

## RACE CONFERENCE

I am going to be chairing this Forum, perhaps I could just start with a couple of introductory comments.

The Forum as you will know has been organised by the Race Relations Unit of Camden Council in association with the organising committee of the Sixth International Book Fayre of Radical Black and Third World Books. I think it is fitting that an education forum should be part of the Book Fayre event, I think during today it will become very clear and we will be able to renew our knowledge of the importance of the role of language and literature in the struggles of African and Asian people in the struggles against colonialism, the continuing struggle for nationhood and here in the west against racism oppression and discrimination. The struggles for language and literature have involved recognition of the need to develop our own language and initiatives and to develop publishing and promoting that literature and if we look at the kind of struggles that black parents, pupils, families and education activists have been involved in in this country in our communities we can see that the important role of events like this events focusing on the production of and promotion and publishing of our own work both written and oral in our own languages. I would just like to raise one point about the Forum and it's really as I see it, although publicity said that I would chair the Forum, and I really hope that I won't have to do very much chairing except introducing people and tell you when to speak and things like that, but I do think that a forum ought to be an important space for us to debate and discuss the issues of concern to us as black people and I would hope that during today you will see that the speakers are here to stimulate ideas and to inform

us of issues that they think are important for us to consider, we may agree with them we may not we will learn from everybody here if we conduct ourselves in such a way to be open and ready to listen, but I do appeal to you from the beginning to make my life very simple which basically means that we all listen to each other. I would also like to say that although we do have four male speakers which I am sure the sisters in the audience are very conscious of my expectations, I make no apology for that it's not me that organised that, but I was expecting there to be a substantial number of women in the audience and I can see that there are, I intend after each speaker to give priority space to women who wish to make their own speeches and I hope everybody will go along with that, I don't see that it is denying anybody any space I just want to prioritise some space for women to make their statements about education.

This morning we have Abdul A                      who is sitting here with me he is Professor of Sociology at the University of Illinois and Chairperson of the Co-operative Research Network in Black Studies, he was founder and first Chairman of the Organisation of Black American Culture in 1955-1967, he was a founding member of the Institute of Black Works in Atlanta in 1968 and was organiser of the first summer workshop in Black Studies in Atlanta in 1969, he was founder and first Chair of the Illinois Council of Black Studies from 79-85 and a Board Member and Vice Chair of the National Council for Black Studies from 1980-1983. He is senior author of Introduction to Afro American Studies and co-author of Chicago Black Power versus Racism, Harold Washington becomes Mayor, which you can find in the new black vote which was published in '84 and edited by Rod Bush, he is on the Board of Black Scholar and has contributed other monographs and papers. He is going to talk to us today about black studies in education

deliberations. Can I ask you to welcome him

ABDUL ?

Thank you, first let me say that it's always good and exciting to see the people who are in a slightly different context, I am going to try and make my comments as brief as possible so that we can maximise and exchange and that the experiences that we have in the United States might be better understood and shared and that also through the questions I might be able to take back to the United States and share with the people in black studies because that would be very important and useful for us.

It is a real pleasure to come to this conference and speak to you about the black struggle for a decent and democratic education in the United States, I've come to London several times and feel comfortable here mainly because there are many people here who are carrying out work similar to mine, people whose comradeship makes me feel very much at home. In addition I feel at home because there are many problems here that are similar to our problems in the United States although I am constantly amazed about the diversity that exists with our overall unity, we are many and we are one. My comments will mainly focus on the black studies experience in the United States and I hope that we can share experiences and lessons. The general concept for this would be the social and economic conditions of the black community, all educational activities obviously fit into a social and historical context and are designed to enable people to adapt effectively to their environment. In capitalist society it means to maintain the status quo usually, to support the status quo in terms of who rules the society, to support the existing power relationships, in this context education is designed mainly to deal with

the two fundamental needs every society has, the training of the skilled and disciplined labour force and the socialisation of loyal citizens but this education does not occur outside of but within the social contradictions that exist in society mainly the many ways in which there is inequality in the society; people who live in cities have more opportunities than people who live in rural areas, middle class people have more opportunities than the working class and whites have more than blacks. Some people have more privileges and more of a stake in things as they are. Working class blacks approach education with the same basic human needs as the middle class whites to point to the polar opposites in the United States but the education they get is different and in essence what they want is different in relationship to this adaptation, some people want to maintain things the way are obviously and other people want to change them. Both black and whites as populations are generally in the working class and make up the vast majority of the population and all of these people have a fundamental interest whether they are conscious of it or not whether they act that way or not, but have a fundamental interest in education for liberation and social change. The major economic elite who dominate and control the central institutions of the United States, what we would call our ruling class are a small minority of people who have a definite interest in the status quo. Most people experience in our society as yours, economic insecurity, people need jobs like the sign says, better jobs if they've got jobs with more pay. Clearly economic reality of the capitalist crisis that we are living through is making the distinction between rich and poor even more clear and obviously everyone who is poor has an interest in education for social change so that the subject that we are talking about is very central, not peripheral, but central to the notion of education that actually meets the interest of

working people. Black also want change because racism has placed false limits on how much a black person can accomplish, on how secure one can be in terms of the availability of what one needs to survive, food, clothing, shelter, health care, violence from the police. So working class people want change for class reasons, blacks want change for reasons of the oppression of blacks and the majority of blacks, who are black people in the working class want change for both reasons.

This conception of education and its meaning for black people leads me to examine black studies as an integral part of the strategic educational objectives of black people but also working people and especially blacks in the working class. Each objective that I am going to talk about is an axis on which the overall fight for a decent democratic is carried out. What should be clear to all of us is that if we want an education worth having, this certainly is what faces black people of working class, we are going to have to fight, we have had to fight in order to achieve it. To introduce these strategic objectives I have to first, for matters of clarity, establish the fundamental historical experiences and the struggles that have occurred within these historical experiences for black people in the United States.

After being captured and forced into slavery black people were denied formal education, in fact it was against the law to educate a slave to read or write, the education that slaves got was "on the job training" and everybody had a job, the thinking of the slave masters was generally sound if you let the slave read then they will learn stories of resistance, even from the bible, and they would become more conscious of how much they were being exploited, how they had to fight to destroy the slave system.

Education meaning reading and writing skills, had to be limited to those few slaves with a very close personal relationship with their owners hence accounting for education being equated with and provided as a function of loyalty, and even with this selection process there were some slaves who did in fact learn how to read including those slaves who realised that they had to fight for freedom and lead slave revolts. Slavery ended with the emancipation experience by which the industrial capitalist north militarily defeated the slave south in the mid 19th century civil war. Slaves joined the war to emancipate themselves from the bondage of slavery as they joined blacks and whites in the north and in Europe, such as in England, who were also fighting against this slavery. In this context after slavery, although blacks were still in the rural south where the legacy of slavery existed, educational institutions were developed essentially on two levels, the "predominantly negro colleges" were set up by the government and black churches to develop a professional elite to manage the affairs of the black community, although a few blacks were able to matriculate at the white mainstream institutions and thereby maintain a link between the top white elite and the black community. We have Harvard and Yale just as you have Oxford and Cambridge, their counter parts among black colleges were Howard University, Fisk University and Atlanta University and places you might have heard of. The second level is what one might call the vocational college movement, the main basis for this is the National Land Grant College Act around the time of the civil war that whites subsequently amended and passed again in the 1890s for setting up institutions for blacks. This Act established a grant giving land to each State to set up a college for technical training and this after all was one of the great gifts of American education, bringing science and technology in the 19th Century directly into higher education.

(long break in sound on tape)

Of course it is interesting that in the South black people who have been emancipated from slavery fought to have a public educational system and in that way brought a public educational system to the white people who lived in the South as well. This is a much bigger point than just that historical experience and that is when black people have engaged in a fight for social change the demands have normally been rather universal not simply demands to meet the needs of black people but there has been a universal claim on society so that the change that results from the black struggle is a change for the democratic vote of all people who have historically been denied and of course this means poor white, it means working class people and in the South it also meant middle class people so that the fight for black people for public education meant fight for public education for everyone.

In legal terms the two supreme court cases, the two that are important to mention, in 1896 the case of *Plessy versus Ferguson* established what allowed the State to build a segregated educational system but it put forward the principle of separate but equal with the notion that you could set up a black school but it had to be equal to the education provided for whites, of course this was a word game, this was never the case.

Expenditure for black was from one fourth to one tenth of the expenditure for whites, the buildings that were built and those that were built for blacks were poorly equipped, chemistry labs with no chemistry, gymnasiums with no showers or whatever. After World War II in our second case the supreme court decided in the *Brown versus The Board of Education in Topeka Kansas*, in 1954 that the separate but equal principle was invalid because



separate was unequal. The court held that there should be unitary school system, one school system for everyone, but in here is the catch they said that the policy should be implemented with "all deliberate speed" without being more specific. Now we are as yet to have a unitary system in the United States and this is 1987 so that something like 70% of all black students in elementary and secondary schools, that is up to the first 12 years of schooling, go to vastly majority black institutions, in other words the educational experience for blacks in the United States today is to in the main go to schools that are dominated by black people so there is in fact a segregated school experience in the United States.

On the other hand it is also true that there have been great gains made in schools attendance, more access, so an objective has been achieved. In 1940 for example for students 16-17 years of age 70% of whites were in school, only 55% of blacks but by 1970 the number was 90% whites were in school and 87% of blacks so from 1940 to 1970 the attendance of blacks for the ages 16-17 went from 55% to 87% and now it is about 98%, so basically that strategic aim for blacks to be able to go to school is more or less something that has been achieved.

By 1975 High School Graduates were enrolled in College at the same level as whites, so by 1975 relative equity has been met for college attendance as well although in 1980 the figures start going down, but in any case overall when you take from slavery to now the strategic objective of blacks getting into school has been met.

The second major strategic objective in the fight waged by blacks for education concerns key aspects of the quality of education, specifically the issue was and is the skills and credentials that enable the youth to leave school and get a good job with a decent wage. Today in the US a high school education of 12 years is required and constitutes a standard criteria for employment. The median years of schooling for blacks increased from 8 years in 1960 to 12 years in 1980 but in terms of real people in 1975 only 35% of black adults and 58% of white adults graduated from high school whereby 1980 51% of blacks had a high school degree. This again reflects a great change but it nevertheless reflects the fact that older blacks still are without this basic high school education consequently that helps to nationalise white people who are economically insecure, I say that because obviously there are many many other reasons that are more fundamental but in terms of education this is fit.

The alarming problem of school drop-outs or push-outs is critical here because there is an important difference obviously in the employability and earning potential of people who get pushed out so this whole objective of getting an education that produces a job opportunity for people is very important in relationship to the school drop-out problem. The fact is that people who go to school for 1-3 of high school earn something like 30-40% less than people who get that next year of 12 years of education or a high school degree, so that even one year is very very important, but in general the drop-out problem has declined tremendously, I won't go through the statistics here but if you want me to later I will.

Another important point to mention in terms of the current situation even when people stay in school in high school the black experience today

reveals many important problems. Only 23% of black students took three years of science, again this is not only a question of what kind of age we are living in it is a question of what are the curriculum requirements for jobs as well as for going on to college, so that only 23% of black students took three years of science while 34% of whites and 45% of asians took three years of science. The three years of maths the figures were 38% of blacks, 50% of whites and 68% of asians. This pattern leads to a racial difference of test scores, the blacks consistently scoring lowest of all ethnic nationality groups.

This leads to the third strategic goal, the one we are most interested in today, the strategic goal of black power in education. The blackinisation process of a white racist institutional experience. It is precisely the impact of gains made in access and staying in schools that sets the stage and infact led to the fight for black power. The setting in the mid 1960s after ten years of active mass education by the Civil Rights Movement was something new, something special began to happen, white racism help nurture the development of black consciousness of response, the fight for access meant a fight to be with whites since they had control of the resources, the Civil Rights Movement set out to do this on the basis of disciplined non-violence, it was law abiding, with its aquisits fully expecting to go to gaol in order to protest an unjust law, what the movement faced was barbarism pure and simple, murder and violence from the police and the lynch mobs. Not only were rank and file activists in danger as when three Civil Rights workers were murdered in Mississippi or a bomb was thrown into a church at negros during a church service and killed but some of our major black leaders were assassinated as well as you know.

M Evers was a state leader in Mississippi or Martin Luther King even at 68 was brutally shot down as the best examples. It was in this context that a new black power ideology swept through the movement and transformed it from a Civil Rights movement to a Black Liberation movement. Up to this point the movement for civil rights was based in itself because it was here that the legacy of slavery held back the entire region, a region backward in social and economic development but the movements major action shifted to the North when sparked by the urban insurrection led by Urban Youth who has been either denied access or pushed out or denied skills and credentials from the education they did get. The voice of Martin Luther King was replaced by the voice of Malcom X, SNVCC was replaced by the Black Panther Party, the student non-violent co-ordinating committee that had been the leader in developing fit in tactics for integrating and breaking down segregation, SNVCC was replaced by the Black Panther Party or the Congress of African People as a leading force among youth in this new phase of the liberation movement in the City.

White racism was fought on the ideological level in many ways but always with a dialectical principle like racism negated blacks and in defense blacks negated what white racism stood for. Black was not ugly it was beautiful, Black was strong, just, kind, Black was full of courage, black people began to think of themselves not simply in racial terms but as a social historical national group, in this way it was easy to identify with the force of liberation sweeping through the third world, especially in Africa. The goal of civil rights was replaced by the goal of liberation of a black nation.

The black nation being talked about was shared by the vast majority of

black people who had been excluded and denied access to the basic social institutions like formal education. Formal education tended to exclude the vast majority of black people but when it was allowed there was a force assimilation in language, culture and lifestyle that went along with it. In response to the riots on the streets in the urban insurrection the colleges open up to a section of urban youths hoping for the force of assimilation to cool things out, to bring people into the educational process, offer them the potential of getting what was necessary to have a job but the price was a total psychological cultural assimilation to essentially approximate white middle class norms.

This begins the story of the Black Studies Movement perse because the opposite happened, people were brought into institutions in order to be assimilated and in point of fact what people did was bring with them the black liberation movement, experience the absence of what they wanted and imposed the demands of the black liberation movement from within the institution. In general there were four phases to this motion for the demand of Black Studies inside primarily first institutions of higher education and also then throughout all other phases.

First was the question of social disruption, that is to say that under almost no circumstance was the leadership of education open and prepared to deal with black people who for the most part now are first generation college students, we are not talking about the institutions that were created after the civil war in the South where you did have families that were second, third and fourth generation college educated people but it was in the north that you had working class blacks going into colleges who were first generation who were not acclimated to the lifestyle of the

middle class and therefore there was no preparation on either side and there was a great deal of conflict.

The point is however that once the demands for black power and black studies emerged within higher education what actually happened was the institution retreated and allowed a whole series of experimentation to occur. This is very important because it was in this experimentation that peoples actual class interest, social interest, social concern began to come to the fore and it is this series of experimentation that allows for the great diversity. We had a chance to reach out to Africa, we had a chance to reach out to black history within the United States, we had a chance to reach out to the black community and herein is a very very important ingredient in this whole business, the contradiction between consciousness and trying to become aware of being black in the world sense versus the contradiction of being involved in the community out of which these people had come. So consciousness was encouraged, being involved in the community was discouraged and I want to talk about that a little bit more. This period of experimentation which essentially lasted, the period I am talking about is 1966 is when black power hit the scene in the black movement in the United States, it was after that that Black Studies developed. In the mid 70s, a great crisis hit higher education so that when the crisis hit, the crisis of funding, and the first aspect of the Black Studies movement that was cut was the connection to the community, the aspects of Black Study that was encouraged was at the level of consciousness and what was encouraged was the diversity of search into the psychological and cultural meaning of blackness but not in a complete sense in terms of the everyday lived experience of black people, and that is a very important point we should investigate further.

The current stage right now in black studies in the question of institutionalisation, how to make these programme sustainable given the economic crisis and given the overall political crisis, then I'll return to this.

The fourth strategic goal is the fight for power, this is a very simple and yet the most profound result of the Black Studies Movement to this point, it can go forward only by facing up to the issue of power and control. Each of the previous three strategic objectives of the fight for education meant a change in the institution - access, quality and credentials and the black innovation process to opening to culture and connections of the community - so that each of these three battle fronts were built on the basis of protest and struggle in virtually no case did a school initiate changes without a demand from concerns like parents and students or from the broader political movement. The power of people struggles expanded education for black people and only in this way can these gains be defended and new battles won. The main basis for such a power struggle is the mobilisation of people to fight for reform not just any reform but the reform that captures the limits reached by the three strategic objectives.

Today the demands, because of the crisis, are as follows :

First the area of access is open admission and affirmative action, that is to say to continue to increase black enrolment, because since the crisis black enrolment in education has gone down, so at first the strategic was met but in general there is a downward trend today.

Second, there is the question of if blacks are mainly in black schools the question of black studies is how to make that experience effective and so there is a new movement now around effective black schools and special support programmes and

Third, is the question of consolidating black study programmes on the campus.

These are the main demands that people in education are working with today. The question of the youth themselves as I indicated about what kind of curriculum people are in, the demands today are as follows :

First in terms of access and curriculum is the question of maths and science and computers, there is a new cycling out process occurring in education for blacks in the United States with black students not taking science courses, not taking maths courses, not being exposed to computers and consequently are basically be cycled out of the main tracks for success.

Secondly, the tremendous need exists for work study programmes since the occupational experiences now in the United States in general have black teenagers being unemployed at the level of 50% and in some cities it is even higher than that, consequently not only are people being cycled out of the curriculum levels but once they graduate are not likely, some half of the black youth today it is estimated are not likely to have regular employment but will have part time employment for their working lives.



Third is the question of community service, that is building a relationship between students and the struggle to transform their communities.

Now everything I have said has to have to do with the institutional demands of people working in education but that really is only one half, one side of the black study experience, the other side of the black studies experience actually has more to do with the black liberation movement than it does with the institution of education, because it is precisely the black studies movement that has involved the most politically active youths and politically active, though small part, of the black middle class people, people like me really who went to school and got a degree and teach at least part of ones life that really are actively involved in the black liberation movement. That is the real story of black studies.

The real story of black studies is that black studies has represented those people who have actively been a part of the black liberation movement but within schooling, whether that schooling has been a formal education institution or in the community. Every phase of the black liberation movement develops new goals, new language, new concepts and it is precisely that new set of goals, that new set of language and so forth that people in education have had to grapple with. The point I am trying to make is is that in fact people in education have followed the lead of the black liberation movement and not vice versa, even though there are people within education who at every stage benefit from the new changes that result from the black liberation movement and present themselves as infact leading the black studies movement.

The truth of the matter is that the black studies movement is ruling in the black community and it is ruling in the black liberation movement so that right now for instance we are coming just off of a down period of relatively inactive period in the black liberation movement in the United States, mainly because the bigger activism in the United States has come through might generally be called electoral politics, so that people who are engaged in being elected to City Council and even being elected to be the Mayors of Cities, this is the cutting edge, but the fact is that their activity has served simply to bring forward the institutional

(short break in sound on tape)

for black studies institutional roles have made black people like everybody else which simply means in the interests of the rulers of education so it is very important to see black studies as an expression of the black liberation movement. Now what that means is that we have made gains but we also accept that we have strength and we have weaknesses. Let me just talk about two, when it comes to Africa black people in the United States, probably more than black people anywhere else in the world have been cut off, divorced, have lost a real knowledge, consequently when Africa was discovered ideologically it was Africa in an idealised form and consequently we had an idealised notion of Africa and generated a whole body of literature that actually did not have a connection to what was happening in Africa. However, in approximately 1971 black people in the black studies movement went to Africa, went to Tanzania, went in to Mozambique with (Prelimo), had discussions with (Prelimo) and came back with a new connection. Here the connection was not traditional Africa in an idealised form trying to recreate the Africa of some previous century

but it was connected to the critical political motion in Africa which raised up many questions. It raised the question of the struggle whereby one had to create a political organisation that would enable one to fight against whatever repression that was being experienced, it had to do with introducing a new concept that defined this struggle which was imperialism, it had to do with raising the notion that in the world there were people who were not black who were fighting similar battles that could be understood and we could learn from, all of these things were brought back and others and it created the basis for the black studies movement to begin to relate to the African Liberation struggle and it was that that then began to feed that into all of the black studies programmes so that now Africa was no longer the search for a romantic past but it was rather the search for knowledge that would enable the Black Liberation Movement in the United States to hook up with the actual liberation movement in Africa so that we could then more effectively contribute to both struggles, we could more effectively develop our policies. It is this that black studies helps to create, so out of that 71 trip the African Liberation Day demonstration day developed, the African Liberation Support Committee which is a very important organisation in the United States developed and it spread throughout the entire United States, this set the tone for what was happening in the early 70s in black studies.

Of course before that one could have mentioned the Black Panther Party at really every point as I have indicated. The critical problem today after what I have said, given this electoral politics and its notion that out of our community, that it is possible to negotiate the freedom that we want, it is necessary to develop a new dream, a new conception, a new vision worthy of culture, of our culture, of a high culture to use that

expression, and firm moral standing to dream of a society free of the problems we face, a world in which humanity can enter into a new stage of fulfilment. The interesting thing about this notion of dreaming is that the biggest problem that I think exists, when I am sitting in a meeting of black studies of professionals who are black studies activists, is precisely the notion of a vision that can capture the imagination and give people something to fight for. Everyone is clear that they have something to fight against the question is how do you have a vision so that you can fight for something, when it as a struggle for integration, when everybody was white people somehow captured a vision that minimally a good objective would be to fight for the inclusion of blacks, this after all is the biggest rationale for the black electoral struggle that dominates much of black politics today.

What is difficult today in the United States is to develop a vision beyond that particularly when that tends not to work out, that is to say you fight for black inclusion and that is a relatively good thing but often that does not work to your advantage, you should probably fought to have blacks on the police force when they were segregated and the police force was white, now the experience if you were at a demonstration or something happens is that black police were more vicious than the white police. So the question then is given that then what is the vision that you can develop, it is one thing to say, like Malcolm said that there is an American Dream but all I see is a nightmare, what Malcolm was talking about was the America that he was looking at, but not the world that he was envisioning that he was fighting for and it is precisely that that I am talking about, the question of a vision, the question of a conception of what kind of world you could possibly fight for. When we speak of

liberation we are also speaking of social revolution, now this is in the United States obviously a dangerous thing to say, especially to advocate it in a militant way but the point is that it staggers the mind today to grasp the conceptual revolutions we re being forced to deal with. Star Wars, Nuclear Winter, computerisation, robotics, genetic engineering, organ transplants, environmental collapse, all of these represent a necessary revolution of consciousness, these technological and biological revolutions are incredible, just as it is incredible to think of the social revolution in the United States in which there would be educational programmes for everyone, there would be a good relationship between schooling and employment, each student would be fully educated about the diverse cultures of each society and especially their own, but the social revolution would take place if the power relations of the capitalist society and the government change hands from them to us, from the few to the many, the black working class in unity with the oppressed and exploited classes of all nationalities is the way we see carrying this motion forward, it is a key lever for the change for the forces yet to emerge.

The main lessons from all of this, really are two :

One is that you have to keep fighting and the other is that beware of all the successes that the movement might have, because each success becomes a rationalisation to stop fighting, each time we fought for black teachers, each time we fought for black principles, each time we fought for a change of curriculum, each time we fought for every one of the main objectives the success of that battle has resulted in the claim that it is more important to sustain that gain or to continue to push that gain further

than it is to place additional, more demanding, more sustaining claims on the system ultimately towards that leap into a new kind of society, that that is the danger so it would seem rather simple to keep fighting to watch the dangers and yet we have to learn these over and over again.

We have to build a movement that has consistency and continuity, we go to school, I would like to think, to become lifelong students, readers and thinkers, informed doers, I would also like to think that we join the movement and transform our lives to live as forcefully as we can for as long as we can. The slogan we use today in the black studies movement is Academic Excellence and Social Responsibility and we say it that way but we mean it the opposite way because of those two values the most important value is social responsibility and we say social responsibility from the standpoint of the black community and the standpoint of the black working and poor people which means that in the society what is called responsible from our perspective is irresponsible, what is responsible are those things that best meet the needs of our community and that does not mean being responsible in the eyes of the people who run the society today. The fight for academic excellence and social responsibility in education in black studies is a fight for the liberation of our people and the transformation of our entire society. In the end it is a fight to build a new world.

End speech

Chairman :

What we have now is plenty of time for people to ask questions and to

continue the discussion around the points that Abdul has raised. We can go on until 1.00 if people want to. What would be helpful to me is if you could indicate to me that you would like to say something, if you bear in mind the point I made earlier about giving some women some space, the microphones in front of you are fixed so that you can be heard, if you would stand so that the technicians can see who it is that is about to speak and can turn on that microphone. I think it would be again part of the supportive way for each other if before you speak, you could introduce yourself very briefly so that people can identify who you are, and where you are coming from and perhaps continue the discussion with you over lunch, etc.

Any sisters want to ask first questions, make comments ?

My name is Rita

I think what you actually have to say stated if you like the dilemma for us very clearly, what I think you didn't do is you didn't address that dilemma. You actually made some very clear statements about the fact, and I have to believe what you say because I am not American and I am not in America and I don't know what has been happening, but you make some very clear statements about what had happened for instance with the involvement of black Americans in politics, what you said was that that had made a great difference to the black movement, the liberation movement if you like, in that that was not going on any more, infact what I read from you said was that those black people who had been elected to various posts politically had spent their time you say deliberating and gaining ground in the instituional argument, what I assume you were saying is that

they were gaining perhaps a few more access spaces here and a few more access spaces there by arguing in particular forums for this kind of exercise, what you also said that was the result of this was that there were fewer and fewer people, black youths, actually registering in the colleges and the courses, is that correct

Abdul :

Yes there was a downward trend

Rita :

You also said that there was 50% of black youths unemployed, what you didn't say is that most of the young people on death row in American prisons were black youths, what you didn't say was that the prison were full of black youths just the same going up and up but that I think is actually statistically correct as well. The point I want to make is that you ended your whole talk having pointed out that in fact the black youths were saying something quite different from the politicians, something quite different from the academics like yourself because they were saying no to what you were actually gaining they are obviously saying no to that, and their lives are a complete misery because of that, and yet at the same time you say that it is their struggles that should be listened to. You ended by saying that you were aiming and you thought that you were aiming for academic excellence and social responsibility, which you say is a fight for liberation, whose academic excellence, how do we define academic excellence, is academic excellence when we pass the examinations that have been written by white people, is that academic excellence ? is academic



excellence when we pass the examinations in order to go to white institutions ? You also pointed out that we had some successes, the successes you talked about was more black teachers, black schools, now I have an argument on behalf of black schools in this country certainly but what actually worries me most of the time about the idea of setting up black schools is that what we will have in those black schools is black teachers who are teaching exactly the same things that are taught in white schools and that is why I stop before actually carrying on advocating black schools because I am not certain, in fact I am at this moment quite certain that if there was a black school set up the kinds of things that were going to be taught in that black school would be no different from the things that were taught in white schools. This is one of the things that you did not address, the essential dilemma that we are in a midst of all the time. We are constantly fighting for black this and black that and black everything and so we ought to be, but we have never ever stopped to define what these black things are, we never stop and say that a black teacher does not mean a teacher who has passed all the white examinations who goes into a school and who teaches exactly the same things as the white teachers, who treats the black children in exactly the same way as the white teachers, who actually tries to persuade the black parents that the school is good for them and that what is going on in the school is what they should be following, that is what they mean by social responsibility. We have not actively talked about having black representatives in local councils and before anybody says anything about it yes I do know about being a black representative in local council and I do know that black politicians in Town Halls are not representing the needs of black people, they are not there to actually say no you must stop it you are not doing something for black people, what they are there to actually

do is to persuade the black people outside that they must revolt against those particular parties that they themselves are part of and that is no good, so that is our dilemma, when are we going to face the fact that putting a black face in the position that has been defined by a white society, by the status quo, that putting a black face there or being a black face in that position does not make any of us any use whatsoever to the black liberation, in fact what we do is to help the white status quo to do its work more efficiently because they have a black person to tell the other black people that what the institutions are doing are absolutely correct.

What I say is that your whole speech did not in any way face that dilemma, discuss that dilemma, even consider that that dilemma was there and what is more you ended up with a statement that essentially told me that what you were saying is that you did not see that dilemma, you actually still believe that we should all be aiming for academic excellence and social responsibility a statement that I feel Margaret Thatcher would endorse entirely.

Abdul :

Thank you for your comments, it helps me to expand upon what I was saying. One of the things that we have learned in the United States is that we have to move beyond a sort of categorical good and evil type of thinking using terms black and white because what we discovered is that once a certain sector of teachers and administrators had achieved the position within education that an interesting lack of rigour and standards becomes rationalised as a struggle against racism in the school system, racism

exists therefore what we have to do is say that getting blacks to rule the process is an important anti racist thing to do and in the process not have standards that we impose on ourselves. It is precisely out of that in the struggle of the black studies movement that the term academic excellence and social responsibility emerges. It is precisely a confrontation with the point of view that Thatcher or Ragan would have that results in this concept. Social responsibility is the principle value and it establishes the criteria, the standards the context in which excellence, academic excellence is set.

What do I mean by this, academic excellence means that Africa is important to study and it is important to study not someones imaginative concepts about Africa but to study objectively the material reality of Africa. It means not to study the illusions but to study the concrete factors involved. Now when we talk about black schools in advocating black schools etc. the point I was trying to make is this independent of what we want to advocate the fact of the matter is that black people go to black schools, it is not even about whether we advocate it or not, that's the fact of the matter. The question is you're going to a black school, how do you actually try to see that black school becoming an effective tool for the overall transformation of the community and the society, you have to not only deal with black studies and linking black schools with the community you have to have rigourous standards. Among black people in the United States many people in education assume the racist notion that black people do not learn, that black people do not have the same capacity to achieve, we think that is precisely what has to be ineffectively destroyed in our thinking, that black people can infact achieve the question is how and in what context.

If you were to go into a school you would find most teachers totally depressed, totally disorientated as opposed to having social responsibility which means taking the political objectives of black people not the ones that are buying into the society but the critical, radical, political objectives of the black liberation movement as an objective framework and context and then being committed to a rigorous training programme of reading and writing, if you want to just put it on the basic level. Those are the problems we face in the United States, how many kids graduate from high school but cannot literally read and write, so when you go among people who are the bumpies in the United States as you put in your leaflet the bumpies who teach, it is precisely those people who do not give a damm about whether or not the masses of black people can read and write in America. It is not just the question with athletes graduating and going on it's a question of can people read and write, are people being taught what is necessary for them to effectively operate in the society and the answer is no, the question is black studies is not a question of some idealist notion about Africa or some conception about culture of psychological identify or whatever, it is to link the actual experiences of black people in the society and the struggle for transformation with the tools necessary.

Read Malcolm's autobiography, read the last two pages, and what Malcolm says in that book is that if he had to go to school again what he would do is be one hell of a student, and there is alot that he would study, that is what he said and that is precisely the point that most people pass over and don't deal with. So I agree with you very much that we are not talking about academic excellence in the typical way the educational systems sets it up but we are not throwing it out, we are not just

throwing it out, in other words the question of mathamatics is a question of mathamatics, that is a part of the black studies argument. The people who run the Universities and the public schools in the United States would disagree with that point of view, they would say that maths and science and learning how to read and write does not at all have to do with black studies and we would disagree with that.

I am not sure what is happening here but in the United States today literacy is an important question. You can write a leaflet but if the kids who get out of high school can't read the leaflet then you have one hell of a problem and what is happening is illiteracy is being recycled back into the black community.

In terms of black youths having a point of view that is different to ours I would have to say this, there is only a yes and a no to that. Today black youths are not experiencng and expressing the political and economic and police conditions under which they have to live they are also manipulated and socialised into a vulgar popular culture that is controlled by popular entertainment - TV, radio, etc. It is a very interesting situation that during progressive political movements today we also have right wing movements among black youths, gangs, highly organised, now controlling drugs and distribution of drugs in certain parts of the community so that we have to look at a category like black youths concretly and yes there are political demands that are being made but no not all things that are happening should be applauded and it is that contradiction between people expressing the need for jobs the need for all the things that they are being denied and those are things that have to be listened to and educational programmes have to be set up to

facilitate their development but no on the other hand it is also true that alot is happening among black youths that has to do with rationalising and maintaining the negative conditions.

What I am saying is that as teachers that come out of the black liberation movement we not only have the responsibility to listen to the conditions and bring them forward from our community but at the same time we have the responsibility to be teachers, we have a responsibility to give leadership and that doesn't mean just tailing behind any spontaneous development that occurs it means having a critical relationship and it is precisely that that brings in the social responsibility as the principle thing but academic excellence is essential and it is that contradiction that we have to have at lest from our experience I think, at the core of our black studies programmes.

Member of Audience

As far as Rita is concerned I would just like to know very much, you say that people must, that the speaker hasn't addressed the business of what black people are studying, at the same time I would like to know from you, I have never heard in all the talks, what you advocate instead of the schooling we do have at present, can you give us some answer because in both talks I have heard you I have never heard you tell us how we can now go about teaching our children, please give me that answer and perhaps I won't have to ask it again .

Rita

I think I have actually said it on several occasions but I will say it again, I think as black teachers in schools our actual responsibility is to the children and one of our first responsibilities is to tell them the truth and to tell their parents the truth. It is not our business to go into school and persuade parents that the school is correct when it is not, it is also our business to address the things that are happening in the classroom and around the school and to actually take them on when they happen with the other teachers. It is our business to defend the black pupils in the school to defend them viz a viz the curriculum, to examine the curriculum and talk about it with the other teachers, to defend the pupils when they have actually been excluded when they should not have been. It is up to us to be able to take on the authorities that be and defend the pupils in that way, it is up to us to be able to listen to things that they have to say and take those on board, to believe them when they talk to us. Do you want actual details of how and when these things can happen because that might be quite alot of things, but I think I have said it many many times, it is up to us to inform the community what is going on, to inform the parents what is going on. Do you want alot more

Member of audience

I am a teacher and I think you are defending our characters, who are you to say that we don't do these things, we do all these things, because you are not around

Rita

I haven't said you don't so why are you are defending it

Member of audience

I am not defending it I am just saying that we do all these things so don't make generalisations as if we don't, there are plenty of us in the schools who are doing all those things that you mention

Rita

I didn't accuse anyone of anything, I made a general statement, now those people who are feeling guilty are obviously feeling very guilty, I am a teacher as well so why are people defending themselves. I haven't actually accused anyone of anything so why do people feel defensive, it is a bit worrying that

Chair

Is there any other women who want to say anything, I have seen about three or four men and I am indicating to them that I have seen them but I just want to know if any other sisters want to address the meeting

Member of audience

You mention that we must stop romanticising about the past and I would just really like to know in reference to his (Abdul) talk on high culture and moral standing what culture are we suppose to take on now, what we should be developing to take us on to this social revolution



I think that what I was trying to get at is this, the reason I tried to put the concept of high culture in quotes, because I think it is our cultural resources that come out of the communities that we live in and that for example the literature, the music, the art and the style that permeates over the everyday aspects of culture, that it is a reflection on that and our ability to understand that that is the high culture that I am talking about. It is not just the culture that we experience but the culture of everybody else in the society that we are a part of.

The fact of the matter is in the United States there is great cultural diversity, there are many different nationalities and it is frequently the experience of black people not to have access to those other cultural experiences, to be very limited and very isolated and there is a great regional factor in the United States.

Just take the question of (Latinos ?) in the United States, black people are isolated much more than we should be from the descendants of people from Mexico and Portorico and so forth, neither of them mention the diversity within the black community of the United States today, particularly again on the regionally based on the east coast, of people migrating to New York from the Caribbean and from Africa. What I am trying to get at is that culture is a resource for the future and not only are we denied access to the cultural experience of the groups that we are a part of directly through family, but we are denied access to the many cultures that exist in the society and around the world and if we want to have a notion of a future in which we can be liberated what we have to do

is have a notion that all those cultural basis have a contribution to make to our consciousness, starting from where we stand but then branching out to embrace everybody.

It seems like a simple thing to say but in New York city for example there was a motion, although in this case it was around electoral politics, but it occurred before even at the stage of the Black Panther party, etc. of bringing together this rainbow coalition, of bringing together people of all nationalities which is a necessity, but it was precisely a kind of backward Nero nationalism, not only on the part of blacks, on the part of (Latinos ?) all of which was manipulated and sustained by white racists that kept people from uniting and that dialective of trying to unite which is the best way it seems to me to galvanise an overall force for change, that's there, but the biggest force is to keep people separate and to keep people from mobilising these cultural resources for the politics of social change and that is really, it seems to me, at the heart of it.

Right now with this rigornomics and the crisis deepening what do we have, we have cutback in bilingual education, we have a cutback in the educational developments for (Latinos ?) or for asians and certainly for blacks, but for blacks as I said before, the key thing that is being attacked is any kind of link to the community that might in any way bring the actual class demands from most blacks into the educational process, with being supportive our programmes would have an idealist and romantic view of Africa and of other aspects of the black experience which remain socially irrelevant as far as the actual lived experience of the black people or the needs of black youths. The main thing is that culture can be a resource for change it just isn't as much as it should be.

Ran ? a schoolteacher from the London Borough of Ealing

I take your point and I think it is a strong point about trying to bring in culture and the importance of culture and what relevance that has on a child's identity or on the identity of a black person whether that person is Afro Caribbean, Asian, Chinese or whatever and you have actually said that that is a very good thing to bring in such cultural resources and to bring that into the curriculum, what I want to know is how are you tackling that because that is what is facing me as a teacher in my school which is 98% black so we have a predominance of two cultures, an Asian culture and the white majority culture which is reflected in the curriculum, I just want to know how you are tackling that because that is a practical thing that is facing me and some of the teachers in my school

Abdul :

Of course there is a wide range of experience on this point, let me just try to indicate what I consider to be the most progressive and important examples to learn more about and to emulate, the point is in the United States it is this question of the relationship with Africa and the Caribbean and we still have to struggle and fight for a positive relationship to Africa because Tarzan is still on television actively, and the important way we are doing it is as I pointed out is to link the identity with Africa to the new Africa that is being created as opposed to simply the historical origins of the Africa that used to exist and in some cases still is the dominant traditional Africa. Some people have taken the position of trying to recreate traditional Africa but we do not think that this is the best way to promote this identity where culture becomes a

tool for social change. Our problem is not the same problem that (Kabrol ?) mentioned of a return to the source in a traditional sense and how that help to bring about, it is more what he talked about in terms of the new culture being developed, so what we are talking about is movies, novels that get at the new Africa coming into existence so that is one whole difference and tension in how to bring culture in, is to bring the political culture coming into existence through the movies etc.

In terms of the black community itself, the culture that we have to struggle against or to work with is the popular culture, University of Illenois, students had a boycott against the local radio station on campus to bring black music, we want black music, what did they mean by this did they mean Duke Ellington, do they mean Count Basie do they mean the cultural resources that have sustained and have represented the highest level of achievement not recognised by the cultural standards of America but within the black community, no what they meant was what the DJ was playing in the top 20 tunes, that's what people were fighting for. So in response to that what happened is that people who were actually involved in black music had to start a process of introducing the students on campus who were politically going after popular culture to the actual cultural wealth of the black community which they then found out had been coming in through the music department and the people in the music department had been studying but black students on campus had been divorced from it.

In the question of how to recapture Count Basie and Duke Ellington and make those tools and instruments then suddenly it became clear that in looking at Duke Ellington when he would compose a piece called black,

brown and beige, and trying to talk about the historical experiences of black people then here was black history from a musician, Duke Ellington, who talked about Africa, who talked about slavery, who talked about the struggles in the cities, so that popular culture is what is fed to black students instead of these cultural resources and so on.

But the most significant thing is that in the black community today there are cultural workers who were part of the black liberation movement, groups here that have come here, people like Gill Scott Heron (?), people like Sweet Honey and the Rock (?), that these groups who are very conscious of the historical development of black culture, Burmese Regan I think is a perfect example of the kind of person I am talking about, and it is to bring people like this in to contact with people in education so that what they are creating as cultural statements, as a manifestation of the liberation struggle that I was talking about, that that is the critical element today, so that writers and musicians and artists that not only are a part of the history of Afro American culture in this case, but who are actively a part of a politics today, the cutting edge of change, that that is the best way.

The last point I want to make is that when something comes along like wrap music, what happened is that you had this dynamic and wonderful expression of black youth coming out of the core of the most depressed sections of the ghetto, this great creativity. Two things happened, number one a lot of people made the mistake of thinking that is just like that awful stuff that comes across the Top 20, diddypop music, and so they do not give it credit for what it really represents. On the other hand before they get to it people have been commercialised to the point that if they stop

reflecting the cutting edge of what they initially talked about then they end up talking about whatever might sell, by the time I went to Chicago and went to see Grand Master Flash, he was trying to make some money, he wasn't expressing the conditions of what happened in New York, he was talking about people eating out of garbage cans, and the struggles of people and the need for a vision, the need to dream a new dream, he wasn't talking about that, he was talking about whatever those people were who had bought tickets to come in might want to hear and so it seems to me that we have to avoid not understanding creativity, but we have to move decisively to appropriate for our purposes to prevent it from being commodocised and become a part of the whole capitalist mess so that it ceases to have the cutting edge meaning that it had initially.

These are the many ways that we have to identify with the new culture that is being constantly created, it won't stop, it will always be there. People say where do dancers come from, where does culture creativity come from, it comes from people who are struggling to express their lives in some meaningful way to give it meaning, that is where it comes from, and we have as teachers and so forth and people in schools, we have to be able to be daring enough to identify with it and to me that is what will unleash black youth. People say black youth can't learn but they memorise these long wraps, it must tell us something. It is like that, not only the conscious political agents within our culture movement like Sweet Honey the Rock but these spontaneous creations that we have to identify with. I am not saying identify with everything but I am saying to be able to critically identify those things.

Rhaman

I have a dilemma, I am not saying that                      is not important and as the Chair of the Inner London Black Teachers Group I can't say that black teachers do not have an important role in the cultural input in the education of the black pupils and for the black pupils to identify with some role models, I can't say that. Even if they could read and write could they do any better when there are so much of                      we know that this amount of                      which is being controlled by the capital was racist. Is not a formal educational system an apparatus of maintaining the status quo, can it change anything, has not formal factory like institutional education always been use to set out workers from the (                      ), has not this factory education devised and pervaded by imperialist, racist                      indoctrinated the white middle class ethics in the                      colonial countries for the exploitation of the masses of those countries. In highly industrialised countries which are white and dominated by the white racist imperialist ethics, is not the fight for democratisation through education pervaded by racist ethics likely to be disadvantage blacks further by creating black middle class co-operatives to submerge black struggle, should not black people fight as in America again we fight for all exploited people in this country, should not in this country, in the fight against racism, concept of blackness be extended and made more wider concept integral part of black struggles.

GUBAT

I don't know whether or not you say on one hand that the African Americans and African people generally in the                      or that Asian people to submerge themselves into the whole European world view perspective in order to move out, as you term, the provocial parameters which you claim

they are caught up in. You say that we need to engage in a culture polarity by which our world view like all other world view is accepted as part and parcel of recognition of the total education system. I think that is an issue that you can clear up for me. I think you will have seen in this gathering here that there is a broad parameter of people, an ideological perspective moving from victimology, namely those people who are still caught up in the idea that they feel they must apologise to the Europeans for being who they are or what they are, and those African and Asian people who are saying, hey I know who I am, what I am, I want to get on and play my side of the chessboard and get on with my life and therefore I am going to do so.

Given that is the case are you arguing that we should also get caught up in the ideas that we should treat the issue world view perspective, that we should see that as mutually exclusive for our present situation here and are you also saying that we should enter into the traditional argument advanced by our enemies in order to confuse to our minds, I want to make quite clear what you are saying before I go any further

DENNY (member of audience)

I think the question that I want to ask have been covered already but I do so because you get a feeling of the strength of feeling and diversity of expression. First question, when you talk about achievement, achievement of what, under those criteria what is the point of achievement if it is on somebody's terms and you also at the same time know that there is achievement to the point of ineffectiveness - what is the point of that, it saddens me when I go for the third year and see them and come



away thinking I can no longer relate to this, so the first time it was part of my culture, something I could see, the third time it was so classical no-one knew what they were trying to do. What is the point of attainment and achievement if and perhaps as a psychologist you might comment on this, possibly the basis of that is that the sort inferior complex, what is the point of achievement if that exists. Could you perhaps make some reference to that.

(very loud hum during the above comments)

(member of audience)

I am a lecturer at Willesden College, Technology and Computer Science, I would like to agree with the speaker on his views that the visions are necessary for black people in order to progress, because we don't have any vision or sight of where we are going, it also gives us objectives which we can assess ourselves to see how far we have gone. I wonder what in particular from the American experience does the speaker think could be relevant for us. In our society the whole system is not as aggressive say as the students in Paris, they went on the streets and they fought for what they wanted and in China they demonstrated but English students do not demonstrate and we seem to be sucked into that whole system of being docile. How do you think some of the American experience could be relevant for us today in England.

ABDUL (Speaker)

Just to clear up one point, I am familiar with some of those works, they

have a very interesting impact in America, there are some people who follow those works, I am not sure where it takes them, it certainly does not take them to the cutting edge of either the reformists who are engaged in electoral politics or any kind of radicals, the fact of the matter is that where it has taken Jake Carruthers in Chicago where I live is that he has become a priest in a religion he founded and has religious services periodically in the auditorium in school. I would imagine he has a vision of where it is taking him and his congregation but in relationship to the people of Chicago politically he is functionally irrelevant. Where I am coming from is this - we live on a planet that we can identify and it is the late part of the 20th century, we are getting ready for the 21st century, we all are subjected to the same material forces, some people do not like computers, some people do not like aeroplanes, but most people today get on aeroplanes, if you do not like computers I suggest you go to a school or you go somewhere but that is a fact in the world we live in today, most people in the world would like to have more. In the various places you talk about not back then but now, so I would say this when it comes to concepts that have to do really with the previous century, that one lesson from the United States is this - that with all the terror and barbarism that black people have experienced in the United States the one positive result is that compared to most black people in the world we are forced to deal with the core of advanced capitalist society because we ain't got nothing else to deal with in a sense, OK and that gives the people who are able to move forward are the people who are able to take the reality of our culture, to take the reality of our experience and impose that in a dialogue with the new technology, to come up with something that meets our interests, that computers are not necessarily hostile just like the saxophone as an instrument didn't come from Africa

it is a tool that people use but it is when we took our culture and imposed it on that instrument so that now it is ours and I look forward to the day when personal computers will be ours in that same sense, they become tools and instruments of our liberation.

When you say am I talking about some European epistimology, etc. I am not sure really what you mean by that, I do know this that when I said that about mathamatics and learning how to read and write, I say that out of respect for the bright people who are denied the ability to learn maths and to learn how to read and write, I don't downplay that I say that with a great deal of respect because I know people who are denied that. In the neighbourhood where I live there are people who are still regarded as the readers, you get a letter you take it to somebody and they read the letter to you. I don't accept that for black people although some black people might say it's the white people who read and the interesting thing, I am not accusing you of that I don't know you I am talking about the people I know, and I am saying that those very people many of them live in very comfortable neighbourhoods but the people who need somebody to read their letters to them they don't live in comfortable neighbourhoods.

So what I am talking about is the fact that our fight for black study must be part and parcel of our understanding of education, I believe that the black innovation process in the United States not only was historically necessary but it remains necessary today. That is to say black people have to fight against racism.

I will now address the question of achievement and this fella here asked the question about what is it and why is it important and so on what do

you mean by the men that use the Harlem Dance Theatre and the question of mimicry and assimilation and so forth. It seems to me that when we are talking about achievement we are talking about it in the context of social responsibility not in the context of the standards and norms of society as it is currently structured. When we look at the Harlem Dance Theatre or the Harlem School of the Arts we have to recognise that there is achievement there, there is no question about that, but if you take that institution or either of those institutions and logically see where that would lead the entire community then that would take you to a very negative place because what that would argue is that the only achievement possible for black people is within the context of the norms and values established outside the black community, and I agree with that and I think most people agree with that, so it is equally wrong it seems to me to criticise achievement by blacks in those areas where the norms have been infact created by non blacks, that is wrong because that then denies us the capacity you see to do what anybody else might do anyway and it is also foolish because if you go into the actual lived experience of (?) Christ who comes from Mississippi then you see one hell of a musician developing out of her own experiences not simply to negate her because she sings in European languages, etc.

On the other hand it seems to me that what we have to do is we have to understand that that is simply one kind of achievement, the achievement I am talking about has to do with the achievement that leads to arming us and making us stronger in terms of the political fight for liberation, that is ultimately if you want my definition of achievement it is those people and individuals in groups who are able to attain a better place that makes us stronger for that struggle, that is the way that I would

define achievement but I am not so narrow as to see that as being simply the only thing because many times something that can look one way actually can contribute in another way. When it comes to culture in the black community there are two points I want to make in addition, one is that fact that there are great resources in the black community in the United States almost none of them are used to promote the kind of achievements that I am talking about. That is achievement that is infact at odds with the society, the achievement that actually arms black people to better fight for liberation, you can see this in Ebony magazine, John Johnson is a multi millionaire and it is a very powerful magazine, probably you all know it, but very little support comes through that for those cultural dynamics, for those other levels of achievement that have to do with arming people for the struggle to change the society, infact Johnson even has a black achievement award ceremony, this is a national TV programme in the United States and they give awards in all the categories, most of the categories are singing and dancing, most of the award go to Motown types and most of the creative artists and political leaders in our community go unrecognised.

If these people are sustaining their own self interest which is not to challenge America, this is not to say that some of those people don't achieve because they do, Lionel Richie obviously has achieved something, and we have to recognise that, we have to criticise that and we have to understand it in relationship to our politics.

The second point is that when it comes to achievement and assimilation etc. I think the main thing to talk about is television because today we have got programmes like the Crosby Show which tends to promote a sense of

achievement, after all they are two professionals, it is the no. 1 TV programme in America, and the point is that it's not an easy thing to just denounce without analysing the shift on television from Good Times which was a programme about a working class family in a project with a strong father and a strong mother and then the father is taken out of the programme and the mother and her friend become the leading figures, so they take the man out of the picture and they have two black women and then they go from that kind of thing to the Jeffersons who use to be maids and now live in a high rise apartment and he runs two or three cleaners and then from the Jeffersons who have just made it, in business he is a hustler, from that to the two professionals who collect art and have little bumpy children and the whole thing, but you have to see the whole movement, so in the 60s there was a new consciousness created, people were in motion they had a certain kind of programme but then over time manipulated the changes and now we have this image of success where they are trying to promote the notion that this is a dominant group etc. but it has nothing to do with the majority of people. Does the Crosbys represent us of course it does, that is a result, that is a victory, it has to be seen as such, but that very victory is also what constitutes a problem, because it creates an illusion and it is an illusion that America wants to buy that is why it is a no. 1 programme because it means that you don't have to think about what is going on with the rest of the black community. It is a very important thing to analyse, no matter what we say alot of black people watch that, it has a profound impact on the consciousness of people, much more profound than say those of us in the classroom.

The question of achievement is not just an easy thing now yes institutions are mainly set up for social control obviously, that is the whole point,

and the point is in terms of access is this I would put this forward as a thesis - America cannot become a democratic society, if the masses of working class people, in this case you are talking about black working class people, were to force all the institutions of education to open up for their full involvement then the educational institution would change and would cease to be what it is because it couldn't sustain the demand that these working class people would put upon it therefore it has to go through all the things I was talking about, bring them in, push them out, bring them in, cycle them in to the curriculum, bring them in and orientate them to some other set of idealist notions about who they are etc. but not accept who they are in terms of what is actually happening in the community, not accept who they are in terms of what is actually happening in Africa or in the Caribbean in terms of trying to promote change. The point is that the fight for democracy, the fight to expand democracy ultimately becomes a revolutionary struggle when people realise that the society is incapable of expanding to the democratic goals that they aspire for. Yes it is true that the education is set up to be one thing but no it is not true that it will always be and has to be and therefore our struggle is futile. I think our struggle is righteous I think it is possible to make change but not simply isolated in the classroom, it has to be linked to the struggle in the community. If it is not linked to the struggle in the community then it will be linked to the career aspirations of the people in the classroom, and that is the point.