Day of Dialogue – Fall 2011 Recap

On December 3rd, nearly 60 individuals joined the University of Miami School of Education’s Challenging Racism and Empowering Communities through Ethnocultural Research (CRECER) team for its fourth annual Day of Dialogue – Imagine an Engaged Miami: Accepting Differences, Building Trust. The series provides community leaders and CRECER partners a space to identify the needs of the community and develop strategies to address them.

Maintaining the vision of being community-driven, this year’s theme was formed as a vision of several participants in the October 2010 Day of Dialogue. This year’s event was unique in its highly collaborative planning and implementation process, facilitated by a team consisting of several individuals who attended last year’s event and felt especially passionate about moving forward in the spirit of their engagement in DOD 2010. Organizational partners were Catalyst Miami, Miami Coalition of Christians and Jews (MCCJ), Multicultural Education Center (MEC), and The Melissa Institute for Violence Prevention and Treatment.

This year’s Day of Dialogue was held under special partnership as part of Catalyst Miami’s Imagine Miami series, which focuses on bring together individuals to take action with respect to a specific issue or aspect relevant to the greater Miami community. This year’s theme speaks to the key role of trust and relationships in creating a sense of collaboration and empowerment for individuals and the organizations they represent.

A total of 57 individuals (including 7 planning committee members and 3 CRECER assistants), spanning several sectors, fields, and academic disciplines attended. Most individuals were associated a social service or other community organization, and representing a wide range of gender, racial/ethnic, and age backgrounds.

Throughout the day, participants were encouraged to engage via head, heart, and ultimately hand, as facilitators led attendees through a series of activities encouraging trust and moving to purposeful action. MCCJ-trained “heritage panelists” shared moving stories of struggling to overcome differences, learning from past experiences, and hoping for better futures. Participants split into working groups to identify barriers to and propose solutions for engagement in communities. To encourage participants’ action, participants completed action pledges that will be mailed to them in three months. In addition, various community organizations were on hand to provide information on opportunities to get involved and support various causes. Among the other highlights of the day’s agenda were musical performances and team-building exercises facilitated by local youth from Voices United, a nonprofit organization that empowers young people to cultivate solutions to community problems and to promote intercultural appreciation and understanding; and an interactive drumming circle led by Sean Dibble.