

Intervention for What?

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INTervention is a useless word and one that is incompatible with a truly democratic society. However, it is not incompatible with a society moving toward a true concept of democracy.

Our social order gives evidence that there is need for intervention if each American is to realize the good life of fulfillment and happiness. There are caste-like obstacles of class, race, sex, religion, employment, and education.

Many have challenged and are still challenging our capitalistic society, a society that has drawn the class lines tighter and tighter. Socialist groups and various forms of cooperative endeavors are still trying to change this economic pattern.

America does not have a caste system, as such; so sociologists, in referring to the plight of many Americans, particularly non-white Americans, have coined the phrase "caste-like." For all intents and purposes, this is no different from the old caste system of India before independence and a new constitution. Many Americans are relegated to "their own kind" when it comes to social life and, in many instances, religious and economic life. There has been some breakthrough, but as long as there are still hang-ups on matters like intermarriage, where poor people shall live, and who shall be educated, there is need for intervention.

The Matter of Race

Tied closely to class and caste is the matter of race, probably America's number one problem, and the one in which there is greatest need for intervention. Without attempting to be historical or philosophic, it can be stated simply that emotions run deep where race is concerned. I am not speaking of the human race. I am speaking of those who are black, red, yellow, brown, or white, for these are the words that most closely identify the various peoples of our society.

The most common intervention in dealing with race has been the written and the spoken word. The inference has been that if people hear the facts or read the facts, they will change apparent attitudes and feelings. I have been one who has tried through the written word in *Educational Leadership* and other publications to help people understand this problem. From the first article that I wrote, "How We Look to Other Peoples of the World," to the most recent, I have advocated what I believe to be the solution of this major aspect of American misunderstanding.

Other ASCDers have spoken to this crucial issue. Delmo Della-Dora and his article, "Racism and Prejudice: Yesterday and Today," developed a theme that has since been published by Michigan ASCD

and distributed in reprint form by the Michigan Education Association. James House, Delmo Della-Dora, and Wilzetta Brown developed the statement, "Improving Race Relations: What Can One Person Do?" Arthur Adkins of the University of Maryland has prepared a one-page statement titled, "Am I a Racist, or Not?" These statements have been addressed directly to people in education and particularly to those who are affiliated with ASCD.

Outside of ASCD, many others have spoken eloquently; for example, Kenneth B. Clark in *Prejudice and Your Child*; Mary Ellen Goodman, "Race Awareness in Your Children"; "The Rightness of Whiteness: The World of the White Child in a Segregated Society," by Abraham E. Citron. The list is nearly inexhaustible. Many groups have spoken up; among these have been the Anti-Defamation League; the National Conference of Christians and Jews; the Congress of Racial Equality; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, through its organ *The Crisis*; *The Journal of Negro Life and History*; and the President's Commission on Social Disorder, appointed by President Johnson and chaired by Governor Kerner of Illinois. I am sure the written word has brought about some improvement, though I am afraid not nearly enough.

Many have come to believe that for intervention in the area of race to be effective, it must be tied to action and to deeds.

Those Most Affected

Equality of the sexes, much like racial equality, has received its leadership from those most affected. Yet, like racial equality, until the total society is willing to accept the responsibility of making all people equal, equality for women will still remain a problem. It is a bit ironic that women, who are the majority group in America, see themselves as a minority.

Seemingly the conflict of religion is always with us. However, the problems in this area are different from those that faced our founding fathers. Problems growing out of public aid to parochial schools, and evi-

dence of anti-Semitism, are more real than most people will admit. Interdenominational conflict is a threat to the unified protestant concept, and our society is still not ready to accept the concepts of the Amish and the Moslem religions. Intervention in religion has gained its greatest support by way of the recent ecumenical movement.

The denial of equal employment opportunity is probably the crux of all the problems previously mentioned, with the possible exception of religion. Upward class mobility, racial prejudice, and discrimination between the sexes are all tied to employment problems. Intervention in this area has come in the form of equal employment opportunity laws of federal, state, and local governments. Our court dockets are filled with cases relating to equity in employment.

And finally, education. Whereas it does not appear to be the panacea for our problems, the tools for the solution to the major problems to which I have referred can be and are being developed through education. Many programs are being instituted through education: training programs for youth, urban education programs for helping those people who in our inner cities have felt completely alienated and neglected, compensatory education programs, and others.

Through education, we have developed techniques of confrontation: sensitivity training, eyeball-to-eyeball discussion of sensitive issues, the development of group dynamics and all the processes of group work, as well as interaction analysis. In education, we are experimenting with action laboratories, in which communities and groups come together and share, through action in a laboratory setting, the kinds of successes they are having. Multi-ethnic materials are being developed for self-fulfillment. And, too, changes are taking place in sensitizing school personnel. We are working very hard to become better human beings.

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