

INTRODUCTION TO THE DIVIDED COMMUNITY PROJECT

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The Divided Community Project aims to support communities seeking to transform community division into forward-looking action. Grounded in alternative dispute resolution theory and practice, the Project previously published three reports for communities to consider as they work to address community division and tension. *Divided Communities & Social Media* (2017)¹ offers strategies for community leaders dealing with community division against the backdrop of the challenges and opportunities of social media. *Key Considerations for Community Leaders Facing Civil Unrest* (2016)² presents a checklist to consider when a community faces civil unrest and when that community begins to build consensus about dealing with the underlying problem. *Planning in Advance of Civil Unrest* (2016)³ offers points to consider for a community that seeks to develop a strategy to deal with division before it escalates into civil unrest.

The Project developed a series of initiatives to talk with community leaders about the ideas presented in these three reports. Through the JAMS Foundation-funded *Bridge Initiative*,⁴ the Project has the ability to send mediators well-versed in community conflict—and aided by the tools identified in *Planning in Advance of Civil Unrest* and *Divided Communities & Social Media*—to provide on-the-ground assistance for communities facing social crisis and civil unrest. The Project's *Academy Initiative*, offered with funding from the AAA-IDCR Foundation and in partnership with the American Bar Association Section on Dispute Resolution, focuses on training groups of local leaders. Through the Project's *Midland Simulation*, leaders have an

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¹ <https://go.osu.edu/DCPsm>.

² <https://go.osu.edu/DCPkc>.

³ <https://go.osu.edu/DCPpia>.

⁴ More information about the *Bridge Initiative* is available at <https://go.osu.edu/DCPbridge>.

opportunity to stress-test their preparation through an unfolding simulated crisis prepared and administered by the Project.

The Project's *Community Resiliency Initiative* is a collection of community leaders who have convened broad-based community planning efforts to address division in their communities. Thanks to the AAA-ICDR Foundation's generous support, the Project has developed five case studies of such efforts:⁵

- In Rochester, New York, the Rochester Community Response Team – launched through the work of Rochester's Center for Dispute Settlement (a community dispute resolution center) and the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* (the local newspaper) – began developing plans for a collective community response to civil unrest.
- Orlando Speaks is a new approach to police-community dialogue developed through a partnership between the City of Orlando, the Orlando Police Department, and Valencia College Peace and Justice Institute.
- In San Mateo County, California, Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center's Strengthening Communities Project aims to identify and address community tension and division.
- In Columbus, Ohio, the volunteer Columbus Community Trust, convened with support from the Columbus Bar Association and the John Mercer Langston Bar Association, aims to develop a broad-based community plan in advance of civil unrest while building community trust and resilience.
- Unity in the Community – San Leandro, California, is a volunteer-based response to a series of hate-incidents in the San Leandro community.

Collectively the case studies illustrate various methods for convening broad-based community planning efforts and for developing a sustainable infrastructure for ongoing community input and engagement with local government and law enforcement leaders. These case studies demonstrate that local government and community leaders are ready to engage together in the short term and for years to come to address difficult and critical issues that divide communities, whether it is racism, building trust between law enforcement and communities targeted for

⁵ All case studies are available at <https://go.osu.edu/DCPcri>.

hate, violence among youth, or a sense of disconnectedness and, in some cases, fear. The Project is honored to have the following three case studies from its Community Resiliency Initiative published in this issue of the *Dispute Resolution Journal*.

