

TOWARDS A THEORY FOR COMMUNICATIONS

This paper by no means is an attempt at a specific report on the things we are doing in the communications department, though several aspects of our work are included. But rather, it is an attempt to outline some of the things (assumptions) that I have been moving towards as a result of working in the department. Underscoring everything that is written is my feeling of the need to gear the department to the black community!

Ideological assumptions

That there must be encouraged within the black community a revolutionary effort focused on the needs of black people as determined by black people.

Since the country opposes black self determination, this effort implies, in fact means, white reaction against it, and the need for black strength to maintain the effort.

Black strength means an understanding among black people as to what they are about. In understanding, lies commitment.

Black people at this point cannot meet the needs of white people (except maybe in a peripheral way) given the nature of this country.

Meaningful communication to whites breaks down over culturally intergrated white supremacy that effects every person at every level. What the country needs is to the detriment of black people.

Therefore, we must focus at every level on what black people need as black people determine these needs. That this includes SNCC communications also.

Every effort to communicate to the white man, detracts from the development of an effective black communications. We are more often used than use.

That the basis from which white people proceed blocks any sort of real understanding of what we as black people must do.

That we should not shoulder the responsibility of changing white people (and cannot anyway because we are assumed inferior).

Generally, the whitemans uncivilized status is an imposition on black people. While we meet these impositions because of the inevitable conflict between black needs and white needs (the country's), we cannot directly root out the savagery existing in the white community.

That there are certain forms natural to the black community that need to be explored in terms of a meaningful communications program.

Assuming that SNCC workers will be rooted in the black communities, these forms and their substantive content meet the needs of SNCC staff only as they are relevant to ~~the~~ black people.

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Communications in the negative

What we (SNCC) have constantly tried to do communications-wise is express black peoples struggle/work/aims (that flows from the assumptions of black

peoples' experiences) in terms understandable to whites. In many cases we have even opted for white acceptance (though lack of acceptance of what our work must be has rarely stopped us).

I think that further efforts in this direction are futile and detrimental.

Futile in that white americans move out of concern and hope for the country. They (whites) move around concerns outside of black people, and link up to the efforts of black people only to the degree in which it can be used in meeting these outside concerns (e.g. the multi-levels of support for the MFDP challenge at the democratic convention and the final breakdown of this support). They cannot on a sustained basis be subserviant to the needs of black people. What we have to say is accepted by white people only to the degree in which it satisfy's their vision. There is no way for black people to be rational to white people given the nature of this country at this point in it's history.

The effort is detrimental in that as we keep whites focused on what black people are doing, we perpetuate a concern (ranging from overt hostile reaction to an alienation and abdication of responsibility to the white community) for what we are doing and how to intergrate their concerns into our work, or how to stop us. We tend to establish and/or become responsible to, a language and mechanisms that are not the most relevant to black people. Or, allow something relevant to get captured (e.g. "black power"). We talk too much — feel that we have to answer every question~~x~~ asked by a newsman. In some extreme cases, feel that they are doing us a favor.

SNCC, because of it's view on what has to be done constantly finds itself in a position of having to deal with (white) reaction (e.g. everybody wants to know what we mean by black power). We create a dialogue about black peoples concerns outside of the black community, which detracts from the developement of ~~xxx~~ meaningful dialogue inside the black community (particularly true because of the strengh of whites to orient to their reaction.)

On positive communications

There are several forms that need to be explored in terms of best getting information, the message, etc. to black people: sound, visual aids, personal contact, through the use of structures contained within the black community.

Sound probably lends itself best and most immediately as a mass communications tool. Radio, both the black aimed and owned. It should be understood that for the most part this radio is white controlled, but it has the ear of a large portion of the black ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ community. We are trying now to tape SNCC news, and feed it into these stations. Timewise by taping and phoning in news, it gets release while still fresh.

Another area of radio that we are trying to explore is taped programs that would discuss indepth SNCC, it's aims, goals, etc. The first of these was done by five of us two weeks ago on WAOK here in Atlanta.

Written news realeases are of minor impotence in that the time factor usually leaves them outdated (except for black press which publishes twice a week) by the time they get to the press. Special reports are different as they negate the time factor and allow us to slant. More and more of our written stuff has been in this direction although we send out WATS reports and will continue to do so.