

EDUCATION — --THE MEANS TO AN END

WHAT HAPPENED TO EDUCATION SINCE I GRADUATED IN 1969

We lost President **Kennedy**, the war in **Vietnam** had escalated, **Malcom X** had been gunned down, **Martin** had been taken away , **Bobby Kennedy** assassinated, **civil rights laws** are passed but without a proper dialogue, shift to the right remains firm, citizenship education had been removed from the curriculum.

Where was education? What was being taught in the elementary schools following these events? Had our commitment to education, our **democracy's back bone**, become so diluted it has sunk to the lowest common denominator.

Is it not **the educator** who is designated to **pass the baton and offer guidance** for interpretation. They are trained **as standard bearers** to secure our society to make Americans become one in “deed and creed”.

It was the late **60's early 70's** and you could feel the undercurrent of unanswerable questions, factions of thought, and change in behavior. Music, dress, conformity, hair style, and mores were all in a state of flux.

My class of 32 intellectually chosen 6th graders received all A's in the syllabus pertaining to the mantra that **“we are more alike than different”**. Indeed everyone became socially aware with the proper posters adorning the walls. The chapter could now be closed; secure that this next generation will help **cure the illness of prejudice and social injustice and bear fruit and flourish.**

I **however**, was not satisfied. **As a teacher my role is to construct an atmosphere for independent thought to surface freely while encouraging intellectual wisdom.** That is no easy task but one that has to be met.

The students are to reflect on what they learn and respond with a clear perspective of **what is right from what is wrong**, and what they'd consider bad from what they would come to regard as good.

I wanted to “push the envelope” and **INSTIGATE** a radically extreme concept. One that would be in **direct contrast to their conditioned** textbook **response**. I decided to alter the class environment creating an atmosphere of **REBELLION** and **DEFIANCE**.

I DECLARED MYSELF THE TRUE REPRESENTATIVE OF SUPERIORITY and **defined a new virtue and purity of mankind.**

They were free to ask questions but I prevailed in my resolute defining of the **NEW ORDER**. I held true to my committed ideals, my reasonings, my “**truths**” that were to become the MANTRA OF THE STAUS QUO.

The beginning of the SEPARATION

I affirmed our belief in the “**RECORDED HISTORY OF MANKIND**” that all those with **TRUE BLACK HAIR** are **SUPERIOR** in both **physical and mental** abilities, as well as purity of character.

I made clear the noticeable differences amongst us and urged the necessity to **SEGREGATE** those to a lesser station in life.

As a trusted and respected teacher I **morphed into a DICTATOR** who became the embodiment of the superior **DARK HAIRD ELITE**. I then divided the children into **SHADES** and those of TRUE BLACK HAIR. One could be black skinned and still be categorized as a shade if there should be any visible tinge (ie. reddish or brown mixed in).

For **ONE** week the punishments grew and each day the segregation process included more restrictions. All questions were answered using “**HISTORICAL FACTS** and **QUOTED PRECEDENT**”. I became more **AUTHORITARIAN** provoking them to the point of calling the shades inferior. **YES!** It was now said out loud.... The tension dramatically increased.

Days later the **SHADES** secretly organized a well planned **REBELLION** that completely overwhelmed both me and the black haired community. All “mindful” thought stopped, pure emotion took over and frustration turned into **uncontrollable anger**.

THE SHADES UNFOLDED THEIR SIGNS AND MARCHED IN FORCE

I took to the middle of the room. **I pounded on the desk** and SHOUTED ABOVE THE **CAOS** that they are doing the right thing but they must sit and discuss. You can hear me scream for order above their tirade pleading that their intellect must be forth coming to hold their emotions as we must talk. I used threats of expulsion and then passed around the microphone giving each one the time to vent their feelings.

WHAT TOOK ONE WEEK TO PROVOKE TOOK OVER TWO WEEKS TO RESOLVE AND INTERNALIZE.

The period of reconciliation as told by the children is filled with emotions that took days to temper and come to grips with the **reality of how delicate** their **minds are** and how important intellect is to maintain responsible thought.

Their dialogues are honest, **unabashed**, beautifully said with a **6th graders purity** of explanation. It was a social studies chapter that has always been swept under the carpet but needs to be discussed openly and internalized.

You bare witness to the upheaval of friendships from across the HAIR BARRIER. Their inappropriate feelings of inferiority and superiority. The tales of their frustrations leading to their unification and rebellion. Their coming to grips with just how fickle they really are.

That was over **45** years ago. I thought by this time a lesson like this would be passé. We were the boomers in charge of educating this new generation. We were the ones that marched for peace, spoke of civil rights, our songs were loud and clear to be heard on every mountain top.

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I beg the question again!! WHERE ARE WE NOW IN THE EDUCATION OF AMERICAN SOCIAL SCIENCES?

If this be the age of communication then let us seek ways to raise the standard of interaction with our children as **their insights become the new values.**

It is 2019 and the **tension of volatility remains. Prejudice is but an illness** that can be **treated through education.**

I therefore have created a **SCHOLARSHIP** requesting those in education to **begin the quest to subdue and eradicate the disease of prejudice.**

For those who would like to add to the **scholarship fund** there are **two** suggested offerings **\$25** and **\$50**. Your names will be added to the list showing support with a **“reality check.”**

My sincerest regards **to the future of education.**

Lew Widoff

P.S. This lesson took place in 1972 on Clark Air Base during the height of the Vietnam War. The Master's Thesis was completed in 1977.

I invite you to read the transcript as recorded straight from the mouths of the children or listen to the AUDIO TAPES THAT REMAIN UNCENSORED.