

# CAPD Center for Assessment and Policy Development

[www.capd.org](http://www.capd.org)

[www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org](http://www.evaluationtoolsforracialequity.org)

## New Jersey Office

609-334-6904

[sstephens@capd.org](mailto:sstephens@capd.org)

## Pennsylvania Office

610-828-1063

[sleiderman@capd.org](mailto:sleiderman@capd.org)

## **Pennsauken Film Facilitator Summary**

To: Andrea Torrice  
Cc: Barbara Heisler Williams  
Fr: Sally Leiderman  
Date: December 3, 2008

On November 19, 2008, I facilitated conversations with municipal government officials from New Jersey at two screenings of your documentary about intentional integration in the first suburb of Pennsauken, New Jersey. You had commissioned me to help design a conversation, facilitate it, and prepare this brief summary of key findings and implications of that discussion. Approximately 67 people from 43 different municipalities in New Jersey, saw the film over the two sessions. The film was introduced by the Mayor of Pennsauken at each session. A panel contributed to the conversations that were held after the screenings as part of the sessions. Panel members included the former mayor of Pennsauken, the filmmaker and the Executive Director of Fund for an OPEN Society (the 501©3 organization that provides technical assistance to communities working on stable and intentional integration). In addition, two of the community leaders who were instrumental in Pennsauken's work were at each session. They and the panel answered questions from the audience and furthered the conversation.

The film is being used as part of *The New Metropolis* campaign, as described below:

*“The New Metropolis* campaign will initiate practical conversations about how land use decisions affect people across regions, demographics and economic levels. Crafted in collaboration with research institutions and policy experts, the campaign will use solutions-oriented stories to get audiences to begin talking, building new partnerships and taking action in their communities.”

The summary below highlights findings and implications to inform that campaign.

### Key findings

- **The film resonated with municipal officials** – they saw the strengths and challenges of their own communities in the film and thus, were open to drawing from the strategies for intentional integration that were featured;

- Very few of the film viewers had already begun working intentionally on stabilizing the racial composition of their communities – in terms of housing markets, education or civic engagement (the three aspects of intentional integration Pennsauken undertook). **After viewing the film, nearly all of them felt the film made the prospect of doing so more feasible** – a key goal of the filmmaker and the people and groups represented in the film (e.g. Fund for an OPEN Society; the leadership of stable integration in Pennsauken and the former and current Mayors of Pennsauken). The film thus provides an opening for those groups to follow-up and support work in other communities.
- **After viewing the film, about half of the viewers believed they would be taking action to explore the possibility of working explicitly on intentional integration in their own communities.** Several people met with OPEN or spoke with the filmmaker after the sessions to follow-up more specifically with them. Actions people were considering included sponsoring activities that promote cross-racial relationships among community residents (based on examples shown in the film); exploring relationships with technical assistance providers to help them do this work; and looking for community leaders like the ones shown in the film, who might work with them to get something started.
- **Most of the viewers believed the film would be a helpful tool to promote intentional integration work.** They could see the value of the film as a tool to engage government leaders (as they had been engaged) and to show residents what is possible and something about what it takes.
- Some parts of the film got more immediate attention from people than others. The actions of the community residents – Lynn Cummings and Harold Adams – got stronger initial recall than the system level actions or the fact **that the residents’ work did not create much change until they connected with government, put in place leadership training and drew on lessons from a technical assistance provider and other communities.** These other aspects of the work did get talked about more through the facilitated conversations that followed the films viewing. This is important because some viewers were concerned that “we don’t have a Lynn or Harold in our community.” Evaluations of Pennsauken’s work indicate that leadership is important, and charismatic leadership is helpful, but leaders for this work have been built in many places with support.
- When asked, viewers wanted to know **more about the costs of doing this work** – this was something they felt their government officials would want to know before being able to commit to a serious follow-up.

### Implications

The implications below draw on the findings above, and CAPD’s experience with evaluations of intentional integration and anti-racism community change efforts (please see [www.capd.org](http://www.capd.org) for

more information). We evaluated some of the early work that the Fund for an OPEN Society did in Pennsauken. We also partnered with OPEN to glean lessons from the experiences of five communities who have been working on integration (Oak Park, Shaker Heights, Mt. Airy, South Orange/Maplewood and Pennsauken), and contributed to INTEGRAL. CAPD also did a ten year evaluation of Project Change, an anti-racism initiative of the Levi-Strauss Foundation in partnership with Valdosta, Albuquerque, El Paso and Knoxville. We say this both to provide some context, and to be transparent about our relationship to Pennsauken and Fund for an OPEN Society.

Important implications we note include:

- The film does an excellent job of interesting people in the process and results of stable integration work, making it relevant to communities experiencing white flight and concerned about their proximity to communities felt to be “in decline.” Based on our experience with those topics in many communities, **the film “jump starts” the conversation about race and racism in a very noticeable way – moving people rapidly to topics that often take months to surface.** For example, the film helps people talk about the different roles for whites and people of color around messages – particularly about marketing to underrepresented groups. In addition, the film points people to solutions, another potentially very positive support to this work. Thus, we think the film should be widely available and part of a package to engage communities.
- At the same time, it is important to ensure that viewers are guided in their reflections and post-viewing discussions, to make sure they understand the necessary and sufficient bundle of supports that were required to make progress on integration in Pennsauken (and others places). This is particularly true about the system pieces of the work in Pennsauken. It is easy for people to get stuck talking about the work of the community residents – Lynn Cummings and Harold Adams are important to the story; the film operates in large part from their point of view; and people are compelling subjects. However, as Cummings and Adams are both quick to point out (and did in the sessions) they got the work started, but their efforts over several years were not sufficient to bring about real change in housing ownership, realtor practices or the other interim markers of progress. The film does show these other elements (they are in the film), but people in our sessions did not recall them or discuss them unless prompted.
- Since not every showing can be facilitated or supported by a knowledgeable panel, it will be important to find ways to raise the profile of these elements for viewers. One strategy is to provide reflection questions to people before they watch the film, as part of its distribution packet, asking them to pay attention to particular questions, such as, what does the film suggest about what it takes to do this work? What are all the elements and how do they seem to work together?