

Just Suburbs

Fall 2014

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Our Mission

Open Communities' mission is to educate, advocate and organize to promote just and inclusive communities in north suburban Chicago.

Get Involved: Join the 2015 Justice Project!

Next year will be the 50th anniversary of the North Shore Summer Project, the grassroots open housing campaign whose roots ultimately grew into the social justice organization we now call Open Communities.

As we reflect upon our powerful beginnings, Open Communities is determined to honor the achievements of our founders by expanding upon them, not simply commemorating them.

That's why we are preparing now to launch "2015 Justice Project: The March Continues"

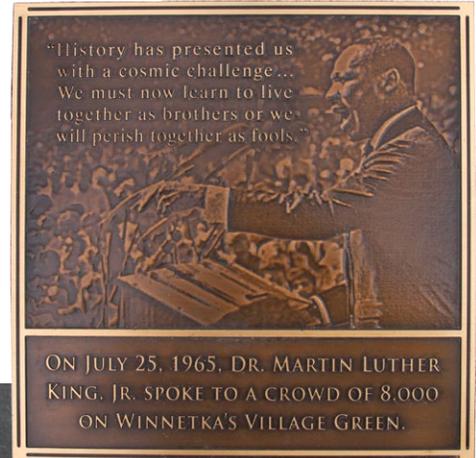
During the months leading up to our 50th, our 2015 Justice Project will be developing clear criteria for defining Welcoming Communities – ones that embrace people of every race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and income bracket.

2015 Justice Project will be doing necessary research and reflection – studying aspects of communities such as housing, transportation, schools and employment – in order to articulate the qualities of a welcoming community.

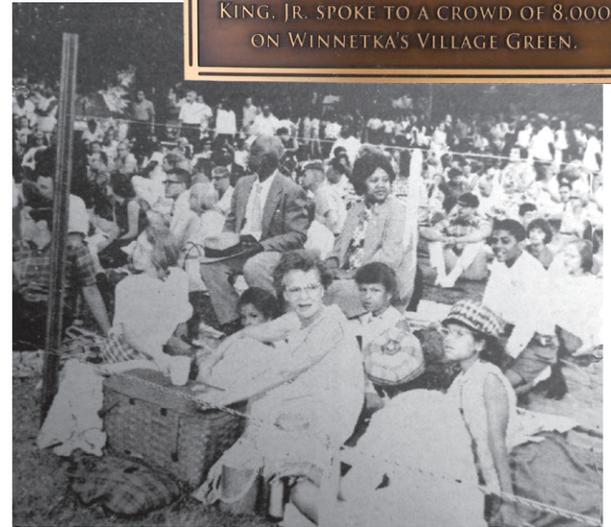
Following this, Open Communities will mark our 50th anniversary in July 2015 by launching "2015 Justice Project: The March Continues," a long term initiative with two primary goals:

- ▶ To firmly establish throughout the northern suburbs a gold standard for being a Welcoming Community
- ▶ To begin the hard, long term and rewarding work of helping the communities in our service area meet or exceed the gold standard

Please help us foster welcoming northern suburbs! Join the 2015 Justice Project committee today, and make a difference – for 2015 and beyond!



Photos courtesy of UIC Library, North Shore Summer Project archives



A LOOK AT THE CROWD OF 15,000 WHO CAME TO HEAR DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING at Winnetka village green several Sundays ago. People from all over the North Shore as well as from other places in the Chicago area came to hear the famed civil rights

North Shore Summer Project



In 1961, north suburban residents, dismayed that racial and religious minorities were systematically being denied the right to rent or buy homes on the North Shore, formed the North Shore Summer Project to open housing markets. It culminated in a rally on July 25, 1965 on the Winnetka Village Green, where more than 10,000 people gathered to witness Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s first appearance in an all-white suburb. Addressing the crowd, he forewarned, "We must now learn to live together as brothers, or we will perish together as fools." Ultimately, the Summer Project was instrumental in making fair housing the law of the land, locally and nationally.

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Non-discrimination

Open Communities does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act; the U.S. Civil Rights Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; the Age Discrimination Act; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; and the U.S. and Illinois constitutions. If you feel that you have been discriminated against, you have the right to file a complaint with the Illinois Department of Aging. Call 1-800-252-8966 (voice and TDD) or contact Open Communities.

How Open is the North Suburban Housing Market?

Answer: If you are Black or have a disability, securing the housing of your choice remains a challenge.

Open Communities completed a three-year project (from May 1, 2011 to April 30, 2014), underwritten by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to investigate and address discrimination against all persons protected under the Federal Fair Housing Act in Chicago's northern suburbs.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, or familial status. In addition, Illinois protects individuals from housing discrimination on the basis of age, marital status, sexual orientation, ancestry, or military discharge status. Cook County adds lawful source of income (e.g. child support, alimony, Housing Choice Vouchers) and housing status (forbidding landlords to refuse people who have previously lived in a shelter) as protected classes.

Open Communities trained and deployed volunteers posing as home seekers, or testers, to record their experiences, as well as reviewed local ordinances and conducted focus groups.

Open Communities findings include:

- ▶ Most municipal leaders verbally express support for diversity and fair housing laws; however, many local fair housing ordinances do not reflect this support.
- ▶ Although few African Americans lodged complaints with Open Communities, audit testing found that racial discrimination against blacks persists in the rental and ownership markets, but in ways that are not obvious to the community or to the home seekers.
- ▶ Few suburban officials either support or endorse affordable housing in their suburbs.

The highest incidents of potential discrimination in the rental market were most often based on race (37%), national origin (36%), disability (27%), and familial status (20%). The highest incidents of potential discrimination in the sales market were most often based on race (61%), national origin (33%), disability (44%), and familial status (50%).

Fair Housing Ordinances Lacking

- ▶ Kenilworth and Winnetka do not address fair housing at the municipal level.
- ▶ Deerfield, Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Niles, Northbrook and Wilmette do not provide the same protection against housing discrimination as the Federal Fair Housing Act.

Senior Housing Marketed to Able-Bodied Whites

- ▶ The study revealed that the Equal Housing Opportunity logo was used 90% of the time in print ads advocating for a sense of community in senior housing; however, 95% of the ads featuring individuals used white models only.
- ▶ According to the Disability Status Report for Illinois, 48.6% of people aged 75 and over are living with a disability, but in print ads for senior housing, the disability logo was only used in 32% of ads.
- ▶ Based on investigative testing, 67% of independent living facilities appeared to be engaging in possible discriminatory practices based on race.

Affordable Housing as a Fair Housing Issue

With the exception of Highland Park, suburbs with too little affordable housing by law (that is, under 10%), resist making affirmative overtures to developers to include lower-cost housing units. The suburbs also have fewer than 10% African Americans and Latinos combined. Deerfield, Lincolnwood, and Park Ridge did not submit affordable housing plans to the state in 2005, as required under the Affordable Housing Planning & Appeal Act. These suburbs as well as Glencoe, Glenview, Highland Park, Kenilworth, Morton Grove, Northbrook, Northfield, Wilmette and Winnetka must submit updated plans by June 2015.

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Say Yes! Benefit Draws the Circle Ever Wider

“Heroes are not defined by color or sex or position or wealth” (Jean Cleland, 1923-2013)

As demonstrated by our 2014 Justice Award winners, there are so many ways to “say yes”. From disability rights to compassionate immigration reform, our winners advocate for all of their neighbors to live in open and welcoming northern suburbs.

More than 160 people attended Open Communities’ Say Yes! Benefit Justice Awards on June 10, 2014 to celebrate the lives and accomplishments Father Robert Oldershaw and Ellen and Ed McManus.

“**Father Robert Oldershaw** serves the community as a pastor and a prophet at the same time, effortlessly,” said Mark Miller as he presented him with the Rayna & Marvin Miller Community Justice Award. “He doesn’t see his work as limited by the four walls of the church. He challenges us to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. He turned St. Nicholas Church in Evanston into the most welcoming Catholic Church for Latinos throughout the northern suburbs.”

We are all ordinary people trying to “draw the circle ever wider”, as Father Oldershaw so eloquently elaborated. Father Oldershaw recognized more than a dozen members of his congregation upon accepting the award, pointing out that these individuals “out on the streets, give hope for the homeless, the powerless, the marginalized, the left overs and left outs.” He added modestly, “On their behalf, I accept this award. My style is to lead from the rear, to entrust and then trust.”

Ellen and Ed McManus, Wilmette residents and long-time advocates for affordable housing and accessibility for people with disabilities, were named the first Jean. R. Cleland Social Action Award recipients. Created this year, the award honors a founder of Open Communities and one of the North Shore’s most stalwart champions for housing justice, who passed away in 2013 at the age of 89.

In presenting the award to the McManuses, Jean’s son, Stuart Cleland, pointed out that in extending their love of their daughter Laura to all in the Wilmette community and greater north suburban area through advocacy, they demonstrate that “it takes a child to raise a village.” The McManuses also are active peace and civil rights advocates.

In accepting the award, Ellen shared Ed’s and her story of how they met Jean Cleland; in the process, she told their own story. Jean’s phone call asking “how can I help?” eventually led to Laura, the McManuses daughter, being able to successfully live in Wilmette.

Also during the evening, Cook County Commissioner Larry Suffredin presented a proclamation in honor of Jean Cleland to the entire Cleland family.



Additionally, Evanston Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl accepted a duplicate of Father Oldershaw’s award to be displayed at the Evanston Civic Center. Former Evanston Mayor Lorraine Morton was also on hand.

The event, which took place at the Woman’s Club of Evanston, was moderated by Christian Farr of NBC Chicago.

Open Communities moves forward

Both awards embody Open Communities’ transformation in 2012 from one focused exclusively on fair and affordable housing in the northern suburbs to one that promotes positive change by educating, advocating and organizing for the housing, economic and social justice in the northern suburbs.

“Indispensable to progressive activism is direction – in the form of moral and faithful leadership that ‘gets its shoes soiled by the mud of the street,’” said Gail Schechter, Open Communities’ Executive Director as she closed the event by quoting Pope Francis: “It’s also about putting forth an appealing vision of a beloved community that ‘is richer – in the best sense of the word’, to quote Jean; and making speaking out individually and collectively an exhilarating and effective experience.”

Gail Schechter called upon every individual in the room to be “heralds of justice,” in Father Oldershaw’s words, in whatever way they can, with Open Communities as their leader from the rear.

Whether you’re inspired to take action for anti-discriminatory housing or you want to foster more welcoming neighborhoods, mark your calendar for our celebration and call to action for July 2015.

Thank You!

Open Communities would especially like to especially thank **Diana Hennington** of Grand Events for coordinating the event, and the **Benefit Committee: Catherine Buntin, Karen Chavers, Sue Carlson, Debbie DePalma, Betty Ester, Marion Flynn, Helen Gagal, Lorelei McClure, Yvonne Smith, and Loretta Sortino.**



Cleland family, with the Cook County Proclamation honoring Jean

Photographers: Jennifer Frankfurter of Photographers with Heart & Lauren Heckathorne



Evanston Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl, Executive Director Gail Schechter, and Andre Wallace with his wife, Open Communities’ Vice President Corrie Wallace

GET INVOLVED!

Join our board. We are looking for board members. Inquiries may be sent to Gail Schechter.

Volunteer technology skills. We are looking for someone to assist in organizing our database. High school students welcome.

Send your photo! Our movement “We Are the North Shore” aims to highlight our diversity. Send your photo holding a sign saying “I am the North Shore” and a typed blurb of who you are to wearetheNS@gmail.com and posted on <http://wearethenorthshore.tumblr.com>

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Open Communities gratefully thanks all its generous event sponsors:

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- ▶ Todd Logan

Thanks to these sponsors, silent raffle donors, attendees, and other generous well-wishers, Open Communities netted \$20,000 from the event, which will be used to underwrite the agency’s education, advocacy, and organizing for welcoming communities.



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We Are Here. Now What?

An invitation to Open Communities’ Annual Meeting 2014

What does an “inclusive community” really mean in 2014? In 1965, outside of parts of Evanston, the northern suburbs of Chicago were overwhelmingly white, with few immigrants, no mosques, and people with disabilities sent to live “out there” in large facilities. Today, while most of our suburbs are more diverse and no suburb wants to be thought of as “intolerant,” the experiences of too many residents tells a different story.

What do we want to see in 50 years?

Our panelists, local residents who are diverse in age, ethnicity, religion and ability, will lead a group discussion. All are encouraged to share their experiences and hopes. “We Are Here. Now what?” will set the groundwork for 2015 Justice Project: The March Continues.

Please join us for our Annual Meeting on **November 2, 2014** entitled **We Are Here. Now What?** at **2:00pm at Nilis West High School** in the South Commons. Enter the South parking lot from Gross Point Rd. which is behind the school. Signs will be posted. **This event is free and open to the public.**

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Temple Beth El, Northbrook
Temple Beth Israel, Skokie
Temple Jeremiah, Northfield
Temple Judea Mizpah, Skokie
Trinity United Methodist Church, Wilmette
Winnetka Congregational Church, Winnetka