

Agenda For Racial Harmony

***10-Point
Individual Plan
Illustrates Ways
to Help***

By NAT WELCH

This article was written at the request of the editorial staff of the Atlanta Journal and was published on its editorial page. The Community Relations Commission believes that this 10-point Plan is worthy of wide distribution in the Atlanta community and has made available this reprint for use by civic, church and service organizations.

Dr. Samuel W. Williams, Chairman
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About the Forum Writer

MR. WELCH is executive director of the Atlanta Community Relations Commission which is charged with the responsibility of fostering mutual understanding and improvement in human relations.

He wrote this article for The Atlanta Journal.

THE JOURNAL FORUM

The Atlanta Journal

Saturday, May 17, 1969

The foremost problem America faces at home is the urban crisis. Regardless of where I make that statement in Atlanta, few disagree with it. The urban crisis is real. It is more than deteriorating buildings and open spaces. It is a human condition.

Atlanta is known as a progressive city. It has attained a favorable national reputation because its people have been willing to change, especially in regard to race relations. The city is now faced with the challenge of improving on that reputation or falling away from it.

Human relations must be improved between white people and black people—not only on a group basis but as an individual. An individual usually has a feeling of good will toward his fellow-man but has little knowledge of what helpful role he can perform to make it a visible reality.

Here are 10 specific suggestions:

BE INFORMED on what is happening in regard to local urban problems.

READ THE Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. We need to understand more about the problems. This is one of the most important presidential Commission reports ever made. If you can't wade through the several-hundred page paper back edition, an excellent 30-page digest is available.

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TAKE A tour of some of our economically depressed areas and let the local residents tell what *they* are doing to improve their lot. These tours are sponsored by Economic Opportunity Atlanta for individuals and groups. Arrangements can be made by calling Mrs. Mary Lou Mitchell at 525-4262.

VISIT THE Hungry Club at the Butler Street YMCA. This is probably the most stimulating luncheon club in the city. Speakers since the first of the year have included Mayor Ivan Allen, former Gov. Carl Sanders, Julian Bond, local NAACP President Lonnie King, Dr. John Letson, SCLC's Andrew Young and Donald Hollowell.

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DRIVE THROUGH some of the upper income Negro residential areas as Collier Heights and Peyton Forest in the Cascade area. You will see that Atlanta has a substantial number of middle and upper income Negroes who take pride in home ownership just as any other comparable group.

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ENCOURAGE YOUR business or professional organization to expand its Negro membership. The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce took the initial step some ten years ago. This way lawyers get to know lawyers and teachers get to know teachers as persons and prejudice fades.

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LEARN TO pronounce the word "Negro" correctly. The word is pronounced "knee-grow." This is difficult for a white Southerner who has grown up saying "Nigra." If you can't pronounce it correctly, just say black since both are acceptable. The term "colored person" is old hat. Proper titles are also very important.

VISIT ANOTHER church. Four members of the Commu-

nity Relations Commission are outstanding ministers. They are the Rev. Sam Williams, pastor of the Friendship Baptist Church; Rabbi Jacob Rothschild of the Temple; Dr. R. E. Lee, pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer; and Dr. John Randolph Taylor, minister of the Central Presbyterian Church. Visitors are welcomed as in other Atlanta churches.

ATTEND A lecture or concert at the Atlanta University Center, Emory University, Georgia State or one of Atlanta's several other institutions of higher learning. Become exposed to some new ideas and new people.

The two most interesting lectures my wife and I heard last year were those of John K. Galbraith and Walter Heller at the Atlanta University Center. And when the Atlanta Symphony was doing a special series at Spellman College, a friend remarked, "They might as well be playing at Dahlonaga as far as most Atlantans are concerned."

JOIN AN inter-racial discussion group. This small movement was started last year by Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Wilber. Four white couples and four Negro couples meet once a month for an evening of discussion. The host selects the subject which might be a community problem or a personal prejudice.

One participant remarked, "These are pretty frank discussions. After three or four sessions, you don't look on each other as white or black but as individuals." There are now over 100 persons in Atlanta involved. After a year the group splits up into two or three groups.

THE PLACE to start improving human relations is where you are—your neighborhood, your school, your church, your business and the organizations with which you are affiliated. If a person is treated with genuine dignity and respect, he will respond in kind. If treatment is second class, this is what can be expected in return.

A homemaker can start by paying domestic help the minimum wage of \$1.60 and seeing that the employe's quarterly social security form is filed.

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WHAT ELSE can be done?

One institution that needs to be revived in Atlanta is the neighborhood organization or group. We have lost the "neighborhood cohesiveness" that is so important.

White middle and upper income neighborhood groups tend to become defensive mechanisms to insulate the neighborhood from the rest of the city. In so doing we tend to develop sterile neighborhoods. The neighborhood needs to relate to the city.

The disadvantaged neighborhoods are making substantial progress by strengthening their neighborhood groups through local leadership with the help of EOA, Model Cities, and the Community Relations Commission.

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THE GRANT Park area is an encouraging example. It was selected by CRC as the area in which to initiate their 1969 Town Hall meeting program. The usual procedure is, first, a meeting with the citizens to get their ideas on what their problems are and, then, a follow-up meeting in which City Hall officials re-

port on actions taken in response to the citizens.

The first meeting was on a cold March night with a rather slim crowd at the Jerome Jones School in Grant Park. The public officials almost outnumbered the citizens. The crowd tripled at the follow-up meeting held recently. A total of five aldermen, two state representatives, eight city department officials and five members of CRC participated in these two meetings.

* * *

THE CALIBER of leadership shown by the Grant Park citizens impressed me tremendously. Both white and black citizens and white and black elected officials showed dignity and respect for one another and an earnest desire to move on with solving the community problems at hand.

Cecil Alexander, head of the Mayor's Housing Resources Committee, has stated, "Atlanta no longer has the choice of being a white or a black city. The choice is either to be a black city or an integrated city."

These two Town Hall meetings produced strong evidence that the citizens... white and black... have made their choice. Grant Park is their home and they are going to stay there and build a great community again. Model Cities, assisted by CRC, is making a valuable contribution in helping develop this indigenous leadership.

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LET US hope that as other neighborhoods move into transition, they will follow the example of the resurgant leadership in Grant Park.

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