

Mississippi Business Leaders Engage in New Conversations on Race

In April, the Mississippi Economic Council and Mississippi Partnership for Economic Development launched Blueprint Mississippi 2011, “a project that aims to update the existing [Blueprint] plan and explore new areas of opportunity.” The initial Blueprint Mississippi process began as an effort to “explore opportunities to position Mississippi for greater competitiveness in education, economic development, business climate, and image.”

For the first time, the process includes an exploration of racial reconciliation, and project leaders reached out to the Winter Institute and other state leaders to help guide a research process. We are developing an asset map of organizations in the state engaged in racial equity and healing work, a list of best practices from around the country, and data on a range of issues from education and criminal justice to health care and the environment in order to lift up areas where improvements can be made in order to improve the quality of life of all Mississippians.

Blueprint leadership conducted a survey to aid in the overall process. They learned that sixty-two percent of Mississippi business leaders believe their children will have to leave Mississippi in order to secure good jobs. That statistic is a staggering reflection of the challenges ahead, yet a coalition of business leaders, educators, and non-profit leaders is emerging to face those challenges. We all understand that we will not attain the economic health of which the state is capable without addressing the issue of race.

Some interesting data is already emerging. The Mississippi Economic Policy Center shared studies that show that a college degree makes the most significant economic impact in the life of an African American woman in Mississippi. And yet, even with that degree, she still makes less than a white male in the state without a high school degree.

The process hopes to share such research in order to identify the most effective strategies and tactics to improve the state’s economic well-being. A report will be issued before the November elections in the hopes that recommendations can help shape and inform policy discussions in the upcoming elections.



More information at: <http://www.msmeec.com/index.php/activities/blueprint-mississippi>