

Part Two: Caren Adams, King County, and PAID

Consider the example of PAID (People Advocating Involvement in Democracy)

When Caren Adams of King County Health came to PAID she encountered a group consisting largely of people of color who worked together, joined their white allies, and together affected policies, procedures, and practices in education and government; addressing diversity, equity, and social justice issues. In other words she saw “authentic” community involvement and advocacy in action in Kent. The group had formed on their own volition, not controlled by any other entity. [Click here](#) for Part One



King County



As good as any place to start Part Two of this Synrgy document is to quote Caren Adam's response to two questions in Part One where she was asked, "What are some of the most effective ways for impoverished communities to make gains in improving health? And, why is influencing policy so critical to healthy communities?" She responded:

"...All communities have assets and resources and recognition and growing those is the most important starting point. As people come together to grow those resources some analysis of the policy/political environment is important to understand the factors that created the under-investment in those communities. "It is not a natural process." (from Unnatural Causes). Dollars follow political and economic clout. They can use that to address the opportunity gaps in their community. Maybe work with the police department to foster partnerships to address community concerns; develop a community gathering place open to all; or partner with others to determine the use of a community resource, push for development of higher wage jobs. Impoverished communities can build political clout. Policy can be very important in making the healthy choice the easy choice. Tobacco use is the most cited example. It really didn't decrease significantly until policy was put in place that made it harder to smoke in many places, it became more expensive and quit options became more available, and we still have a ways to go because 1 in 5 men still smoke. (Some say there remain inequities by income, education, and geography among those who smoke).

Policy about the placement of resources such as sidewalks, bike lanes or other walking areas, enforcement of vehicle safety laws (speed limits, stoplights etc.) can also influence who feels safe getting from the bus to home, or walking to school or walking to a local shop or restaurant..." Caren Adams

What did Caren Adams find in PAID?

When we talk about "Authentic Community Involvement" suffice it to say that PAID (People Advocating Involvement in Democracy) is a shining local example based in Kent, and is fairly well known in the region. PAID was formed almost twenty years ago including several black community members and one Native American member, to advocate around diversity and equity issues in the Kent School District (KSD). Having been a major force compelling the KSD to establish a diversity task force to address diversity, equity and social justice issues PAID members became a part of the KSD Diversity Task Force. Even when they rotated off the task force they were instrumental in making sure the task force remained in some fashion.

By 2007 it had become clear that the task force had been weakened and was no longer an oversight group around diversity, equity, and social justice issues in the district and the community, so Melvin Tate again recruited activists to become members of PAID and it grew to include a more diverse group.

In addition to advocacy around education issues the expanded group began to also advocate around diversity, equity and social justice issues in the city of Kent. Whereas PAID members played a major role in the development of the nationally recognized KSD Diversity Plan in the early years, PAID members joining in 2007 played a major role to overcome the city of Kent's questionable Weed and Seed efforts in 2009; episodes from which was derived the Community Network Council, whose president is Barbara Phillips.

Such is the short, short story of the group that Caren Adams encountered when she attended her first PAID meeting. She also found two black females in the group whom she recruited to help with other activities in the region. Who are some of the current PAID members.

Again and again the question always surface, “why aren’t more people of color involved and ‘working together’ on equity and social justice issues?” Some are involved, especially in Kent, but there needs to be more working together in the region. The King County Opportunity Mapping documents and language strongly suggest that in order to best prepare for both the short and long term our society must build individual, family, and community capacity in communities deprived of opportunity. This, to benefit the common good of all communities, the region and the state. And PAID has provided fairly good examples of how to do that.



Barbara Phillips Willie Wright Brenda Fincher Leslie Hamada Reverend James Gwen Allen Dale Smith

Every area in the region needs an advocacy group

When we really take a moment to consider what Caren Adams is talking about and what PAID members are doing, to a large extent it’s participating in democracy. The engines in a democratic society are fueled by discussion, debate, advocacy, and two cornerstones that allow the democratic process to survive is compromise and majority rule with protection of minority rights.

Institutions, organizations, and individuals in a democratic society are affected by the political principals of democracy, including the economy, spiritual life, social values, and education. As an example, political policies whether local or national can affect the health of local communities, and influence education policies and practices that can affect whether some students are successful in life and others are not.

One thing for sure in a democratic society however is, if you are sitting at the table when and where decisions are being made that impact your life, you have a much better chance of seeing your concerns addressed.

A democratic system of government is not based on trust, but rather on accountability. That’s one reason why there are so many checks and balances. And, the populace must be well informed and get involved, especially at the local level, in order for democracy to work well for the people. PAID members are an example of how to get involved.

PAID’s way of doing it

Presently PAID members view themselves as a network who individually may have interests, passions, and work in various areas of diversity, equity, and social justice issues. It is not uncommon for one PAID member to pursue his or her passions without other PAID members being actively involved; likewise, it is not unusual to find several or all PAID members united on one issue, e.g., the city of



Ray Lee

Melvin Tate

If we had to like everything one another did in order to accomplish common goals rarely would anything be accomplished. We are kindred spirits; that’s stronger than friends.

Kent’s version of Weed and Seed. PAID members may differ in terms of views, philosophy and approach to various diversity, equity, and social justice issues but all PAID members know God does exist, are committed to and active relative to valuing diversity, and advocating around equity and social justice issues. Such is are conditions under which all members were recruited to PAID by Melvin Tate.

Several names and pictures are not listed here but Members of PAID include people of various backgrounds and experiences, including White, Alaskan/Native American, Pacific Islander. PAID members hold bachelor degrees, masters degrees, and various levels of formal education and self education. There is also a variety of experiences and titles among PAID members, including; ombudsman experience, political strategist, pastors, and people with a variety of other skills, talents, and credentials. PAID members tend to be leaders in their own right and have many friends and supporters. PAID members get involved and encourage involvement; they serve on boards, committees, and councils, they may attend various meetings, and at their discretion share information with the PAID network.

Various PAID members are active around homeless issues, educations issues, youth issues, hunger, domestic abuse, and many more. But also participate in You, Me, We, Kiwanis, Lions Club, Major’s Advisory Team, Land Use committee, and many more. The point is you have to be out there to know what’s going on, and you sometimes have to communicate and work together in order to gain allies to achieve common goals in the community.

Keep in mind that we are not talking about people who hang out together on the weekends necessarily. In fact, in some instances we are not even friends, but we know we have to work together at times either in small or large groups in order to accomplish certain common goals around equity and social justice issues.

A brief history of PAID's origins and activities

PAID has been an equity and social justice advocate, but also a resource to and a supporter of institutions, leaders, elected officials, bureaucrats, businesses, and other individuals and entities.

Beginning with the Kent School District

PAID was originally organized by Melvin Tate, Barbara Phillips, and Ray Lee, and included several others in early 1990 to address a number of disparity and disproportionality issues in the Kent School District (KSD). After identifying cases of racial and sexual harassment, disparate treatment, and a plethora of disproportionality issues, in 1995 PAID members (supported by Lacey Steele, President of the King County NAACP) asked the school board to establish a Diversity Task Force (DTF) to study disparities and disproportionality issues in the district and make recommendations to the board for remedies.

The board directed the superintendent to form the task force and charged a group of 27 members as described. At that time PAID members became a part of the DTF and helped guide the process of identifying the issues and composing the recommended remedies. Melvin Tate, Director of the District's Community Outreach Office for the Kent School District at the time, maintained constant contact and support from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories (NWREL) and its Center for National Origins, Race, and Sex Equity (CNORSE) division, for guidance, information, and other kinds of support, which he brought to the DTF meetings regularly.

The result of the DTF work was a presentation to the board of "The Kent School District Diversity Plan, 1995 to 2000, A Work in Progress." The local and national press quoted both civil rights leaders and education leaders in the state as saying the KSD Diversity Plan was a model for the nation. The KSD Superintendent and board received accolades and many calls asking for copies of the plan and someone to speak to the plan.

The diversity plan called for the establishment of a Diversity Task Force II (DTF II) to continue the work of the original task force. The bylaws of DTFII, written largely by Melvin Tate and approved by the DTF and the superintendent, called for it to always be co-chaired by the superintendent or his/her designee with a community member not employed by the school district. This, to establish a more permanent district/community partnership, the kind of partnership the PAID members had wanted originally.

The first co-chair with the superintendent was Harry Williams, the second was Barbara Phillips, and the third was Ray Lee. Having been the impetus for creating the DTF and folded into the DTFII, and getting DTF II off to a good start, the PAID members rotated off the DTF II and passed the torch to the incoming community co-chairs, believing there was no longer a need for PAID. However, they soon learned that when leadership in an institution changes, so might changes in priorities; likewise for the community leadership.

In just a few years the authority and consideration established by the DTF II had diminished. The district staff person designated to support the DTF II complained to Melvin Tate that the district lacked commitment to the goals and remedies of DTF II, the district eventually cut the position to part-time, the name changed from DTF II to Alliance for Diversity and Equity (ADE), and there was talk that the new superintendent had recommended dissolving the group completely.

Having heard the latest in a list of diminishing moves and actions to the credibility of the DTF II Melvin Tate again called on Barbara Phillips and Ray Lee, and sent Barbara Phillips to a meeting of the DTFII with a passionate lecture as to why they needed to continue. Simultaneously, At the behests of Melvin Tate, Derrick Glasper agreed to serve on the task force and draw attention to the bylaws in order to remove a sitting community co-chair who had served more terms than appropriate and was perceived to be in bed with the administration. Derrick was successful and Bess Walker, (who became a good friend of Melvin Tate and later joined a newly formed PAID) was elected co-chair with the new superintendent.

Eventually the racially charged issues began to pile up in the

district. There was the issue of trying to close schools in the diverse community, the handcuffing issues, and the disproportionality continued into the twenty-first century.

This time in the early months of 2007 it was Dale Smith calling Melvin Tate out of a peaceful retirement to help with the Friends of KM to address a variety of diversity and equity issues in the district. Then Brad Bell asked Melvin Tate to focus some attention on the city of Kent's diversity and equity issues, e.g., the city's population had changed over the years and the leadership should reflect that change. Based on the requests and activities of these two white males Melvin Tate called on the PAID members, Barbara Phillips and Ray Lee (Ray Lee communicated from New Mexico), and others and began meetings to address diversity and equity issues in the district and the city.

Tate soon recruited a group that included others such as Joseph Jones, Reverend Jimmie James, Bess Walker, Dale Smith, Deborah Northern, Pastor Holloway. Then Brenda Fincher, Robert White, Lawrence Lombard, Rick Furinas, Chandra Simmons, and Leslie Hamada. This group called PAID, continued working with the school district very effectively to address many persisting diversity and equity issues. During this time two board members in particular, Bill Boyce and Jim Berrios, were very understanding, supportive, and very effective at working with "some" PAID members to address issues. However, the work had just begun with the city of Kent, and they also increasingly became believers, especially after the Weed and Seed episodes.

Kent's Weed and Seed Grant

The city of Kent had begun to respond to PAID requests on a number of diversity and equity issues, e.g., the Mayor had followed PAID advice which included collecting data about community demographics, began to replace the city's defunct Diversity Task Force with the Mayor's Advisory Team, and showed receptivity to hiring a more diverse staff. However, the city's Weed and Seed Grant (Administered by the Kent police Department) effort is worth mentioning in this brief history because it was a milestone working with the city and the Police Department. PAID, eventually supported by the U.S. Department of Justice, compelled the city of Kent to either implement the Weed and Seed Strategy according to Justice Department guidelines or lose the Weed and Seed Grant.

The short story is the city had received a grant from the justice department to "Weed" out bad elements of the community and "Seed" in good elements. Having the Weed and Seed Grant also gave the city leverage to receive other grants. There were several major problems with the city's administration of the grant. One of the issues, contrary to Department of Justice guidelines, was the dominance of city employees on the steering committee. Simply by having more city votes the city dominated the Weed and Seed Steering Committee, which for some reason couldn't be resolved. Another was the selection of a Director that would follow the Weed and Seed Grant guidelines which are published on the Department of Justice website. And there were more issues.

After two years of trying to get the city of Kent to respect the community being served by the Weed and Seed Grant and to administer the grant according to guidelines; after the Weed and Seed Grantors, the U.S. Department of Justice, sent out personnel to explain grant guidelines and help resolve the dispute between PAID members and city hall; after the Department of Justice sent out mediators to meet with PAID members and mediate the conflict; after lawsuits were being threatened; after local and national elected officials had been contacted by PAID members; and after charges of racism had been published and sent to the Major of Kent; finally DOJ sent a letter to the city of Kent halting all Kent Weed and Seed Grant expenditures, including deadlines to make changes in the way the grant was being implemented, and notice that Failure to comply would result in losing the grant.

King County's leadership requires a complimentary response from communities that care. PAID in Kent appreciates but didn't wait for the county. How about your town?

(PAID continued)

PAID's advocacy causes feds to halt Kent's Weed & Seed

The following statement is quoted from the August 2009 edition of Synrgy includes DOJ halting the Kent Weed and Seed and six demands of the city of Kent in order to resume utilizing DOJ Weed and Seed Grant funds.

"...The U.S. Department of Justice Community Capacity Development Office (CCDO) recently addressed a letter to Debra LeRoy of the Kent Police Department. In part the letter stated, '...The East Hill Corridor Weed and Seed site is hereby suspended indefinitely. Suspension includes a freeze on all funds for any Weed and Seed active awards' wrote Dennis Greenhouse, Director. Greenhouse goes on to highlight a brief history of the 3 year Weed and Seed Strategy in Kent identifying reasons for the suspension. He then includes a timeframe, '...The site is hereby put on a 60 day corrective plan beginning July 23, 2009, to address issues discussed herein.' The concerns and issues to be addressed are evident in Greenhouse's specifications: '(1) capacity building activities to reconnect and engage the full community in Weed and Seed, (2) diversifying the composition of the Steering Committee, (3) outline duties, roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee, (4) provide Operational Steering Committee Policies and Procedures, (5) include at least 25 percent residents of the approved designated area on the Steering Committee, and (6) reduce the number of city departments serving on the Steering Committee.' Other than identifying who to contact with questions the Greenhouse letter concluded, '...If the site does not address the aforementioned issues within the specified time frame, the site will be considered for termination effective immediately after the 60 days.'" http://news.synrgy.us/files/Synrgy_0809.pdf.

The City of Kent, having given up on its Weed and Seed efforts came together with the Department of Justice in an attempt to establish something community based to replace the Weed and Seed. It was a struggle in the beginning but eventually Police Chief Steve Strachan and Melvin Tate identified Barbara Phillips to chair the Community Network Council to begin to replace Weed and Seed efforts, but more on the "seeding" side. Mayor Cooke and the Kent Police Department have been instrumental in supporting and working with the CNC. The CNC enjoys several other partnerships as well, including with the City's Parks Department, the school district, the Boeing Black Employees, and more.

Over the years PAID members have brought many, many issues to the attention of leaders in local institutions. Most have had to do with a variety of disproportionality issues, disparate treatment, and/or discrimination. The two examples cited in this brief history of PAID illustrates the lengths to which PAID members will go and the resources called upon to accomplish a given advocacy goal. Simultaneously however, these two examples illustrate how willingly PAID members will work to support institutions once understandings and agreements have been reached.

Some groups and organizations led by PAID Members continue to work with the city and the school district as partners, and they continue to offer critical feedback as well as support. In more recent months, with the inclusion of Gwen Allen-Carston as a member of PAID some critical attention, feedback, and support has been provided to elements of the business community. Issues arising out of the business community as well as grant recipients continue to be a concern for some members of PAID.

Some PAID members are called to support institutions and organizations, and provide advice/feedback.

Historically and presently, far more than engaging in adversarial relationships, some PAID members have been called more often to provide advice, feedback, and support to institutions and organizations. Some elected officials, administrators, bureaucrats, and other leaders of organizations place a value on receiving input from black community leaders and other communities of color leaders. In those instances PAID's facilitator, Melvin Tate, convenes all or a select group of PAID members, and possibly others who support PAID's work, for dialog with a given entity or individual. In the past some of these dialogs have included:

- Interviewing political candidates
- Providing input relative to medical facilities
- Feedback on youth programming needs
- Working with and supporting police department approaches to sensitive community issues
- Working with school board members in non-adversarial ways on a number of diversity and equity issues
- Support school board goals and superintendent
- Serving on interview teams
- Working with businesses to foster a culture more inclusive of diverse populations
- Working with city council members to foster a culture more inclusive of diverse populations
- Supporting the Mayor to address a number disproportionality and diversity issues
- Providing feedback and support to a number of organizations on a wide variety of issues in the region.

PAID is much more than an adversarial watch dog group. More frequently individuals, groups, and organizations come to PAID members these days for support; before an adversarial relationship has an opportunity to start. As an example former Police Chief Steve Strachan utilized PAID input before recommending gang policies in the region. The current Police Chief Ken Thomas also exemplify this concept of, let's establish a good relationship and communications before incidents occur. With this approach we won't be strangers when an incident does occur. Rather than an adversarial relationship most PAID members prefer this kind of relationship with all bureaucrats, elected officials, and others.

Local communities need to support the county's equity and social justice initiatives; thereby helping themselves

A perfect compliment to recommendations from the King County Opportunity Mapping and the King County Equity and Social Justice Plan is that communities throughout the region, impacting their local institutions, begin to advocate for themselves.

So, here we are, beginning with the role of Caren Adams as clear evidence that local communities can and should compliment the county's efforts to improve lives in all communities; also provided Part One is the documentation that supports the county's efforts; next, PAID is provided as an example of how community groups can help.

There has to be someone in every community who cares enough to take the time to organize a few people for the good of the community and for the common good. Don't leave this important work to the bureaucrats and elected officials; they need to hear organized community voices; voices not controlled by their three minute limit to speak at a council or board meeting.