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Predicting the Next Juvenile Revolution

by Denis Rancourt / August 30th, 2015

The establishment, not so very long ago, had a healthy fear of juveniles. In the 1950s:

“ A thousand conferences, agencies, committees, and newspapers alerted the country [USA] to the danger. Juvenile delinquency was the only rebellion around, and it had to be stopped. Articles on teenage delinquency gushed forth. Experts labelled it a “national epidemic,” projecting some two and a half million cases. “Unless this cancer is checked early enough,” warned one popular book, *1,000,000 Delinquents* (1955), “it can go on spreading and contaminate many good cells in our society....”¹

Although politicians called for it, there was no purge like there was against Communism, only a tightening of civil and institutional controls, including city-wide curfews. But the genie was out of the bottle due to changing economic reality and modern technology:

“ The greater access to money and especially to automobiles, which allowed the young to escape watchful parents, fostered their identities as individuals with specific sexual, musical, and consuming needs.”²

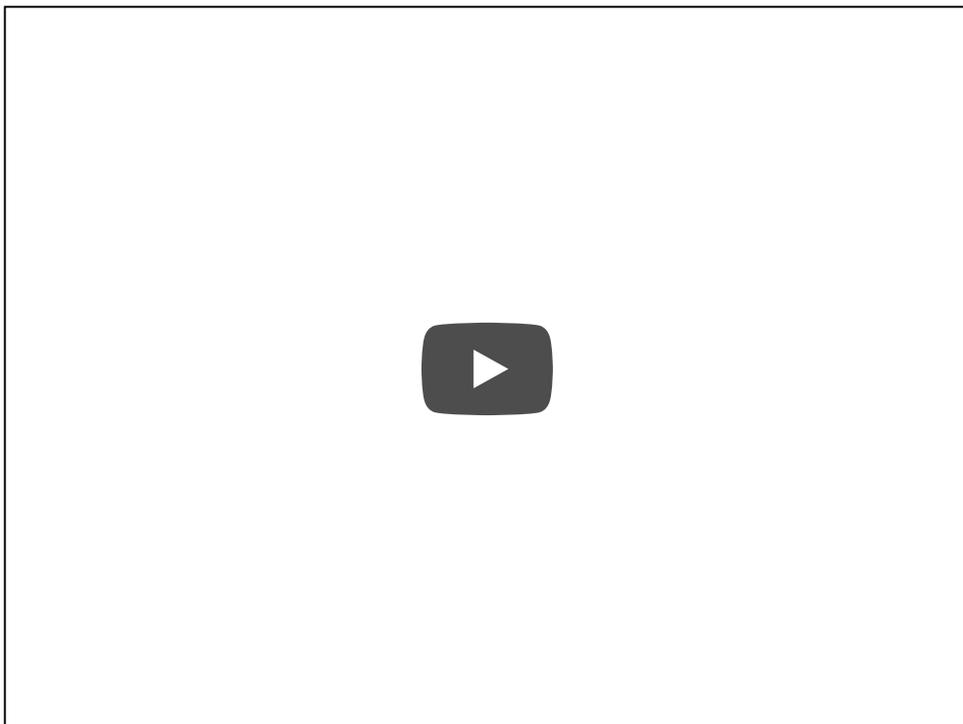
However, the first modern juvenile revolution did not occur until newly populated campuses exploded in the 1960s. The students rejected being treated like owned children, while being drafted for war.

The students revolted, walked out, demonstrated, and squatted without relenting. They obtained:

- independence over their personal lives (no oversight of off-campus activities, no curfews, no discipline for non-academic matters)
- the right to unionize and collectively own buildings and businesses on campus
- respect of their power when it came to imposing a military draft
- minority representation on all university committees (including the Senate and Board)

These were lasting victories of a true and bloody juvenile revolution.

While the revolt vehemently and explicitly expressed a desire to be free from the clutches of true legal power over the institution (which resides in the Board), as in Mario Savio's iconic speeches



the furthest success in that direction was to obtain representation on university “governance” committees, which is no small accomplishment if the representatives impose themselves rather than allow themselves to be co-opted tokens.

But the 1960s achievements of partial democracy and partial student liberation in the institution were perceived as threatening and have been systematically eroded by the concerted efforts of establishment forces.

The counter-revolution was already well underway by 1975 when the [Trilateral Commission](#), founded by David Rockefeller in 1973, published [The Crisis of Democracy: On the Governability of Democracies](#). The report recommended restructuring public institutions to address the identified threat stemming from “an excess of democracy”. They knew how to fix that...

What followed, starting in the 1980s, was a catastrophe on the scale of a macro-economic and macro-societal restructuring:

- Reversal of [The New Deal](#) and of post-WWII middle-class access to economic independence,
- gutting of professional independence of teachers,
- gutting of tenure (replacement by contract staff),
- complete corporate alignment of the university mission,
- codification and confinement of radicalism within allowed “justice and equity” programs,
- student-debt slavery extended far into post-studies life,
- tighter ideological processing in all the professional programs, and new imposed programs for journalists, etc.,
- totally institutionalized childhoods including after-school activities,
- more grading and performance evaluations than you can shake a stick at,
- more homework and “volunteer” work than ever,
- “zero tolerances” of drugs, traffic violations, petty crime, payment delays, improper language, etc.,
- more surveillance than in any novel about a dystopia,
- being fired for comments on social media at every corner,
- etc.

... the list of post-1970s abuses that most citizens actually celebrate and defend is a long one. All of the “99%” (non-elitist) suffered the same fate, to varying degrees.

As a result, more than ever these days, all school pupils are literally in a prison, with locked doors, yard time, prison guards, and parental home visits. College and university students have no time to think, but instead are on a brutal and meaningless treadmill, with periodic PowerPoint torture,³ while being shackled with financial debt, rather than being paid for their labour.⁴

What has kept the lid on US-Canada juveniles (except in Canada’s province of Quebec, to some extent)? What has stalled the next US-Canada-Europe... juvenile rebellion?

Several factors have contributed, as I see it.

First, juveniles are seriously constrained and corralled in every aspect of their lives, but that alone is not normally enough to suppress vital instincts.

Second, the state, like any police state, is vicious in attacking and punishing student dissidents with police-induced judicial consequences, augmented by punitive measures applied by the educational institutions themselves. This is a strategy to kill any spontaneous or planned emergence of rebellion.

Third, many students themselves have been largely neutralized in their brains, to be seekers of justice fairly provided to them by the very system that imprisons them, to seek “being oppressed fairly”. A mass of students has essentially been zombieified by the poison of the “radical” “justice and equity” programs, anchored in “critical theory” “at the service of the design of a better society”. They have swallowed the myth that liberation is establishment-regulated participation in the design of a “just society”.

Fourth, in a divide-and-conquer attack against the mind, students have been turned against each other with manufactured hyper-concern for their own religions, skin colours, genders, sexual preferences, and superficial “privileges”, rather than recognizing the common enemy of an oppressive establishment that eats them alive, irrespective of their individual attributes.

Ageism is a unifying psycho-social force that channels a juvenile rebellion against the systemic oppression of youth. There is ageism, but it is presently used as a strategy for survival, rather than a force for rebellion. Ageism and inter-generational solidarity with trusted agents and coalitions with trusted cells are not opposites in a juvenile revolution. The former is visceral motivation while the latter are strategic choices.⁵

Fifth, and possibly most importantly, juveniles are both drugged by their parents and self-medicated to escape and “perform”.

The pharmaceutical industry for drugs that optimize the schoolability of children is massive. These potent mood-altering drugs are widely prescribed against the symptoms of repressed childhood (so-called attention deficit disorder, etc.), and are now frequently marketed as “smart drugs”. These are the *Ritalins*, etc., known as nootropics. Nootropics have spawned a pervasive black market among juveniles forced into “performance” work and are widespread among students.⁶

The self-medication to escape meaninglessness and powerlessness is both from substances and from technologically enabled stimulation (personal music devices, social media, communication technology). Much of

the needed identity management is authentically communicative, such as YouTube testimonials, status posts, and tweets, and is often supplemented by face to face continuations.

In addition, there is a significant pot culture of escape. While pot (like all drugs) is a helpful personal exploration tool, it is also frequently primarily used to escape the brutal world by creating a safe space, and simply to dull the pain of being violated by the institutions of “education”.

Thus, there are many effective avenues of personal identity management that allow long-term survival. The mental space is self-managed away from the visceral impulse of authentic rebellion. This is combined with the fact that students are still able to physically escape the institution, both in separate physical spaces, which can be as small as a student apartment, and via their computer and phone screens in the classroom or elsewhere.

Sixth, although the school and university environments are brutally dehumanizing, in terms of institutional obedience-training and indoctrination, they are also accompanied by a constant brainwashing that the student has merit and high status by virtue of being in school, and that the student has entered a privileged club whose members experience fulfillment and meaning. And, within each program, there is “choice”, which some students reason to themselves allows them to personalize their experience.

Seventh, the media and institutional spaces are actively cleansed of any eminent examples of successful rebellions, and of the personal rewards of authentic rebellion. Teachers and professionals are harshly prosecuted for anything that could resemble “corrupting the youth.” Instead, professional status and military service are portrayed as providing the ultimate personal rewards.

The May 1968 message “[Sous les pavés, la plage!](#)” is both absent and written in a very foreign language. There are no teachers writing re-mixes of the 1969 “[the little red schoolbook](#).” You cannot even utter the “N-word,” let alone assign unconstrained reading of the 1967 essay “[The Student as Nigger](#).”⁷

At my own recent binding arbitration into my 2009 dismissal from my tenured full professorship of more than two decades, after I had been critical of the administration and created a popular activism course which had to be given in the largest auditorium on campus, the hired university lawyers spent the majority of their efforts to argue the propositions that I incited students to violence, had incited students to bonfire the campus at UBC via an invited talk, had connections to fire-bombing domestic terrorists, had publicly called the president a “[douchebag](#),” etc., etc.,⁸ with such “exhibits” as the fact that one of the clips in one of my YouTube-channel playlists is this one, which, for no other reason, was played during the arbitration hearing:

Against Me! - Baby I'm An Anarchist



The anarchist video is an example of fringe-culture rebellion connected to anti-globalization demonstrations, not an example of campus rebellion against institutional suppression of student lives.

Eighth, the constant and overbearing propaganda that there are mega-threats to humanity, including global warming, potential health epidemics, etc., that require dedicated collaboration with the establishment and its scientists. Add the threats from “foreign invaders”, and homegrown “terrorism”, etc. All such research and propaganda also serves US corporate and geopolitical interests. Institutions and governments do not work against themselves, ever.^{9,10}

For all these reasons (first to eighth, above), therefore, so far, there has not been a new juvenile revolution against student slavery. You can't even use the word “slavery” because that would be “misappropriation”, blah blah blah.

But it is slavery, just as wage-slavery is slavery, and its damage is deep and lasting.⁴ And as with any slavery, there is a large psychological barrier against recognizing the slavery. Every slave has invested into the system and identifies with the system. To reject slavery would be to vaporize one's identity and could induce massive grief at the prospect of having lost one's past life.

So, will the student-slaves ever revolt again? Will there be another mass juvenile revolution?

I believe it is inevitable. There are constant sparks, and the gasoline of human suppression is just under the corporate facade. Institutional totalitarianism is advancing at a furious pace. The war economy of global exploitation has endless needs... Rebellions are emerging all over the “developing world”, and new geopolitical blocs (e.g., **BRICS**) are emerging that challenge US domination, which breaks the isolation and forces some moderation both abroad and at home.

At any moment, the sight of beach sand from under the broken pavement could cause a frenzy. There could result real physical solidarity against the targeting of the most daring, the emergence of vision, and the organization of a committed juvenile front.

This can only work if the next juvenile revolution goes significantly beyond the juvenile revolution of the 1960s, beyond minority representation on committees, and on towards true power to run the institutions of juvenile imprisonment and make them into institutions for and by juveniles. Students are workers in the economy and must, as a start, be fairly paid for their labour,⁴ as the first transitional demand.

Never mind tuition, students must be salaried. If society wants juveniles to do the hard work of learning skills, because society wants those skills, then a living wage is an immediate prerequisite. This was understood in the Middle-Ages but has been “forgotten”. Youth cannot be used as a pretext to exploit and capture.

Children were taken from factory wage-slavery and put into factory schools. Now juveniles accumulate debt for the “privilege” of being molded into service professionals.

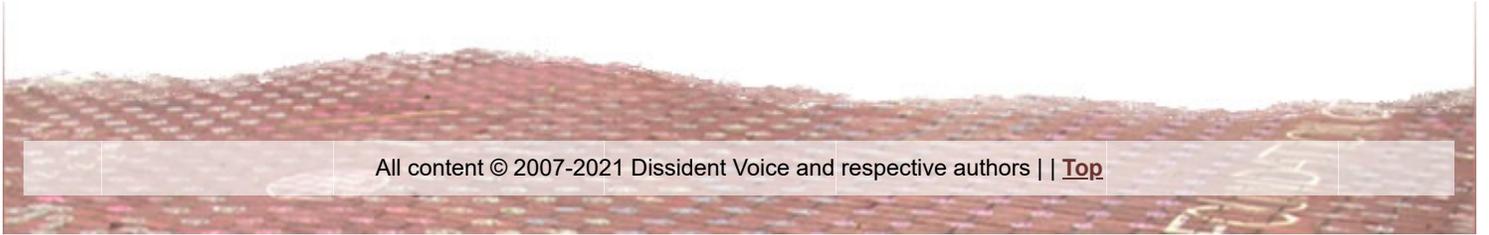
Sooner or later, there will be the next juvenile revolution, and university president salaries will drop. Students will fire and choose their teachers, and will decide what needs to be learned. They will learn how to make all the most important decisions about their own lives, by the practice of making those decisions. And they will learn how to make and re-create powerful institutions made in their liberated image rather than controlled by outside occupiers.

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1. Jacoby, Russell, *The Last Intellectuals*, 1987 (2000 edition, Basic Books), p. 63. [🔗]
 2. Jacony, p. 64. [🔗]
 3. Rancourt, Denis G., “[On the sacred space of the university classroom](#),” *Activist Teacher*, October 3, 2009. [🔗]
 4. Rancourt, Denis G., “[Adult Students Please Get Real](#),” *Dissident Voice*, April 27, 2015. [🔗] [🔗] [🔗]
 5. The same is true of racism in racial liberation struggles, and of violence in struggles to survive attempted genocides. See: Rancourt, Denis G., *Hierarchy and Free Expression in the Fight Against Racism*, Stairway Press, 2013. [🔗]
 6. For example, this 2009 5 O’Clock Train – CHUO 89.1 FM investigative radio interview: “[Upper Year Psychology Students on School, Deadlines, Medication and How to Survive University](#),” December 3, 2009 show. [🔗]
 7. Farber, Jerry, “[The Student as Nigger](#),” 1967, first published in the Los Angeles Free Press. Canadian Union of Students re-publication. [🔗]
 8. A transcript of the lengthy hearing is fascinating and was published by a former student who attended the proceedings: [Cover-article-LINK](#), [Transcript-LINK](#). The emails of a hired student spy to the university executives, explaining her use of false cyber-identities and covert machinations are most instructive: [Spy-emails-LINK](#). [🔗]
 9. Rancourt, Denis G., “[Climate Stupidity and Human Survival](#),” *Dissident Voice*, May 26, 2015. [🔗]
 10. In particular, carbon politics is domination geopolitics. The US is branding itself as “the clean-energy superpower”, including at the recent G7 parade. Next it will continue to attempt to strangle and extort the energy development of the emerging BRICS global economy, using a combination of green blackmail rhetoric, global carbon-economy monetary instruments, military posturing, covert and direct targeted nation destruction, and sanctions. And, of course, the same folks always suffer the destructive consequences of these global economic instruments that purport to be intended to “save the planet”: [The Carbon Rush documentary film trailer](#). [🔗]
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