

## **Breaking Down Barriers**

Rob Corcoran's book *Trustbuilding: an honest conversation on race, reconciliation, and responsibility* portrays an excellent look into how interracial dialogue can be used to help break down barriers between ethnic, religious and even social groups. He presents the successes of Hope in the Cities, a Richmond based NGO, to open up honest conversation between different groups in the Richmond area, which has had a deep-seeded history of slavery and racism. Today with the help of Hope in the Cities, other non-profits, and open-minded residents Richmond has become a model both nationally and internationally for a call to open dialogue and change in race, reconciliation, and responsibility.

Corcoran's book opens reader's eyes to the issues of racial tensions still very much present in the United States today and even more present abroad. He presents an excellent narrative drawn by his own personal experiences, experiences of Richmond citizens, and other examples that Hope in the Cities has been involved with, anyone reading can relate to at least one narrative in *Trustbuilding*.

*Trustbuilding* takes an in-depth look into racial, social, and economic issues that divide us and to show how conversations on these issues can open up long lasting relationships between groups and perhaps in many cases promote change. Corcoran discusses cases from racism in education, narrow-mindedness between religions, to racism in the Case of South Africa, Great Britain, and France.

His personal example of his sons in predominately black schools was in my opinion his best chapter. It portrays a story that many whites in the US never experience, being the minority. He shows how integration can't work in schools "without the support and participation of parents of all backgrounds who are willing to come together and talk honestly about their personal hopes and fears."

In the end of the book Corcoran moves from a narrative of examples to setting up a model of how dialogue should be used and how it has been used by Hope in the cities. He starts this by saying we must He discusses how all backgrounds need to open up in order for change to occur. Corcoran discusses how "The Journey...will not end until we have a new American community that builds on honest acknowledgement of the past to create a will for a future of inclusion and opportunity." In this conversation he states that both black and whites could say: "We have remained silent when we should have spoken out. We have been resistant to change."

*Trustbuilding* is an excellent source for the casual reader trying to understand how to open their minds to differing opinions as well as educators and peace-makers attempting to break down barriers between prejudices of all variety and in fact build trust between us all.

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