

FROM:

FOR RELEASE IN  
THE DENVER AREA

Southwest Intergroup Relations Council  
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Edwin Stanfield, Exec. Dir.

March 11, 1970

"Social Action in the Seventies" will be the theme of the principal address to members and guests of the Southwest Intergroup Relations Council, Inc., gathering in Denver for their first annual meeting, Friday and Saturday, March 13 and 14. Dr. Paul Anthony, Executive Director of the Southern Regional Council, Atlanta, Georgia, will deliver the address Friday at a 7 P.M. banquet.

Site of the weekend meeting is the Continental Denver Motor Inn, where members will convene to be addressed by Dr. Hector P. Garcia at a luncheon, Friday at 12:30 P.M. Dr. Garcia, former Ambassador to the United Nations, is the Founder and National Chairman of the American G.I. Forum (a national organization of Spanish-speaking Americans), and has been a member of the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The purpose of the Southwest Intergroup Relations Council is to promote "equality of opportunity for and mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation among all the people and groups of the Southwest." A private, non-profit, educational and charitable agency with headquarters in Austin, Texas, the Council has a membership active in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New

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Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah. Most members are American Indians, Mexican-Americans, Black Americans, and Anglo-Americans; several other ethnic groups are also represented.

The Council earlier this year published a Leadership Report, "A Bilingual Approach: Education for Understanding" for use by public school administrators; and this weekend a new collection of essays on relations among the ethnic groups of the Southwest will be released.

Colorado members of the Southwest Intergroup Relations Council are Mrs. Dorothy Davidson, Mrs. Portia Hitchens, James Reynolds, Minoru Yasui, Vine Deloria, Jr., Dr. Thomas Hickman, Thomas G. Lentz, and Bernardo Valdez, all of Denver; and Professor Russell Olin, of Boulder.

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FOR RELEASE IN DENVER  
AFTERNOON OF  
MARCH 13, 1970

"The option to remain 'as is' is not on America's ballot," writes Mario Obledo, President of the Southwest Intergroup Relations Council, in the introduction to a publication released Friday by the Council. "The supercilious slogan 'America: Love It or Leave It' is foolhardy," he states.

Titled With All Due Respect -- Thoughts on Diversity and Community in the Southwest, the release is a collection of papers written by Black, Mexican-American, American Indian, Jewish, and Anglo members of the Council, which is holding its annual meeting at the Continental Denver Motor Inn this weekend.

"The criticism of the country by minority groups is not a threat," Mr. Obledo continues, "but an offer of help in bringing her proud promise to fulfillment....With its ethnic and cultural pluralism, the Southwest could be a very special proving ground for American democracy."

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Among writers for the publication is Vine Deloria, Jr., of Denver. Mr. Deloria is a former director of the National Congress of American Indians and author of Custer Died For Your Sins. A Standing Rock Sioux, he is a senior at the University of Colorado School of Law.

Mr. Deloria points out that Indians tend to distrust other ethnic and racial groups because of the long history of broken treaties and other betrayals of Indian people. He credits the survival of Indian culture to tribal sovereignty and argues that strong recognition of group identity is the key to good minority-group relations.

Another contributor to the collection is Dr. Jorge Lara-Braud, Director of the Hispanic-American Institute, Austin, Texas, who contends that it is inaccurate to regard Mexican-Americans as an immigrant community. "The land was ours before we were the land's," he writes. Like Mr. Deloria, he rejects the notion of an American "melting pot" as myth. "The question," he suggests, "is whether the U.S.A. will continue its policy of cultural genocide...towards its Hispanic-Americans, or...will live up for the first time to its cherished ideal of pluralism, allowing this important community to enrich the country and itself through... its rich cultural traditions."

Willie L. Brown, Jr., Black Assemblyman in the California Legislature, points out in his essay that the Black, Indian, and Mexican-American communities exhibit the same degree of poverty,

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inadequate health care, conflict over leadership, high rates of suicide, alcoholism, and family instability -- all characteristics of "conquered peoples." "It should be apparent," he writes, "that the three groups must begin to view themselves as one in the struggle against subjugation by the 'majority'."

Theodore Freedman, director of the Houston regional office of the Anti-Defamation League, indicates that the danger of prejudice "stems not from its virulence but from widespread indifference to it" and a "lack of principled opposition to bigotry." "Prejudice is a treacherous beast," he concludes. "That man is a fool who stands idly by while his neighbor's ox is gored."

In the last of the five essays, Dr. Mildred Dickeman, chairman of the Department of Anthropology at California's Sonoma State College, calls for "dominant Americans" (commonly called Anglos in the Southwest) who wish to aid the struggle for justice and community in America to begin by "unprejudicing" themselves. This, she says, is a difficult two-fold process of listening and self-acceptance. "It is an uncomfortable fact," writes Dr. Dickeman, "that dominant Americans who would free themselves from the ethnocentrism of their heritage desperately need the assistance of those who have seen America from the other side. Whether minority group members will care to play this role of guidance and correction is a question I cannot answer, but I am convinced that the dominant American will never be free without it."

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