

Racial Crisis in Cleveland—A Diagnosis

Editor's Note: The following is a column submitted by Clyde DeBerry analyzing Cleveland's racial crisis. It is the second installment of a series on the Congress of Racial Equality's Target City Project in Cleveland. The remaining installments will appear intermittently within the next two weeks.

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Cleveland's racial crisis can be analyzed along two dimensions. First, there is the basic crisis in the functioning of the city, the malfunctioning of community institutions, and the deeper-rooted crisis in political-social relations. Secondly, there is the crisis in finding a way out of the situation.

The short-run problem here can best be described as ineffective tension-management. The long-ranged problem, the one that needs to be a focus point for change is the absence of crisis resolving processes.

Due to the inadequate organization of reform elements in both the white and black communities, and the lack of institutionalized processes for creating local resources necessary to change, Cleveland has thus far been unable to deal with the underlying conditions that threaten the security of the whole community.

Malfunctioning Institutions

First of all, as presently organized, the institutions which have been set up for dealing with community issues that directly involve Black people interests have been totally ineffective.

A report in the Cleveland Press on Saturday, June 17, for example, stated that among out-of-school Black youth, the unemployment rate was 58 per cent. This condition of high youth unemployment has continued to persist and worsen over the past few years despite frequent warnings from various commissions that immediate remedial action was needed if the tinderbox of frustration among young Blacks was not to explode into violence.

Yet, even after major violent confrontations occurred in the Hough area of Cleveland during the last year, an effective program remains to be developed that will reach the most alienated, hard-core ghetto youth with jobs and opportunities or convince them that there is a future for them in American society.

Urban renewal is another immediately pressing problem area in which an adequate program still needs to be developed. Poor Blacks in particular are beset by considerable insecurity regarding the program since it is they who will be displaced by Urban Renewal, and it is they who have the least power at present to affect the decisions which are made concerning the direction of the program.

Moreover, underlying the ineffectiveness and mismanagement of the program, and the general unresponsiveness of the city administration to Black fears and concerns seems to be a calculated policy of "containment" of the Black popula-

tion within a defined geographical-political boundary. Despite intensive pressure from the federal government for reforms in the local program, and despite widespread criticism of the program among both Blacks and responsible white civic leaders, efforts at change have thus far been ineffective.

A third critical area where an effective program has yet to be developed is police-community relations.

The tragedy of the Black's experience with Cleveland's political institutions is most clearly attested to by the fact that although the city has 11 elected "negro" members on the City Council, four "negro" judges, and five "negro" representatives in the state legislature, the "negro" community, to date, has been powerless in affecting changes in discriminatory police practices.

These practices involve a blatant exercise of dual standards for whites and Blacks in which, for example, Black youth get incarcerated for minor offenses for which white youth only get mild reprimands.

Such dual standards are highly visible and are common knowledge among all elements of the community. They are a wide-spread source of bitterness toward police and a cause of tensions between Black and white youth.

Community Relations Crisis

To date, however, the city administration has only demonstrated what can most kindly be called insensitivity to this, the most sensitive of community issues.

Underlying this crisis in the community at the institutional level is the far deeper crisis in social relations both within the Black community and between Blacks and other ethnic and social groups within the city.

The old arrangements which placed Blacks on the lowest rung of the status, economic, and political ladders within the total community is no longer accepted by Blacks. Particularly among the younger generation of Blacks who have grown up during the period of civil rights ferment, the norms, values, and institutions within the Black community which were constructed on the implicit or explicit assumption of the Black inferiority are being totally discarded.

These youth are coming to adulthood at a time when the old standards for behavior are no longer viable, but where a new community order based on common pride, responsibilities, and a deep-rooted "we-feeling" is still in an embryonic stage.

This lack of a well-developed "sense of community" among Blacks is paralleled by a lack of solidarity between Blacks and whites.

The uncertainties and disorder that have gone with the creative changes in the Black community have produced violent defensive reaction in the members of other ethnic groups in Cleveland who have interpreted the upsurge in Black militance as a threat to their positions in the "ethnic hierarchy."

Suspicion and fear has (sic) been the response of many of these groups to the social changes in which they have not participated but which they have felt as a threat to their security.

In the absence of large scale cooperative activities between Blacks and other ethnic groups that would create an order based on the concept of racial equality rather than ethnic hierarchy, tensions will continue. The solution to the institutional crisis of the city requires as well the implementation of steps designed to reconstruct social relations both within the Black community and between Blacks and whites.

Movement Disorganization

These steps, however, are not being taken in part to a crisis in the internal organization of the civil rights movement. The local movement today is highly fragmented—common programs and supporting activities are virtually nonexistent.

This situation is due to the difficult problems encountered in developing alternative solutions for issues that could not be resolved through simple non-violent protest and moral fervor.

It should be noted here that the rise in frustration among young Blacks locally has closely followed the blocking and frustrations of the once effective local movement in creating appropriate strategies, methods, and structures of involvement for bringing social change in the ghetto.

With the indicated investment of major resources in Cleveland by CORE, SCLC, other national civil rights organizations, and supporting foundations, the possibility of creating a city-wide movement, a new coalition of urban forces, which will be as effective in solving the basic dilemmas of the ghetto as non-violent protest was effective in breaking the color line, looms as a distinct possibility.

So far, however, no steps have been taken to link up the activities of various groups into a coordinated system.

Tension Management Crisis

The second dimension of Cleveland's crises concerns the handling of "crisis situations" produced by the conjunction of the malfunctioning of city institutions, increased militancy among Blacks, the growing polarization between Blacks and whites, and the certainty of prolonged periods of tension as a new coalition of community forces directs itself to overcoming the political and economic powerlessness of the ghetto and solving Cleveland's basic urban problems.

Situations involving a potential for violence by either Blacks and whites will continue to be endemic to the city until the urban crisis is solved and a new set of arrangements established between Blacks and whites.

Indeed, at this point in history, virtually any heated controversy that involves Black-white relations, or any incident involving the police and the community can be the match that lights the flames of chaos. Yet, the city administration seems to have learned very little from either its past experience or that of other cities that will prepare it to deal with persistent community tensions in the future.

The previous mayor, for example, persisted in labeling the racial outbreaks that have already occurred as the results

of "outside agitators" and "communists."

This attitude has served as an obstacle between the city administration and responsible Black leadership, preventing the development of meaningful dialogue on deep-rooted problems that require extensive cooperation from all parts of the community for their solution.

The most recent example of the previous mayor's attitude was his publicly declared belligerence toward Martin Luther King, whom the mayor had refused to meet with and had labeled an "extremist."

A serious educational program must be directed at the mayor and the top leadership of the Cleveland Police Department in the art of tension-management if his intransigent belligerence is not to produce more fuel for violent confrontation.

The problems of effectively handling crisis situations, however, is not simply confined to the city administration. Local community leadership, out of fear and lack of training in the dynamics of community crisis, have demonstrated throughout the country a lack of understanding of the dynamics of the dilemmas they have faced. In their conclusion, blunders typically are made which only exacerbate tensions.

Yet, nothing has thus far been done in Cleveland to educate responsible community leadership, both black and white, in "tension management" as a matter of daily routine. The only program dealing with this problem in the entire city is that conducted by the police department which stresses exclusively the weaponry and organization of police activity in riot control.

There is virtually no recognition of the basic fact that violence control in community conflicts can best be secured through effective leadership arrangements, rather than through the technical organization of the police department to control an outburst after it has occurred. The definition of intergroup tension control as primarily a military problem is, at best, only a stop-gap measure in resolving disputes, and at worst, a positive agent for a future conflagration.

Lack of Processes for Change

Finally, and most important, there is a lack of institutionalized processes for creating resources necessary to change. The leadership, the knowledge, the staff, the motivational and financial resources necessary to change are not being generated on a regular basis within the city.

While individuals at the local universities and institutions of higher learning, and among the professions, have been actively involved at a personal level in the civil rights movement, there has been little demonstrated effort by those institutions responsible for the training of skilled personnel to orient programs directly toward the solution of Cleveland's pressing racial dilemmas.

While the people of ghetto and civic leadership desperately need skills and information on a regular basis, this is not being provided. Thus, in the absence of the formulation of non-violent alternatives for change, a social pattern oscillating between violent outbursts and apathy becomes more probable.

Emerald Editor:

'Facts' Corrected

Emerald Editor:

I would like to correct some of Jerry Norton's "facts" about the war in Vietnam.

First of all, Dr. Howard Rusk found no napalm victims in the hospitals because it is American policy to "escort" such visitors on their tours. This means Dr. Rusk only saw the things the U.S. Army wanted him to see, things to make him think we aren't burning babies and that we're winning the war.

Another reason Dr. Rusk found so few war casualties is that most of them, who live in small hamlets, never get to the pitifully small number of hospitals in the cities.

Mr. Norton's next "fact" is that we fly over hamlets warning the inhabitants to get out before we bomb. How humane of us! These people will not leave their homes because their religion ties them to their family gravesites, but as long as we tell them first, we don't mind bombing the hell out of them with napalm. And if they aren't killed, we "pacify" their vil-

lages by burning everything to the ground and then sending them to "relocation camps" no better than concentration camps. No one can deny this.

The United States is so unashamed that anyone can see it on Huntley-Brinkley any night of the week. And we don't call off bombing raids when civilians are involved. Barbara Demming, who spoke here last year after spending time in Vietnam, saw the Americans bomb a leper colony, chase the prisoners into caves and then bomb the caves.

About our allies, Mr. Norton. When Saigon was attacked several days ago, why didn't the ARVN soldiers help fight when called by the American forces? Why did the South Vietnamese Army have a 21-year-old draft limit until a few weeks ago? And why are so many young South Vietnamese between the ages of 18 and 21 fleeing to Cambodia now that they're drafting 18-year-olds? Could it be they don't really want us there?

If everyone forgot the so-call-

ed "facts" and tried to be a human being, this war would soon be over.

How would you like being bombed every day by an "enemy" you couldn't understand, Mr. Norton? How would you like having to leave your home in order to stay alive? How would you like being maimed by napalm or killed by bullets that shatter the capillary system little by little? If everyone turned this "abstract" war into a personal conviction against the slaughter, maybe the United States could be a decent country.

Dianne Fallon,
Graduate, English

Defiance

Emerald Editor:

With reference to the advertisement submitted in Monday's Emerald by Mr. D. V. Clark on behalf of the creationists I should like to point out that God defies the law of gravity simply by being up there.

David Policansky
Graduate, Biology



The Officers and Crew of the U.S.S. Pueblo