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Upward Bound Reflections

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H301
CLA

Special Studies H-70

Upward Bound — Reflections

of

C. David Claybrook

for

Dr. Paul Root

May 17, 1968

I have been taught that all people everywhere are basically the same. They may appear different at first sight, because very few of us actually look alike. Some of us have different colors and shades of hair. My eyes are brown; others have blue and even green eyes. Not every one has the same color skin. Some of us have light skin, others have more pigment cells in their skin giving it a darker color, mostly brown or yellowish, sometimes even black. Some of us are more "intelligent" than others. We can work analytical problems faster and with more accuracy than can others. Some of us have more "common sense" than others. We know enough to "get in out of the rain." All of us are basically the same, but we appear in various shapes and sizes.

We are all the same in that we all have ideals. We all hold some things dear and others not so dear. We all seek happiness, and we all want to find our purpose in life, our reason for being here. Some work hard at finding this purpose and happiness. To some, it comes naturally and easily. To others, there is no purpose and there is no hope of happiness. I worked in a program that had as its purpose that of helping young people find purpose in their lives. It also strived to help those that needed it find a hope for happiness. The program dished out a little bit of gladness to some who had known little of it in their lives. The program, Upward Bound, gave some, last summer, a reason for bounding upward. A lot of young people and a few older ones realized, some for the first time, that all people are basically the same. These people learned to work, play, rest, eat, and love together last summer. I learned how too.

Upward Bound is a small part in the war on poverty. It is for high school students who, because of inherited attributes of good minds have a better than normal chance of finding their purposes in life. They have, because of an inheritance in environment, been stifled in the rut of despair. It is believed that self awareness can come through education. Although all of these young people have been exposed to some of the finest public schools that our state can offer, they have found no purpose for life and none even for education.

I worked last summer as a "tutor-counselor" in the Grambling College Project Upward Bound. It consisted of seven weeks of study on the campus of Grambling College. Many students had never been to a college campus and this in itself was something new to them. We studied and attended classes in the mornings under settings that were much similar to those of the schools that the young people had attended most of their lives. There was something a little different, though -- the teachers. I think that for the first time last summer, many of the students realized that teachers are for help and guidance. Our classes were different in another way too. They were what we called "unstructured." Oh, they were planned well enough alright but the best thing about them was that if the planned activities were disliked or not meaningful, they were dropped from the curriculum. Something else was tried.

We didn't go to classes all of the time. A lot of the afternoons were spent just playing. We learned to play together, to disagree, to arbitrate, to compromise, and to play together some more. We learned to win and to lose. We developed our sense of fairness as we developed our bodies. Some of us played harder than did others. These probably always will. Some, however, learned that although competition is often stiff they too can do well if they will apply themselves.

We spent a good deal of time seeing things that we had never seen before. We spent probably as much time talking about what we had seen. Some learned here that our opinions, although not always right, are always valid and needed. Upward Bound was not a school in the strict sense of the word, but in actuality every experience is a school if one is attentive to the lessons that ^{are} offered for learning. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate those activities from those that are not educational. Upward Bound was based on that premise. We spent a lot of our learning hours outside of the formal classroom. We spent some of this time outside the college environment. We took trips to various places of interest. We traveled, an educational experience in itself, to another state to see a world famous amusement park, we ate in a most exclusive restaurant, and then saw a professional musical production in a large city of our country.

All in all, the summer was worth to me and to many others the cost of it. It is difficult to estimate the value of changing one's life. It can not be known how that change might affect the lives of so many

others. There were changes made last summer in Upward Bound. Some young people for the first time saw the place that education has in the quest for self awareness and purpose. Some found the pure pleasure that comes from acquiring new knowledge and using it. Some found hope for the future and the future of those they love. Some found that although not everyone looks as they do and not everyone acts as they do, everyone does have things in common. Many of them found too that by working together, they can all reach their goals easier.

Many of the lives were changed. Most of the change was for the better. All of the students, of course, did not get out of the program what they went looking for. Many questions were left unanswered, but for some now at least there were questions where before there had been void. Some day some of the kids that I worked with last summer will be famous, many will be successful in their endeavors, most should be happy because all of them felt, at least for a while what it is to be UPWARD BOUND.