

## POINTS OF VIEW

# Teens identify common issues at summit

Last week, 300 black and white teenagers from 65 Detroit and suburban high schools told me what it is like to be a young person today.

They were called to the first Southeastern Michigan Youth Summit to learn how they can have an impact on issues they care about. But first they had to define those issues.

And strange as it now seems, nowhere among the concerns they raised was the specific issue of racism.

Of course the summit took place the day before the Rodney King verdict was issued and Los Angeles exploded. It may have been a very different session had it convened after.

Still, perhaps we get a truer picture of the day-to-day concerns of these kids than if the atmosphere had been skewed by the national news.

After a morning of small group discus-

sions, they held a "Speakout" to put forth their issues and solutions and asked for help in achieving them from a panel of journalists and government officials, including Michigan's First Lady, Michelle Engler.

They specifically asked the journalists to publicize their concerns. As one student said: "We are intelligent people. Help us get our views across."

So parents, educators, elected officials, media — listen up:

• **Sex** — Sex education must begin earlier and include discussions in school with our peers. And, hey, there's too much promiscuity of sex in our society.

• **Substance abuse** — Everyone's doing it. Whoever has the money to buy it can just go out and get it. It's coming in from everywhere; almost security should be increased. When a kid goes through drug rehab, we all must help him get back into the system.



JUDITH DONER BERNE

• **Teen jobs** — We need public transportation to get them and get to them. Schools should help us get jobs in fields we might want to go into. If we're working, we're less likely to do drugs. Jobs make us do something for ourselves.

• **Education and real life** — No to home economics, yes to information on drugs, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Sex education from sixth grade on. School is not interesting enough; that's why some of us drop out. Don't pass us when we can't do the work. Have teacher-student workshops so we can tell them what we need.

• **Youth in abusive situations** — Institute a kids' crisis hotline, staffed by teens who've had crisis intervention training.

• **Teen parenting** — No one wants to talk about it. Publish information about what we can do if we get pregnant. We want condoms in school bathrooms. Help us start a support group, Students Supporting Student Parents.

• **School dropouts** — We drop out for three main reasons: pregnancy (start day-care in schools staffed by student volunteers); low self-esteem (kids need to reach out more to kids); and boring classes (teachers have to make school more interesting and relevant).

• **Talking with parents** — They don't deserve respect just because they had us. They have to earn it by acting as parents.

• **Homelessness** — Welfare programs must be updated to help people who really don't have homes. Let us help fix up low-income housing.

Those are the issues, articulated by some very thoughtful teens. Notice they don't ask for adults to do it all. They include them selves in many solutions.

If we work as one community on the issues which face our young people, black and white, perhaps we'll find that we're a lot more similar than we are different. And maybe then the metropolitan area's reputation for being racist will erode.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric.

# Acrid smoke billows over notion of a model city

In the 1960s, black frustration over the gap between promise and performance in civil rights reached the flash point.

Nearly 60 cities exploded in riots that left 141 people dead and 4,552 injured. These uprisings were generally spontaneous eruptions which began when minor incidents between blacks and police blew up into urban warfare.

In Watts, the black ghetto of Los Angeles, and in Newark, the frenzies began over tickets for traffic violations.

In Detroit during the long, hot summer of 1967, a routine raid on a black speakeasy drew a crowd that was curious at first, then angry and out of control.

That was the worst-rioted riot in the decade, with a death toll of 43 and more than 2,000 injured after nine days of fire and looting. Orange flames licked the sky as \$44 million worth of property crumbled.

We were in Los Angeles during the recent siege. When we left for home Saturday, the number of deaths was listed at 40, injuries were reported at 1,899 and damages were estimated at \$500 million.

We were in our hotel in Beverly Hills

when we watched with disbelief the report on television Wednesday, April 30, that four Los Angeles police officers won acquittals in their trial for the beating of Rodney King.

"If something in you can die, that something died," said the Rev. Cecil L. Murray in a luncheon meeting room of his First African Methodist Episcopal Church in South-Central Los Angeles.

Murray could only close his eyes, fighting back tears and label the verdicts of the all-white jury in Simi Valley a tragedy.

"To see them completely white-washing something that the whole world witnessed is a brutalization of the truth," he said. "You'd think rational people would be at least semi-rational and civil people be at least semi-civil."

Community leaders and activist groups met to urge calm while neighborhoods around them simmered near a boil. Passing police cars were pelted with rocks, but at first displays of emotion were limited to verbal blasts.

"They beat that black man," one woman shouted. "It's time for the black folks to



JACKIE KLEIN

reunite. It's our turn now. We're tired of being slaves."

The key word is "tired." The Rodney King incident was one more blow amidst too many. You could feel the frustration, the anger, the breaking point.

On that Wednesday night, rioters touched off more than 150 fires, stormed police headquarters and trashed downtown buildings. Sporadic gunfire flared in the streets and heavy black smoke rose from the fires.

As we drove along the Santa Monica

Freeway, we saw funnels of black smoke like slow-moving tornadoes. A police car was set aflame as were palm trees lining Hollywood Freeway, shooting flames 100 feet into the air.

Thousands of looters ransacked stores and set fires Thursday in a chaotic rampage through the Los Angeles area. We saw National Guard troops in the streets. A dusk-to-dawn curfew was clamped into force.

We saw rioters choosing the opportunity to steal, loot and vandalize. Some were in high spirits, enjoying the anarchy of the moment. Some kids risked their lives for half a gallon of ice cream.

And everywhere, thick black smoke clouded the air and car horns, burglar alarms and fire engines blared. Businesses were sacked along every major thoroughfare. We saw skeletons of burned out buildings like rusting corpses.

The Beverly Center across from our hotel was closed. The hotel dining room and swimming pool were locked and guests were cautioned to stay out of the lobby. It was a virtual ghost town as few motorists dis-

beyed the curfew.

My daughter, who lives near Venice Beach, was afraid to drive in her open Jeep Wrangler. Other drivers were yanked from their cars, beaten to unconsciousness and robbed.

The disturbances bared a simmering racial anger that community efforts never fully quelled.

The notion that Los Angeles was transforming itself into a harmonious, multi-ethnic model city appeared to waft away amid the acrid smoke billowing over the city.

In Detroit, torn apart by its long hot summer of 1967, the wounds will probably never heal. People talk of racism and white flight and community responsibility.

We acknowledge what we have become even as we pray what happened in L.A. will never again happen here.

Jackie Klein is a retired Southfield Eccentric reporter. She now writes a weekly column.

## "FAREWELL" SILVER'S TEL-12

### Closing Our Doors Forever May 31

### Store-Wide Sale — Save Up To 75% Off.

### All Office Supplies, Gifts, Furniture & Fixtures Must Be Sold...

STEELCASE STENO CHAIRS	Reg. List \$403.00	Sale Price \$ 59.50
STEELCASE SYSTEM FURNITURE		75% OFF
METAL COMPUTER STAND UNITS 18" x 45"	Reg. List \$395.00	Sale Price \$ 79.50
INDUSTRIAL STEEL SHELVING SECTIONS 18" and 24"	Reg. List \$ 99.50	Sale Price \$ 39.50
HON EVERY-DAY CHAIR	Reg. List \$213.00	Sale Price \$109.50
HON HOME FILE	Reg. List \$420.00	Sale Price \$ 64.95
ALL BETTER PENS (Cross, Parker, Waterman, Mont Blanc)		40% OFF
TEXAS INSTRUMENTS CALCULATORS		33% OFF
WHITE HOUSE COFFEE		33% OFF
GOELITZ JELLY BEANS		33% OFF
HOWARD MILLER CLOCK	Reg. List \$ 55.00	Sale Price \$ 29.50
COSTUME JEWELRY		40-50% OFF
BRAUN 10 CUP COFFEEMAKER	Reg. List \$ 55.00	Sale Price \$ 29.95

AND MUCH MUCH MORE!

## If It's Not Nailed Down...It's Marked Down And Must Be Sold!

# Silver's

GIFTS ■ OFFICE PRODUCTS ■ FURNITURE

## TEL-TWELVE MALL, SOUTHFIELD ONLY

12121212