A Cultural Revolution for Dartmouth?

Every fall at Brown University, newly-admitted minority students arrive on campus four days before their peers. They spend that time in Brown's "Third World Training Program," an intensive seminar focusing on issues of race, class, gender, assimilation, and identity. When the rest of the student body arrives on campus, they are forced to watch a film depicting a conversation between a black man and a white man. At the conclusion of the film, the white man breaks down crying from guilt.

By

Steven Menashi

Next, the insidious part: the entire freshman class is divided into small groups and assigned a "facilitator" to discuss with them class and the rest. Naturally, those who participated in the Third World Training Program are most outspoken; they have just completed four days of instruction in PGT orthodoxy. One Brown student reported that when he voiced his objections to the film, he was subjected to a barrage of rhetorical attacks from Third World Training Program graduates. The student kept his mouth shut for the remainder of freshman orientation—and much of the first semester.

In their recent book, The Shadow University: The Reproach of Liberty on America's Campuses, Professor Alan Charles Kors of the University of Pennsylvania and civil liberties attorney Harvey A. Silverglate have chronicled the recent phenomenon of campus speech codes to 1960s. Marxist philosophers Herbert Marcuse, et al., in Repressive Tolerance, wrote that free expression is actually "repressive." By his logic, the powerful and wealthy elite keeps the great bulk of the population "manipulated and indoctrinated," and that the "parasite, as their own, the oppression of their masters." In this environment, tolerance of all views serves to entrench the status quo power structure.

"Liberating tolerance," Marcuse wrote, would consist of "intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left." Assuming the "sacred liberalistic principle of equality for the other side," Marcuse advocated "the withdrawal of toleration of speech and assembly from groups and movements which promote aggressive policies, armament, chauvinism, discrimination on the grounds of race and religion, or which oppose the extension of public services, social security, medical care, etc." After all, Marcuse opined, "there are issues where...there is no other side in any more than a formalistic sense."

Kors and Silverglate observe that while Marcuse's logic has been rejected by the "real world," it has enveloped the academy. They point to the rise of speech codes on campuses. But Marcuse's ideas are even more pervasive in universities. Marxist logic has invaded the curricula and educational programs of American universities.

Certainly, Brown University administrators designed the Third World Training Program so that its graduates

would be prepared to rebuke dissenters—and so that the dissenters would be left unprepared in the same way. Like Marcuse, Brown fancyes itself partly to some objective truth and feels compelled, in order to "liberate" its students, to fully indoctrinate them in leftist multiculturalism.

"Unless the student learns to think in the opposite

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Unnecessarilv alterates some students (most noticeably students who follow Western religions). Moreover, the Marcusean view presupposes that the leftist view is "true" or "progressive" while Western thought is "regressive." Too often, students are encouraged to reject the critical of the Western traditions, but not to think critically about their professors' ideologies. "Re-education," after all, is the whole point for students to be properly educated they can't start defending the regressive position. Some students are indoctrinated; others feel alienated from class discussions.

Ironically enough, the goals of the modern left are now being best accomplished within the very structures they once tore down in 1964. At Columbia University, which still maintains a core curriculum grounded in the Western Canon, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's A Hundred Years of Solitude, Toni Morrison's Beloved, and Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Are Watching God are taught alongside The Iliad, Oedipus at Colonus, King Lear, Crime and Punishment.

They are all powerful texts that resonate, in some way, with the texts taught in the curriculum. By examining the classics of the Western tradition in workshops that are critical of tradition, students are encouraged to think critically about Western ideas, but competing ideas as well.

The Committee on Instruction is reviewing Dartmouth's academic requirements this year. They will consider a proposal by the Student Assembly for a distributive requirement in "Identity, Race, and Ethnicity." The proposal is currently more reasonable than similar requirements at other schools. Rather than requiring a specific course in multiculturalism, the SA proposes to allow students to

choose among several courses that examine the minority experience in America in a comparative context. According to Jorge Miranda '91, SA Vice-President for Academic Affairs, a course that would fulfill this requirement might examine the African-American experience in Harlem and compare it to the Latino experience in Los Angeles. One course currently at Dartmouth that would fulfill the requirement would be the American Studies program's "The Identity, Race and Ethnicity" course.

The proposal would not require students to take this course, but creating a new distributive requirement establishes the same dichotomy that such requirements have at other schools: the SA proposal is to combine the North American (NA) distributive requirement from the American Studies program, as well as the requirement from a single distribution category, RN.

The whole point, after all, is to prepare students to function in society and they can't do that without knowing the basics of their civilization. Surely, students should think critically about society, but "diversity" should mean diversity of thought, too.