

*The following are excerpts from a video tape we made this summer at an Alternate Education Conference held by Phil Yenawine of the Metropolitan Museum of Art which has sponsored a number of video workshops (among a vast array of educational projects) for junior high and high school students. The purpose of the gathering was to figure out how the Met could become a more relevant place for kids to come to.*

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by Dean & Dudley, RAINDANCE

*Nancy Russel, the bookbinder:* "Because I'm a very verbal person, I'm lately coming to—what happens to you for which there are no words? We've not had any problem at all describing it verbally, but I know now, and I've become twice as free as I was ten years ago since I have learned that the name is not the thing. This is what I would hope would happen if you were doing any kind of sensitivity training with kids who don't know how to say what they feel yet, that it's important to teach them specifically how to say what they mean . . . I'd call it communications (training) . . .

"The education process so often is making you believe that until you have said a thing, it doesn't exist, and making a wider and wider gap between what you say and what you feel, *and teaching you, bringing you to the point where you can say everything, and feel nothing, and then you are considered educated.* The biggest difference in my mind between educated and uneducated people is vocabulary size. And educated people are not one bit better able to cope with reality than uneducated people. But most educated people consider themselves superior and most uneducated people believe that educated people are superior to them. And the greatest difference is vocabulary size. It's not valid."

*Jack Robertson:* "These alternatives which you are thinking about doing, it seems to me they have to be different from that old institution. That is if you look back at the sickness in that old one, you can learn what not to do. I see them pretty much as jails. If you haven't seen Weisman's film 'High School' I'd recommend you look at that. Because you can see that some of those teachers like those jails . . . We've got to create alternatives. Some people here are really into that. Far from being pessimistic, I'm personally more excited at the present moment than anything in my life (and I've been in this for a long time), and that's the truth! That other institution is so sick, but some of the things that are coming up from the bottom are healthy . . . The seeds of something new are here. The old machinery has broken down. The old system (meaning the great big system in N.Y.C.) really can't help us very much so you really are forced back on your own efforts. This time education will almost have to be created from the bottom up or it won't work. With the students, the teachers who want to do it, the parents who want their kids in something like that. This time it will have to come that way or it won't come."

We have to get out of those buildings. I learned that out there in Bedford Stuyvesant. So much sickness in the buildings, all over the walls and floors, in the lockers, in everything, in their attitudes that go with it. You almost

have to get out of the schools to get healthy. You have to get out of the schools also because learning as I see it has an awful lot to do with making choices and then following through on those choices. The range of choices inside the school building is just too narrow. What can you decide inside that building? You have to get out and I see the big function of those buildings is going to be making meaning out of the experience that happened some place else. Education is really the reconstruction of experience. That is the way I've learned almost everything in my life . . . The way to change it is to change a piece of it, to take this program and this one, draw away off the major system and create new alternatives and keep creating them. That's all."

*Student:* "I know that the kids in our free school are not going to want to come to the museum to have a curator lecture to them on Egyptology for three hours writing hieroglyphics on the blackboard. They want something more alive. We could possibly get that at our own school."

*Melanie Barron:* "It's a wonderful place for kids to have a good positive experience and they don't have to come out wanting to be hired for the job which they were exposed to. But they definitely belong here with every adult that's walking around here doing a job . . . There's somebody taking care of those plants. There's something to be learned, even for an hour a week walking around with a guy who's got these wonderful things growing. The kid is not necessarily going to grow up and be a botanist, but he will have a nice experience. He may meet a nice man who will spend some time talking to him."

*Student:* "You can't force a student to get into the fact that they have to tell you exactly what they feel about something, pictures let's say. Many students don't come here just to think about the pictures or what the painter was feeling. They just come to see and have some fun. But they don't find any fun over here because the whole place is covered with paintings."

*Student:* (commenting on a sensitivity session where they acted out some of the paintings) "I hated museums and I still do, it's just that I find something that, even though it's not as deep as some people would like, at least I get something out of it. I don't know what, but I enjoy looking at pictures and doing something like what I just did now."

*Woman from the Clinton Project:* "Kids from 12, 13, 14 have a certain attention span and after that, forget it. They are tuned out . . . An activity that they can do, that's the big thing. Listening after a while means nothing to them."

*Melanie Baron:* "Doing the very best you can teaching straight lecture-wise doesn't work in the schools and it's not going to work in the museum either."

*Student:* "You've got to have the students become aware somehow of the possibilities, that this, this, and this are available to do, that you can if you want to. But you can't just ask us what we want to learn. You've got to have some kind of direction."