

**A Blueprint for Building Bridges Between People:**  
**A Recap of the 2004 CURE Symposium**

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We wish to thank all of those who helped to make the 2004 C.U.R.E. symposium a tremendous success. The symposium was entitled “**A Formula for Building Bridges with our New Neighbors**”, and the topic of how to organize and educate people about different cultures was extensively discussed. The symposium was held at Long Island University’s Brooklyn Campus on October 29, 2004. We are so pleased to report that the symposium had representation from dozens of cultures and religions from throughout the communities of New York City, including both audience participants and the community leaders who served as panelists.

A number of dynamic speakers attended the symposium representing the following communities: **Bishop David Hartman** (African American community); **Jacque Friedman and Rabbi Gluck** (Jewish community); **Rene Lobo and Alex Martin** (Indian community); **John Abi-Habib and Rev. Khader El-Yateem** (Arab community); **Alec Brook-Krasny** (Russian community); **Eddie Gonzalez and Pastor Joseph Mattera** (Hispanic community); **Swaranjit Singh and Harpreet Singh-Toor** (Sikh community). Also joining our panel was **Dr. Carmela Sansone**, a practicing psychologist and **Dr. Benjamin Chu**, President of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation. We were also pleased that **New York City Human Rights Commissioner Patricia Gatling** presented greetings from **Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg**, and that **Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz** kicked-off the event.

The panelists – which represented both new and experienced neighbors - each recounted various real-life experiences of racial and ethnic insensitivity and discrimination. It was amazing to learn how similar the experiences of newly arrived ethnic groups from India, Southeast Asia, Russia and the Arab continent were to those groups that have long been a part of the fabric of New York City, including Hispanics, African Americans, Jews and Italians. Panelists explored the cause of these problems and how they could be mitigated through positive and proactive methods. The panelists agreed that ignorance, a lack of commitment to cultural education, as well as feelings of isolation by new immigrants, contribute to the perpetuation of such practices – even by our new neighbors. The key ingredient for a successful approach would be education by “appropriate individuals” in a “comfortable setting” – especially children, who are more receptive to exploring diversity and who often serve as a conduit of information for immigrant parents.

The remainder of the discussion focused on the logistics of organizing and educating our children – the “how”, “when”, “who” and “where.” Uniformly, the panelists agreed that the credibility of the speaker was critical. Someone who is already known and respected in the community where the education is taking place would be

preferred. To this end, CURE will tap into its Citywide network of community leaders and seek out additional community leaders to either speak themselves or organize and deploy speakers that they trust. To effectively accomplish this, CURE will formally create a speaker's bureau as part of its Community Leader Advisory Board. It was decided that these speakers will visit schools, religious institutions and any other appropriate community gatherings where children and adults alike can be reached with CURE's message. There was extensive discussion on how to gain entry to the public schools by the audience. Ultimately, the panelists agreed that CURE would need to develop a concise curriculum and consistent message that can be delivered at such speaking events. Many of the comments and experiences discussed by the panelists and the audience can become part of this curriculum, which will have the input of CURE's community leaders and educators, psychologists and other professionals.

If you were unable to attend the 2004 symposium, please visit our website at [www.curenyc.com](http://www.curenyc.com) where you can view a videography of the symposium from our home page. If you wish to get involved with CURE in 2005, contact us at **(718) 436-7270** or send us an e-mail on our website. We have much work ahead of us and are very excited about implementing the plan of action we set forth at the symposium. Remember, as Rocco Crisalli once said, emancipation emanates from organization and education. While emancipation is an ideal and goal to strive for, organizing and educating are not easy tasks.....but where there is a will and a necessity.....as there is right now in New York City.....CURE will find a way to make it happen!