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CURE

CITIZENS UNITED FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

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SCHOOL VANDALISM
Causes and Remedies

by Shuf Swift

In view of the recent costly fires at Hale and Einstein Junior High Schools, A Report on Conflict & Violence in in California's High Schools recently issued by the State Department of Education is of special interest. While the report indicates that violence is not as widespread and common as some believe, it is a serious problem. For this reason Wilson Riles, Superintendent of Public Instruction, established a task force to collect comprehensive data on incidents of conflict and tension, to analyze the data so that useful generalizations or principles could be identified, and to look for programs and procedures that have proven effective in preventing and reducing conflict in high schools.

The Task Force conducted a mail survey of over 300 California high schools. They interviewed over 1,000 persons (administrators, students, teachers, parents, and community representatives) on 32 campuses. They gave attitude surveys to these same 1,000 persons. They interviewed 60 experts. They examined nearly 300 reports, articles, books and other publications and analyzed over 100 newspaper articles. All ethnic groups were well represented in all of the surveys and interviews. In short, the data collected was extensive and representative.

Regarding the nature and extent of conflict the Task Force came to these general conclusions:

"Although most acute in the inner city, campus disorder and violence exist throughout the state."

"Disruptions on campus stemming from student activism appear to have subsided in recent years."

"School conflict is not associated with any single racial or ethnic group of students."

"Vandalism is the most widespread type of campus conflict in terms of frequency and expense."

The general conclusions of the Task Force regarding the causes of conflict were:

"Students, staff, and community members frequently have significantly different views about the causes of situational conflict in the schools." Situational conflict is associated with local issues such as student regulations, dress codes, student organizations and sports events.

"Practices in the schools which are perceived by minority persons as a continuation of a long history of discrimination, exclusion, and denial of help cause intergroup conflict."

"The causes of criminal behavior on the school campus are complex, reflecting problems of the larger society."

The report devotes 12 of its 30 pages to describing and discussing methods which have been utilized successfully to reduce the various forms of conflict. Many methods that have successfully reduced vandalism cost little or nothing. Instead they utilize the energy, skills and creativeness of the students. One of the most successful techniques was the use of student designed murals on halls, walls, and even whole buildings. In another instance, restrooms, which are often a target of vandalism and harrassment, were redecorated and placed under the supervision of student government. "It appears that administrative action to encourage genuine student involvement in the school's decision-making process is likely to reduce the incidence of situational and activism conflict."

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UPDATE ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Human relations is back! In many and diverse areas there is evidence of an upsurge in human relations activity in San Diego.

What is human relations? It is people communicating and relating to one another. For human relations to be effective and positive, individuals must develop respect and understanding for all kinds of human beings, and must learn and practice communications skills.

At the San Diego Marine Base the Human Relations Institute, under the direction of Capt. Donna McLellan, trains Human Relations Discussion Leaders. These individuals return to their bases throughout the United States to serve as leaders for human relations classes given all entering Marines. The Marine program emphasizes a scientific approach to the study of human values and cross-cultural issues through discussion and an

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As for reducing intergroup conflict, the two examples selected to illustrate successful total programs were the Pasadena and Riverside unified school districts, two districts who desegregatsd their schools, one by court order and one voluntarily. These two districts provide excellent examples of how intergroup tensions can be dealt with successfully.

The Pasadena program had two principal themes. The first was to maintain open communications between all people interested in education; and where no communications existed, to establish communications. The second theme was to develop an increased awareness of what was going on within each school as well as with individual students. One specific program was to place five specially trained police officers, selected because of their abilities to communicate with students, in particular schools throughout the district where they were "heavily involved in activities which develop good communications among all segments of the educational community, provide guidance and counseling to students and their families, and create a favorable atmosphere in which police personnel and students can better understand one another."

A Diversionary School was provided for expelled students It was supported through the cooperative efforts of several community and state agencies, including the school district, the California Youth Authority, the Police Department and the City Manager's office. The program consisted of counseling and remedial work involving teacher, counselors, psychologists, and tutors, and aimed at getting the student back into the mainstream of the community through employment or a return to school. There is general agreement that this program worked to the benefit of the student and the community.

A student advisory group of 50 to 75 students from all high schools met regularly with the superintendent. These were not just student leaders, but a representative cross section of students. The nature of the meetings was unstructured, and the superintendent felt this allowed many potentially disruptive issues to be resolved. The social science department in each school presented a course in the American system of justice taught by uniformed Pasadena policemen. Learning Centers staffed by counselor-teachers, psychologist, community workers and a variety of tutors were available to give personal attention to students who were on the verge of becoming serious discipline problems

About eight years ago Riverside voluntarily desegregated its schools. There was strong pressure from the community to take this action. The district administration appointed a task force to develop ways of dealing with the problems and tensions that existed at that time. Parent advisory committees were formed as a result of one recommendation from the task force. The advisory committees provided parents and school officials with a regular forum for discussing all types of problems, including violence and vandalism. These committees continue to function, though the problems of desegregation are no longer a primary concern.

The superintendent placed heavy reliance on his principals. He "implemented a form of decentralized management which gives principals and teachers a much bigger voice in governing their school.

Sensitivity of certified and classified staff was emphasized. To further emphasize the importance of sensitivity to the "little things," the superintendent conducted a leadership training program It is a voluntary program for teachers who aspire to leadership positions As an example of one of the "little things," no student could be suspended until the student's parents had come to the school for a conference with a counselor or the principal.

As another method of opening communications the superintendent initiated the Youth Forum. This is a group selected by the students which meets with the superintendent twice a month to discuss any matters of student interest. The superintendent has worked hard to earn the respect and trust of community leaders as well.

Like the Pasadena program, the Riverside program puts heavy emphasis on open communications and programs which develop mutual respect and trust. The reduction in conflict and violence cannot be attributed to any specific program alone. Much credit for the success in both districts must be given to the attitudes of the superintendent, other administrators, and teachers who demonstrated a real caring for students and a genuine concern for the parents and the community. The program gave expression to and support for these attitudes.

It is encouraging that the two examples of district programs that successfully reduced conflict and violence were districts that were desegregating their schools.

CURE

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a forum for the dissemination of information and the expression of opinions among those concerned with combating racism. CURE believes the opinions herein need to be expressed, although they may not represent official policy of CURE.

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In Memorium

Olen Purnell, Jr. 24, poet, died suddenly March 16th, in his Pacific Beach apartment. He was from Harlem and had lived in San Diego for two years.

Olen's contributions strengthening our community life were many. He worked for the Urban League as a community organizer He affected policy regarding implementation of equal opportunity practices of city contractors. He was in demand as a speaker on racism, drug abuse, and prison reform, and had served on CURE panels. Olen sang in the choir of St. David's Church where he was a member.

Survivors are his parents, Olen and Johnnie Mae Purnell, three brothers, three sisters, and his San Diego "family" Aaron and Mary Eunice Oliver.

A selection of poetry by Olen Purnell, Jr. follows. Plans are being made to publish a volume of his poetry so that it will be available to the public.

Self-Portrait

Who am I?
I am twenty three
I am from... Watts... Logan Heights.. Harlem.. Brownville
Anywhere on the wrong side of the tracks,
Will do just fine. Thank you.

I am here...
Because there is no refuge ... finally from myself.
Myself now ... at the present... is the ex-man... ex-convict...
Ex-drug addict ... ex-lost soul.

What am I?
I fancy myself a poet.
But now I work hard with my two hands
To raise myself from the mud.
I sweat and get dirty...
But I fancy myself a poet!

Where am I?
Here with a family.
I live and love in a family.
Differences are to be appreciated not to be hated.
Differences are not used as a foundation
For superiority or inferiority.

I am Olen Purnell.
I came from New York.
I was lost.
I am found!

Look At Me America
two poems

Look at me, America, I am your sin,
The bastard son, the unwanted one
That you keep hidden from the eyes of reason.
I am the darker child, forever and always a child,
Shining shoes of shame, and always "Boy" has been my name.

A sleep-in maid
Since the birth of their world
Now, I'm old and time-wrinkled
But they call me "their girl."

Look at me, America,
Are you capable of truth?
Or is my dark skin
the fountain of youth?

Open Letter to God

Dear Father,
Our Father, Almighty one
Look what they've done to your son
They've nailed him to a cross, Father
Feelin' like I'm lost, Father
Look what they've done to your son!
Father, Our Father, God of mercy
Look what they've done to folks like me!
Father, Our Father, Lord over land
Look what they've done to Viet Nam
They're not hearin' what you say Father
They're killin' folks every day, Father
Look what they've done to Viet Nam!
Father, Our Father, when will it end?
And when can I call each man my friend?
The sheep have all strayed from your fold, Father
All of us lost and cold, Father
Send down our shepherd again!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES For Fiscal Year June 1, 1973 to May 31, 1974
(includes a newsletter subscription)

Student . . $2	Contribution . $25	Donation . $____
Individual. .$5	Sustaining. . . $100	Subscription without membership . . . $2
Family . . . $8	Organization. .$15	

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I am unable to send money now, but want to remain on the mailing list. ____
Sometimes CURE receives requests for use of its open mailing list from groups dealing with solutions to racial problems. Should your name be included on the____ open list or____ restricted list?

UPDATE

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individual action program. Each session ends with action assignments, to be reported on at the next class session. There is much enthusiasm about the progress made since the beginning of the program.

A recent San Diego City School publication, Human Relations: Guide for Schools in Transition (prepared by Bertha Pendleton, Vice Principal, Crawford High School is another evidence of resurgent interest in human relations. The Guide is for secondary school use, each school receiving enough copies to supply its Human Relations Committee. Since human relations programs are now mandated for each school in San Diego the Guide will prove useful. It includes a history of human relations activities in San Diego schools, an article on "Transition High: Profile of a School in Change", and program objectives with checklists for helping the school arrive at meaningful goals for its particular situation. CURE readers can ask about the Guide at their school, and may want to share in the implementation of its suggestions.

Another new City Schools activity in human relations is the training workshop held each week in Bungalow 8 at the Ed Center. A voluntary team of six or more from each school within an area cluster (usually four schools) come together with four facilitators for three active days. Comprising the teams are two parents, two or three teachers and administrators and two students. The three days pass quickly as the participants "grope, gripe, grasp and finally group." Many opportunities are provided for practicing effective communication. Participants learn active listening, feedback skills, observation, role identification, value clarification, etc. Time is allowed for the teams to work on human relations program development for their own schools. At the conclusion, the group experiences a euphoric unity, and members return to their school communities with useful skills in their pockets, knowing whom to contact for support in future human relations endeavors.

A most significant recent development in San Diego is the unanimous decision of the Elementary School Administrators to participate in human relations training. Their program began Jan. 17, continues for seven weeks, then repeats with new participants. Each Thursday and Friday 99 elementary principals and vice principals flock in groups of 25 to Bungalow 8. With so much increased attention to the problem, we should soon see notable progress in human relations activities in our schools.

The San Diego Chamber of Commerce has its program. On February 22, 1974 the Chamber sponsored a Seminar on Effective Affirmative Action and Human Relations. The purpose was to provide personnel management of corporations, government agencies, and community organizations the opportunity to review their human relations and affirmative action practices, particularly as they pertain to minority, handicapped and female employees.

Because of past years of devoted effort to improve communication among persons of diverse origins, CURE members can take a special pleasure in the progress in human relations being made in San Diego today.

FRIENDS OF FARM WORKERS

Churches and Synagogues across the land honored farm workers during the week of April 28 thru May 4, 1974 with special services, offerings, and food ingatherings.

CURE Newsletter readers who have not had an opportunity to share in this expression of support for the farm workers as they struggle for self-determination and justice may send contributions to the CURE office or to the UFW office, 1825 National Ave.

Election Due

Any CURE member is eligible to serve on the Board of Directors. A slate of nominees is now being prepared for election to a 2 year term, beginning in June, 1974. If you would like to be included on it please call the office, 295-5800.

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