

# 'Black Power Experiment' at Loras

Loras College has 15 black students. All of them live on the fourth floor of Kane Hall.

Greg Rhodes, a black counselor on the floor, said, "We have formed to educate ourselves and the white campus. We have come together for identity purposes, so we can identify with ourselves."

The "black floor" has, in addition to the 15 black students, about 35 white students—who are there by choice.

The black students are members of the Black Student Union, a black power organization.

The white students are there because some belong to the Students for Human Rights group. Some belong to the Students for Reconciliation, a peace group. Others are there because it's the "best floor in any dorm to get some studying done," as one freshman put it.

But in this day of busing, open housing, and school integration, why do the black students want segregation? Why do they want to be apart from the white community?

The floor was created by the Black Student Union with the requested permission of the dean of students, the Rev. Eugene Kutsch. Father Kutsch said, "The black students felt

they were being immersed in a white culture. The reasons given me were reasonable. It was a legitimate request and I felt it should be honored."

Father Kutsch said, "Any student should feel at home at Loras. I did not think of it in terms of segregation."

Referring to incidents during the 1967-68 school year that caused a showdown between the white and black community at Loras, Rhodes said, "It is widely known and accepted that there are racists on this campus. I don't think they like to refer to themselves as racists. They would rather say they were slightly prejudiced. And they are not ashamed of being prejudiced."

"The first thing you have to admit is there is a cultural difference between black America and white America. When you can admit this, the reason for our floor becomes easy to understand," Rhodes explained.

"When many of these kids come to Loras they have the idea black is bad," said Gary Cook, the white counselor on the fourth floor. "They come here and see black students are demanding their rights and they don't know how to handle it."

James Gardina, a white stu-

dent on the floor, said, "We are rejecting the value system our parents lived under. We have accepted a new set of values and we lead our lives accordingly. Our system rejects the system of values that judges a man by his color."

Huge Nocton, assistant dean in Keane Hall who lives on the fourth floor, explained the Negro students dilemma this way: "The black students live in a very hostile environment. There is the ideal set up by the whites for the black man and there is the reality practiced by the white man for blacks. And there is such a chasm between the ideal and the real."

The black floor is not an attempt to close the chasm. It is described as an attempt to re-create the ideal in a black man's terms, an experiment in "black power."

Ron Thomas, Rhodes' roommate, defined black power as "the black man accepting himself as black. That is, he is proud of being black. He accepts his skin, his superficialities. Black power is black people coming together, controlling their own economic, social and political aspects of life."

The Black Student Union not



Greg Rhodes

only helps the members with studies but, along with the Students for Human Rights, goes out to high schools to explain what black power is.

"The program is to let people know what black power really is. They read the newspapers. That many times is a racist view. We think there should be a true evaluation given by black power advocates," said Thomas. "The young people are more receptive to change."

The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Justin A. Driscoll, president of Loras College, said: "Father Kutsch told me of the idea and it was agreeable to me."

Father Kutsch stated, "I am more than pleased with the results."



Watching TV Football Game on Fourth Floor of Keane Hall

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