

Interracial Justice Commission  
Manhattanville College  
Purchase, New York  
February 2, 1954

Dear John,

The first Inter-Collegiate Discussion sponsored by the interracial Justice Commission will be held on Sunday, February 14, 1954, in Fordham University's Bishops Lounge from 1:30 to 5:30 P.M. The topic of discussion is: The Responsibility of the College Student to Promote Better Race Relations.

Enclosed you will find two papers which will help you in preparing for the discussion. I would appreciate it if you would read these papers, be prepared to discuss them and be ready to add new ideas to the discussion. Your whole-hearted cooperation is asked to make our first discussion a success.

Geraldine Henry has given up the regional chairmanship since she plans to be married in February. I am substituting for her until June. She had already made plans for the year and I hope to be able to carry them out. This, of course, is only possible with your help.

I should like to brief you on the coming events through March:

1. Our first Inter-Collegiate Discussion at Fordham.
2. On March 14th, the Fordham Interracial Club is presenting Bishop Waters of South Carolina. He will give the sermon at the Solemn Mass held for Interracial Justice. A reception will be held in his honor after the Mass.
3. We are designating March 14-20 for Interracial Week, this year. I plan to forward a list of literature which may be obtained from the National Council of Christians and Jews and the Westchester Commission Against Discrimination. This material is free of cost and will be good to display for the students of your college to read during Brotherhood Week (Feb. 21-27) as well as Interracial Week (Mar. 14-20). I will also suggest that you have some special activity on campus during that week, such as, a prominent speaker on the subject, a smoker, a panel discussion or an interracial movie, which would stimulate special interest in that week.
4. Our second Inter-Collegiate discussion will be held on March 21 at Manhattanville College. The topic will be given at a later date.

Please do not forget to be prepared for the discussion on the 14th of February. I am looking forward to meeting you on that date.

Sincerely,

E. Dines

## IS YOUR PREJUDICE SHOWING?

We usually think of prejudice as hurting the people against whom it is directed, but, actually, prejudice is a boomerang. The person who suffers most from a prejudice is the one who has it.

A narrow mind leads to a narrow life. It cheats people out of the pleasure of new experiences. It warps thoughts, conversations, activities. It affects careers, friendships and opportunities.

"He can't handle that; he's too prejudiced to give a fair opinion," is not an uncommon expression in business. Socially, the reaction is apt to be: "Let's leave her out; her views are too set."

But, despite its high cost, prejudice is like sin—even though everybody's against it, it still continues to flourish.

We all have a pretty accurate idea of a "prejudiced" person. He is someone who is set in his ways, bitter, antagonistic—the sort you want to leave off the guest list when you give a party.

Yet many of us harbor prejudice without recognizing it. We label it "feelings" or "convictions."

### The Telltale Signs

If you want to identify prejudice in yourself, here are three telltale signs:

1. When you think, "They can't change my mind no matter what they say." A conviction that is based on sound reasoning doesn't need to fear arguments. A prejudice does.

2. When the bulk of your opinions originate with others. "Most people are other people," wrote Oscar Wilde. "Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives are a mimicry, their passions a quotation."

3. When you voice inherited opinions, justified on the basis that Grandfather didn't approve of votes for women, or the theater, or income tax. Grandfather wasn't necessarily right.

During a discussion, prejudices are usually not hard to spot in other people. Most often they are betrayed in one of these ways:

When a person loses his temper in the face of overwhelming argument. (Many people are prone to this reaction when faced with a formidable fact.)

When actualities are ignored to drag personalities into an issue. ("It may be well and proper, but Jack Jones is for it, and he's no good!")

When an opinion is stated too emphatically. (Ted Cook once said that the narrower the mind, the broader the statement. It's a subtle signal, but one to watch.)

### What to Do

But it is not enough to know prejudice when you meet it. The question is, what can you yourself do about it? How can you avoid becoming narrow-minded?

Here are seven helpful rules:

The first is to strive constantly to know thoroughly before you form a strong opinion. Years ago Montaigne wrote, "Nothing is so firmly believed as that we least know." The better you are acquainted with something, the less likely you are to develop a prejudice against it.

The second is to have a factual basis or good authority for the opinion you hold. "they say" is a pretty weak justification for a statement; at best it is half a lie as Timothy Fuller remarked.

The third is to avoid outright acceptance of the opinions of others. Give yourself time to mull over what you're told and then make up your own mind. Too many of us think by infection, catching opinions like colds.

The fourth is to avoid being too consistent. Raymond Clapper said that some people, when they adopted an idea, buried it in the ground and thereafter spent their days defending it, never once re-examining it to see whether time

and the elements had caused it to decay into a worthless handful of dust. In that way, he added, people can always be consistent--and wrong. Opinions should be checked frequently in the strong light of new argument and upon the basis of changed conditions and new facts.

The fifth is just this: If you can't win an argument on reason alone, give it up--then re-examine your point of view. If you lose your temper, you'll reveal the essential smallness of your opinion. People are about as big as the things that make them mad. A good point of view can be defended with facts alone. Prejudice brings temper into play.

The sixth is: Don't put yourself out on a limb. When you express an opinion you put yourself on record, and probably will feel duty-bound to defend your stand thereafter. None of us likes to admit having been wrong. Unfortunately, however, too many of us make up our minds, and only then look around for arguments to prove that we're right. Think first.

Seventh, and last, don't let your feelings trap you. Psychologists say prejudice often arises out of a feeling of inferiority. To compensate, we look around for somebody to whom we think we can feel superior--and thus we acquire a prejudice.

In following these rules you start with an open mind and progress to sound opinions. And you need opinions; they are what make you an individual. The person with no definite point of view is of small value to the world. He seldom feels keenly enough about an injustice to fight for its correction. But before you can take a

valid stand you must know where --and why.

The object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth when eating, is to shut it again on something solid.

These seven rules will enable you to do so--without prejudice.

QUESTIONS TO BE EMPLOYED AS "THOUGHT" MATERIAL FOR THE  
INTERRACIAL CLUE SMOKER

1. What social contacts have you had outside of college with people of other races and nationalities?
2. In what fields did these contacts lie:
  - a) church
  - b) jobs
  - c) recreational activities
  - d) previous schools attended
3. Has your family environment influenced your state of mind?
4. What positive steps have you taken to make yourself and others aware of this problem and its solution:
  - a) as a citizen
  - b) as a Catholic