as Nigger

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same attacks as their counterparts of the 60's.

Another change since the time Farber's article first appeared is that the shallowness is probably more evident today. The major shortcoming in Farber's essay is that it fails to deal with the reasons *why* our educational system creates "niggers". Farber seems to see the built-in "authoritarianism" of the educational environment as a structural defect, an accident almost, and as something which students themselves could change.

The history of the student movement of the 60's, and subsequent analysis, has resulted in an improved awareness of the role of post-secondary education in our society. Given the authoritarian and class nature of our corporate society, the authoritarianism of our post-secondary system, in terms of the content of education and the mode of educating is quite understandable.

But with that understanding came the realization that the goal of the student movement can't be to eliminate "authoritarianism" from our institutions by means of political activity confined to that issue and those institutions. Because of the direct connection between the post-secondary system and the socio-economic-political system, it became apparent that struggle has to go beyond the campuses and include broader social groups than just students, and that the goal of "a free university in a free society" is conditional on the prior establishment of a "free society".





Then there's the infamous "code of dress". In some high schools, if your skirt looks too short, you have kneel before the principal, in a brief allegory of fellatio. If the hem doesn't reach the floor, you go home to change while he, presumably, jacks off. Boys in high can't be too sloppy and they can't be too sharp. You'd think the school board would be delighted to see all the spades trooping to school in point shoes, suits, ties and stingy brims. Uh-uh. They're too visible.

What school amounts to, then, for white and black kids alike, is a 12 year course in how to be slaves. What else could explain what I see in freshman class? They've got that slave mentality; obliging and ingratiating on the surface but hostile and resistent underneath. Like black slaves, students vary in their awareness of what's going on. Some recognize their own put-on for what it is and even let their rebellion break through to the surface now and then. Others - including most of the "good students" have been more deeply brainwashed. They swallow the bullshit with greedy mouths. They honest-to-God believe in grades, in busy work, in general education requirements. They're like those old grey-headed houseniggers you can still find in the South who don't see what all the fuss is about because Mr. Charlie "treats us real good".

THEY CHEAT A LOT

College entrance requirements tend to favor the Toms and screen out the rebels. Not entirely, of course. Some students at Cal State are expert con artists who know perfectly well what's happening. They want a degree and spend their years on the old plantation alternately laughing and cursing as they play the game. If their egos are strong enough, they cheat a lot. And of course, even the Toms are angry down deep somewhere. But it comes out in passive rather than active aggression. They're unexplainably thick-witted and subject to frequent spells of laziness. They misread simple questions. They spend their nights mechanically outlining history chapters while meticulously failing to comprehend a word of what's in front of them.

The saddest cases among both black slaves and student slaves are the ones who have so thoroughly introjected their masters' values that their anger is all turned inward. At Cal State these are the kids for whom every low grade is torture, who stammer and shake when they speak to a professor. They go through an emotional crisis every time they're called upon during class. You can recognize them easily at finals time. Their are festooned with fresh pimples; their bowels boil audibly across the room. If there really is a Last Judgment, then the parents and teachers who created these wrecks are going to burn in hell.

So students are niggers. It's time to find out why, and to do this, we have to take a long look at Mr. Charlie.

The teachers I know best are college professors. Outside the classroom and taken as a group, their most striking characteristic is timidity. They're short on balls. Just look at their working conditions. At a time when even migrant workers have begun to fight and win, college professors are still afraid to make more than a token effort to improve their pitiful economics status. In California state colleges the faculties are screwed regularly and vigorously by the governor and legislature and yet they still won't offer any solid resistance. They lie flat on their stomachs with the pants down, mumbling catch-phrases like "professional dignity" and "meaningful dialogue".

THEY COPPED OUT

Professors were no different when I was an undergraduate at UCLA during the McCarthy era; it was like a cattle stampede as they rushed to cop out. And in more recent years, I found that my being arrested in sit-ins brought from my colleagues not so much approval or dondemnation as open-mouthed astonishment: "You could lose your job!"

Now, of course, there's the Vietnamese war. It gets some opposition from a few teachers. Some support it. But a vast number of professors, who know perfectly well what's happening, are copping out again. And in the high schools you can forget it. Stillness reigns.

I'm not sure why teachers are so chickenshit. It could be that academic training itself forces a split between thought and action. It might also be that the tenured security of a teaching job attracts timid persons who are unsure of themselves and need weapons and other external trappings of authority.

At any rate, teachers are short on balls. And, as Judy Einstein has eloquently pointed out, the classroom offers an aritifical and protected environment in which they ca exercise their will to power.

Your neighbours may drive better car; gas station attendants my intimidate you, your wife may dominate you; the state legislature may shit on you; but in the classroom, by God, students do what you say or else. The grade is a hell of a weapon. It may not rest on your hip, potent and rigid like a cop's gun, but in the long run it's more powerful. At your personal whim - anything you choose - you can keep 35 students up for nights and have the "pleasure" of seeing them walk into the classroom pasty-faced and red-eyed carrying a sheaf of typewritten pages, with a title page, MLA footnotes and margins set at 15 and 91.

RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

The general timidity which causes teachers to make niggers of their students usually includes a more specific fear - fear of the students themselves. After all, students are different, just like black people. You stand exposed in front of them, knowing that their interests, their values and their language are different from yours. To make matters worse you may suspect that you yourself are not the most engaging person. What then can protect you from their ridicule and scorn? Respect for authority. That's what - it's the policeman's gun again. The white bwana's pith helmet. So you flaunt that authority. You wither whisperers with a murderous glance. You crush objectors with erudition and heavy irony. And, worst of all, you make your own attainments seem not accessible but awesomely remote. You conceal your