

## Going the Second Mile

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Recently I worked with R. Joseph Dixon as he wrote his Indiana State University doctoral dissertation, *Intercultural Education: A Comparative Study of Recommended Approaches*. While studying 12 possible approaches, Joe found, among other things, that four out of five of the approaches most highly recommended by educators writing in the heyday of intercultural and intergroup education in American schools, 1943-1954, are today still the approaches most highly recommended both by scholars in racial and ethnic affairs and by administrators of the largest public school systems in the United States. His study recalls some of my own experiences while attempting to foster better intercultural relations both through academia and on the field of battle. What I think I have learned, as human relations education evolved, might be of interest to people enrolled in the continuing struggle. History may not always help, but it seldom hurts.

I missed the earliest period of intercultural education, the missionary stage, because it took place before my time as an educator. During the missionary stage of the 1920s, people of good will stumped the country talking to whomever would listen about the need for school programs to build better relations among Americans of varied races, religions, ethnic backgrounds, and social classes.

Consequently, some teachers tried their hands at building intercultural understanding through schools during the late 1930s and the early 1940s. As a secondary school teacher in the experimental Ohio State University School, I tried too. But intercultural education then had little to guide it save rhetoric. Though many teachers were serenely confident that they were building brotherhood, their answers, given the magnitude of human relations problems, were overly simple. For instance, in the stage of the simple answers prior to World War II, there was a vogue for teaching about George Washington Carver's experimentation with the humble peanut and for holding school pageants in which children dressed up in costumes to portray their varied national backgrounds. Evaluation of results was seldom attempted, but we know that little change came about through such racial and ethnic projects. Let us hope that we can learn from the past and avoid naive answers in our contemporary ethnic pluralism programs.

National crises have a way of galvanizing education, as we were to relearn during the post-Sputnik hysteria and Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty. In the late 1930s, with growing recognition of the horror of the Nazi concentration camps, with the entry of the United States into World War II in 1941, and with the Detroit race riots of 1943, more Americans began to take seriously the national need for intercultural education. The magical combination which induces efforts toward educational change--national concern for survival coupled with provision of philanthropic and governmental funding--prevailed. So in the early 1940s intercultural education entered the stage of promising practices and began to come of age. Approaches were devised and tested. Intercultural or intergroup education (terms usually used interchangeably except when identified by organizations as

trademarks) became the theme of many yearbooks, special issues of professional magazines, textbooks, workshops, school system projects, and in-service programs. The momentum continued after the close of World War II, as research increasingly supported some and denied other of the promising practices.

To me, the Period of the 1940s was a stimulating time to be a working participant in intercultural education. Three organizations were especially notable in the field: the Bureau for Intercultural Education, led first by Stewart G. Cole and then by H. H. (Mike) Giles; Intergroup Education in Cooperating Schools, directed by Hilda Taba; and the College Study in Intergroup Relations, conducted by Lloyd Allen Cook. The vigorous staff members of these organizations wrote, edited, consulted in schools, conducted university workshops, spawned projects, and moved into emergency situations in school systems. Among my own prized personal recollections of the 1944-47 years as director of publications and learning materials for the Bureau for Intercultural Education are collaborating with wise old William Heard Kilpatrick on *Intercultural Attitudes in the Making* for the John Dewey Society and with the electric Hilda Taba on *Democratic Human Relations*, a yearbook of the National Council for the Social Studies; editing a magazine, *The Intercultural Education News*; shepherding a series of Bureau for Intercultural Education-sponsored books toward publication by Ordway Tead at Harper and Brothers; conducting workshops for Teachers College, Columbia; and participating in Bureau seminars following presentations by Bob Havighurst, Dan Dodson, and many other social and psychological explorers.

Among the things I learned from the intercultural education movement was that human relations education through American schools was not enough. Nor was writing about intergroup education enough. Community organization and participation leading to social action were also needed. Not either-or, but both-and. I came to recognize that education and social action were one and inseparable, if America was to have a fighting chance of achieving democratic human relations among varied human beings. And not just action to achieve campus desegregation--action to achieve community desegregation was also essential. Dewey and Kilpatrick were right: You learn what you live.

So, while a professor at the University of Illinois, I gladly accepted the invitation of Governor Adlai Stevenson to serve as an unsalaried citizen member of the Illinois Interracial Commission. The commission used a variety of approaches to its difficult task. For instance, swift action was taken when the commission learned that concessionaires in a state park honoring the memory of the great emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, were discriminating against Negro school children who visited the park.

The Illinois Interracial Commission also served as a mediator in some situations. In 1950 I was requested by Governor Stevenson to help in mediating a conflict situation that had developed in Alton. Black children were sitting in the corridors of all-white elementary schools nearest to their homes while threatening clusters of white adults gathered in the streets outside. To the best of my knowledge (please tell me if you know an earlier case), it was the first black sit-in to take place in all-white schools in the United States. The Supreme Court decision on public school desegregation was still more than four years in

the future. In Alton I learned that a major problem in mediating conflict situations is to locate in the community the real sources of power to negotiate; the nominal authorities often lack genuine power. After many sleepless hours, A. Leon Bailey, a staff member of the Illinois Interracial Commission, and I managed through mediation to move the conflict from the schools and streets into the courts. After two years of legal process, followed by a highly effective threat to cut off state aid, the blacks won. Harold E. Turner has a full description in his doctoral dissertation which compares desegregation experiences of Alton and East St. Louis, *A Study of Public School Integration in Two Illinois Communities* (George Peabody College for Teachers, 1956).

With the Supreme Court decision of 1954 declaring segregated education in public schools inherently unequal, the frontier shifted in the field of human relations as a whole. The urgent, demanding problem became the physical desegregation of schools. Integration, a concept which goes far beyond physical desegregation and which involves the acceptance of other human beings as individuals and as equals, received a lower priority on the American agenda. Desegregation was to be the first mile; integration was regarded as a second mile. Either-or? So the intercultural education movement entered a new stage, that of desegregation, and was eventually absorbed by it and in it. Human relation centers were often swallowed up by major universities (for instance, the Bureau for Intercultural Education became part of New York University), and many staff members of the intercultural organizations moved on toward, or back into, university posts.

The historic Supreme Court decision against segregation in the public schools, *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, came along while I was a professor-administrator at George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. Men and women of good will in Nashville seemed to wait for somebody else to do something--another thing you learn about community action. So some of us organized a Nashville Community Relations Conference, a delicate but effective hybrid of National Association for the Advancement Of Colored People members, largely black, and community and academic liberals, largely white. We held our meetings in synagogues and churches while white segregationists ice-picked the tires of our cars and burned their blasphemous crosses. We closed our blinds at home after the meetings against the possibility of flying glass. We testified against evasive, foot-dragging bills in the Tennessee legislature. We helped move Nashville to a step-by-step integration plan which was adopted in the year 1957 when all hell broke loose at Little Rock, Arkansas.

They played rough in the South those years; today most of the violence has moved North. Many young contemporary workers for ethnic pluralism seem puzzled by the dedication of older Southern black activists and white liberals to desegregation and integration and seem baffled by rejection by these groups of anything that smacks of separatism, whether by blacks or whites. Had they lived through and participated in the years of bitter struggle in the South immediately before and after the Supreme Court decision, they might better understand why.

But just as education without action is not enough, action without education is also not enough. Both-and, not either-or. While at Illinois and Peabody and later at New York University, I still wrote in the field of intercultural education. I tried units, articles, and pamphlets. I appointed myself an amateur historian of the movement, contributing an entry to the 1960 Encyclopedia of Educational Research and writing a pamphlet, *The Development of Education for Desegregation and Integration*. Both-and, I reminded myself.

In the 1960s American blacks reached for greater power over their own destinies and many opted for going it alone without white liberalism. In retrospect, the reaction was completely understandable. People achieve power when they reach for it themselves. No one can or should minimize the real achievements of the black power thrust. But unfortunate corollaries were neutralization of potentially helpful allies among white liberals and the application of a policy of "benign neglect" by a conservative Nixon administration. Many white liberals found their former action channels blocked; they were advised to confine themselves to the education of whites against white racism. Either-or again. Some whites abandoned the struggle. Others returned to education without action.

But some opportunities to combine education with action still did exist. I found the letters to the editor section of the New York Times receptive to an appeal for an American Conscience Fund for black youngsters who were putting their bodies on the line in the segregated schools. Funding from Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 not only supported a New York University institute for supervisors and curriculum leaders on problems of achieving desegregation and integration but also provided funds for follow-up consultation and action in the school systems and communities across the nation from which the institute participants came. When, in my follow-up, I worked with two magnificent Catholic nuns in Louisiana and, on their advice, traveled under an assumed name because of threats of local white segregationists, it felt like old times in Nashville again.

Desegregation, still in process, was essential and urgent; it constituted the first mile. We have come part of this mile with agonizingly slow "deliberate speed." But now desegregation is making few major gains, partly because of Nixon appointees to the Supreme Court but also because integration, which is more than physical desegregation and which involves full acceptance of all human beings as individuals who are created equal, has not accompanied many desegregation programs. Achievement of integration, the goal of the second mile, is still a formidable distance away.

Perhaps now blacks and whites both and, not either-or, can work together for a renaissance of intercultural education under new ethnic-related labels in our schools, combined with effective joint social action for desegregation and integration in our communities. I hope so. Again both-and, not either-or.

Important to such a renaissance is Dixon's finding that four out of the five approaches ranked highest by earlier writers in the intercultural education movement from among a

possible dozen approaches are today ranked highest by contemporary scholars of racial and ethnic affairs and administrators of largest public school systems. Maybe through the approaches of "community study, democratic atmosphere, curriculum permeation, and group dynamics," joined by the current emphasis on the "direct experience" approach, we can go the second mile to achieve integration.

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