

ESMC Third Field Review - Public Comments:

Be Honest About the Maoist Origins of Ethnic Studies and the TWLF!

Why do the Ethnic Studies Departments on CSU and UC campuses have more true-believer, dedicated Marxists than one can find at the Central Party School in Beijing?

The answer has everything to do with the fact that CSU and UC campuses never had to live with the real-world consequences of their own Marxist theories. Instead, these academics/activists have been cushioned by an affluent, free market democratic society to which they nonetheless express hostile opposition.

It is extremely dishonest to omit the anti-intellectual, totalitarian and anti-free speech origins of the 1968-1969 activism that established the first Ethnic Studies departments.

Some undisputed facts about the origins of Ethnic Studies have to be included in the Model Curriculum to avoid legitimate charges that the model curriculum is nothing more than a platform for indoctrination. These include:

- The Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) student strike at San Francisco State began with a physical attack on the staff of that college's student newspaper. The Black Student Union and members of the Black Panthers carried out the sudden attack on students exercising their first amendment rights. Criminal charges were brought for the assault.
- The Black Panthers were an openly Maoist organization that drew inspiration and support from Marxism as practiced by the Chinese Communist Party during the height of the Cultural Revolution.
- A central demand of the TWLF was the reinstatement of George Murray to a teaching post at San Francisco State University. George Murray was the Black Panther Party's Minister of Education. He was a devotee of Chairman Mao's writings and was often quoted saying that "political power comes from the barrel of a gun" and "a revolution is not a dinner party".
- Having violently attacked the student newspaper, Murray later threatened violence against students and administrators.
- The Black Panthers as Maoists sought to divide society into opposing categories to foment unrest from which they could politically benefit. They actively engaged in tactics of intimidation throughout the strike.
- The TWLF strike actively disrupted the normal operations of the College halting education for students who wanted to continue their studies.
- One of the TWLF/BSU demands was that all black students wishing for admission in 1969 be admitted without respect to academic qualifications.
- Opposition to the Vietnam War during the strike was expressed through the wholesale embrace of Vietnamese Communist (and their Maoist ally's) war aims. Opposing views were shouted down and met with physical intimidation.

Maoism is one of the most destructive anti-intellectual political doctrines in world history:

- Mao closed all university campuses in China for roughly a decade and incited the students to form Red Guard Brigades that attacked, persecuted, tortured and murdered educators. The Red Guards' book burning program was at a scale that would have made Goebbels blush. The Red Guards also destroyed countless works of fine art, architecture and items of ancient religious and cultural significance. Anything and anyone that could be associated with "old culture" and "old learning" were subject to destruction and persecution.
- When universities in China reopened near the end of the Cultural Revolution, admissions were based on favored political class background rather than academic achievement. The slogan "Better Red Than Expert" was applied not only to college admissions but also to academic, professional and technical jobs.
- Roughly 10 million died in the Cultural Revolution, which followed 45 million dead in the Great Leap Forward and roughly 10 million dead in "land reform" from 1949-1957. (Please read Yang Jisheng and Frank Dikotter's histories)!
- All differing opinions, religious worship, economic freedoms and basic human rights were crushed under Maoist ideology, often through government and party sanctioned mob action.

Huey Newton, Black Panther Party Minister for Defense, described visiting China and meeting with senior communist officials at the height of the Cultural Revolution as providing him with a "sensation of freedom" and convinced him that "an oppressed people can be liberated". Never was a society less free and liberated than Cultural Revolution China.

The temptation is to dismiss the intellectual and tactical origins of the Ethnic Studies movement and its connection to the vast suffering of China under a violently enforced totalitarian conformity. It seems that an "It was the '60's, man!" attitude has prevailed.

But, if Ethnic Studies is to be taken seriously as an academic field one has to ask about reappraisals and reevaluations that have taken place in light of subsequent historical events and evidence. The Model Curriculum does not present any reappraisals or reevaluations of the totalitarian inspired origins of the TWLF. Instead, the prevailing Ethnic Studies ideology seems to be encased in late 1960's amber.

Advocacy and activism to transform communities are at the core of Ethnic Studies as an academic discipline. Concerned taxpayers and parents, such as myself, have a right to ask: What ideas will Ethnic Studies educators advocate to our children? What forms of activism will be promoted and to what transformational end?