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Liberatory Education: Unmasking Apartheids Pedagogical Plunder The South African Liberation Struggle (1912 – 1990)

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Abstract: This study creates the possibility of providing a template for an interactive and participatory resource where activists, scholars and the general populous can converge into a dialogue highlighting the role of ordinary citizens in the formulation and conception of their own history and how this historicity has informed the development and trajectory of the South African (and other) National Liberation Struggle/s.

Introduction

A Man and a Lion traveled together through the forest. They soon began to boast of their respective superiority to each other in strength and prowess. As they were disputing, they passed a statue carved in stone, which represented “a Lion strangled by a Man”. The traveler pointed to it and said: “See there! How strong we are, and how we prevail over even the king of beasts”. The Lion replied: “This statue was made by one of you men. If we Lions knew how to erect statues, you would see the Man placed under the paw of the Lion” (Aesop’s Fables).

On April 22, 1845, the following excerpt appeared in a letter to Frederick Douglas from Wendell Phillips:

“My Dear Friend:

You remember the old fable of “The Man and the Lion,” where the lion complained that he should not be so misrepresented...I am glad the time has come when the “lions write history”. In a sense, I characterize my work as a situation of the lion reclaiming and assuming unequivocal inquiry and authorship of its own history - A history framed by Africentricism as intellectual tradition.

Background

This research project approached Liberatory Education within the context of the South African Liberation Struggle and explicitly embraced the positionality expressed in the Movement’s (1955) **Freedom Charter**. The Charter essentially was a part of the broad and encompassing architecture of the Liberation and Democratic Movement covering all areas and sectors of South African national life, mobilizing the efforts and energy of all into one great national effort. The educational sector was thus a key area in the Resistance Struggle as well as reconstruction planning. The mobilization of key stakeholders in confronting the might of the apartheid state during the most intense periods of resistance was central in rendering the apartheid state unworkable. The study examined three key elements, viz.: 1) the historical legacy and relevance of the *Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College* as a center of adult education and a site of Struggle conceived out of the goals and commitments of the South African Liberation Movement; 2) explored the degree to which an element of a people’s “alternative education” countered the constructs of mis-education, propaganda, “baasskaap” (white domination), inferiority and indoctrination that characterized the apartheid regime’s Bantu education policies, particularly, the significance of the role played by civil society through this process; and 3) while no experience can be transposed onto another situation with the expectation to have similar results, important lessons continue to be drawn from the South African Liberation Struggle. Its wider implications for the growing challenges in the development of adult education practice are

carefully considered.

The study further intends to contribute toward the discourse that critically engages and problematizes Eurocentric educative and theoretical models while fully embracing and not romanticizing the Africentric paradigm. The primary theme of the Africentric philosophical tradition is the idea that one's individual identity is never separable from one's socio-cultural environment. Philosophically then, the Africentric philosophical tradition stands in sharp contrast to the *rationalist and transcendentalist valorization of "pure intellectual activity"*. For example, former President of Tanzania, Julius K. Nyerere describes socialism as an attitude of mind rather than any adherence to standard political pattern. Since the dawn of time, Africentric philosophy has engaged ways in which intellectual inquiry and philosophy can be directed toward the *redemption* of society and thus the improvement in the quality of life for those it seeks to address.

Adding utility to the study is the possibility that it provides a template for an interactive and participatory resource where activists, scholars and the general populous can converge into a dialogue highlighting the role of ordinary citizens in the formulation and conception of their own history and how this historicity has informed the development and trajectory of this and other National Liberation Struggles. Thus, Liberatory Education, as is presented in this study, is an interpretative frame for a people's alternative educational quest that ultimately releases them from the deliberate infusion of racial oppression, religious bigotry and the hegemonic norms often embedded (overtly or covertly) in Eurocentric education schemes.

Research Rationale

This study is in many ways a conversation about identifying and applying Revolutionary Liberatory Theory and Struggle strategy as a means of reframing the discourse, particular to the integration of the Africentric Paradigm. There is a dualism at play here. While it espouses a Liberatory Education sample, viz. the South African Liberation Movement, it simultaneously proposes an agenda for changing the tone of the adult education discourse so that there is an unambiguous understanding of Africentricism, particularly in relation to its andragogical space and its sometimes contested and suppressed historical validity. To that end, this study proposes "Historical Rescue".

In addition to the Freedom Charter, four Struggle Texts: *Long Walk to Freedom; Part of My Soul Went with Him; Let My People Go* and *I Write What I Like* were entwined into the study so that they could continue to generate the kind of dialogue that critically engages and interrogates the systematic deficiencies and contemporary inequities various communities face from day to day. The relevance presented by these texts is at the core of contemporary South African radicalism. Not only do they serve as more than just historical and scholarly artifacts but in an era of globalization such as the one we have, they continue to serve as relics of naturalistic struggle. Their insights transcend the particulars of this time and might help us make sense of today's political and economic tensions. So, by serving as another site of Resistance and Struggle, these texts were implanted, in part, to serve as the evolving consciousness as well as the conscience of the profession. Thus, their overarching themes serve as a bases and gateway toward facilitating a multidimensional analysis confronting the historical fictions, perceived data deficiencies and institutional and institutionalized problems that continue to plague the field. These texts poignantly shatter those myths claiming "hallucinatory theoretical voids" which are often moaned about at conferences and practice "talk shops".

As critical observers in the analysis of education systems and policy, it is essential that research endeavors identify areas requiring continued engagement. To this end, this study

assists in an increased understanding of the broader context of adult education. It identifies weaknesses in the adult education practice, clarifies intersecting realities, points out obstacles to achieving a better world, while proposing and not prescribing suggestions for tackling them in future studies.

Historical Inquiry as Research Methodology

Changing political and socio cultural relations based on the ownership and control of information systems and communication raise important questions: What is history? Who are the agents of history? Who bears the promise and pain of history? To what end are ALL histories open to contestation? How do we begin to address issues of public amnesia?

Through a process of historical inquiry this study illuminates the contribution made by the South African Liberation Struggle toward the advancement of the field of Liberatory Adult Education.

Interpretive Models

The study draws from the following interpretive lenses so as to add texture and further harmonization to its tone: 1) Model of Africentric Curriculum Orientations, specifically the second orientation, viz., the “Selfethnic Liberatory and Empowerment Orientation”; 2) Formulation of Critical Reflection and “Considerations for White Adult Educators to racialize the adult education discourse”; and 3) Marxism - Leninism without which any socio political analysis of South Africa would be rendered incomplete.

Instrument of Evaluation

Any educational endeavor is evaluated by some or other measure. To that end, this study committed itself to two things: 1) It illuminates the scholastic genius of Kelly Miller’s (1914) Theory of Binocular Education; and 2) It exalts the basic *Afrikan Systematic Philosophical* tenants as enshrined in UBUNTU and the Nguzo Saba as its intellectual and spiritual anchor. My work therefore, is grounded in an explicit political stance and a clearly articulated value base.

Tentative Conclusions

This study does not gloss over issues. Pending a further analysis, the following are some of the salient issues that emerge from the study:

Internalized Colonialism and the Psychology of Liberation

What emerged out of the South African Higher Education Revolutionary experience exemplified the real difficulty that working bilaterally with even the most sincere Whites posed a moral dilemma for Black students, who were the last to want themselves labeled racist. Yet for Steve Biko and others, for example, the need for exclusive Black organizations was very clear, something Ben Khoapa referred to as the need for “regroupment”, (1973). Blacks were considered to be an interest group, like workers in a trade union or teachers fighting their own battles. The collective segregation and oppression based on skin color therefore provided an eminently logical basis for self-assertion and independent organization. Blacks would no longer allow themselves to be objectified in the negative image of “nonwhites” -- instead they would reconstruct themselves as Blacks, as self-defining initiators. Gone were the days when they appealed to Whites by seeking to convince them that Blacks too had civilized standards. The Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) was therefore, one of the most significant developments in South Africa between 1968 and 1976. This, not only because of the self-confident protest and rebellion that it unleashed but also “because of the questions it posed about the nature of oppositional politics in South Africa and its relation to the nature of South African society”, (Nolutshungu, 1982). Black Consciousness was about pressuring Whites through contesting the

self-definitions of their opponents (Adam, 1973). Accusations that this was a racist act were dismissed on the grounds that “one cannot be a racist unless he has the power to subjugate”, (Stubbs, 1988).

Later, when Black Consciousness developed a socialist tinge, cooperation with White liberals was rejected, not because of race or privilege, but because these would-be compatriots were seen as representing a bourgeois class enemy. Collaboration with representatives of racial capitalism would amount to betrayal. “Black Consciousness,” writes George Frederickson, an American historian, “had evolved from an effort to overcome a Black sense of inferiority through independent, nonviolent action into an explosive combination of race and class revolutionism”, (1990). Whatever the meaning of the latter phrase, Black Consciousness remained above all, an awareness-raising movement, rather than an organization that practiced revolutionary violence. What was distinctive about the BCM was “its originality in elaborating an ideology of hope rooted in a Theology of Liberation which emphasized the solidarity of the oppressed regardless of race”, (Fatton, 1986).

The Necessity of Armed Struggle

In the 1960's the African National Congress (ANC) was not alone in preaching violence as the only way out of the apartheid monsters grasp. Malcolm X, Mao Tse Tung and Che Guevara amongst others, also made it unequivocally clear that to solve the problems besetting mankind, there was an urgent need to eliminate completely the exploitation of the dependent countries by the developed capitalist countries. This loud call to arms explains the triumph of violence throughout Africa in the 1960's, 70's and 80's. In his “ballot or the bullet” speech (1970), Malcolm maintains that the strategy utilized by the oppressed has to be dictated by context (contextual analysis/treatment), specifically by the severity of the oppression and the character of the oppressor's response to legitimate demands for social justice. This is simply not a question of violence for the sake of violence, nor is violence advanced as a first response to the plight of the oppressed. Conversely, Mao affirms the inevitability of violence. He tells us that the focus of the problem is not the untroubled conscience of the oppressor but his superior might and weapons. Accordingly, it is extremely erroneous to believe that the imperialists, for example, will become Buddhas overnight if there's a dent in their conscience rather than their firepower. In sum, the oppressor will only lift his foot from the neck of the oppressed if there is a gun barrel, bigger than his own, aimed at his defenseless head. Furthermore, the eventual success of liberation forces in Africa lent credit to Frantz Fanon's dictum that “only violence pay”, (1961). Even the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the continental body formed in 1963 to free the continent from colonial rule recognized the need for violence by establishing a Liberation Committee. Its task was to use every means possible, including violence to end colonial rule. And this it did.

Thus, the ANC through its underground military wing “*Umkhonto we Sizwe*” (*Spear of the Nation*), had no choice but to resort to armed struggle. It asserted moral legitimacy for resorting to violence on the grounds of “necessary defense” and “just war”. In a 1963 statement, the ANC National Executive Committee stated that implicit in the language of a revolutionary armed struggle is the idea of a political struggle which includes the use of military force. It is important to emphasize this because the movement rejected all manifestations of militarism which separates an armed peoples struggle from its political context, (Strategy and Tactics of the ANC). From the very beginning, the ANC emphasized that armed resistance took place within a political context, and was one of a number of inter-related methods of struggle. From the outset, it conducted an intensive education campaign in which Cadres had to fully understand the basic

policy positions of the ANC, the first step in military training and that they were at all times guided by and subordinate to the political leadership of the ANC.

Paternalism

Official attitudes toward African education remain fraught with paternalism. In the editorial introduction to the 1972 annual *Black Viewpoint*, Biko, referred to the absence of black writers in the media: “So many things are said so often to us, about us and for us but very seldom by us”, (Biko, 1972). Biko deplored the images of dependency created for Blacks by the White press and expressed the need to deconstruct the implicit interpretive connotations, underlying values, attitudes, and interests of both the financial supporters and the readership of those newspapers. Articulated here is a general insight into conquest: that defeat for the losers has always meant more than physical subjugation. It means, as two historians of the Soviet Union have described in other circumstances, “that the conquerors write the history of the wars; the victors take possession of the past, establish their control over the collective memory”, (Heller & Nekrich, 1988). In short, the victors’ definition of reality becomes the dominant explanation.

Badge of ‘Shame’

The oppression of apartheid society was overt and blatant; all opposition had been silenced, and institutionalized racism flourished triumphant. Centuries of exclusionary practices led to what might be described as the “inferiorization” of Blacks. Blacks were portrayed as innately inferior, accustomed to dehumanized living, sexually promiscuous, intellectually limited, and prone to violence. Blackness symbolized evil, demise, chaos, corruption, and uncleanness, in contrast to whiteness, which equaled order, wealth, purity, goodness, cleanliness, and the epitome of beauty.

Inevitably, these racist stereotypes were at least partially internalized by South African Blacks, although their self-doubt never seemed to have matched that prevalent among Blacks elsewhere in the Diaspora, where the official proclamations of equality misled many Blacks into blaming themselves, rather than discrimination, for any miseries they experienced.

Undoubtedly, apartheid society produced a self-hatred. The limited range of opportunities open to Blacks gave rise to rationalizations in favor of the status quo, and self-doubts and self-accusations led some Blacks to accept their oppression as legitimate. In short, Blacks blamed themselves. In addition, the fragmentation of the three Black groups through differential privileges and incorporation led to a reinforcement of an intra-Black hierarchy.

The thin line between Religious Fervor and White Supremacy

Mirroring the experiences of the African Diaspora in the United States, apartheid education was also based on trusteeship and segregation. Black education was not supposed to drain government resources away from White education. Apartheid education merely force fed South Africans an educational diet which they could neither digest nor assimilate.

Any system of education, by whatever name it may pass, is seriously faulty unless it touches the vital needs of the people for whom it is intended, (Miller, 1899). What is often overlooked is the fact that two of the architects of Bantu education, Eiselen and Verwoerd, studied in Germany and had adopted many elements of National Socialist (Nazi) philosophy. The concept of racial “purity”, in particular, provided a rationalization for keeping Black education inferior. In addition, Afrikaners were generally members of the Dutch Reformed Church who followed the teachings of John Calvin. Calvinism, as we know, was characterized by a militant, religious authoritarianism. In Calvinist Christianity, the will of the ancient patriarchal God of the

Jews was rigidly imposed on its members. Dutch Calvinists believed that, by the twin doctrines of 'predestination' and 'election', they were the chosen race or people of God. Thus, the Dutch regarded South Africa as their 'Promised Land'. This special religious identity had to be preserved through separateness. Unfortunately, the Dutch Calvinist, unlike his reformed brothers in South Africa and elsewhere, misconstrued religious separateness with 'race' or 'color' separateness. Twentieth century Afrikaner churches were foremost in their support of Apartheid. Church leaders were at pains to find so-called 'Biblical' evidence for the 'sinful' practices of apartheid. Apart from many other doctrines, Calvin was scathing in his rebuke of unbelievers, the heathen, the infidels, who dared to occupy and defile all that was sacred to the Christian, (Du Pre, 1990).

Undoing Racism

As the often long, complex and arduous task of undoing racism sets in, Cornel West (1993) insists that we begin not with the problems of Black people but with the flaws of society – flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes. The manner in which we set up the terms for discussing racial issues shapes our perceptions and responses to these issues. As long as Black people are viewed as “them,” the burden falls on Blacks to do all the “cultural” and “moral” work necessary for healthy race relations. Of course, the prevailing racist ideology, which defines people of African descent as less than or subhuman, is simply a distortion within the realm of ideas based on real and systematic efforts to deny Black people their rightful status as human beings. Racism in itself is an alienation from the human condition, a violation of humanity that distorts both parties - oppressed and oppressor. More importantly, any racist act fundamentally alienates the oppressed from the freedom and liberty to which every human being has an undeniable right. This alienation can remain unacknowledged and unchallenged, or it can be recognized in such a way as to provide a theoretical impetus for a practical thrust in the direction of freedom and liberation.

I've learnt that both the strategy employed by the South African Liberation Movement as well as the sum of what seems to tentatively emerge from the analytical and interpretive frames, endorse a kind of Du Boisian view (1940), acknowledging that intelligent propaganda, legal enactment and reasoned action are key ingredients required to attack and disarm the conditioned reflexes of race-hate and change them. How else do we endeavor to reconceptualize that “vast” historical project and continue to reconstitute our role within the academy so that we arrive at the “scientific truth” we so ardently desire?

End Note

Any educative endeavor or reeducation project specific to the Psychology of Liberation must have, at the core of its curriculum, **Transcendence** as a conscious strategy. Upon completion, therefore, this study will include Transcendence as a key recommendation.

Oppression cannot be shocked out of a person, (Asante, 2003). Each person must be allowed to manage their own change so that the cognitive process is more than simply managing socio-cultural crisis or psychic collapse, but that it becomes one of spiritual cleansing and healing. This is indicative of creating new growth opportunities and spaces for others by constructing and communicating new concepts of power, love, relationships and ideology.