



DR. TAYLOR DISCUSSES EDUCATION FROM BLACK VIEWPOINT

Black Educator Speaks Out

IUK ARCHIVE

'U.S. School System Destroys Negro Culture, Keeps Blacks in Bondage'

By KIRK WEEKS

The effect of American education culturally destroys black people and keeps them in a state of perpetual ignorance and bondage, Dr. Orlando Taylor, assistant professor in the department of speech and theater at Indiana University, told a group of about 50 people Monday night at Havens Auditorium.

In order to rectify this situation, Dr. Taylor called for establishing a system of cultural pluralism in the nation's educational system during the coming decade.

"This means school boards will either have to share their power with blacks; or, if that's not possible, then divide their power so that black people can educate their youngsters in ways that are relevant to the black community," Dr. Taylor said. He was speaking on the subject "New Directions for American Education: A Black Prospective," part of the week-long IU-K program on "Focus — Black America."

Dr. Taylor said integrated education has failed black people, at least as it is presently practiced. "When the white man talks about integration he is really saying to black people that 'we will let you come to our schools as long as you agree to buy white culture, white values, white history, and learn to think white, learn white, talk white and act white,'" he said.

"How relevant do you think it is for black people to be taught that George Washington was a hero?" Dr. Taylor asked. "Washington owned slaves. When he talked about freedom he was not talking about freedom for blacks, but for whites only. Washington's no hero to black people; he's a slave-holder. Our heroes are men like Nat Turner, Malcolm X and John Brown who talked about freedom for black people. They wanted to kill slave-owners like Washington, but in white history Washington is a hero while Turner, Brown and Malcolm are portrayed as radicals or murderers."

Dr. Taylor said that American Negroes have developed their own language since being imported to the United States — "but 'soul language' is considered 'bad English' by whites, and when Negroes go to white schools they are told that they don't talk right and that everything they've learned at home and in their community is somehow bad or wrong.

"I submit that language is a tool, a

means of communication, and that's all it is," Dr. Taylor continued, "and that the Afro-American language is as expressive and communicative as any language, including standard English which is taught in white schools."

Dr. Taylor went on to say that being educated in standard English is, for many young Negroes, like being educated in a foreign language. "Black youngsters are told they're not as bright as white youngsters, when the truth is that the white child is being educated in his native language while the black child is not. How fast would white kids learn if they were educated in a foreign language — say in Afro-American — instead of in their own language?"

Plays and stories written in Afro-American in Watts, Calif., show that supposedly "illiterate and under-educated" Negroes are bursting with brilliance, talent and originality, Dr. Taylor said, because they are allowed to express themselves in a language and style familiar to them.

Modes of dress and behavior by black people are also anathema to white people, the educator said. "If we go to school dressed in African robes or let our hair grow natural or grow beards we are told by the whites to go home and change our dress, cut our hair and shave off our beards. Blacks don't object to whites wearing their hair short and dressing in a European manner, so why should whites object to blacks wearing their hair long and dressing in an African manner?" Dr. Taylor asked.

Blacks have been systematically excluded from the education required to adjust to an industrialized and technological society, Dr. Taylor said, "so now we are a nuisance to a white society which no longer has use for unskilled laborers who can be exploited. You have machines now which do the work we used to do."

Blacks do serve a psychological need for whites and that psychological need requires that whites keep black ignorant and in bondage, Dr. Taylor said. "Whites need to feel that blacks are inferior so their treatment of us as slaves and as something other than human can be justified in their own minds. It also provides whites with an excuse to treat blacks in a paternalistic fashion to alleviate their own guilt feelings.

"For this reason whites are afraid to see blacks become really well educated," Dr. Taylor said.

Whites will have to recognize the cultural values of the Afro-American society before education will be really meaningful to Negroes, Dr. Taylor said. "This does not mean that whites should look down on black culture or feel that they 'have to lower their standards' to accept us. It is not a matter of whites 'coming down' or black 'coming up.' It's a matter of letting the black and white cultures exist on equal planes and equal levels, with neither 'superior' to the other."

This means, Dr. Taylor said, that blacks should be allowed to control the schools where black students constitute a majority and to have proportional representation where they constitute a minority.

Educational standards and goals, even for predominantly black schools, are defined by white school boards, Dr. Taylor said, consequently whites are telling blacks how and what they should teach their own youngsters. "If there is a black brother on the board, he is consistently out-voted by the white majority," Dr. Taylor said.

Dr. Taylor urged decentralization of the school board system so schools can be run by the parents whose youngsters are attending the schools — in other words, neighborhood control of schools.

Whites are against this idea, he said, because whites are afraid of what black teachers will teach black youngsters. "This is simply the modern way of saying to black people that you're not to be trusted to educate or govern yourselves," Dr. Taylor said.

Nonetheless, Dr. Taylor said he is "guardedly hopeful" that in the decade ahead a trend toward "cultural pluralism" will develop, whereby whites will permit blacks to educate black youngsters in black heritage, black history, black pride, black culture, and black (soul) language.

"The issue is not how many black youngsters are allowed in white schools," Dr. Taylor said, "but whether or not black people will be allowed to be educated in ways that are relevant to their needs and their communities."

The school board system can be helpful in this effort if it agrees to share power with blacks, Dr. Taylor said, otherwise the power should be divided on proportional basis.

Kokomo Tribune March 1969