

EDITORIAL

The Beacon and the Port

In 1957 I was a school age kid attending segregated schools in North Carolina and barely understood what was occurring at Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas. Nine Arkansas high schools students decided to go to school, and to get to school safely, President Eisenhower had to enlist the services of the 101st Air Borne Division and a federalized U.S. National Guard. I was seven at the time and on that day, I road to school in a bus and was guarded only by my taunting ten year old brother and the supervision of community values. It was another ten years before the schools I attended opened their doors to all Americans and it wasn't until 1979 that the first seniors graduated from my high school having never attended racially segregated schools. This edition of JITP commemorates two very important anniversaries. First, it is the 50th anniversary of the Central High incident. Second, it is the 25th anniversary of the Alliance for Invitational Education.

The connection of the two events, though wide apart in the emotional reaction they evoke, is more direct than may appear at first glance. Vital to both the Central High incident and the creation of IAIE is a steadfast, unquestioned belief held a few true believers that people need to be united and to be treated with justice, kindness, and dignity. And, if there are costs for that determination to invite, the costs will be born by the committed few and goodness *will* prevail. Both events illustrate that inviting with commitment often has its costs, and

that accepting an invitation frequently requires great courage. It is helpful to remember that although a disinventing mob and a very disinventing governor may be our first memory of Central High, there were many others who acted invitingly and with great courage. First among those, of course, are the nine students who took that long walk to Central. But there are others such as Central High students Georgia Dortch and Jane Emery, editors of Central High's student newspaper *The Tiger*. On October 3, 1957 they wrote "Looking back on this year will probably be with regret that integration could not have been accomplished peacefully, without incident...[We encourage] each individual to maintain a sensible, peaceful neutrality; to accept the situation without demonstration, no matter what personal views are entertained; and to make these, your years in Little Rock Central High School, the happiest and most fruitful of your academic education." A modest statement for today's ears, at the time it showed great fortitude and considerable insight into the future for adolescents in such difficult times. It is a message we need to hear today, "Give ourselves time to work it out."

Twenty-five years later, while certainly less dramatic, the founders of IAIE assembled, chartered themselves into a legal entity, and set about putting a body to a dream. This was not easy. The world in 1982 was tainted by an aging Cold War, IRA bombings were a fact of life, the Falkland's War flourished, a

plethora of serial killers such as the Unabomber and the Freeway Killer stalked the US, and a new form of hate emerged with the killing of unsuspecting consumers with the deliberate tampering and cyanide contamination of Tylenol pain relievers. Yet, the effort was made, the persistence commenced, and twenty-five years later IAIE has spread the concepts of invitational education worldwide.

While the immature and ignorant disinvolving behavior of many is well documented in film, in print, and in the folklore of our society, what is also apparent is the commitment of the everyman. The everyman is the literary commoner whose coalition of duty, will, and courage emerges to see that the future will include just and kindly treatment of all people. The commitment of the inviting everyman is at the expense of personal risk and setting aside the pursuit of individual gain to provide an invitation to others who are currently in need. Those who accept invitations do so with a risk that is unacknowledged and underconsidered also display great courage. The actions of the inviters and of those who accept illustrate what I have begun to think of as The Beacon and The Port.

In invitational theory many constructs have been devised to help us understand and unite a cohesive validated theory. Yet, we have substantial work ahead of us. One area to be considered is the complexity of the structure and attributes of the invitations themselves. I've identified several potential variations in invitational behavior, but as an introduction to the topic, I'll simplify my analysis to examine two types of inviting behavior "The Beacon" and "The Port." Both are demonstrated by the end of

Central High School's racial segregation and by the founding of the IAIE.

The Beacon

"The Beacon" is inviting behavior that attracts others. Beacons send out invitations to one and all: smiles, greetings, encouragement, participation, conversation, company, and entreaties to join. As Allyson Schoenlein says, "...getting everyone inside." Beacons serve as the most overt expressions of inviting behavior, reaching out even to the most reluctant persons, always showing others that invitations are there for the taking, offering encouragement and optimism, an opportunity to join, a chance to establish belonging.

The Port

"The Port" is more subtle. Ports are inviting by providing a haven of safety, a place to pause and take stock, a place to rest and recuperate, a place to take refuge without a need to provide an explanation. Sometimes a Port is inviting by saying nothing, communicating support by presence alone, avoiding the poking and prying that is ordinarily so encouraging and invigorating. Instead, a Port listens with care, concern, and interest. A Port freely gives away time and attention, provides empathy, acknowledges fear, accepts reluctance avoiding the foray of enthusiastic invitations Beacons provide so earnestly

Both behaviors are inviting. Both are appropriate, although either can be inappropriate given certain circumstances and timing.

Choosing Our Behavior

How do we know what inviting behaviors to provide at any given moment? In general, Beacon behaviors initiate an inviting relationship while Port behaviors sustain and nourish the association. If, as in Allyson Schoenlein's words, the individual is "on the outside," Beacon behaviors are usually needed. If a relationship is established, the choice is more difficult.

Part of the conundrum is a result of the ability to send invitations and yet, not be an inviting individual. This phenomenon is poignantly illustrated by the Central High incident. Let there be no doubt an invitation was sent and great lengths were expended to see that the students could attend the school. However, relatively little was done to educate the community and deal with the root causes of hatred: distrust, lack of respect, emotionally uncontrolled platitudes, and a pessimistic attitude that "them" equates to "trouble." Little Rock was and continues to be a host of many good-willed citizens practicing the four virtues of invitational education...trust, respect, intentionality, and optimism. However, for so many, those attitudes were lost in the moment, the past overshadowed the future, a void emerged from the inevitable elimination of systematic discrimination. Less dramatically, we see inviting behaviors go awry when the gregarious "life of the party" invites a reluctant participant to join the dance, sing the song, join the game or participate in some other behavior that draws attention to oneself. Certainly this is a Beacon of inviting behavior, an overt sign saying "join us...we welcome you." Yet this may be the exact opposite of the individual's needs. Drawing atten-

tion to oneself when one is feeling inadequate isn't inviting at all...it is terrifying! Terrifying, tormenting, or generally disquieting an individual is certainly not inviting. Likewise coaxing someone into doing something they may be reluctant to do may be a big step forward, but to some, it can be a big step back.

Wisdom

Beacon behaviors are the most popular of inviting actions because they are overt, easily conceived, inclusive, and (at least in my experience) fun. Because of this, I think that extending Beacon behavior is always appropriate...at least once. After the initial behavior, the inviter has to carefully ascertain the receiver's response and be very sensitive to the reactions of the invitee. When practicing inviting behavior, we are totally out of the range of simple answers and easy solutions. We are, I would propose, into the area of wisdom.

Wisdom is more than amassed learning and experience. On the contrary, wisdom is the ability to go beyond what is known, to accommodate what may not be knowable, and to discern what has value. Wisdom does not operate in the quiet corner of a peaceful refuge. Instead, wisdom is found in the chaotic experiential existence where life's compass spins erratically, never yielding a true heading, always creating doubt, always capable of error.

Wisdom, as it turns out, is not completely accepted in academia as a valid construct. The more common understanding of wisdom transcends the logical analysis of data that underpins the philosophy of science. On the contrary,

wisdom, by accepting the use of the unknowable, can yield results that do not comply with the laws of logic and of science. Mark Twain underscores the purpose of wisdom: “The perfection of wisdom...is to proportion our wants to our possessions, our ambitions to our capacities, we will then be a happy and a virtuous people.” My father said it rather more simply, “The wise man is the man who knows he has enough.” So, moving on...

“Bringing Them In”

In the last issue I posed one of the yet unanswered issues in IE theory: Does the motivation of the sender when sending an invitation alter the invitation in substantive ways that might enhance or detract from the invitation’s success in promoting positive action and situational amelioration?

Allyson Schoenlein of Huntington, West Virginia sent a thoughtfully written letter that summarizes and synthesizes the views of other inviting educators. Invitational education imposes a number of positive exemplary expectations upon those who choose to follow that path. However, that belief also conveys an expectation that other will reciprocate and incorporate trust, intentionality, respect, and optimism into their outlook and their behavior. As Allyson states: “After all, self-control is a decision. Proper motivation isn’t required. ...Positive actions develop positive habits. Positive habits can change our way of thinking. In other words, when we repeatedly choose positive actions, positive thoughts develop.” Allyson concludes with a powerful summary to guide us in our work and remind us that we will get better with time: “Ulti-

mately, the goal for invitational education is to merge positive thinking *and* positive action. But in the meantime, it just may be the greater form of selflessness when a person chooses to *act* inviting during a battle with negative thoughts. It is a backdoor to invitational education, but getting everyone inside is all that counts.”

Featured Articles

The thirteenth volume of the JITP describes and illustrates some of our finest inviting concepts. Melanie Hunter and Ken Smith help us build a Port in the arts. Their article “Inviting school success: Invitational education and the art class” describes characteristics of an art classroom that attracts students to explore their aesthetic abilities.

Jack Schmidt also describes the creation of protective Ports in his article “Elements of Diversity in Invitational Practice and Research.” Jack outlines the “Six E’s” of invitational education in promoting equity and mutual understanding. As a natural extension of invitational theory, Jack provides an instructive model to assist in the creation of satisfying environments for all students and clients.

Gina Gresham provides a nice Port for inviting educators and students troubled by math anxiety. In her article “An invitation into the investigation of the relationship between mathematics anxiety and learning styles in elementary preservice teachers,” Gresham examines ways to reduce math anxiety by employing invitational education processes and strategies. The article provides assistance to the educator enabling a better understanding the student, in providing a

supportive environment for learning, and, of course, the beacon to invite them “inside.”

Our last piece for this issue comes from Anita Kitchens and Robert Wenta and provides a Beacon and a Port for introducing educators to invitational education, in this case through an examination of the affective aspects of math education via the format of a teacher in-service opportunity. Their article “Merging invitational theory with mathematics education: A workshop for teachers” describes their strategies for introducing

invitational education into the math curriculum in to reduce apprehension and promote math confidence.

Happy Birthday IAIE

This year marks the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the International Alliance for Invitation Education. Join the festivities at the Leadership Conference in Georgetown, Kentucky, read your Forum, and visit the new IAIE website www.invitationaleducation.net.

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