

EDUCATION AND REVOLUTION

ONE WAY OF UNDERSTANDING what's going on, on the college and the high school campuses in the United States today, is to examine the essence of education. Basically an education passes the heritage, learning, the wisdom and the technology of human history to the coming generations. We want this information to be passed on to enable and to help mankind continue to survive and cope with the environment. In terms of surviving and coping with our environment, basically, we have two worlds to deal with. We have the natural world — the task of surviving against the given world, the task of eking a living from the earth itself, for which technology has been designed. On the other hand we have the social world, the social situation. We have an antagonistic orientation to both of these worlds. We speak about the natural enemies of man, including everything from animals to the weather, and these elements have been given the label of enemy because they can kill people. We have to be able to harness these forces, we have to be able to adapt to the natural situation so that our survival will be enhanced, and for this purpose, science and technology, agriculture and industry, all of these tools have been developed by mankind through practice in coping with this physical environment.

We are in the habit of speaking about certain things that happen in the social situation that are hostile and inimical to the prospect of survival for mankind, and

we also label these with the same designation of enemy. The distinction between the struggle for survival against the physical environment, and the struggle against the antagonistic forces and situations in the social realm is a very important distinction to make, because often the struggle in the social realm is really the only struggle that many people are caught up in. They are not directly involved in struggling against the physical environment, but their survival does depend upon struggling within the social realm, in terms of how the economy is organized, how the political system is organized, and how the social system itself is organized, so that many lives are played out against this background of struggling against the way civilization is presently organized.

The struggle against the physical environment, of course, is primary. We have organized our social situation in order to cope with the physical environment. The way that we organize agriculture, the way that we organize industry, the way that we organize the economy as a whole, the way that we organize the political situation, all historically have been towards facilitating and better enabling us to cope with the physical environment.

AT THIS POINT I think it would be useful to establish some terminology. The best terminology I know of, for discussing this distinction between the struggle within the physical environment and the struggle

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by ELDRIDGE CLEAVER

within the social environment, is the terminology developed by Karl Marx. He designates the struggle against or within the physical environment as taking place within the economic base of society. And, upon the economic base of society is erected the superstructure of society. Thus the struggle within the social realm takes place within the superstructure and the struggle in the physical realm takes place within the economic base. In the economic base we find the natural resources, the technology, the industry, all the machines and the tools and the means that mankind has developed for coping with the physical environment. They are designated as the means of production, the means of producing material wealth, goods and commodities from the natural resources themselves. But all of the institutions of society, everything from the educational facilities to the hospitals and the postal service, everything belonging to the organized aspect of society, exist within the social superstructure, which has been built and sustained by our means of producing material wealth.

Let's get to the essence of an education. In a very simple-structured social organization, where technology and learning have not become complex, it would be possible for one's father or one's uncle to pass on the technology. Your father could teach you how to fish or your father could teach you how to farm at a rudimentary agricultural level. He could teach you how to hunt with a spear or a rock, or bow and arrow.

But as the economic condition becomes more complex, and as the level of information and knowledge and understanding of the environment increases, to the extent that society requires people to specialize in passing on this information, then the problem of education really sets in. When it was necessary for people to be designated as teachers and to specialize in, or devote all their time to, passing on this information, the learning situation itself had to be centralized as an institution. Schools, universities, etc., were developed so that the maximum productive use of a man's time and energy could be made. Now you can readily understand how in a very complex social situation it would be understood by the community, by everybody involved in the social unit, that these places or institutions of learning were there to serve and to benefit the community as a whole. It would be absurd for a teacher or one who is charged with administering the learning process as a whole, it would be absurd for him to alienate himself from the community as a whole or to claim that he owns the body of information that is a heritage to mankind; this would be absurd, it would not be tolerated by the community.

Of course I have been writing as though society was an organism in which people were in harmony with each other, in which they cooperated with each other and in which they were not waging wars of aggression against each other and were not

in conflict with each other. But in actual fact and in terms of human history such harmony has not been the case.

In human history, we see that society has been broken up into classes, into antagonistic ethnic and economic groups that struggle against each other for survival as each sees it. They enslave each other and make their living at the expense of other groups, special interest groups are formed, etc. So that in reality we have to look at our own situation, have to look at the situation that exists in the economic base in terms of the class struggle, also in terms of the ethnic struggles that have gone on. When we look at our own situation today in the United States, we find that those who are very powerful in our society are powerful because of their relationship to the means of production, because they are rich, because they own the factories and because they own the natural resources. With this economic power they are able to gain control of all the institutions in society, they are able to appoint people who themselves may not be rich, or may not own stock, or have any control over the means of production of the natural resources, but because of their extensive education are able to be appointed to positions of managing society.

But at the top of the social organization in the United States, we have the ruling class mentioned; and because of the wealth of this ruling class, it is able to dominate American society and control American society, able to determine what judges are appointed to the judicial system, able to determine who is appointed to the Board of Regents to administer the colleges, and able even to determine who is elected to office, because it controls the wealth, and has vast amounts of money at its disposal to wage a political campaign.

Those who control the economy of the United States are able to control the rest of society. Those of us who are not in this advantaged position, black people, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Eskimos, virtually every ethnic group including poor white people and also middle

class college students, all find ourselves in the position wherein our lives are manipulated and controlled by those who have this advantaged social position.

We have to struggle in order to survive. But we're not struggling against the natural environment, our struggle is not in reality taking place against nature itself, but we are struggling against the way society has been organized. We are struggling against those who have organized society to their advantage, in order to continue their control and rule of the entire social unit. It is very important for us to understand that we are called upon to wage this struggle with the same desperation and the same "do or die" necessity that a caveman in some forgotten time in human history had to struggle against the natural elements. In reality, our adversaries are other men, other women and other social classes. In terms of the racial strife within the United States our class struggle is often hidden by our ethnic struggle. We are manipulated along the color line as well as along the class line. We are exploited economically, and we are discriminated against racially, also.

TODAY, AS ALWAYS, the struggle of the exploited people within the United States is taking place on all fronts, but the most sensational and explosive clashes are being centered and focussed more and more on the college campuses and on the high school campuses. We understand that those who control the mind can control the body, so that those who are interested in keeping people in oppressed positions and then dominating their perspective and their outlook on life, know that it is necessary for them to control the learning process in order to brainwash people, in order to camouflage the true nature of the society. In order to sanctify their system, they teach the exploited people and the oppressed people to virtually love the system that is exploiting and oppressing them. This oligarchy has an interest in seeing to it that the content of the curriculum is to its liking, and that it does not expose the

true nature of the decadent and racist society that we live in.

On the other hand, the exploited and oppressed people have the opposite interest in exposing the true nature of the society and in educating ourselves and our children on the nature of the struggle and in transferring to them the means for waging the struggle so they can be aware of the level of the struggle, of the progress and the history of the struggle and the nature of the enemy and the true vulnerability of the enemy. In other words, we want to be able to teach ourselves and our children the necessity for struggling against this ruling class.

What we have to realize above all else is that our enemy and that which we in fact are struggling against is not an individual college president or high school principal or a board of regents or a board of education, but the entire social structure. We are struggling against the capitalist system which organized itself in a way that purchases our lives, that exploits us and forces us into a position wherein we have to wage a struggle against the social organization in order to survive.

One of the techniques or one of the weapons that the enemy uses against us in our struggle is to turn words against us, to define our struggle in terms that place our struggle in a bad light, so that the word "revolution" is given a bad name, is looked upon as a negative term.

But what revolution means and what it means to us is that we are trying to change a system that has historically enslaved our people, has continually exploited us, has discriminated against us and made our lives miserable and kept us underdeveloped and kept us blind and kept us in a form of slavery, one form of slavery or another. Of course, our struggle has continually forced the slavemaster to modify the terms of the slavery, but every modification that has been made has only been made because the slavemaster found it necessary to make a few minor adjustments in order to continue his exploitation of us on a new level.

THE PROCESS of breaking out of slavery, the process of breaking out of a set of social arrangements, out of a social organization that is killing us, this process is named revolution; we are revolting and rebelling and moving against a system that is our enemy. For us the word "revolution" should be a beautiful word because it's a word that promises us hope, that promises us a better life and we should not be ashamed to call ourselves revolutionaries. We are a revolutionary people, our very social situation forces us to be a revolutionary people. If we are not going to be revolutionary people, we have to accept the designation of satisfied slaves; if we aren't satisfied, then that means we have a revolutionary consciousness. It is important for us to be consciously revolutionary, to understand that we are revolutionaries, and to understand that it is right for us to be revolutionaries and that in fact the enemies are the ones who are wrong.

The enemy uses words against us, talks about "crime in the streets," talks about "disorders," talks about "law and order," all of these words are smoke screens, are smoke screens to confuse us, to create conflicts between the various exploited groups and to turn them against each other. It is the old technique of divide and conquer. What we need and what — if we had any sense at all — what we would be working for is to create an alliance between all the exploited people within the society so that we could join together to create machinery, coordinate our struggle, and coordinate our attack against the capitalist system and destroy it. Because as long as the capitalist system exists, by its very nature some people will have to be exploited in order for others to be rich and powerful, so that the exploited are powerless and in an oppressed position. Therefore revolution is a glorious term, it is a term to be proud of and we should know that we are morally right, we are right in every sense of the term and that the oppressor is the one who is wrong and that the oppressor has no rights which the oppressed are bound to respect.

History is on our side and justice is on our side and it is only a question of removing from positions of power those who are able to judge our struggle and to pass out judgements that denounce us and that deny us the right to survive. If we had revolutionary members from the exploited classes sitting on the Supreme Court, in the halls of Congress and in the Executive Branch of the Government, then these revolutionaries in office would give out revolutionary decisions, the revolutionaries on the benches of the court would give out revolutionary decisions on the court cases and the capitalists and the racist police would be judged wrong.

They would be the ones who would be sent to prison. They would be the ones who would be penalized. They would be the ones who would be forced to raise a hundred thousand dollars in order to get out on bail. In other words, the oppressed people have to take control of the government, they have to take control of the state, so that in their hands these instruments of power would be turned against the exploiters. The exploitative system would be dismantled and we could build another system that would be based on cooperation, not on a "dog-eat-dog" epic of competition, of corrupt methods of exploiting people. It would be based on how best to organize the industries, the means of production, in order to give everybody a good life.

OUR STRUGGLE to gain black studies departments on college campuses, our struggle to have black studies added to the curriculum across the nation is a struggle that the enemy sees as a grave danger. The enemy also recognizes the struggle of young white people on the college campuses and high schools as a grave danger and he is right. It is a grave danger because what we realize is that the education that is given is designed to perpetuate a system of exploitation. On the one hand it is designed to keep black people and so-called minorities ignorant, and on the other hand it is designed to keep the masses of

white students in harmony with this system, to keep them supporting the system, to indoctrinate them to fight the wars that protect the system, and that extend the influence and the power of the system. We are all becoming conscious of the evil of the system, conscious of the fact that this system can no longer survive, that we have a historic opportunity for attacking the system and destroying it at its root. Thus all of the manipulations that the capitalists and the watchdogs of the capitalists go through are designed to destroy the thrust of the movement, to designate as criminals those who are in the forefront of the struggle and those who are guiding the struggle.

Historically the struggle in the educational arena, in terms of black people, has been waged from, on the one hand the slavemaster not even wanting black people to learn how to read and write, to black people wanting to learn how to read and write on the other. The struggle then transposed itself over into what black people were allowed to read and write, until today black people have reached a point where they want to control totally what they read and write.

This has been a steady struggle against the opposition of the slavemaster, it has been defeat after defeat for the slavemaster, until now we have burst into consciousness, until now we have realized the necessity of taking control of our education. When we see this long line of progression from the struggle to become literate to the struggle today to control totally the education, we can see the true nature of the opposition that we face now and faced then. All of these racists and liberals who are opposing our moves today to gain control of our education, are nothing but the descendants of the outright racist slavemasters who opposed us in our attempts to learn how to read and write on the plantations during the days of slavery. Hence all of their rhetoric, all of their arguments, all of the changes that they go through, in the last analysis, are a continuation of the desire and the necessity of the slavemaster to keep us ignorant

and unable to manipulate ideas; because in order to organize a revolutionary struggle, we must be able to manipulate ideas. We must have knowledge of ourselves and of our enemy, and of the situations that we find ourselves in, in order to organize a true revolution to move against the oppressor.

ONE OF THE GREAT DANGERS that our revolutionary struggle faces, perhaps the greatest danger, is that we historically have tended to compartmentalize our struggle; that is, we get hung up on one aspect of the struggle, without having an overall revolutionary perspective and without realizing that the struggle that we wage is against the total social organism. We focus all of our attention and all of our energy on the educational system, and we don't realize — or our tactics and our strategy would seem to indicate that we don't realize — that this is only one aspect of our struggle and that the same people who control the educational facilities, control the rest of the social structure. Everything, the economy, the judiciary, the political parties, the political instruments, every aspect of society is in the same hands. We need a broader strategy, a revolutionary strategy that aims at overthrowing the rule of this class as a whole, so we will not just be going through changes on the college campuses.

The repression against the movement that the United States is now mobilizing is not a sign of strength on the part of the ruling class, but rather the sign of weakness of the ruling class, and a sign of the strength and effectiveness of the movement. All of the lies, the subterfuges, the hypocrisy of the ruling class has been exposed, for it can no longer hope to control or manipulate the movement by words alone. It has to resort to the brutal, repressive forces of the police department. The movement itself has drawn several lessons from this reaction of repression by the ruling class. The clear cut nature of power in the United States and the racist policies of the ruling class are revealed.

ON THE ONE HAND the rebellion of black students and black people thoroughly exposes the racist policies of the administrations of the various colleges and high schools, and on the other hand there is the repression that the blacks and the allies of blacks are receiving. It's really incorrect to speak of the white section of the movement as being the allies of blacks, because in reality there is no such thing as a black movement and a white movement in the United States. These are merely categories of thought, that only have reality in terms of the lines that the ruling class itself has drawn and is enforcing among the people.

Because the United States is controlled by one ruling class, one single structure, and the whole drama of the black liberation struggle, and the revolutionary struggle in the white community is being played on one stage. Because of the division that the ruling class has historically implanted amongst the people, because of the different experiences of black people from white people, the reality of the division is more apparent than real, because at the top opposed to both black people and white revolutionaries is a single ruling class, there's not a ruling class for blacks and a ruling class for whites, but there's one single ruling class that rules all, that controls all, and that manipulates all, that has a different set of tactics for each group, depending upon the tactics used by the groups, in the struggle for liberation.

One of the great weaknesses in the movement at this particular time is in the campus aspect of the attack upon the ruling class and the power of the ruling class. In the compartmentalized thinking of the traditional American society, the college community and the college campus is viewed as something separate and distinct from the rest of the community. The college is not really looked upon as a part of the community. People who are not concerned with themselves going to college or who have no children in college feel that what's going on, on the campus is none of their business. But nothing could be farther

from the truth, because in reality they are the people's colleges, institutions that have been set aside to perpetuate the human heritage, and to pass on human wisdom, the knowledge and technical skills for the further development of society and civilization. And every single individual living in a given society has a stake in what goes on in them; he has a stake in seeing to it that what happens on the campus is proper, and that the best interest of all the community is being served.

On the other hand, the attacks focussed on the college campuses serve to expose the nature of power in the United States. When we look at the composition of the board of regents and administrations, and councils that control the colleges, we find them replete with military men, retired generals, foundation personnel, and big businessmen. We could say that the boards that administer the universities are a good barometer, or a clear diagram of the stratification of power in the society as a whole. We don't see poor people represented on the boards of administration of the institutions of learning, for in the society beyond the college campus, poor people do not exercise or possess any power. If they did have the power, they would be in a position to see to it that some of their members were appointed to these boards.

But those who control the economy, those who control the various sources and levels of power in the community and around it, are able to have their lackeys and their flunkies appointed to administer these institutions of learning. The composition of the boards of administration of the institutions of learning indicate clearly, the powerlessness of the various sectors of society and this fact needs to be brought out much more clearly and brought home to the community. A connection needs to be made between the college campus and the community so that the repression and the tactics of the ruling class can be defeated by the total community being involved. As long as the pigs are able to vamp on the college campuses and to commit mass arrests and brutality against the

students and there is not solid and massive community support, then they will be able to get away with it, and slowly but surely they will be able to grind the movement to a halt by cutting off wave after wave of leadership, by expelling the leadership, and hounding the leadership out of existence.

It's a mistake to think that the ruling class cannot be successful if a proper response is not made from the movement, a mistake that has been made time and time again in the various revolutionary struggles around the world. There have been cases of the revolutionary movement being very highly advanced, very well organized, much more organized than we are in the United States, with a higher theoretical understanding, and with very good party machinery, etc. and they have been crushed because the power structure would resort to unlimited brutality — it would kill, it would imprison. It had the mass media in its control, and it could use the mass media to justify this, and to brainwash other people who were not organized enough to do anything about their repressors.

So that it's a question of time. The movement is always behind, the movement has the initiative. The power structure, by over-reacting seeks to buy time for itself, and the pressure that the movement puts on the power structure determines the amount of time that is left. Because if the struggle progresses slowly enough to allow the ruling class to devise means of coping with the movement, then all is lost and the movement itself is doomed to failure. So that a broadening of those involved, or those concerned, and those whose support is now latent is what is required.

Poor black people and poor white people and middle class people who are not themselves directly involved in the college situation, need to be made to understand that something of their own precious liberty, which either they never had or they thought they had, is being decisively determined in the struggles that are going

own on the campuses today. Every black mother, every black father, every Mexican mother, every Mexican father, every father and every mother in every group, white, Puerto Rican, Indian, Eskimo, Arab, Jew, Chinese, Japanese, whatever ethnic group they happen to be in, in the United States, need to be made to understand, that if they have no child or teenager involved in the educational process today because they were not able to afford to send them to college or something of that nature, that this in itself is a criticism of the structure of education in the United States.

IT IS THE DUTY of any society to see to it that every individual in that society is vested with the human heritage and provided with the technology, the skills, and the knowledge that will enable him to cope with his environment, to survive and to live a good life. It is the duty of the society to provide this education, just as it is the duty of the society to provide the highest level of medical assistance, housing and employment, of every benefit that exists in society, it's the duty of the government to provide that. As long as the state is not providing these benefits, it is not worthy of existing, and under our kind of state which is called a representative democracy, it is not possible for a capitalistic economy to provide a universal education for the people. What it has been providing is universal brainwashing that masquerades as universal education. The quality of the education is contemptible, it is inhumane, and it is only geared to provide a level of intelligence or a level of competence that will enable the product of the educational system to become war material, to be exploited by the capitalistic economic entities within the United States.

So what we're into today is not only sitting back and criticizing, but actively reaching out and challenging the authority of those who control the various institutions in society, not simply challenging this authority, but by actively moving to disrupt the functioning of these facilities in the best interests of the community as a

whole. These facilities can no longer serve the interests of the crosswork monopolies that are being administered by racists and by pigs who only want to exploit people and sentence people to be cogs in a wheel. In the final analysis, the struggle that is now going on on the college campuses cannot be settled on the college campuses. It has to be settled in the community, because those that sit on the boards of administration of the colleges do not derive their power from the fact that they are sitting on the board, but rather, they sit on the board because they have power in the community.

Their power is based on the economic institutions of society and other institutions that form the power structure, and because of their relation to these sources of power, they're able to be appointed to these positions of administration.

We have to destroy their power in the community, and we're not reformists, we're not in the movement to reform the curriculum of a given university or a given college to have a Black Students Union recognized at a given high school. We are revolutionaries, and as revolutionaries, our goal is the transformation of the American social order.

IN ORDER TO TRANSFORM the American social order, we have to destroy the present structure of power in the United States, we have to overthrow the government. For so long we've been intimidated into not speaking out clearly what our task is, our task is the overthrow of the government, which has to be understood as being something but the instrument of the ruling class. The court, the congress, the legislative and the executive branches of the state and federal government are nothing but instruments in the hands of the ruling class, to see after the affairs of the ruling class, and to conduct the life of society in the interest of the ruling class. So we're not to destroy this, to smash this machinery and to erect new machinery. But new machinery cannot be erected until the present machinery is destroyed. It is not the

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