

We live as prisoners in the "new world."

America: the land that slavery and imperialism built. America: the "First World" birthed through theft and genocide and sustained through domination of the "Third World" outside - and inside - 'our' borders.

Wherever possible, our rulers have laid a torch to our past. They never speak of the bloodshed sown - only of the glory to be reaped.

We live in the ashes of a memory of fire.

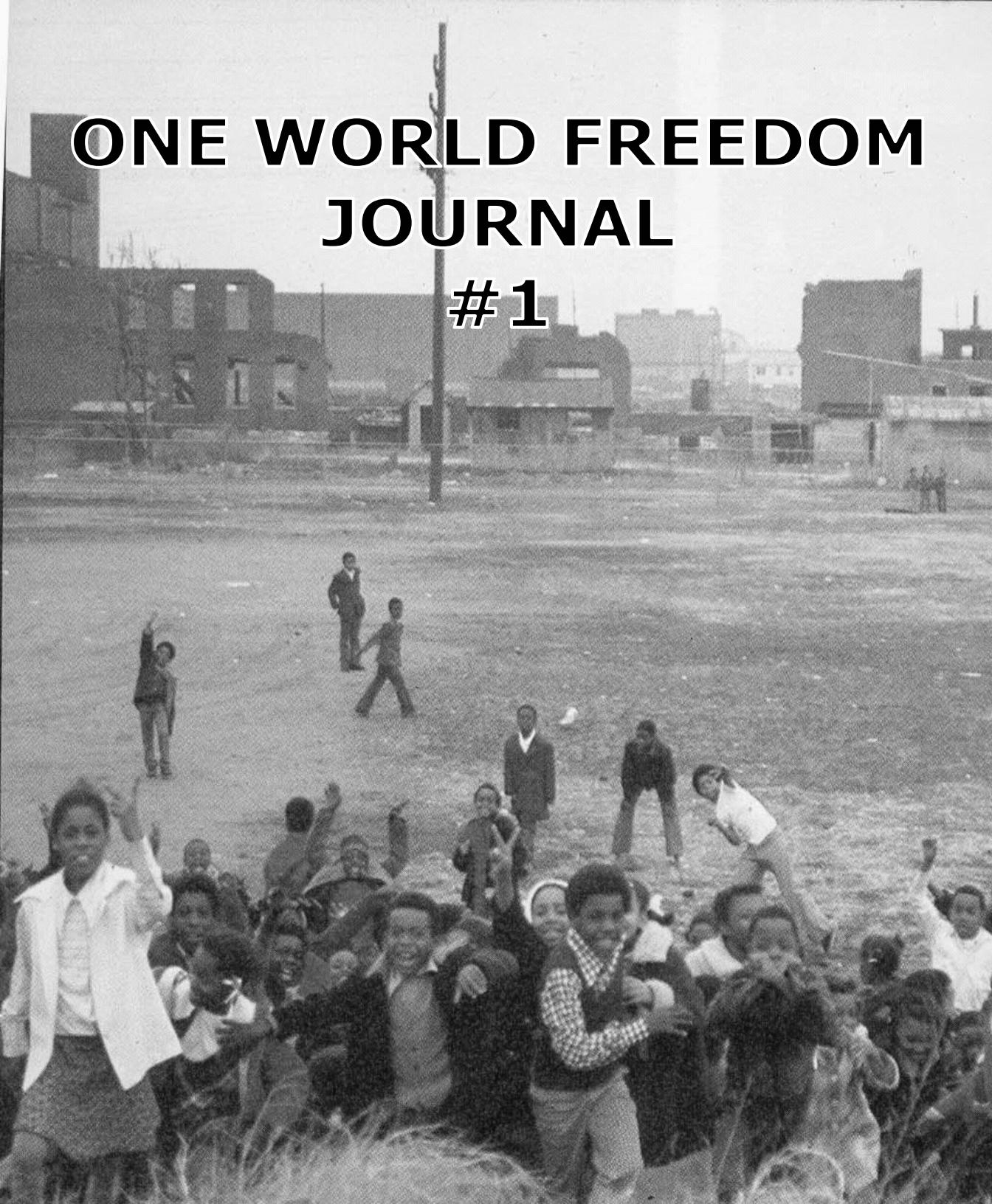
Always we hear of the greater life that awaits us at the end of all of this toil. Our Masters push forward, ever forward - and we follow along.

The freer their markets, the more of us live behind bars. The more their Corporations live in a "global village" - the more we find ourselves in isolated suburbs and ghettos.

It's time to break out of the master's future by finding old passageways to freedom. Ways and means ridiculed, abandoned, paved-over and carpet-bombed will offer us hope...

# ONE WORLD FREEDOM JOURNAL

## # 1



*Distributed by*  
**One Thousand Emotions**  
PO Box 63333  
St. Louis, MO 63163  
USA

## INTRODUCTION

You've studied History before, sure. You've been to the master's schools and heard all their tales of progress and plunder. You've learned to recite endless facts and meaningless dates. You've been told a thousand times that you are powerless over this world the "Great White Man" has created.

That's not what this is about.

By reading this journal you become a student of the *One World Freedom School*.

One World means that we are all responsible for solving the problems that face our present society. Freedom School means we are teaching and learning because we want to be free.

One World means none of us are truly better off if we benefit at someone else's expense. Freedom

School means we are teaching one another, and there are no experts.

One World means that what we have in common is far more liberating than what divides us. Freedom School means we are learning, as a community, how to take care of one another, and how to take action to improve our lives.

There will be no masters or slaves here.

The schools that taught you how to 'get by' in an oppressive world taught you well how to sit still and keep your mouth shut. *Your passive acceptance was the*

*lesson.*

The Freedom School only lives when students become teachers. And the first lesson we're teaching is this: *we're going to have to liberate ourselves.*



*The master won't do it for us.  
He never has...*

## P.S.

By reading this journal you become a student of the *One World Freedom School*.

From here on, school is in session. We expect you to pay attention to everything you're taught here. The lessons might be subtle, and you might well need to pay attention long after you've put down this journal. In fact, the only 'test' is what you do outside of school.

The 'graduates' of the *One World Freedom School* are those who autonomously expand the project.

You can become a teacher for the school by sending in your writing to the Journal. You can become an organizer for the school by offering to distribute copies of the Journal where you live, or by beginning Freedom School classes with your friends, families, neighbors, etc. Or you can just write us with questions, challenges, support, or word of a similar project.

These are only a few examples. One thing is definite, **we are actively seeking submissions for this journal.** The deadline for the next issue is June 1<sup>st</sup> 2003. The general "theme" will be *Reconstruction*. We're hoping for writing both about the historical time period after the civil war, and on the more broad topic of reconstructing society in order to end slavery.

And, we're interested in good writing (and photos and art) of all kinds.

## P.P.S.

Some of the photos might could use a caption. Here are captions:

- \* Page 15: *Bob Moses – first SNCC worker to go to Mississippi, now head of the national math literacy program "The Algebra Project."*
- \* Page 16: *Miss Ella Baker – leader of Black freedom movement for over 40 years, hugely influential in NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC.*
- \* Page 30: *"General" Harriet Tubman – bold conductor of the Underground railroad and collaborator with John Brown.*
- \* Page 35: *People being loaded into the "bowels" of a slave ship.*
- \* Page 38: *John Brown kissing a baby on the way to his execution.*
- \* Page 45: *"Central America: another Vietnam for the imperialist Yankee."*
- \* Page 46: *A mural in the nationalist section of Belfast, N. Ireland.*
- \* Page 49: *Subcommandante Marcos, waving hello.*

finished, but some keys and trails in order to unite those disperse fragments and, in putting together the puzzle of yesterday, a crack will be opened in the wall, a window will be drawn and a door built.

Because it is widely known that doors were windows before, and before that they were cracks, and before that they were, and are, memory. Perhaps that is why those of above are afraid, because, when one has memory, one has, in reality, a door in one's future.

There are many of us who are seeking parts of our faces in seeking memory. Those who ask us to forget are asking us to

remain incomplete, to use the crutch which the Power offers.

Today, in Argentina, in Mexico, and in other parts of the world, there are many guardians of memory gathering together for a ceremony as ancient as the word: that of conjuring history from oblivion and the forgetting.

And we want all of you to know that we are listening to your footsteps, and, when we hear them, we remember that the main attribute of human beings is, still, dignity.

Vale. Salud, and may stupidity never again be allowed to democratize fear and death.

## I AM ACCUSED OF TENDING TO THE PAST

Lucille Clifton

i am accused of tending to the past  
as if i made it,  
as if i sculpted it  
with my own hands. i did not.  
this past was waiting for me  
when i came,  
a monstrous unnamed baby,  
and i with my mother's itch  
took it to breast  
and named it  
History.  
she is more human now,  
learning language every day,  
remembering faces, names, and dates.  
when she is strong enough to travel  
on her own, beware, she will

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## CONTRIBUTORS

*Billy Powell* is the name Whites gave to Seminole Chief Osceola, one of the major leaders of the seven-year Negro-Indian war against the U. \$.

*Braima Moiwai* is a West African story-teller and musician.

*Andy Keniston* is a wonderfully belligerent and autonomous fella'.

*Clarissa Rogers* is a playful - militant student and teacher.

*Jordan Green* is a young man from Kentucky that still has hope in the idea that regular people can run their own lives.

\*\*\* Many thanks to all those whose work appears here without being consulted: Audre Lorde, Chrystos, Grace Lee Boggs, Lucille Clifton, Subcommandante Marcos, Matt Groening, AWOL, Clay Butler, and the photography students of John Dewey High School. \*\*\*

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...TENDING TO THE PAST

# THE THIRD CHOICE

Billy Powell

## PART I

“There do exist some students of a tolerable intellectual level. They make no secret of the fact that what they extract so easily from the ‘academic system’ is used for its destruction. For the student cannot revolt against anything without revolting against his studies.

But the student is a product of modern society just like Coca-Cola. His extreme alienation can be contested only through a contestation of the entire society. This critique can in no way be

carried out on the student terrain: the student, insofar as he defines himself as such, identifies himself with a pseudo-value that hinders him from becoming aware of his real dispossession...

The future revolutionary society will naturally condemn all the ado of the lecture halls and classrooms as mere noise, verbal pollution. The student is already a very bad joke.”

- *On The Poverty Of Student Life*  
the Situationist International

## PART II

*“I teach that helpfulness is rebellion.”*

-Andrew Trull

“Hello, my name is Billy, and I will be your teacher today.” The kids look at me funny, asking themselves, and me, “Billy?” “Yes. Billy is my name; it’s what everyone calls me.”

I am the paid enforcer of adult values such as conformity,

obedience, and a never-bending hierarchy in which I (the adult, the authority figure, the man, the White) am always superior...and I have just broken the first rule of the day.

Next I will explain that, “Punishment makes human beings

# CELEBRATION OF MEMORY IS ALSO A CELEBRATION OF TOMORROW

Subcommandante Marcos

SupMarcos is speaking to you, in the name of all the men, women, children and old ones of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Our most ancient ones taught us that the celebration of memory

order to make its journey. The other six are truth, pride, consistency, honesty, respect for oneself and for the other, and love.

That is why, they say, memory always points towards tomorrow, and that paradox is what prevents nightmares from be repeated in that tomorrow, and so that the joys - which also exist in the inventory of the collective memory - will be new.

Memory is, above all, say our most first ones, a powerful antidote for death, and an indispensable food for life. That is why the one who cares for and guards memory is caring for and guarding life. And the one who does not have memory is dead.

The ones who were power above bequeathed us a pile of broken pieces: deaths here and there, impunity and cynicism, absences, faces and histories blotted out, despairs. And that pile of rubble is what they are offering us as an identity card, so that saying "I am" and "we are" will be an embarrassment.

But there were those who were, and are, below. They bequeathed us, not a new world, complete and



is also a celebration of tomorrow. They told us that memory is not turning one's head and heart towards the past. It is not a sterile remembrance which speaks laughter or tears. Memory, they told us, is one of the seven guides which the human heart needs in

English, the Mau Mau against the British Empire, the Algerians against the French, the Vietcong against the United States, the ANC against apartheid South Africa, and the Intifada against Israel. In our own country, we take inspiration from the stillborn national liberation movements of the Black Panthers, the Young Lords, the Brown Berets, and the American Indian Movement.

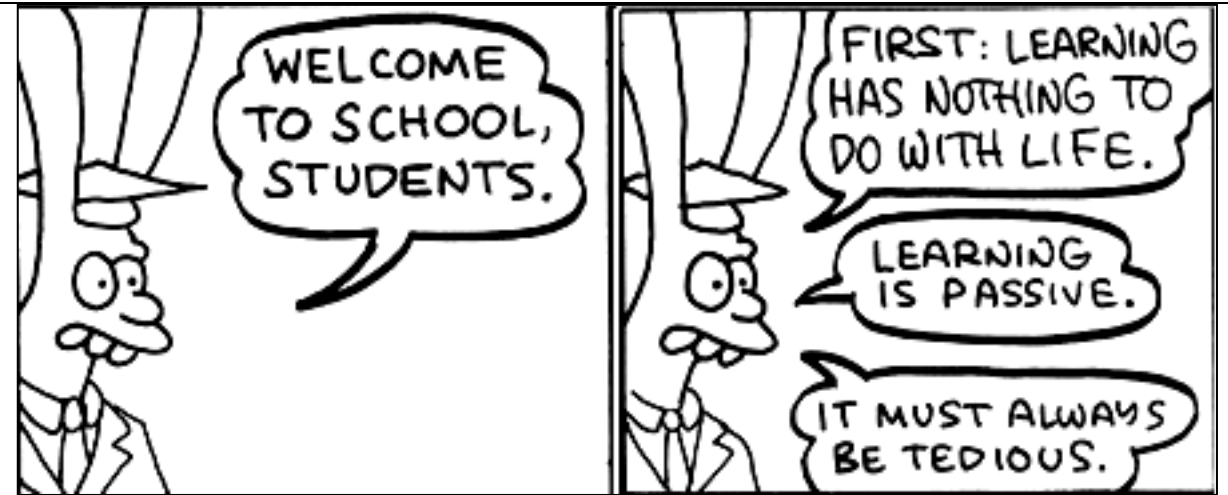


worker's syndicate, the food cooperative, the housing collective, the professional guild, and the local defense committee can be the church of solidarity and the leveraged force for contesting power relations.

In at least this respect, we are sure we have the advantage: the free market ideology of the bottom-line profit as the highest value engenders mediocrity, craven subservience, and pitiable morale. On our own merits, with only our voluntary associations and creative impetus, we will build something better.

All we want is dignity and self-respect, to live in each other's glow, to not have to eat shit.

We know that these animating ideas of nationhood are the most potent challenge to the tyranny of market rule, but we are also aware of the limitations inherent in nationalism – that of patriarchal control of women and crippling heterosexism, of ethnic fratricide and tragic partition. Tie down the corporate enterprises and erase the national borders where people are concerned. Trace out in the paths of migration a radical solidarity. To transcend the pitfall of national chauvinism and retrenchment of Empire in the form of neocolonialism, we embrace the Irish Republican idea of “home rule” and the Zapatista idea of “Autonomy.” To this end,



less intelligent. You will not be punished, and neither will I.” The conspiracy has begun. For the rest of the day, the primary lesson will be about collective self-defense – solidarity.

We face a ceaselessly uphill journey. Against everything the children have ever been taught, (and often with only 40 minutes to play with) I begin to create a sanctuary. The loyal enforcers of the master's wishes are never far away. They watch us in the hallways and visit us uninvited to offer their threats and forceful reminders of “the way things work.”

The children themselves have – as early as age five – learned to speak the master-speak. Kids scold one another, search out authority where none exists, and frequently remind me that, “we’re not supposed to be doing this.”

- We are nearly done our allotted thirty-five minutes of first grade gym class. The kids have chosen their activities by brainstorming ideas and voting. Two kids tell me, “Thanks for letting us do whatever we want today.” I ask, “How often do you get to do what you want?” “Never.” Another boy comes up to me, for the third time, to ask, “Am I being bad?” “No.”

- A second grade class plays totally wildly. Every few moments I am called over because “she’s crying,” “he kicked me,” and so forth. One boy has a whiffleball bat and seems to really want to whack his classmates in the head with it. I am scared and I don’t know quite what to do. I say “nobody likes you when you act really mean to them. Can you please stop that?” He breaks

down and begins bawling and screaming, "Then why is everybody so mean to *me* all the time?!" I am immediately sorry for what I've said, and sorry also for all of the violence the children in my class are endlessly inflicting on one another.

- I ask some full-time teachers, "What do you do when it seems like the kids really hate one another?" They respond, "Well, the kids here are just really spoiled. They're too used to getting what they want all the time."

I feel as if I have witnessed a horrible atrocity that most everyone else pretends does not exist. Every day I spend working as a substitute teacher I absorb another half-dozen images of

exactly how cruel compulsory education is.

The public school system is a machine just as heartless as (and remarkably similar to) jail. Human beings are being broken here. Even the best of people, with the most benign intentions, would be ground down working as a student or a teacher in this climate.

Like the Prussians who first implemented wide-scale compulsory education nearly two hundred years ago, American education seeks to craft human beings that lack the capacity for thought, creativity and autonomy. Under these conditions, the only response that expresses any intelligence or dignity is to conspire and act against the system in any, and every possible way.

of humanity, the sensual pulse of natural balance, and the civil society of dedicated community work?

We must choose to be good fellows rather than slavish servants.

According to the official history of the United States, we are all stakeholders in the noble experiment of the American dream and the melting pot of immigrant arrival and integration. When we acknowledge that this history of White exclusivity and privilege is based on the genocide of the American Indians and the enslavement of the Africans, we can only conclude that to identify as Americans is a poisonous and perpetually destructive way of relating to our fellow humans. We

understand that this deplorable legacy of atrocities has only been built in the rapacious imperial plunder of Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and has continued through the massive slaughter of the Vietnamese and the domination of the Near East. With this in mind, we can only conclude that the sooner we refuse to identify and act as Americans, the better the chances are for the people of the world to loosen the stranglehold of oppression and flourish.

Treason against whiteness and Americanism is loyalty to humanity.

We take as our guiding lights the national liberation movements of the anti-colonial struggle: the Irish Republican Army against the



# WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Jordan Green

*“Empires may crumble; republics may falter; but fools go on.”*

*-Jean Luc-Goddard*

We can no longer afford to wait for the conditions to ripen for our liberation. A suicidal gang of elites are embarking on a campaign of wanton destruction. This gang has the largest arsenal of armaments consolidated under the grip of one arbitrary and cruel power in the history of humankind, with the intent to exterminate any party that resists coercion.

Another world is possible, and under these circumstances, very desirable. We may be fools, but we have at least the faculties to patch together by rough experiment and bold imagination a future that doesn't contain genocide, coercion, and stifling conformity. Just because capitalism is in crisis doesn't mean we have to stand loyally on the deck of the Titanic playing with the Orchestra while the ship sinks. We are not obligated to accumulate more debt, spend our wages on cheap consumer goods, or buy stocks to

stave off the inevitability of financial collapse.

We must first address the conscious cultivation of a liberation culture – a radical, equalizing ethos of solidarity and mutual aid in the creation of popular support institutions and in the refusal to cooperate with exploitative economic systems.

Discarding the poisonous idea of Americanism, we should seek new bases of social relations that free us from imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. We should seek to re-animate the bones of our aboriginal selves, to invest in the holy energy of all living things: rocks, forests, rivers, even people. We should honor the energy of ghostly things, past present, and future – to believe in the earthy, natural and sensual, in the spirits that animate all our strivings.

Now is the time to ask ourselves the question posed by the coal miners of Appalachia: Which side are we on? Will we defend the fortress for a plum position in the administration of its horrors or sign on with the great plurality, the diverse carnival

## PART III

*“Knowledge makes a person unfit to be a slave.”*  
*-Frederick Douglass*

There's a theory within Alcoholics Anonymous that if a person drinks solidly for ten years of their life, the first ten years of recovery will be simply making amends for her time as a drunk. Essentially, the problems and strengths of an individual become trapped – entirely inaccessible – by the process of active addiction.

At face, this is a grim calculus for the millions of brilliant, creative five-year olds (like myself) who will be subjected to the educational system of the present society. When children are offered up to the school-machine they are too young to consent or to even understand the full immensity of the conditions that they are being required to endure. By the time most people break free from the master's education,

they're at least ten years in the hole. Our intelligence has been so efficiently attacked that most of us forget we even had something stolen from us.

After three semesters in college, I dropped out. I was twenty-one years old. By the arithmetic of AA it will take me the next fifteen years actively de-schooling to fully regain my pre-kindergarten humanity.

The hopeful sentiment in this whole scenario is the notion that something lost can be recovered. Our intelligence is not truly “stolen” by the educational system – merely subdued. What is possible now is the (re)building of an education which liberates and defends – rather than atrophies intelligence and creativity. In resistance to the systematic conditioning of human



WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

beings to be drones within a vast machine, it is possible to create

the conditions in which no one is mediocre.

Part IV

*"If you have only two alternatives, then choose the third."  
-Jewish proverb*



I had grown completely fed up with merely hoping to survive through a lifetime of undesirable circumstances.

Even though abandoning the sanctioned "reality" and false choices of the oppressive society felt like stepping off of a cliff, I needed to do it. I needed to purge myself, as entirely as possible, of any impulse to simply "get by," or "make a living."

I needed to reclaim and reassert my innate capacity and responsibility to dream of a better way of life and to tirelessly seek to manifest life-affirming dreams.

In reaction against the straitjacketing of young people into either the university system or the job market, I created a third choice for myself in the One World Freedom School. The Freedom School began when we started to imagine transforming the garage behind our house into a Schoolhouse.

Our initial goals for the school were very simple. We wanted to

When I dropped out of school in January 2001, it was an affirmation of a way of teaching and learning that I could only imagine at the time.

*"The thing about us not being real" she began, then giggled. "Well, not us so much but our work. Sometimes you know, people say because it is outside of institutions, it's just, you know, not real...doesn't exist...doesn't matter"*

*He could see a journey written on her face. He knew she made choices with a high price tag, that she only looked forward, even when the past beckoned - that she generally lived without regret.*

*They were both committed to doing the bulk of their work outside of institutions. He knew that when you work outside of institutions and formal structures, you make a trade. It means working in your bedroom, being stopped on the street corner, interrupted cooking dinner, 11pm house meetings and 2am legal defense committee - conversations you couldn't prepare for. Education is a way of life. You can't hide from your own politics.*



Capitalism uses institutions like colleges, prisons and the military-industrial complex to create, maintain and support the unequal distribution of power and wealth.

But institutions alone cannot do this work. The citizens of capitalism must be taught compliance. To stop organized resistance to it, capitalism must teach oppression and domination. To this end, capitalism must accomplish at least two other goals. It must stop people from believing in themselves, and it must stop people from working together

In this regard, the revolutionary project is an educational project. We are attempting to do something that we do not yet know how to do. We are learning.

We are learning to create forms of socio-political organizations that can oppose structures and institutions based on hierarchy—institutionalized systems of command and control. These forms of organization will need to be able to develop a re-constructive vision for liberatory, non-hierarchical structures with which to replace the old systems.

Revolutionary education is also an ever-receding horizon. As we learn, we will continually learn how much more there is to learn...



# IS WHAT WE'RE DOING REAL?

Clarissa Rogers

The goals of capitalism are to expand the realm of the commodity in order to expand the market and to concentrate the wealth in the hands of a small elite.

In order to accomplish this, capitalism has adopted a particular pedagogy. The US, the bastion of capitalism, bases its system of public education on the system used to train Prussian soldiers.

Capitalist pedagogy conditions students to believe they are powerless. Those who believe they are not agents of history are less likely to change it.



*"I could hear the whispers" said Rain to Miguel "so I listened to them. Well, I'm lying. I don't think they were whispers. The screaming was drowning them out though." "Those assumptions, they were screaming so loudly, it was a little bit distracting"*

*"Well" said Miguel philosophically "it's important to practise listening to the whispers you know, whether or not they are. And, Rain, something had to be distracting you"*

*Rain laughed at Miguel and herself "indeed it is Miguel, and indeed it did"*

*She looked sad for a brief moment. "I'm glad ours mock us, instead of screaming. Laughter is a nicer background. If mine screamed a lot, they'd give me a headache, or something"*

*"Yeah," agreed Miguel "but screaming is better than the ones that poke you. They hurt, and you never know when one will get loose and poke someone else"*

*"Good point!" Exclaimed Rain, smiling again. She had been poked. It did hurt.*

*A cloud passed over Rain's face as she looked with serious eyes at her cousin. "Do you think," She asked tentatively "that that thing could be true?"*

*Miguel studied her tired face for a moment. Though he knew the answer he asked, "Which thing is that, Rain?"*

teach history; and we wanted to begin that history with the story of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Particularly, we wanted to speak of SNCC's historic expulsion of white

The One World Freedom School was, then (and is now) an experimental project to create a context for white and black folks to be together, mutually discussing the possibilities of Freedom.

The program that we created during the spring of 2001 was a free weekly summer program for two groups of people.

The first group was elementary-school aged young people from the local, mostly Black neighborhood. The Young People's Program set out to teach topics such as gardening, algebra, art, and Black History in innovative ways. For example, kids would learn about their neighborhood - and the race and class dynamics within it - by walking the creek that runs from our neighborhood down through a wealthier, whiter neighborhood further along.

The second group of multiracial high school and college students and drop-outs would address the deeper historical and present day questions facing those of us who struggle for freedom in the Southern United States.

people as if it were a question. The question might be something like "for what reasons, or in what contexts, can white people and black people work together for liberation?"

Expanding out from the initial discussion of SNCC, classes ranged from Africans teaching about slavery and colonialism to the Palestinian Intifada to the Situationist International. The classes intended to ask the following questions:

- What did we learn from this history?
- What mistakes were made?
- What role did different groups of people (i.e. white people) play?
- Did they derail or aid the struggle? In what ways?
- What does this mean for the current movement?

Quickly, and steadily, we drew in more and more people eager to participate in the project. The Freedom School offered professional (i.e. university) teachers a chance to put across material in a less restricting, less profit-driven setting. For non-university folks, the Freedom School was an opportunity to be "credentialised" by other regular

folks who affirm their experiences and mostly folks of color, got and struggles. More than two-dozen teachers of various ages, involved in the project.

PART V

*“As the pattern becomes more intricate and subtle, it is no longer enough to be passive.”*

*- Waking Life*

In June, 2001 - three days before its scheduled opening date - the project aborted itself due to internal struggles, and the presence of obstructionists within the activist “community.”

That’s it. As far as the “official” history goes, there’s nothing more to tell. Another good idea cast into the dustbin because the opposition to this society is too sick on the system’s medicines to actually constitute an opposition. Just another Huey Newton overdose or Guy Debord pistol shot to the head.

But this hardly tells the story.

PART VI

*“We were not able to choose the mess we have to live in- this collapse of a whole society- but we can choose our way out.”*

*-C.L.R. James*

In mythic time, the Freedom School always has been, is and will be a small revolutionary organization based on the following principles:

1. The medium we work with in this task of creating a contemporary, and safe, environment where people of

mixed-races can explore possibilities of working together is simply history: we only tell stories! We explicitly challenge the a-historical tyranny of white society and seek to honor our ancestors and build a path of struggle rooted in lessons from the past.

# REVOLUTION IS ONE FORM OF SOCIAL CHANGE

audre lorde

When the man is busy making niggers it doesn't matter much what shade you are.

If he runs out of one particular color he can always switch to size.

and when he's finished off the big ones he'll just change to sex which is after all where it all began.



REVOLUTION IS ONE FORM...

Socialism in Germany and State Capitalism in the “revolutionary” Soviet Union.

### Same as Today

**T**his is the same power we contend with today and the objective pay-off is still Empire. Increasingly I see the great Anglo flags of Britain and America fused in imagic public ceremony, reminding us of our ancestral mutuality/identity.

### There Are Antagonistic Classes

**G**ayatri Spivak, in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” directs us to Marx’s 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. She directs us to the specific duality I have mentioned earlier:

- 1) “The objective evidence of the senses supports the conclusion that there are *classes* of people. Distinct, identifiable groups whose interests are opposed in the arena of production and elsewhere *separate*: production of value with a portion reserved as capital. The “interests” of these

classes are antagonistic; they would devour one another.

- 2) The self-perception, the “identity” of the individual may align itself with “interests” that are not its own. *To the extent that the identity of their interests begets no community...they do not form a class.*”

### The Significance of Silence

**S**pivak does not direct “White” people to define Whiteness; that testimony is complete-to-date.

She *does* suggest that the *significance* of silence within discourse is a quality/quantity which Europeans might seek to measure.

Is it that a discussion of “Whiteness” would only once again pre-empt the long-awaited discussion of *not-Whiteness*; the discussion of blackness; the discussion of heterogeneity?

2. In the spirit of these ancestors, we habitually demand respect for ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and for all sentient beings.
3. We are against whiteness. Seeing the roots of a racialized society in such crimes as slavery and genocide, we actively and thoroughly strive to be traitors to whiteness.
4. We honor labor. We see volunteerism as primarily a choice of the privileged classes and thus strive (in a money economy) to compensate teachers for their work.
5. We can compensate for the difficulty of the work by treating each other well. This actually means not treating each other shitty. We can affirm and assist one another, or at least express and reaffirm our intention to do so. We will not engage in petty and mean-spirited politics within our community. If we do, we will only die.
6. We should promote brother/sister – family – relationships with like-minded autonomous workshops in our area.

7. We should willingly and wholeheartedly join our efforts with business and institutional situations which:  
1) share, in some demonstrable sense, some goal or aspiration with ours, and 2) do not conflict with our core values. We should accomplish this by freely, willingly, humbly assisting them in whatever tasks they may deem useful.
8. We don’t partner with assholes. We recognize that our strength lies in the dignified, mutually respectful relationships we maintain. Thus, we fiercely defend ourselves from entanglements with those seeking to co-opt, water-down, or shut down our work.

What is possible now is the (re)building of an education which liberates and defends rather than atrophies intelligence and creativity. The rebirth of the One World Freedom School begins right where the last incarnation left off.

Once again, the possibility of white and black folks working together for freedom remains an unanswered question.

**This is what is possible now.  
This is what is already underway.**

# WINTER COUNT

Chrystos

By their own report America has killed  
 forty million of us in the last century  
 The names of those who murdered us  
 are remembered  
 in towns, islands, bays, rivers,  
 mountains, prairies, forests  
 our own names  
 We have died as children, as old men &  
 women without defenses  
 We have been raped, mutilated, we have  
 been starved  
 experimented on, we have been given  
 gifts that kill  
 we've been imprisoned, we've been fed  
 the poison of alcohol  
 until our children are born deformed  
 We have been killed on purpose, by  
 accident, in drunken rage  
 As I speak with each breath  
 Another Indian is dying     Someone  
 part of our Holocaust  
 which they have renamed civilization  
 Our women are routinely sterilized  
 Without their consent during operations  
 for other reasons  
 I have seen the scars  
 We are the butt of jokes, the gimmicks  
 for ad campaigns  
 romanticized into oblivion     So carefully  
 obscured  
 that many think we are all dead  
 For every person who came here to find  
 freedom  
 there are bones rattling in our Mother

The ravage of suburbia covers our burial  
 grounds  
 our spiritual places, our homes  
 Now we are rare & occasionally  
 cherished as Eagles  
 though not by farmers who still potshot  
 us for sport  
 Suddenly we have religions they want &  
 they'll pay  
 Down the long tunnel of death my  
 grandmothers cry     No  
*Give no solace to our destroyers*  
 Into the cold night I send these burning  
 words  
*Never forget*  
*America is our Hitler.*



“Lacking knowledge of themselves (as a class), they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited government power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above.”

Marx: 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire

## Older Than Time Power

**T**his is “executive power” subordinating society to itself. This is a truly grand master-narrative whereby the uncontrollable bourgeoisie gets its nose rubbed in its own shit.

This is the ancient, older than time power which propelled tribes of proto-Europeans around the margins of the Ice-Mass at Europe in lost eons of origination. This is

the unrestrained power of the father – the male ancestral origin; the “unknowable” power of thunder and sky.



This is the truly great power of which Yahweh is only a tepid signification. Within 80 years time (4 human generations) it will give rise to both National



to send their children to the university. "Others," of course, were given a free trip to Ireland, or America, or Barbados, at the expense of the state.)

### The Predicament of Peasants

**M**arx was clearly unsympathetic to the predicament of the peasants: the greatest mass of human beings in France were not, in fact, proletarians, but peasants – "smallholders" owning a tiny plot of land and earning "a living" poorly in and around agriculture.

"Small-holding property, in this enslavement to capital to which its development inevitably pushes forward, has transformed the mass of the French nation into troglodytes [cave-dwellers]. Sixteen million peasants (including women and children) dwell in hovels, a large number of which have but one opening, others only two, and the most-favored only three. And windows are to the house what the five senses are to the head."

- Marx: 18<sup>th</sup> Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

### Democracy's Empire

**E**vents in France – the "revolution" of 1848 – clearly proved: under conditions of "democracy", "free" men constituted as "voters"/equals would not elect the proletariat – despite their great "knowledge" – to govern, that is to *execute* power. They would elect instead Napoleon's nephew Louis Bonaparte by a huge majority. Four out of five voters cast their ballot for Bonaparte, representing the "Party of Order." Victor Hugo would comment unambiguously:

"The man who has been elected by 6 million votes carries out the will of the people and does not betray them."

Marx examples a paradox:

1. Human beings, in the process of creating "capital" – wealth reserved, wealth not-spent – constitute themselves objectively as classes: distinct groups, opposed according to opposing interests.
2. To the extent that the identity of their interests begets no community...they do not form a class.

# MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SCHOOL CURRICULUM, 1964

Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee

The Basic Set of Questions is:

Why are we (teachers and students) in Freedom Schools?  
 What is the Freedom Movement?  
 What alternatives does the Freedom Movement offer us?

The secondary set of questions is:

What does the majority culture have that we want?  
 What does the majority culture have that we don't want?  
 What do we have that we want to keep?

## UNIT I: COMPARISON OF STUDENT'S REALITY WITH OTHERS

*Purpose:* To create an awareness that there are alternatives.

## UNIT II: NORTH TO FREEDOM? (*the Negro in the North*)

*Purpose:* To help the students see clearly the conditions of the Negro in the North, and see that migration to the North is not a basic solution.

UNIT III:  
EXAMINING THE APPARENT REALITY  
(The "Better Life" that Whites have)

*Purpose:* To find out what the whites' "better life" is really like, and what it costs them.

UNIT IV:  
INTRODUCING THE POWER STRUCTURE

*Purpose:* To create an awareness that some people profit by the pain of others or by misleading them.

To create an awareness that some people make decisions that profoundly affect others (i.e., bare power).

To develop the concept of "political power."

UNIT V:  
THE POOR NEGRO,  
THE POOR WHITE, AND THEIR FEARS

*Purpose:* To indicate that the "power structure" derives its power, in the final analysis, by playing upon the fears of the people - Negro and white.

To come to an understanding of these fears - what has helped them to produce them and what they, in turn, have produced, namely, the myths, the lies, the system.

To grasp the deeper effects of the system we have produced and have allowed to continue, the deep psychological damage to Negroes and whites.

thought as a process, as in continuous motion, change, evolution.

### Unity is Master

**Piyadassi** Thera, a contemporary Sri Lankan monastic, evaluates the life of Buddha in this way:

"Through his own perseverance and understanding he proved infinite possibilities are latent in man and that it must be man's [sic] endeavor to develop and unfold these possibilities."

- The Buddha's Ancient Path pg. 23

Around the teaching of this man, Gotama Buddha, a great, enduring civilization developed, along with an intricate and explicit master-narrative. Unlike the European master-narrative, however, an alliance with temporal power is not desirable. Buddha sent his monks to beg their food from among communities of lay-people. Secular power is exclusively the domain of lay-people and their *king*, the one chosen from among all to hold executive authority.

The Buddhists indeed produce a master-narrative but the "master" of the Roman model - the homogeneous experience of power Over/under is erased. It is replaced by a magnificent signification - a semiotic miracle is accomplished. The "master" component is now a principle-of-unity, the principle of unity which underlies human experience: exactly the heterogeneity of it all.

### Capital is Unceasing Struggle

**Marx**, dialectician, student of Hegel, also saw that "infinite possibilities are latent in man" and it was his endeavor to "develop and unfold these possibilities."

Marx was a product of the dialectic relationship he termed "capital" - unceasing struggle (for power) between bourgeois and proletarian.

His very "knowledge" (that power is contestable) was the product of the preceding "bourgeois revolution."

(The armies of Cromwell were a bloody bunch, and all they got out of it was the monotonous idiocy of industrially-created wealth - empire. The right, you might say,

Whereas under feudal nobility the masters' demand was for stability, exactly *not-change*, under the domain of the burghers the ultimate demand was for change itself: the relentless change of industrial production and international commerce fused into the political form of empire. Buy and sell always; increase. The key ingredient of bourgeois power was unceasing change.

Bourgeois intellectuals – Adam Smith in the domain of economics, John Locke in political thought – labored mightily to amend the master narrative: but the shocking truth was, the bourgeoisie would never submit. Their profound nature was to compete, not submit. Having convincingly replaced the “noble” power, they could not maintain it on their own behalf.

The lesser burghers, the Proletarians (like Marx himself) also had achieved knowledge of power and they too intended to compete for it. Every consolidation of bourgeois power would elicit a proletarian demand. Every proletarian surge toward equal status would demand a brutal repression by bourgeois masters.



### Marx Meets Buddha

**E**xactly here is the site of the “unity” I have given Marx to represent. This is the philosophic treasure of his text, and also the text of Hegel, and also, substantially, the text of Gotama Buddha on the subcontinent of Asia. This is dialectics, the first philosophical method to conceive the whole world of nature, society and

## UNIT VI: MATERIAL THINGS AND SOUL THINGS

*Purpose:* To develop insights about the inadequacies of pure materialism.

To develop some elementary concepts of a new society.

## UNIT VII: THE MOVEMENT

*Purpose:* To grasp the significance of direct action and of political action as instruments of social change.



# FREEDOM SCHOOLING

Grace Lee Boggs  
August 20, 2000

At the June meeting of the Black Radical Congress in Detroit conferees delegates decided to launch a campaign for "Education, not Incarceration."

That means we have to redefine what we mean by Education. We can't possibly mean the present system which is widely recognized as responsible for so many of our young people ending up in prison.

For example, at the Back to Basics Community Convention held in Detroit on Saturday, May 6, the Education Task Force passed the following resolution:

**WHEREAS** the current educational system has been organized to fail 50% of our young people, many of whom end up in prison, and

**WHEREAS** the current system does not develop critical thinking or build community.

## BE IT RESOLVED

1. That we create a community curriculum that will empower our children to recognize the truth from untruth and develop the ability to assess information for the best
2. possible solution for themselves and for the community; and
3. That we develop tutorial programs that will implement a community curriculum that includes remediation but emphasizes critical thinking and empowering children to make a difference.



with) this "freely" acquired wealth/power: this wealth derived from not-land. Stresses would accumulate, unrelieved, leading to the insurgency of protest-antism.

The unified domain of the Roman Catholic narrative in Western Europe is erased in large areas. New narratives proliferate, whose objective is to bring this new "free" power (of money-over-land) into congruence with the demand for submission of the empire-builder Yahweh.

## Fertile Ground for "Democracy"

**I**n a nutshell, the most efficiently aggressive form of power human beings have ever created must be made to appear submissive in order that the ancient master-narrative "submission-is-blessing," can operate continuously throughout this transition to a new secular power. This is the work of Martin Luther and John Calvin and, later and most clearly, John Wesley (in England). This is the fertile ground from which "democracy" will later grow: all are equally humbled before God - if some make out

better than others, well then, that's God's business!

## Masters of Unceasing Change

**O**n this side of Empire, this "revolution" of the burghers/bourgeoisie will propel the vibrant Puritan communities of New England into the forefront of empire-building; predictably, at the expense of indigenous "others." Much later, this same Puritan tradition will provide John Brown as the much-maligned and vastly misunderstood savior of empire-in-America. As power-over-land was humbled by the "revolution" of the burghers in Europe, its American expression of slavocracy was equally detestable to bourgeois "knowledge" and would inevitably be defeated - if empire were to continue.

On the "other" side of empire, in France, 1851 this "democratic revolution" would enable the "free" population of France to elect, by a huge majority, Louis Bonaparte as emperor! This is the first true modeling of the modern state as we experience it.

FREEDOM SCHOOLING



anything beyond the sheriff's demand – he cannot conceivably “understand” Marx.

Marx was not a product of the peasant/nobility dialectic. He was a child of “burghers”: urban people earning “a living” by means of performing a function on behalf of the needs of empire. They are “free” people, that is to say, without obligations to nobility: outside of the universal obligation to monarch/state, which is also imperial center.

Typically, these burghers have massive obligations, but they are obligations of money owed to people-of-wealth, not necessarily nobility. These obligations are “contractual”; specific, discrete, and “freely” entered into. At the level of master-narrative, the posture of submission is retained but the “noble” man is replaced by the powerful burgher – the bourgeois.

The narrative is elsewhere modified: whereas the peasant will never become “noble” (except, interestingly, under conditions of active warfare) the burgher, by performing functions of empire, comes to have knowledge of the power of empire.

In this arena of commerce, manufacture, industry, the power inherent in knowledge (of

commercial protocols, or industrial processes) may be used by the willing individual to convert his social-status: the carpenter becomes contractor, the merchant, financier. Although the power of nobility, which is exactly control of land, is reserved for nobility, the power of the burgher, which is money, may be “freely” accessed by “others.”

Piracy (theft of property in the course of sea-faring shipment) became a great source of the capital – socially accomplished, unexpended/reserved value; value not “used” but “saved” – which supported the origination and growth of industrial enterprises – massive material installations employing huge populations of proletarians (urban landless people) in steel-making, manufacture of cotton-cloth, establishment of railroads. Also, the great wealth generated by the transatlantic slave trade in African “slaves” was a related source of industrial capital.

### **Fusing God and Money**

**T**he old master-narrative of the Roman church and feudal nobles was ill equipped to acknowledge (to “know,” that is, to share power

Today's schools build addicts and prepare our children for prison because they teach passivity whereas what our children need most is a sense of themselves as change agents and decision makers. Our children need not only academics but character building.

- To appreciate their neighborhoods and understand their environment.
- To be developed as whole persons with manual, mental, social and environmental skills.
- To become resourceful and independent thinkers.
- To see themselves in the context of community and practice what enhances community life.
- To recognize their worth because their input makes a difference.
- To work together to change the community.

In the 1960s Movement activists had to create Freedom Schools in the South because the existing school system had been organized to produce subjects, not citizens. People in the community, both children and adults, needed to be empowered to exercise their civil and voting rights. To bring about a kind of “mental revolution,” reading, writing and speaking skills were taught through the discussion of black history, the power structure and building a Movement to struggle against it. Everyone took this basic “civics” course and then chose from more academic subjects, like algebra and chemistry.

All over Mississippi, in church basements and parish halls, on shady lawns and in abandoned buildings, volunteer teachers empowered thousands of children and adults through this community curriculum.

**This is the kind of Freedom Schooling that we need today.**

# TREAT THE CHILDREN RIGHT OR YOU PLAY WITH DYNAMITE.

...A STORY ABOUT YOUTHS OF SIERRA LEONE, WEST AFRICA.

Braima Moiwai

*Children are as powerful as they are precious. I am a grown child of Sierra Leone, a country in West Africa where we have paid for this lesson in blood, in severed body parts and with the deaths of a million children, women and men. Part of my tradition calls for sharing-- "komei," which means in Mende, "let me share." So, komei in hope that the people of this, my adopted home, will not ever pay such a price.*

A terrible knowledge is loose on the globe. If it were not already so well-understood by people willing to destroy wildly for the fulfillment of their personal desires, I could not describe it publicly in good conscience. The following is the blueprint for the most dangerous weapon I know.

Alienate a generation of children from the awareness of the beauty of what has already been created, been dreamed and been said. Give them little reason to hope that they can share in the abundance of the Earth. Fail to create faith in their unfolding hearts that civilization will welcome and love them and eventually call upon them to take their turn as creators and creatrixes in their own right. Then...

Let short-sighted, lawless people fill the children's ears with "easy answers," fill their bodies with drugs and put weapons in their hands. Let these villains demonstrate their power by raping and maiming some of the children. Let them seduce the rest by their apparent superiority to the current powers that be when they kill the children's families in front of their eyes, when they assassinate and mow down other adults who represent the current, imperfect order and with empty promises to put the children in charge after the destruction. Although we share this history with other nations and communities, this is the recently-ended darkness of Sierra Leone.

There is more to say about the little villains who pillaged in their own backyards. And there is even more to say about the bigger,

proposed which is simply the irreducible *mutuality* of human existence: all is the product-of-all/no separation.

Human beings are a unity. The behavior of one is the experience of all.

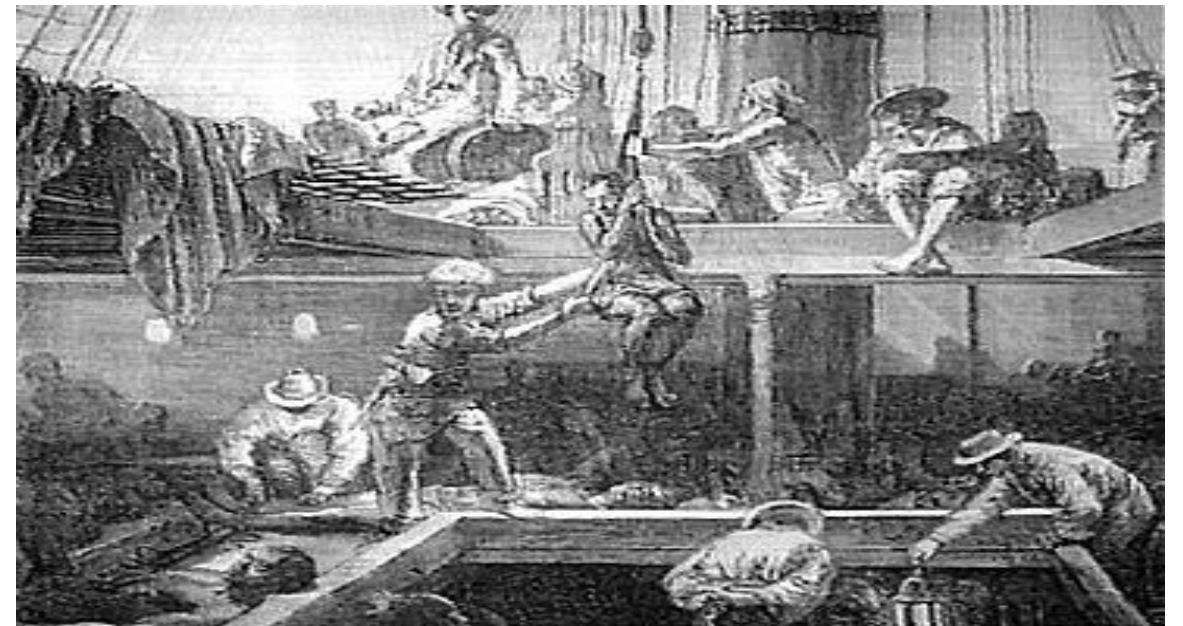
Further, Marx understood his own experience of existence as the product-of-all preceding human endeavor: he read (and wrote) history. As a university-trained proletarian – a child of “free” humans, living in an urban place and earning a living by participating in a complex social-division of labor – he had easy access to the “knowledge” of empire.

It is exactly the university which is ultimately charged, by the masters of empire, with keeping

the record of empire. By means of careful study, the mechanisms of power could be as well understood by Marx as by the rulers of empire themselves. For Marx, power becomes transparent, stripped of its mystifying aura.

Now, though he is often depicted as deluded, Marx clearly wasn't stupid. This power he could see, revealed in its nakedness, as petty and vain and crucially *limiting*, was in no way equivalent to the power an English peasant might “see” in the appearance of the Sheriff to collect rent or other material obligations.

Marx is faced with a paralyzing predicament: he understands, that is to say, he has “knowledge” of the peasant's dilemma. The peasant has no “knowledge” of



Now, this great work of the Roman church – the fusion of God/Yahweh with temporal authority – was hugely successful (as a structure of empire, an empire “scheme”) in the very areas of Western Europe where the Roman empire had exercised authority. Here the master-narrative was long-established, but exclusively temporal – external to personality itself.

The genius of the church “fathers” was to wed this scheme

with an immortal, irreducible power. A power that is internal to personality, which is exactly the critical capacity to monitor and adjust one’s own behavior. The church fathers have taught us to name this power “God.”

In the 200 years subsequent to events in western Flanders in 1323, the domain (lords’ estate) of the Roman Catholic master-narrative – the material base of its authority – would be under attack and in decline; as its predecessor had been 1,000 years previous.

Under these changing circumstances, submission was no longer blessed. The vast insurgency which opposed it is, in fact, received by us under the name “protest-antism.” Temporal power, the location of authority in its heterogeneity, is being reconstituted. It will not abandon the master-narrative, only recast it.

**All is the Product-of-All**

**K**arl Marx’s writing – Marx’s narrative text – may be understood as taken to represent a spiritual viewpoint. A unity is

invisible villains who conspire to benefit from suffering in every corner of our global village. But let me now share, komei, about my first trip back to Sierra Leone in seven years. And komei my hope to participate in a powerful healing to render impotent the villains and their shameful weapon and to mend the hearts, minds and spirits of our many orphans, including my own.

What healing force could be more powerful than all the weapons of mass destruction in the irresponsible hands of the twisted, empty souls of humanity’s

invisible oligarchy? The sacred stories and oral traditions lovingly and mindfully passed from our few surviving elders to the wounded children -- and we are all wounded children-- will heal and protect us. Many of the orphans of the Holocaust and wise elders like Bruno Bettelheim found this to be true. And my own brother, Gbewah, whose very name means wise elder, is ready to spread the ripples of healing stories out from the hearts of the surviving members of my family to our village, our nation and our world. One day, the ripples will be felt in



the U.S. He says, "all our elders have been swallowed up by this war and we that survived are like birds after the hawk carried their mother." But I am getting ahead of myself.

The story of my return to Sierra Leone begins when my lifelong friend, just back from his own visit, reported to me that the "up-country" roads-- that is the roads



that connect the urban part of the country to the rural villages-- were newly safe enough to travel. The relative safety is due to efforts of UN peace-keeping forces, the will of the international community and the fact that the diamond mines in Eastern Sierra Leone are now running low. When I considered taking this journey, what were fresh in my mind were the repeated pleas of my sister in Sierra Leone and my intimate friends all over the world not to take the chance of returning while rebels and the gangs of armed

children were still murdering and maiming civilians.

When my 11-year-old son, Juju, learned of my intention to surprise my surviving siblings with a visit, he was also worried.

Although the US media have largely ignored the war in Sierra Leone since it started in 1991, Juju had seen the macabre images of amputees and refugee camps on American TV documentaries. He "spoke" eloquently to me in sign language: "Papa, there is war and people starving."

I felt our bond and I knew the risks I was taking with Juju's potentially fatherless future. But my homesickness was overwhelming, my friend's reports was encouraging and my need to bring whatever joy I could to my sister and the rest of my family made me determined to "li nya yei," which means in my native Mende tongue - "to go home," when one feels homesick. Rebel

hierarchical indigenous culture. Thus, the political agreement which was necessary was simply a "peace" with the pre-existing culture. A peace under which Christians would be:

1. In compliance with pre-existing social norms
2. Substantially self-sufficient, that is to say, not a material burden on the community and
3. Free to establish their identity as "Christians" by associating beliefs and behaviors in ritual patterns.

The spiritual community of Christian monastics in its simplicity and consistency was quite compatible with ancient social patterns. The fused identity created here is of Christian knowledge (literacy) with ancient standards of community. To a great extent, these monastics were independent of Roman authority. The Irish monastic model was so salutary, in fact, that it was later re-exported to Europe via England. There it served to (somewhat) rehabilitate the "character" of the church to public perception.

The monk's existence was simple: consistent, secure (relative to prevailing conditions at large) and based on total submission to

the will-of-God. Warm, simple clothing, certain food, a dry place to sleep; many "others" under conditions of feudalism were not so well-off. So that here we have a variant master-narrative: bad ass ole' Yahweh is made to sit down and negotiate a peace with everyday Joe and Plain Jane human-being!

Submission is blessed.

### Protest-ant Masters

**E**lsewhere, under the God-Yahweh narrative of submission/empire building, all was not well: multiple, bloody insurrections at France and England in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In western Flanders in 1323:

"The priests did not escape the class hatred which animated the masses; one of the leaders of the movement would have liked, so he declared, to see the last of them hanging on the gallows. By a refinement of cruelty, the nobles and rich were compelled to put their own relatives to death under the eyes of the crowd."

- Henri Pirenne Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe

The history of the Middle-Ages reveals feudal aristocracy aligned with (and competing with) bishops of the church, who are agents of the papal institution at Rome, in crafting a master-narrative whereby bishops and nobility are mutually empowered -- empowered at the expense of all the "others." Any unfortunate, who is neither noble by birth nor an agent of the papal institution at Rome, is conversely disempowered. A holy differentiation among human beings is proclaimed; according to the design of "God."

Actually, "God" is a revivifying of the ancient Hebrew, Yahweh. If you will carefully read the Hebrew narrative of Yahweh and "his" people, you will see that it is also a narrative of empire-building.

Similarly, the "gospels," which are the stories of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, may be understood as an insurgent and popular movement to topple, not Roman secular power, but the tyrant Yahweh!

### **Monastic Autonomy**

**P**eople actually tolerated this type of stupid shit; as well as they were able.

They may well have received good assistance in enduring their suffering from monastic institutions. Monastics frequently crafted vibrant, largely self-sufficient communities. People, marginalized under brutal conditions of feudal life, might even be absorbed into these communities as participants.

Monastics mostly operated within the secular web of the papacy, but were often able to function quite independently of church controls. Ireland came to example monastic autonomy.

In Ireland, as elsewhere in Europe, agents of the papal institution at Rome were sent to live among indigenous populations -- that is to say, non-Christians. Clearly, their mission was to introduce the master-narrative of the papal institution at Rome; and to secure a material base for its domain. (Domain from the old French "domesue" : "Lords' estate").

Throughout Europe, bishops and nobility fused their identity into the master-narrative, "submission is blessed" in a political agreement to share power (over differential wealth).

In Ireland, the early Christian missionaries encountered a relatively simple and non-

atrocities be damned. It was time for a family reunion.

On July 8, I arrived in Sierra Leone. I landed at the Lungi Airport in Freetown, the capital city.

After living 15 years in America, the visions of my people were unsettling. I was greeted by starving children. The city itself was overcrowded and teeming with displaced people. Refugee camps were scattered all over the outskirts of the city. Maimed children missing arms, legs, even genitals that were cut off by the rebels lived with single mothers under plastic, United Nations tents, which were barely able to protect against the drenching rains of the wet season.

Despite such a dismal greeting, I tried to remain optimistic. I was eager to hear news about my village, Bunumbu, after ten years of rebel war. What I heard was heartbreaking.

Folks told me Bunumbu no longer existed. My village - with its thatched houses, coffee and cocoa farms - where I played under the moonlight, worked on the farms and joyously swam in the nearby Loya River, had been turned into a bushy, overgrown woodland. There were once as many as 40 families

there. But, no one is living there now.

Who destroyed Bunumbu? It was the children-- children who maimed and killed other children.

In the Capital, I saw more amputee children and the graveyards of children lucky enough to die instead of having to live with and recover from memories of ghastly horrors. It was the very children of my village who looted, pillaged and committed unimaginable crimes against hundreds of community members, but more importantly, against a way of life. The children of my village had visited upon them more violence than the generations which preceded them could ever imagine.

Many people blame the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, who they say, acted in concert with Liberian president, Charles Taylor, to "recruit" the children of my homeland through force: children were kidnapped from their schools, some were raped. The children were easy to manage. After they were "recruited," the leaders used drugs - cocaine, crack and heroin, to control them. The rebels, as young as 12 and under, were forced by Sankoh and the Liberian leaders to maim and kill--for what?!?!-- for diamonds. My 11-

year-old son could very well be a general with the rebel forces.

Sierra Leone is very rich in diamonds. The second largest diamond, *the Leone Star*, was found in Kono district, near Bunumbu. Who has profited from this lucrative trade that spawned a 10-year orgy of violence and destruction of my people's traditional values?

I realized that my own family's plight had been the plight of the entire country. In 1991, the rebels - yes, the children living in the community - forced my family to flee Bunumbu without taking any of their belongings. They ran for their lives and spent what must have seemed like endless nights in

the woods subsisting on roots and berries. I knew all this from the many letters and phone calls that I had been forced to be satisfied with during the aching years of

physical separation.

The spent bullets, fired by children aiming AK-47 machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, were everywhere.

"Children fell from the backs of mothers and they couldn't turn back" my brother's wife, Mariama said. "It was a matter of life and death."

I also knew from letters that my family had stepped over dead bodies and through abandoned villages to Segbwema, a town 20 miles away. It became their new home. The rebel leaders however, were unrelenting in their lust for blood and diamonds; a sense of power and control over their chaotic, might-makes-right world.



## AGAINST THE MASTER NARRATIVE

Andy Keniston

**Whiteness** is a pre-occupation with an unattainable ideal.

Our consciousness - our engagement with temporal reality - is forever distracted. The sensory data, with which a critter navigates existence, become subject to controls. Sensory data itself is colonized; made to conform to the master's demand. We see (experience) what we are programmed to see. The raw data of human experience is reflexively sorted into categories and preferences. Only after that sorting (distorting) has been accomplished can we appropriate our lives as "unique" and "realistic" narratives.

The ego, the sense of "I" is the remainder: firstly, the personality must honor its obligation to the "master" (idealized, perfected) narrative - no exceptions; then, and only then, is the personality entitled to nourish itself. A tax is put onto perception itself and in every interaction with our material environment; we enrich this idealized "master" by rendering psychic tribute.

Having thereby surrendered control of perception itself, coherence becomes something not to which we may attain but which we may be gifted with should our behaviors become perfectly congruent with the master narrative.

### God Builds Empire

**A**lienation, profound separation, becomes our "normal" state.

Nonetheless, we are content with the belief that if we can perfectly mimic this ideal, master-posture, alienation will be removed and a "blessed" (by the masters' hand) unity will prevail as our experience of the human condition.

The vast institution of the church is historically identified with this master-narrative. In the long interval between the failure of the Roman Empire and the emergence of modern European nations, the church became a master-narrative within a context of secular power.

“Black” people are slaves to the system because they want to be slaves.

Look at the holidays they celebrate.

Characters, leaders, great men and women as examples are most abundant in the U.S.

Access to information through Free libraries and Free schools is



significant.

However, the sayings of emptiness dominate the conversations of people who should know better.

If you think the schools are not teaching things that you value then teach and live those things yourself. Culture is not a myth.

Are “we” going to live and die without creating/establishing solutions to the dilemma of more than 500 years in the so-called New World? (If not me, who? If not now, when?)

•••

Many greats died in vain because no one wants to perpetuate their aim.

•••

In life you may encounter obstacles, challenges, problems, etc.

The answer is to seek the solution or accept the reality.

Every act has its consequence. To do nothing benefits the status quo.

It makes no sense to prattle off the proverbs and sayings of universality.

Practice what you preach.

Do what you say.

In 1997, there was another upheaval and my family had to run for their lives again.

Hundreds of families trekked westward over 70 miles to Blama, a farming community noted for its rice, coffee and cocoa farms. That is where my extended family live to this day. Bunumbu is but a memory.

My head was swirling with confusion, pain, anger and questions.

What could have possibly gone so wrong that allowed the very fabric of my country to be ripped apart? Many fellow Sierra Leoneans were asking themselves that same question as they looked at an entire population surviving in refugee camps. The elders, the very foundation of our society had died. The weak and sickly could not run. Many lost their lives in the struggle.

Who would teach our children the precious and sacred oral traditions of our people?

During my visit, the clear truths and teachings that I had grown up honoring in the past, glared at me from the chaotic present. The elders of our village had always been our vital link to the past. They were the keepers of the oral traditions of our ancestors’ wisdom. The present

generation of children in Sierra Leone had been tragically denied these traditional values and knowledge of the power these values have to bring peace, order, justice and freedom.

Imagine a country where libraries and hospitals have been burned down and all the wise and learned are killed. In my village, the elders who would teach the children are gone. They, who were our traditional libraries and teachers. These venerated herbalists and griots who were poised to pass on the old ways were almost all gone.

On the third day of my visit, having sufficiently recovered from jet lag, my youngest sibling Hawa, along with two of my nephews and I took a bus to Blama to see the rest of my family. The highway we took is the only roadway that connects the city of Freetown to the rest of the country. It’s present condition is terrible. We bumped up and down because of the seemingly countless potholes and through dozens of UN barricades to reach Blama. It took ten hours to go 180 miles.

During the rebel wars, the highway became known as the “Death Trap.” It earned that name because of the frequent rebel ambushes. No one was safe.

Evidence of the war was everywhere. The wreckage of burned cars and trucks were all alongside the road. It looked like a junk yard. The people called it Sankoh's Garage.

The spirit of my people amazed me. We were packed into the mini bus like sardines. Nonetheless, we passengers entertained each other with songs and survival stories. We listened in silence to a woman tell how her entire family was forced into a house only to have it burned down by the rebels high on drugs while they were inside. She was the only survivor.

As I listened to the stories and songs, my anxieties rose in anticipation of seeing my brothers. The last time I saw them was in 1986, when leaving to join my fiancée in Durham, NC. From letters, I also knew about their families. My oldest brother Bockarie had three children. Amara had six, Gbewah had nine. Kenie proudly had ten and Hawa, my sister, had one.

When I saw Gbewah, I recognized him the moment he smiled. All of us have the same big smile. But he looked tired and thin. His wife Mariama and the children had just returned to the farm. Interestingly, I learned that deafness may be a genetic trait in

my family. JuJu has a cousin who is also deaf.

Despite such overwhelming challenges, I tried in the smallest of ways to restore a few of our society's traditional values with my family. I remembered, when I was a child, we used to eat from a single bowl according to our ages. Nostalgia forced me to suggest that we eat with our hands from the same bowl for old time's sake. I remembered how our late mother made the five boys eat from a big congo pan and the four girls from another. Gbewah's huge appetite was well-represented by his enormous hand filled with rice. We teased him about his "kavae," his huge appetite and he in turn, teased me about my huge head. Our joyous laughter was a healing relief and despite the sorrow that lined my way there, I knew I was home-- home at last.

I thought too about the survival stories I had heard on the mini bus and wondered about what my own family had endured. The next day, Bockarie and Kenie joined us at Gbewah's home for a family meeting. Traditionally, he or she that comes home asks for the news and so I did. Gbewah opened the meeting by calling on our ancestral spirits to join us and he thanked them for their guidance.

(social organizations, political parties, churches, etc., etc.) However, people talk as if you have some association or affiliation based on "Blackness" They (whoever has those beliefs) are very ignorant regarding the reality of the history of the world. So-called Black people hate Black people. If you want to be the type of person or have the type of philosophy a Black likes Be White, a Klansman, a Nazi, a Confederate.

A person must have their own ways and live life based on their reality of the world. Or the world will have the person living its myths.

WWI millions died on all sides, WWI – they liked it so much they did it again.

If the dreams of most "Africans" came true i would not be in a position of respect or regard. If the world operating according to the philosophies and religions of

most "Africans" are loyal and dedicated to, i would be in hell, a Pagan, Heathen, Infidel, etc. etc. etc.

If war is God's will, i'm going with the devil.

Kwanzaa isn't part of my heritage, I was born before it was created. Harriet Tubman did not celebrate Juneteenth (a slave's commemoration) She decided she was free before the U.S. Government said so and the defeat in the war between the states made Masters agree. Slaves must free themselves or they remain slaves. Someone or something else is responsible for everything.

Harriet Tubman! Harriet Tubman! The Blacks claim, say they love Harriet Tubman. But in the towns they dwell are many statues to those who would enslave the likes of Harriet Tubman. The Blacks have no holidays and put up no statues to/for Harriet Tubman.



You ask or wonder  
Why do the victim's  
relatives celebrate these  
holidays and maintain  
traditions that have their  
origin in slavery and  
degradation.

"People" say how  
wonderful things are and  
you've got to have hope in  
spite of reality.

I think it is a very ignorant  
position to take. Reality  
matters.



#### Shifting idiocies

One moment in history  
you are colored, Negro, Afro-Am.,  
African-Am., Minority, etc.

The White people have always  
been White.

Many people glorify the "Civil  
Rights" movement.

Are Civil Rights different than  
Constitutional rights? Which is the  
greater right?

The White people have always  
been White. (Right, Write)



"Black," what does that mean?

Words spoken have meaning  
sublime.



Some words mean different  
things in different times, in  
different places.

"Black," never a positive statement  
or a dominant position relative to  
its opposite (White)

If you are Black and believe in race  
i do not want to hear anything you  
have to say

Based on your belief in race, only  
an opinion, statement of someone  
White deserves consideration.



In life i have no associations with  
people because i'm "Black"

"Thank you for coming home,"  
he then said to me.

Gbewah connected the family to  
The Dead. There was complete  
silence in this traditional naming  
of The Dead. Gbewah named  
family and members of the  
community close to us who had  
died in the war: our mother, Matta  
Gbateh, our brother Amara, our  
Aunt Jenneh. She had 15 children.  
Only two survived the war.

Our silence during the naming  
of The Dead echoed far beyond the  
walls of Gbewah's home. He finally  
broke the silence with a story:

"Once upon a time," he began,

"a bad spirit came and turned the  
heads of the children against their  
own parents. With the help of guns  
and drugs coming in, the children  
fought amongst each other, ruled  
over the adults and took all the  
wealth for themselves. This rebel  
war was about diamonds,  
something for the strangers."

Then my brother started  
naming other members of our once  
close-knit community who had  
died.

Uncles, aunties,  
grandparents. That's when I  
realized the seemingly irreparable  
gap in our generation. Yes, we are  
like baby birds who just lost their



parents to the hawk.

My journey home was about the faces and hearts of those who had called me from afar. Yes, the bushpeople, the farmers, the original wildcrafters. Seeing members of the community who raised me, people who loved me, I know what it means to be really loved. I know of growing coffee and cocoa and cultivating rice. This special way of life that even the colonial English could only influence. This is a way of life I inherited from my grandfather, when he helped to show the English that ancestral land belongs to the families. It is a natural right.

While considering my country's dilemma, I am reminded of Patricia Jones-Jackson's book, "When Roots Die." It is an account of how Africans, during the African Slave Trade, were cut off from their customs and heritage by little villains gone astray to enrich big villains far away. Similarly, the horrible war in Sierra Leone has disconnected the survivors and future generations of my people from the wisdom and precious

traditions that can only descend from the elders.

Although I am far too young, inexperienced and imperfect to be an elder, -- although I, too, am orphaned -- I must and will try to participate in the massive healing on Sierra Leone's hope-filled horizon. I am grateful to this community and this country for sheltering me and the sacred wealth my grandparents, my father and my mother entrusted to me. I am a living library and librarian in one. I am also grateful to my wise friends who held me back from running headlong into the fray all these years. I have shared our sacred teaching tales with thousands of children in the U.S. to show my gratitude to my adopted home and community. Let the healing continue for all of us.

In the noble words of my grandma, Nematu, "the world is a spider web. A break in the web affects the whole." Let us continue to tell our healing stories, to mend the web and to weave the children and each other back into a beautiful, diverse, just, compassionate and peaceful world-wide village.

## SOLILOQUIES OF AN URBAN NEGRO

Do not ask why. Accept reality. Why do i know the words to "Dixie"? I never tried to know the words to "Dixie."

If most dreams came true for most people in the U.S. I'd be dead or a slave.

A lot of traditions and holidays are based on events in history, real or otherwise,

Which have been continued by people.

My history as a descendant of slaves in the U.S. is the dominant factor in my life.

Truth and facts have been my goal and guide.

Mentally and spiritually, is there are such things that can be separated from human activity

I have always been on the underground railroad.

I will commemorate the times when descendants of slaves (or slaves) first became free.

Jan. 1, 1863, not July 4<sup>th</sup>. Acknowledgement of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments.

No Columbus Day (instead John Brown Day)

No Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Memorial Day, Labor Day

The history surrounding these days is clear.

No more birthdays (most slaves did not know the day they were born.

You do not get to stop on the underground railroad to freedom to celebrate someone's birthday).

It is not about your birth (divinity, royalty) it is about your life (merit, deeds).

Day and night. There are many stories about slaves working from "can't see in the morning"

'til "can't see at night." The hours of the day (like

slavery) are creations of Man

Follow nature's way. Night, dawn, day, dusk (darkness to light).



Look back on the past to understand the present in order that we might guide the future course under our own leadership.



SOLILOQUIES OF AN URBAN NEGRO