

NO! Against Adult Supremacy Vol. 5

Various Authors

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America and the Beating of a Black Child, by Stacey Patton

It's not surprising that a black mother in Baltimore who chased down, cursed and beat her 16-year-old son in the middle of a riot has been called a hero. In this country, when black mothers fulfill stereotypes of mammies, angry and thwarting resistance to a system designed to kill their children, they get praised.

"He gave me eye contact," Toya Graham told CBS News. "And at that point, you know, not even thinking about cameras or anything like that — that's my only son and at the end of the day, I don't want him to be a Freddie Gray. Is he the perfect boy? No he's not, but he's mine."

In other words, Graham's message to America is: I will teach my black son not to resist white supremacy so he can live.

The kind of violent discipline Graham unleashed on her son did not originate with her, or with my adoptive mother who publicly beat me when I was a child, or with the legions of black parents who equate pain with protection and love. The beatings originated with white supremacy, a history of cultural and physical violence that devalues black life at every turn. From slavery through Jim Crow, from the school-to-prison pipeline, the innocence and protection of black children has always been a dream deferred.

The problem is that Graham's actions do not assure that her son, and legions like him, will survive childhood. Recall the uncle who in 2011 posted a video recording of himself beating his teenage nephew for posting gang messages on Facebook. Acting out of love and fear for his life, he whipped the teen, but months later he was found dead anyway.

Praising Graham distracts from a hard truth: It doesn't matter how black children behave — whether they throw rocks at the police, burn a CVS, join gangs, walk home from the store with candy in their pocket, listen to rap music in a car with friends, play with a toy gun in a park, or simply make eye contact with a police officer — they risk being killed and blamed for their own deaths because black youths are rarely viewed as innocent or worthy of protection.

If there were an easy way to keep black children safe from police, out of prisons, morgues and graves, we would not have spent the past three years in an almost endless cycle of grieving the loss of young black people: Trayvon Martin, Renisha McBride, Rekia Boyd, Jordan Davis, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray and ... and ... and ... The list is too long to fit into my word count.

This celebration of Graham reflects a belief that black youths are inherently problematic, criminal and out of control. The video also supports the idea that black fathers are absent, suggesting that all we need is an angry black mom to beat the "thug" out of an angry young man — and everything will be fine.

What is so disturbing is that white supremacy is let off the hook. A militarized and racist police force is not the problem. Systemic racism — from the War on Drugs to racial profiling, from hyper segregation to community divestment — is not the issue. The message becomes: Black children's behavior is the true enemy of peace.

This distracting conversation turns the spotlight back to black youth. If only Freddie hadn't run; if only his parents had beaten him; if only he was perfect, maybe he would still be with us. And the praise of Graham reflects a belief shared across race lines that beating black children is the only way to keep them safe from the dangers of a racist society, or from stepping out of line. Rather than embracing her son Michael, rather than hearing and seeing his pain and assuring him that she's got his back, Graham beat and shamed him in front of the world.

The public shaming and devaluing of black children has a long heritage. On Nov. 8, 1893, the Anderson Intelligencer, a South Carolina newspaper, reported that a black boy was caught stealing a lunch that had been left inside of a horse buggy. The locals tied the boy up in a stall and called his mother. Upon her arrival, the 200-pound mom was told of the trouble her son made. She then exclaimed, “Dar now, told you so, tank de good Lord I dun got you dis time. I bin trying to git hold of you for six munts and you git away from me ebery time. Bit I got you now, tank de Lord.”

The mother asked for a whip or cowhide, but was given a buggy trace. She stripped her son’s pants, bent him over a cross bar and beat him. The reporter noted, “Those licks and those yells were awful to hear and awfuller to behold.” And then the mother “lynched him while other humane gentlemen looked on and approved. That darkey will never steal another lunch from that stable nor any other stable.”

While Graham did not literally lynch her son Michael, she metaphorically strung him up for the world to see — in hopes of keeping him alive. We can all appreciate the pain and fear in her cry that “I don’t want my son to be a Freddie Gray.” This is every black mother’s cry heard over hundreds of years in America. From the plantation moms who whipped their kids so white masters and overseers wouldn’t more harshly do the same, to the parents during Jim Crow who beat their children to keep them safe from the Klan and lynch mobs, these beatings are the acts of a people so desperate and helpless, so terrorized and enraged, that heaping pain upon their children actually seems like a sane and viable act of parental protection.

The intensity of this fear is integral to the history of black Americans. Just as black parents have “the talk” with their children, listing survival tips for when they are confronted by white authority, black corporal punishment has been encouraged as the only way to make black children acceptable to society.

The recent killings of unarmed black people, including children, has elevated black parents’ fears and questions about how to protect their kids, and intensified debates over corporal punishment. All of this happens against the backdrop of American hypocrisy: a culture that routinely cites Martin Luther King Jr.’s embrace of nonviolence yet celebrates militarized police, corporal punishment, and the daily violence directed at black children; a culture that disempowers black parents, that criminalizes them, and blames them for everything from low graduation rates to poverty. Only hip-hop is a bigger problem if you believe people like CNN’s Don Lemon.

At the same time, American society has empowered principals who suspend and use corporal punishment, and police who wield their batons and guns to control black children.

Beatings are not transformative. They don’t empower. They simply punish the victims and accelerate the trauma, bringing the pain from the streets into the home. This form of “discipline” makes children only more vulnerable to violent behavior, and increases the risk of the very behaviors that will get them in trouble at school and in the streets — the behaviors that parents think beatings will prevent.

Where is celebration of moms whose children have been at the forefront of peaceful protests? Where is the celebration of black mothers and fathers who have been organizing against police violence, against food injustice, and against the violence and looting in Baltimore and beyond? The history of the civil rights movement is one of parents and children joining together on the front lines of the struggle for justice, not one of black parents beating their children. Yet this is the image captivating the nation.

What's most tragic is that Graham said that she unleashed on her son after making eye contact with him on the street. Tragically, Freddie Gray's offense that led to his killing was that he made eye contact with police. A look from and the mere presence of black bodies leads to violence and death, and that is the real crime, which no amount of shaming or corporal punishment will fix.

Youth Against Liberation: An Exploration, by Sven Bonnichsen

Not all youth support Youth Liberation. In fact, a large percentage would be against Youth Liberation — even after being introduced to its ideas. ...See, granted many youth simply haven't encountered the ideas of Youth Liberation, and so they just go along with the flow. But resistance to YL, by youth, runs deeper than that.

My thinking here is highly influenced by the book "Right-Wing Women" by Andrea Dworkin. ...It's 1971, the second wave of feminism is cresting, and the slogan "Sisterhood is Powerful" is hitting the streets. There's this feeling among radicals that with 51% of the population, women are going to be an unstoppable force. All we need to do is raise women's consciousness, and they'll surely be on board with the cause.

But, it comes as a slap in the face to discover that not all women are on board with feminism. There are people like Phyllis Schlafly (in particular) who defend the notion of wives being subordinated to their husbands. Why is this? The Marxist Feminists fall back on the concept of "false consciousness" — which to my mind is rather patronizing, and un-disprovable. Once you basically say that a person is wrong because they're deluded, there's no further room for argument.

Dworkin argued that Right-Wing Women are basically offered a better deal. It's the sexual revolution, and one segment of the feminist movement is feeling disillusioned, getting the sense that they're just getting exploited and used by "free love" men. So the choice looks like this: be the property of just one man, who has some obligations to care for you — or be the property of all men, none of whom owe you squat. From that perspective, it makes a lot of sense to me why a lot of women would want to stick with the "traditional" patriarchal arrangement.

Back to youth. You're 16, legal adulthood is just two years away. You can either make a fuss and fight for your rights — taking lots of flack from parents, teachers, and society in general along the way — or you can simply wait out your time, aging out of minority. It's the path of least resistance. And all the privileges of adulthood are just waiting, shining in front of you; the fee-for-entry seems to be putting up with the 18-year hazing of childhood just a little longer.

Furthermore, youth are well-practiced at taking the point of view of adults. It's the dynamic of dissociation. The five year old protests, "I'm not a baby!" The eleventh-graders avoid hanging out with the tenth-graders, to avoid the stigma of being associated with one's inferiors. Most people spend the first 18 years of their lives not thinking of themselves as minors at all — but rather, practicing thinking like adults.

I've listened to youth condemn Youth Liberation, talking about how children aren't competent to vote. Or about how they support the curfew, because youth are bound to get in trouble. It's rather amazing: the speaker never seems to doubt their own intelligence and good nature — but their opinion of their peers is abysmal. I can't help but wonder: what portion of this is actually based on observation — and what portion is based on the powerful image of youth-as-inferior propagated by adult society?

In terms of talking about the “deal” that society presents youth (be a rebel and suffer, or be patient and get enormous privilege) — I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention the deal offered to religious youth. Secular society offers up legal status for putting up with minority. Religious communities (many of them) offer up heaven. “Honor your father and mother...” (which means “obey”, I believe), is the fifth of the Ten Commandments. If you believe in the bible, then YL is seemingly a rebellion against God.

Religion offers a complete world-view that can be very difficult to argue with. The worldview offered by most YL thinkers, by contrast is very limited. Our area of focus tends to be limited just to a few legal rights, and a period of one’s life that may only be 2–4 years long. I think our ranks remain thin partly due to this. Notice that the YL movement is being far outpaced by the Christian Youth movement. ...Ironically, some of these youth groups are also dubbed “Youth Liberation”!

It need not be so, however. YL has the potential to offer up a very expansive world-view: one that is not merely about a few years of one’s life, but rather encompasses (a) what it means to be an adult, how do well at having a family of one’s own, a vision of justice and fairness that takes it’s strength from the principle that no person is property (and we must continue working to wipe out the vestiges of people-as-property), a world-view whose truth is firmly rooted in verifiable historical events.

A world-view is a powerful thing. Feminism, Marxism, Freudianism, Re-evaluation Counseling, and other such philosophies are compelling largely because they give you a lens — through which it becomes possible to interpret the world around you. The sense of control provided by being able to make sense of the world — is intense.

The Student Left: A History, by Tom Watt

The history of the oppression of youth goes back to the origins of society, the imposition of the Patriarchy, and the division of society into classes, (freeman and slave). But at every stage in the development of class society; youth have, in rebelling against their specific oppression as youth, played a role in the overall class struggle and helped to advance the struggle of humanity to liberate itself from all oppression.

History advances in waves and several revolutionary waves have swept across America, each gaining in depth and force. And in each, youth have been the most active element and have increasingly come to the fore as youth in their own cause and under their own organization. Between the high tides there have been periods of retrogression but each new wave builds upon the last: Each revolutionary generation stands upon the shoulders of the preceding generation and takes the struggle higher.

From the early days of European colonization of America, Native American youth played the most active role in resisting the colonizers. It has become a Hollywood cliché for the Old Chief to say that he cannot control the “young bucks.” In reality, many young braves did rise rapidly to become leaders of rebellions and whole Indian armies, such as Teedyuscung of the Lenape, Ocoela of the Seminole, and Blue Jacket and Tecumseh of the Shawnee. [Actually Blue Jacket was originally a white youth adopted into the Shawnee nation after being taken captive.]

Masses of white Youth came to America as indentured servants, many of them to die under the harsh conditions of servitude, and many of them ran off to join the Indian nations as did

many Black slave youth. Most of the slaves that were kidnapped and brought on the “middle passage” from Africa were youth, or children, and many of them died along the way, or shortly after arrival in the new land. Conditions of living for slave children were deplorable. They were denied any type of two parent family life, and usually their parents were worked for very long hours, and they had little time or energy left to rear their children, who were often raised under the care of older children or women too old for the master’s to exploit another way. When they got sick they often died.

Both white indentured servants and Black slaves played an active role in Bacon’s Rebellion of 1676, which was a foretaste of the War of Independence a century later. Youth organized as the RMohawks” played an important role in the popular movement led by the R Sons of Liberty.” as did student leaders like Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton. Tom Paine was a young English radical who came to America and became the Revolution’s most noted propagandist along with young Thomas Jefferson who drafted the Declaration of Independence.

But the Revolution was dominated by and served the interests of the rising middle class and land owners, and youth. women, Indians, and slaves, as well as those without property, were counted out from the Liberty that was won. To the new dominant classes of capitalists and landlords, Freedom meant freedom to trade and develop the productive forces in ways that would maximize their profits. This meant exploiting the unpaid labor of youth under slavery or on the family farm and exploiting the barely-paid labor of youth as workers in mines and mills.

The Abolitionist Movement gave rise to the first leader of a radical student movement in the U.S., Theodore Welt, of the Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1833–34, he organized the sons of slave holders to publicly speak out against the institution of slavery at meetings of students. Eventually, he and his core group were expelled, and they transferred to Oberlin College, where they continued their abolitionist activities and helped to organize the “Underground Railroad.” They also campaigned for the right of free speech on campuses. Abolitionist youth fought in Kansas and were with John Brown in the raid on the arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, when he attempted to initiate guerrilla warfare to overthrow slavery in the South. During the Civil War, millions of youth (Black, white and Indian) answered the call to take up arms against slavery. But the Civil War, which was a continuation of the American Revolution, did not address the issues of youth liberation, women’s liberation or even racism, class oppression and exploitation, or genocide against the Native Americans. The oppression and exploitation of youth intensified after the war as many tens of thousands were forced into taking jobs in factories where they worked twelve and thirteen hour days for half pay. In the South, former slave plantations were turned into semi-feudal manors where poor whites and Blacks worked the land as sharecroppers, including the unpaid hands of children and youth. In the North, factory owners like Simon Slater competed to see who could exploit children the most, even recruiting orphans as young as seven or eight years old to work in their “sweat shops.” In Rhode Island, where Slater had his mills, the census in 1875 listed 1,258 factory workers under twelve years old. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), organized in 1905, took on the issue of child labor, and on August 3, 1913, Mother Jones of the IWW led a march of factory children from New York City to Washington, D.C. to protest child labor and demand free public education. The Socialist Party had been founded in 1901 by Victor Berger, Eugene Debs and Morris Hillquit. In 1905, Jack London, Upton Sinclair and other students founded the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS). Sinclair wrote that, R...only a few institutions would let us in under our own evil name, and we had to disguise ourselves as...open forums and social science clubs” [Prospect for Youth, p. 143]. After the First

World War, the ISS was reorganized as the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID). In a pamphlet titled the Revolt of Youth published in 1923, Dr. John Holmes wrote:

Our young people have come to the time when they propose to be free from the domination of their elders – free to follow their own courses and seek their own goals ... to my way of thinking, this declaration of independence is as glorious as all previous declarations of the same kind; and the youth movement, which embodies it, not a terror, but a great hope to humanity” [Ibid, p. 144].

Early in 1933, a split in the SLID led by the Young Communist League (YCL) led to the formation of the National Student League (NSL). The first action of the NSL was a student expedition to Harlan County, Kentucky, where miners were engaged in a tough armed struggle with company goons known as the Harlan County War. This was followed by an NSL-led student strike at Columbia University over the expulsion of the editor of the Columbia Spectator. In October of 1934, The YCL led several successful student strikes and demonstrations in the Chicago high schools protesting racial discrimination. And in general the YCL was active on many fronts of the rising worker’s movement during the depression, particularly in building the Unemployed Councils and in celebrating events such as International Worker’s Day (May 1st), International Women’s Day (March 8th), and International Youth Day (August 31st). SLID continued under Socialist leadership, but it continued to work with the Communist-led NSL on issues such as combating racism and kicking ROTC off campus. Eventually SLID and NSL re-merged to form the American Student Union (ASU). Throughout the 1930’s mass student protests against war and fascism rocked American campuses. During the April 12, 1935 student strike, 10,000 students rallied in New York City against war and fascism. In November, 20,000 rallied on the different campuses in the city. Together with other progressive student and youth groups, the ASU organized the walkout of a million collage students in protest of the war in Europe in April of 1937.

In 1934, the American Youth Congress (AYC) was formed under the slogan RPeace. Freedom and Progress,” and it adopted RThe Declaration of the Rights of American Youth” at its second congress on July 4th, 1935. Together with ASU, AYC succeeded in getting the American Youth Bill before the 74th Congress and organized a demonstration of more than 1,000 youth in front of the capitol to demand passage of the bill. It was not passed. Both ASU and AYC participated in the American League Against War and Fascism (ALAWF) which had been established in 1933. By 1939. ASU had a membership of some 12,000 students, 400 of whom volunteered to go to Spain to fight fascism with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

In 1959, SLID changed its name to Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In June of 1962, SDS leader Tom Hayden, presented a sixty-one page document to the SDS convention at the AFL-CIO camp at Port Huron, Michigan. It became known as the Port Huron Statement, and some 100,000 copies were eventually distributed by SDS. In April of 1965, SDS drew 20,000 students to Washington, D.C. in what was up till then the largest anti-war demonstration in the capital’s history. For many students, the Revolution had begun in 1964, during the RFreedom Summer” in Mississippi, organized by the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). More than 2,000 Mississippi Black youth were organized into forty-two two-month RFreedom Schools” that stayed open despite KKK terror, while other students organized voter registration. SNCC leaders Stokeley Carmichael and H. Rap Brown would sum up that the SNCC civil rights approach was

wrong and mired in middle-class liberalism and subtle white racism, and they launched the Black Liberation Movement taking their cue from Malcolm X, who was assassinated in 1965. Also inspired by Brother Malcolm were the Black Panther Party (BPP), born in Oakland, California when Bobby Seale hooked up with Huey P. Newton at the local junior college in 1966. The Panthers added a new dynamic into the American Left by popularizing the “Little Red Book,” Quotations From Chairman Mao, and openly advocating and practicing armed self-defense. Parallel to the Black Panthers, and allied with them, were other ethnic based revolution organizations centered among oppressed youth, such as the Young Lords Party (YLP), later the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers’ Organization (PRWO), The Young Patriot Party (YPP), composed of hillbilly white youth, La Raza Unida Party, (Chicanos), I Wor Kun, (Chinese), and others including the American Indian Movement (AIM). Dennis Banks and George Mitchel founded AIM in 1968, consciously patterning it after the BPP. The Panthers, by their example and through the liaison work of Bob Avakain, had a profound influence on SDS as SDS was having a profound influence on the growing anti- Vietnam War movement. Picking up the chant first raised by SNCC outside the U.S. Army Induction center in Atlanta, SDS rocked the Rivory towers” of academia with “HELL NO WE WON’T GO!” and “HO – HO – HO CHI MINH, THE NLF IS GOING TO WIN!” Student takeovers of buildings at Columbia and Harvard in the spring of 1968, led by SDS and the Black Student Union (BSU), the student wing of the Black Panthers, led to the rapid growth of both organizations and severely hurt government attempts to sell the war as “winding-down.” coupled with the Tet Offensive by the National Liberation Front (NFL) in Vietnam, it marked the turning point in the war. That spring marked the hightide of revolution internationally and the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago was a showdown between youth and the Cold War Liberal Establishment. Contrary to the popular impression, the young demonstrators in Chicago were not, for the most part, the hard core of the American Left. The Black Panthers and most militants had heeded SDS’s call to stay away. The overwhelming majority of demonstrators were unaffiliated with the revolutionary Left. Many were supporters of anti-war candidate, Eugene McCarthy, or had come for the Yippie! Festival of Life. According to the official Walker Report, of the 668 persons arrested, 75.8% were twenty-five years old or younger (64% were under 18) and roughly half were from Chicago or its immediate suburbs. Forty-three percent were workers and less than a third were students. Only 39 out of the 668 had been previously arrested for political activity.

Following its convention after Chicago, SDS split apart into numerous factions, one of which, led by the political line of Bob Avakain, regrouped in the 1970’s as first the Attica Brigade and later as the Revolutionary Student Brigade. Following the formation of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1975, it became the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade. Other factions tended to form other Marxist-Leninist parties such as the Communist Workers’ Party, Communist Party (ML), etc. – joining the alphabet soup of the fractionalized American Left. Most of these formations have since passed out of existence.

In response to the revolutionary upsurge of the 1960’s and early 1970’s, certain concessions were made to youth, such as lowering the voting age to eighteen and discontinuing the draft in practice, (though it can be reinstated at any time). Most importantly, there has been an acknowledgement that youth are a social, and potentially political, power which must be considered.

The issue of Youth Liberation was raised in this upsurge and the results can be seen in changes in the custody laws and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, but it has yet to win decisive victories, and only another and more powerful wave can accomplish this. The student

Left is at present quite weak, as is the Left generally in the U.S. The Youth Liberation Movement will have the task of rejuvenating it, which will ground it more firmly in youth issues and a youth perspective, but it is important not to narrow or negate the revolutionary scope of the student Left in doing this. Youth should discuss and deepen their understanding of this heritage and prepare to enrich it as they move forward to prepare a tidal wave of youth liberation in the 21st century.

Unschooling and Anarchism, by Idzie Desmarais

I don't really separate the different aspects of my life: every belief, opinion, and interaction is intertwined with all other parts of who I am and how I live. So although I might not talk about it specifically all that often on this blog, my anarchist views—my belief that humans have the innate ability to control their own lives and as such do not need to be, and are happier without being, ruled—infuse everything that I write and think, including what I write and think about unschooling.

I find it interesting that my becoming anarchist went hand-in-hand with my embracing of unschooling. Coming out of a not-so-great time in my early to mid teenage years, a time characterized by feelings of depression, of feeling like an outcast, and of not knowing who I was as a person or what I should be doing, I started reading extensively about both unschooling and anarchism. And, not long after I decided, with both relief and a new found conviction, that unschooling really had been the right thing for me, and really was an amazing way of looking at and living Education, I finally found a political view that truly spoke to me, that felt right in the most fundamental way.

For me, the questioning of the education system—something so close to the hearts of so many people, something almost universally heralded as an amazing achievement for a democratic country, and the best way to Get An Education—and the realization that it was not only not the best option, but something truly horrible to inflict on the vast majority of youth, really startled me, and led me to start questioning all the other rarely examined or thought about aspects of society. That questioning, starting with unschooling, was a process that led me very organically to rethinking almost every aspect of life and how we live in this world. It was pretty mind-blowing. So as you can see, for me unschooling and anarchy have always been tied especially closely together!

Radical unschooling is a philosophy that recognizes that children are people, too, and as thus have a right to control their own thoughts, activities, and by extension their own education and learning. Parents thus abdicate their role of authoritarian presence, dictator and teacher, in favour of becoming their children's partner, supporter, helper, and guide. It removes hierarchy from the family unit, and replaces it with mutual co-operation.

Anarchism is the belief that individuals are fully capable of being self-governing, so do not need to be ruled, controlled, or governed. Taken from An Anarchist FAQ “anarchism is a political theory which aims to create a society within which individuals freely co-operate together as equals. As such anarchism opposes all forms of hierarchical control as harmful to the individual and their individuality as well as unnecessary.”

So to me, unschooling is basically putting anarchy into practice in daily life. It's going past the philosophy and the can-it-really-work and proving that people, even children, are far more capable of controlling their own lives than anyone gives them (us) credit for.

Yes, I most definitely realize that unschoolers are not all anarchists. Most aren't (though there are definitely more anarchists in your average group of unschoolers than you'd find in your average group of random people). I just find that, from my point of view, the two philosophies are extremely complementary. Both emphasize living in co-operation, living in freedom. Both involve a lack of dependence on the State or other higher authorities.

At their core, what both unschooling and anarchy mean to me is living in (when possible), and striving for (when necessary), true freedom. If anarchy is getting rid of all forms of domination and oppression, hierarchy and authority, then unschooling, the freeing of children from school and the empowering of children and teens by giving them back their own lives, is an important part in moving toward an anarchist, co-operative society.

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