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To: President John X. Jamrich
Northern Michigan University

Mayor Lloyd H. Price
City of Marquette

From: Michigan Civil Rights Commission

Events of recent weeks throughout the nation symbolize the polarization that exists in our country. Of particular significance have been the deaths of four white students at Kent State University, the slaying of six black people in Augusta, Georgia, and the killing of two black students at Jackson State University. These destructive and tragic happenings, though outside of Michigan, have had a deep impact on many in this State, especially students, black and white. The separation that exists nationally is present within Michigan as well. It is between black and white; old and young; campus and noncampus; and establishment and nonestablishment. The mistrust is growing between these forces rather than lessening.

With mistrust there is an added factor - fear, which causes many kinds of reactions. It heightens the tensions that exist between groups of people who consciously or unconsciously perceive one another as antagonists. Fear also carries with it distortion, which causes a blur between what is real and unreal. This leads to a communication breakdown, which often leads to violence, or to the threat of violence.

In many university communities this kind of breakdown has become very apparent. We cannot view a University, and the community in which it is located, as being bound only by mutual geographic locations. Social forces which affect one, have an impact on the other as well. Both share mutual responsibility for insuring the physical and psychological well being of community residents and university personnel alike.



No longer are local communities or university campuses isolated from the events of national import, and the emotional responses that attend them. Northern Michigan University and the City of Marquette are faced with a situation which is reflective of the aforementioned divisiveness, fear, and distortion, particularly as it involves relationships between black students and white students and townspeople. For this reason, the two bodies have a mutual interest in providing an atmosphere in which all parties possess a sense of well-being and security.

Black people on the Northern Michigan University Campus and the Marquette Community, have for the most part, felt like aliens. They have experienced encounters which are perceived as harassment and acts of discrimination, both on and off campus. Of prime importance now is a lack of understanding involving the heavy emphasis on hunting and the possession of guns. To most urban black people firearms are used for one of two purposes--for violent use, or for protection of life or property. Because of a culmination of events in the Marquette community over many months, and the earlier mentioned national events, black students feel that their lives are in danger. Even though the extent and meaning of the threat of danger may be perceived differently by various segments of the community and university population, the threat has become a reality. One black student expressed the feelings of most students who are black when he said: "Except for my first semester here, I have been 25% student and 75% struggling to survive and being a freedom fighter." These feelings were enhanced when an unknown party put up on a university bulletin board the so-called "Nigger Hunting License."

Whatever the external reality, the internal reality for blacks in Marquette is that they feel their lives are in danger, and this affects their educational experience in destructive ways. They are faced with a crisis, and the University and the City of Marquette must respond affirmatively to this crisis.

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission, therefore, makes a series of recommendations which are based on several important observations which the Commission and its staff have seen operative in similar instances throughout the State. The University and appropriate government officials must make it absolutely clear that the physical safety and well-being of every person will be protected, both on and off the campus, and that any action which threatens either will be dealt with effectively and firmly.

The Commission recommends the following to the Administration of Northern Michigan University and to the government of the City of Marquette:

- (1) That the citizens of Marquette and the University community affirm publicly the civil rights and liberties of all students for the well-being of the entire community.
- (2) That the University gun-control program be reaffirmed publicly and that the entire community, on and off campus, be informed of its present status.
- (3) That the University and the city take appropriate action in order to insure that firearms are not transported from the City of Marquette to the campus of Northern Michigan University for illegal or improper purposes.
- (4) That the "Hunting License" and its implications be denounced through the public media, and that it be made clear that every means will be employed to guarantee the safety and well-being of black students, in particular, and all students in general.
- (5) That the role of the University Human Rights Commission in insuring the equal rights of students on and off the campus be reaffirmed to the entire University community.
- (6) That the City of Marquette cooperate fully with the University Human Rights Commission in any matters which pertain to the alleged violation of student civil rights.
- (7) That the University affirm to the total community that it will meet its obligation to be an educational resource to all citizens of this state and that recruitment efforts for additional black staff and students will be continued.
- (8) That the University pledge to the entire community its willingness to serve as a resource in matters pertaining to human and civil rights.
- (9) That the University's Public Information Office be designated as a rumor control center; that the total community be informed of this designation and encouraged to utilize the center in order to allay fears and suspicion which grow out of the circulation of rumors, particularly during times of campus unrest; and that the University and the City of Marquette maintain close liaison on the Center's operation.