



# EQUITY NOW!

Volume 1 / Issue 1

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## HOT ISSUES

The **Black Parents Workshop** continues to focus on issues of equity and the treatment of Black children in the school district and the communities of South Orange and Maplewood. Our priorities in the school district include dismantling academic tracking or 'leveling,' the elimination of practices that disproportionately discipline and punish Black students, the implementation of a culturally relevant curriculum and the full adoption of the state mandated Amistad Black History curriculum, increased support for the MAC Scholars program and Black Student Union in Columbia High School, and the hiring of Black teachers. In addition, we are paying close attention to the issue of lead contaminated drinking water in the district's school buildings and have made our concerns known to the New Jersey Attorney General. We also intend to push for the full integration of the district's elementary schools.

In the larger community, we are demanding local police treat Black children with respect and end racial profiling. We have called upon the Township of Maplewood to release the police audio transmissions and video tapes from the July 5 2016 incident in which the Maplewood police herded Black youth out of town at the conclusion of the Independence Day fireworks. The relationship between local law enforcement and the African-American community will not improve until there is an earnest effort by the police to demonstrate their concern for the welfare of our children.



## HOT ISSUES (cont.)

In addition, we oppose New Jersey Assembly bill **A1114** that mandates teachers instruct children how to interact with local police. We believe the burden falls on trained law enforcement officers to respect the constitutional rights of children. Rather than shift that burden to children, we challenge our state legislators to introduce police reform legislation that holds local police responsible and accountable to the public.

## COMING EVENTS

### Legal Workshop

We will host a legal workshop for parents of special needs students on **Saturday September 30th** at **10 am** in the **Maplewood Community Center in DeHart Park**. We will have attorneys present who can answer questions regarding the rights of parents who have children with learning disabilities. Please spread the word.



### Fall Fundraiser

Our friend, noted television and film actor **John Amos**, has graciously offered to perform his one-man play “Halley’s Comet” as a fundraiser for the Black Parents Workshop. It is a play that he has performed around the country and centers on an elderly Black man’s relationship to the comet in terms of his life experiences. The event will be held on **Saturday October 7th** at **7:00 pm** in the **South Orange Middle School auditorium**. We need to create an event committee to help plan this function. If you are interested in serving on that committee, please send us a note at **blackparentsworkshop@gmail.com**.

### November School Board Election

This November the School Board election – **November 7, 2016** - will present us with the opportunity to elect three candidates to the Board of Education. Our goal is to support and help facilitate the election of three progressive candidates who support the tenets of access and equity, and specifically the removal of structural barriers that historically have denied Black children a fair and equal educational experience in the South Orange-Maplewood School District.

The Black Parents Workshop will develop an agenda that will serve as the basis of our support for candidates. We will host an **Equity and Access Board of Education Candidates Forum** at **7:00 pm** on **Thursday October 26th** at the main Maplewood Library on Baker Street. Our community partners for the event are the **Oranges-Maplewood Branch of the New Jersey NAACP** and local advocacy group **SOMA Justice**, as well as the **MapSO Freedom School**. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. This forum will focus solely on the issues of equity and access, and the plight of Black children in the district.

We encourage you to make certain your friends and children of age are registered to vote. You can download a voter registration form from the bottom of the Civic Engagement page on our website. If you have a child who is out-of-state attending college, please make sure they complete an absentee ballot. Every vote is going to be necessary in November to achieve our goal of changing the direction of the school Board. As we get closer to Election Day we will announce our get-out-the-vote plans and Election Day information.

## HOW WE OPERATE

The Black Parents Workshop is a not-for-profit organization that is incorporated in the state of New Jersey. We are currently making application to the Internal Revenue Service for recognition under section 501(c)3 of the tax code. This



*Our mission is to serve Black children, and by doing so, uplift all children.*

## Contact Us

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would allow contributions to the Workshop to be tax-exempt. Until we receive certification, we can still accept contributions. They will not, however, be treated as tax-exempt at this time.

To date we have operated as a strictly volunteer-driven organization. Our short-term (12-18 month) plan is to secure funding to support a paid staff to manage the day-to-day business of the organization.

We are not a membership organization but we operate as an advocacy organization that raises concerns unique to Black parents. From time to time, we will hold general information sessions to inform parents of developments in the school district. We are guided by a Board of Trustees that sets policy for the Black Parents Workshop. We also collaborate with other organizations and have a special relationship with the **MapSO Freedom School** and we also work to support Black student organizations in the district.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

There are many ways you can help the Black Parents Workshop serve as a powerful advocate for Black children in the South Orange-Maplewood School District and our two communities. The first way is by encouraging other parents to become a part of our network by submitting their contact information. They can do so by submitting their information through our website or you can submit it. The second way is by reporting to us any incidents in which you believe your child or a child that you know has been subjected to discriminatory treatment (e.g. discipline, assignment to a class

below her or his capabilities, grading, bullying by a teacher or staff member, or denial of resources as a special education student) in school. You can find a Parent Incident Report form on our website at the bottom of the Access and Equity page. Fill out the form and describe the incident, and return the form to us.

Third, we would like to have at least four Black parents attend every meeting of the Board of Education. They are held monthly at the Board headquarters in Maplewood. We would like to form a Watch Committee on which members will rotate to attend Board meetings. You would attend to observe and take notes. Send us an email if you would like to be on the Watch Committee. Fourth, inform us when a Black student in the district has had a significant accomplishment. We want to celebrate our young people and publicize their success. Look at the *Speak Out* section of our website and you will see how we highlight our children. Finally, share with us your ideas to make the South Orange-Maplewood School District better. The only bad idea is the one that is not shared.

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*Where there is no struggle, there is no progress – Frederick Douglass*

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