

GUEST EDITORIAL

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As a guest editor, it seems most proper to give attention and thoughts to the National Association for Interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies (NAIES), which by its very nature is a unique and singular organization. We have little in common with the larger professional academic entities. We are small in membership, but have the capacity to operate on the national level.

NAIES is special because we forge a link between academia and social involvement. Many members of our scholarly community are devoted to current causes and organizational activities. This health balance can propel the Association into new fields and directions and provide for its increased exposure.

We are an organization that has the potential to rise above the narrow parameters that have so often enclosed most professional organizations. Unfortunately, there persists in many circles of academia the concept that there is a peculiar "objectivity" described as "impartiality" which often conflicts with intellectual honesty and social justice. The solutions we seek must be for humans and not basically for writings in textbooks or professional journals or for "intellectual exchanges" at national meetings.

As an ethnic studies group there must be a primary concern for those people of the United States who are the most oppressed because of sexism and racism - primarily people of color - African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans. We likewise realize that there are other groups who are oppressed, such as those in Appalachia. We live in a society which is thoroughly dominated by educational systems and a mass media, especially television and film, which perpetuate mythologies, stereotypes, distortions, ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism, racism, sexism and oppression. The work of the organization necessitates the study and action to combat these elements. Our goal is perhaps best summarized by the heading, "Commonality in the History of Social Struggle." NAIES must endeavor to develop themes based around this concept and disseminate information pertaining thereto. We must avoid what is often referred to as 'esoteric' and attempt to deal with studies and analyses on day-to-day problems of our society.

A major goal is to involve people from the different communities, those who are most adversely affected by the social nature of our society. There is a serious gap in relationships between many of the oppressed groups, with a lack of appreciation of each others' rich history, not only of social struggle but for significant cultural heritages. These particular ethnic minorities have a common history of struggle against oppression which is often unrealized. These groups have a natural base for being allies; instead, our society has kept them apart with each having little appreciation for one another. This often results in their viewing each other as "the enemy" rather than natural allies. There are vast resources which are available, documenting these histories and cultures - films, video tapes, recordings, craftworks, posters, publications. Yet, these important materials remain in hallowed halls of libraries and academia. A basic challenge will be to get this information to where the people are.

One of our essential contributions can be through our outreach programs where information and ideas are brought to the communities. Major emphasis should be given to regional conferences throughout the country which will not only involve the educational institutions of the area, but draw heavily from community organizations, churches, local primary and secondary schools; others involved can be from academia, business and professions, with the programs generally open to the public.

We have a responsibility to compile a working bibliography of readily available paperback books, records, films, and slide programs which can be used by community organizations. We must encourage setting up displays on the use of such materials. Whether it is through co-sponsorship or under the auspices of NAIES, remember it is at the immediate community level through which we can strengthen our organization and fulfill our objectives, and bring these new unique approaches to the public.