July 2002

Dear Colleagues:

This packet contains "conversation starters" about solving community problems while also bridging traditional fault-lines of race and class. The conversation starters are in the form of stories that can be used as cases to spark discussion, reflection and learning. In particular, they are designed to spark analysis of how power, race and class work in communities, and to help people practice analyzing these things as a first step in planning for community change. We hope the conversation starters also provide opportunities for people to consider in a deep way how racism, classism and power might be at work in seemingly neutral community issues such as housing, education, economic development and so on.

The conversation starters were developed for a gathering of people from many communities, based partly on their own experiences doing this work. Gathering participants asked for simple materials to help them use these cases back home. This packet was put together for that purpose. It contains:

- **General tips for facilitators:**

  This offers some ideas to organize and run a conversation using the case materials

- **Conversation starters**:

  o *Strategies for Growth – about a community that wants to bring more money into the community through development and maintain the character of the community*

  o *Engaging the Neighborhood – about a community trying to reduce violence in a particular neighborhood*

  o *Recognizing and Exercising Power – about how to equalize the quality of schooling for rich and poor, black and white neighbors*

- **Reflection questions for each conversation starter:**

  Each conversation starter has its own set of reflection questions. They are attached to the particular conversation starter to which they go. Each person who is part of the discussion groups should get a copy of the conversation starter and the matching, attached reflection questions.

- **Chart of Issues and Probes** [1]

  This chart lists some of the main issues for each conversation starter, along with some questions that facilitators' could ask to help the group probe these issues in more depth. The charts are just for the facilitators. They are not handed out to the group.

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January 2007

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[1]If you want to try out the cases yourself, you might not want to read these charts until after you have read and thought about the cases on your own.

CPS CONVERSATION STARTERS
TIPS FOR FACILITATORS

GETTING STARTED

- A good group size is eight to twelve people

- Allow between two and three hours to discuss one of the stories and to thoroughly tap all the wisdom in the group

- Each person should have a copy of the story and the associated reflection questions. Each person should also have a copy of any of the handouts you have decided to use

- The handouts are two tools to help your group be more productive in their group work (here, and at home). "Four Primary Types of Thinking" shows how people actually think differently. "Moving From Problems to Action" shows the steps people can use to work through a community problem. You should feel free to work with these tools in any way you choose and to use one, both or neither as you see fit. HOWEVER, if you choose not to use either one, please take care that you apply the principles in your facilitation: for example, do not allow the group to jump to solutions and action plans without carefully analyzing the problem first!

- Begin by asking people to introduce themselves, or with some other warm-up exercise or activity that you like to use.

- Introduce the handouts, if you are using them. Ask people to read them, and discuss their content briefly. Remind people that one tool describes different ways of *thinking* about a community problem, and the other describes a *process* for problem-solving.

- Introduce the conversation starters by having the group read the story. Have volunteers from the group read parts aloud while everyone else follows along. **(CAUTION: Do not go around the circle and ask each person to read a paragraph. Many people are uncomfortable doing this. DO ask for volunteers, even if you only get one!)** After the story is read aloud, ask a general question to start, such as "what really struck you about this story, or what are some important facts for understanding what's going on?"

- Use the reflection questions to help guide the discussion. They are intended to surface issues related to race and class, as well as other issues embedded in the discussion. Try to work through these reflection questions one-by-one, in the order given.

o As an alternative, use the process on the *Moving from Problems to Action* handout. At a later point in the discussion, the group can look at the other set of reflection questions to see if they missed anything.

o Note how the reflection questions and "Moving from Problems to Action" follow a similar pattern: starting with identifying and analyzing the problem, moving to discussing the priorities, and finally deciding what actions can be taken.

o Remember, the cases are designed to spark reflection, analysis, discussion and learning. The discussion is done when everyone feels they have surfaced the important issues and worked them in depth.

o And finally, remember your role as facilitator: to ask questions, to probe deeply, and to encourage everyone to participate. Resist the temptation to talk a lot. You will naturally want to contribute to the conversation, but try to ask questions more than make comments. (For example, "what do you think might be the mayor's motivations?" rather than "I think the mayor is in cahoots with the planner.")

OTHER FACILITATION IDEAS

People who facilitated the discussion at the CPS Gathering offer the following suggestions and tips:

o The stories don't include all of the facts or details that some people may think are important. Try not to let the group get bogged down in arguing about what actually happened, or about whether or not a key fact is missing. Instead, ask them to fill in a reasonable fact. Then move on.

o Encourage the group to focus on the strengths, successes and opportunities in each story, not just the problems. The reflection questions are designed to help do that as well.

o People may be reluctant to talk directly about the role that race and class play in the conditions of the communities or the challenges the coalitions are facing. Help them surface these issues. Some ways to do that include going back to the reflection questions, raising these issues yourself once in a while over the course of the discussion and helping people in the group enter the discussion who look like they have something to contribute but are holding back. (For example, say – "Gladys, do you have something to add?")

o Encourage people to discuss the implications of racism and classism in these stories – how they affect why some communities are in better shape than others, how resources are distributed, how decisions get made, why groups may not trust each other fully and the different kinds of power groups may have to change things.

o Help people get beyond superficial discussion of these issues by staying on one topic for a while, rather than moving quickly to some other aspect of the story. For example, you might go around the group asking everyone to say something about the issue under discussion before going on to another point. If issues get raised that are not on the topic, you can write them down in a "parking lot" and come back to them later. Then people know that their issue will be talked about later, but you can stay on the topic.

o As the discussion is winding down, feel free to take a look at the list of issues embedded in each conversation starter (below). See if the group missed some of them, and if they still make sense to raise. It might also be productive to ask the group why they think a given issue did not surface and what lessons that might suggest for their own work.

o At the Gathering, each group discussed two stories, one for several hours in the morning and one for a shorter time in the afternoon. Some people felt they would have preferred to stay with the same story longer, going deeper in the second discussion.

Background

The neighboring towns of Turner and Brookside are just inland along the Southeastern Atlantic coast. The area is breathtakingly beautiful with lovely parks and forests, open land, access to the inter-coastal waterway, rivers and the ocean. The area is largely undeveloped, in comparison to many neighboring communities that are now very popular, highly developed beach and golfing resorts.

Both towns sit on what used to be a large plantation. The area is multi-racial – primarily African American and white, with a growing Latino population. The towns have a lot in common. Many of the families in both communities have lived there for generations. Their young people often left town to go to college and begin their careers, returning when they were older. The towns are also different in many ways. For example, most of the town leaders and residents of Brookside are white; homes tend to be larger and there seems to be more wealth in the area. Brookside levies a property tax and the revenue enables Brookside to provide several community services – including paved roads, water and sewer lines.

Most of the town leadership and many residents of Turner are African-American. Turner has more newcomers than Brookside, but there are still many residents whose families have lived here for a hundred years or more. Most Turner residents work in seafood or fishing or do seasonal work along the coast. Others are lawyers, judges and educators. The town does not levy a property tax and Turner does not provide many municipal services. For instance, there is no public water system.

About 3 years ago, more than a hundred citizens from both towns began meeting to talk about economic growth and the environment. This was the first time in living memory that the leadership and residents of the two towns had met together to discuss a common concern. Many people came to prevent Brookside and Turner from turning into just another crowded, expensive and commercial resort town – like communities all around them. A coalition of leaders, business people and residents was formed from that first meeting. The coalition met for about a year to develop an area-wide plan for growth. The plan put equal emphasis on protecting the beauty of the area, economic growth and meeting community needs. One great part of the plan was that it was for the whole county – for the first time people were thinking of Turner and Brookside as one place with a common future. The plan was discussed in a community forum that was well attended by folks from Turner, Brookside and the surrounding rural parts of the county. It was enthusiastically endorsed with wide community support.

Soon the coalition was able to raise some funds, hire staff and support community working groups to implement parts of the plan. For example, one group began working on eco-tourism building on the area's environmental assets and skills of local artisans and fishers.

Current situation

Coalition meetings have been very heated recently and some have even had to be ended early. The source seems to be a disagreement about how best to divide up a 900-acre parcel of land. The parcel of land is in Turner.

The leadership of Turner has been considering dividing the land into one-acre lots with water and sewer services. Turner leadership chose to share its plans with the coalition a few months ago at a coalition meeting. They explained to the other coalition members that such growth, if well managed, would provide a short-term influx of people and money that could help the town better control growth in the future.

Other coalition members voiced concerns and some were flat-out opposed. Those voicing opposition do not want 900 new homes in the area. They also feel that the proposed zoning and services would inevitably lead to more growth. Brookside coalition members, the coalition's staff and consultants offered alternatives they felt were quite reasonable and would take about the same amount of time to complete.

Turner leadership respect the coalition's plan for growth, which they played a big part in creating. At the same time, they do not feel bound by it. Turner leadership are becoming increasingly frustrated that the other coalition members do not see the urgency of need in Turner for economic growth and good community services. They are starting to wonder how long they can be part of the group if things do not change.

Brookside leadership feel that the Turner folks are misguided in thinking that they can control growth once services are improved and so many new people flood the community. They feel that Turner leadership are going back on the plan by considering the new zoning and services. Some are even beginning to wonder privately if Turner leadership stand to gain in some way and might not be trustworthy.

Some questions to consider

- *What has the coalition done successfully? What strategies are paying off for them? What do they have to build from right now?*

- *What is your analysis of why the communities are in different circumstances and express somewhat different priorities? How do historic divides across race and class come into play?*

- *What is your analysis of how power works in Turner and Brookside? What does this suggest about what's going on?*

- *Do those analyses suggest guidelines for the coalition to use when they pick strategies to implement the plan?*

- *How can the coalition get through the issues that are dividing them right now?*

Going deeper

- *Class issues often come up when environmental issues are at stake. What is your analysis of how this works?*

- *In your community, how do you analyze what's driving different people's actions?*

- *What is the relationship of the proposed development to the county-wide plan? Is it consistent or not? What issues does that raise for the coalition?*

- *What criteria might the staff and coalition have used to choose consultants and pick targets for change? What might the staff or the coalition done differently?*

- *What assumptions is your group making about the motivations of each of the key leaders (the Mayors and City Councils)? Why? How do race and class influence those assumptions?*

Background

The Ardmore section of Wilson City was never a fancy neighborhood, but it has seen better times. The neighborhood is home to young families, single people who can't really afford to live elsewhere and older folks who have chosen to stay in the houses they bought just after the war. It is multi-racial. According to the most recent census, about 67% of the people living in Ardmore are African-American; about 20% are white and about 13% are Latino.

Most of the homeowners are white and most of the renters in the neighborhood are African-American. The neighborhood has two sets of rental properties. One is a large factory building converted to private apartments. The other is subsidized public housing that includes some individual homes and some apartments. The people in private apartments are African-American or Latino, by and large. All of the families in subsidized public housing are African American.

Homeowners tend to socialize among themselves, as do the people living in subsidized public housing. The people in the apartments really don't spend much time in the neighborhood – their social life seems to happen downtown or in other neighborhoods. For example, there are two neighborhood associations. One was set up by homeowners many years ago. It still runs garden competitions each spring. The other was set up by the city housing authority for tenants of the subsidized housing. That group is active in running a day care and after-school center inside the building, and they supervise children when they use the large city park across the street.

People who live in Ardmore have many complaints. Trash is piling up. A lot of the streetlights don't light – the bulbs are broken or the power service has some problems. There are drug deals, drive-by shootings and street crime on the side streets and in the park at all hours. Most of the older people don't feel comfortable outside their own homes at night.   Some residents think the violence comes from kids in the neighborhood, particularly from the kids living in public housing. Other residents feel just as strongly that the violence comes from outsiders looking for trouble.

Many individuals in Ardmore have complained about conditions over the years – to licensing and inspections, to the police and to the City Council or Mayor.   Sometimes there is a flurry of activity, but it dies down. Nothing much seems to come of it.

Then, violence became an important issue in Wilson City, because of a shooting incident that took place in another neighborhood. An English teacher was taking some students to a debate club event at Wilson High School when she was shot and killed in a drive-by shooting on the steps of the school. No one had ever been killed in a drive-by shooting in that neighborhood, which happened to be one of the city's wealthiest.

In response to the shooting at Wilson High School, a coalition was formed to address growing violence in Wilson City.   The coalition is multi-racial and includes city residents and leaders. A few concerned churches and community organizations (the United Way, for example) provided seed money to get resident input and begin planning strategies.

The group held a community forum, which was well attended. With the seed funds, the coalition was able to hire an Executive Director, who was skilled at neighborhood redevelopment. The coalition and the Executive Director were able to raise funds that would pay for work in one or two neighborhoods.

Because Ardmore was considered one of the most violent areas of the city, the group decided to work there first. Based on neighborhood need and the Executive Director's skills, the coalition developed a strategy to redevelop the neighborhood starting with affordable housing.

But now, after several months of work, the Executive Director and coalition members are getting discouraged. Even though the Ardmore neighborhood has a reputation for being a violent place, they cannot get the residents on board with their plan to build safe and affordable housing. The coalition has sent out a lot of flyers and has sponsored radio ads to tell people in Ardmore about their plans, and to invite them to coalition meetings. They offer food, baby-sitting, transportation and translation services at the meetings. But people in the neighborhood don't seem to care enough to show up.

Meanwhile, the city is feeling a lot of pressure to show some tangible results quickly. Some other neighborhoods are ready to begin neighborhood watch groups, and they are pressuring the city to direct funds to them. Right now, these funds are earmarked for the Ardmore neighborhood.   The coalition wants to do something, but they don't know what to do. Without active resident involvement, the project in the Ardmore neighborhood is not likely to succeed.

Some questions to consider

- *What are the strengths and opportunities of the coalition, Wilson City and the Ardmore neighborhood?*

- *What is your analysis of why the Ardmore neighborhood is in its current condition? How do historic divides across race and class come into play?*

- *What is your analysis of how power is distributed in the current situation? Who controls resources? Whose voices are getting heard? Where is leadership coming from?*

- *What do these analyses suggest about the expectations people might have for the nature, timing and results of the coalition's work? What do they suggest about outcomes the coalition could set for itself?*

- *What kinds of strategies could the coalition implement to start making progress toward these goals? What might be immediate next steps given the situation?*

Going deeper

- *The coalition did involve some neighborhood people early on – were they the right people? How would you figure out whether or not they were the right people?*

- *Why might well-meaning and experienced people begin an effort in the way this one began? What thinking about race, class and power might have to shift to begin a different way?*

- *How can the coalition get beyond where it started?*

Background

The kind of education people get in Cassaville County depends a lot on the color of their skin. There are two high schools in the County – one in Leamon City, and one about 30 miles away in the outskirts of Cassaville County, in eastern Georgia.   Both of the schools get money from the County (through local property taxes), the state of Georgia and some local foundations. Leamon High School also receives funds from the City of Leamon, and is overseen by the City School Board. The Board includes the Mayor, Head of City Council, United Way representatives and a representative from Cassaville County. Cassaville High School is overseen by the County School Board, which includes several professors from the local college and business people who have "adopted" Cassaville High School and live in the area. County officials are also on the board.

Leamon City and Cassaville County share an interesting history. A newscaster from New York visited the area in the fifties to do a story on school desegregation. In his report, he described the area as "the toughest test of desegregation you can find" because of the deep divides he observed along the lines of race, class, religion and politics. And the newscaster was right. When the schools were ordered to desegregate, white families moved in droves from Leamon City to other parts of Cassaville County. Expensive houses were built all over the county while property values dropped in the city. Over time, Cassaville County became mostly white and affluent. Poorer people, many of whom were African-American, were more and more concentrated in Leamon City.

Now, fifty years later, the Leamon City High School serves mostly African-Americans who live close-by. The school has high standards and dedicated staff. However, the building is in bad shape. The pay scale is low. Cassaville High School serves mostly white people living outside the city. It pays better and holds onto its faculty for a long time. For the past fifteen years Cassaville High School has usually ranked near the top of all Georgia schools on educational results, and Leamon High School is often near the bottom.

About five years ago, a foundation made a major grant to the region to improve education.   The money was given to the local United Way to administer, in cooperation with city and county government. Leamon High School received new plumbing, desks and had its asbestos removed. A new high-tech laboratory and media center was added to Cassaville High School.

At about the same time, a group of civic and church leaders began to meet. They were fed up with watching the city and county do things the same old way. They started meeting one-on-one and then in small groups to get to know each other and to find out what people cared about locally. It turned out that lots of people did not feel connected to government. This was true for people living in the county and the city. City residents were also very worried about the safety and quality of the local school buildings and poor test scores compared to other schools in the state.

A coalition was built from these relationships and meetings. The coalition defined its mission as civic involvement and self-determination. The group set up committees and rules to make sure every voice was valued. About 60 organizations paid fees to join the first year. The group used the money to hire staff and pay for continual organizing and leadership development.

Then, when the coalition felt it was ready to act, it targeted improvements in Leamon City High School as its first public goal.

Current situation

The coalition is getting stronger every day. About 30-35 organizations are still active. It is a marvel of inclusion and diversity in this part of Georgia. It is the only multi-racial and multi-class civic group in the area. It also has a mix of men and women, Democrats and Republicans, people from all geographic parts of the region, and people of many different faiths. One participant talks about knowing people well – maybe not as friends but as allies – that she never would have had occasion to speak with before.

Right now, the coalition is deciding exactly which strategies and tactics to use to start improving Leamon High School. A few powerful people in Cassaville seem interested in putting out a bond referendum to improve education in the region. The coalition thinks that may be another opportunity, especially if they can expand the referendum to cover both Leamon and Cassaville High Schools. Also, the Mayor is up for re-election, and that may be an opportunity for them.

Their challenge is to figure out what to do with these opportunities, and maybe to find some they have overlooked. Then, they need to come up with a specific plan of action. So far, the discussions have not been very specific.

Some questions to consider

- *What are the strengths of the coalition, Leamon City and Cassaville County? What assets can they draw from in changing things?*

- *What is your analysis of why Leamon and Cassaville High Schools have different test scores and other statistics on educational results? How do divides across race and class come into play?*

- *What is your analysis of how power works in Cassaville County and Leamon City? How are decisions made and resources allocated? Who seems to have influence over these decisions, and how do they exercise that influence?*

    - *What power does the coalition have? How does it fit into your analysis of power in the community?*

- *What do these analyses suggest about the opportunities in front of the coalition now? What do they suggest about things to anticipate or watch out for?*

Going deeper

- *What power do the specific stakeholders in the coalition have – what power do parents have, teachers, voters – to influence education in the region?*

- *What does "equity" mean in the context of this situation – what is "fair"? Is fair the same as equal? What assumptions are you making and what's the analysis you are using to decide?*

- *Suppose the coalition decides to get involved with the mayoral election and/or a bond referendum? What are the pro's and con's of becoming involved? What specific tactics can they try?*

ISSUES AND PROBES

Below are some key points that came up as the conversation starters were used by people at the CPS Gathering. Participants believe these points are not always obvious in the stories, but are important to analyzing it and thinking about next steps. The first and second columns describe the main point and some additional thoughts about it. These two columns are kind of a "cheat sheet" to help facilitators. Questions that the facilitator could ask to bring out these issues are in the third column.

Facilitators should note whether or not these issues are coming up on their own (through the reflection questions and discussions). If not, facilitators can introduce them via questions, probes or, as a last resort, by making the points themselves. One way to use these charts is to look them over toward the end of the discussion, and then weave any relevant questions into the conversation before ending it.

NOTE: These charts are for the facilitators only. Do not hand them out to the group before the discussion is over.

Conversation Starter #1: Strategies for Growth		
The story is about balancing economic growth, environmental concerns and community needs.		
ISSUES	**MORE ABOUT THIS**	**POSSIBLE PROBES**
Because Turner's and Brookside's needs and conditions are so different, their leaders may rank the three concerns: economic growth, community needs and environmental concerns, very differently.	For example, safe drinking water is an urgent priority for the Turner community – there is little evidence that Brookside residents understand how serious this problem is in Turner, or share their sense of urgency to get it fixed	*--Are Turner and Brookside as interested in safe water?* *--Why isn't the water as safe in Turner as it is in Brookside – what could power, race or class have to do with it?* *--(After analyzing the situation): What could Brookside do to show they understand about the need for safe water?*
The two communities are just starting to work in coalition. The history of the two communities suggests many reasons why they may not fully trust each other, regardless of what is said in public forums or how much they may have in common.	Given this, they may need specific training and experiences to begin to build enough trust to manage their differences and keep work moving past them.	*--How long have the communities been working in coalition? What difference could that make?* *--Do they have reasons to trust each other? Do they have reasons for being distrustful?* *--(After analyzing the situation): What could they do to work on this?*
Though the story suggests that the problems are personal, they are	Knowing this might help the group open up some different	*What if we assumed that these kinds of problems are typical of*

Conversation Starter #1: Strategies for Growth		
The story is about balancing economic growth, environmental concerns and community needs.		
typical challenges of newly forming coalitions once the "rubber hits the road."	solutions and ways to compromise.	*new coalitions and communities just beginning to work together – how would that affect our analysis?*
The alternative plans were developed by Brookside, the coalition's staff and consultants. Turner doesn't seem to have been involved.	Turner leadership should have been fully involved, or perhaps in charge, or developing alternatives	*--Who was involved in developing alternative plans for development?* *--What does that suggest about how power is distributed?*
Issues of class are often just under the surface of divisions over environmental plans. People's self-interest varies, depending on whether or not they rely on environmental assets for their living, whether or not they own property in question or stand to gain from its sale or development and whether or not they have already accumulated enough wealth to ensure their family's future.	Turner and Brookside may not have had these hard discussions yet, and they may not have an analysis of class that they could use for these discussions.	*--What role could class be playing here?* *--How does class affect decisions about the environment?* *--What might it take in Brookside and Turner to get issues of class on the table?*
There may not be a solution that benefits everyone equally.	Maybe it is Turner's turn to benefit, given historical and current inequalities in conditions for residents of both places and the region.	*--Does every solution to these kinds of issues have to benefit everyone equally? Why or why not?* *--If it is not possible for every group to benefit equally, what's a way to settle this issue?* *--What does equity mean in this kind of situation?*
The story offers several possible scenarios: for example, that the Mayor of Turner is working in Turner's best interests, that he stands to gain personally from development but is working alone, or that he is working with landowners or business leaders who also stand to gain. These colleagues may be white or black, and live in Turner or Brookside.	Power analyses of these different scenarios may raise different issues about racism and classism, and, therefore, suggest different strategies or solutions.	*--What assumptions are you making about what's really driving the Mayor of Turner in this situation? Why are you making those assumptions?* *--How would you find out what is really driving the Mayor's actions?* *--What if it turned out the Mayor (insert undiscussed scenario)? How would you analyze that situation, considering power, race and class?*

Conversation Starter #2: Engaging the Neighborhood

Note: This story is about why people from within a neighborhood may distance themselves from solutions others impose on them, and how to build from within instead

ISSUES	MORE ABOUT THIS	POSSIBLE PROBES
People in the neighborhood don't have much reason to trust city government or "do-gooders" from outside the neighborhood.	Past promises of help were not kept Government and residents of other parts of the city didn't show much concern about violence when it only affected this neighborhood.	--*How might neighbors perceive the interest in violence in this neighborhood?* --*Would some neighbors be skeptical – why or why not?* --*What assumptions are you making about the neighbor's beliefs? How might you really find out what is driving them?*
The coalition tried hard to engage the residents in coalition activities and meetings. But the neighborhood didn't ask for this help, it was "chosen" for help by government and the coalition. It didn't request the help itself. It also doesn't seem from the story that neighborhood redevelopment or affordable housing were the neighbors' highest priorities, or that they were involved in choosing those particular starting points.	People in the neighborhood are in a better position than outsiders to know what is most important to them People are much more likely to get involved with things they help to design and plan	--*Who is choosing possible solutions? Who is implementing them?* --*How could traditional fault-lines of race and class influence the power to choose solutions and/or implement them?*
There may be race and class divides within Ardmore that need to be addressed as well. The neighborhood associations seem to be segregated by race and class. People blame each other for the violence and don't feel safe among other neighborhood residents.	These divides will have to be addressed at some point to build trust and solidarity among neighbors Trust and solidarity among neighbors will make them more equal partners with outside groups and government One way to begin is to help each separate neighborhood association get stronger, and then to bring the neighborhood associations together for social activities and joint work.	--*What different groups exist in the neighborhood?* --*Are the groups strong internally? What difference does that make?* --*What are strategies to build coalitions among groups that may not be strong individually?*
While outsiders believe the neighborhood is in very bad shape, there are many assets to build on. People have not abandoned the area. There are active neighborhood associations, even if they are currently segregated ones. Residents	These activities demonstrate indigenous leadership and capacity to plan and implement activities successfully. The neighborhood might benefit more from efforts to build their own capacities than by relying on	--*What are the assets in the neighborhood?* --*In what ways does the current scenario build on those assets? In what ways does it fail to do so?* --Why might some assets be

Conversation Starter #2: Engaging the Neighborhood

Note: This story is about why people from within a neighborhood may distance themselves from solutions others impose on them, and how to build from within instead

practice self-determination by running garden competitions, child-care and after-school programs, and by trying to keep a neighborhood park safe enough for children to use with supervision.	capacities from outside the neighborhood Note: The garden competition may seem like a trivial neighborhood activity. The community on which this story is based, however, found that making some houses look better encouraged other residents to do the same. As the neighborhood began looking better, neighbors felt safer and were more likely to come out of their homes and mingle with other neighbors. The place started to look like people cared what happened there. This in turn discouraged people from coming in from outside the neighborhood to do drug deals and other crimes. It was not the whole answer, but it was a more powerful strategy than most anticipated.	overlooked? ---What could class, race and power have to do with why some assets are overlooked? --*What are specific ways to build on those assets to improve the goals that the neighborhood cares about?* --*What are long-term benefits of building on the neighborhoods assets?* -- *How much time might it take to build on those assets – is it worth it?*

Conversation Starter #3: Recognizing and Exercising Power

This story is about what strategies and tactics a large, organized and diverse coalition of community residents can use to improve education in a community with major race and class divides.

ISSUES	MORE ABOUT THIS	POSSIBLE PROBES
There are at least two big issues to consider: What exactly is the problem with education that needs fixing? and What power does the coalition have that it can use to get things fixed?		--What are the major issues that need to be analyzed with respect to education? --What power does the coalition have to address these issues? Where does its power come from?
In terms of the problem, the story makes it clear that historical	Because education is still so unequal right now, race and class	--What could racism and classism have to do with unequal

Conversation Starter #3: Recognizing and Exercising Power

This story is about what strategies and tactics a large, organized and diverse coalition of community residents can use to improve education in a community with major race and class divides.

divisions between races and classes contributed heavily to unequal education.	are undoubtedly still a major factor to consider.	educational results in Cassaville and Leamon City --Is there evidence that these issues have been resolved or not?
Educational outcomes are often tied to resources.	While it may seem fair to split any new resources evenly between the two schools, this may be unfair given past inequities. If one school has historically been deprived of resources, it may need a lot more support currently to reach the same results.	--Is it important that resources be split evenly among the schools, or is there another way to think about equity?
Since inequities persist, it is reasonable to assume that current leadership in the community (on the school boards, schools and at various levels of government) is not solving the problem.	This suggests leadership is a target for improvement or change	--What role does leadership play in the way things are? --Should leadership be a target for change? Why or why not?
Thinking about the two schools separately may be old thinking that perpetuates inequities.	Regional thinking, crossing lines of race and class, may offer better solutions.	--What are the advantages and disadvantages of thinking about education regionally?
The coalition is large, organized and diverse. It thus has many ways to exercise power in this situation.	The coalition could, for example: --Document and broadcast specific differences in the area's education resources (for example, equipment, teacher and counseling ratios, pay scale and turnover) --Attract media, state and federal attention to the region's educational issues --Influence bond referenda and political leadership through voter registration and other non-partisan tactics; --Influence leadership of School Boards, county councils and schools through personal influence and advocacy --Create forums where plans to improve educational results and buildings are discussed and agreed to by officials with the authority to see they are carried out --Hold public officials accountable publicly for meeting these commitments	--What power does the coalition have to influence or demand change? Where does its power come from? --What could it do that builds on the power it has?

Conversation Starter #3: Recognizing and Exercising Power		
This story is about what strategies and tactics a large, organized and diverse coalition of community residents can use to improve education in a community with major race and class divides.		
The coalition should analyze the situation before jumping to action. Two analyses might include:	--A power analysis to fully understand how decisions are made about educational financing and resource allocation --An analysis of the specific set of outcomes they want to help the region achieve (for example, do they want equal funding for education within the city and county, or equal educational results?)	--What kinds of power analyses would be most helpful to deciding how to proceed? --What outcomes might the coalition work toward, given the way power works in this scenario? --How are decisions made about education financing and resource allocation in most communities, and what power does a coalition have to influence those decisions?