



*What's going on here? It appears that a professor (the fellow with his back turned—the bald spot gives him away) is talking (nothing unusual so far) and some students seem to be listening (hmm, something uncommon may actually be happening). Well, folks, they are listening, and in a second they'll begin responding. Where's this miraculous phenomenon taking place, you ask. At a special seminar which was held during the spring vacation. Yep, some students paid extra to forego Ft. Lauderdale and interact with thirty of their contemporaries and four profs. It turned out to be a provocative mix from the college subcultures: guys with beards met Gant-shirted fraternity types; PhD candidates met real live sophomores, blacks met whites, straights met non-straights, there were more than a couple of political positions represented. The subject was the American Dream, and discussions began early in the day and lasted until the early morning hours, which is an educational dream. "It blew my mind," said one participant. "It was the first intellectual stimulation I've had in my two years at OU," said one of the sophomores. It was successful enough that a similar program on the problems and challenges of technology was held in May, over a weekend, and the group ended up at the Hollomon house for dinner and discussion described by a student as "probably the best experience I've had in college." The following is an account of the inaugural. . .*

# Experiment in Education

By Brenda Taylor

**E**arly in the Eighteenth Century, St. Jean d'Crevecour enthusiastically labeled America as "a land of happy farmers"—a country guided by the dream of prosperity, equality, and freedom. Now, two hundred years later, the American Dream has expanded to include a host of other ideals. Often these hopes have served as excuses for inaction; sometimes the implementation of the American Dream has seemed almost paradoxical. Certain aspects of it have degenerated into more anachron-

isms, but the American Dream persists, undaunted by cries of rejection and determined to convince the populace that "God is on our side," that the American Dream is inherently valid, and, moreover, that the realization of the Dream is imminent.

Struggling to determine and evaluate the meaningful aspects of the American Dream, thirty students and four professors participated in an experimental seminar during the first three days of spring break. Sponsored by the

Student Academic Advisory Council, the seminar was staffed by Dr. Gilbert C. Fite, George L. Cross Professor of History; Dr. George Henderson, associate professor of sociology; Dr. David Kitts, professor of geology, and Dr. Roy R. Male, professor of English.

The program was "experimental" in that it deviated from the formal lecture routine. The meetings were held in the Union's third-floor lounge, since flexibility and comfort were of prime importance. The daytime sessions included informal lectures followed by coffee breaks which invariably shifted into general discussions. During the evenings the participants split into four discussion-research groups. Facades were abandoned, blatant intellectualism forgotten—and the difficult task of evaluating self and society in light of the American Dream commenced. The topic, suggested by Dr. John Paul Duncan, professor of political science, was selected because of its interdisciplinary character.

Historically, the American Dream implies political and religious freedom. Early settlers, seeking to escape European tyranny and despotism, vowed to form a tolerant and just government, provided, of course, by the divine hand of Providence. Miraculously, Divine Providence led the Pilgrim fathers to destroy the culture, the unity, and the spirit of the North American Indian by imposing their God-given, righteous democracy. This missionary spirit has been incorporated into the American Dream. As one

student put it: "Our aim is to save the world, even if we destroy it in the process."

The first American also dreamed of prosperity. Plagued by the all too real vision of poverty, his hope was security, and his motto "Diligence is the mother of all good fortune." Dr. Fite asserted that this striving for material stability caused an idealization of "work." Work implied integrity, honesty, and perseverance and easily won Puritan support. Student Ervin Edge aptly voiced this hypothesis: "Their attitude and now ours seems to be 'Keep your nose to the grindstone, work hard, and you will get ahead, or if you don't, your children will.'"

Work was the methodology behind the Dream—the path of material success. But in recent years this apparent attitude of the American is changing. No longer is the motivation to work strictly pecuniary. More and more Americans are asking, "Where lies the meaning? Why work?" The Puritan ethic, camouflaging American life for so long, is at last falling away. What remains is an ethic which extols the virtue of "doing your thing." A proponent of this philosophy remarked quite in earnest, "My projects are *all* I have." Indirectly, this position is reminiscent of Kant's categorical imperative which instructs man to perform acts as ends themselves and not as means to an end: Work not for monetary compensation but for immediate personal meaning.

The doctrine of original sin is another Puritan ethic





inculcated by the American Dream. We are not "born free"—instead, we are imprisoned by the sins of our ancestors, obligated not only to accept the responsibility for their transgressions but even to plead guilty ourselves. Paradoxically, the American Dream aims for perfection. Ben Franklin's "list of virtues" is illustrative of the rational man's organized efforts to improve himself. The American Dream, as Dr. Male understands it, offers man the hope of a second chance. "If you don't succeed, try, try again" encourages the American dreamer, who reminds himself that "he has not one chance but a hundred chances." (Emerson) This mirage of perfectability looms before America urging, compelling, driving.

Yet, engulfed as we are in promises of the future, the dream of extending the present moment continues to entice us. The first kiss, reaching the summit of a mountain, watching the sun rise at the atrocious, if not romantic, hour of 5 a.m.—these and countless other experiences are attributed with an aura of sentimentality, mysticism, and revelation. Amazement and bitter disappointment reign when the guide notes that the mountain's apex was passed 15 minutes ago. The anticipated moment of ecstasy was lost. But such peak experiences "come seldom, and they do not come to everyone; and the rest of life makes either no connection with them, or tends to contradict more than confirm them." (William James) The extension of the moment as an aspect of the American Dream

seems the slave of fortune, not of free will.

The dynamics of the seminar was determined by the character of the participants. Representing nineteen disciplines, students did not hesitate to interject comments or express ideas. Spontaneity was encouraged. The entire approach radically differed from mere classroom mechanics, providing an unusual and exciting intellectual experience for many. Dr. Kitts, rejecting the value of such seminars, strongly defended the concept of the university in the traditional sense, maintaining that the purpose of the institution is the transmission of the culture, not the fostering of creativity. If a student seeks merely the nurturing of his creative bent, his place, according to Dr. Kitts, is not in the university as we know it. This assertion proved to be very controversial. Students maintained that change, perhaps even revolution, was an aspect of the American culture and furthermore the university was subject to such change. They denied the value of the vocationally oriented university and voiced the need for an institution which encourages curiosity and creativity. The prevailing attitude was "if I am not creative, concerned, and curious, it is the fault of the university." Disagreeing with this position, purporters of individual responsibility rose to be counted. Few in number, they denied the validity of the I'm-trapped-by-the-system attitude and condemned those who use parents, universities,

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# Boyd and Short

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so much in love with this particular girl that he can give you no reason for his love for her but the best he can do is say, "It's the girl I love." As Karl Barth said, "Jesus is the Son of God because He is so." In other words, it's finally just that dogmatic without any justifying reason or proof. Schroeder, who worships Beethoven, comes close to this same type of Christian dogmatics when he's asked the question about his faith or his love for Beethoven.

Short said that no matter how many good works or good deeds a person has done in his life, they're all for nothing as far as a man's own redemption or happiness in life if the deeds have been done for the wrong reasons—with "dirty hands" like Lady Macbeth, or Linus in the following Peanuts dialogue:

*Linus:* (admiring his hands) I like my hands. I think I have nice hands. My hands seem to have a lot of character. These are hands that may some day accomplish great things. These are hands that may some day do marvelous works. They may build mighty bridges, or hit home runs, or write soul-stirring novels. These are hands that may someday change the course of history.

*Lucy:* They've got jelly on them.

Phony gods are the cruelist of task-masters, said Short, and serving these gods causes a living death occurring inside us right now.

Turning to the concept of rebirth or conversion, Short said that "rebirth is necessary at some time in life because we do not come upon the scene worshipping God." Short continued, "We become aware of our idolatry when our false gods collapse. Who is going to save us? Who is always hammering away at false gods? Who saves us from too much security?" Of course, it's Snoopy, Charlie Brown's loyal dog:

The dog, just because of its loyalty and watchfulness, has often been used as a symbol for faith in literature and art—and of course it's a good symbol because all of us have first got to become as "dogs" before we can really become Christian. Christians are those "Hounds of Heaven" who have been called to be witnesses for God through Christ. This doesn't mean that all of us are called to be priests and ministers, but still we are a part of the priesthood of believers where the priesthood calls us to remain exactly where we are, bearing

witness to our faith in and through the work we know and can do best.

Although Malcolm Boyd and Robert Short both deplore the idolatry of false gods, their views of the church and its relationship to people strongly differ. In the introduction to his talk, Short said, "There are many people in our own communities and cultural situations who wouldn't be caught dead inside a church. In fact, this is probably the *only* way they would be caught there, come to think of it. These outsiders must be communicated with too." This attitude, that *insiders* implies "religious" and *outsiders* implies "non-religious," was particularly disturbing, as it exemplifies the kind of clannishness within the church which has been a block in communication between the church and those outside the "religious community." I think Boyd counteracted this attitude in a believable way with the following statement, which was received with considerable enthusiasm from his audience:

I love at 11 o'clock Sunday morning to get in some old clothes and go down to the heart of a great city. It's very holy outside of the church. And there's a great sense of community among those outside. It's one of the times I love the most—to be with those who are *not* in church at 11 o'clock. I have a very great suspicion that God might also be with those who are outside.

Because Short has delivered his Peanuts lecture over a thousand times, it came across in a stilted, canned manner that was so mechanical and structured that its potentially stimulating elements were somewhat neutralized. On the other hand, Malcolm's personal dynamism and his ability to deeply involve an audience in his thoughts made his presentation a special experience to many of us. Malcolm spoke to members of all religious faiths, not to just a segment of these. From Short we heard excellent definitions of a number of *Christian* concepts—concepts which he did not relate to events occurring today or to other religious faiths.

In the last two years, the Conference on Religion has evolved from a lecture receiving mediocre participation from students and faculty into a major event—well attended, well publicized, involving many activities and culminated by a sharing of ideas with nationally prominent religious thinkers. And in 1968, the conference attained a new relevance for all the University community in challenging students and faculty to confront current problems from a religious viewpoint. ●

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professors, or society as catch-alls for their own faults. Perhaps the discussion was oriented toward the problem of free will versus determinism—whatever the formal nomen or misnomen, the debate was vigorous and the arguments of each position persuasive. One person's comment was particularly thought-provoking: "Please don't deny to others what you yourselves value most: your humanity." A fitting preface, indeed, to Dr. George Henderson's lecture on racism in America.

How long can voices be stifled? How long can zealots be misled? Perhaps at last the black American is refusing

to wait for the white's American Dream to come true. Beguiled by smiles and heartened by the false promises, the black American heretofore has bought the dream "lock, stock, and barrel." But his unquestioning hope has in recent months been replaced by a clamoring for his freedom—a clamoring which threatens to erupt into a mighty tidal wave, sweeping away those who attempt to dominate, intimidate, and oppress.

Dr. Henderson frightened us. The American Dream will no longer suffice. Hope doesn't fill an empty stomach or build decent houses; dreams don't teach English and mathematics in poorly equipped schools; visions do not yield pride in self and faith in one's own value and integrity. While fighting the white man's wars, cleaning his houses, mowing his lawns, and enduring his insults, Ameri-



ca's black citizens have still "kept the faith" and only God knows how. Dr. Henderson discussed these "deferred dreams"—equality, justice, prosperity—and the cancer of hate spreading throughout America. Much as a doctor might, he recommended immediate surgery as the only alternative to death. The American Dream must hastily be engraved in the hearts of Americans if equality and justice are to retain any meaning whatsoever. The black American must never again be sent "to eat in the kitchen" (Langston Hughes). Instead, we must all, as human beings, join at the table.

Studies of specific aspects of the American Dream occurred in the evening sessions. Each group selected a limited subject and analyzed it with intensity and thoroughness. Group One suggested that the American Dream emphasizes quantity rather than quality as exemplified in our mass education programs. The structure of the system is oriented toward imposing God, Mother, and Country into the minds of as many young learners as efficiency permits. The group revealed several plans for improving the quality of OU's curricula, including open-ended courses on the human condition, a Western Civilization

study, more comfortable and pleasant classrooms and facilities, and finally an extension of the seminar itself.

Group Two discussed the American Dream love. Remarks ranged from a condemnation of a Prince Charming idealization to a questioning of the family's role in society. The third group discussed the Dream and the economy. One boy theorized that the source of conflict between the anti-welfare middle class and the ghetto dwellers in America was socio-psychological. He maintained that the middle class is not concerned with the basic physical requirements necessary for survival but instead seeks fulfillment or "self-actualization" and therefore perpetuates the slum dwellers' misery because of a failure to identify with his physical needs. The groups reported many other ideas, but perhaps the most unique discovery was that such sessions lasted until early hours of the morning. There were an enthusiasm, vitality, and an interest not found in the average classroom. Feelings, emotions, ideas, facts, hypotheses, common sense—all were acceptable at this seminar because we were not seeking a textbook answer to the question "If there were dreams for sale, what would you buy?" ●

## Campus Notes

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guard on the football team, "We are prompted by no outside source and the only thing we belong to is the O Club. Our grievances are with the athletic department, and each coach will know which grievance refers to him."

The basis of several of the grievances is that black athletes are often treated with a different set of standards than white athletes. The question is asked, "Why are there no black counselors, secretaries, coaches, trainers, and managers in the department?" The group claims that white and black athletes are segregated in the dorm and on trips even when blacks and whites object. The group asks why athletic coaches object to interracial dating and why repressive measures are taken against black athletes who date interracially. Another grievance is that preference is given white athletes in finding summer employment. Grievance fifteen states, "The white athletes' popular pastime of resorting to racial and cultural slurs against black athletes is not discouraged by coaches and will be tolerated no longer." Other grievances ask why black football quarterbacks are not recruited and why there are no black athletes on four of the athletic teams. "Why are departmental courtesies concerning employment for athletes' wives extended to the white athletes and not equally extended to those of black athletes?" asks another question. Another allegation is that black athletes are "coerced to cut their hair short and shave off their mustaches," though these are important cultural symbols to the black athletes.

Most of the varsity coaches were out of town on recruiting jaunts and unavailable for comment. Assistant basketball coach Bud Cronin was quoted in the school paper

as saying that he felt the players "wanted to show everyone that problems exist." He said some of the grievances pertained to the basketball team and that "we will try to iron these problems out. This is good in some ways because it will give the coaches a chance to reevaluate their programs. I definitely believe that nothing but good can come of the situation."

All of OU's black athletes signed the list which also included the signatures of Ben Hart, former football player, and Willie Wilson, former basketball player, both of whom are enrolled at OU. Four signees (Don Sidle, Willie Rogers, Howard Johnson, and Liggins) have completed their athletic eligibility. OU has five black football players, nine black basketball players, four on the track team, two on the wrestling squad, and one gymnast.

At a second meeting on May 13, Jones read a lengthy, prepared statement to the athletes which answered each of the grievances. The statement began with an endorsement of the movement for equal opportunity and expressed pride in the accomplishments of OU's black athletes. It said that the Athletic Department has been most at fault in two areas: "Our coaches advised our athletes against interracial dating although they did not forbid it. This obviously should be the choice of each individual athlete. Also I [Jones] believe President Cross was correct when he told of the need of employing additional Negro personnel throughout the University." Jones' statement went on to say that he felt that the issues raised could have been met more effectively if the athletes had spoken personally with their individual coaches.

The black athletes presented a statement

to Jones which attempted to clarify the objectives and correct any "erroneous statements made about motives and intentions." The following points were made:

"1. Our behavior is a collective behavior, neither initiated nor continued for the personal gain of any individual. Nor are we connected with any national organization. Our primary reason for seeking a group meeting is quite simple: While some sports are more integrated and fairly administered than others, we feel that as long as one black athlete at OU has a racial grievance, all black athletes have a racial grievance.

"2. It is true that we are caught up in the struggle of black Americans for racial equality. This, however, cannot be equated with black separatist movements. The fact that we are seeking to become fully integrated on and off athletic fields should be adequate testimony to our concern for and commitment to a democratic society.

"3. In our quest for equality for opportunity and treatment, we are not assuming that all our grievances have grown out of conscious efforts by coaches to discriminate against us. Rather we believe that much of the treatment reveals a lack of sensitivity to the culture of black Americans. If this situation is to change, it will require as much energy to integrate us into the mainstreams of athletic life as is devoted to denying us full equality.

"4. We know that some of our grievances appear to be more significant than others. The important point to remember is that seemingly minor conditions are very real to individuals questioning them. No aspect of our domestic life is more obvious or disruptive than alleged or real discriminatory treatment. Thus, we are presenting to you our grievances—large and small. Our accounts are not taken from individual diaries which specifically chart each grievance. Instead we have put together all cases which we collectively consider to be important. In this manner we can 'clear the air' at one session.