

SOME LIBERATION THEORY

Paolo Freire has been very important in the development of theory and practice (PRAXIS) in the anti-racism movement in this country. Not only was his influence great, both in terms of his teachings and writings, but more than anybody else I can think of, he expressed the kind of things that the emerging movement in the 1970s was trying to do, whether or not those involved had studied his works or not. Because of his great accuracy and humanity, many people who have struggled through painful situations, voiced their dreams and started to set up programmes to meet their goals, read his words and recognise themselves.

Freire's theory is that oppression dehumanises both the oppressor and the oppressed, and true liberation is a process of enabling all human beings to live according to what is best in human capacity. This means that the situation of oppression must be brought to consciousness (conscientization), emotions worked through, plans made and action taken, sometimes separately, but always in human solidarity.

Despite the sexism of the translation (it's surely time for an inclusive language version!) Pedagogy of the Oppressed is still worth reading. I can't even begin to do justice to the insights which helped so many of us:

- the liberation and restoration of humanity, with loving care for both oppressed and oppressor;

- oppressed objects becoming subjects, naming reality and seeking their own education which changes the situation;

- violence embedded in injustice and domination;

- love, courage, hope, dialogue, trust, critical thinking;

- anti-dialogical actions like cultural invasion maintaining dominance and therefore preventing true humanisation which is the vocation of humanity;

- development, true transformation, consciousness and revolutionary action: cultural synthesis.

- what is appropriate for members of the oppressed group who have been co-opted into the oppressor group (both groups have responsibilities here). Their humanisation and liberation requires a different kind of conscientisation and education, and different forms of action.

Oppressors and Oppressed have different needs and tasks

In the 1970s, Maori, Pakeha and other Polynesian groups were all responding to the same data. Much of that data was put together by research or experientially through action, some of it was uncovered by a new reading of existing data from new analytic hypotheses: mainly, that racism probably was operating.

It soon became clear that, while we were responding to the same data, those who belonged to or with the dominant/oppressor group and those who belonged to the oppressed group(s) had different

needs and different responses were appropriate.

Therefore it was necessary to develop different but cointentional processes of education and action, although action by members of the oppressor group should be consultative. Sometimes action will be joint. The basic idea was to use Pakeha energy to shift Pakeha (sometimes called "white on white") recognising that Maori people need to use their energy primarily for their own development tasks.

DECOLONISATION - CONSCIENTISATION OF COLONISED PEOPLE

Effects of colonisation are left on the colonised peoples, both as individuals and as groups. One of the best writers about decolonisation is Paolo Freire, in a book called Pedagogy of the Oppressed. He says that oppressed peoples have to decolonise themselves by understanding what has happened to them, understanding what their current situation is, and planning for change. He says that consciousness is raised around what he calls "generative themes". Culture is a primary generative theme.

Conscientisation for Maori (and other Pacific peoples in different specific ways) is based around decolonisation. For many Maori individuals and families survival had become a basic preoccupation. Coming together again in larger groupings to share for survival is a huge step. The first planning comes out of co-operation for subsistence and survival. As basic survival is accomplished, critical reflection and consciousnessraising begins, around cultural themes, and collective survival is replaced by subsistence. The people affirm their identity. They sort out questions of leadership which have been confused by the games colonisers play. They work to restore relationships which colonisation has damaged. They call back people who have been taken away or compromised by the colonisers. As the people develop their vision, they begin to plan longer term. The next stage grows out of subsistence security, and moves through vision to planning for development. Subsistence plus is a stage where something is set aside to enable the first step to be taken in the development plan. This may be a financial venture, or an investment in skills: such as using computers, or enabling somebody from the group to take up an educational opening to bring information back to the group.

Cultural renewal requires an economic base. To implement their plans, the people search for an economic base. Cultural and economic development requires a political base.

In his book Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou, Rangi Walker makes the point that many Maori people, whether in iwi or hapu or mixed iwi groups, have moved through a number of these stages. Massive Maori energy has gone into conscious-raising, structural analysis under the influence of people like Philippe Fanchette, works of healing and action for development. Urban groupings and small, impoverished hapu, particularly in the rural sector, have been pursuing development strategies for some time, as have larger iwi.

The search for an economic base happens on varying levels or scales. Some are big and pan-Maori or inter-tribal. Some are large scale based on iwi trusts. Some have been long-term, growing out of the incorporations of the 1930s. Some are as small as one fishing boat. Tourism, forestry, and investment in buildings and companies are all possible Maori economic enterprises. Principles of sustainability and ecological soundness are factored into many tribal enterprises. Ventures in combination with big companies and multinationals increase the marketplace pressures.

The search for a political base includes a reassertion of te tino Rangatiratanga. Each iwi has its own rangatiratanga which is the basis for its cooperation with any other group. Examples of working towards a political base would be the 1990 Don't Vote campaign; calls for constitutional reform; the development of Maori Congress; campaigns for Maori enrolment; international linking with other indigenous movements and the United Nations; pressures on political parties; and efforts to strategise for MMP.

DECOLONISATION - CONSCIENTISATION OF COLONISERS

Conscientisation for members of the colonising group is different, partly because there are power differentials within it. Groups which are identifiable by class, caste race/ethnicity or gender have their own consciousness raising and education to do. At the same time, they need to do some work around their settler identity. This is what some of the Tauwiwi discussions in the context of Te Tiriti are about.

Freire calls this "co-intentional" education. That is, the settler side are processing the same historical and situational information as the colonised group, but from a different direction. To bring to light what has been hidden, to notice what has been ignored, and to admit what has been denied.

The more powerful the person is within the settler group, the more difficult this task will be. Many people in the colonising group were not themselves powerful but carried out the intentions of the powerful. This middle group can shift from identifying with ruling interests and ally themselves with the oppressed. This requires a lot of learning and developing trustworthiness.

It is also important for people from the dominant group to deal with responses of guilt and fear, so that they can take responsibility for settler actions and institutions, overcoming history. To become change agents in their own world. This means becoming more aware of their own culture, its power and dominance, and learning new skills for co-operating with members of other groups.

Supporting Maori initiatives is a very high priority, the top priority some would say. Challenging the old system and its guardians, and attempting to develop new policies and practices is also a high priority. Learning to work co-operatively and collectively is important.

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THE FACES OF RACISM

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Racism has many faces. Some of them may be veiled by others frankly overt - unmasked.

These faces may be grouped into three main forms - personal racism, cultural racism and institutional racism.

Personal racism affects individuals or groups. It occurs when people of one group are seen inferior to another because of skin colour or ethnic origin. It belongs to those situations in which an individual is directly diminished or discriminated against on grounds of race.

In our country as in others, it may be manifested in jokes, disparaging comment and prejudiced attitudes. It may occur in rental housing, unequal distribution of opportunity and in our classrooms. Personal racism is the form that cuts most keenly at individual people. It is the variety that diminishes a person in their own eyes. It attacks the fount of personal identity and destroys a sense of self worth, as well as denying the indigenous person access to resources and opportunities in the larger society.

Cultural racism is less obvious than the more open areas of prejudice between individuals. It is entrenched philosophy and beliefs. Its most obvious form in New Zealand is in the assumption that Pakeha culture, lifestyle and values are superior to those of other New Zealand cultures, notably those of Maori and Polynesian people.

It is rooted in the 19th century heritage of unshakeable belief in the cultural superiority of Europeans. It is a direct inheritance of colonialism and imperialism, and embodies in the ethos of the dominant group and thence the mind of the individual within the group. Without challenge and change this is transmitted to successive generations in the pre-school stage of development and becomes a recurrent theme in subsequent socialisation.

Despite the fact that tenets of Pakeha culture become fractured, eroded or obsolete (for example the nature of family, the role of marriage and the position of women) the assumptions of cultural superiority persist.

One of the most pervasive forms of cultural racism is the assumption that Pakeha values, beliefs and systems are "normal". This places Maori values, beliefs and systems in the category of "exotic". Provision for Maori cultural preference thus become an "extra". That which sees provision for Maoritanga as anything other than a normal ingredient of our national culture is essentially culturally racist.

However, the most damaging aspect of cultural racism is the underlying notion of superiority. It is seldom overtly stated in modern New Zealand, but it is constantly implied in advertising, in education and in the marketplace.

One of the ways in which this parcel of attitudes impacts on Maori culture is that the power culture, because it has the authority of "superiority", takes to itself the right to select those aspects of Maoritanga it wants to use or include in general New Zealand culture.

These selections range from the tail motif on our national airline to the inclusion of Maori words in the Dictionary of New Zealand English.

It must be stressed that it is not the inclusion of Maori symbols and elements in the national culture that marks cultural racism. It is the arrogantly assumed "right" to select those elements and to use them in ways which hollow them and diminish their cultural importance.

Whilst personal and cultural racism may be described in their own right, institutional racism is observed from its effects. It is a bias in our social and administrative institutions that automatically benefits the dominant race or culture, while penalising minority and subordinate groups.

The effects of institutional racism are graphically illustrated in our social statistics. For virtually every negative statistic in education, crime, child abuse, infant mortality, health and employment, the Maori figures are overwhelmingly dominant. In virtually every positive statistic in these areas, Maori are in miniscule proportion, if not entirely absent.

It is plain that the institutions, by which New Zealand society governs itself, distributes its resources and produces wealth, do not serve Maori people but they do clearly serve the great bulk of Pakeha people.

The persistent myth advanced to explain the cause of Maori disadvantage is that the Maori have not "adapted" or have "failed" to grasp the opportunity that society offers. This is the notion that poverty is the fault of the poor.

The fact is, though, that New Zealand institutions manifest a monocultural bias and the culture which shapes and directs that bias is Pakehatanga. The bias can be observed operating in law, government, the professions, health care, land ownership, welfare practices, education, town planning, the police, finance, business and spoken language. It permeates the media and our national economic life. If one is outside, one sees it as "the system". If one is cocooned within it, one sees it as the normal condition of existence.

Institutional racism is the basic weapon that has driven the Maori into the role of outsiders and strangers in their own land. The more recent identification of institutional racism as the basic evil constraining Maori participation in New Zealand life, has caused something of a furore. The monocultural institutions means that they personally are therefore accused of being 'racist'. The

resultant resentment has been bitter and a barrier to change. It has polarised attitudes and clouded the capacity for dealing with the issue of monoculturalism.

If a person works within an institution that practices institutional racism, that person need not necessarily be racist. However, if those in positions of influence within institutions do not work to reduce and eliminate the monocultural bias that disadvantages Maori and minorities, they can be accused of collaborating with the system, and therefore of being racist themselves. In a system of monocultural/racist policies and practices, individual behaviour when operating these policies and practices, becomes translated into personal reflection of racism.

Institutional racism can be combatted only by a conscious effort to make our institutions more culturally inclusive in their character, more accommodating of cultural difference. This does not begin and end at "the counter". The change must penetrate to the recruitment and qualifications which shape the authority structures themselves. We are not talking of mere redecoration of the waiting room so that clients feel more comfortable.

Affirmative action programmes aimed at reducing the monocultural bias in our institutions are an essential ingredient of change.

The first stage of change to a more culturally inclusive New Zealand is the recognition of biculturalism. This involves both the place and the status of Maoritanga in our institutional arrangements.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Institutional racism exists when one racial (cultural or ethnic) group, who are not Indigenous, make the *assumption* or are committed to the belief that their values, practices and systems are superior to any other,
and

because they have set up (usually by force), the systems and institutions of the community/society, they then have the *power* to enforce all others to conform to that one set of values, practices and systems.

Institutional Racism benefits the group who have set it up, and all individuals who belong to the institution are implicated, however unwittingly.

Institutional Racism is not measured by individuals intentions, but by the collective outcomes -the data and statistics produced by the institution and the feedback from the people who are consistently disadvantaged.

Institutional racism disadvantages indigenous or First Nation Peoples most drastically of all groups. This is borne out in any negative health, morbidity, mortality statistic produced by this country, and any other place where institutional racism is practised.