted earlier, UALR has relationships with civic, non-profit, philanthropic, religious, cultural, governmental, medical as well as other organizations around the city, county and state.

Finally, an institute/center focusing on race should be as comprehensive as possible and tackle the issue from all angles. Creative problem-solving using outreach programs, research, awareness programs, and on campus and off campus partnerships should all be employed when dealing with an issue as sensitive as race and ethnicity. All resources, especially human capital, are needed to deal with such a heavy topic.

Future Research

In terms of future research, more in-depth, semi-structured interviews with another group of civic minded residents is warranted to not only compare groups but to add information regarding the role UALR should and can play in improving race relations. Adding teens and young adults to the pool of interviewees would no doubt provide a different dimension and tenor to the conversation and the ultimate results. As a few interviewees noted, early experiences are vital in shaping attitudes toward racism, and younger people seem to understand that stereotypes perpetuated by the culture about various groups are not true. It is middle aged and older people who seem to be stuck in mindsets from fifty years ago. In addition, focus groups would be another research method that would lend itself to the question of how to make the issue of race fresher and UALR's role in that attempt. With small groups of eight people, a natural dialogue would grow out of the discussions and provide avenues for even greater dialogue both in the group and as individuals who might find kindred spirits among them. These types of studies could be done in conjunction with religious organizations which were criticized by interviewees for not being more active in the fight against race and ethnic injustice. This in turn would create more university-community partnerships.

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