

Today, I am here to say that multiculturalism is our sun, our center, our factual truth, and that the high priests of monoculturalism—of white male Eurocentrism—will not torture nor maim^v or murder us into oblivion. O, they can threaten to withhold tenure (and have done so), but the world will no longer be ignored or denied, however strong their fears. In the next two decades it will be amply clear that they have all the strength of a fly trying to kill an elephant. Elephant-like let us get on with our forward-moving and worthwhile tasks.

My basic notion of devolution is quite simple. In order for any social system to work positively—be it family or factory or nation—there must be accountability of the people who have power to the people over whom they wield it. Parents must be accountable to their children. Political officials must be accountable to those whole lives they govern.

Where there is accountability, people act responsibly so that progress, positive movement, and welcome change are possible. Where there is no accountability, no responsibility, things generally worsen and all kinds of devolution sets in. Devolution is the opposite of evolution. Devolution is regression.

In devolving systems, masses of people are sacrificed for the benefit of the powerful, the greedy, and the callous. We are all aware of the deteriorating infrastructure of U.S. cities, counties, and states. Not merely bridges, sewage systems, and other physical structures are involved. Education and social services have been steadily deteriorating in the past ten years, while the number of billionaires has multiplied by about ten. What makes a billionaire is mostly tax monies out of your pockets and mine. Our government doesn't stop merely at giving the rich tax breaks (in 1988 GM

and Xerox paid NO income taxes). It protects grand larceny (as we see the Justice Department doing with BCCI), and as it's doing with the S & L bailout. Even when a scandal is in all the newspapers and constantly on TV, government officials just wait it out and then CONTINUE as before. Nowhere was this more evident than in the S & L bailout, when the government allowed a man already guilty of fraud to plop down \$1,000 in cash for the purchase of 15 failing banks and without so much as a blink or a blush, supplied him with \$1.85 billion—yes, I said \$1.85 billion—in government guaranteed insurance (TIME, Aug. 13, 1990, 51-52). That's your money and mine. This comes about because whatever the scandal, whatever the abuse, there is no system of accountability. Government officials are NOT accountable to the public they ^{supposedly} serve. Politicians are NOT accountable to the voters but to the big corporations that finance their campaigns. The fact that (as of six months ago) every child, woman, and man would have to pay more than \$2,500 to save the failed banks—and the amount grows daily—shows the radical devolution of the U.S. in political and economic terms. And indeed in psychic terms. As a people, we are quite thoroughly demoralized. The lack of our leaders' accountability leaves us feeling frustrated and powerless.

There can be no progress without honesty. There can be no honesty without a common sense perspective that, when looking at the world, takes into account the interests of whole populations rather than the short-term profits of the now overprivileged rich. In Africa, for example, industrial nations supply more than 14 billions dollars annually in what is called military aid (MOTHER JONES, Sept./Oct. '91, 41). "Aid?" Military aid for countries suffering drought, famine, disease. Now who among us, when hungry, runs to the cupboard to devour a submachine gun—with bullets presumably for dessert?

Devolution in Africa is profoundly related to foreign incursions, both colonial and capitalist. Economic colonialism continues to bleed African dead. Today, according to Gayle Smith, Africa "produces less food, has more starving people, and owes more money than it did ten years ago." (MOTHER JONES, 61). We must stop calling outside commercial investments "aid" or even "credits." They are usually—or at least they have been—devolutionary obligations that benefit only the very rich. In Ghana when the World Bank decided to supply credit to encourage large scale commercial fishing, cheap fish began to vanish from local markets because local fishermen could not survive, and there was a devolution of people's health as well as of their financial competence. As is now well known, World Bank investment means the flow of goods, cash, and services from the poorest people in agricultural countries to the foreign rich.

We don't need to look at government to see devolution at work. It happens wherever there is no accountability. Let's look at the business world. When it comes to appliances, we have pretty good accountability systems. If you buy a toaster or a TV that doesn't work, you take it back and get a new one or a refund. ^{MSF} Retail dealers feel (and are) accountable to their customers. If you hire a plumber or an electrician, they are accountable to you for their services.

On the other hand, if you go to a physician, it's a different story. Although you are hiring the doctor to perform a service, she or he is not accountable to you. No matter how badly they do, you pay them. Unlike the plumber or the electrician. Even if the doctor kills you, your family obligingly pays the bill. This is, sad to say, not a rare event—the doctor's killing the client. But it is a well guarded secret. Physicians are killing tens of thousands of their customers in this country every year.

A study by Harvard medical researchers showed, "Of all hospitalized in [N.Y.] state in 1984, over 5 percent sustained injuries that resulted from their medical treatment and not the underlying disease. Of this group, over 7,000 died and over 29,000 ...had injuries due to medical negligence...defined as the failure to provide 'reasonably careful treatment.'" (HEALTHFACTS, May 1990, p.1) The number of people dying from AIDS is puny compared to the on-going epidemic of physician-caused deaths.

Dr. Howard Hiatt of Harvard says that the more than 7000 deaths in one year in NY state broadly reflects what is happening across the country. Dr. Julian Whitaker writes (in the current issue - September, 1991 - of Wellness Today): "...over \$20 million a day is spent on unnecessary heart bypass operations, which kill between 14,000 and 28,000 people every year." Physicians are quick to label non-medical treatments as crackpot, while their own crackpottery (as wild and pervasive and huge as all the banking, housing, and other scandals combined) is cheerfully and stupidly ignored.

Doctors are not accountable for the deaths they cause, even when they've been careless. Where there is no accountability, we find devolution. And that's what has happened to medical care in the U.S. It continues to worsen. It's devolving. Fetal monitoring, for example, has led to three times the risk of cerebral palsy in infants (compared to a nurse's monitoring with a stethoscope), but hospitals continue to do it routinely. (NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE, Mar. '90). They are not accountable to their clients, but to their pocketbooks. The U.S. badly needs national legislation defining medical felonies and assigning penalties. As it is, physicians feel they can freely lie to their customers; that is, they don't feel obligated even to give you the information you're paying for. They blatantly state that you can get a

second opinion--as if that excuses them from misleading you and as if you have the unlimited time and money that second opinions entail. I'm not referring to honest mistakes that decent physicians make. I'm referring to the 2 1/2 million unnecessary surgeries performed yearly (according to 1976 Congressional hearings) that result in 12,000 unnecessary deaths. The reason for unnecessary surgery, let us be clear, is to make money for the surgeon and for the hospital. We need national legislation criminalizing such surgery and stipulating that medical doctors are accountable first to the sick people in their charge--not to themselves, not to their profession, not to their bank accounts. If money is to be involved, there should certainly be no payment when the doctor makes you worse. (Rather, he should pay you.) And why pay the surgeon if the surgery doesn't work? I guarantee there will be a lot less and a lot better surgery when we pay for only the successful operations. If the customer is gambling with his or her life, why shouldn't the surgeon gamble with her or his remuneration? We need to teach the medical profession that our human life has more value than the dollars they earn.

Multiculturalists support accountability systems. We are conscious of the damage done by oppression of the underprivileged. Feminists also support accountability systems, and we criticize political structures that promote (or tolerate) abuses of power.

Most people today have a fatalistic notion of power that collectively we must change. The old religious idea of dominion has got to go. That idea proposes that God has dominion over people and over their ~~kings~~ ^{rulers} (or leaders), that ~~kings~~ ^{rulers} have dominion over citizens, that men have dominion over women, that humans have dominion over animals, and so forth. It is a truly arrogant notion that people use to justify horrendous and

unspeakable deeds. The dominion idea makes it possible, for example, for humans to cut open living rabbits, peel down their torn flesh and paint it with corrosive chemicals. That is allowed because we believe people are superior to animals. Are we? Are we? (I can name a dozen kangaroos that add more to the world's well-being than the man currently in the White House.)

The dominion idea--that the superior can justly buy, sell, manipulate, or destroy the inferior--was an absolute necessity for the atrocity of colonialism in Africa, in the Americas, in the Far East--indeed, all over the globe. Many countries continue to devolve today because of colonial structures that still exist. In the U.S. our government (and so you and I) continue to colonize the poor and our first citizens, American Natives. In South Bend, for example, the land that the University of Notre Dame is built upon belongs to the Potawatomi Indian Nation. But the Potawatomi aren't sharing in the TV income from N.D. football. The U.S. government, even worse, continues to push Natives off reservation lands we earlier pushed them into. Why should we have dominion over people who respect the land when we wantonly destroy it?

Have you noticed that as the population of the U.S. becomes more multicultural, the national government becomes more irresponsible and unaccountable? Look at Bush, his cabinet, and his rich friends: shout out the names of all the Latin^o, Black, Asian, Indian, gay, female, handicapped, poor, destitute, homeless, jobless, medically uninsured, pensionless people in his crowd. GOOD AND LOUD! Are you, like me, fed up with paying tax money for their collective benefit? As in the 1770s when the American people revolted against England, we are being taxed, once again, without representation. Our Congress is bought by big white money, and it votes

that way. How many of you in this audience wanted to spend your taxes on military aid to Saddam Hussein when Iraq was fighting against Iran? Can you imagine what the press would say if a woman were president and did the on-again off-again soft shoe dance that George Bush does with every vicious two-bit tyrant he can find? Folks, enough is not enough: it is too much!

It is no multicultural secret that rich white males are a small minority in this country, nor is it a secret that they are in control. Now if the Russian people can go out on the streets and face down tanks, we, the multicultural majority, can face down hypocrites. We need to derail current systems and put them on democratic tracks. Here's what I propose:

AGENDA

1. Taxes. No taxes on the poor. Graduated afterward. *No taxes on food.*
E.g., 1% on annual incomes of \$10-12,000.
3% on annual incomes of \$12-15,000.
5% on annual incomes of \$15-20,000.
Percentages increase up to 70% for billionaires.
2. Political Office. Every candidate gets free TV time (once petitions have established candidacy) in the three weeks prior to campaign. Also free radio time in equal amounts.

No TV spots are allowed. Low maximums put on amounts candidates can spend. Federal government supplies funds to poor candidates equal to the maximum that rich candidates are also spending.

All candidates required to state positions on issues and those positions are published in newspapers one week before elections, allowing candidates to be questioned.

3. We must develop new measures of work. GNP (Gross National Product), as it stands, is a poor measure of the economic vitality of a country. It promotes devolution by (1) valuing destructive technologies and products and (2) ignoring meaningful work--such as parenting and caring for sick family members, both very strenuous, very important and highly valuable kinds of work.

If we shunt budgets (like those for SDI and Stealth bombers) into a reconceived Department of Labor, workers in the home (housekeepers and parents) could be paid. Workers outside the home would also pay a small enabling tax to the Department, most of which would go to pay the salary of the parent working at home.

4. Meaningful work would be provided for all who want to work, including the handicapped and the elderly. Recycling projects, planting trees, visiting the infirm, teaching literacy--there are any number of important unpaid jobs that will improve our society and give people a proper sense of their worth.
5. Of course, kiss welfare goodbye. Welfare mothers who are cooking, cleaning, raising children ARE working and must be both paid and dignified. Other welfare recipients would be given work.
6. Health care should be free and vastly improved. M.D.s would not be in business, but salaried employees of a healthcare system. Other

types of medicine (rather than medicine by trauma, i.e., drugs and surgery) would be encouraged. M.D.s would be required to study nutrition. Legislation would describe criminal medical conduct.

Emphasis would be redirected to making sick people happy and comfortable, and the daily work of health providers (nurses, *nurses aids*, *visitors*, therapists) would be valued with much higher salaries.

7. Education would be free. Teacher's salaries would be much higher, and their teaching loads much lighter. Incompetent teachers would be removed and given other work.

Two foreign languages would be taught in the grade schools.

Parenting and home nursing skills as well as healthcare would be taught to everyone in the high schools.

Nutrition, ecology, and geography would be taught in both grade and high schools.

I could of course go on. The point is that we need to define our progress as a society NOT in terms of things like GNP, but rather in terms of how effectively we advance the interests of the poorest segment of our citizens, how effectively we provide meaningful employment to all our citizens who want to work, how effectively we protect and improve the earth we occupy, and how effectively our governing bodies respond to the concerns of our ordinary (as contrasted to our wealthy) citizens.

We have seen enough irresponsibility, greed, and selfishness in capitalists, communists, and socialists around the world to understand that a mere system means nothing. What we must demand of every system are officers in government and people in positions of economic power who are responsible to the populace as a variegated whole. As multiculturalists and as feminists, we must continue to demand reality checks of the monoculturally blind power brokers. The future belongs not to them but to us.