

## **Executive Summary**

This report is addressed to youth organizations that are planning to expand their services to youth from diverse racial and ethnic groups and those that wish to develop more effective outreach and retention programs. The views of community leaders from diverse racial and ethnic groups reported are from a larger study on expanding existing racial and ethnic diversity in Girl Scouting. Community leaders' comments regarding what youth organizations need to do to serve girls in their community applies to boys as well.

The broad racial and ethnic groups covered in the report are Native American, African American, Anglo-European American, Asian Pacific American and Hispanic/Latino. For each broad group we provide background information designed to sensitize the staff of youth serving organizations to several issues relevant to outreach and programming. This background information is followed by comments from community leaders.

The major conclusion is that all approaches to achieve diversity must be tailored to local conditions and carried out in collaboration with local communities. There is so much diversity within broad racial and ethnic groups that there can be no universally viable formula to attract and serve youth from diverse communities across the nation. The needs of youth and the most effective ways to reach and serve them need to be identified locally at the point of service delivery.

## **Introduction**

The publication of Carnegie Corporation's report of the Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs<sup>1</sup> has lent credence to a widespread perception that many national youth organizations fall short of their goals to serve all young people, especially young people from non-Anglo-European backgrounds. This paper provides guidelines to youth serving organizations for reaching a more racially and ethnically diverse population of young people.

The research which forms the basis of the paper was undertaken to learn from community leaders in diverse racial and ethnic groups how organizations can serve a broader spectrum of youth. Our work grows out of the recognition that it is not enough for youth serving organizations to offer an array of recreational and educational programs to attract and serve young people from diverse racial and ethnic groups. Indeed, the "if-we-build-it-they-will-come" approach appears to be a naive strategy toward broadening membership. Historical, cultural, and economic barriers need to be overcome if young people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds are to benefit more freely from the range of services available to them. Perhaps more importantly, overcoming these barriers will not only broaden membership but the pluralism which will have to be institutionalized to achieve diversity will benefit all youth. After all, we live in an increasingly diverse society.

The research reported here is part of a larger project commissioned by the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. This phase of the research was designed to elicit community leaders' recommendations for expanding Girl Scouting to include more girls from diverse racial and ethnic communities. Community leaders' comments about qualities they look for in any