

Pedagogy and Knowledge of Self – *The Blueprint for Counter Revolution*

Alongside the classic modernism of Joyce, the autobiographical journey taken in *Revolutionary Suicide* follows Newton engaging with selfhood through a mixture of philosophy, enlightenment, and socialism. In the tradition of radical Black leaders of the time, particularly Malcolm X whose influential biography was published in 1965, Newton was aware of the resonance of Black autobiography for a widespread process of self-actualisation. Like others, he knew that in the absence of Black voices in the media, a need for information on the Black experience could be addressed using personal reflection. As well as the confirmation of experience that is offered in the act of autobiography, the book is a cache of information set to encourage activism.¹ In this model, unexpected examples, as demonstrated by the inclusion of Joyce, set the context for revolutionary Black thought.

Other activists in the period also mention the opportunity of defining revolutionary paths by acknowledging how diverse literary influences formed an open approach to self-knowledge. Acknowledging this analogue process again underlines how the vernacular came to feature as these activists developed and delivered non-standardised agendas of protest. Newton's peer, the Black activist Angela Davis (1974, cited in Washburn, 2010, p. 59) describes avidly reading 'everything from Heidi to Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, and Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* to Frank Yerby's lurid novels.'

Diversity should be acknowledged accordingly. In context, a case does exist for a reading of James Joyce seeming to play a part influencing a Black radical agenda. In Newton's case, it represented lateral learning for knowledge of self, and this led to the revolutionary ten-point plan he drafted with the Panthers. Point five of the plan reads,

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.²

(Newton, 1980 cited in Baggins, 2001)

This text was primarily based on socialist and utopian writings processed through the Black experience and designed to be read by a universal audience. In this period, the revolution had

¹ The Muslim Elijah Muhammad's, *Message to the Blackman in America* (1965) was a core text in this period.

² [online] *Marxist History Archive*. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/workers/black-panthers/1966/10/15.htm> [accessed 19 April 2019]. There was also a required reading list offered by the Panthers, which included a mandatory reading of Mao's Little Red Book.

to take into account the need for the idea of change to feature a new educational environment that would operate outside established institutions.

The Blueprint for Counter Revolution (Stein and Miller, 1970) is a US publication from the period that is of relevance here in terms of how disparate situations can be brought together. Originally packaged as a manual combining maps and recommended directions for study including many radical sources, it is a significant example of an attempt to build on the ethos of the counterculture and to radicalise educational possibilities outside the institution. Published in one edition of 5,000 by the sociologist leaning countercultural educators Maurice Stein and Larry Miller in 1970, its rationale questioned how the radical nature of modernism became static after being embodied in the academy. The authors insisted that modernism's energies in an educational context should be continued by other means; outcomes would be led by open-ended radicalism. Teaching in the newly formed institution of Cal Arts in Los Angeles, Stein and Miller were assisted by Michael Aldrich, described by *Newsweek* magazine as 'A self-styled White Panther' who taught 'dope, peace and a group grope', a line adapted from a song by the protest New York band, The Fugs (Cronin, 2016, p. 48).

The manual offered a combination of countercultural resources as a prompt for new learning structures advocating an open curriculum for a new educational environment. A radical pedagogy was presented in a box that mixed the texts of philosophers, artists, and revolutionaries. On the cover, the names, Herbert Marcuse and Marshall McLuhan, were placed alongside the Black Panther, Eldridge Cleaver, and radical film maker, Jean-Luc Godard. In essence, this alternative curriculum was a curated library that offered itself as a one-stop resource comprised of classic, revolutionary, and contemporary printed works. It served to re-orientate the reader and encourage them to act upon unique set-ups of their design. By bringing their specific interests, predilections, pursuits, and biases to bear on social contexts, the student was supposed to bring original thought for progressive construct (Cronin, 2016). Due to its prominence in the youth arena, music was forefront in this as it was, according to the authors, 'the subject area most widely explored by students' (Cronin, 2016, p. 54).

physical presence in Black neighbourhoods by being wheat-pasted onto walls as its designer Emory Douglas and others were distributing it.



Figure 2. *Revolutionary Posters* order form, *The Black Panther*, 28 September 1968, Issue 28. Offset lithograph on paper. 44.5 x 29.

Source: Tate Modern (2017).³

³ Tate Modern (2017) *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*. Exhibition held at the Tate Modern London, 12 July to 22 October 2017 [Exhibition Catalogue] p. 64.

Douglas prioritised potent protest images and hacked affordable graphic technology in the commercial art production of the day to allow visuals to function as both posters and newspaper layouts.⁴ Significant posters designed by Douglas included in early issues of the *Black Panther* were black and white portraits of the leadership but also images that showed a proud Black presence in the wider community. Examples visualised for the everyday included images of a Black revolutionary, a Black studies student, and a Black mother and child.

The educational aspect of the presence of these images in space in the public arena intersects with the social strategies we associate with progressive graffiti culture familiar since the 1990s. The importance of generating conversations around civic expression and ownership of urban space physically on city walls remains as valid now as it was in 1967. In a conversation on graffiti identity and place with the profile urban artist Shepard Fairey, Craig R. Stecyk III, a leading figure of Los Angeles skate culture in the early 1970s, proposes that such posterage should be categorised as open commentary and, as such, reflects the first amendment of the American Constitution where, ‘the individual has a right to participate in open commentary, which takes place in commonly accessible area.’⁵ The ghetto itself is the gallery for the revolutionary artist’s drawings. As Douglas said in 1970 (p. 5), ‘By taking it out of the museum and putting it on the street with the people, the revolutionary artist educates the people as they go through their daily routine.’⁶

⁴ Pitchaya Sudbanthad (2008) *Biography of Emory Douglas* [online] AIGA The Professional Association for Design, 1 September 2008. Available at: <http://www.aiga.org/design-journeys-emory-douglas> [accessed 19 April 2019].

⁵ Shepard Fairey in conversation with Craig R Stecyk III. Jeffrey Deitch, Roger Castman, and Aron Rose (2012) *Art In The Streets*, Exhibition held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, July 2012.

⁶ Emory Douglas (1970) ‘On Revolutionary Art’, *The Black Panther*, 24 January.



Figure 3. Image of Angela Davis of the Black Panthers. Unauthorised poster campaign. Philadelphia, 1995.
Source: Wallacavage (2011).⁷

The success of the *Blueprint* included a significant input by the designer Marshal Henrichs, whose cover proclaimed ‘The Revolution Starts Here’.

Women, Hippies, youth groups, students and school children all question the institutions that have formed them, and try to erect their obverse: a collective commune to replace the bourgeois family; ‘free communications’ and counter-media; anti-universities – all attack major ideological institutions of this society. The assaults are specified, localised and relevant. They bring the contradictions out into the open.

(Mitchell, 1971, p. 32)

⁷ Adam Wallacavage (2011) *Art In The Streets*, Exhibition held at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, p. 192.

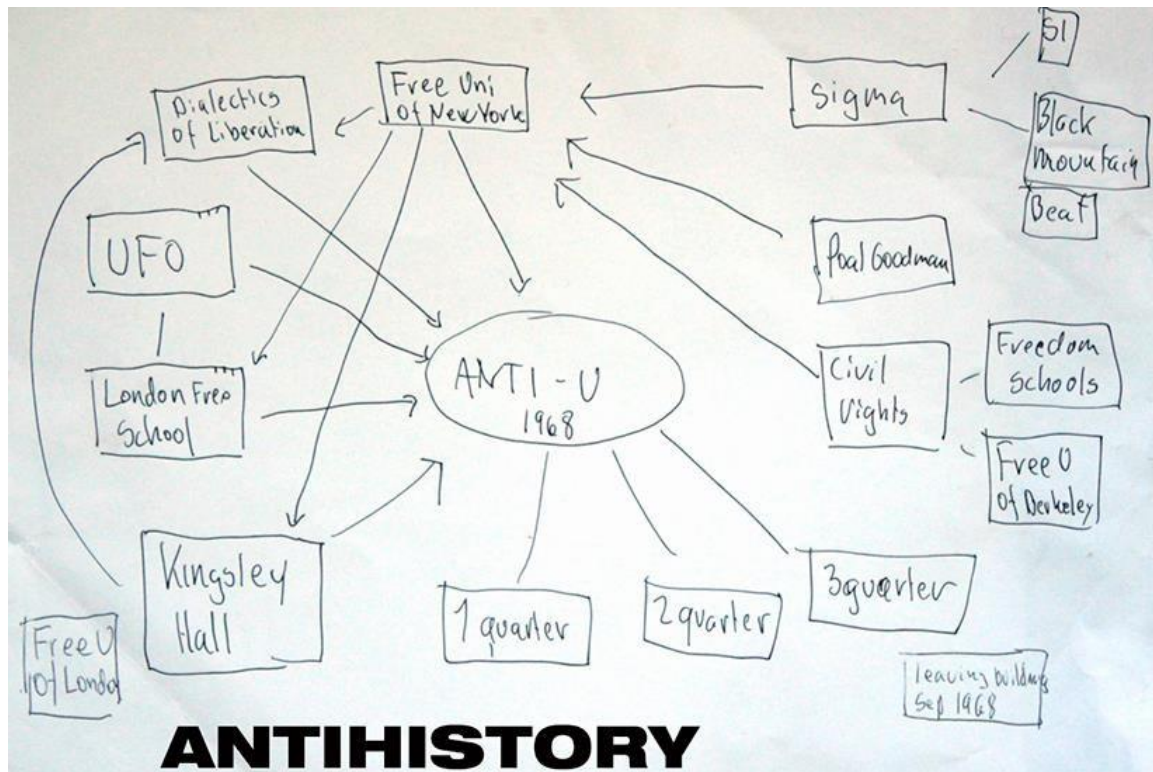


Figure 4. Image from the online review of the London Anti-University (1968).

Source: Jakobsen (n.d.).⁸

In an introductory text about the anti-university, an independent project set up in London in 1968, one of its instigators, the American psychiatrist, Dr Joseph Berke (cited in Jakobsen, n.d.) wrote,

The schools and universities are dead. They must be destroyed and rebuilt in our own terms. These sentiments reflect the growing belief of students and teachers all over Europe and the United States as they strip aside the academic pretensions from their ‘institutions of higher learning’ and see them for what they are – rigid training schools for the operation and expansion of reactionary government, business, and military bureaucracies.⁹

The desire to promote activist learning through alternate curriculums to function outside educational institutions had been a consistent theme in the alternative press since the mid-sixties. By 1973, this desire was still visible and was processed in pathways by an alternative press still committed to delivering the countercultural ethos. The network featured non-institutional learning alongside reportage and music-based subcultural coverage;¹⁰ all featured

⁸ Jakob Jakobsen (n.d.) *Antihistory.org* [online] available at: <<http://antihistory.org/post/19403968148/anti-u-faculty-first-quarter-february-april1968>> [accessed 19 April 2019].

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ This network also distributed *The Black Panther* newspaper worldwide.

as necessary components to be offered to a youth audience. In the introduction to the *Blueprint for Counter Revolution*, Stein and Miller mention that the subcultural process surrounding rock music was something that could have been expanded on in their manual, particularly regarding how radical ideas can be processed in the subculture that surrounds rock culture. Much of the *Blueprint* was assembled in Los Angeles, and the authors would have been aware of the activist role music and music events played in the counterculture of the West coast. By 1971, the authors were also aware of the decline in the communality of independent outposts once proposed by the counterculture as utopian hubs. This rendered the necessity of having alternative structures that embraced different formats to allow for alternative learning to circulate outside the institution. The concept of sharing experience while learning is key. This is activism as defined by Brian Holmes (1912, p. 79) as the

making-common of a desire and a resolve to change the forms of living, under uncertain conditions, without any guarantees. When this desire and resolve can be shared, the intensive assemblage of a social movement brings both the agonistic and the utopian dimension into daily experience.