

5-21-1969

[Faculty Member to the Sarah Lawrence Community, May 21, 1969]

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To: The Sarah Lawrence College Community

From: [REDACTED]

May 21, 1969

I want to take this opportunity of thanking my faculty colleagues for their resolution of support adopted at the May 13th faculty meeting.

Several of the faculty have advised me that they felt quite uninformed and, therefore, confused about some of the charges against the Institute which was closed by the administration on May 13th. Although the Institute for Community Studies no longer exists, I do feel that some of the examples of "exploitation" used by the sit-ins should be clearly understood by the faculty.

According to the demonstrators, the Institute has:

- "1. Been set up to study the alien cultures of surrounding communities. Mount Vernon is not an alien culture."

One of the most ardent, vocal supporters of the sit-ins has acknowledged that this phrase was not used by me or my staff at any time in either written or oral statement. Rather we have said, "the City of Mount Vernon is faced squarely with problems which in varying degrees will be confronting more and more small cities and suburban communities across America." (From The College in the Community: The Institute for Community Studies and Mount Vernon, a report issued by the Institute in 1968.)

- "2. Has helped bring Model Cities to Mount Vernon."

The Institute alerted the Regional Office of HUD and Mount Vernon local black leaders to the weakness of the city's Model Cities proposal with regard to the proposed structure of community participation. We provided examples of how other communities give "target" populations a more effective role in the decision-making process of developing and implementing Model Cities programs.

- "3. Has said it works with the people of Mount Vernon - yet it hand picks the people it chooses to work with."

In February 1967, we were asked by 32 Mount Vernon people and leaders of varied South Side (Negro) organizations to serve as consultant to their weekend retreat which addressed itself to the question, "Can Negroes Mobilize?" We presented a population estimate which indicated that by 1975

the Negro population would constitute approximately half of the city's population. The participants at the conference recognized that they needed to prepare for that time when they would obviously be in a position to share more fully in community discussions. At that conference, an Ad Hoc Council was formed and a Steering Committee and Chairman elected. We had been serving that self-elected Council which did represent both the organizational and unaffiliated population, and did so only when called upon.

- "4. Though the Institute gives lip service to quality education, its actions show it is only interested in integration and not quality education for black children."

We were privileged to assist the Black Community Planning Board develop and write the Best Plan. About 150 black people were involved in the development of the Plan which was vocally supported by a substantial number of leaders and publicly opposed by none. The Best Plan clearly stated that integration is a meaningless concept unless accompanied by an upgrading of the entire educational system, effective parental participation, and the use of black para-professionals to be placed in every classroom taught by a white teacher to help the teacher use the rich culture of the black child.

- "5. The Institute works in many black communities with no black people on its administrative staff."

The Institute staff included a black teaching associate, the parent coordinator of Upward Bound, and a research assistant. The Institute worked in many predominantly white communities as well as in racially mixed ones.

I would be pleased to meet with any faculty member for further clarification.