Cornel West

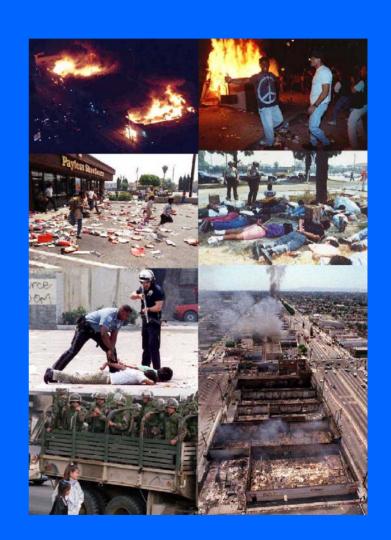## The Struggle for Freedom in Education-Race Matters

About West

- Cornel West has been known for his view on "race relations".

- This is seen in his book titled *Race Matters*.

- In *Race Matters,* West emphasizes that minority cultures should be viewed as "constitutive elements of life" (Schultz, 2001, 165). In other words, minorities should be viewed as essential components in society

- In *Race Matters,* West's goal is to talk about and "confront" major race issues that still exist in the 1990s (Schultz, 2001). He mainly focuses on the black community.

West Continued

- If we confront these race issues, West believes that society will then "ensure that all American children receive just and fair opportunities to develop well in American society" (Schultz, 2001, 165)

- In order to create equality West stresses the creation of "a new framework for the discussion of racial issues, which is positive and affirmative in our conceptualization of one another" (Schultz, 2001, 165).

- In other words, society must create a new way to discuss race, where people will view all races in a positive light.

The Rodney King Case

- Rodney King, a black man, was pulled over after a car chase. He refused to comply with police officers, but was cruelly beaten with batons, kicked and tasered.
- He suffered permanent damage to his face; however the police officers were found not guilty of violating Kings "constitutional rights" (The Nizkor Project).
- This verdict was in 1992 causing a huge riot in Los Angeles among the black community, where at least fifty people were killed.
- Eventually two of the officers were found guilty; however, West believes this is a prime example of the segregation that still exists within society.
- People outside of the black community just seemed to ignore the fact that this event occurred and went on with their lives.
- http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/orgs/canadian/canada/justice/hate-motivated-violence/hmv-006-00.html

Ideas on society in the 1990s

- West believes there is a noticeable decline in race relations in the 1990s.

- The United States is becoming more segregated.

- This is especially seen within liberal and conservative views on race.

Liberal and Conservative View on Race Issues

- On race issues, the liberals believe that government aide is the solution in resolving the race division.

- However, this is a problem because it only emphasizes the "economic dimension" of the race issue (Schultz, 2001,166).

- Conservatives stress the need for change in the black community. This includes a belief that black males provide greater support for their families and reduce involvement in crimes.

- The conservative view only emphasizes "immoral actions, while ignoring the immoral **circumstances** that haunt fellow citizens" (Shultz, 2001, 166).

- West believes that both liberals and conservatives still emphasize the black population as "problem people" and not "fellow American citizens" (Schultz, 2001, 167).

Liberal and Conservative View Continued

- Liberals feel that the black population should be "integrated" into white society and conservatives feel the black community should be "well behaved" according to the white way of life (Schultz, 2001).

- West emphasizes that the black community is neither an "addition" or "defection" within society (Schultz, 2001, 167).

- Instead the black community is a "constitutive elements of that life" (Shultz, 2001, 167)

- In other words, essential components of society.

West's view on Race

- One must start with the problems in America's society, instead of "problems" within minority communities.
- Feels that white society ignores minority needs and instead wants minorities to try and "fit in" with society (Shultz, 2001, 168).
- This causes Black nationalism, which is a revolt to "fitting in" (Schultz, 2001, 168).
- As long as racial injustice continues to exist, so will black nationalism.
- Afro centrism is another type of black nationalism, which tries to establish "African identity" (Schultz, 2001, 168).
- However, West believes Afro centrism only focus on the narrow topics of "black doings and sufferings" (Schultz, 2001, 168).
- Needs to emphasize a diverse amount of issues within the community.

Establishing a new framework in society

- West stresses "the need to begin with a frank acknowledgement of the basic humanness and Americanness of each of us" (Schultz, 2001, 168).
- This has not been shown within the past decade.
- In the 1990s, West believed that society had become more segregated.
- "86% of white suburban Americans, live within communities that are less then 1% black" (Schultz, 2001, pg 168).

The Problem With Society

- There has been a decrease with the amount of jobs within cities (where there is a majority of minorities) because industries have moved to cheaper areas in the United States or are now overseas (Schultz, 2001).

- "An eroding tax base", which leads to a cut in government programs (Schultz, 2001, 168).

- Thus this results in "unemployment, hunger, homelessness, and sickness for millions" (Schultz, 2001, 2008)

Spiritual Impoverishment

- Because of the developing unemployment and poverty, "spiritual impoverishment" occurs within the minority communities (Schultz, 2001, 168).

- Spiritual impoverishment involves the "absence of love and self of others" (Schultz, 2001, 168).

- Thus, according to West, this causes "cultural denudement" (Schultz, 2001). In other words, people are stripped of their cultural roots. This is seen especially in children.

- Support networks no longer exists.

Problems within society continued

- Having no support networks in society, causes "random nows with acquiring pleasure, property, and power" (Schultz, 2001, 169) .

- Has a huge effect on the poorer populations who turn to violence, in order to seek "pleasure, property, and power" (Schultz, 2001, 169).

Political Problems

- West believes the political atmosphere is where "images, not ideas dominate, where politicians spend more time raising money than debating issues" (Schultz, 2001, 169).

- There is also a lot of greed within the political system.

- Politics also seem to ignore blacks, females, and homosexual issues (Schultz, 2001).

What can be done in society

- West emphasizes that "citizens must admit that the most valuable sources for help, hope, and power consist of ourselves and our common history" (Schultz, 2001, 169).

- We must also "focus our attention on the public square", or the needs of the common good. Neglect in the sewage system, streets, and other areas of the community shows the "low priority society places on common life" (Schultz, 2001, 169).

- We see this disregard for human life, when 1 out of every five children in the United States lives in poverty (Schultz, 2001). This includes "one out of every two black children and two out of ever five Hispanic children" (Schultz, 2001, 169).

- Parents are overburdened with the ills of society, and therefore can not give their children both "spiritual and cultural quality" (Schultz, 2001, 169).

What Can be done continued

- In order to protect children and society, West wants the formation of a "large-scale public intervention program to ensure access to basic social goods-housing, food, health care, education, etc" (Schultz, 2001, 170).

- Lastly society needs to develop new leadership

- Leaders "who can situate themselves with a larger historical narrative of this country and our world, who can grasp, the complex dynamics of our people hood and imagine a future grounded in the best of our past, yet who are attuned to the frightening obstacles that now perplex us. " (Schultz, 2001, 170).

- Leader must have democratic ideas and each provide "freedom, democracy, and equality to the landless, propertyless, and luckless (Schultz, 2001, 170).

- 21st century leaders must create a "multiracial" democracy in a xenophobic world" (Schultz, 2001, 170).

References

- Schultz, Fred. (2001) *Sources.* Connecticut: McGraw Hill.
- Hate-Motivated Violence (1991).
- http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/orgs/canadian/canada/justice/hate-motivated-violence/hmv-006-00.html