

THE ART OF BLOWING
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THE ENEMY WITHIN

RUBEL JOSE LUCERO



Any consideration of the problems encountered by the Chicano inside his own soul must take into account the following two simple facts: (1) The dominant culture in this country is white, racist; (2) The Chicano, mostly mestizo, is not considered to be a part of this culture by its members. The social, economic and political consequences to the individual Chicano, describes some unsatisfactory solutions and suggest a model for a positive growing solution.

The Problem

Racism in various forms has existed at least since the dawn of recorded history.

Reduced to its essential component it is a conviction of superiority of one people over another in terms of some characteristic such as skin color. This feeling allows the dominant group to take advantage of the other without the pangs of conscience attendant on hurting an equal. The major form of racism affecting the human race at this point in history is that of the white race. The begetter of this illness is Western Europe. It's best and most prominent disciple is, of course, the U.S.A. The claim that the U.S.A. is multi-national and a "melting pot" — claims which have seduced a generation of Chicanos — are probably in the main true, if you are white. The facts of some Spanish blood, the Spanish language, some transmission of Western European culture via Spain to Mexico to Aztlan; these facts have done much to distort the actual state of the Chicano. (This heritage may, however, make it possible for the Chicano to be the bridge between diverse peoples and races in this country. That, however, is another story.) The Anglo has always considered the Spanish speaking people of the Southwest to be inferior to him. The pathetic and unfortunately statutorily successful attempt by some Chicanos to list us as "white" has been viewed by the Anglo with, at best, amused tolerance and, at worst, with undisguised contempt. Deeply he rejects us as non-white and deeply we feel this rejection.

What happens to the Chicano if his search for identity when he is not Spanish,

Mexican, North American Indian or Anglo but is instead all of these and something else — a becoming? How can he realize his full potential? How can he achieve dignity, proper self life, self-acceptance? How can he walk tall, as — full complete human being?

He cannot do any of these so long as he is at war with himself. And he will be a house divided internally until he solves the racial question. He has learned from an early age that Anglo culture and fair skin are supposedly innately superior to Chicano culture and darker skin. He has been taught to depreciate his background, to have contempt for his mother, to hate something called Mexican, to feel shame for his accent, to despise his culture. He learns, in short, that he is supposed to be inferior.

Self-depreciation is a very painful feeling. It calls for resolution. So long as one accepts the premise that he is inferior in his relationship to *himself*, he is in great psychological trouble. It is necessary to resolve the conflict between the knowledge that one has just as much value as anyone else and the sick belief that one is inferior. Even if things were to be changed overnight so that the cause of these feelings, white racist domination of the Chicano, were eliminated, the problem would still exist inside the souls of those Chicanos raised in this era. —

The basic solution to the conflict is, of course, to eliminate the inferiority feeling. This involves a great deal of self-scrutiny and the process is a painful and laborious one. (A possible model for this will be proposed later.) Short of the difficult process of deep change so that one can love oneself and others, there are many "sick" and/or partial solutions. Those to be described below are not intended as an exhaustive list but are fairly typical. It should be obvious that the same person can, and often does use more than one, possibly all of them.

"Sick" Solutions

The "Mexican Greaser" Solution —

This syndrome involves the tacit admission that one is indeed inferior and worthless. It almost appears that the Chicano suffering from this syndrome has studied carefully all of the Anglo fictions and tries to faithfully live them out.

"The Anglo says I am shiftless and irresponsible. O.K., I'll steal and cheat and never work hard or keep a job."

"He says I laugh and brag and dance. O.K., I'll dance for him, and laugh even when I feel like crying and I'll entertain him with my songs."

"He says I'm dirty. O.K., I won't work and I'll keep a dirty house."

And so on, ad infinitum. Needless to say, this solution leaves the Chicano with no self-respect. But he has solved the conflict, he has decided against himself.

The "Becoming an Anglo" Solution —

This solution also involves an admission of inferiority by its very existence. In this solution one denies his background. He trains out his accent. If he can, he leaves his Chicano friends, brother and sister, his mother and joins Anglo society. Some day, if a sociologist really wants to find out what an exaggerated caricature of a "White Anglo Saxon Protestant" is, he should study these Chicanos. Many, too many, Chicanos have gone this route and have made it. They've made it big. Made it big everywhere except where it counts, in their own souls. Here, in the lonely truth of the night, they must face themselves in a deubly deadly light: (1) they really are Chicano and they have agreed that that means they are inferior; and (2) they are imposters in an Anglo world and they are really all alone.

The "Gringo Hater" Solution —

This solution is the most seductive of all to the Chicano today. Not only does it seem to direct one's energies in the correct direction, it is immensely popular within certain segments of the Chicano movement. There are three things wrong with it, however, from the psychological point of view: (1) to be a whole adult human being one must be a loving human being and, as Eldridge Cleaver states, "The price for hating other human beings is to love oneself less;" (2) you are still the prisoner of the Anglo and the inferiority feeling if you hate him; and (3) you make more mistakes in the movement as Cesar Chavez says if your motivation is hatred of the oppressor rather than love of your people.

A description of the gringo hater seems superfluous but may be necessary. He says all whites are bad. *Everything* European in origin is evil. "The only good Anglo is a

... Only Chicanos know the real value of life. In fact, blacks being brought up in Anglo ways, are really white. "Don't trust nobody unless he is Chicano." "How about Indians?" "Well, they would be O.K. if they would only understand our common heritage and become, well, become more Chicano."

The logical conclusion to this type of thinking is a new form of racism, Chicano racism. And the Chicano now bears the guilt of hating inside himself and the uneasy dimly perceived realization that he has solved nothing by changing his inferiority feeling to superiority feelings.

The "Chemical Dependency Cop Out" Solution —

Man has used drugs from time immemorial to change his mood. Most people do this for short periods of time and with small dosages. Some three to seven percent of the human population become dependent on chemicals to induce moods to live by. (The chemicals of choice in the U.S.A. today are alcohol, "speed," "grass," "acid," heroin, barbiturates and various combinations.)

Though no accurate statistics exist, it is agreed by most people in the Chicano movement that a disproportionate number of Chicanos are dependent on chemicals. What this involves from a personal standpoint is the discovery that drugs allow one to live with the conflict rather than solve it as the artificially induced good feelings give one an illusion of being at peace with oneself. The social consequences to the Chicano movement are grave. A great number of potential contributors to the movement are lost to it.

The internal consequences to the individual Chicano are disastrous: (1) he needs to get his drug in increasing quantities and this occupies most of his time (2) in addition to the original inferiority feelings he now bears the knowledge that he seems to have no internal resources for feelings of self-worth.

Yet the return to the human race of this seemingly most hopeless of our brothers this broken human being, can point the way to a possible model for all of us to solve our racism against ourselves. Reduced again to its most essential elements, the recovery of the addicted human being seems to depend on four factors:

(1) the admission of and deep acceptance of having a problem; (2) acquiring of a belief in something bigger than oneself; (3) free will decisions to act in ways that are unselfish; (4) future behavior determined by discussion within and love exchanged within a peer group.

Other "Sick" Solutions —

There are many other unproductive or productiveness of happiness in the individual solutions which can be added to this list. Some of these may be more important than those listed but unrecognized by the author. At least two — hopefully minor ones — come to mind at this point. One is the "Do your own thing" solution. This is generally escapist and encourages lack of responsibility to the Chicano group. Lastly, one should mention the most obvious, namely direct or indirect self-destruction.