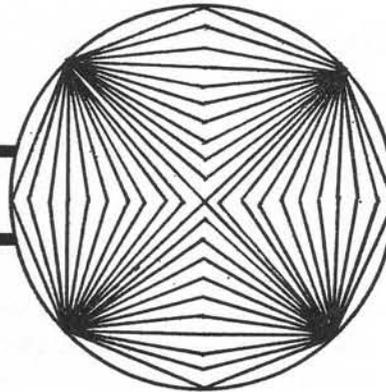


Points of View



Dear Editor:

For some time I have wanted to write to someone about the *Journal* article, "Inner-City Youth Programs: Guidelines," by Jerry Parsons (Summer, 1971). I didn't get an opportunity to hear Parsons or the ETN program of March 10.*

I have read and reread Parsons' article, and each time it has become more and more apparent to me that this is a document which: (1) is full of stereotypes about blacks—children, women, men, families; (2) is outdated in its outlook, viewpoint, and approach to working with black youth; (3) has a heavy "charity" and condescending attitude toward black youth; and (4) shows a tremendous lack of understanding of the whole black youth culture and life styles.

(I have reviewed the reprint with black faculty members and staff in my department.)

Let me point out one of the most disturbing aspects of the document . . . the almost total lack of attention paid to the factors that affect black behavior among black youth—starting with racism, prejudice, segregated schools, and neighborhoods—and the lack of

job and other kinds of opportunities based on these factors and other factors which press on black youth. In my opinion, 4-H and other groups, within and outside of Extension, have little or no place in the inner city *unless they address themselves to these problems.*

Parsons' article doesn't begin to address itself in this manner.

The group approach in the format presented in the article is some 20-25 years old, and has little or no relevance today—it's an old Settlement House approach which Settlement Houses gave up a long time ago. When Parsons says, ". . . Craft and other recreational activities are appropriate learning experiences for inner-city youth" (p. 38), he's way off the beam—again an old approach and very much outdated.

A few other areas where I think Parsons shows a great lack of understanding of black youth and the black community are these: "Young people and their families make very limited use of the available facilities because they lack money, transportation, know-how, and personal security to venture out for new experiences. Once taken to a museum, for example, they're apt to return" (p. 37).

*On March 10, the Wisconsin *Journal of Extension* liaison committee sponsored an ETN program discussing this article.

That concept of so-called cultural enrichment is just not so; it's the old charitable approach to taking the poor kids to see what's good for them. Let me reverse that statement and ask, if the young people and their families had money, transportation, know-how, and personal security to venture out, would they therefore make better use of available facilities? What "facilities," and for what purposes?

I think Parsons has stereotyped inner-city youth behavior — not inner-city people as they really are today.

Again, he says, "Occupational information is another area of misunderstanding and experience. Inner-city youth have a limited view of occupations available to them . . ." (p. 37). This again is entirely untrue and unfounded. These youth learn too early about occupations available to them and agencies that provide information.

He says on the same page: "Often inner-city people have problems with processes involved in an urbanized society. They may not know how to fill out application forms, contact their government, apply or interview for a job, and a whole list of other activities normally accepted by middle-class people" (p. 37). (How many 4-H leaders know all these?)

My question is: If inner-city people did know all these things, what difference would it make? There have to be *real* job opportunities, responsive governmental agencies and departments, etc. (If 4-H leadership wants to make some impact in helping black youth "make it" in our society, here's the place.) Blacks have fewer "hang-ups" with the problems of living in an urbanized society than most other people; the surprising fact is that they've been able to traverse the obstacles placed before them in an ur-

banized society — and they've survived! Most of us couldn't have made it if we were confronted with everything working against black people in this urbanized society.

Informal educational programs such as 4-H and youth can help inner-city youth learn "school know-how" (p. 37). This whole paragraph again shows little understanding of the black youth and what they need educationally. They don't need any more "amateur" and do-good tutors helping them do better in school. They need the best professional help in the world that can really reach them educationally and otherwise. More than that, they need to attend desegregated schools. Is 4-H willing to work in this direction?

A long number of other glaring errors and unrealities exist in this article. Let me point out just this last one: "If presented in a realistic way, recreation, city or community exploration, personal grooming, career awareness, and sex education are experiences significant to inner-city youth" (p. 38). Are those the needs for black youth which Parsons refers to so often in his article? If so, then he really doesn't understand black youth.

It's not my intention to be hypercritical, but if Parsons' article represents the 4-H approach to working with inner-city youth, then the program based on this article is doomed to failure — or will be just another recreational program that will be like almost all others formerly or currently conducted in the inner city.

Because I have high regard for the 4-H goals, objectives, and programs, I ask that a thorough review and study be made of the article, and it be reviewed and revised to reflect *real* needs of inner-city youth. I would

also suggest that the 4-H staff decide what role, if any, they can play realistically *today* with inner-city youth that won't duplicate what's already being done by others.

I would be more than happy to meet with any individual(s) or groups to review the above comments, and many other items in the article by Parsons, which I think need to be studied for accuracy and relevancy.

SAM STELLMAN

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

[*Editor's note: Mr. Stellman was formerly a director of the anti-poverty program in Franklin County, Columbus, Ohio, and for five years a consultant to the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity.*]

On Continuing Education

Since the inception of the term "extension education" about 20 years ago, it has been generally perceived as a specialized form of the broader term "adult education." As these two areas of advanced study and research have further developed and spread, the term "continuing education" has been increasingly used to delineate the broad educational process to which they both relate: providing organized opportunity for people to learn outside the traditional formal and terminal systems of institutionalized education.

Continuing education is first of all processional. It's a way of gaining increased awareness of your environment and learning ways of relating to it. It's more than adult education when adult education is thought of as "catching up" or "remedying" the deficiencies of earlier formal education. It's more than "extension education" when extension education is thought of primarily as a vehicle for disseminating technology created by research centers — and especially when it's viewed

as agricultural or home economics extension.

Although encompassing remedial learning and technological dissemination, continuing education implies an uninterrupted process of fulfilling individual aspirations and further developing individual potential for meeting the demands of a rapidly changing environment. Thus, it refutes the notion that life is divided into two parts — one of preparation and one of action. Continuing education suggests a system that is flexible but with a firm backbone, open-ended with numerous entry and exit points according to ability and need.

In contrast to the kinds of activity represented in traditional systems, usually referred to as "school," that provide the sequential ladder of educational progression and focus on preparation *for* life before entering the "real" world, continuing education stresses not a terminal point, but a future perspective on education. Therefore, it offers opportunities for entrance and exit at different points in the life span with less emphasis on formalized credentials and terminal designations as prerequisites for advancing your education.

Continuing education includes those educational programs in all places where adults are employed and specialized programs for adults offered by formal school systems. Included are programs of organized instruction through Extension, educational television, and numerous other agencies.

Continuing education then is a process of learning that helps meet the educational needs of each successive period of life, especially those following terminal education phases.

J. PAUL LEAGANS
Ithaca, New York