

GUEST EDITORIAL

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The National Association of Interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies (NAIES) is an organization dedicated towards finding solutions to some of the "Ethnic" problems which plague U. S. society. Some of these solutions are found when people from a variety of cultural, ethnic, and environmental backgrounds are brought together to communicate and discuss germinal ideas. To this end, the NAIES, in the recent past, has set up regional conferences in various parts of the United States. These regional conferences are a microcosm of the national conference. The regional conferences follow similar guidelines as set up for the national conferences. I attended one of these regional conferences at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, California, in November, 1979. A critique of this conference will illustrate how such regional conferences are about solutions.

The South-West Regional Conference of the NAIES was held at California State Polytechnic University. This regional conference was energizing and invigorating. It carried the essential spark necessary for solutions to take place. One key towards providing solutions was the variety of topics covered in each of the sessions. People from different ethnic and academic backgrounds were brought together under the umbrella of interdisciplinary ethnic studies to present a variety of ideas. An example of this is a session I attended which consisted of Asian American mental health issues and a sociological construct for understanding racial stratification. Presenting these ideas together, even though there appeared to be little relationship between the two papers, forced all the participants to think about how these ideas do relate. When people are intricately involved with such ideas which are from different perspectives, they/we are forced to broaden their/our horizons and formulate constructs which incorporate and deal with these issues. This is necessary if this organization and the people are about solutions. We need to understand ourselves first. This is exactly what this conference achieved. We did learn more about ourselves. One student presented a paper on the concerns of ethnic studies which was the search for truth and personal liberation. This is a fundamental key for understanding ourselves and our relationship to the universe. The sessions at this Far-West Regional Conference provided us with the opportunity to explore ourselves through our personal involvement with the participants and ideas presented.

One factor which added to the ultimate success of the conference was the size of each session. They were small in terms of numbers but large in terms of overall participation. The small numbers of participants was an asset and played an important role for creating a solution oriented conference. I noticed that at almost every session the involvement of the participants was high and intense, i.e., discussions were taking place between the audience and presenters. One of the participants commented that the level of discussions was the best he had ever been involved with. He stated that other "larger" sessions/conferences prevented, even alienated, people from asking questions just by the sheer numbers attending each session. This is one of the NAIES' greatest attributes, and that is people feel more comfortable participating in their sessions. This is the situation in which solutions are derived.

The regional conferences and national conferences have laid the groundwork for opening the doors to new discoveries. Every time the meetings are held, people learn about themselves through the presentation of new ideas, discussions, and being about solutions. Participants are taking these new ideas back to their respective workplaces and helping others experience a broader perspective concerning ethnicity and ethnic groups in the United States. These shared ideas are discussed among other people where knowledge and the struggle for personal liberation is spread to other populations. The regional conferences have formed a network within the national NAIES organization and both are working towards creating solutions.

It is imperative that this effort continue. This organization has provided all people with a place and a focus for the expressed purpose of finding solutions to the multiplicity of ethnic problems and towards the goal of human liberation. It is our duty, therefore, to continue to support this organization and become involved with the activities which keep the NAIES focusing on solutions. The future of this organization is in the hands of the people.