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MINORITY CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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I am happy to have the opportunity to present for your consideration some points of view developed in the course of almost 50 years of observation and experience as a member of various minority groups -- as a member of a minority racial group, as a member of a minority religious group, and finally as a bureaucrat among many taxpayers.

The validity of the points of view expressed here should be measured by you as you evaluate them against what you already know -- and what you may learn -- in the discussions this week, as all of us seek to find out how to provide opportunities by which children and youth may realize their full potential for creative life in freedom and dignity.

If you do not subscribe to these views, then you must determine for yourselves to what views you will subscribe. If you do subscribe to these views, then you must determine what course of action you plan to take in carrying out these convictions.

The masses of people of the world are not as concerned with sputniks as they are with social problems of minority groups. This concern exists largely because social patterns prescribed in the past by dominant groups for natives of newly discovered areas, and later for minorities, were crystalized into legal systems from which subjected peoples throughout the world are now seeking freedom and independence.

There is one such group, well represented here for the first time, whose ancestors met the boat on which most of your ancestors arrived.

The American Indian tribes, like other native peoples of the world, have been subject to legal systems involving treaty-making, ceding of land, and rights of occupancy. In the process of settling the land bringing vast territories into a federated union of states, now known as the United States, a modicum of legality in land acquisition gave respectability to transactions with separate Indian tribes.

For individuals within the tribes these experiences held no dignity nor promise. From such experiences they found themselves forced into patterns of acceptance and accommodation where they were made prisoners of war, compelled under forced marches to leave localities familiar to them, and refused settlement along

with other settlers. The reservation system, though quite legal and useful to territorial settlers, also proved effective in isolating individuals and families of Indians from the mainstream of social and economic development.

Over a long period of time Indian tribes came to look upon these reserves as places of refuge from the "civilization" which threatened to engulf them. Later there began to be a movement of Indians away from these reservations, largely in search of education and new experiences. Now, Indian youth and young adults of all tribes are moving into the dominant group and utilizing structures of that group to establish and maintain a new way of life.

For those who are not able to cope with the frustrations which come about from failure to make an adequate adjustment, those things detrimental to their physical and social well-being become the pattern. This pattern is illustrated by the statistics of one State which reveal that although only 4 percent of the population is of Indian descent, 25 percent of those in the Boys' Training School are Indian, 50 percent of those in the Girls' Training School are Indian and $33\frac{1}{3}$ percent of those in the State penitentiary are Indians with an average age of less than 25 years.

They are the products of a society that has oriented them for a different world and with their emergence they find themselves caught between two worlds.

In their old world they find there is very little concern for the future -- that one lives in complete harmony with nature -- that in return nature will provide for their consumption those things essential to life. This is contrasted with the other world where there exists a real concern for the future -- where nature is to be exploited for the benefit of man -- and where production is the basis of our economic survival.

For the most part, Indian young people grow up in rural areas far removed from industrial activity and those resources which can contribute to their social development. All the knowledge about the other world is obtained from between the covers of a textbook. Their limited socializing experiences leave them little equipped with the social skills necessary for their satisfactory and healthy personality adjustment.

With a concept of time based upon the present only, they lack orientation to a future-oriented society. They feel the enjoyment of the moment should not be marred by a concern for tomorrow. As products of a society without a concept for time, Indian young people find it difficult to understand or keep pace with their

youthful counterparts of a time-oriented society in their frenzied search for security.

Living in the homes of their parents and grandparents does not give them the opportunity to observe as daily examples people who are well adjusted to the society around them. There have not emerged a sufficient number of cultural heroes from their social system to provide images for emulation.

They have a fear of the prejudices in the communities around them and those who obtain social acceptance in those communities do not champion the cause of those who are left behind.

Their educational opportunities have been limited so that only now can it be said that for the first time there is available educational opportunities for every Indian child of elementary school age.

Social exchange and communication among ancestors in their various tribal groups were limited by the 200 native languages spoken by the various Indian Tribes. The only common language was the English language of their conquerors.

They come from the most economically destitute minority group with a life expectancy of little more than one-half of the general population. Their instinct for preservation has promoted a very high birthrate and there has been a 50 percent increase in population over the last 25 years with 50 percent of the present population being under 19 years of age.

Their society demands that members share with each other for the benefit of the tribal group. This social obligation has forced parents to deny to their own children many economic and social advantages.

Due to mechanization of agriculture, job opportunity for the unskilled in proximity of their homes has been lost and their economy is based upon a relief program which over a sustained period is resulting in deteriorating personalities.

Finally, spiritual insecurity prevails as their native religious principles and teachings are lost with the death of their elders and the new Christianity is not so understood as to fill the spiritual gap caused by this loss.

Out of this background are emerging some, of which there are several at this conference but far too few, outstanding Indian youth. The fact that these few personalities have survived social deterioration

gives us hope as well as evidence that with sympathetic understanding and opportunity, this number can be greatly increased. They can become a part of the total community bringing with them the contributions of their heritage to enrich all of our lives.

Their struggle for a meaningful way of life in our society is that of all minority groups in the world who have joined issue with the dominant group to reach an understanding of the values of human life.

What is the challenge of our society in fostering this emergence of Indian children and youth with self-respectful images of themselves.

May I suggest some goals for action which would benefit Indian children and youth in the building of self-concepts of themselves and in leading more productive lives.

Movements to evaluate textbooks material and supplement it where desirable on the concepts of Indians taught to all children would be timely.

Special opportunities should be provided for children and youth on reservations to benefit from leadership training and group participation programs. These programs help children and youth to gain some insight into the attitudes which help them cope with life in the communities around them. This requires financing and this is not provided for in present Federal, State, local, or voluntary programs.

Because of the islands of poverty in which they live where the poverty of social experience is more acute, well-defined programs of summer visitation to families within communities where social experiences are richer would provide beneficial opportunities. This poverty suggests also the need for scholarship and aid programs for Indian students at the high school and junior high school level.

Mental hygiene services, already too limited for all children, are more and more necessary for Indian children and youth in conflict. Recognition and acceptance of responsibility by States is suggested not only for services but also for protection within the legal system used to safeguard all children. A study of reservation Indian children and youth in the American legal system is long overdue and would be most helpful to tribes, the States, and Federal Government.

To these suggestions could be added the relocation of families for educational reasons and other socializing experiences within the social setting of the community in which lies their hope for economic and social betterment.

The major courses of action of the next decade with respect to minorities should be directed toward diminishing minority status as a factor in the lives of individuals.

The existence of a minority depends upon the power of one group to dominate another socially, economically, and politically. When this domination restricts the freedom of the minority then conflicts arise between the groups, within the groups and finally within the individuals themselves.

What people will do who come under this kind of domination depends a great deal upon the bitterness quotient generated by the dominant group. This group which may feel a sense of responsibility, if at all responsive to the precepts of freedom and Christianity, nevertheless seeks to relieve itself of this responsibility by seeking refuge behind a self-serving set of values arrived at by rationalizing their position with tradition -- if nothing else.

We must therefore set forth a premise that we can build a society in which we begin to diminish minorities and develop a total community identity. Only when this is done, can a capitalistic and democratic society develop to its fullest potential and provide that atmosphere essential for children and youth to have the opportunity to realize their capabilities for creative life in freedom and dignity.

Minorities learn through education, experience and within-group training to develop methods of coping with their minority status.

The Negroes who were immigrated here by compelling invitation accommodated themselves to the pattern set for them and by rationalization seemed almost to accept their secondary role. This role was created by the dominant group, who built an image for the Negro which was designed to be useful in maintaining the power structure of the dominant group. This accounted for the stereotypes ascribed to the Negro race. However, a different image of Negro personality developed by the Negro himself through education and experience is emerging and that image is based upon what the Negro believes himself to be -- a human being.

People have in their minds an image of an Indian, a Negro, a Catholic, or a Jew and as this human being moves out from within his own group and emerges it is like immigrating into a foreign land because an image has been prescribed for him that he does not know nor identify as himself. This image bears no relationship to what he actually is nor to his potential as a human being.

It is the experience of minority groups that the dominant group attempts to tamper with their freedom of choice and decisionmaking. Individuals, therefore, develop patterns of making those kinds of decisions which are expected of them, rather than habits of exercising free choice.

They frequently find themselves in a position of acquiescing although they know that in the absence of freedom of choice and of opportunity they cannot achieve the results expected of them by the dominant group. Consequently, there is added the image of incompetence to the stereotype image.

This image of incompetence draws forth in the dominant group the mechanisms of paternalism, an approach which is neither desirable nor desired. However, it is another way of maintaining power under the guise of benevolence. Failure of the minority to have freedom of choice in decision-making can only add to the toll of disturbed personalities which are the consequences of a secondary role as a human being -- limited by the fate but not the choice of being in a minority group.

If we accept the premise of freedom we would grant that every person growing up in this great land of ours would have the right and be given the freedom to discover himself and his potential to serve others not according to what someone else thinks he is nor any prescriptions written for his behavior as a member of a minority group.

He should have the freedom of coming into contact with fellow-citizens and of not having his development restricted by extraneous factors which seek to identify him with what somebody else thinks is his place. If opportunity for development in terms of God-given talents and potential are restricted, then by the same token, the freedom to which we all subscribe as being the natural heritage of all citizens is also restricted.

We may well ask, "Why do we have devices to measure capabilities and talents if the opportunity for development is going to be restricted or determined on a wholly different basis?"

The mere spatial adjacency of the majority with the minority group does not lessen the width of the chasm which separates them. There must be developed a social adjacency based upon a communication of spirit as well as words and on which depends the society of a free people. The dominant society cannot take action which leaves it socially removed from the very problems created by that society within the minority group.

We need to say, "All of my friends are human beings," and not "You know some of my best friends are Indians." This kind of communication at the feeling level should not be interrupted nor made impossible by compartmentalizing of human beings according to the race, religion, or some other criteria created by the dominant group, primarily as a defense of its own security. The minority assumes that there exists meaningful communication between the members of the dominant group. There is understanding as to their views toward the minority status they are seeking to maintain for others, but in relation to other things there exists a paucity of that kind of communication out of which can grow, among other things, their own security.

When the sophisticated minority finds that this communication does not exist within the dominant group, except as toward the minority, they begin to desintegrate this view about the minority and break up the units of the dominant group. As the views toward the minority are based upon invalid premises, this breakup becomes more evident and the sense of security of the dominant group is shaken and real difficulties appear on the horizon when it has to make the adjustment.

The problem now confronting both the dominant and minority groups in various sections of the country is what to substitute for the view that the dominant group had of the minority when that view is no longer tenable.

At this point, real leadership must accept its responsibility or the dominant group may well find itself on the wrong side of issues when its position is evaluated in the light of democratic, Christian, and other acceptable values. Real leadership must accept its responsibility or the minority group may well find itself on the wrong side of the issues as the dominant group seeks to break out of the pattern it has brought upon itself.

Communication can neither commence nor continue if the dominant group has fears that it is not going to be treated properly as it should by the minority as the increasingly favorable position of the minority is accelerated.

The only common denominator is to recognize, accept, and defend the principle that man is a human being entitled to the respect he earns.

If we recognize this as a common denominator, then the challenge is to develop the means of a deep and abiding and understanding communication. When this is reached, we can out of the richness of all our different cultures, develop other common denominators in social, economic, and other fields.

We cannot use the experience of one to deny to the others of the minority group that opportunity to develop with the dominant group these common denominators which make for a better way of life. Persons, because of character disorders brought upon by the long and futile struggle, who deviate or show up as disorganized personalities present a problem which should not be used as a bar to opportunity for other members of the group.

How we handle ourselves in the dynamic situation of today will test the validity and permanence of our position in world leadership as the greatest Nation on earth. It will profit us little to have peace with other nations when we do not have peace ourselves.

This peace from within grows out of the destruction by both the dominant and minority groups of something within themselves before

the new dynamics of thought and feeling enable us to undertake a more peaceful life in our own community. We must turn our back on all prejudice and separate ourselves from all prejudices and attitudes of the minority and dominant groups toward each other.

The attitudes within the minority group toward each other and within the dominant group toward each other likewise must be altered or completely destroyed. For those who have been raised in a tradition of nonassociation or noncommunication with your fellow human beings, who are members of minority groups, can you, after having accepted the fact that he is a human being, be at peace with yourself any longer as a member of a dominant program? Lacking the security of like-minded associates, can you develop the courage and strength to find that peace?

Knowledge, experience, and the hand of friendship can bridge the chasm and you can find a common ground of understanding in all those activities which make up the daily lives of all human beings.

I would say to the youth of this conference, that you are human beings -- each with an individual personality. You are also citizens of the United States and finally, you are descendants of a distinguished heritage of which you can be proud. If you think of yourself in a different light, then you will have difficulty of carrying out your main business in life-- which is to be a human being. You have all the factors out of which a creative personality can be made.

The elements which go into building that personality are -- heredity, for which you are not responsible; an environment, which you cannot control; but for your personal response, you alone are responsible. It is not alone what happens to you but the way you take it that will determine your mastery of difficulties which is all a part of life's business. In distressing situations you must look inward to your own attitudes and resources. How you handle yourselves -- not the situation -- will make the difference.

Confronting yourself with the making of your own personality is the beginning of worthwhile living. You must organize your life around some supreme values because the process by which real personality is attained is inward and spiritual. In order not to be torn to pieces inside you must accept heredity, cope with environment, and then say, "Now, I will see what I can do with me."

To pull a person together takes inner resources of power and of a power beyond one's self. This calls for faith -- which is not something we get but something we have.

Religion is the basis for hope and a source of power in trying to make the most of what nature gave us and become what we ought to be. He who undertakes the task is on the main road of creation's meaning and is accepting the central trust of life. If nothing else, please remember:

"The Lord will not ask thy race
Nor will He ask thy birth.
Alone, He will ask of you
What have you done on earth?"