

Linda Allenstein
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Meridian, Miss.

Per. -
Post

Jan. 17, 1965

Dear Dick,

I have just returned from Harmony and am not sure if this is really the right time to write this letter. I am writing it because some of the things that we talked about really got me thinking in a slightly different way than I had been previously. I am writing to you because I think that you might be able to help with some of the problems. This ~~xxx~~ does not mean that I expect any pat answers, but I am only looking to you as an advisor, consultant, experienced white staff member.

First of all, I am really glad that we had that chance to talk alone. You brought up some very thought-provoking concepts. When I proposed my idea on accelerated-interaction, what I was looking for was precisely the kind of criticism you gave. One point that I had not considered was that white staff is verbal and Negro is not. This of course, is crucial. ~~xxxxxx~~ The basic idea behind such a discussion session as I proposed is communication, on an intensive, honest, and trusting level. One reason that I feel that this idea bears closer examination is that I'M not sure whether the trust need be there before the session or whether it is developed through the session.

Another important aspect is the sociological background of the method. Could we not call it something else? More important, could we not use this concept as a jumping off point for attacking our problems? Would something like this have a better chance of success ~~xxx~~ if one of the Negro staff members suggested it? It seems to me that in some basic ways the proposed worksops will be doing much the same thing. Do you agree with that idea?

I am caught in the dilemma that every white worker must face if he or she is involved in the movement. I see a situation that is ~~xxxx~~ extremely difficult to accept and work in. I want to try to help do something about it. In some ways I am the symptom of a disease. My problem can not be solved until the disease is cured. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Sometimes I forget what is symptom and what is disease. I just can't stand by and watch this disease kill the movement. So I look for a way to solve the problem; I make mistakes; I try to do what is right. What else can I do?

I would also like to know how you feel about our proposed session in Clarke County. Greg now seems to be afraid of it. He thinks we will be altering personalities. I don't think it will. Could you give some honest criticism?

Could you also find out about that letter from Sandy. I think I should explain my concern about this letter. At the time I first heard about it, Batesville, I was quite upset. I believe that if a project director doesn't think that a person should be on a project then perhaps they shouldn't be in the state. I told Liz Fusco this at Batesville. She assured me that she had talked to Jessie and that this had not happened. I also wrote to Phylliss Cunningham, who is a good friend of mine, and asked her about this. She also said, I believe, that it was not true. I told Liz that if this were the situation that I thought that I should be asked to leave the state. There was also a hassel at this time about me staying in Batesville. Penny didn't want me there. Liz explained this as her fault. She had approached Penny in a way to alienate her to the idea. She had just told me to tell Penny that I was assigned to Batesville. Penny thought, and rightly so, that since we were in Batesville she ~~xxxx~~

should be able to chose the people staying in Batesville. Liz had led me to believe that Penny already knew of the decision and that I was just reconfirming it. That is the explanation I was given.

I give you this information only as background. I am quite concerned about why Sandy put me on that list. This has nothing to do with Sandy and only concerns me. If I made mistakes and left hard feelings in Hattiesburg, I would like to know what ~~amx~~I did and why it upset people. To never know these things means that I can't grow and change. I don't want to make the same mistakes again. I am quite concerned with growing, dealing with my problems, and correcting my faults. I can't do this if I'm not confronted with ~~ex~~ them.

Another thing about me as an individual that it seems important that I accept and that you understand. I have only been "verbal" for about a year and half. I used to be very quiet, never talk in groups, only talk to people that I knew very well. I want to learn how to communicate.

I don't want you to really deal with my problems. I do want you to give me some aide in working effectively in the movement.

Sincerely,

Sinda

Allenstein

P.S. I am enclosing a Clarke County report. We are suppose to send them to you once a week, aren't we? If so, we'll try.

1714 Everett Avenue
Jackson, Mississippi
January 28, 1965

Dear Linda,

I have no neat answers to your questions, only a few odd comments.

You and Greg will have to figure out about the accelerated-interaction. I don't think it will change personalities, but on the other hand I'm not too sanguine about possible results. I really don't know. Maybe you need to contact Mark Weise further, maybe something else needs to be brought out about it. But if the local people want to do it, I say let them go ahead with it. I might suggest that you leave staff out of it or at least the mixed staff.

In general I'm a little more attracted to workshops and generally sought after training sessions as a way of overcoming staff difficulties. It's something that will have to work out with time, but I think that generally the more people work and think together on specific problems the more chance there is of getting together. Very unscientific, though.

The letter from Sandy doesn't matter. If he did write it, all it did was assure you that you couldn't go back to Hattiesburg. If you made errors, so did Sandy, and there is no way to bridge the gap. Sandy couldn't give you a complete rundown on the reasons, and a partial story might be a total myth. You are much better off working with the local people in Clarke county and being as sensitive to them as you can be. If you can really work and learn with them, then the troubles that arise will be properly handled--there is a real will on both sides. The movement in general doesn't go into detail about difficulties. Maybe to the detriment of the movement and personalities; but nonetheless something that has to be lived with.

Your difficulties vis-a-vis the staff ought to be minimal there. It looks to me as though Collier will not be coming back into Clarke, so you and Greg will be on your own. It puts a lot of responsibility on the two of you, but I think there is a lot that can come out of the experience.

I like regular reports, but suit yourselves. On the first and fifteenth of the month, once a week--whatever suits you. Try to give something more than just details of happenings. Try to put some of the feel of the community in the reports, some of the sense of motion or lack of it, some of the ways in which shifts take place, some of the signs of individual local development. Hard, but it will start you looking on a deeper level towards what is needed.

Write further as questions arise.

Yours,