

Aiming for equity: Forum offers chance to discuss racial disparities

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Ida Holloran of Irondequoit, left, and James McClary of Rochester engage in discussions on race relations in Rochester at the Facing Race, Embracing Equity forum Tuesday night at the Asbury Methodist Church.

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Ida Holloran of Irondequoit, left, and James McClary of Rochester engage in discussions on race relations in Rochester at the Facing Race, Embracing Equity forum Tuesday night at the Asbury Methodist Church. / Donyelle Davis/Staff photographer

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Unite Rochester seeks to raise awareness about race and find more inclusive ways to work together to solve community problems.

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An aggressive campaign for a community dialogue on race in Rochester pushed forward Tuesday night at the Facing Race, Embracing Equity (FR=EE) forum, hosted by the Rochester chapter of the League of Women Voters at the Asbury First United Methodist Church.

To jump-start dialogue, the forum opened with a partial screening of the documentary, July '64, which details the 1964 race riots in Rochester. Participants were then encouraged to discuss the current state of racial inequalities — topics ranged from housing to education — and how these disparities can be diminished.

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“We don’t want this to be a feel-good meeting that says to each other ‘Isn’t this awful?’ and then go home,” said Georgia DeGregorio, president of the Rochester chapter of the League of Women Voters. “We need to know the steps that have been taken in the past and consider how to proceed now.”

DeGregorio said she hopes the community discussion will not just be about talking about issues, but finding and enacting solutions to those issues through whatever means necessary, such as education or legislation.

“The (FR=EE) initiative is a wonderful way to start re-energizing ourselves,” she said.

The FR=EE initiative is a multi-year project through the collaborative efforts of The Community Foundation, Action for a Better Community, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Rochester Institute of [Technology](#)

and the Rochester Initiative for Structural Equity, which focuses on creating a community-wide plan that will [enact](#) equal opportunities in the city.

Minister Clifford Florence, Sr., associate minister of Central Church of Christ, challenged forum participants to not just discuss injustices, but to solve problems.

“It’s admirable that we all came out to view this film,” he said, “but seeing it is not going to make us go into action unless we really believe from the heart that there’s something each one of us can do to make a difference.”