

Diversity becoming a dirty word

Multicultural programs separating instead of unifying college campuses

By College Press Service

Diversity training and multicultural programs, created in the early 1980s on American campuses to ease student relations, may be causing more harm than good, according to critics who say walls are not torn down by separating people into groups, but by unifying them.

The buzzword "diversity" cropped up when educators, aware of new demographic realities on America's campuses, became concerned that students were not prepared for the vast differences in race, language, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or gender they would face on college campuses or later in their lives in workplaces.

Despite continuing racial tensions on college campuses, some fear these programs may have gone too far and have created further difficulties by focusing on differences between students rather than their commonality.

"My question is, how do you teach diversity? It's such a nebulous term," said Oron Strauss, editor of the conservative Dartmouth Review newspaper in Hanover, Conn. "The important thing for colleges to teach is intellectual diversity. This stems from all sorts of differences — ideological differences — because this is what truly makes colleges exciting."

Strauss charges that today's colleges and universities are addressing multiculturalism in terms of numbers of minorities enrolled in their schools. The administrations, he said, are preoccupied with percentages and are neglecting to unify students.

"How many of this kind of person can we get?" he said. "How many of that kind? This is the wrong way of going about it."

The term "diversity" bothers Strauss even more, he said, because educators are not being direct about what their goals are.

"It seems to me that the terms are skewed," he said. "If they want to teach acceptance of other races, don't put it under the guise of diversity or as an intellectual pursuit. There are a lot more intellectually worthwhile things a person could be studying."

Dartmouth College offers a number of multicultural courses and a program known as Affinity Housing that offers minorities the opportunity to live in dorms with other minorities. While all Dartmouth students take part in a common convocation and commencement service, minorities are invited to participate in separate ceremonies.

To Strauss, such developments mean that too many students are finding comfort in closed, ethnocentric groups.

"While it is acceptable that students will have different interests and extracurricular activities, the administration should not make it so easy," he said. "They are abdicating their responsibility for community by promoting diversity."

"It's very important to focus on traditions and school spirit, our similarities, rather than concentrate on our differences. I just don't feel separation is the solution."

A former trustee for a Long Island, N.Y., community college agrees.

Robert Unger, an attorney who is publisher for The New York Guardian, which he terms the "most politically incorrect newspaper in America," said he believes that teaching multiculturalism on college campuses will not eliminate racial prejudice but exacerbate the problem.

"Racial bigotry is a moral problem," he said. "The schools can't teach morality. Multiculturalism teaches that everyone be treated the same and equally, when everyone should be treated fairly and justly. For example, I would not treat you the same way I would treat a rapist."

Unger decries what he calls a "victim mentality," which he says is pervasive in America's individual citizens, as well as racial groups. Teaching multiculturalism, insists Unger, abdicates the personal responsibility necessary for students to learn to respect others.

"We have whining victims in this country," he said. "You can turn on the idiot TV shows during the day and see the victims. No one is stressing individual responsibility. No one is responsible for our destiny more than ourselves. If you are in a bad way, racial or otherwise, you are responsible for pulling yourself out of the mess."

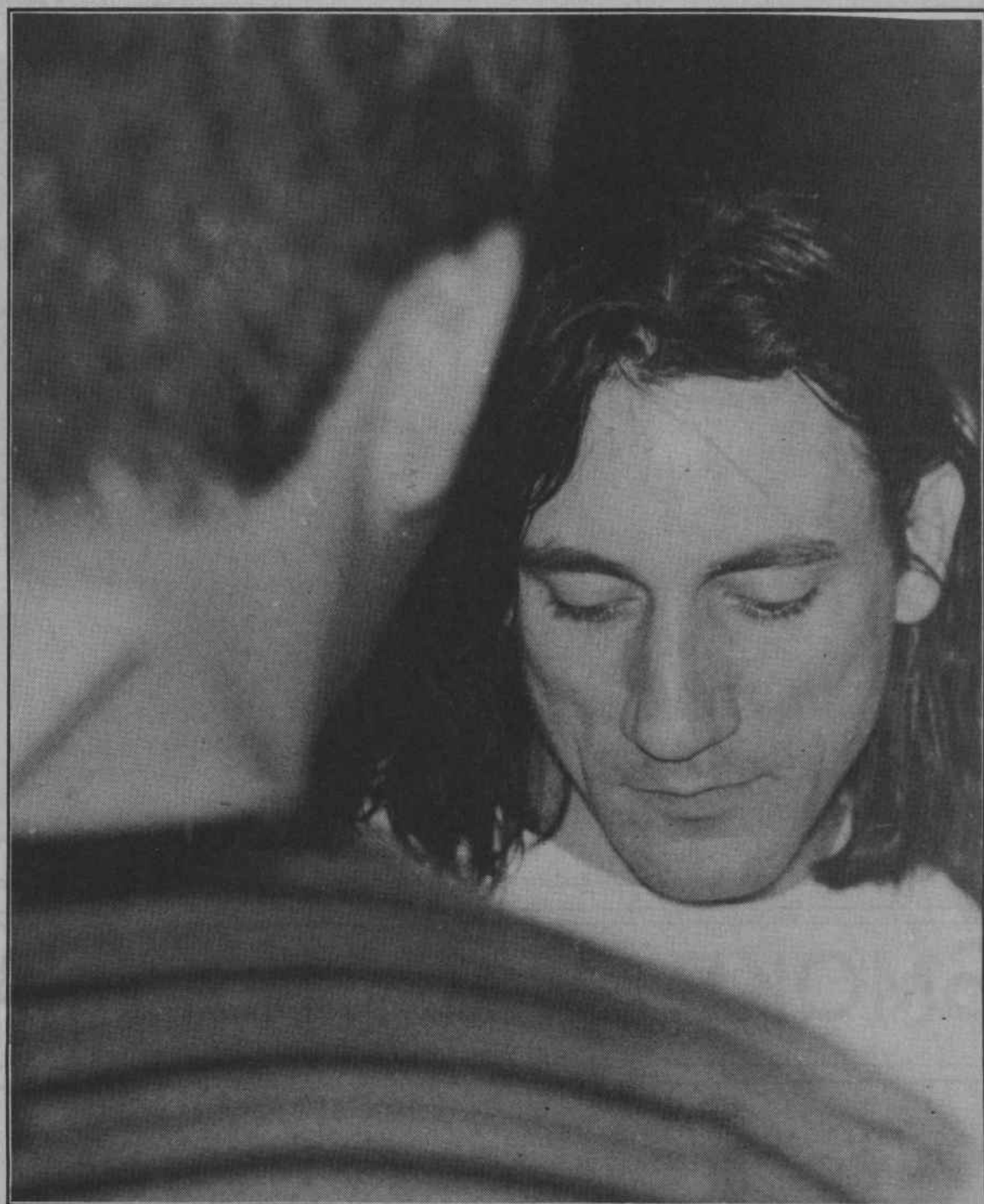
Unger, who wrote the book "America Does Not Owe You a Living," said that while studying other cultures should not be a problem, doing it at the expense of a full education cheats students.

"They all seem to know who Martin Luther King is and who Jesse Jackson is," he said. "But they don't know anything about Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and can't tell you what the Constitution is, and the basis of our American legal system."

Another conservative said teaching multiculturalism on today's campuses is doing nothing but forcing people back into tribal camps.

"Young people should know their ethnic backgrounds, but to focus on them is not helpful," said Robert Grant of the American Freedom Coalition, a conservative activism group in Washington, D.C. "The multicultural movement has gotten out of hand. It's trying to force us together, but it is divisive and is driving us into tribal camps."

Crashing Pumpkin



An exhausted Smashing Pumpkins drummer Jimmy Chamberlain signs autographs after Sunday night's performance at the Township Auditorium. Chicago's Pumpkins played to a sold-out crowd. Photo courtesy of Diana Gentile

Civil rights groups dedicate themselves to fighting racism in America

By College Press Service

Thirty years ago, the summer ennui of America was shattered by the murders of three civil rights workers in Mississippi. This year, a foundation named for one of those young men has joined with other groups in a national effort to recapture that youthful activism with Freedom Summer '94.

This summer, young people will work with civil rights veterans at three national conferences to identify social problems facing their generation and what they can do to solve them. Three national conferences are planned to articulate a "national youth agenda," to form a

network of youth activists and to launch a national TV and radio public service campaign, produced by the Andrew Goodman Foundation in collaboration with Rock the Vote.

The Andrew Goodman Foundation is working with the Black Student Leadership Network, the U.S. Student Association, the Student Environmental Action Coalition, Youth Action, Rock the Vote and other grassroots organizations to help youths work on issues such as peace, justice and opportunity.

"Andy and the thousands of young people involved in the civil rights movement believed in activism as a way of life," said Goodman's mother, Carolyn Goodman. "Young people to-

day are just as dedicated to righting social ills. Their experience and vision must be at the heart of the debate about the future of their generation and the country."

Goodman, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner were killed during Freedom Summer of 1964, a massive voter registration drive in rural, black Mississippi that took place in defiance of publicly sanctioned discrimination. The young men were among 1,000 college students organized by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committees to join registration efforts already begun by black residents.

During the summer, 15,000 African Americans filled out voter registration cards, and

80,000 people joined the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. But the effort was marred by bloodshed. Eighty people were beaten, 1,000 were arrested, and four died, including Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman.

"Our country today faces problems as dramatic as racism and oppression of Mississippi in the 1960s," said U.S. Rep. John Goodman, D-Ga., former chairman of the SNCC. "But images of violence and despair obscure the hard work of young people struggling to reclaim their communities."

"We must recognize the hard work of young people and provide the resources they need to tackle the seemingly insurmountable problems

facing them."

The groups involved said it was important to look back in order to move forward.

"Freedom Summer '94 provides an important opportunity for this generation of youth activists to revisit the strategies of Mississippi in 1964," according to Lisa Sullivan of the Black Student Leadership Network. "This experience is invaluable to help us determine the best way to jump-start a social movement in the 1990s capable of completing the unfinished business of the civil rights movement."

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