



MONTHLY REPORT

August, 1973

Dear Friends:

The new school year is upon us. And while we prepare our children for it physically, with new pencils and new blue jeans, we should also be spiritually preparing both them and ourselves for the struggle for a new black education -- particularly at the public school level.

Our July *Monthly Report* carried the first part of a speech on the new black education by Vincent Harding. This month the last half of that speech is combined with another lecture made to a group of Atlanta parents. The emphasis in this edited version is on goals and strategies for realizing that education, hence this broader consideration has led us to giving the piece a new title.

We hope that all of our readers, and not just parents, will find this article useful in pondering the meaning of a new black existence in America -- for ourselves and for the many generations still to come.

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GOALS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR A NEW BLACK EDUCATION (Part II)

The closer we examine the education that our black children are getting in today's public schools, the more we recognize the stark inadequacies of that education. It demonstrates to us that black people must commit themselves to the development of a new education for the new times in which we live. Some of us carry on this creative task in independent schools. Most of us, however, will have to challenge the public school systems where the vast majority of our children, our teachers, and our educational tax monies are.

The education of our children is our responsibility; . . . we cannot place it in anyone else's hands anymore. We cannot expend precious time and energies convincing white people that they ought to stay in systems where we are now in the majority; nor can we demean and deceive ourselves by assuming that we need their reluctant presence to develop new, excellent, creative educational experiences. (Neither should we exhaust ourselves by running away from them -- once we have decided what we want to do, and set about doing it.)

But as soon as these things are said, we must immediately ask ourselves, what are we going to create in place of the present chaos, especially when so much of this chaos has been imbibed in our own lives? What do we want of any new education for our children? In other words, what are the new goals toward which we must first turn ourselves and then our schools, as they carry out their part of the larger educational process?

As a point of departure, I'd like to suggest seven preliminary goals for the education of black children in the public schools. All of these flow out of my own sense of what Martin King, Malcolm X and the Freedom Movement were about at their best. All of them challenge us to decide what we shall be about in the future. They are presented in sketchy outline here. But, by and large, they attempt to speak to the issue of how our children shall view themselves, their people, and their world.

These goals self-consciously avoid leaping into the familiar professional discussions of the "skills" our children need to "compete" in American society. Rather they address first the spirit, the attitudes, the values our children need to be authentically human. They place primary attention on the inner equipment black children need to understand themselves and this American society. And they are based on the fervent hope that such a vision will help our children perceive the need for radical, personal and societal transformation, and inspire them to demand, seize and master whatever skills are required for their new tasks. In other words,

the spirit, the values, the humanity come first. These goals assume that primacy.

Some New Goals for the Education of our Children

We are committed to create an educational process which will:

1. *Develop and present to our children and young people new models of men and women. Using examples from our century and our people, we should call their attention and study to persons like Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Ruby Doris Smith, Septima Clarke, Diane Nash, Paul Robeson and many others. Such study would include emphasis on self-discipline and self-sacrifice. It would move our children's thoughts beyond "rugged individualism" and "do your own thing" to a real sense of social consciousness and commitment -- to a real sense of purpose.*
2. *Create in our children an understanding of the process of social change for justice and new humanity, and the necessary struggle, sacrifice and conflict involved in bringing about change. This should include study and recognition of the central role black people have played in the Movement to transform America especially since World War II.*
3. *Provide students with a sense of their relationship to the world-wide community of colored peoples who have also been waging struggles for freedom, justice and independence, especially during this century.*
4. *Provide our children and young people first with a sense of historical perspective on the long fight for justice that we have engaged in since the earliest days of the slaveships; next, with the understanding that over the centuries black people in America have, as a group, been the most consistent crusaders for freedom and equality in this society; and, third, with the consideration of their own role given that legacy of historical struggle.*
5. *Develop in our children and young people a knowledge and appreciation of the full cultural heritage of black people, beginning with our African origins; thereby helping to develop in them a healthy sense of self-respect and self-love, without which they cannot respect or love anyone else.*
6. *Develop in our children the will, the knowledge, and the imagination to ask new questions and seek new answers which will lead to the building of a more just and humane society in America, rather than teaching them to accept the order of things which exists today.*
7. *Create in our children a profound belief in their abilities to work for real, humane change in America, with a cognizance of their own responsibility to do so for the sake of their children, and for the sake of children they will never know.*

Putting the Goals into the Schools

Once we have discussed, expanded and absorbed the letter and spirit of such goals, how do we go about putting them into practice? How do we set into motion a new educational process which will point the minds of our children towards our past as well as our future, and the best future of Mankind? In a sense, of course, the motion has already begun. The movements of the last 30 years, and the men, women and children who made them, provided a real new beginning for our continuing thrust forward. Now, some other things can be done by us all.

First, students must begin to think about what they're into. They must decide -- becoming adults in the process -- what development within themselves they wish to explore and encourage. They must decide whether the Superfly-Shaft-Cleopatra Jones fantasy syndrome on the one hand, or the constant "realistic" demand to develop money-making "skills", on the other, are really the only options available to them, the only vistas they can know.

When they are exposed to other possibilities and other goals for their education, then they can make some new choices and begin to create that new education themselves. So at the same time that they make just and necessary demands on their parents, faculty, administrators and Boards of Education for changes in the entire content and direction of their education, they must also make demands upon themselves and begin educating themselves in new ways. It can be done. We've seen one group of high school students in Atlanta who simply decided that they would create alternatives which were not available to them in their school (named ironically after Frederick Douglass). They began

to teach themselves, seeking out surrogate teachers at places like IBW and elsewhere. What this example means is that students who decide to be serious can transform education from a deadly and often inaccurate recital of what is, to an exploration of what ought to be, what must be.

Of course, the parents are no less crucial. (By parents I mean here not only these who are biologically in that class, but all the persons who care deeply about the education of our children, the future of our people and the humanization of our society.) Parents often tend to think that professional educators or Board of Education members are magicians: that if they simply put their children into these "professional" hands, the young people will come out as they ought to be. But look at the kind of country the "professional educators" have produced up to now! Is this really what we want -- in the light of Indochina, Watergate, the gruesome Texas child murders, our own experiences?

We must admit that the tendency to put our children into the hands of others, without raising any real questions about what they are doing, is a form of escape from serious parental responsibility, one which must stop. Additionally, it is a result of growing despair over our capacity to challenge and change large, seemingly unresponsive structures and systems. But we cannot give in to either temptation. Certainly the last three decades in our struggle and that of our brothers and sisters across the colonized world have taught us that the demands for justice and humanization are always considered "impossible". We simply have to decide what must be done for the children -- and for the society. Then we must move against the odds, without guarantees, but with great expectations, endless patience, and an unswerving commitment to struggle.

Finally, there is that central, influential, but often fearful and apathetic element: the teachers. Usually, their fear and silence arise out of the fact that they are locked into the system as it is, by way of their education, their mortgage payments, their credit cards and other elements of their own "security." If they are to become part of the force for implementing our seven goals, then they must recognize that they don't have to stay locked into passivity and acquiescence. They need to see the terrible choice they are making by placing their personal security before the future well-being and transformation of black people and the radical humanization of American society.

That is no overstatement of the dilemma. For if, with help, encouragement and a certain protection from other elements of the community, they can unlock themselves, our teachers have a tremendous opportunity at hand. They can begin to unlearn much of the content and methods they have been taught (and have taught themselves), so that they may be free to contemplate really new questions, new options, a new future for themselves and all of us. Soon they would be following the example of a small, committed minority who are already tearing the pages out of the ill-written textbooks, breaking the walls of the oppressive schools and opening themselves and their children to a real present, a real past and a real future.

The Choice Is Ours

What this means, then, is that if we are to create a new education for our children, if we are to implement new goals, then all the participants in the task must be engaged in a continuous process of rethinking our own roles and purposes. Black people should be discussing, debating, questioning, contemplating this matter of the education we need.

In cities like Atlanta, where black students far outnumber whites, it is increasingly popular and right to say that we must organize to gain control of the educational system. But it is even more important for us to be thinking about what we shall do with that educational system once we really control it. (We might even think about what we are doing now with the educational sectors we do control, in our homes and our churches.) For we've certainly discovered by now that Blackness is no magic potion, automatically leading to life and truth and humane values. No, we've been educated in this system too long. So, like all other peoples, we must work incessantly, struggle continuously for transformation within ourselves and within our society, or we shall face stagnation, empty black rhetoric and death.

I think we have to choose life. That's what our foreparents were about. That's what Martin and Malcolm and the Movement were about. That's what our children must be about if they are to enter Mankind's great search for its own best humanity. So, wherever we have any control now, let's start creating the education and the society which will help to move us on our way. So what if all this has been a long time coming? Real change always comes that way. Our daddys and our mommas knew that. Why don't we?

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REJOICING TOO SOON?

What Richard Nixon seems to understand that the Senate Watergate Committee and the Democratic Party do not, is that there is no way to curb his dictatorial excesses except through the elementation of his power. It was Congressional power that stopped him bombing in Cambodia and only that same power can stop his march toward monarchy. Since the Congress appears to refus to play the only card available to it within the political system, Nixon has decided that they represent no real threat and hence his counter-attack in his speech of August 15. Oddly then, what appeared to us all to be his greatest defeat may yet turn out to be his greatest victory -- for if he can get away with Watergate, then "where will his hand be stayed?"

CARIBBEAN INDEPENDENCE

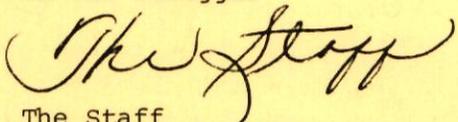
On July 10, 1973, yet another black colony became free of the bonds of British Empire. After 250 years, the Bahamas has made its own constitution, created its own seal, written its own national anthem and hoisted its new black, blue and yellow flag. The 700-island Bahamas received its independence in British-inherited pomp and ceremony under the leadership of Lynden Pindling, a man who gained popularity in the islands for reversing the trend of white expatriate employment in the tourist industry.

While the electorate danced in the streets, the Prime Minister entertained Sidney Poitier, Flip Wilson, Bill Cosby, Gloria Foster, Julian Bond and Howard University President James Cheek. Clearly wishing to reach out and join the trend of Blackness that young West Indians are leaning towards, yet wanting to retain the tourists and the 300 foreign banks in the country, Pindling is caught in that dilemma familiar to underdeveloped and newly independent countries. What can 700 scattered and beautiful islands with little arable soil do without depending on some larger power? He knows that the Commonwealth is just an anachronism now. (British Prime Minister Heath has already publicly demonstrated his indifference towards the mostly black members of the Commonwealth by arriving nonchalantly at the recent Ottawa conference, ignoring most of the delegates, and leaving early to enter his yacht in a regatta.) So Pindling is a pragmatist -- reassuring American investors of the stability of the Bahamas, while inviting Cuba's Foreign Minister Raúl Roa to the independence ceremonies.

We see this Cuban-Bahamian contact as a symbol of what is to come in Caribbean politics. The acceptance of Cuba by Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and now the Bahamas is, we hope, an indication of future Caribbean closeness and true independence. For unity holds the only solution to the individual poverty and limited resources of these small islands.

Although our *Monthly Report* is mailed free of charge, your contribution is essential not only to continue publishing in this way, but also to carry on our day-to-day IBW activities. We thank those who have made contributions and ask those who have not to help us survive the plague of the Republic!

In the struggle



The Staff
Institute of the Black World