

# Community Involvement

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The words <sup>were</sup> community involvement are used quite frequently in CORE. There seems to be developing a feeling that this is something new in our organization - this is not true at all. Core has been constantly trying to involve the community in its program. It is only that now, since we have recognized our failure to do this, and are willing to admit this failure, do we find ourselves giving this aspect of the CORE program the emphasis it needs.

The community involvement program cannot be successful under an artificial atmosphere. There must be the sincere desire to do something for the people in the community and <sup>the desire to do</sup> not for oneself or the CORE program. But desire alone is not enough. That desire must be accompanied by ability - ability to work well with the people in a given community. Then we must add another ingredient - knowledge. We must know and understand the background and current status of the community in question. Knowing the desires, needs, and frustrations of a community is a must if one plans to be successful in involving a particular community.

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Before one plans a community involvement program, the question must be asked, "what do you mean by community involvement and involve the community to do what." My answer to this question is this. By "community involvement" I mean that every aspect of that community should be involved in one way or another in achieving a common goal or goals. Not only every aspect of the community should be involved but every individual should be involved as well. This means very definitely that a network of communication must be established in order to reach the entire community. The worn out method of trying to get everyone to a designated place to disseminate information has proved to be highly inadequate. So an effective means must be found but more on that later. The question "what is meant by community involvement" is answered. Involve the community to do what? depends on what goals are set up. A specific goal such as not buying at a given department store is one thing - but a general goal such as to achieve integration is quite another. So before a community involvement program can be launched, the goals must be

well fixed in mind. Once the goals are set - the hard work of implementing methods to accomplish these goals lies ahead.

Before we discuss methodology - there is one other ingredient - acceptability. Are we being presumptuous in thinking that we have the type of program that appeals to the general community? I feel we have been mistaken in thinking that a community which agrees with our goals will find our program to accomplish these goals appealing to it.

Therefore, a community involvement program must be <sup>one</sup> broad ~~and~~ capable of reaching out to involve all the groups and sub-groups of a given community. To do this ~~one~~ must be knowledgeable as to the framework of that community and then find ways to utilize the complete community structure in working toward the common goals.

One method of involving the community has been offered in terms of setting up a home base in a given community and work from that base to initiate programs aimed at involving the community. <sup>Smart</sup> This program falls far short of the mark because <sup>it</sup> at best ~~it~~ only provides a staff who has <sup>it</sup> available, which admittedly is

most important to say the least. But the program fails <sup>to perform</sup> one very important function - it does not utilize the existing agencies and services. Freedom Houses, etc. perform duties such as providing recreation, <sup>and providing</sup> educational classes, <sup>such as Negro History.</sup> These services can be rendered by existing agencies within the community. It is now CORE's responsibility to act as a catalyst in seeing to it that these services are rendered. For instance, I have proposed to the director of the Girls Club that we help her set up classes in Negro History. She is receptive to the idea and awaits my request to appear before her board to speak on the matter. Thanks to the efforts of <sup>various</sup> CORE chapters in California in applying pressure <sup>at</sup> the state level, our local community now offers a class in Negro history in the Adult Education Program. This is an example of using existing agencies and I feel that this is a very important part of a community involvement program.

The only use I see in a "freedom house" etc. is to make "freedom house" and the CORE chapter one and the same. The chapter continues to function as a chapter but has more space available to do other things. This program is <sup>currently</sup> in existence

in Denver. There can be great value in this type of program providing there is a payed staff person who is competent to involve the other agencies and individuals in the community.

The subject of involving individuals is an extremely important one. Within the community there are important influential people whose assistance is needed in organizing and financing programs. The staff person must be equipped to bring in such persons.

The value of a full time staff person in each local community has been realized by our National Action Council. That is why it is setting up a program to encourage each local chapter to move in this direction.

Now to the important and difficult task of suggesting methods by which CORE can involve the total community. First I believe that CORE must change from a direct action organization to an organization that uses direct action. The difference is only in the emphasis. We must now broaden our program whereby our activity will be in many phases of the community - becoming involved in projects that heretofore were considered not to be of the direct action nature. This of course is the

direction in which CORE has been going since the good ole days of the "freedom riders." We now see the necessity to involve ourselves in such programs as political action, retraining programs and the Anti poverty Bill. Insert B

With this direction in mind I make the following recommendations:

1. That our chapter spend a large percentage of its time on a "community involvement" program that takes in both the Black and white community. This means that the entire CORE program will be considered in terms of how each part of the program can involve the community. Previous programs have been such as to push a CORE <sup>direct</sup> action program with less emphasis on initiating programs for the purpose of involving the community.
2. That our chapter become well versed in the political action of our city and play an active role in the election of persons who will further the goals of CORE and the adoption of legislation that is to the best interest of civil rights.
3. That our chapter endorse a program of "self help" in the Negro community and

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work to bring about unity of strength within the community.

4. that our chapter adopt a positive selective buying program. An effort to direct the buying of Negroes and those sympathetic to our goals, toward employers who have or agree to hire equitably in regards to race gives a positive tone and increases community involvement.
5. that our chapter encourage its members to become involved in other organizations where they can solicit support for certain community programs designed to aid the civil rights struggle. For too long CORE people have stayed removed from other organizations or have failed to encourage other organizations to participate in our programs.
6. that our chapter adopt a program to raise finances to employ a full time person to do the work necessary to accomplish our goals.

The program of community involvement places an emphasis on obtaining the support from the community that is needed to make programs successful. The priority of the community involvement program lies in the Negro community. The support and participation must come from it first as did the protests. This however does not mean that the white CORE worker does not have an important function in CORE. The priority of the Negro community in the community involvement program calls for the same type of understanding from whites that they possessed when they committed themselves to the civil rights struggle. The purpose of this program is not to remove whites from the organization but to attract more Negroes to it. Then, let's not forget that there is much work that needs to be done in rallying support among the white community. Besides <sup>helping in the way</sup> the every day hum drum of running an organization, white CORE workers can begin to educate and communicate for support in white neighborhoods; launch fund raising programs in white communities; work to get white organizations to endorse our programs; organize a program of visitation



between white members of a community and Negroes. These are but a few of the ways that white CORE members can be and should have been all along, useful proponents of the civil rights movement. Needless to say, there will always be the protest demonstrations which need massive support.

I only mention the role of the white CORE worker because there seemed to be some apprehension and misunderstanding about this part of the community involvement program. I suppose it was a result of lack of clarity. I hope I have been able to paint a clearer picture of what I see as community involvement. The times of today call for constant analysis of the civil rights movement and civil rights organizations must continue to evaluate their role. With this in mind I respectfully submit this statement.

Harold Brown

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## Inserts:

A. These programs are known as Freedom House, ~~settlement~~ settlement House, and the southern project of Community Center.

B. This does not mean that direct action techniques of protest will not continue to be used by our organization.