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## [Memo from Esther Raushenbush to the College Community, May 14, 1969]

Esther Raushenbush  
*Sarah Lawrence College*

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May 14, 1969

To: The College Community  
From: Esther Raushenbush

You will have received notice that we have decided to close the Institute for Community Studies. This decision does not affect [REDACTED]'s personal research which, as in the case of any scholar, he is free to carry on as he chooses. It is understood that he will complete his present Institute-sponsored projects in Mount Vernon, but not undertake new ones. Mr. [REDACTED] will also, of course, continue as a member of the faculty, and will teach one course.

Arrangements for students to engage in field work in connection with any courses will be made in the regular way through the College.

The decision to close the Institute was taken after a long discussion among Mr. DeCarlo, Mrs. Mattfeld, Mr. [REDACTED] and his staff, and me. It is important for the College to continue to develop its relations with the community and to serve the community. It has been suggested that one or more communities in the neighborhood might wish to establish community institutes of their own, and the College should stand ready to give such groups any professional assistance within its competence.

The tensions surrounding the activities of white people that affect black people are, as you know, growing; and the pressure on our campus, not only among the black students sitting in, but the other black students as well, and among some white students, and others, for community control of the Institute, and community determination of its activities has taken more energy, and promised to deflect the work of the College more actively than, in our judgment, was warranted. The black faculty have publicly supported the position taken by the black students, as have some white faculty. A majority of the General Committee have also supported it. The position they have taken is that the Institute should either be brought under community control or be closed. We have chosen to close it.

It is essential that the College find ways to conduct its principal business with as little friction as possible in a time of increasing difficulties in the relations among people in general, and between black and white people particularly. Those of us responsible for the administration of the College have felt that the educational loss to the College of the Institute for Community Studies would, at this time, be less than the educational gains that would come from a new effort to create good cooperation among all groups on campus. New and less abrasive ways of carrying on work in the community will have to be found by those faculty and students interested in such activities.

ER/lk