



## **The Human Genome Project: Community Conversations**

### **A Joint Project of Americans for Libraries Council and WE ACT for Environmental Justice.**

#### **Project Summary**

##### Overview

The *Human Genome Project: Community Conversations* (the Project) is a joint initiative of Americans for Libraries Council and WE ACT for Environmental Justice. The overall goal of the Project is to meet increasing public needs for information and education about the Human Genome Project (HGP) and to foster understanding about the implications of genomics research for individuals and communities, especially communities of color, minority and low-income communities. Our primary strategy for achieving this goal is to marshal the unique assets of the public library as a trusted, accessible center for information and education and a venue for local discussions on topics relevant to the community. The Project will enable an expert team to assist libraries in strengthening their collections and reference capacities with respect to genomics and to create a replicable framework for community conversations on the social, ethical and legal implications of genomics. The Project will be piloted in metropolitan New York, including venues in Harlem and Queens, and will also involve testing of the program framework through local programming in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona.

##### Specific Aims of the Project:

1. Develop innovative approaches to establish libraries, especially those serving communities of color and other minorities, as centers for public information on the Human Genome Program and genomics, including gene-environment interactions.
2. Create replicable models for planning and implementing “Community Conversations” on the ethical, legal and social implications of genetic advances by maximizing the inherent unique attributes of the public library as a venue for public affairs discussions.
3. Enhance public discussion and understanding, through focused outreach to communities of color, including Native Americans, on how socio-economic factors and concepts of race, ethnicity and culture influence the use and interpretation of genetic information, the utilization of genetic services, and the development of policy
4. Assess and build the capacity of public libraries as centers for genomics education.

5. Provide a process whereby scientific information and rigorous scholarship in the genetics field can be communicated and integrated in the knowledge base of diverse communities.
6. Seek replication of the planning and implementation models nationally through inter-library collaboration, summary presentations and reports, and broad dissemination.
7. Evaluate all project materials.

#### Project Partners

The Project is jointly developed and managed by Americans for Libraries Council (ALC) and WE ACT for Environmental Justice (WE ACT). ALC is a national non-profit organization that helps libraries and library systems around the country design and implement community responsive information and education programs. WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a non-profit community-based organization, based in New York City, that works to improve environmental protection, policy and health in communities of color.

#### Project Team

The Primary Investigators are Dr. Peggy Shephard, Executive Director of WE ACT and Diantha D. Schull, President of ALC. Project Coordinator for WE ACT is Leon Tulton. Susan Imholz, Ph.D., a program consultant to ALC and a specialist in information technologies and education, is currently managing the project.

Dr. Jose Morales, Ph D, is content specialist for the Project. Dr. Morales is a molecular biologist with a specialty in environmental disease who is a Research Fellow in the Laboratory of Human Genetics and Hematology at Rockefeller University in New York City. Dr. Morales created the "Genetics 101" lecture at WE ACT's, 2002 genetics conference, and has particular skill in translating science to the general public.

#### Role of Advisory Board

Members of the Project Advisory Board will help to set critical standards for engagement with librarians and the public and for monitoring the curriculum and scientific content. The Advisory Board will review all program content. The Board will have special responsibility for scientific content, and ensuring that all public program information and materials are current, accurate and appropriately presented.