

A WORD OR 2

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“Black Nationalism is the only real solution for Black People in the United States.”

Education Summary

In the United States of America, education is first and foremost a financial undertaking. To a lesser extent it is a civil undertaking, but it is not a humanitarian one. It is normal for a person to get an education in order to improve his or her money making potential and learn the importance of following orders and obeying laws. From the individual's point of view, success is getting a good paying job with a big corporation. Success is getting a license to practice in a high paying profession, as a lawyer, doctor or business executive. In the United States of America, the educational process does not revolve around molding students into human beings who value principles like honesty, justice, equality and fair play. Therefore, in the United States of America, the first thing a revolutionary educator must do is reduce the importance of money making as an educational objective and indicator of success.

Black People in the United States of America have been systematically victimized by the status quo educational process. That process consists of a system of public and private schools that adhere to government guidelines in regard to curriculum, teacher qualifications, textbooks, teaching techniques, cultural and socio political perspectives, discipline and many more overt and subtle controllers. There are several mechanisms in place to assure that schools adhere to these guidelines, including what are called standardized tests. What I want to talk about, very briefly, are educational alternatives that are presently being practiced by some who are not satisfied with the government system, and what their advantages and shortcomings have been. It is important to note that, for various reasons, these alternatives are participated in by only a small but steadily increasing number of Black parents, teachers, educators and students.

I will divide the alternatives practiced by Blacks into four categories; Black centric charter schools,

Black centric privately financed schools, Black centric home schooling, and Black centric independent schooling. I will discuss Black centric charter schools first.

Black centric charter schools are licensed by the government and operate under fewer government restrictions than public schools, but must adhere to certain government standards. Black charter schools provide its administrators with more control over its staff, and that is very important because it has been demonstrated that white teachers don't care that much about Black students, tend to make negative assumptions about Black students based on subjective biases, and don't encourage Black students to excel. Black charter schools are able to hire teachers who care about Black students, treat them fairly, and provide them with a more intensive educational experience.

Secondly, a Black charter school can provide a cultural experience that is more appreciative of the Black experience. How much Black culture is emphasized at each school is determined by that school's administrators, but it has been demonstrated that a Black learning environment serves Black students better than a white environment. What students see around them and experience vicariously while they attend school and learn cannot be overemphasized.

Thirdly, charter school students are eligible to receive some educational monies from the government. The lack of adequate monies is one of the greatest obstacles facing Black educators. Children who attend charter schools are entitled to grants of money from the school system. This money follows the child to the school he or she attends and helps reduce the Black educator's financial shortcomings.

I will now discuss privately financed Black schools.

Privately financed Black schools are licensed by the government but do not receive any monies



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from government sources. They still have to adhere to certain educational standards established by the government, most noticeably in adhering to a core curriculum, but they are less controlled by the government than charter schools. That is one reason some privately run Black schools refer to themselves as independent Black schools. Like charter schools, privately financed Black schools can select teachers that care about Black students and provide an environment that appreciates the heritage of Black People. As a rule, Black private schools tend to emphasize Black culture more than Black charter schools, but how much Black culture is emphasized can vary greatly. The Black private schools that call themselves independent teach Black self determination more than charter schools do, but some Black private schools do not teach self determination at all.

Home schooling is the third alternative I will discuss. Home schooling is an alternative whereby parents teach their children at home; they do not send their children to a school. They must prove they are capable of teaching in order to get permission from the government to do home school, but do not need a teaching license or teaching degree. Like charter and private schools, home schoolers must stress certain core curriculum courses. Since it is more difficult to marshal home schools, home schoolers enjoy more liberties than charter and private schools, and the educational environment is the home environment. Given the choice between charter, private and home schooling, the opportunities for a balanced education rest more with home schoolers than the others.

The disadvantage of charter, private and home schoolers is that they are controlled because they have to adhere to certain standards set by the government. The schools are regularly monitored, inspectors are apt to visit the homes from time to time, and the curriculum of charter, private and home schools is apt to be reviewed to ensure that the core curriculum is adhered to. If shortcomings are discovered, home schoolers can be forced to enter their children into public, charter or private schools and charter and private schools can be decertified or lose their accreditation. Loss of accreditation is a serious blow to a private or charter school because a child who graduates from an unaccredited school would likely be rejected if they apply to enter an esteemed college or university. For that reason, most parents are not receptive to sending their children to a school that lacks accreditation.

In addition to these controls is probably the greatest control of all. All students, be they in public, private, charter or home schools, are required to take standardized tests. These tests revolve around core curriculum courses and perspectives, and the students are expected to pass these tests. If a school produces graduates who do not successfully complete the standardized, that school will come under scrutiny and be pressured to make changes. Therefore, even in charter, private and home schools, the education of students must produce results that satisfy government requirements.

Because of these controls, the possibility that charter schools, private schools and home schools will produce a revolutionary system of education is minimal. Producing graduates who will be successful within the established system remains the major accomplishment of each of them. When the established system is as negative as that of the United States, it is necessary to prepare students to do something other than succeed within the established boundaries. It is necessary to help students understand that making money is only a small part of the recipe for success.

That leads me to the schools that can in fact Black play a revolutionary role. These are the genuinely independent Black schools. They are few and far between. Unlike charter and private schools, independent Black schools are not licensed by the government, do not receive monies from the government and are not concerned about government standards. Black independent schools do not prepare their students to be successful within the status quo system. Instead, they prepare their students to be successful human beings who recognize the importance of self determination to the proper development of Black People.

Black independent schools do not revolve around certificates and degrees. They are more likely to have a guerilla or cyber structure than a traditional one. At present they are not accorded any status or considered legitimate by the government, employers, colleges or universities. That is one of the reasons why most students who study at Black independent schools also study in a public, charter or private school. If they were to stay away from the establishment school system entirely, they could be taken away from their parents, their parents could be prosecuted by the government, and the students would be denied employment even if they demonstrated that they were more capable and better qualified than those who attended the

traditional school system.

Independent Black educators, for the most part, are highly qualified but do not receive financial compensation. Often their qualifications are not deemed legitimate by the government, but that generally does not concern them. Even worse, they run the risk of being targeted by the government or its representatives, and they might be falsely labeled as a radical, criminal, con artist or agent of a terrorist organization. In the United States of America, independent Black educators are apt to be framed for a crime they did not commit or incarcerated on a bogus charge because their teachings are contrary to what is taught by schools that have to adhere to most of the government's guidelines.

At independent Black schools, understanding the political and economic landscape is critical to the educational experience. Independent Black educators realize that learning is important, but learning loses its value if students do not recognize the importance of applying what they learn based on what is just instead of what is profitable, convenient or enacted by law.

Independent Black schools have very few financial resources, but that is not the major hurdle they have to overcome. In the United States, the major problem confronting an independent Black educator or a revolutionary educator is the mindset of the people. People in the United States have been turned into consumers first and foremost. They are taught to spend money and obey authority figures. As a result, they do not have a high political, economic or social IQ.

I will conclude by making the following observations. In addition to reducing the emphasis on money making and redefining what it means to be successful, it is clear to me that educators and teachers need to make four adjustments before an educational process can be genuinely revolutionary. The first is that revolutionary teachers and educators need to discover how to make the educational experience more of an emotional investment for those who study. Our African forefathers learned long ago that the heart is more powerful than the mind. It is therefore only natural that the heart should play a leading role in our learning process and the fight for justice and equality. Students must be able to feel revolutionary thoughts and ideas, feel what justice and equality are, and feel how damaging racism, capitalism and colonialism are. A student who has been taught by revolutionary educators will have learned that the

fight for justice and equality is just as important to their personal well being as a good paying job.

We have been underplaying the role of emotions in the educational and revolutionary processes. If this applies nowhere else, it definitely applies to the United States of America, where the prevailing train of thought is that emotions can not be trusted when objective observation and analysis are required. Even if that were true, it would lose its validity as soon as one party in a dispute failed to abide by it. If the political, business and academic leaders ignore objective observation and analysis in order to take unfair advantage of the people, the people must be taught that they should ignore objective observation and analysis if that will help them free them of their abusers.

In the United States of America, if nowhere else, a revolutionary educator must make sure that the emotional commitments of the everyday person, particularly students, play a role in how they evaluate and respond to what they observe and experience.

Secondly, in order to make the educational process a revolutionary process, educators must establish a link between the education and a political-economic paradigm. To educate without identifying a specific political and economic preference is to leave students without a political and economic identity, without an alternative they can strive to realize. This means that, even if the student has been taught an African or revolutionary perspective as opposed to a Eurocentric or capitalist one, the student still will tend to act in a manner that is good for the status quo.

The revolutionary educator must understand that knowledge, in and of itself, has never overcome a reactionary system or created a new system. It is the responsibility of revolutionary teachers to create within the student the realization that they must do more than talk about an alternative political reality, they must create one.

Thirdly, educators need to do a better job of associating authority with morality. Very often everyday people do not take a stand against those in power because they have been taught to respect authority and authority figures. We need to make a point of teaching our students that authority figures should only be respected if they take a position that is just and morally correct. Our students must be taught that authority figures break the law any time they try to enact or enforce an immoral law.

And, number four, in addition to teaching the importance of struggling, we must also teach the

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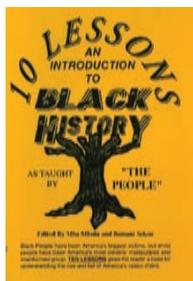
necessity of fighting; not one individual fighting against another individual, but one individual and groups of individuals fighting against a repressive system and representatives of a repressive system. We are not stating the case strong enough when we think in terms the struggle; that leaves things a bit too imprecise and fuzzy. Whereas a struggle can be very intense, it is very conceptual and makes identifying the enemy difficult. By contrast, when we fight we know perfectly well who we are fighting against because the enemy is specific and clearly identifiable. We need to fight more because that makes it clearer to our students who they should be fighting against.

Revolutionaries are good people, but it takes more than good people to make a revolution. It takes people who understand that ideology is one thing, practice is another; learning is one thing, acting in accordance with what one has learned is another. In most countries in the world today, a revolutionary educator will be despised by those who hold power. In order to make the educational experience a revolutionary experience, revolutionary educators will have to defy the powers that be and put their personal well being in at risk.

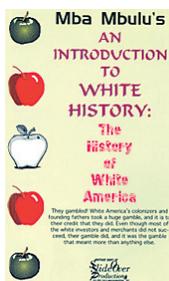


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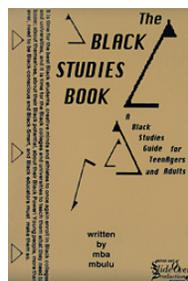
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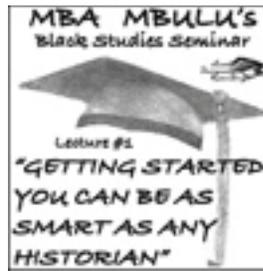


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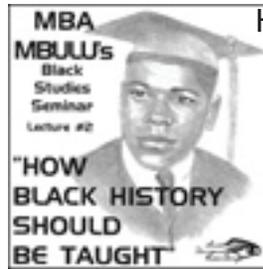


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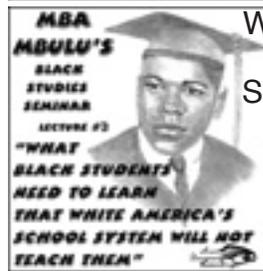
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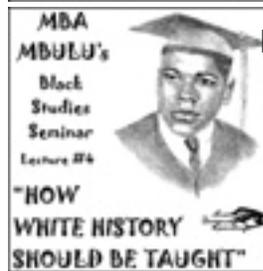
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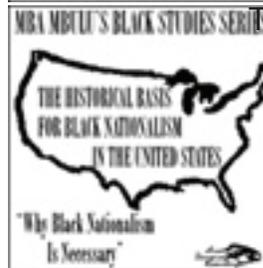
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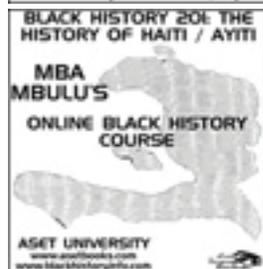
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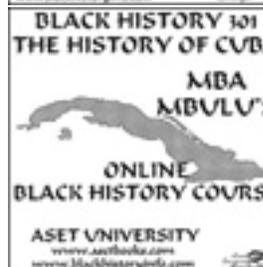
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