

COMMENTARY

## Who Really Owns 'Your' Culture?

*"Oh, Freedom, Oh Freedom,  
Oh, Freedom over me.  
An' before I'd be a slave,  
I'd be buried in my grave  
An' go home to my Lord an' be free."*

(Traditional, arr. by Hall Johnson)

This song was one of the anthems of the Civil Rights movement, and it is an expression of one of the powerful ideas we've been discussing, starting with Lyndon LaRouche's address this morning, with his presentation of the principle of the Sublime. The Sublime begins with the idea that you have a mission in life, and that mission is to achieve true freedom, not just for yourself, but for all mankind.

However, the question of freedom, what is true freedom, is one that my generation—the Baby Boomers—has so distorted, that most of you have no idea what that word really means. What I will discuss tonight is how, by examining our current diseased culture, from the standpoint of true, Classical culture, we can get an answer as to what freedom really means. In particular, we will investigate the centuries-long battle over the most fundamental question faced by human civilizations, namely, "What is the nature of man?"

To answer this, we will take up the question that I have put up here on the board: "Who owns your culture?" Most of you do not know the origins of what you think is your culture. By the end of this presentation, you may be very upset to find out that you don't own it, it is not

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*This article is adapted from a November presentation to a Los Angeles regional cadre school, held in the mountains near Hemet, California. The cadre schools are quarterly conferences attended by members of, and potential recruits to the LaRouche Youth Movement. Author Harley Schlanger is Western States' spokesman for Presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.*

**'I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. . . . I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life, unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him.'**

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



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yours, and, in fact, it is poisonous to you, it makes you a slave of your "f-e-e-lings." And to the extent that you embrace any aspect of this modern culture, and claim it as your own, you have no chance of being free, as you are embracing your own slavery.

So that is what we are going to be investigating this evening.

### **Martin Luther King and the Dignity of Man**

Let us begin with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who did understand this dilemma, of the necessity to lift people up out of their backwardness. As Lyn said this morning, Dr. King was a sublime being. He lived for the ages. He paid back his debt to those who went before him. And he lived for the future. He knew his future might be short, which is why he was free, because no one could take anything away from him. The only thing that could be taken from him was his life. Once he decided, that, if necessary, he would give his life for the cause, he was totally free.

This is a section of a speech that Dr. King gave when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, on Dec. 10, 1964:

"Civilization and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the United States, following the people of India,

have demonstrated that non-violence is not sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes for social transformation. Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood.

"If this is to be achieved, man must evolve from all heathen conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love. The torturous road, which has led from Montgomery, Alabama, to Oslo, bears witness to this truth. . . .

"I accept this award today, with an abiding faith in America, and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. . . .

"I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life, unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to this starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. I refuse to accept the cynical notion, that nation after nation must struggle down the militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear

destruction. I believe that unarmed truth, and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

"I believe that even amidst the day's mortar bursts, and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow. I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nation, can be lifted from this dust of shame, to reign supreme among the children of men."<sup>1</sup>

Now, what you hear, from Dr. King, is an expression of cultural optimism, an expression of the kind of courage necessary to move this nation ahead, to take on the racism that existed in the South, enforced through the so-called Jim Crow laws. There are probably very few of you who grew up in the South, who know this history. Are there any of you who lived in the South? And how many of you lived in the South in the '50's and '60's? (Laughter) I didn't think so.

When Dr. King began his organizing, he could not stay in hotels in most major cities. He could not eat in many restaurants. If he wanted a drink of water, he had to go to a fountain that said, "Colored Only." If you were audacious enough to go to the Board of Registrars and ask to register to vote, there was a chance that a cross would be burned in your yard, that you would be beaten, that dogs would be unleashed on you. And yet, there were people like Amelia Boynton Robinson of the Schiller Institute, the woman who has adopted Lyndon and Helga LaRouche as her godchildren, who took up this fight, even before Dr. King. Amelia began organizing for the vote in the 1930's, and she was the one who brought Dr. King to Selma, Alabama in 1965, to begin the final march toward victory, with the Voting Rights Act. Amelia and Dr. King exemplify the principle of the Sublime; the fight for a better humanity regardless of the danger, based on the commitment to bring out the best in everyone.

#### What Is Human Nature?

The question of art and culture is really a question of, "What is the nature of man?" Now you heard Lyndon

LaRouche say this morning that all human beings are born good, or with the potential to become good. But many of you may believe, if you are being honest, that we have more in common with animals than we do with the divine potential which we ascribe to human beings. This is what is taught to you in your college classes, what you imbibe in this culture: the popularized Darwinian theory of evolution, or Social Darwinism, which was essentially plagiarized from Thomas Hobbes, the belief that all men are beasts, that life on this planet is short, miserable and brutish, that it is a

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battle of survival, a struggle of each against all.

Now, that may appear to be an accurate description of most of human history. But there have been people throughout human history, such as Dr. King, who have not only demonstrated, through their own actions, that man "is created in the image of God," but have fought throughout their lives for that concept of man in other people. And to fight for that, to say to people, especially to those who are oppressed, "You have been created in the image of God and, therefore, must get off your knees and fight for your rights," can get you killed, as it did Dr. King.

The central force in history that wishes to impose the Hobbesian/Darwinian view of man, which acts against sublime leaders, acts to destroy cultures, and destroy nation-states, to keep man enslaved as though he were merely human cattle, is the oligarchy, once a feudal, landed nobility, today predominantly operating as a financial oli-

garchy. That elite, the oligarchy, the ruling families, believe they were born to rule; and that they were bred to be better than the human cattle, over which they must rule. This idea, that because of one's lineage and breeding, one is better, has been imposed on man throughout history. But, in order for that to be accepted, it is necessary for that oligarchy to reduce human beings to believe that they are no different than animals, to accept that there is nothing which differentiates them from animals, and that, in fact, humans beings are creatures of the senses; that we are controlled by sense perception—just as animals are.

How do we know that this is not true? As Lyndon LaRouche emphasized this morning, it is because individual human beings have the capacity to discover universal physical principles, and can communicate to others the method by which that discovery was made, so that the discovery can be applied to increase the power of man over nature, which is why man alone is capable of increasing his species' potential relative population density. No animal, which is limited in its experience of the physical universe to sense perceptions, can do this.

Now the purpose of art, the purpose of culture, more broadly, is to enable you to more profoundly and effectively communicate the quality of mind required to make such scientific discoveries, so that others may make the same discoveries in their own minds. All the advances of human civilization have depended on this kind of fundamental breakthrough in what we call the arts.

If one wishes to halt human progress, the first step—which has been employed repeatedly by oligarchical forces—is to degrade the image of man within a culture, to convince humans that we are no different from animals; that our primary concern is sensual: to seek pleasure, and avoid pain.

This was the essence of the "counter-culture" of the 1960's, the cultural paradigm shift, in which scientific and technological progress came under systematic attack, and we were taught that a

belief in truth was a characteristic of the "authoritarian personality." This was the line of the Russell-Wells utopians, the same people who promoted "pre-emptive nuclear strike" against the U.S.S.R. after World War II, and who today favor the Clash of Civilizations policy, as an excuse for turning the U.S. into a pathetic replay of the "Decline of the Roman Empire."<sup>2</sup>

The problem is, that my generation became totally self-centered, focussing on our own pleasures. We looked for short cuts, for the easy way to do things. "Don't waste time with theories, let's be practical. What's the bottom line?" Instead of working to resolve the fundamental paradoxes which underlie every aspect of man's sensuous interaction with the physical universe—which requires that dreaded four-letter word, WORK—we chose, instead, to concern ourselves with our feelings. It's easy to rely on feelings, and go along with what is popular. You can just turn on the radio, and in a few minutes you can forget the world—"Oh, man, I feel great, this is my kind of music!" Whether it's Country & Western, or it's rock, it makes you "f-e-e-l" good—that is, it's easy, you don't have to think. This is how you get suckered into believing that something which was created to make you a slave of your senses, to weaken your power of creativity, and promoted, from the outside, so you will accept that you have no power, is really yours.

But the requirement for initiating a Renaissance, is developing the powers of cognition. It is good to do that kind of work! This is what we are all about, to generate new, more powerful ideas concerning man and nature, and to master the means by which we can communicate, and pass on those new ideas to the next generation, so that it is able to make new discoveries. Every Renaissance in history, since the time of Socrates and Plato, has been based on going back to the ideas of Socrates and Plato. And every time we've had a dark age, it has been the deliberate assault on those ideas, and the method of their generation, which created the dark age.

So now, I want to introduce you to

several examples of ideas which express, or exemplify the concept that man is created in the image of God, that we possess a capacity which is beyond the limits of our immediate sense perception.

#### **'What a Piece of Work Is Man!'**

Let us take an example from a Fifteenth-century Humanist named Pico della Mirandola. The Humanist movement, which was advanced by Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa and the Council of Florence, followed in the footsteps of the great Dante Alighieri, who was kicked out of Florence when he challenged his local oligarchy a century earlier. Humanism started with the rejection of Aristotle. Medieval Scholasticism, the slavish adherence to the philosophical method of Aristotle, rejected the idea that you can know causal, universal principles; instead, it taught that you can know only the *names* of things, and the *order* of things. During the medieval dark age which preceded the Renaissance, scholars studied linguistics, semantics, and logic. It is no different today, as "artificial intelligence" and "systems analysis" represent a modern version of the Aristotelean curriculum of that dark age.

But the Humanists rejected Aristotle, and focussed, instead, on the relationship of man to the Divine. What is the role of man? What is the nature of man?

Pico, in his famous "Oration on the Dignity of Man," explicitly rejects the Aristotelian concept of man as fixed, like an animal. He opens with an irony: As a Christian writer in Italy, at a time when most Christians believed Muslims were their enemy, he begins by writing, "I once read that Abdala the Muslim, when asked what was most worthy of awe and wonder in this theater of the world, answered, 'There is nothing to see more wonderful than man.' Hermes Trismegistus concurs with this opinion. 'A great miracle, is man.'" And so, Pico asks the question, "Where did Man come from? What is Man?"

He answers, "[T]he Great Artisan mandated that this creature, who had received nothing proper to himself, shall have joint possession of whatever

nature had been given to any other creature. He made man a creature of indeterminate and indifferent nature, and, placing him in the middle of the world, said to him, 'Adam, we give you no fixed place to live, no form that is peculiar to you, nor any function that is yours alone. According to your desires and judgment, you will have and possess whatever place to live, whatever form, and whatever functions you yourself, choose. All other things have a limited and fixed nature, prescribed and bound by our laws. You, with no limit or no bound, may choose for yourself the limits and bounds of your nature. We have placed you at the world's center so that you may survey everything else in the world. We have made you neither of heavenly nor of earthly stuff, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with free choice and dignity, you may fashion yourself into whatever form you choose. To you is granted the power of degrading yourself into the lower forms of life, the beasts, and to you is granted the power, contained in your intellect and judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, the divine.'

"Imagine! The great generosity of God! The happiness of man! To man is allowed whatever he chooses to be. As soon as an animal is born, it brings out of its mother's womb all that it will ever possess. Spiritual beings from the beginning become what they are to be for all eternity. Man, when he entered life, the Father gave the seeds of every kind and every way of life possible. Whatever seeds each man sows and cultivates will grow and bear him the proper fruit. If these seeds are vegetative, he will be like a plant. If these seeds are sensitive, he will be like an animal. If these seeds are intellectual, he will be an angel and Son of God. And if, satisfied with no created thing, he removes himself to the center of his own unity, his spiritual soul, united with God, alone in the darkness of God, who is above all things, he will surpass every created thing. Who cannot help but admire this great shape-shifter? In fact, how could one admire anything else?"<sup>3</sup>

We find this same idea of the nobility of man in William Shakespeare. Lis-

ten to the echo of Pico, as we observe Shakespeare speaking through the inner struggle of Hamlet, who, though too fearful to realize the sublime himself, demonstrates in this passage, that he was aware of that innate potential which resides, as an Ideal, in all men.

Hamlet enthuses, “What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god. The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!”<sup>4</sup>

This is the Humanist conception of man. The creative power given to man,

these battles, in your own mind. Being immersed in Classical culture develops your understanding of universal history, of the ideas behind the battles, to prepare you to act as a leader in your own time. And at the heart of truly great Classical culture—as in tragedy—the author demonstrates that a tragic destiny is not inevitable, but that there is a path of action by which tragedy may be averted.

### The American Revolution and Schiller

Often, it is from the midst of the most degraded and miserable circumstances, that leaders, equipped with powerful

ple, “We must end our isolation within Germany, and demand to become citizens of Germany.” And he said to the German people, including the Prussian Emperor, Frederick the Great, that “you can build your nation by giving us the right of citizenship.”

Moses Mendelssohn is an example of a sublime individual who, for most of his life, had to work at a regular job, twelve or more hours a day. He had very little material comfort, and yet, he never gave in to his circumstances. Instead, he focussed his life on the most beautiful ideas in the sciences and in philosophy. He was known as the Berlin Socrates. His beautiful writings on aesthetics served as an inspiration for another sublime soul, Friedrich Schiller.

Schiller also lived under oppressive conditions. He was denied the right to choose a profession. He wanted to study theology. Later, he wanted to write. Instead, the Duke commanded that he become a doctor, to serve as a medic who could be sold with his unit of mercenaries. After his first play was produced, he was threatened with jail if he wrote another. So, he had no freedom. His dramas, poetry, and philosophical writings evoked the true beauty of man, and were a threat to continued oligarchical domination. Despite the limitations placed upon him, Schiller devoted his life to fighting for the liberation of all people.

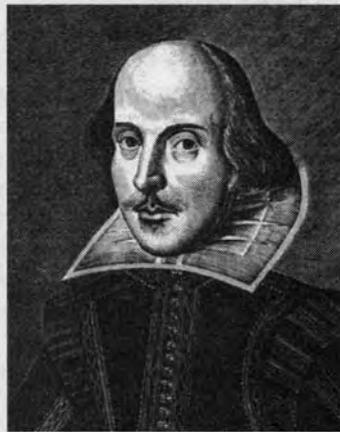
He was part of a circle which would meet regularly, to read poetry and drama, and to discuss politics. Schiller, Goethe, and Alexander von Humboldt eagerly anticipated the news from the Americas, as they were trying to bring the ideas of the American Revolution to Germany.

Schiller was inspired by the ideas of the American Revolution, including, in particular, the Declaration of Independence, a document which was a call for men to act against tyranny:

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature, and of nature’s God

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—William Shakespeare



means that we can act to continue the work of God’s creation, to act not just for our own pleasure or survival, but for two, three, five, or ten generations ahead. These are not the conceptions of academics, they come from fighters. Shakespeare, for example, was in the middle of a battle over whether England would be swallowed up by the Venetian oligarchy, and turned into an extension of the Venetian empire, or whether England would return again to take its place as a sovereign nation-state, as it had been under Henry VII, who ended the disastrous Plantagenet reign over England.

The study of history—a pleasure which has been denied to your generation—puts you on the stage, with Shakespeare and his character, Hamlet, so that you may become engaged in

ideas, can uplift the population, so they may assert their true humanity.

One example of this, we see in Germany at the end of the Eighteenth century. At that time, Germany was not a unified country. There were small duchies and principalities, many of which were ruled by local tyrants. And these oligarchic tyrants held life and death power over the people who lived there.

The oppressive conditions of life in the German lands were challenged by two collaborators, Moses Mendelssohn and Gotthold Lessing. Mendelssohn, a Jew, was denied the rights of citizenship. Jews were non-citizens. Yet, Mendelssohn did not accept his oppression. He fought to improve not only the conditions of Jews in Germany, but of all Germans. He said to the Jewish peo-

entitled them, a decent respect of the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which compel them to that separation.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation upon such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

“Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light or transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same objects, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.”

These ideas are directly echoed by Schiller in the famous Rütli Oath scene from his drama *Wilhelm Tell*:

“... there’s a limit to a tyrant’s power,  
When the oppressed can find no  
justice, when  
The burden grows unbearable—he  
reaches  
With hopeful courage up into the  
heavens  
And seizes hither his eternal rights,  
Which hang above, inalienable  
And indestructible as the stars  
themselves—  
The primal state of nature reappears,  
Where man stands opposite his  
fellow man—  
As a last resort, when not another  
means

Is of avail, the sword is given him—  
The highest of all goods we may  
defend  
From violence. Thus stand we ’fore  
our country,  
Thus stand we ’fore our wives, and  
’fore our children!”<sup>5</sup>

It should be obvious, from hearing these two passages, that there is a dialogue of ideas between the authors of the Declaration of Independence and Schiller. It is the role of the artist to rally the citizenry against oppression, by calling on the best of man, by inspiring in man the sense of his true dignity, as in the case of the Declaration of Independence and *Wilhelm Tell*.

To do this, the artist must first develop in himself those powers to know the Good, and to inspire in others the ability to know the Good, and to act on it. Schiller, in his poem, “The Artist,” directly challenges the artist to act in this way, writing, “The Dignity of Man is in your hands. Protect it / It sinks with you, with you it shall ascend.” This is a constant theme in Schiller. In one of his late plays, *The Bride of Messina*, he wrote a Prologue, in which he again took up this theme:

“True Art is not intended as a mere passing fancy; its earnest endeavor is not to transport man into a mere momentary dream of freedom, but, rather *to make him actually free*, and to do so by awakening, exercising, and developing within him his power to achieve an objective distance from the sensible world, which otherwise weighs down upon us like a dead object, pressing us like a blind force. This distance [from the sensible world—HS] gives us the power to transform the material world into the free product of our own intellect, and to exert dominion over it through ideas.”<sup>6</sup>

Note once again the attack on the Aristoteleans and their fixation on the senses, and the appeal to the intellect; the higher developed cognitive powers. And it is from this that you see where the concept of the Sublime comes from, that there is no force in the world, including your own death, that can force you to go against that higher nature of man. That is the quality we see in Dr.

King, and in Lyndon LaRouche, which demonstrates the true nature of man.

We are the inheritors of these ideas. Schiller and Goethe, Shakespeare, Mozart, the Greek dramatists, worked for us, to give to us the power to shape our society. These ideas, and the method of generating new and more powerful ideas, give us the capacity to address the following, historical paradox: Given that the nature of man is good, and we can demonstrate the power of man to act for the good through the discoveries which have been made of universal physical principles, and the ability to transmit these discoveries to increase the power of man over nature, then, why has so much of human history been so damned ugly? Why has man’s inhumanity to man dominated during most periods of human history?

#### Frankfurt School vs. the Classics

To answer this satisfactorily, I’m going to get very personal. I’m going to talk to you about what you think is “your” culture. It has to be personal, because many of you are unaware that this great heritage of Classical culture, this great legacy, which separates us from the beasts, has been deliberately taken away from you, and replaced by a culture—if you can call it that—which not only reduces you to the equivalent of human cattle, but causes you to embrace your own enslavement, in a way which makes you incapable of being aware of your own mental and emotional slavery.

Our case study will start with the following basic propositions:

1. The present dominant culture expresses an idea of man which is cynical and pessimistic. What we see in the visual arts, in music, etc., is an expression of this cynicism, a descent into ugliness.
2. There has been a conscious effort, in the promotion of this contemporary culture, to destroy the method of Classical culture, with particular focus on what Lyndon LaRouche refers to as the principle of discovery of universal physical principles. The attacks, for instance on Kepler and Leibniz, which have continued since



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—Friedrich Schiller

their day, make us prisoners of axioms derived from sense perception, and enforced through popular opinion. “There is no truth, why bother trying to master anything? Where does it get you? To get ahead, you gotta be practical, get that degree, just learn the right answers.”

3. Since contemporary popular opinion rejects the ideas of universal principles or truth, there must be no higher purpose to life, i.e., no mission for the individual.

One example from present-day culture makes this point. There was a book written for Baby Boomers called, *How to Die Broke*. It was a bestseller a couple of years ago. The advice it offered was, “Spend everything you have, don’t leave any money behind for your kids. Just make sure you have enough money to last until you die. Let them fend for themselves.” The message is clear: Don’t worry about the future you leave. Just live for all the experiences you can pack in, “go for the gusto.” Since the future will be worse, enjoy life while you can.

This is why youth today, the children of Baby Boomers, are part of a “no future” generation. If this is your view of what your life is about, then you are a slave. You have become enslaved by the culture that is imposed on you. Now, we get to the real tragedy. What is this

essence of this tragedy? That you embrace your own enslavement!

Why? Because, what you think your culture is, especially entertainment—films, television, sports, and music—has been imposed on you by an alliance of financial oligarchs from Wall Street, academic degenerates from the Frankfurt School, and organized crime, which has created disposable cutouts, known to you as “celebrities,” who are the modern-day heroes and anti-heroes. You don’t own this culture!! They own it! You don’t even own your own soul, if you tolerate this.

How did this pessimistic, bestial culture become hegemonic? Let’s take a brief look at role of television, as it relates to promoting the music, which you will then “choose” as “your own.” I would like to call your attention to an excellent pamphlet, “Turn Off Your TV,” by L. Wolfe, which reports on the conscious effort to develop television as a medium designed to turn human brains to mush.<sup>7</sup>

I presume all of you are familiar with MTV, Music-TV. What you don’t know is where it came from. In 1956, a man named Theodor Adorno, one of the chief ideologues of the Frankfurt School, wrote an essay, “Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture.”<sup>8</sup> Adorno wrote, “Television is a medium of undreamed-of psychological conditioning and control.” For Adorno and his

collaborators, television provided an ideal means to create a homogenous culture, a mass culture, through which popular opinion could be shaped and controlled, so that everyone in the country would think the same.

MTV was created to target youth in the 12- to 25-year-old range. (If you are over 25, and are still watching MTV, you must be a cultural retard—after 25, you are supposed to switch to VH1!) It was designed to appeal to the emotions, by using repeated beats and rhythms, and flashing images, with repetitive, mindless phrases. What appeared on television was an effort to recreate the grand effect of modern rock “concerts,” with flashing lights and loud noise, with a crowd chanting and shrieking so that it is almost impossible to hear what sounds are being produced on stage. The model for this was the theatrical spectacles presented by the pre-Nazi Richard Wagner at Bayreuth, in which the audience was driven to a kind of numbed ecstasy, which was later consciously used by the Nazis in their own creation of symbolic events, such as the Nuremberg rallies.

This was not accidental, in the case of MTV. It was set up explicitly to use the kind of visual and audio images which would dull the mind’s cognitive powers, by arousing in the viewers a mindless frenzy. Wolfe cites a book written by Anne Kaplan, from New York State University at Stony Brook, titled *Rock Around the Clock*. She writes, “MTV hypnotizes more than others (other television) because it consists of a series of short (four-minute) texts that maintain us in an excited state of expectation.” Viewers are “trapped by the constant hope that the next video will finally satisfy, and lured by the seductive promise of immediate plentitude, we keep endlessly consuming the short texts. MTV thus carries to an extreme a phenomenon that characterizes most of television.”<sup>9</sup>

Other studies point to the effects of prolonged exposure to MTV (by prolonged, they probably mean more than four minutes). The repetitive flashes of color and images overwhelm the visual senses, and dull the cognitive. A sociolo-

gist cited by *Time* magazine stated that watching MTV accelerates the process of thinking in images, rather than in “logic.” By “logic,” I assume they mean creativity.

One of the creators of MTV was Robert Pittman, who wrote in a retrospective on MTV, after its first ten years, that it introduced a “non-narrative form. As opposed to conventional television, where you rely on plot and continuity, we rely on mood and emotion. We make you feel a certain way as opposed to walking away with any particular knowledge.” He added, “What the kids can’t do today is follow things for too long. They get bored and distracted, their minds wander. If information is presented to them in tight fragments that don’t necessarily follow each other, kids can comprehend that.”

Lest you think that he is not conscious of the social effect this has in the dumbing down of the youth, this same Pittman told the *New York Times*, “When you are dealing with music culture, music serves as something beyond entertainment. It is really the peg that people use to identify themselves. It is representative of their values and culture.”<sup>10</sup>

### The ‘Poetry’ of Rock and Rap

So, where does “rap music” fit into this picture? I know what some of you are thinking, because I have heard this many times before: “Yeah, I know what you’re saying, in general. But rap is different. There is some great poetry in rap, some real revolutionary ideas. Sure there’s rage, but that’s just keeping it real,” i.e., the rage is justified by the oppression of life for Americans of African descent in the U.S. today.

Well, let’s start with poetry, with a “poet” who moved my generation, John Lennon of the Beatles. Listen carefully to the profound, moving ideas in an early Lennon poem, “*I Want To Hold Your Hand*”:

*“Oh yeah, I’ll tell you something,  
I think you’ll understand,  
When I’ll say that something,  
I wanna hold your hand  
I wanna hold your hand  
I wanna hold your hand.”*

*“Oh please, say to me,  
You’ll let me be your man.  
And please, say to me  
You’ll let me hold your hand  
You’ll let me hold your hand,  
I wanna hold your hand. . . .”*

Oh, yeah! Not only is the poetry bad, but the Beatles played out of tune, and they sang off key. And when they performed, your parents were excited, your mothers screamed. Now you know why your parents are nuts! Let’s listen to the words of a more contemporary “poet,” the eminent Eminem, who is considered, by some so-called critics, to be the great angry young white poet, in his evocative, “*BLOW MY BUZZ*”:

*“Hmm, yeah  
This just one of them days when yo’ ass  
just wanna chill out  
And motherf\*\*kers be all in yo’ ear and  
shit, yknowhat I’m sayin?  
Or that naggin bitch, that just like to  
hear herself talk  
Blowin all yo’ high away  
Now that’s some f\*\*ked up shit, heh  
But it happens, yknowhat I’m sayin? Yo*

*“Yo yo yo yo  
Schizophrenia, how many of ya got it?  
How many motherf\*\*kers can say they  
psychotic?  
How many motherf\*\*kers can say they  
brain dry-rotted from pot?  
You got it like I got it or not?  
If you did, you would know just what  
I’m talking bout  
When your tongue’s rottin out from*

*cotton mouth  
When you end up becoming so  
dependent on weed  
That you end up spending a G in the  
vendin machine . . .”*

Chorus

*“Blow, my, buzz  
You want to want to just don’t blow,  
my, buzz  
(Do what you want to) And I’m gon sit  
here and just roll, my, drugs  
(Smoke my weeee) And if you talk  
I’m gonna f\*\*k, you, up  
(I might just whoop yo’ ass) Just don’t  
say shit and we’ll be cool. . . .”*

Delightful, eh?

Now, let me get to the point that I think that you are going to have to work on—understanding that “your” culture is not really yours. The embrace of “gangsta” rap by youth in general, but especially by the African-American community, and the idea that it is somehow a revolutionary art form, which speaks to your soul, is part of a grand delusion.

Not that long ago, people in this country were marching for Civil Rights, fighting for the idea of human dignity. They refused to go to the back of the bus, refused to be denied the right to vote, refused to be scared by men wearing white robes and pointed hats, which covered up their pointy heads. Instead, they went out and fought for the rights of all mankind, led by Dr. King. And this movement changed history, as the leadership of the Civil Rights movement



**The present dominant culture expresses an idea of man which is cynical and pessimistic. What we see in the visual arts, in music, and so forth, is an expression of this cynicism, a descent into ugliness.**

*Rapper Eminem*

insisted that Constitutional principles, which are both explicit and implied, are the birthright of all men and women, not just in the U.S., but worldwide. Is this sense of the dignity of man reflected at all, in rap?

### Embracing Oppression

As a young man, Sean Combs, aka Puff Daddy, aka P. Diddy, the rapster, entrepreneur and fashion mogul, said, "I wanna be a modern Mozart." Years later, after having "made it," he said, of his new identity, "If you wanna be a motherf\*\*kin thug, you gots to live and die a thug. Only thing I know is dead or in jail or about to be."

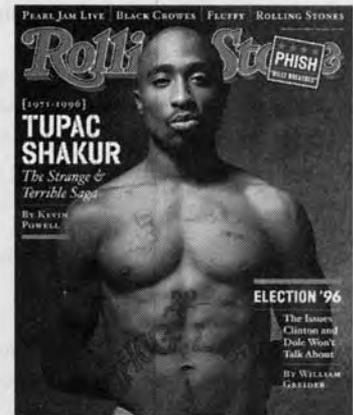
When he was a young boy, his father, who was a drug dealer, was shot and killed. Today, he is a wealthy man, who speaks of rap as a liberating force. The man who made a lot of that money for him, Christopher Wallace, aka, Biggy Smalls, aka the Notorious B.I.G., who had been a crack dealer before he became a rapper, was murdered in 1997, in what was purported to be revenge for the murder of Tupac Shakur, in an early stage of an ongoing battle for supremacy between East Coast and West Coast music labels.<sup>11</sup>

Tupac Shakur was murdered in Las Vegas in September 1996. His mother was Afeni Shakur, who was a member of the Black Panther Party, a movement which grew after the assassination of Dr. King. With King's death, the Department of Justice (D.O.J.) and the F.B.I.—which had consistently harassed him during his life—moved to destroy his legacy. As part of this D.O.J./F.B.I. deployment, Afeni Shakur was framed up, and sent to jail. Ultimately, she was acquitted, but by then she was broken, and spent most of the next 20 years in and out of rehab centers, with a drug addiction. Her son, Tupac, spent his youth being shuttled around from family friend to family friend. His godfather was Geronimo Pratt, another Black Panther who was framed up by the D.O.J.

Despite these hardships, Tupac had other options besides that of the "thug life." He attended the High School for the Performing Arts in Baltimore,

**Tupac Shakur was embracing his own victimization, playing the role assigned to him by those who had opposed Dr. King, and who wished to promote the idea of African-American youth as savages. The rap culture reinforces the feeling of hopelessness.**

*Tupac Shakur*



where he studied ballet, theater, and poetry. His teachers at Baltimore said he had a great affinity for drama. Yet, in choosing the life of a "gangsta rap" star, he adopted the belief that anger and rage pave the road to liberation from the oppression and racism around him.

His defenders, those who claim him as an artist, argue that he was a "talented lyricist with a gift for storytelling," and that his poetry speaks for itself. Let's listen to the beginning of one of these poems, titled "F\*\*k the World."

*"Who you callin' rapist??  
ain't that a bitch  
you devils are so two faced  
wanna see me locked in chains  
dropped in shame  
and gotten socked by these crooked cops  
and game  
f\*\*kin' with tha young black male  
tryin' ta stack bail  
and stay away from tha packed jails  
told tha judge i'm in danger  
and that's why I had that 45 with one  
in tha chamber  
F\*\*k tha World.*

*"their tryin' ta say that I don't care  
I woke up screamin' f\*\*k tha world  
their tryin' ta say that I don't care  
just woke up and scream f\*\*k tha  
world  
their tryin' ta say that I don't care  
I woke up and screamed f\*\*k tha world  
their tryin' ta say that I don't care  
Just got up and screamed f\*\*k tha  
World...."*

In reality, Tupac Shakur was embracing his own victimization, playing the role assigned to him by those who had opposed Dr. King, and who wished to promote the idea of African-American youth as savages. Shortly after he had achieved "success" in rapping, and in movies, Tupac was gunned down, followed in short order by his "rival," Biggie Smalls. These killings strengthened the image that the self-identification by rappers as "thugs" had created. It sent a message to frightened parents in the suburbs, which was loud and clear: "This is what Civil Rights got us, drug-runners and gangsters who endanger us, men who hate women, hate police, and are a threat to society."<sup>12</sup> (What was even more frightening to parents in the suburbs was, that their children were gobbling up rap CD's. There are estimates that 75 percent of rap sales are to white consumers.)

As preposterous as it seems, there are some defenders of rap and hip hop who say that it is the natural outcome of the Civil Rights movement, that rap is, in fact, a product of the Civil Rights struggle of the 1960's. The *Los Angeles Times* recently reported on demonstrators who were protesting the arrests of employees of West Coast rap mogul Suge Knight (the founder of Death Row records, who was in the car with Tupac when he was shot), who were arrested as part of an investigation of several killings related to the "music industry."<sup>13</sup> The demonstrators held signs equating the attacks on Knight's operations to the persecu-

tion, by the D.O.J., of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, and their subsequent assassinations!

To get inside this story, it is necessary to discover how rap moved from street corners in the Bronx to “mainstream” culture on MTV.

### Who Really Owns This Culture?

In a generally positive book on hip hop, critic Nelson George writes, “One of the prevailing assumptions around hip hop is that it was . . . solely African-American created, owned, controlled and consumed. It’s an appealing myth—but the evidence just isn’t there to support it. . . . I’d argue that without white entrepreneurial involvement hip hop culture wouldn’t have survived its first half decade on vinyl.”<sup>14</sup>

What George doesn’t tell his readers is who these white entrepreneurs are. A brief overview of “Who’s Who” in the record business, leads one to the unmistakable conclusion that the recording industry, as far as the production, distribution, and popularization of rock and rap is concerned, is under the control of a syndicate representing a marriage between organized-crime networks and high-level fixers on Wall Street.<sup>15</sup>

The first rap recording was “Rapper’s Delight,” which was released by Sugar Hill Records in 1979. Sugar Hill was nominally a Black-owned label which, by 1979, had fallen into deep debt. That debt was covered by one Morris Levy, who had been identified by the New York State Crime Commission in 1972 as “the front man for the syndicate [i.e., organized crime] in the record business.” Levy was an operative for the Genovese family. He was co-owner of another label at that time, Primo Records. The other co-owner was Tommy Eboli, who was then the boss of the Genovese family.

Following its success with “Rapper’s Delight,” and with backing from Levy, Sugar Hill went to MCA in 1983, looking for bigger backing and more opportunities in the expanding area of rap/hip hop. Levy brought in Sal Pisello for these negotiations. Pisello was a high-ranking figure in the Gambino family, another of New York City’s organized-crime fami-

lies. He was under investigation at that time for heroin trafficking. Another associate of Levy was Vincent “Vinnie the Chin” Gigante, later boss of the Genovese family, who was also part of the organized-crime families’ involvement in the record business. Another associate of Levy in the record business was Gaetano Vastola. When Vastola was indicted for his role in a vast organized-crime conspiracy, which included money laundering through the record business, his attorney was Roy Cohn, a long-time organized-crime fixer and vicious opponent of Lyndon LaRouche.

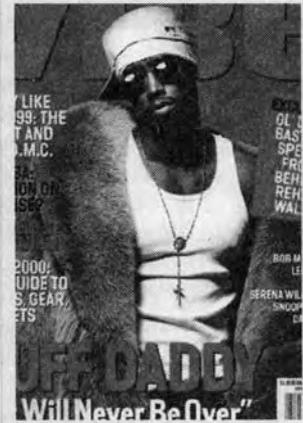
The “Godfather” of MCA (which

Lansky’s Intertel, was brought in, to limit the damage to the company<sup>17</sup> Members of the MCA Board at that time included top Democratic Party fixer Robert Strauss, and one of Wall Street’s top investment bankers, Felix Rohatyn of Lazard Freres.

A second record label instrumental in production and promotion of rap was Warner Communications, which, along with MCA, Capitol-EMI, CBS, and Polygram, dominates the music industry. Warner was in the doldrums when it was purchased by the Kinney Parking Company of New Jersey. Kinney was run by Steve Ross. Parking lots are very

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*Sean Combs, aka Puff Daddy*



included Universal Pictures) was the late Hollywood heavyweight Lew Wasserman, whose close friend and ally was Sidney Korshak, known to all in Los Angeles as a “former” syndicate lawyer from Chicago. Wasserman got his start with mob networks in Cleveland, working for Mo Dalitz’s gang.<sup>16</sup>

Now you know why they call it “gangsta rap!”

In 1986, when Levy’s network, which included leading organized-crime operatives in the very recording companies which had backed rap from the start, was hit with a 117-count indictment, the high-level suits on the board of MCA stepped in, to arrange a fix. Levy was represented by attorneys from Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, one of the top firms on Wall Street. Bill Hundley, a former top D.O.J. official, who left the Department to go to work for Meyer

popular with the mob, as they serve as excellent fronts for money laundering, because a lot of cash passes through them on any given day. Kinney had been set up by the Meyer Lansky gang, directly by Abner “Longy” Zwillman, who was known as one of the most vicious hitmen in New Jersey in the postwar period.

Some years later, Warner Communications founded MTV. Ross, who got his start as an employee of the Lansky mob, had a direct hand in its founding. Record labels which were subsidiaries of Warner, were among the most prominent in promoting rap in the late 1980’s and 1990’s. Warner Communications later merged with Time, and then with AOL.<sup>18</sup>

Even some of the so-called independent labels were the product of organized-crime operations. Russell Simmons, whose Def Jam is celebrated as an

example of “Black entrepreneurship,” acknowledges that his operation only came into existence through the beneficence of Walter Yetnikoff of CBS, and the junk bond operator Ronald Perelman, who made his fortune through his alliance with Michael Milken. Perelman was one of the original “Milken’s Monsters,” a gang which used access to money laundered from Lansky’s operations, to make a run at taking over corporate America—until Milken was sent to prison in 1988.

There is no great culture, nor artistic vision, in this. The rap culture is a dirty, ugly cesspool, in which disposable “artists,” such as Tupac and Biggie Smalls, are used up and then discarded. It is a culture which reinforces the feeling of hopelessness, of victimization. Nelson George, one of its most ardent supporters (although, at times, a harsh critic), is forced to admit that, “There is an elemental nihilism in the most controversial crack-era hip hop that wasn’t concocted by the rappers, but reflects the mentality and fears of young Americans of every color and class living in an exhausting, edgy existence in and out of big cities.”<sup>19</sup> And it is not just about money. It is unlikely that the real thugs, such as Longy Zwillman or Steve Ross, got together and said, “Hey, boys, let’s run this parking lot gig so we can mess with the minds of people, make them pessimistic and cynical, so we can keep ripping them off.”

But on a higher level—the level of the Frankfurt School and Wall Street—that is exactly what they were doing, in the creation of the “counterculture,” which is now entrenched as the dominant culture. In launching this, they were trying to destroy, in you, the optimism, which would engender in you the intent to fight for a better future. They deliberately set out to obliterate in you any chance that you would see yourself as human, as the crown of creation.

The task in front of you, as leaders of the growing international LaRouche Youth Movement, is to take seriously Schiller’s challenge, that although you live in *this* century, you must be from *another* century. You must develop the strength to reject the “popular culture”

of this century, which has been imposed on you, and, instead, see in yourself the Ideal man; see the Ideal in others. Help others to recognize that they have become enslaved by something which is not “theirs,” but is a bestial, alien force designed to root out what is human in them. Help them overcome their fears, and fight that sense of littleness which causes them to run with the pack.

We have a great weapon to aid in this fight. It is called Classical culture. It is a culture which develops the human mind, enhances the powers of concentration, which will enable you to see the dignity of your fellow man. And, by doing so, it increases your power, and the power of mankind, to overcome the otherwise tragic outcome we face. As Lyndon LaRouche has stressed, repeatedly, the tragic outcome—a New Dark Age—is not inevitable, if we act to free people from the scourge of popular opinion, so that every person on this planet, and especially every young person, may realize their potential to be an actor on the stage of history.

—Harley Schlanger

1. Martin Luther King, Jr., Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, December 10, 1964, in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. by James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1986).
2. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., “How Bertrand Russell Became an Evil Man: Reflections on Tragedy and Hope,” *Fidelio*, Fall 1994 (Vol. III, No. 3).
3. Pico della Mirandola, “Oration on the Dignity of Man,” trans. by Richard Hooker, in *Reading About the World, Vol. I* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999).
4. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, Act II, Sc. 2. For a sharp, concise report on the tragedy of Hamlet, see Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., “The Historical Individual,” *Executive Intelligence Review*, Nov. 1, 2002 (Vol. 29, No. 42).
5. Friedrich Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, speech by Stauffacher, Act 2, Sc. 2, in *Friedrich Schiller: Poet of Freedom, Vol. II*, ed. and trans. by William F. Wertz, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Schiller Institute: 1988).
6. Friedrich Schiller, “On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy” (Prologue to *The Bride of Messina*), quoted in Gabriele Chaitkin, “Friedrich Schiller, Poet of America,” *The New Federalist*, Nov. 11, 1996 (Vol. X, No. 44); see also trans. by George Gregory,

*Fidelio*, Spring 1993, Vol. II, No. 1.

7. L. Wolfe, “Turn Off Your TV,” reprinted from *The New Federalist*, 1999.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 21. For more on Adorno and the Frankfurt School, see Michael Minnicino, “The New Dark Age: The Frankfurt School and “Political Correctness,” *Fidelio*, Winter 1992 (Vol. I, No. 1).
9. *Ibid.*, quoted on p. 68.
10. *Ibid.*, quoted on p. 77.
11. Ironically, Biggie Small’s first major album was titled “Ready To Die,” and was released in 1994 by Sean Combs’ Bad Boy Entertainment label, the same label which took advantage of his death, with the release of an album “Life After Death,” less than three weeks after his murder.
12. One rap group even took the name, “Menace II Society.”
13. Whether rap and hip hop can even be called “music” is debatable. A leading defender of rap, author and critic Nelson George, writes that the practice of “sampling,” by which rap recordings borrow instrumental accompaniment from other recordings, as the background mix to the rapper, is a departure from earlier musical innovations by Black musicians, such as jazz and blues, the which were often developed by classically trained musicians. In his book, “hip hop America,” he quotes a musician named Mtume, who blasted hip hop “for its slavish reliance on record sampling,” adding that “this is the first generation of African-Americans not to be extending the range of music.” According to George, it upset Mtume “that so many hip hop producers had no understanding of theory, could play no instruments, and viewed a large record collection [from which ‘samples’ could be gleaned—HS] as the only essential tool of record making.”
14. Nelson George, *hip hop America* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1998), p. 57.
15. A good starting point for investigating this marriage is William Knoedelseder’s book, *Stiffed: A True Story of MCA, the Music Business, and the Mafia* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).
16. For more on the dark side of MCA, see Dan Moldea, *Dark Victory: Ronald Reagan, MCA and the Mob* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987).
17. See *Dope, Inc.: The Book That Drove Kissinger Crazy* (Washington, D.C.: Executive Intelligence Review, 1992), pp. 498-99, for Hundley’s background.
18. For more on Ross and Warner Communications, see Connie Bruck, *Master of the Game: Steve Ross and the Creation of Time Warner* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).
19. Nelson George, *op. cit.*, p. 49.