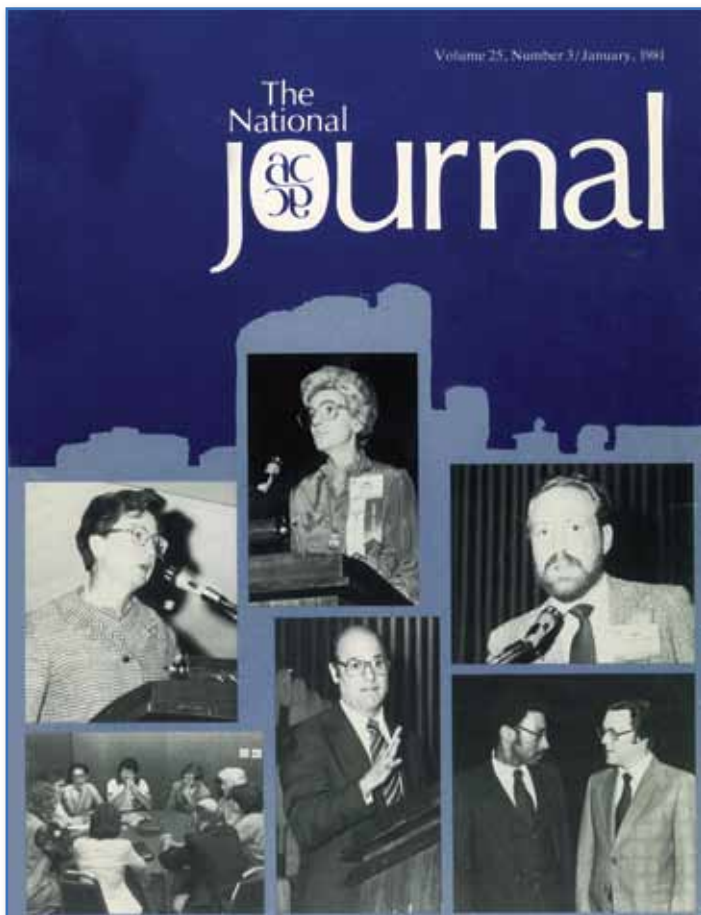


January 1981

# The Future is Now for Renewed Commitment

Response by Tony Campolo on page 55



I became fascinated by the fact that in my own life, I never watch what I ought to watch. There's a good educational channel—the Public Broadcasting System. I want to watch the programs on that channel, but every time I do, I get bored! I try to tell myself, “This is good. This is sophisticated. I am a good, sophisticated person. I should like this.” But I hate it! Commercial shows seem to entertain me more, but then I'm really horrified as I analyze my personality, because I find that what fascinates me more than anything else are the commercials.



From 1981: **DR. CAMPOLO** (far right) elaborates on a point of interest to his students during a sociology class.

Somewhere along the line, educational institutions must once again become citadels; communities filled with visionaries. I don't believe that to be a dreamer is to be unrealistic, or to be a visionary is to be detached from reality.

The whole style of life in American society is changing as you well know, and I thought as a Sociologist, the thing that I could best contribute to this group would be some input in terms of how I perceive, and how some of my colleagues perceive, that young people coming into college will be different through the '80s than in the '70s.

The first thing to note as I analyze these young people is that they represent more and more a generation of people who have been raised with television as a basic medium of communication.

Now there has been a lot of talk about television being a positive medium if we are selective about what we watch. It is that premise that I want to attack right off the bat. For I am not so much upset with the contents of television programming—which isn't very good—as I am concerned about the medium itself.

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I began to ask myself why, and found that the answer was easy to come up with. Try this sometime: Stand in front of a television set with a stopwatch and check the number of technical changes that occur per minute. Technical changes mean that a

camera zooms in or zooms out, or we change cameras, change directions, change scenes, change color. Something technical takes place that alters what one sees on the screen dramatically. On public broadcasting, there are approximately seven technical changes per minute. On a commercial station, there are somewhere between 18 and 21 technical changes per minute. And in the commercials, there are about 47 technical changes per minute. That's pretty many when you stop to think about it. The ramifications of that cannot be underestimated.

#### Television's Effect on Children

Television has conditioned a whole generation of young people to not pay attention to anything unless that thing is undergoing rapid technical change before their eyes. They can't read, because there is something bad about reading. You open a book—and there it is—no technical changes. There is no zoom in, no zoom out, no changing of angles; it's just there. Thus, the student—the young person reared on television who is used to paying attention only when rapid technical changes are occurring—finds it very difficult to pay attention for any length of time when he reads. You may say, "Aren't you overstating the case?" Well, the average high school youngster watches television approximately four times the number of hours he spends in class each year. So you can see that television is making a much more powerful impact on him/her than the school.

In case you are interested in the family's influence, let me break the bad news. The average interaction between a father and child is

somewhere around 7½ minutes a day. Mothers do a little better—they interact about 14 minutes a day. Children interact very little with their parents, very little in school, and a great deal with the medium, a medium that is conditioning them not to pay attention to anything unless that thing is undergoing rapid technical changes.

It is no wonder, therefore, that College Boards will register a degree of drop when it comes to reading skills. Their verbal scores reflect this. It's even more frightening that not only are verbal scores

dropping and not only are most institutions accepting students with College Boards that they probably would not have accepted just a decade or two ago, but add this to the fire: We find a tendency for students in a large number of universities, if not most of the universities (I can't say all, because I haven't studied all) who came into school with the lowest College Boards—almost illiterate and in need of remedial reading programs—end up majoring in education. They come into school almost illiterate, they go through college almost illiterate and they come out at the other end and go into the teaching profession.

I spoke this year at the National Convention of the Parent-Teachers Association which met in Honolulu. The people gathered there were irate, for they wanted teachers of the United States to undergo a competency test that would require them to read on a 10th grade level, and do mathematics on an 8th grade level. You're probably thinking "But of course. Certainly they should." Yet the National Teachers Unions have resisted such a test, and have done so adamantly, and for good reason: in the three states where such tests were administered, close to 30% of all the teachers who took the test flunked it.

That becomes a very scary phenomenon, when you have young people going to a school system filled with teachers who cannot read, cannot do mathematics, when you are dealing with young people who were raised in an environment of medium that teaches them not to read, that teaches them, in fact, not to pay attention to anything that doesn't have rapid technical changes.

There is another concomitant, namely that the attention span of people under the impact of television is diminishing to shorter and shorter segments. What we find is that people have difficulty, for the most part, paying attention to anything for more than 20 seconds. I don't care what kind of speaker you get, chances are that in the course of his remarks, your mind will wander several times, because the attention span is about 20 seconds. The ramifications of that in an election year are awesome. Obviously, candidates aren't saying anything. How can they? What can you say in 20 seconds, and if you take longer than 20 seconds, it is too long for the average American to pay attention.

The young people who are coming into school are not lacking in intelligence, are not lacking in intellectual capability, but are lacking in the capability of paying attention, and the capability of reading. And to a large degree, they are inadequately taught because in many instances they are taught by teachers who themselves leave much to be desired. Undoubtedly, somebody from the teaching profession is going to say, "What a terrible way to talk! There are a lot of very good teachers out there who are dedicated and committed to teaching, and are par excellence." And I say, "Hurray!" But I want to add that I think they are the problem to a large degree. It seems to me that the good teachers ought to be invading the professional organizations and making sure those professional organizations do not become agencies that protect incompetence.

When I look at the Teachers Unions of the United States, I see union after union that is protecting incompetent teachers. We have to face up to that. Tenure is an outmoded value system in the high

## Throwback: 1981

37th NACAC National Conference is held in Philadelphia, PA. Ann P. Fritts (The Lovett School, GA) is NACAC president.

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention first recognizes cases of AIDS.**

Charles, Prince of Wales, and Lady Diana Spencer wed at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

MTV launches.

12.4 million students enroll in US postsecondary education; 6.4 million are women.

school and may I say as a college teacher I think it is outmoded on the college level as well. It is about time we recognize that we are the last vestige of another era. If you can't produce, if you can't hold the attention of your students, if they don't want to take your classes, then I think that in the marketplace there have to be some cuts. I don't think tenure should protect some people who shouldn't be protected.

### Age of Dying Commitment

There's another thing. This is an age in which commitment has died. We have almost made self-sacrifice in the American culture a bad word. I happen to be one who believes in commitment to a large degree and I worry about a society that is devoid of commitment. For instance, I'm intrigued with marriage, being a married man for 23 years. I'm intrigued with a society that doesn't understand commitment in that particular arena. We live in a society that is increasingly romantic and puts a great emphasis on romanticism.

Students come into my office, they look at each other, and then they look at me, and I know why they're there. They want to get married. I'm not only a sociologist, but I'm also an ordained minister, which means that I can perform ceremonies for students. I used to do a lot of them when I was at the University of Pennsylvania, because I could do it for free, before class, and it was very convenient for everybody. They would come in, look across the desk at me and say, "We want to get married." And I would always ask the obvious question "Why?" They would always look back at me in an incredulous manner and say, "What do you mean 'why?'" "Then, they would look at each other like dying cows in a hailstorm. They would say, "We're in love." So, as a solid sociologist, I would ask "Do you have a better reason?" They would always be incredulous again at that point.

Better reason than being in love? But of course! Ours is a romantic culture, particularly on the youth level. Stop to think of the lyrics of a romantic song: "I need you. I want you. I can't get along without you." It really makes me cry. Romantic love is a lousy basis for marriage. We may love and enjoy romance, but it is an inherently selfish emotion. The whole emphasis of romanticism is that this other person exists primarily to aggrandize my state of emotional ecstasy. Some of my colleagues in the field of sociology say it should not even be called love, because love by nature is self sacrificing and self-giving, and romance is basically an emotion that calls for the *other* person to give: I want you to give yourself to me; I want you to belong to me; I want you to be mine forever. It's possessive, egocentric, and selfish.

I don't trust romance, because it is part of the whole "Me" decade. And as a matter of fact, in our contemporary culture, people build marriages on romance and when romance dies, so does the

marriage. That is bad news because the studies indicate (Nimkoff and Wood studies, for instance) that romance tends to die about 80% in intensity during the first year and a half of marriage. People don't like that fact, but it is true. I remember saying to my wife before we were married, "Just think Peg, three more weeks. It will be like this all the time. We're going to share everything. The beautiful things, the ugly things, the easy things." I have been married for twenty-three years. When my kids vomit at three in the morning, and my wife is cleaning up the mess, I have no desire to share with her. Generally, I roll over in bed and pretend I am still sleeping. I don't know what your device is, but in the morning when my wife says, "Bart was sick last night," my response is, "Oh, really?"

One night I had just finished a speaking engagement in New Jersey, my wife and I were in an automobile coming across the Walt Whitman bridge, my kids were asleep in the back seat and my wife suddenly said, "Look at us." "I'm looking," I said. "What's the matter?" She said "Look where you are sitting." "I'm in the car. When you drive a car, you're supposed to sit behind the wheel. What's the matter?" She said "Look at *them*." So I looked into the car in front of us and there was a guy with two heads. Saying not a word, we came off the bridge along Schuylkill River Drive and pulled into one of those parking places right by the river. My children were still sleeping. I reached out and grabbed my wife, and smashed her head on the steering wheel. She said "What are you doing?" I said "I'm being romantic." She said "Take me home."

### Romanticism and Commitment

Romanticism also has a very low level of commitment. It tends to be on again, off again—an emotion that cannot be depended upon. As a matter of fact, I think that part of the problem of our contemporary cultural milieu that has enhanced the instability of marriage is in reality the romanticism of our culture.

I was speaking at Bryn Mawr College about a year and a half ago—a group of students had invited me. The women at Bryn Mawr are very bright and in my two previous visits there I got along quite well with them. I am an ardent feminist and they like that. So, I figured I would cut the mustard with great ease. But they asked me to speak on the values of traditional marriage and I am a traditionalist when it comes to marriage.

I gave them the old one-two and when I was finished they started arguing with me, which upset me. It upset me not only because they were arguing with me, but because they were winning the arguments. That was very strange because I never lose arguments; not because I am right, or not because I've got good ideas, but I don't lose arguments for three reasons. One is, I am very loud,

They said that marriage is basically about romance and about the emotional gratification that comes out of romanticism and that when it no longer has that thrill, that excitement, that euphoria, one ought to get out of the relationship because then it becomes dehumanizing.

and it's hard to beat a loud person in an argument. Secondly, I speak fast. It's very difficult to beat a fast talker who is loud. And the last thing is that when I speak, I spit—that destroys most people in arguments. If you can imagine me at a cocktail party, I start arguing in the middle of the floor and by the end I've got everyone backed against the wall. So I was amazed, purely amazed when these particular women were cutting me to intellectual smithereens. They said that marriage is basically about romance and about the emotional gratification that comes out of romanticism and that when it no longer has that thrill, that excitement, that euphoria, one ought to get out of the relationship because then it becomes dehumanizing.

I was losing the argument until in the midst of it all I reached back into my hip pocket and pulled out one of those little stories that can easily demolish the opposition. I said, "I want to tell you about a good friend of mine. He taught at the University of Louisville and at Louisville Seminary. He describes the day in which his mother dies, an old woman in her eighties. She and her husband came down for breakfast. She had just finished eating when she slumped over in her chair. Her husband ran around to the other side of the table. Sensing that something was terribly wrong, he swept her up in his arms and ran with his bride out of the house. The neighbors knew something had happened when they saw this old man running like a fleet-footed deer.

"He plunked her down into the front seat of the pickup and ran around to the other side. Then they knew that something tragic had occurred, for the old man started the car and pulled out of the driveway and down the street like a teenager at a drag race, leaving a strip of rubber behind.

"The old lady was dead on arrival at the hospital. The day of the funeral, the family laid her to rest, came back to the house, and then the old man with his two sons sat on rocking chairs on the front porch. He asked them, 'Where is momma now?' As best they could, these two philosopher-theologians tried to pull out of their bag of intellectual tricks explanations of what life might be like after death and what their mother might be doing at that very moment. The old

man responded by saying, 'Take me back to the cemetery.' They pled with him and said it was 10:30 at night. Take me back to the cemetery,' he repeated. And so they did.

"The old man checked out everything, and made sure the dirt was just right and the flowers were arranged just so. Then he stood back and said, 'It has been a good 54 years and it ended just the way I wanted it to end.' You know what he meant by that. When you are old you know that somebody is going to die first, and he was hoping that she would die first because he didn't want her to go through the pain of laying him in the grave. He wanted to have the agony, not her.

"He gathered his two sons in his arms, held them tightly, and said, 'We can go home now. It's been a good day.'"

I said to my intellectual friends that I wouldn't call that relationship romantic, but there was a commitment there built on intensive love that the romanticist can never know. For it is out of commitment that people develop love.

#### Age of "Self-Discovery"

Yet ours is a generation (as Kenneth Kenniston eloquently describes) that can be labeled the generation of the uncommitted. I am sure that as admissions counselors you must time and time again ask young people, "What are your hopes? What are your aspirations? What are your dreams? What are your commitments?" You probably get responses like this: "I am trying to keep all my options open." Jean Paul Sartre said it well: "You show me the individual who hasn't decided anything and I will show you somebody who is nothing."

We live in an age of self-discovery. Everybody is trying to find themselves. Have you noticed that one? They always come into the office and say "I'm not coming back next semester, Doc. I'm taking a year off." And you say, "Pray tell, why?" The answer is, "I need time." "For what?" "To find myself." I am skeptical about that. Hundreds of thousands of collegians take off every year to find themselves, and I just wish somebody would come back having carried it off. I have yet to meet the kid who comes back and says, "I



did it. I took a year off and I found myself.” It seems to me that out of all the people who are trying to find themselves, that somebody should. Perhaps no one does because nobody has a self-waiting to be found. Or perhaps the French and German existentialists were quite correct—that self is not in essence waiting to be discovered through introspection. And that those who try to find the self are like blind men in dark rooms looking for black cats that aren’t there.

In the final analysis, self is not an essence waiting to be discovered. Contrary wise, self is an essence waiting to be created. We are called to create the self and there is only one way to create an identity and a sense of and purpose in life and that is basically through commitment. I’m not so upset that they are not committed when they come in to college; but it’s quite obvious as a teacher that I find most of them are uncommitted when they come out of college. They let life happen to them, because they have no direction and they have no direction because they have no commitment. Perhaps Nietzsche was right when he said the greatest consequence of the “God is Dead,” is that we have a generation that will float aimlessly without an up or down, without a right or wrong, without anything for which to live.

I teach at a church-related school and I like it, primarily because we talk about committing oneself to what we believe to be of ultimate importance in life. I find that people without commitments don’t know who they are or what they are or what their lives are all about. Oh, they give me the rhetoric: “See Doc, I’ve got to peel away each of these socially created selves and get to the core of my being.” It sounds good, but I always ask them, “After you peel away each of these socially created identities and socially created selves and socially engendered personalities, maybe you’ll discover you’re an onion. What is an onion but the sum total of its skins?” It may be the human personality is nothing more than the sum total of the roles that society has trained him to play. And after he takes the long, psychedelic trip into his inner self and gets there, Hi-ho! Nobody is home.

I think that behavioristic psychology hasn’t helped us any. For behavioristic psychology has raised a generation of young people who know more about psychology than most of their professors. For example, a kid comes into my room and sits down. I ask him, “What is your trouble?” “Oh, I’ve got terrible problems.” “Well, tell me about them.” “Where should I start?” “Start with the beginning.” He talks in perfect behavioristic, psychological terms. “I was raised in a very restrictive background that conditioned me to behave....” He gives me a total psychoanalysis which I’m not interested in at all.

We should realize that behaviorism is not the only option in psychological understanding. Out of the University of Michigan there came

a sociologist by the name of George Herbert Mead who introduced to the American scene (and that stream of thought has been continued by Herbert Blumer) what we call phenomenological approaches to human personality. It’s more popular in Europe than in the United States. The phenomenologists are not so concerned about the past as they are the future, and they say that what a person is not as much the result of what he has been, as much as it is the result of what he chooses to become. What a person chooses is a future. This is where admissions counselors really come in because you are the people who talk about people’s futures at the time when they want to talk about them the most.

What a person chooses to be conditions what he is in the existential now more than anything that has been in the past. I am a conversionist, as you would expect of a Baptist Evangelist. You should go to one of those Baptist Evangelist meetings. They sing twenty verses of “Just As I Am.” People come down just as they are and go out just as they are. It is really wonderful. I am a conversionist because I believe that no matter what a person’s past is, s/he can make a commitment to a future, can choose an identity in the future, can choose a meaning in the future, and be completely transformed by that existential commitment. In essence, what you choose to become is more important than anything you have been.

## Affiliate Achiever

**Lynn Slaughter**

**Director of College Counseling**  
**The Emery/Weiner School, Houston, TX**  
**Texas ACAC**

### Why are you in this profession?

As I begin my 45th year as an educator and think back on the choices of careers I considered, I cannot imagine myself having spent my life doing anything more enjoyable, challenging and inspiring than serving students and families as a college counselor. I have always been fortunate to work at schools where the philosophy of college admission matches my strong belief that my role is to help students and families find colleges that are great matches for the student. When this is accomplished there is no greater feeling than seeing the students receive their letters of acceptance, seeing their faces light up with a smile and hearing their “sigh of relief” that someone wants them and they are going to college! It is this joy that led me to this profession and it is that same joy that keeps me coming back to work every day.

We live in an age of self-discovery. Everybody is trying to find themselves. Have you noticed that one? They always come into the office and say “I’m not coming back next semester, Doc. I’m taking a year off.” And you say, “Pray tell, why?” The answer is, “I need time.” “For what?” “To find myself.”

When I was at the University of Pennsylvania, I had a running battle with a colleague of mine. He was not so much behavioristic as Freudian. He was sure that what you are is a result of the past, but he was caught up in toilet training. If you had bad toilet training, you were ruined for the rest of your life. I used to sneak into the back of his lecture hall because he always drew a lot of students to his lectures. I would just sit there while everybody took notes profusely. I loved his lectures. He used to say “The first demand that society ever places upon the individual, the first requisite that the social structure ever places upon the personality is via the parents as they demand of the child that he does it at the right place and at the right time. The parents, as the agents of society, plead with the child. The mother says, “Do it for mommy.” It is there that my colleague would say rebellion against the social system is bred for the child if not handled properly, for the child can establish an air of defiance and say “No.” Then he says that after the child does produce what society wants it to produce, what is the response of the social system? Does it show appreciation? Gratitude? Does it honor the product? “No,” he says. “What society does is flush it!”

#### A Generation Lacking Identity

I guess there is a point to all of that, and I’m not going to be one who denies the influence of the past on what we are in the present. But perhaps this generation more than any other generation lacks an identity, a meaning, and a purpose in life because we have been incapable of challenging them to a creative future. It is almost as though the geist in Hegelian terms has left the American culture, and we no longer believe in tomorrow.

The cynicism that I find articulated in the average high school and college classroom frightens me—“The political system is corrupt. You can’t change anything.” With that kind of jargon an idealism that pervaded the educational community in the ‘60s died. People ask me, “Aren’t you glad the ‘60s are over? Wasn’t it a terrible time to teach?” Of course not—it was fun in the ‘60s. When I was at the University of Pennsylvania, you could just walk into a class; you never had to prepare a lecture. All you had to do was say “Hi.” They would fight with you for thirty minutes over the philosophical implications and the oppressive, chauvinistic quality of your

statement. But there was one thing about the ‘60s that I loved; there was a vision, a dream, and a hope in the ‘60s. It was idealistic and possibly naïve, but I am one who operates out of a biblical base, and the Bible says so clearly that when the young men no longer dream dreams and the old men lose their vision, people perish. This is occurring in our culture; the result of an absence of vision and an end of dreams. Somewhere along the line, educational institutions must once again become citadels, communities filled with visionaries. I do not believe that to be a dreamer is to be unrealistic, or to be a visionary is to be detached from reality. As a matter of fact, I think that the people that are really detached from reality are those who cannot see beyond today.

In regard to the whole educational process, I worry about a generation that has come down the pike and has lost its confidence in tomorrow and in the future. Dostoevski pointed out quite well that the great problem of atheism is not so much that people no longer believe in God, but that they no longer believe in people. To me, that is the capital crime.

One of my students at the university played basketball back in the golden ball era of Pennsylvania and he went on to the pros, making both himself and the school proud. One summer he was working in the Philadelphia playground system. He had 120 boys and he broke them up into basketball teams—there are approximately six players to a team, five starters and one substitute. He saw that one team was vastly superior to all the others, so he called those players aside, took the five best players and separated them from the one who was mediocre. He said to the five players, “Listen. I want to perform an experiment. You are going to win the championship, so you can afford to do this. See Charlie over there? Every time he makes a shot, cheer him; every time he misses a shot ignore it; every time he makes a pass, praise him; and every time he fails, ignore it. Make him feel like he is the best player on the team.” He told me that by the end of the season two things had happened. First, that young man was absolutely convinced that he was the best basketball player on the team. But number two is even more interesting. By the end of the season, he was the best player on the team. He had become what everybody made him believe he was!

## A Challenge for Faculties

As admissions counselors, it is about time that you challenge your faculty. I get upset with my faculty because they are always complaining about the quality of students coming in: “We don’t have students like we used to have them.” The real challenge of the teaching profession is not to take a kid with an IQ of 150 and a College Board score and verbal of 750 and tell him that he can be a genius. The challenge is taking a student with 450 College Boards and making him believe that he can be a scholar, that he can be a first-rate student, and that he can achieve and be somebody. I think that any faculty that complains because they are not getting the quality of students they used to get is copping out. For it is the test of a faculty member to believe in a student and if you believe in a student and create an environment in which the whole environment believes in the potentiality of that student, s/he will become what we believed him/her to be. If you don’t know that you don’t know the basic laws of the looking-glass self and the dynamics of human personality. The next time your faculty gives you that complaint, say to them: “For the first time I give you a challenge. I give you the opportunity to demonstrate whether you are a good teacher or not. Let’s see whether or not you can communicate information in an exciting way so that a student is alive to what you are saying and believes in himself/herself and believes that s/he can become what in fact the brightest students on the campus are.”

Television, the culture, and a whole array of influences have produced a generation of young people who aren’t exactly what they were twenty years ago in terms of sophistication. Yet there is a potential there. They’re as intelligent, but they need to be challenged, and we need to believe in them.

## Challenges for the ‘80s

In conclusion, I would like to make one last point. I think that the eighties are going to be an exciting time on many college campuses because it is going to take a great deal of creativity on the part of faculty to create programs that excite students. Students are coming out of the culture of narcissism—the “Me” decade so eloquently described by Tom Wolfe. They want to do something again. I’m glad the seventies are over—it was a bad ten years. The sixties were easy, however. When you wanted to change society all you did was stage the demonstration and march down to the city hall singing “We Shall Overcome.” It was all so simple. Today, we are well aware of the fact that change is not going to be brought about through political structures, but is basically to be brought about by changes in the cultural and economic structures of our society. Economics, business, the multinational corporations—these become the agencies that are influencing change in our culture and what we have to do is design programs that show students how to affect change within corporate structures.

Unless the American lifestyle radically changes in the next ten years, you won’t have to worry about it because the rest of the world is not going to tolerate a nation that has trained itself to consume 42% of the world’s resources while it composes only 6% of the world’s population. Our heyday is over. We have got to learn to live more simply that others might simply live.

I was down in the Dominican Republic just a few weeks ago and a young man said to me, “Doctor, you’ve got to tell the people back there in the United States that we can’t afford them any more.” You know exactly what he meant. We’ve got to turn the educational institutions into institutions that train people to live responsibly.

Each year at Eastern College where I teach, I require all my sociology majors to spend the month of January in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti. We (the professors) also go with them and it becomes a learning experience, because they need to see what it is that has to change. The things that happen in countries like Haiti and the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Niger are decisively going to influence whether or not this nation survives.

I remember the first time I went to eat in a restaurant in Port-au-Prince. I sat down, they served us the food, and as I was about to stab the food with my fork, I looked to my left and there with their noses pressed up against the glass were four little Haitian boys, naked, dirty, their hair turned rust from malnutrition. They were staring longingly at the food on my plate—not at me—just at the food on my plate. I grew uncomfortable and lost my appetite. The waiter, seeing my predicament, moved in immediately and pulled down the venetian blind, then said to me, “Don’t let them bother you.

## Affiliate Achiever

**Julie Kampschroeder, College Counselor**  
Pattonville High School, Maryland Heights, MO  
Missouri ACAC

### Why are you in this profession?

I was first-generation and I am very passionate about working at a high school that has a lot of first-generation students. I know what having that degree has done for me, and the opportunities it has given me. Knowing that I can give students information that can change students’ lives forever is immensely rewarding. You have to be intrinsically motivated to love this job! There are so many things to know and learn that it keeps you fresh.



Enjoy your meal,” as if I could. But in a sense, isn’t that what we all do? Don’t we all pull down the shade and shut them out? The hour is at hand when they are going to tear down the shade, keep us from living in our comfortable affluence, and challenge our way of life; and I think that no institutions other than the institutions of higher learning can train a group of people to understand the economics of living a more simple lifestyle, and teach young people how to conserve.

It seems to me that one of the most important courses in academia will have to be the course in home economics, where eating styles will have to change. We’re going to have to give up certain things, like coffee and sugar. When I go to the Dominican Republic, I see acre after acre of land in sugar production, but the people in that country and in Haiti starve because there is no land to grow food on. The land that should be used to grow food is growing sugar and coffee—both poisons. You may think that I’m a bit off the wall, but we are in an age when there is a whole set of problems that have to be dealt with and unlike other periods, these problems won’t wait.

The Club of Rome and other groups that calculate with systems analysis what our future is, predict a grim picture in the future. Don’t worry about college admissions fifteen years from now; worry about whether we survive ten years from now because there has got to be a change—an awesome change, a dramatic change.

One day I was at the edge of a grass landing strip just outside Santiago, and a woman came towards me holding her child whose stomach was swollen five or six times the normal size. That happens when there is a lack of food, when there is hunger, when there is starvation. Its arms and legs had become as spindly as my thumb, and this dying black child hung limp in his mother’s arms. She began to plead with me. “Take my baby,” she said. “If you leave my baby here, my baby is going to die mister. Please don’t let my baby die.” I turned away from her. She came on again, all the more intense. “Please don’t leave my baby to die,” she begged. I got away from her—what could I do? There were thousands of babies on that Haitian border, thousands of children around Santiago. The little Piper Club that had come to pick me up came into sight and landed. I ran across the field as quickly as I could, and she came running after me, screaming at me. I climbed into the plane and closed the plexiglass door. She was running along side of the door, banging against the fuselage, screaming for me to take her baby. The engine revved and the plane pulled away from her down the landing strip and into the air. We circled the field and I could see her solitary figure down there. Half-way back to Santo Domingo, it dawned on me who that baby was. To me that baby was Jesus; for a Jew, it would be Yahweh; for a Muslim, Allah; if you are a humanist, whatever you deemed to be of ultimate sacredness in a human being. For that which I ultimately revere and

that which all of us ultimately revere, there is not an obstruction in the sky but incarnates himself, incarnates herself, incarnates itself. And in the lost, and in the last and in the least, and bids us, “Come, love here.” If I have to stand before a judgement seat, a voice will echo, “I was hungry and you never fed me; naked and you never clothed me; sick and you never took care of me. As a stranger, you never took me in.” And I will say, “Just outside of Santiago, for inasmuch as you failed to do it unto me.”

The institutions of higher education cannot maintain a morally neutral stance. They are committed to building a sensitivity for the poor and the oppressed, to educating a generation of people to adopt a lifestyle that is reasonable, compassionate, non-exploitive, and that does not require death for other nations in order to be maintained.

These are challenging days requiring a new kind of education relevant to the needs of these pressing years, and requiring a new kind of educator who is willing to accept the challenge of average students who want to do great things. This is a period when people have to be taught to love beyond the level of romanticism and understand the nature of commitment to higher values, to lofty goals from whence comes identity, purpose, and meaning. It is almost too great a task, but unfortunately it is a task that none of us can avoid.

## Affiliate Achiever

**Mike Oligmueller**  
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**If you could change one thing about your life,  
what would it be?**

That’s a loaded question to ask a person fast approaching a milestone birthday (number 50)... As I look at my life, I believe it would probably be currently different if I had been able to accept myself as a gay man at a younger age. There are jobs I would not have taken (or left earlier), people I would have embraced or pushed away, and (by now) countless interactions I would have contributed to differently had I been truly comfortable with who I was (and am). I realize that I “came of age” at a time and in place where there were not only no role models of how to be an openly gay man, but it was often very risky to be perceived as anything other than a heterosexual. There is still much room for improvement on the LGBT-rights scene in this country, but I am encouraged to see how our society has changed. Now, when I encounter a high school student who has “come out,” I know her or his life is going to be much different (and probably better) than the path so many of my generation chose.