

Teachers / Parents: Restorers of Black Social Organization
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It is hard to struggle today in a society that is anti-us;

in a society that stagnates our capacity to respond / to act (wage requirement);

in a society that is structured to live, survive and thrive on the ill health of the majority;

in a society that “seasons” / acculturates us in backward behavior and concept (power corrupts, “don’t rock the boat,” “do your thing,” rude to fight back, individual over collective, profit over people)

all of these causing confusion and lack of direction.

But it is possible to be less overwhelmed and frustrated and more energetic and committed to change, if we:

- be creative in and deepen and sharpen our analysis of this society and the world and how forces, institutions and people operate and the role we play in continuing the status quo. We need to read and study.
- reinforce ourselves, our history and future aspirations so as to counter destructive images on TV, in movies, on billboards, in print
- live our beliefs and values in relation to self, family, community and in all social relationships
- concretize and institutionalize our ideas, concepts and visions
- daily practice: do, act, and respond. Be a worker about the things you believe should be done.

This discussion is irrelevant if we cannot give a strong affirmative to the following two key concerns:

QUESTION 1: Do we love our people? Do we have a deep emotional commitment to what is best for our people? Do we truly love ourselves?

Without this vital love we cannot accomplish anything beneficial to advance ourselves or our people and will only add to the hurt and confusion that already exists among us.

QUESTION 2: Do we believe that we can win? Can we really make a difference? Are there solutions? Can we be problem-solvers creating and working through solutions?

Without this ardent belief in ultimate victory, what we will only become alienated, isolated and frustrated with life itself.

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So we must start with ourselves and bring to our discussion love for our people and belief that we will win. One of the key concerns of the Black Liberation Struggle today is Black female/ male relationships, the crisis in the Black family, and the raising of our children.

There is a vital need for we African-Americans to live out a new social order in all our social relationships. There is a vital need for us to create a social/political style of organizing ourselves and empowering ourselves.

Black social organization is a critical aspect of African-American life and it is being eroded and attacked daily by America's institutions, so-called professionals and intellectuals. The key activists in countering this attack are we parents and teachers.

There is crisis not only in the Black family, but also in our schools, our communities, our organizations and all other social groupings that stabilize the total structure of Black social organization. This crisis is for real and the solutions have more to do with us than with anyone or anything else.

Black social organization, as defined by Dr. Maulana Karenga, is "essentially the structure and functioning of the Black community as a whole, as well as the various units and processes which compare and define the Black community, that is, families, groups, institutions, relations, views, values, economics, politics, conflict and change, and so on."

With the whole organization of our people at stake, it is vital that we as teachers and parents transform this reality. We'd like to suggest a four-step plan for changing our social reality.

Step One: Belief in ourselves and our people rooted in our history of resistance, struggle and creativity.

Step Two: An understanding of the forces that are working against us.

Step Three: A willingness to struggle against our enemies both internal and external.

Step Four: A precise plan to insure that Black social organization is rescued, revitalized and reconstructed.

STEP ONE: Belief in Ourselves and Our People

We already talked about possessing a love for our people and a belief in the victory of our (Afrikan-American) struggle, but what is this love and belief rooted in?

1. a strong self-identity (answers the question: Who am I?)
a sense of self-worth (knowing that you are valuable and that you have a needed role to play)
self-love (otherwise, how will we be able to love others?)
2. the will and ability to make change
 - a. will – the power to make conscious, deliberate choices; a strong determination rooted in a deep emotional commitment; being zealous, ardent, passionate, earnest and intense about accomplishing goals
 - b. ability – knowledge and skill; experience and expertise; also involves rearranging our lives to enable us to be mobile and available for liberation work, that is, less dependent on job and other system-oriented responsibilities
3. daily practice of our beliefs
 - a. daily – every day/all day
 - b. practice – do/act, but not blindly; rooted in past practice and ideas that we have perceived, reflected upon, tested, tried, applied and finally evaluated
 - c. beliefs – values and ideas that we know are true, that are in tune with reality, and have benefited us in making decisions and coming up with solutions; if you are not sure about a belief, live it / practice it – if it holds true, keep it; if it doesn't, get rid of it

4. transforming reality

- a. transforming – changing for the better; beautifying; improving
- b. there is much to be done; key areas for transformation:
 - i. self (body / mind / soul / consciousness) – a lifetime process
 - ii. our homes (more about this later)
 - iii. our social relationships (this is what we can change now!)
- c. language is a powerful reality-shaper: we need new definitions, new thinking and a reshaping of how our lives are described

STEP TWO: Understanding the Forces

Four examples that show how directly we African-Americans are being attacked socially:

Example 1:

American society is divided and organized along class lines, racial lines and sexual lines. The ideology and social theory that rules academic and social circles is the ruling sex, race and class. Intellectuals and professionals institutionalize these theories and thus aid in maintaining the status quo rather than critically analyzing it. The political propaganda pushed and promoted in educational institutions and mass media are cornerstone principles such as the one we just mentioned: the pathological (that is, due to disease) and/or the pathogenic (that is, causing disease).

Example 2:

The Black family as a social unit is under constant attack so as to completely confiscate the minds and souls of our children. The so-called welfare system reinforces the breakdown of the Black family rather than its unity.

Example 3:

Family functions of raising (educating, socializing, inspiring, protecting, providing, respecting) our children have been taken over by government and/or big business.

Education = public schools and television

- public schools teach our children to be unconscious consumers and unconscious workers, and to accommodate and be abstract
- television is racist, amoral and physically detrimental

Health = big business and not about well-being of clients

- public hospitals across this country are noted for using our people as guinea pigs and offering extremely poor health and medical practices

Example 4:

This culture “seasons” us to accept our condition and the status quo.

We mentioned earlier why it is hard to struggle. It is hard because we are rewarded for individualistic behavior and we are fed fear and threats for struggling to make life better for ourselves and others.

We are talking about the restoration of Black social organization. The key restorers are we parents and teachers. We are sharing a four-step method that will better enable us to do Black liberation work.

STEP THREE: Willingness to Struggle Against Our Enemies

There are two levels of enemies:

- A person who harms us and/or blocks our self-determination and development
- Our own internal weaknesses

While external forces influence and shape us, it is our internal strengths and weaknesses that actually determine who we are, what we will be and what we will do.

Our enemies have three major characteristics: capitalist, racist and sexist. Whether we are talking about ourselves or our external enemies, most of our disunity and lack of commitment to ourselves is rooted in these three characteristics. When we manifest these, we call this internalized oppression.

What do we mean by capitalist?

- Those who own to live rather than work to live
- Those who espouse an economic system that profits from the suffering, poverty and surplus labor of others
- Those whose life goal is the accumulation of private property and capital
- Those who believe that one can anything (social relationships, knowledge, etc.)

What do we mean by racist?

- Those who want to entrench their race as the rulers of the world
- Those who oppose our, or any other people's, empowerment
- Those who continue to oppress and exploit Black people (or any other race) as a valid/valuable social ideal for their own race's advancement

What do we mean by sexist?

- Those who attempt to institutionalize the concept that men are made to dominate women
- Those who resist the necessary self-criticism and the overturning of false ideas regarding women and our ability to function as equals
- Those who allow the head of their sex organ rather than the head on their shoulders to lead their role in their social relationships with women

The greatest force we can use to challenge our enemies is action-guided IDEOLOGY – that is, political thought and progressive morals: a system (not a random collection) of beliefs and values which, when accepted and practiced, acts as a guideline for specific judgements and attaining goals.

Now we come to the hard part: putting into practice what we believe should rescue, revitalize and reconstruct Black social organization.

STEP FOUR: Reconstructing Our Homes, Schools and Communities

We want to share tangible solutions. Solutions we can apply now. Solutions that will reap results. Solutions that are within us, right at our fingertips.

Let us:

1. State the role of the home, school and community
2. Discuss their relationship in raising us
3. Offer a definite yet simple process for building community organization

Role of the Home

- to reflect our identity, our purpose and our direction
- to develop all aspects of the family members' personality: strong bodies, alert minds, advanced souls, and well-developed consciousness
- to strengthen us against alien environment and culture
- to reinforce our goals and aspirations
- to inspire us to continue fighting for our empowerment
- a place where we are in control and can create
- (in summary) base camps for inspiration, development and strength

***Décor

- How are our homes decorated?
- How many symbols of our struggle are on the walls?
- Are Black people, working people, women and children shown in positive progressive scenes in pictures and paintings?
- Are there famous quotes from our ancestors on the walls?
- The liberation flag?

***Body

- Are we aware of our diet and hygiene?
- Do we exercise?
- Do we open up our house for fresh air and sunshine?
- Do we take time to meditate and/or relax daily?

***Mind

- Do we have many books in our homes and of a wide variety to interest everyone?
- Are books and knowledge revered?
- Do our children see us reading?
- Is reading something we do as naturally as eating?
- Do we listen to Great Black Music and appreciate its essence?
- Are there special areas for each family member to work and study?

***Soul

- Do we teach our children a sense of what is right and what is wrong?
- Are we finding new ways to teach them self-reliance, orderliness, cleanliness, responsibility, purposefulness, patience, respect and collectivity?

***Consciousness

- Are we aware of aspects of our culture that should be symbolized and institutionalized?
- Do we discuss various current events and issues in a context of what is best for Black people?
- Do we teach our children to love Black people first?
- Do we constantly try to discipline/self-control our excesses and teach our children to aim for progressive perfection?

Our homes should be: places where we are in control; places where we can create; base camps for inspiration, development and strength.

Role of the School

First, let's get a picture of what is happening with the majority of our children today. It is in understanding this reality that we will commit ourselves to building and maintaining our own schools.

Present Role:

- does not educate, but trains/indoctrinates our children to be unconscious laborers and compulsive consumers

- our children are trained by public education and television, which is controlled by government and big business/major corporations
- no wonder our children are being taught:
 - individual economic advancement
 - backward ideas about themselves and people of the world
 - public education and television dulls their social sensitivity and responsibility and encourages social relationships that erode rather than development women and men
- ensures the survival of America, mainly by promoting what we call The Three Pillars of Enemy Power: racism, capitalism and sexism

We need to build and maintain schools:

- to extend what our homes initiate
- to develop academically excellent (high standards), socially advanced (value-bound) and politically progressive (ideology/worldview) students
- to provide vital education for our children
 - political education
 - education that empowers
 - education that is controlled by conscious African-Americans
 - that defines our needs and shapes our wants
 - in our own interests and
 - on issues of our own choosing
- to teach our children to become revolutionaries, leaders and workers for our people
- to teach our children the true nature of America, and that we must build a better, more beautiful alternative society
- to teach our children a commitment to both their individual self-development and our collective self-determination and self-reliance as a people
- a place where social living is learned in a formal, structured, collective environment

Our schools should be liberated zones, free from enemy control or influence, and should teach our children self-awareness and discipline.

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The most challenging aspect of Black social organization today is the community. Challenging because:

- 1) we allowed our enemies to convince us that our creativity in social living is pathological and pathogenic;
- 2) of our own internalized oppression;
- 3) we allowed our enemies to dismantle the historic relationship between Black women and Black men that has assured our very life today; and,
- 4) community is the vital link in the social organization chain. Without social organization, it is almost impossible to succeed in making life better in our homes, schools or any other social grouping we may have.

Before stating the role of the community, we need to define/re-define community. Language is a powerful reality-shaper. By using language to express our “new” thinking, we are actually beginning the first step toward transforming reality.

When we say community, we are talking about:

- 1) a group of socially and politically interrelated people
- 2) persons who share values and lifestyles
- 3) the collective group that has common interests, common goals and common commitment
- 4) the larger extended family that raises (that is, provides, protects, respects, educates, inspires and socializes) its members to a higher level of social unity and life
- 5) the major determiner, influencer and support in our lives
- 6) a way of getting and staying together / organized to attain liberation / getting together and fighting together so that change will happen
- 7) COMMUNITY is the most effective/efficient way to make our lives better because there is little we can do individually

Another word for community is multi-organizations. In our political state we must form organizations to meet our social and political needs. One organization, of course, will not be enough. We need specialized organizations to meet our needs. Specialized organizations can join as multi-organizations or communities.

Yes, we should be part of or busy about building an organization that will:

- maintain our collective development and movement as a people through struggle, daily work and action
- institutionalizes our ideology rather than individualize and personalize it
- insures collective work, responsibility and commitment for the unity, liberation and self-reliance of our people
- encourage creativity in rearranging reality to make life better and more beautiful for the defense and development of our people
- reinforce our belief in ourselves, the righteousness of our struggle and
- inspire us to struggle beyond belief, practicing our beliefs daily

Our organizations and communities are our power base that supports, influences and determines our social organization, and aids in our empowerment as a people.

The relationship of the home, school and community is vital to resolving the crisis in the Black family, and the restoration, revitalization and reconstruction of Black social organization.

Getting our homes together is less of a challenge than organizing schools and communities because:

- everyone lives in a home or household
- controllable environment: space, people, decision-making
- requires less planning, training and organizing
- schools must have organizations/communities to survive

But, each (that is, the home, the school and the community) is weakened by the absence or ineffectiveness of the other.

So, why can't we come together and work together to build and maintain schools?

- to collectively support/counsel each other in the midst of the pressures and stress of America?
- to run bookstores and information centers to make available the time, place and opportunity to read and study?

- to found performing companies that teach and reinforce Black thought and creativity in drama, dance, music, art and writing?
- to initiate and maintain printing companies producing posters, pamphlets, brochures, program books for forums, teach-ins, conferences and workshops?
- to found health clubs that can institute exercise, nutrition and other physical development activities in health centers?
- to start business cooperatives/collectives that can figure out ways to insure profit, maintenance development and usefulness?

These are the beginning steps if we ever will move on to more involved institutions of power in economy, politics, education and ideology. Some of us are busy working in these areas, but there is so much more that needs to be done.

The reason we have trouble coming together and working together is that we tend to focus on our disagreements rather than our agreements. We allow our differences to lead to divergence rather than diversity and mutual respect. We need to emphasize what we do agree on. Once we are clear on that, we can begin to concretize those agreed-upon ideas and we can live with diversity that will encourage creativity.

Reflecting on the essential role organizations/community plays in our lives and believing that the answers to our needs lie within ourselves, we can come up with solutions. We'd like to share a process for building organizations/community.

- It requires work and struggle.
- It requires creativity and testing.
- It is a place to begin...

Step One: REACHING OUT

As we move around daily on our jobs, while entertaining ourselves (movies, nightclubbing, concerts, and parties), exercising or sports, community meetings and programs, REACH OUT.... Keep conversations centered on sharing ideas on your interests and on finding out other people's interests. This takes skill, but with practice, we can develop our know-how. If there is potential for working with that person, jot down their name, address and phone number.

Step Two: STAY IN CONTACT

Call each other. Go out together. Spend time together. This is how we build trust.

Step Three: SOCIAL POLITICAL GATHERINGS

Give social gatherings that are purposeful, pulling together people who are concerned and conscious:

- Pot lucks that double as book parties
- Brunches that double as discussions of a shared article or an agreed-upon book

Step Four: COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Put on political educational programs which address some issue and allow you and others opportunities to do media work, organizing work, studying a topic and doing public speaking.

These community programs would have a twofold purpose:

1. To offer the community some needed information
2. To develop the organizing skills of the people putting it on

This is a risky step in the process because you can get frustrated and discouraged.

- Define what success is for the group
- Set feasible goals
- If the program succeeds, do another
- If the program does not succeed, find out why and then do another

These programs will aid in developing a group consciousness.

Step Five: COMMUNITY/ORGANIZATION

At this point what should begin to happen is a clarity of common values and common interests.

Now it may be possible to become an organization:

- defining who you are and what you will be about.
- creating an ideology
 - o that will reflect the group
 - o that will help make judgements
 - o that will support the “family bonds”
- struggling to put on programs and build institutions that will support the “political bonds”

Taken from Hoffman and from Harding in two recent magazine articles:

*We need to rebuild trust and seek truth.

*We need to deepen our understanding of the word responsibility – our capacity to respond/to act.

*We must view and value our individual self-development and our collective self-determination as one struggle – both must be worked on for the other to be actualized.

*We must find ways to enrich our powers of creativity and responsibility.

*We have to realize that all of this will take time, energy, reading, discussion, study, meditation and a fundamental commitment that we can succeed.

*We also need to pose new questions, think of new possibilities and have a new dissatisfaction with the old answers.

*We ourselves are the political leaders in the struggle for justice for our people.

*We are living in a word-drenched society and need less words and more visions that we concretize.

*Let’s start to think in terms of answers. We are problem-solvers rather than problem presenters.

*We need to develop an informed worldview – of how it operates and the part we play in it.

*Be a spark plug! Believe in yourself and your beliefs! It's contagious.

*Be conscious, capable and committed. Be a Black expert in all you do!

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We teachers and parents are the restorers of Black Social Organization. This is our role in our national liberation struggle.