January 5th, 2009 Immigrant Brainstorming

On January 5th the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing brought together immigrants from Somalia, Yemen, Thailand, Mexico, and Columbia of all ages and from ten different Minneapolis neighborhoods to talk about what the biggest issues are facing neighborhoods from an immigrant perspective, and what if anything immigrants want from their neighborhood groups.

Virtually all of the participants knew the name of the neighborhood that they lived in. All of the participants were interested in developing a closer relationship with their neighborhood group, and were able to indentify specific issues that they would like the neighborhood group to engage on with them. The issue that was the most frequently repeated by the participants was that they wanted to know more about how the system worked, whether it was the government, the schools, health care or the structure of the neighborhoods themselves.

What are the biggest issues facing the community?
Education
Making different cultures friends
Programs for immigrants
Helping each other
Clean neighborhoods
More diversity
Communication among neighbors
Peace
Safety
No peace no life (umbrella of life)
Neighborhood and government should work together
Programs for young people
Jobs for your 14-16
Neighbors working to help each other
Youth programs
Less crime
Playing sports
Respect each other
People say bad things and little kids pick it up
Neighborhood understand the culture
Get rid of graffiti
Boarded up houses
Need more alleys

Challenges that all immigrants face
Language barrier
Don’t know what you can do (legally, jobs)
Loneliness and isolation
Climate, weather (how to dress, when to go out, what shoes to wear)
Need insurance if you fall in the snow
Understanding how the government works
Kids forgetting the culture
Children losing values

What do immigrants want from neighborhoods?
Leadership of neighborhood working with the community
Teaching the young people how to be leaders
Youth understanding government and community
Learning how the system works
Coming together
Neighborhoods working together with all people

Finally, the participants were interested in gathering together again and including people from every neighborhood in the discussion.