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Comments From

La Mesa

"Design For Understanding"

sponsored by Heartland Human Relations

held May 12 - May 26, 1968

A
Citizens' Interracial Committee
Public Education Program

Comments on Design for Understanding

May 26, 1968

"The singularly important contribution of Design for Understanding has been the confrontation of black militants with whites - for, hopefully, mutual understanding of attitudes. Blacks need patience with white blindness and lack of a sense of personal guilt for the problem."

"You leave no room for suggestion etc. Is this so cut and dried? I could not attend your first meeting but have become interested in your cause."

"This is the best thing that has happened in this church for a long time!"

"As to my last answer, I'm not sure of my feelings toward intermarriage. My hang-up lies in the life of the children. DFU should be publicized more. It's the greatest. I feel like I have a little knowledge to back me up when I give white people a hard time."

"More DFU is needed."

"The 4th meeting should be assisted by a 3rd party. Example - our group became bogged down with discussions of personal experiences etc."

"I thought the program most encouraging. I'd like to see the spoken and mental thoughts put in to action. Also, more of these type programs."

"I have found the series most interesting and informative, only wish more people could have this experience."

"I felt that this series was most informative and wish it could reach many more people. Hope that through those of us participating it will reach more. I felt that untill hearing this program that I didn't have the proper concept of either 'white racism' or Black Power'."

"Excellent series. Good exposure to the problems. I feel more exposure to the moderate black (whatever that might be) would have been helpful - as well as the militant point of view (which may represent a minority of the minority....)."

"I don't feel that by just discussing this problem, anything is going to be done. Maybe 1/2 of the people of this Design will not carry through with your suggestions, but if the other half does and really believes it, a whole world could be changed. Many of the attending people have come here without any realization of what this problem is. I think that the panels and dialogues have shown them. Everyone, when they leave here tonight, will probably have a feeling of more intense responsibility than before.

"Provocative experience - produced great progress toward understanding of what's at the root of the problem, what may happen, how to influence our future for progress. Will 'follow up'. Hope CIC will also do this thru our church."

Re #3 "Yes, if these would be included in all schools, not just ghetto areas."

"DFU has been stimulating - hope aftermath proves it was worth your time and effort. Our 'new' effectiveness as informed people will either prove the usefulness or wasted time - time will tell - but a big thanks for your continued efforts to wake us up."

"I learned a lot of concepts - new to me - white racism, black power etc., have had my eyes opened to the problem and am trying to pass this information on to neighbors and friends. How about one of these DFU's in El Cajon?"

"I thought that the D.F.U. was very meaningfull and I wish to help as much as I can as a student."

"I only hope that when I leave here tonight, I don't get so absorbed in what I have been doing that I forget (or choose to ignore) what I have learned. I appreciate this opportunity. I had no idea things were like this."

"A list of specific stores or businesses in our area which engage in racial discrimination - let's confront them now!"

"This series has been very enlightening to me. Viewpoints were well presented in such a way as to help us see the real situation and to become involved at least in our everyday living situations and attitudes toward racism in our society. As one who is responsible for christian education programs I can use some of this!"

"I feel there should be no differentiation in education or opportunities because of color and that slavery was not the cause of all discrimination (Indians, Mexicans, etc.) but the inherent crime in the hearts. of men."

"Black teachers in white schools to improve white attitudes and understanding. D.F.U. - Excellent - really made me realize how much I didn't know and understand. Good follow through suggestions also."

"DFU has given me a much greater understanding of prejudice, problems and possible actions. A valuable experience."

"The planning is beautiful: builds up in logical sequence to effect a change of views."

"Change can't come overnight but it should come as rapidly as possible without violence. Integration should be acceptable although I don't believe it should be considered the only right thing as I am sure most races wish to live basicly near others of their race. Intermarriage is also fine if people want it freely but also would be something that will happen but not be the rule. I enjoyed it very much. Most of what was discussed I did not know anything about. The series made me realize many things. I was a bit bothered by the people who came to talk to my individual group on the 4th night as they couldn't see any answer short of violence or at least threats. I did not get that idea from any of the panelists. I especially enjoyed the 3rd session on Black power."

"The series has been a tremendous help to me in my thinking. I am especially pleased to learn of the scheduled series for high school and college students. I hope many other programs along this line can be scheduled."

"I think the urgency of the problem should be emphasized. The choices on this questionaire do not really point this out. The word 'gradually' illustrates a typical ambiguity. Wish there were more series so that I could send friends to them."

"Try to emphasize the schools and the youth more. What you did was good!"

"Immediacy the key and absolute essential. Series is excellent."

"Great! I surely thought San Diego was a very 'liberal' community! Most enlightening. The 'Black Power' session was particularly potent."

"This has been a most worthwhile investment of my time. If anything was lacking, perhaps it was some comment on the loss that white America would suffer and through the polarizing trends."

"The questions are not checked because we feel they are too extreme and do not present an opportunity that truly represents our thoughts. The series has been very interesting and informative and we plan to take action to help all humans achieve equality in society."

"I have been very pleased with DFU but I have a very painful feeling left that the people that needed this weren't here and I cannot do the kind of job in this affluent white racist society that you <u>beautiful black people</u> can do!!!"

"I think that the black race should acquire the best that the white culture has developed. And the white race should acquire the best that the black culture has to offer."

"Wish everyone could participate in a series."

"As for #4 - I do not believe that society is ready for intermarriage at this time - but that eventually true integration on other levels might bring this about without penalizing the children of such unions."

"It's a shame that we sitting here must be told what we can do when we as human beings should already know what to do. I feel the main purpose of this series is to help to give drive and direction to our feelings and to increase our desire to make this a country united in brotherhood. Excellently done!"

"Excellent. Need better 'advertising' I heard about it almost accidentally after looking hard."

Series was great in every respect - made me aware of my own racist weak spots. Suggest even stronger emphasis though, on fact that commitment must take form of continuing action."

"Very good presentation! I think (as a youth) that we should have more activities like DFU to get adults to realize that they are racists, and do something about it."

"I personally feel that the blacks should get what they're after but not to have a black controlled society when they're done."

"DFU has been very good. It would be helpful to organize some way for small groups to keep on meeting to find ways of action."

"This has been a very educational series - wish everyone could hear it, especially my white racist acquaintances and friends. I'm glad for black people taking pride in their color. This one thing will make more strides in CHANGE than anything."

"DFU has been most informative, and has enlightened me in many ways. I feel I can honestly do a good job of carrying on."

"I do have a hang-up about intermarriage."

"I am interested in opening housing in mobile home areas. I feel 'separatism' with result in apartheid."

"Since it seems so difficult to establish any common goal with black power advocates - it might be better if group discussions were held with CIC people instead."

"I thought the series as a whole was terrific. I felt it helped me so much as I had felt so powerless as one individual. It has given me direction in the sense that I know now where I can be effective."

"I thought this was a very eye-opening series. I had prided myself in being so very non-discriminatory; I found out how very wrong I was. With the help of God and my fellow man I now hope to come closer to racial justice."

"I am not ready for intermarriage. I do not think our society will accept it. In a few years we will accept it."

"I felt the first night and last Thursday night were the most stimulating and helpful. I would like to see a breaking into groups on the other nights even without black leaders, to promote communication and help us verbalize with others. I'm for your program and anxious to get involved as a result of it."

"Need more such sessions. Feel Black Power leaders insulting = needlessly so. Lack of manners and whites were not permitted."

"These meetings have been real eye openers; not because I didn't want and felt the wrongs should be righted, but conditions were so much worse than I knew."

"Most enlightening, stimulating and activating. Keep up the good work!"

"This has been an informative series and opens up many avenues for action - if we will. Thank you."

"Very helpful - a real aid to increased understanding of 'our' problem. I hope to really do something signigicant to help bring about solutions."

"I believe DFU is a very good program. It has reached many blockheads - like me. I believe that something similar should be done in every community. It will present more understanding. Something similar to DFU should be installed in the schools, also. (Youth speaking.)"

"Watch the student action at Helix. We are going to strive to let students become aware. Goals in the next 3 weeks: 1, interracial literature boards. 2, Reading list to be in special case in library donated by clubs. 3, editorials in our school newspaper, the 'Fling'. Other goals: club on basic theme. 2, special paper. 3, A.S.B. action to create student forums etc. If we can accomplish this, then I evaluate this program as extremely worthwhile."

"#3 - My opinion is that increased emphasis is needed on Negro culture, heroes etc., but this should be factual and integrated! #4 - With emphasis upon gradual and mutual respect and goodwill, Just as all whites or blacks cannot accept other whites or blacks with diverse standards and values, respectively, we should not force interracial acceptance between persons with similar difference. Accept a person as an individual for what

(con't)

(con't)
he is and given equal opportunity for what he can become and completly disregard color or race."

"I feel it is most important that we teach youth that violence and burning only alienate people who would help them get what they desire if more meetings such as these were held."

"I feel (because of my Catholic and Italian background) that if I go (speak out) against the establishement: schools, lending institutions, and fuzz, I will loose or be punished for these acts."

"I would like to stay activated and help with some sort of activity to reach the high-school and below youth of my community. I would, though, work in anything asked of me that I can. DFU has been to my feeling a great motivating experience. I only hope I can bring this experience of mine into contact with others of the youth."

"I think you could have been more persistent and shocking in your approach. I would have enjoyed it."

"I get the feeling (tho I've only been here tonight) that I'm asked to be 'pushy' and/or donative of monies. I guess I don't understand this problem enough -- but I must do what I believe in and it's a more people with people approach than people at people."

"The most significant aspect of our day is change. The greatest problem is recognizing what is actually happening. Group dialogues, like this, help clear thinking and crystalize actions. I think we need more of them."

"In whole the DFU series was excellent. The first evening was for me a restatement of the obvious conditions which exist. (The reason I came - what can I do - was answered in the 5th session - finally!"

"If no provocative questions come from a group in the beginning, please have some provocative thoughts ready to go - Please don't waste time - it is too precious."

"I want to thank you for letting me see the light."

"This has been a tremendous experience - much needed and appreciated by us."

"Could not the requested pressure say to business - we will advertise your integrated employment and recommend it - not threaten, the negative action?"

"It has been said that there is a brain drainage from the minority community. This is true. But, as a Mexican-American, I have come to know that in order to acquire a decent education and reach out for opportunity it becomes necessary to almost divorce yourself from your people. This is deplorable and I hope that education and preperation achieved, I will be able to channel back some of this advantage."

"Possibility of another dialogue session near the end. Please accept an appreation and admiration for all of you - you're beautiful!!"

"I feel that 'the Design for Understanding' program was very good. I became quite confused at times as to what the minority groups want but on the whole I have a much better understanding of how the minority groups (Negroes in particular) feel."

"It's been a good awakening - I've been jolted by as much impact as youth can give. My commitment will be in our area stores, schools, neighbors, etc."

"A very provocative series. I worry about what might happen to the young militants and children of the black community if they are not properly interpreted. They (the young blacks) seem to have a lot of understanding though, and will probably prove to be good to point up long over-due injustices."

"Have attended only 1 meeting for another person. From this meeting and reports on others I would suggest that reasonable people reasoning together and acting on the exchanges of ideas is a social, economical and political must if the country is to survive. The meetings seem to approach this criteria."

"Wonderful Series! I would hope all whites could attend because it is an eye opener and mind broadner. I would like to see it sponsored by some local businessmen over T.V. - a sort of "equal-time" against the local panel of the "One Nation Indivisible" show."

"Realistically, I support the black power awareness of separate cultures and believe that black power is the pathway by which a new, and truly inclusive nation can take place. I am for inclusiveness and am working for an open society in regards to the human race."

"D.F.U. has been most helpful to me at points of education (understanding, different viewpoints, learning of situations, etc.) and inspiration (new incentive, new urgency, etc.)"

"I am especially pleased with the opportunity to hear the 'angry' black man's argument. What the discussions brought out were viewpoints I had never considered; I am the wiser for the information."

"The DFU is probably the greatest thing that's happened to La Mesa since it happened! The 275 of us need to be multiplied by one hundred."

"This program has got to come before more people - It is the first constructive hopeful note I've seen in these parts - I'm afraid we need to be led abit before we can lead - this may do it. Thanks!"

"Just beautiful - very effective, unfortunately not miraculous. We're ready to commit - whole heartedly - once one starts speaking up its really surprisingly easy - and a BEAUTIFUL feeling! Thank you."

"The above represent 2 of us. This was very helpful and encouraging. I prefer more information from those who know opposed to uninformed individuals views. I do feel questions are necessary. Perhaps if they were written they would be condensed."

"I was already committed really. I wonder if a T.V. presentation might reach more of those lethargic citizens who need the message. Maybe George Scott will help sponsor. Your first question on this questionnaire was misunderstood by several persons around me."

"The series has been very helpful, awakening and enlightening and very well done."

"I appreciate having DFU made available - A few of the stereotypes I've carried around for years have been shattered, and it's great."

"The 'Black Power' panelists and group leaders I met were too extreme. One of the men made a big whoop-de-do over the word riot and then his buddy (Galloway) used the term riot later - they at least ought to get together on semantics. They treat all whites as if they are honkies, so they are prejudiced. I don't have to dig all of their views and they ought to recognize this fact. Why don't you visit some schools? I have never seen you in my classroom yet you are 'experts'. I'm still for the Negro and recognize the need for change now."

"I always considered myself non-prejudiced - This D.F.U. series has helped me to see racisism for what it really is. I feel that all white people should have the opportunity to share this experience."

"The 'Design for Understanding' was of great interest, now, I do understand what black power means and I am for it. I will try to promote meetings so more people can understand."

"I think the D.F.U. has been a tremendous experience. I have been able to relate to friends and neighbors with more knowledge."

"This series has been the most significant experience in directing my bewilderment to action in my life. DFU is 100% Nitty Gritty."

"A thought provoking series - speakers were excellent. The black power speakers gave me a whole new insight into what 'black power' means. Good luck and success to all of us in this struggle for equality."

"The emphasis should be on the 'humanness' of people--the emphasis should be on oneness--soon people will be able to see through color, race etc. My closing bit of wisdom..... We ain't what we want to be, We ain't what we're going to be, But we ain't what we wuz."

"In #3-the black culprits should be emphasized along with the black heroes, just as white history should be balanced with culprits and heroes - if not this would be historical discrimination - 'tell it like it was' black or white."

"Series let me really become aware of white racism in our society. I feel I have a much better background for commitment."

"Great program - but persons attending so often missed the point. Can honestly say that the Kerner report, the T.V. program 'One Nation Indivisible' and D.F.U. have changed this liberal's feelings. Already I have said and done things to offer help to blacks that I simply would not have done 2 months ago. Thank you!"

"Just great!!"

"I thought the entire thing came off real well. It certainly covered the problem and gave some positive answers - what to do rather than what to say. Let's have more - all San Diego needs them, badly, now!!"

"I think this DFU series is a fine step in the right direction and a needed one in this community."

"The C.I.C. is in excellent position to convey serious discrepencies in minority rights on to Human Relations groups when individual action can be taken (letters, contacts, etc.)"

"Series was extremely valuable in its ability to make people think and understand the problem."

"Excellent dialogue; pinpointed issues and reemphasized points. Clarified need for improved communications. Every man and family should hear message."

"In small dialogue groups I felt something lacking - in both group and leaders. I don't know if smaller groups might help or if definite topics should be discussed. Check-up after D.F.U. over with to see how progress is coming."

"Very enlightening - each session was of value. You've done a fine job."

"Have learned a great deal and developed a strong desire to keep on learning and find ways to contribute myself."

"I am interested in effective methods of establishing an ethnic history curricular at the junior college level."

"I think the series has been quite informative. However, I get a profound feeling that communication has not been established as fully as it might have been. In some ways the alternatives offered in the above questions indicate this - obviously there is broad ground between the extremes."

"Despite these meetings, I still feel quite strongly that the goal of total integration is a utopian dream; the only practical answer is Black Power to develop a society of which they are the masters."

"Very informative, interesting and persuasive. Lots of action already going on (in little ways) since the series began. Real exchange of ideas - great dialogue."

"The series was very thought provoking and educational. I find myself now expressing many of your viewpoints to my friends and defending your position. However, I felt that the panel of 'Black Power' representatives assumed that all whites think and feel as one group and that all whites are bad and all blacks are good."

"At least 3 of the 5 sessions should have had some small group dialoging, using some focal questions (except for the one night when leaders were present)."

"Black society should be given 'everything' that the white society has and is enjoying now."

"Questions are too 'black and white'. Idealistic - tendency to overlook practical economics. D.F.U. great, I learned a lot. I think the Black panelists were too negative in their approach to the audience, however I understand their bitterness."

"Excellent series - my understanding has increased tremendously - just wish I could now obtain some training in verbalizing my understanding more adequately."

"I think I needed help in recognizing racist behavior (I probably will still miss a good deal). I think the commitment and dedication of some of the black people (our group leader, for instance) has been an inspiration. I think it is as important for whites as for blacks to know Negro, Mexican, etc., literature, history, etc. We need to admire and respect, too."

"Feel it is very important to continue this type of communication -- very valuable and thought provoking."

"I feel I have had a broader view of the problems that both white and black communities have to solve. I have both sides of the story now and can use my own conscious to evaluate the situation."

"I commend you for your excellent presentation in D.F.U. The opportunity to listen to and have dialogue with people from Black Nationalist groups as well as our own neighbors helps us to see the problems and solutions more clearly. More human relations sub-groups and a coalition group of organized groups for political pressure would speed up action by Gov't., I believe."

"The D.F.U. sessions have been an excellent foundation for future building. I appreciate all who have given their time for this problem."

"Would prefer meetings not extended over too long a time period - given over weekends or every nite. How about involving white power structure in discussions."

"Excellent series. Informative and provocative. Hope we don't lose our enthusiasm and drive and let inertia take over."

"This D.F.U. series was extremely good and stimulating - I only hope that positive action, based on a new awareness and concern for all Americans, will be the aftermath of your (CIC's) hard work - Thank you so very much!!!"

"People should have been given a sheet with names & addresses of the ethnic publications to make subscribing surer and simpler. Same regards NAACP, Urban League, etc. DFU was well presented and informative but did not make strong enough demand for comittment by people, particularly those claiming religious affiliation.

"We need more understanding - dialogue between whites and minorities. This D.F.U. has given me a better understanding of the urgency of the problems."