Various Authors
NO! Against Adult Supremacy Vol. 3

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fore with the fitness of the caretaker. It has not been concerned with fundamental questions about the nature and limits of adult authority over children. It is the sense that the ways in which adults control children and make decisions for them are themselves a part of the mistreatment and oppression of children which is absent from the ideology, and is ignored by the government when it becomes involved." To paraphrase psychologist Richard Farson, we believe that we best protect youth by protecting their rights. That which undermines the right of young people to autonomy and self-determination (even under the misguided assumption that it is for their own welfare) demeans, oppresses, and endangers them. Child abuse and child protectionism are two sides of the same coin.

Youth rights supporters believe that youth don't usually need protection from themselves - they need protection from the social, political, legal, economic, and cultural forces that make them a subject class. We recognize that, as has been the case with people with disabilities, when youth need protection it is usually from the institutions such as schools, the family, and social services agencies that were ironically enough set up for the purpose of protecting them. This is because it is impossible to truly protect someone within a framework that denies them liberty, autonomy, and self-determination and thereby deprives them of the ability to meet their own needs and desires and to protect themselves.

Contents

those who claim to support human liberty and social justice rarely acknowledge this. I focus on youth because there is a more organized effort in our society to extend liberty and dignity to animals than to human children. I focus on youth because ageism is one of the greatest unexamined black marks on American society in the early twenty-first century. I focus on youth because if I don't few people will. And as long as all of these things are true I am a radical youth liberation supporter first, last, and always.

Youth Rights vs Child Protection

"Youth rights" can be difficult to pin down. The term itself is vague (although no vaguer than most terms used to describe more established social movements and philosophies). Youth rights is difficult to pin down primarily because there are a number of philosophies similar in some respects to youth rights that ultimately differ in critical enough ways to distinguish themselves from youth rights.

There is also a great deal of ideological diversity within the youth rights movement itself. Those differences may be highlighted in more depth elsewhere on [The Youth Rights Blog], but this post is intended to focus on the commonalities that make us youth rights supporters as opposed to something else. Youth rights is, like feminism, first and foremost a frame for viewing issues (in this case issues affecting young people). It emphasizes the prevalence of ageism as a key prejudice affecting the lives of young people. It problematizes institutions like the family and compulsory education which are central in the lives of youth. It calls into question assumptions that most thinkers about childhood, education, and the family take for granted about children's capacities. Most critically, youth rights thinkers tend to regard child abuse and child protectionism as two sides of the same coin.

In the words of philosopher Howard Cohen, "Child protection has been concerned with the quality of care of the child, and there-

economy is an increasingly oppressive force in the lives of more and more Americans, including those who would have once been known as middle class or even wealthy. And individuals of all demographic groups are oppressed by the military, medical, and prison industrial complexes as well as social mores which prize conformity over critical thinking and individuality. So why focus on youth?

I focus on youth because minors are the only group of individuals in our society that almost everyone - left or right, religious or secular, educated or ignorant, authoritarian or libertarian - is openly comfortable treating as a subject class. Youth are the only group of people in the United States for whom there is widespread consensus that segregating them from the rest of society, denying them legal rights, keeping them economically dependent, and turning arbitrary authority for them over to other people is not a necessary evil but the best possible way we individually and collectively can hope to relate to them. I focus on youth because the ills of sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, sizeism, rural oppression, poverty, and the military, medical, and prison industrial complexes are complicated and exacerbated by the status of minority. I focus on youth oppression because it is taken for granted and therefore invisible despite its ubiquity.

I focus on youth because the critical theoretical eye that has problematized the idea of biologically essentialist gender roles and racial identities has not problematized much of the ageist pseudoscience surrounding discourses about child development. I focus on youth because those who decry the warehousing of our elders and people with disabilities in nursing homes and assisted living facilities do not draw parallels with the warehousing of our youth in schools and other institutions. I focus on youth because most libertarians see no contradiction in talking about arbitrary and oppressive state power on the one hand and using the phrase "parents' rights" on the other. I talk about youth because a commitment to human liberty and social justice demands youth liberation and

Young and Oppressed, by Brian Dominick and Sara Zia Ebrahimi

While most common oppressions, such as sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, even speciesism, have been identified, widely acknowledged, thoroughly discussed and deeply analyzed, one oppression remains largely untouched. This fact is astonishing given that the group oppressed by this ignored injustice is one to which every adult human has once belonged. It is the one oppression with which all humans can identify, having suffered from it directly. It is not an oppression of a tiny minority to which few will ever belong. It is not the oppression of people who can be blamed themselves — by any stretch of the imagination — for being among the oppressed.

The oppressed group is that of young people — all young people.

As we will further demonstrate, adults and adult institutions in our society regularly commit acts of abuse, coercion, deprivation, indoctrination and invalidation against young people. From the moment of conception, young people are oppressed by their elders, entirely based on the difference in age, via a process known as "ageism."

As an oppression in need of acknowledgment and understanding, ageism is vital to oppression theory. Yet its overall framework has long been ignored. Sure, many an author has attempted to discuss the relationship between parent and child, teacher and pupil, detention center officer and detainee, etc. But when has it been stated that adult society, as an institution, oppresses the young regularly, consistently, and without exception? And when has it been stated further, in any detail, that this oppression is vital to, and largely born of, society's need for maintenance at such absurd, atrocious levels?

Let's face it: when adults look at oppression theory, they do so from a "grown up" perspective — one which sees right over the heads of even their own children. While the Left takes great pride

in its defense of women, the impoverished, racial and religious minorities, etc., it fails to realize that among the most thoroughly and widely oppressed are society's young. In our struggle for true liberation, we can leave no one behind — especially not those to whom the torch of revolution shall be passed. That is why ageism needs to be recognized.

Which brings us to why ageism is unique among oppressions: we are all directly its victims. It is not at all presumptuous to claim that the one oppressive dynamic of which we have all been on the receiving end is that of ageism. Indeed, we are all victims of every oppression acted out in our society. But none other than ageism claims each of us like a man carves a notch on his headboard, like a bombardier a stencil on his airplane, a capitalist a dollar in his bank account.

That is significant. When we step back and observe the social engineering performed by society's institutions upon its members, oppressions are plainly spotted in the tool chest of the dominant. Among those oppressions which help maintain the power positions of the wealthy white Christian heterosexual male elitist adult, ageism is universal. It is also, unlike the others which are interchangeable, completely indispensable to society's maintenance of individual apathy

In order to be a permanent victim of an unjust society's power structure — that is, accepting and not resisting one's own victimization — one must be engineered as a child to remain docile in the face of oppression. Certainly young people who are impoverished, female, African American, gay or otherwise in position to be oppressed, are conditioned for disempowerment. But what about white male children of upper class parents? Why do they show the same signs of submission and apathy when confronted by oppressors? Why do they, by and large, fail to expose and resist injustices, both in concept and in everyday encounters? Could it be because, as children, they undergo a rigorous process of indoctrination, both formal and informal, in schools, on television, at church, in the

reasoning capacities, along with the desire for freedom, so often found in our young before they are extensively engineered by the dominant forces of society, can be nurtured not by dictators or even leaders but by free association. Indeed, we are all born anarchists, defiant to irrational oppressions, but are then molded by social forces largely beyond our control.

What would happen if these dominant forces never were allowed to dig their claws into the minds and hearts of our young? Would children reach the conclusions that classism, sexism, authoritarianism, racism, etc. are rational and just on their own accord? Is it possible that they might never recognize that power should be inequitably distributed among individuals and groups?

Might we find that the corruption of adults begins with the corruption of children, a reciprocal and indeed cyclical process? And might we see that indeed the nurturing process, delicate yet vital, is in dire need of revolution?

Youth Rights 101, by Kathleen Nicole O'Neal

Why Youth?

Some people may wonder why I focus so disproportionately on youth issues. After all, young people are not the only people oppressed, either collectively or individually, in our society. Structural forces and individual prejudices often conspire to keep women and people of color from being as successful as many white males. Heterosexism is still inscribed into our nation's law codes and animates the belief systems of many people. The situation of disabled and elderly Americans bears many similarities to that of youth (albeit with some key differences). People of size are increasingly scapegoated under the guise of a "war on obesity" that conveniently doubles as a war on them. Rural people are oppressed both by the condescending attitudes of non-rural people and the very geographic realities of rurality. The poor

Young people consistently form cliques at school, practicing exclusion and limiting their own exposure to variety. They invalidate and even abuse each other verbally, physically and sexually based on racist, classist and sexist assumptions. Of late, it has also been noted that the most recent generation of young people insists on invalidating achievers in the classroom. Low scholastic achievement is often rewarded with acceptance while high achievement is penalized by exclusion. All these activities and many more are carried out solely based on association by age.

Now That We Know…

This indictment of adult society, the first part to a manifesto of sorts, is by no means complete. Many volumes could (and hopefully will) be written on these matters. There is much more to discuss and investigate regarding ageism in theory and practice. For now, identifying the most glaring applications and most basic theories will have to suffice.

Of course, this essay wouldn't have been written had its authors not honestly believed there was hope for change and progress. If we can agree to acknowledge the existence of ageism as a far-reaching, powerful and thus significant oppression, we can perhaps initiate discourse on the liberation of young people, an act equal in importance to the liberation of all other oppressed groups.

Let's face it: young people are the future; they always have been. It is the values and perceptions instilled in young people which will carry over into adult life and dominate social activity therein.

One idea is that adults should instill as few values and perspectives as possible, thus freeing the "nature of youth" to develop on its own in a free manner of socialization, in the absence of indoctrination and social engineering. Already the topic of discussion and debate in certain, limited forums, this idea has become known as "youthism," whereby the free-spirits, open minds, curiosities and

home? Could it be because they have been abused and coerced by legal systems, parents, teachers, police? Because they have been invalidated by overpowering institutions and individuals whose purpose it has been to teach them of their "incompetence," their "worthlessness"? Could they be so as a result of having been deprived of their right to self management, of simple needs, indeed of love and understanding and support? Could it be, at last, because throughout childhood and adolescence they have been treated as adult society has seen fit for its young — ignored, conditioned, neglected, brutalized, violated and compelled?

Then, as adults, they reproduce their own suffering, this time inflicting it upon those the society of which they are now full members has traditionally oppressed. As adults, they are offered power over — if no one else — the people on whose behalf few stand: their children, their younger neighbors, their adolescent customers, their voiceless constituents.

It is clear that ageism is not just another oppression. In some cases (few would disagree) age difference, aside from being the basis for oppression, is a justification for special treatment. Surely children require guidance as they learn for themselves about social realities. In many cases, clear bounds need setting by adults, for the child's safety and indeed for her or his benefit. But how much more often than not does the relationship between adult and young person — between adult institution and the young population — become counterproductive, destructive, outright violent? Why are these inequities not exposed, denounced and struggled against by those of us who regularly fight other oppressions?

These issues, equal in importance to the full examination of ageism itself, are in dire need of discourse. With that in mind, we hope to present, from our own biased perspective as young people, what we see as the issue: What is ageism? How does it manifest itself in practice? What are its results?

Political Ageism

Few oppressions are more obvious than those perpetrated by governments. From laws to bureaucracies, the manipulation factor in state systems is staggering. The most blatant mechanism employed by government towards the oppression of its subjects is certainly the legal system. Consistently, it is laws made specifically against young people which most flagrantly display the state's contempt for their youthful attitudes; mindsets which by their nature contradict prevailing social values and norms. After all, young people are one of the only oppressed groups which the US government not only discriminates against in an official capacity, but towards whom it does so unabashedly and without apology. The list of things the state will not allow people to do based on their age is seemingly endless. At the same time, the rights and "equality" of most other oppressed groups are lauded and, at least to some extent, protected by government agencies.

There is little validity to the argument that young people, due to their inexperience, need to be protected from themselves by agents of the state. It is the government's own interests which require defense from young people's natural lack of subordination and submission. Hence, authoritarian structures are forced to protect themselves by containing the expression of free thought and activity by children and adolescents. As a sort of insurance policy, the government stunts self-confidence, individuality and creativity at the earliest age possible, knowing full well that its resurgence in adult life will then be unlikely. People must be trained for submission when they are most vulnerable to impression, which happens to be when they are young.

The government displays its contempt for young people's ability to determine the courses of their own lives by trying to restrict their access to everything from R-rated movies and ear piercing to alcohol and tobacco. Conflicting with the concurrent pressures introduced by the market economy — which encourage participation

widespread. But it must be stated that this is an oppression founded strictly on age differences. By understanding pedophilia, we can begin to recognize the extent to which adult dominance over the young actually reaches. More importantly, knowing how common such abuse actually is, we can realize how common and widespread less extreme and less apparent abuses must be.

All forms of child abuse must be recognized as something aside from ordinary violence. Besides being the victim's first introduction to cruelty, abuse causes children to inherit a pattern of violence, prompting them to act similarly towards their peers and, in adulthood, towards their own children. Even more directly than most oppressive activities, child abuse has been clinically proven to be self-perpetuating.

Anyone who believes parents and guardians possess legitimate authority over "their" children must either overlook the severity and frequency of these violations or deem them acceptable. The only remedy for this dynamic, which has likely existed throughout human history, is the elimination of parental authority. The role of parent as dictator must be replaced by nurturer. With humans, nurturing consists mainly of oversight, with guidance and control limited to a minimum.

All known social oppressions can be shown to possess a phenomenal characteristic known as "internalized oppression" whereby members of the oppressed group actually oppress each other in unwitting service to their interested oppressors. The internal self-destructive activities of the black community are among the most obvious examples of this. Also, the self-perpetuation of dependent and submissive activity among women, through defining each other by their relationships to men, is yet another example of internalized oppression.

Among young people, there are several such examples. Segregated almost entirely from valuable interaction with adults, much socialization takes place strictly between and among groups of children — yet they mirror relationships indicative of adult society.

abandoning any potential for independence. Similarly, a male who constantly witnesses his father's dominance, coercion and abuse of his mother will probably espouse an overpowerful role in future relationships with women. Role imposition is a type of informal indoctrination.

While the gender roles delegated to young people have been exposed and explored by feminists quite sufficiently, it must be noted that gender assimilation is a process controlled by parents and other adults, thus making them ageist as well as sexist. Unlike adult women who fall pray to sexism, the sex roles of girls are directly dictated by adults, those who society acknowledges universally as having legitimate authority over young people.

Young people also experience ageism when parents and other adults inflict feelings of guilt, shame and worthlessness, causing psychological dysfunction, an indisputable example of invalidation. Using guilt and manipulation as tools, parents coerce young people into performing tasks which they themselves lack the desire to carry out. When children are not acting on the dictates of their parents, they are often called "unhelpful" or "no good," regardless of the fact that they are seldom offered or even shown the benefits of equitable participation in the function of family.

Parents are hardly seen as friends by their children, but rather as figures of authority. This is a loss for both child and parent, depriving them of a potentially wonderful and equally rewarding relationship based on trust, openness and companionship. Instead of this ideal, mistrust of adults is learned as a defense mechanism (often a necessary one). Coupled with the "generation gap" (which is not at all inherent to familial relationships, but is unique to those in which parents deny their children respect, camaraderie and understanding), the actual basis of parent-child relationship activity is oppression-ridden.

Sexual abuse between adults and children, during which the elder takes advantage of the young person's impressionability and lack of understanding, as well as physical size, are acknowledged as

in "risqué" entertainment, exotic fashion and drug usage — the imposition of such limitations is counterproductive at best, probably even devastating. The mixed messages conveyed by the two wings of the establishment that possess the farthest-reaching influence pit (commercially manufactured) impulse against (state-imposed) inhibitions, and the confused results are ruinous.

Another outstanding and pressingly current example of legal ageism is the rash of curfew laws which is presently sweeping the nation. While crime rates hover at mid-1970s levels, violent incidences have become increasingly concentrated among the young community, particularly in urban areas. Rather than take an approach which could be labeled even slightly rational, many local governments have decided to pass new laws and further restrict the rights of young people. Though laws will never keep young people indoors, they will surely keep them out of places where they can safely meet and recreate. Meanwhile, the boredom, frustration and despair felt by many young people is only fueled and aggravated. This is a clear example of coercive power used to deprive young people of the freedom to act as they choose, regardless of whether harm would be done to themselves or someone else (the usual accepted criteria for determining legislation).

As few clear-minded folks would dispute, modern states have managed with alarming success to master the art of indoctrination. Without using severe and boisterous methods of brainwashing, the government has achieved the relatively efficient production of numbed minds, conditioned for obedience, servitude and, in turn, the perpetuation and magnification of state power. Not only does the state define the curricula which will be imposed upon any student whose parents cannot afford private school (and upon many whose can), but it forces them to attend classes in Eurocentric barbarism, as dictated by powerful adults who define education standards. Those mental factories which the government does not control it at least regulates.

In the classroom, the student learns, above all else, that learning is boring, degrading and difficult. Based on quantitative systems of instruction, even the most progressive mainstream schools educate young people of little else than submission, assimilation and conformity. It's not what you learn that counts, it's how much you can prove you know. More still, as education standards and expectations regress, the rule is who knows more, not if anyone knows anything of relevance.

The enforced process of hand-raising, through which the student demonstrates her or his subservience to the teacher, is a classic display of the demeaning relationship promoted by formal scholastic activity. The teacher, at the same time, is an adult who is chosen unpluralistically and given ultimate authority — not only in the sense of "expertise" but also of "power." That is, the class is being run by someone who is vastly different in age from the students, and was chosen not because of leadership competence but knowledge alone; charisma, compatibility and attitude being irrelevant.

While the teacher is dictating many rules and little important knowledge, the students are being stratified and segregated. Young people begin the process of discrimination by gender, class, race, etc., which reflects the attitudes of parents and teachers, before they are in grade school. "Boys are good at math and science, girls needn't so much as try their best." "Black students do not possess the capacity to learn as well as whites, so we'd might as well spend less energy trying to teach them." The pattern is irrational, but it has been consistent and unwavering for centuries.

Although experimentation with a progressive concept known as "inclusive education" is now being undertaken around the country, the separation of students according to their perceived ability to learn is still dominant throughout most US schools. Elites are formed of "gifted" students who display a propensity to learn at a faster pace, while "normal" students are herded into overcrowded classrooms across the way from those tagged

litically correct normalcy, it is our assertion that single parents or lesbian/ gay couples often conceive or adopt children in order to make social statements. That isn't to imply that such people are incapable of being suitable parents, but rather that human life should not be produced for use as political or social protest signs.

Of course, oppression is not predetermined in all cases, and the reasons for which children are born are not all for the advantage of the parent at the expense of the child. But there is a significant relationship between parents' intentions, which are often just to appease cultural expectations of adulthood, and the methods by which families socialize their offspring.

Another component of parenthood which is taken for granted but as such is no less oppressive is the notion that children are wards of parents or guardians. "Ownership" of children is determined simply by their physical origin or by legal documentation which grants control to otherwise unrelated adults. Certainly children need protection, and to some extent guidance, but that this should be dictated by one or two or even three individuals is preposterous. Pluralism is so often lacking in familial relationships, but this is rarely connected to the narrow social and personal characteristics of those raised in such an unpluralistic manner. Again, we clearly see tradition conflicting with the actual needs of young people, depriving them of diversity for the sake of parental self-satisfaction via the idea that children exist as personal property.

In the debate over "family values," where is the voice of children, the very people most affected?

It is in the context of family that gender and other roles are first accumulated. Children acquire their sense of self in large part by mimicking the actions of their parents, the rationalization coming much later in life. Hence, when parents exhibit roles of dominance and submission based on sex, their children will adopt similar roles as they grow socially. For instance, a young female who repeatedly observes her mother depending on her father financially, emotionally, etc., is likely to become dependent on males herself,

are determining factors of community identification is a ridiculous and damaging injustice which must be further addressed.

Interpersonal Ageism

It is in the kinship sphere of social activity that interpersonal relations are formed. This sphere also houses the most direct oppressions of young people, and it is where internalized oppression among and between young people primarily takes place. Inside personal relationships, the young person contends not only with oppressions from adult family members and friends but also siblings and peers.

The most obvious forms of ageism are perhaps those perpetrated by parents and legal guardians. Not unlike a corporation or bureaucracy, the family unit is a top-down hierarchical institution. Parents play the roles of absolute managers in a cell where level of authority is determined by seniority

Before we investigate the relationship between parent and child, let us expose a few notions which set the stage for active oppressions but are rarely identified as oppressions themselves.

First, we must take into account the reasons for which parents typically have children. While the reasons themselves do not necessarily ensure oppression during the actual life of a young person, they potentially promote oppressive attitudes and behavior towards children by their parents. In this age, parents seldom produce children for economic reasons (though this is not unheard of), but child-bearing is nonetheless often carried out largely for the selfish benefit of the parents themselves.

All too commonly, children are a source of entertainment, toys with which "mature" adults can play and still be respected by their peers. Children are also used by parents as cohesion between themselves while their own partnership is elsewise failing. Parents also intend to live vicariously through their children, having their offspring achieve things they never could. And at risk of defying po-

"disabled." Do these distinctions haunt the adult lives of students grouped as such because they were originally accurate or because they became self-fulfilled prophecies during childhood and adolescence? Furthermore, in case the labeling system does not sufficiently stabilize a young person's self-image, requiring that his or her class ranking be included on every high school transcript does the trick.

Formal education, whether it be collegiate or secondary, is wonderful practice for one experience which can be looked forward to by prospective adults: routinization. School teaches people to fall into line, obey rules and, most of all, to qualify. Whether one learns anything or not, one had better pass the final; whether one works a fulfilling job as an adult, one had better bring home a paycheck.

Other government institutions practice ageism as well. There is little argument on the Left that the US military — any military, for that matter — uses severe forms of indoctrination, coercion and invalidation, whose effects overshadow even those of the most thorough scholastic "education." The recruitment practices of the armed forces are diabolical in their use of propaganda and outright lies, as well as their focus on young people, not so much for the acquisition of strong, young bodies as impressionable minds. Save for professional criminality, the military is often seen by America's poor to be the only way out of poverty, a fact illustrated by disproportionate numbers of Latino, Afro-American and working class recruits. And again, the military complex instills the same biases and psychological effects as the education system, only with much greater severity. The broad effects of military service on the individual young person, not to mention whoever s/he is manipulated or forced or bribed into killing, are clear and disastrous.

As our world becomes more and more technologically advanced, it has become increasingly difficult for individuals to maintain any sense of individuality. As humanity is herded and oppressed as a whole, it is the young who receive the most trampling. As if the isolation felt by adults is not enough, their needs

are often fulfilled by the state (over which adults at least have some power) far prior to the needs of their children. We live in a system where even those adults whose voices are allowed hearing receive very little from the power structure which holds them down. So how can we (especially those of us on the Left) have gone so long without recognizing that young people, whose voices are seldom heard if ever, are even more severely oppressed by that same, inherently violent system of authority and subordination?

Economic Ageism

Anytime an economic apparatus exists which is not specifically designed for equity it will oppress certain groups in society. Throughout the world one of the groups most heavily oppressed by nearly all economic systems is that of young people. In relation to the work force, young people are violated in several ways. At times they are excluded from the workplace; at other times they are forced against their will to become a part of it. Moreover, at the other end of the assembly line, primarily in the market system, capital* exploits the paradoxical combination of young people's youthful open-mindedness and their desire to assimilate.

In a system of centralized capital, whereby wealth and power are manipulated by interests other than those of society as a whole, the individual's needs are automatically excluded from the concern of those coordinating the flow of capital. Whether an economy is public but coordinatorist or "free" but private, young people constitute the last group to have a say in the management process (again regardless of how little voice most adults may have). Therefore, as they are ignored by the rule makers, the economic activity of young people is drastically restricted, perhaps more so than any other oppressed group.

Where politics collide with economics, the state has substantial influence over the economic freedom of young people. The system of compulsory education, whereby young people are forced

cision is among the most painful acts any human will likely experience, and the psychological trauma, not to mention physical mutilation, has deep-rooted effects both psychologically and socially. Indeed, those circumcised will later be offered positions as oppressors when they might chastise a fellow young male's uncircumcised penis in a high school locker room. Circumcision performed for social reasons is a form of child abuse, based on cultural standards.

Many community-based programs, in which young people's participation is often encouraged if not enforced by parents and other adult community members, have oppressive aspects. Organizations like the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, despite facilitating some positive learning experiences, encouraging social activity and introducing young people to diverse cultures, are noted for their narrow conceptions of community and family, as well as their strict foundation in Judeo-Christian doctrine. By forcing young members to wear uniforms, salute the American flag and pray to the other god, these groups forego their progressive potential to enter the business of mind-molding.

Formal scholastic sports, again despite their positive potential, also serve to oppress many young people. By restricting access to participation based on athletic ability, they invalidate any young person who cannot "make the team." Further, among those who are not excluded, a competitive mindset is encouraged. Winning is rewarded while losing or even tying is punished, externally by adult coaches and internally between team members. Instead of encouraging teamwork and communitarian ethics, school athletic programs teach young people to look out for themselves, regardless of who else might be hurt.

Many leftists tout the merits of community identification, which no doubt exist. But the idea that individuals should inherit such identifications rather than acquire them by personal choice as they grow is absurd; that skin color or place of birth or bloodline

velopment. That a child's skin pigmentation differs from another's is one thing; that such characteristics are of importance in life is another matter altogether, undoubtedly initiating a pattern of heavy distress. Soon, as the child grows, the race factor becomes accepted, and all the social strife it causes seems natural. But it remains unnatural, a truth even radical theorists are still having trouble understanding. We teach young people of color to take pride in their race, which may well serve to "empower" them as individuals; but doing so also perpetuates the myth that race is a rational concept in and of itself. Children do not understand the idea of race until they are taught it's perceived importance by adult society, a kind of informal indoctrination.

Then, of course, there is formal indoctrination. Judaism and Christianity both contain official structures by which young people are trained to accept dogmatic "truths" which have relevance to them not because the concepts are rational per se, but because they are hereditary. So we have a situation where young people, once again, are born into oppressive systems, inheriting them from parents who promote their relevance only because those parents themselves were born into them.

As children are taught one religion (the religion), they learn that they must live in accordance with the dictates of that religion — the only acceptable manner. To do otherwise would yield Hell or worse. Such manipulative power is highly coercive, and it sees that choice is removed from the individual student, a quite invalidating condition.

Moreover, many religions have formal "rites of passage" by which young members are graduated into "adulthood". This systematically segregates children from adults in an official capacity, denying the younger indoctrinees the validity of full-fledged membership in the culture, and forcing upon the adolescents the responsibilities of religious maturity.

Community identification is also the basis by which parents usually decide to perform circumcision on male children. Circum-

to work without pay, is similar to slavery, the product being the student her or his self. Prior to the age of 16, people are neither allowed to work at a regular job nor to leave school. Even after 16 adolescents are offered a limited spectrum of opportunities in the workplace, almost never including work which could possibly be considered empowering.

Although child labor laws were originally created to protect young people from exploitation by business and parents, and they undoubtedly serve that purpose today, in many cases they also prevent adolescents from obtaining money legally and without soliciting parents. And while family incomes vary, they are hardly indicative of the amount of money children will be allowed. Still, when children below age 16 are permitted to work, most commonly in the family business or farm, their labor is heavily exploited by parents who treat them as capital. This demonstrates the importance of a substantially deep look at economic institutions as a whole in their relationship to young people. Any time the capitalist system can exploit, it will, and those with no recourse are by definition most vulnerable.

Of course, there is a fundamental difference between young people and adults where this matter is concerned. Namely, young people are still socializing (or being socialized) at a rapid pace, and thus schooling is of greater importance than the production, through labor, of other goods. However, the fact remains that the education apparatus is an industry, and the chief laborers — not teachers or administrators but the students themselves — are not rewarded for their labor in the same way workers in other industries are. In this case, the students are not necessarily alienated from the fruits of their labor (i.e., themselves), but are alienated from the process by which production takes place.

While young people in the US are kept from earning money, they are simultaneously bombarded by specifically-geared commercialism and its introduction of "wants." Of course, many young people see their wants fulfilled by parents who are willing

to appease the desires of large corporations as well as those perceived interests newly instilled in their child (which isn't to say that such children are not oppressed by capital simply because they can satisfy their material desires). However, this process forms a significant group of young people in whom wants are being commercially conjured but who themselves cannot allocate the material manifestations of those desires — that is, they simply can't afford all the things they're told they desire.

Such is not meant to imply that society should pity those young people who cannot afford the latest fashions and the action figure or video game of the month, so long as they have sufficient clothing and entertainment. Rather, we should recognize that it is a primary purpose of private capitalist institutions to take advantage of young people's culturally reinforced need to conform and their search for identity, as well as their relatively free minds whose desires and initiatives are malleable.

One of the market's most manipulative and socially-destructive weapons is its elimination, via the "entertainment industry," of the community and family relations which previously raised children without heavy commercial interference. We have seen the substitution of seemingly realistic film and television for actual experience.

More subtly, the commercial aspects of the modern market serve to manipulate or even eliminate the community and family relation as well. A 30-second douche advertisement on TV, in which an imaginary daughter confronts her make-believe mother with simulated feminine problems (e.g., the "not-so-fresh feeling"), actually replaces an entire conversation between real-life mother and daughter. Not only does the adolescent woman, as viewer, no longer think she needs to discuss certain personal things with her mother, but now she even knows the name of the product she is supposed to use.

The contradiction of want creation and accompanying restrictions from the ability to satisfy those wants places young people in a position which is even more blatantly discriminatory than capital's obvious abuse of women and minority races. Yet, while the Left adamantly supports the rights of those oppressed groups to have access to satisfactory amounts of wealth and privilege, young people's right to economic independence is almost nowhere advocated.

As young people are forced into dependence on parents and (often) the paternal state, their own potential is neglected and invalidated. Meanwhile, the state system forces them into a subjective conditioning process while young people are economically manipulated to, in all their social activity, serve the interests of capitalists.

In an alternative economy, the production of laborers could easily be taken into account as such, and the producers rewarded for their efforts. Such an economy could separate young people's consumption rights from those of their parents, thus circumventing the problem of misappropriation of excessive or inadequate amounts of goods to those young people. Furthermore, by eradicating markets and capital, we could eliminate misguiding commercial pressures and the inheritance of intemperate or deficient wealth.

Cultural Ageism

Taking a look at communities in our society, generally identified by race, ethnicity, heritage or religion, it is plain that the institutions within these communities oppress young people regularly. Particularly by respecting coercive and invalidating traditions, whereby young people are treated as less than whole, groups identified as communities intimidate and violate their younger members.

Simply speaking, the very fact that young people are so often born into communities which are identified as somehow separate from others is oppressive. The idea that differences in race, for example, are even acknowledged at all is oppressive, as it creates an immediate identity crisis experienced early on in a child's social de-