

Gray Plan Debate

The controversy over the Gray report is one among adults who are motivated by their interests, prejudices and fears. Many who oppose the proposed constitutional change are concerned about the possibility of higher taxes, and many who favor the change are concerned about having to associate with Negroes at PTA meetings, recreational gatherings and teachers' conferences. Actually, the issue primarily concerns children—their welfare and future happiness.

My children have long attended school with Negro children, and I think they are the better for it. Their relationship with Negroes is a natural one; they like and dislike individual Negroes for the same reasons they like and dislike their white playmates.

My children aren't troubled by any guilty feeling about Negroes. They aren't uneasy or condescending in the presence of Negroes.

Prejudice, fear and bad conscience aren't good companions. We who have grown up in all-white schools and lived very long in Virginia know this. We know at heart that many of our rationalizations are partly an attempt to overcome a secret feeling that it isn't right—after all is said that can be said—to make some children (equally sensitive and as easily hurt as our own) use only the rear entrance.

So for me it's enough to try to get across to my children the need to be honest with one's self and respectful of others, without trying to qualify this and justify different sets of rights for different racial and religious groups.

Philip S. Brown.

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