

From Talk to Action
A Community Conversation on Systemic Racism
PART IV
Building On Our Recent Work

The Baltimore Ethical Society and Out For Justice, in their continued concern about systemic racism in Baltimore, particularly with the criminal justice system, has held a series of events under the rubric “From Talk to Action.” The goal has been to not only increase our knowledge of issues but to also channel our concerns into actual action directed at supporting solutions. The fourth event in the series was held on May 8th, 2016. The program was led by Diamonte Brown, Director, Out for Justice, and Thomas Higdon, Chair of the BES Ethical Action Committee.

Ms. Brown and Mr. Higdon briefly reviewed the work both groups have done and set the stage for the primary objective of the session, which was small group discussions directed at increasing our membership participation in ethical action work. In order to insure focused and productive discussion, each group was facilitated by a member of Out for Justice and a member of the Ethical Action Committee. Recognizing the emotionally charged nature of the discussion group, members agreed to a “Group Covenant” expressing guidelines to achieve the goal of learning from each other.

The BES facilitators then summarized why they assisted returning citizens in registering to vote, how they started conversations, what difficulties they experienced, and what they learned from the experience. The Out for Justice facilitators discussed their expectations in joining the discussion, their experiences when people became aware of their criminal record, and the effect of those experiences on them.

Then the group participants discussed their feelings about and experiences with “returning citizens” either as friends or family members. Participants discussed what they thought they could realistically accomplish through the partnership between BES and Out for Justice. Participants were encouraged to consider what thoughts or feelings they have that could hinder their starting a conversation with someone with a criminal record. The complete list of discussion questions is attached as Appendix A.

At the end of the event, facilitators asked those attending to make a commitment to action. Fifteen people signed up to help with everything from voter registration to data entry to cooking meals for meetings. Participants collected \$360 in donations for Out for Justice.

Contact information

To learn more about this work and/or to volunteer, please contact

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All “From Talk To Action” reports are available at

<http://bmorethical.org/programs-activities/ethical-action/>