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BEFORE THE REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CHIEFS
CITIZEN'S PLACEMENT, ACTION
at the MARRIOTT HOTEL
SEPTEMBER 10, 1971



I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak with you today about Minority Communications.

You've probably heard the numbers being kicked around regarding minorities who are serving overseas in the International Division of ACTION. Some say we only have 113. Others say the number is smaller. The actual number really isn't important except that it does illustrate to us that somewhere and somehow we have failed in our total effort.

I believe that our failure to have a better representation of minorities can be blamed primarily on an almost complete lack of communications with minority groups within this country.

Director Joe Blatchford is determined to change these figures. More than 700 slots are being set aside for minorities to fill in our domestic and international programs. VISTA will receive at least 120 new minority Volunteers, and the Peace Corps has a target of at least 600 minorities. These figures do not include women.

I'm asking that you, as professional communicators, lend your expertise toward this new thrust. I'm asking that you join me in this challenge to relate to the minorities within this country the purpose of ACTION and how and why they should participate.

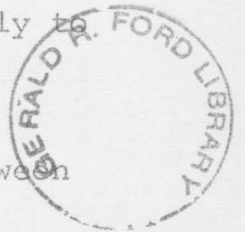
We recently had a study completed among Black College seniors and graduate students. The results are really not pleasing to me. There is a very negative feeling regarding the Peace Corps. The study also showed that this negative attitude is due primarily to an almost complete ignorance of the Peace Corps.

While we have been able to bridge the cultural gaps between Americans and the people of the nearly 56 countries where Peace Corps serves, we have failed to communicate this to a very large portion of our population. Black students know little if anything about the mechanics of the Peace Corps. They didn't know that host countries invite us and outline programs and skills.

But the Black students have not been alone in misconceptions. We at Peace Corps have also been laboring under certain myths that are also without basis.

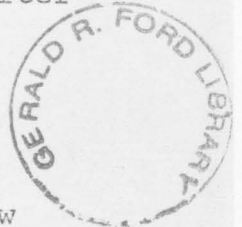
For example, we have thought that most minorities couldn't financially afford to join the Peace Corps, or VISTA. It is true that most minorities have had to struggle through college financially, and many have loans to repay. Never-the-less, the same motivating factors influence minorities as do whites. Travel, a desire to see and understand another culture...plus a genuine desire to help ones fellowman also influence minorities.

In my recent trip through Africa and Asia, the minorities I talked to were not hung up on money, even though most had an educational loan to repay.



HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE WITH MINORITIES?

There is no time tested method. Madison Avenue Advertising experts have for the most part neglected this segment of the population and in a sense its understandable. If you have a market of 150 million potential and a separate market of 50 million which is divided into even smaller parts, you naturally go after the bigger market with your product. So even Madison Avenue can't give us the key to communicating with minorities.



One of the first steps would appear to be to get to know what tools are available to us. How do they relate to the markets.... I say markets because each minority group must be viewed as just that...a separate market, a separate target group.

There are newspapers, magazines, radio stations and TV programs that are designed to reach each minority group.

Trying to communicate directly to each minority is not "segregation in reverse." Earning good will by using the proper words and phrases----ethnic phrases----makes good sense.

In reality we know that there are sub-cultures in this country....or several societies if you please. While you nor I are responsible for creating this situation, this is the climate we must operate in if we are to relate to minorities in an efficient and effective manner.

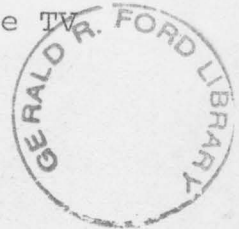
RADIO

Radio is perhaps the most powerful communication tool in relating to minorities. The Puerto Ricans, for the most part, are

going to leave their radio tuned in to the Spanish language station. The Blacks....or the brothers and sisters if you please...are going to listen to Soul radio. Likewise, all minority groups are going to cling to that which is felt to belong to them.

TELEVISION

Television has done much to destroy many of the stereotypes of minorities and because of this it is the second most powerful medium within the minority communities. Most cities, areas with large numbers of minorities have some type of TV show----news, talk, cultural, etc. Los Angeles has a Spanish language TV station....Channel 34.



PRINTED MEDIA

Generally speaking, the printed media is not as powerful within minority communities as the electronic media. But we must define this. Magazines like LIFE, TIME, NEWSWEEK and until the end of October...LOOK; aren't as important to minorities as they are to whites. Nor are newspapers such as the New York Times, LA Times, and the Wall Street Journal. But minority publications are very important and are quite influential within the minority group intended to be reached.

This is not to say that non-ethnic publications or non-ethnic radio and TV should be abandoned in communicating with minorities.

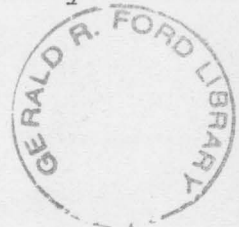
A good story on a Black, published in the Washington Post would reach a larger number of Blacks than a similar story used in the Washington Afro-American. Confusing? The circulation of the Washington Afro-American is only 20,000 in a city of nearly half a million Blacks, while the Washington Post has a circulation of nearly a million. But that story might be missed if it is run in the Washington Post and no photograph is used. If it's run in the Afro you know it will be read. That Afro newspaper might be passed on to at least nine other people who will read each page.

Still confused?

Perhaps more important is believeability. If its ethnic oriented, and in an ethnic publication you'll have this factor going for you. The impact on your target group would be greater with the Afro-American. If you supplemented your effort with a story in both the Washington Post and the Afro-American you would be batting closer to a thousand.

SENSITIVITY

This is an area we could all use some help. Most minority groups will resent being compared to another minority group in the terms of their role within the American society. Any inference to a Black that he is in fact an African is likely to get you in Dutch, if you mean that he is not an American citizen.



There are other areas we should be equally tuned in. The young Black American student knows that he is not isolated. In the identity crisis, which is in existence in all minority groups, you've got to know where all of the students are "coming from", to steal an ethnic term. There are 25 million Blacks in this country. There are over 100 million Black people in the Western Hemisphere....Latin America, West Indies. There are 300 million Blacks on the African Continent, making Black man the second largest people on earth.

Some authorities estimate that almost 95 per cent of the Black people of the United States today are of mixed ancestry. Recent studies show that between 2,000 - 3,000 persons of Black ancestry are assimilated in the white population annually.

Blacks today, like other groups living as minorities around the globe, are in search of a definition of himself and his relationship to his people, his country and the world.

So you see being sensitized is important.

I'm asking your help in building a positive image of Peace Corps and VISTA within minority communities. An image showing Volunteers being involved.

I'm asking you to help me destroy many of the myths about the Peace Corps' efforts overseas. Let's tell minorities what is being done for other nations, and how we are helping these nations to achieve their own goals....goals set by their nation.



Ethnic posters, radio spots, TV spots, newspaper and magazine ads will be available to you. A minority advertising agency is developing these items.

Let's make ACTION....the Peace Corps, VISTA and other programs of ACTION truly relevant to all the people here at home, and let's have the Peace Corps truly represent America abroad.

Thank you.

