

Unit V: The Poor Negro, the Poor White, and their fears

- Purpose:
1. To indicate that the Power Structure derives its power in the final analysis, by playing upon the fears of the people--Negro and white.
  2. To come to an understanding of these fears--what has helped to produce them and what they, in turn, have produced, namely, the myths, the lies, the system.
  3. To grasp the deeper effects of the system we have produced and have allowed to continue, the deep psychological damage to Negroes and whites.

Materials: Case study on Hazard, Kentucky

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Introduction: We have talked about the world we want and the world we now have. Something is wrong with the world we have. We have looked at some of the wrong things. Now let us look at why the world has come to be as it now is . . . in particular, our world here in the South.

Concept: That the "power structure"--which, as we have seen, is one force that maintains a bad world--derives its power from playing upon the fear of the people, Negro and white.

Questions: Have you ever been afraid? Have you ever been afraid enough to let somebody else take your punishment or take the blame for something they did not do? Were you afraid of being punished yourself? What is punishment? Physical pain like a beating? Could punishment also be losing something you wanted to keep? Like money? Like your pride? When you were a child, were you ever punished by having to stay inside the house, or in your room, or stand in the corner at school? Was this punishment loss of pride?

Here are some things we have learned about the "power structure." (Write them on the blackboard)

1. the "power structure" is made up of a small number of people who, because of their power, have a great deal of control over our lives.
2. their power is financial and it is political.
3. they use their power to maintain segregation.

Here is something we do not know about the "power structure." Why is it possible for such a small group to have so much control over all the rest of us? Is it only because they have money? If so, where do they get their money? Is it because of their political power? Where do they get their political power? Could it be that the "power structure" has power because we let it? That these few control us because we let them? Why? Why would we let a few people not only control us but control us in such a terrible way, build such a terrible world?

Case study:  
Hazard, Ky.

Do we like what they do? No? Then why do we let them do it? Are we afraid? What about whites? Are they afraid? Do they like to be controlled by a few people? Does anybody? What about poor whites? Isn't their condition much like ours? Poverty, unemployment, fear?

It is true that the "power structure" has power only because we give it to them--we and the whites. The power structure is built upon the fear of Negroes and the fear of whites. What if we moved out from under this structure? Where would the power go then? To the people? The whites will not move because they fear us because they believe the lies about us. Is it possible to show these whites the truth? How? What would happen if the whites and Negroes got together and moved right out from under the "power structure?" Do we have anything in common that might draw us together? What? What keeps us apart? Fear? Yes.

The "power structure" gets its power, in the final analysis, because we allow them power and we allow them power because we are all afraid of something.

Concept: That the people of the South, Negro and white, are afraid; that the fears are sometimes different, sometimes alike; that all the fears work together to perpetuate the system.

Questions: Why should Negroes be afraid? Is there any real basis for our fear? Of course there is. We have been beaten and murdered, have lost our jobs and homes. We have real reason to fear. What about whites? Do most whites agree with the "power structure" and the lies? Why? Are they afraid? Why?

Let us imagine what might have happened inside the white man, over the years, to fill him with so much fear. We know in part already what happened to make the Negro fear--he was shot and lynched and murdered and beaten. What made the white fear? Write on board "What Happened Inside the White Man?" Let's list the things which might have caused him to create myths and lies.

1. Slavery: since the white man in the South lies about Negroes, let us begin with the coming of Negroes. We came from an unknown continent and we were unknown to the whites. Can we compare this lack of knowledge with, say, Columbus' day when men said if you sailed far enough, you would fall right off the earth? So the white men looked at us and we were unknown. They created myths--Africa is a deep dark place filled with savages.

2. Guilt: it is true that the white man did not know and still does not know much about Negroes.

But it is also true that no man in his right mind can put any other man in chains without, sooner or later, feeling guilt.

Not long after the beginning of slavery, the guilt of the white man began. What did he do with this guilt inside him? He did not free us? Why?

3. Economics: the white man needed the Negro to work the plantation. He chose then not to free the Negro and so, he had to find some other way to try and get rid of his guilt. What did he do to try to get rid of it?

4. Fear and Lies: What does guilt do to you? Have you ever felt guilty? Does it make you afraid inside? What does fear do? Suppose you have done something you know to be wrong and you are first guilty and then afraid? Do you make up lies to get out of it? Have you ever tried to excuse yourself? Protect yourself? The white man did. He wanted to keep his slaves but he wanted very much to get rid of his guilt . . . so he made up lies: he said Negroes are not really human, therefore there is no reason for me to feel guilty. And from guilt came the whole lie of white supremacy/Negro inferiority . . . and from guilt came segregation.

As we saw, the power structure uses segregation to keep poor Negroes and poor whites from working together to solve their common problems. Segregation is also the white man's program for hiding away the cause of his guilt--the Negro--hiding him in slums, segregated schools, backyards. Segregation is a wall the white man built to hide from you, the cause of his guilt . . . and by hiding you, to hide from his own conscience.

Negroes and whites are afraid. Negroes have reason to be afraid. Whites are afraid because of guilt. When Negroes are afraid, they continue to go along with the system. The same is true of whites. And so we say that: there is great fear in the South and it is from this fear that the "power structure" derives its power, from fear that the system keeps going. What do fear and lies do to people?

Concept: that the fear we have felt and the lies we have lived and the guilt have done great damage to us all, Negro and white.

Questions: what happens to you when you keep telling a lie over and over? Do you finally believe it? If you do not believe it, what happens inside to keep telling it anyway? What happens if you are afraid of something for a long long time? Does it change you inside? Does fear finally destroy

something in you? What about guilt? If you are guilty of something and have to hide for a long long time, what happens? Are you happy? Free?

Draw a stick figure on the board--a man standing tall and straight. Here is man. He stands tall and straight as he is meant to stand. Draw a man stooped with his head hung down. Here is man again. What do you feel when you look at this figure? Tired? Old? Ashamed? Sick? Draw a stick figure stooped behind a fence or wall. What about this man. What do you feel? Fear? Hiding? What is alike about these two figures? They are bent. Is the first man bent?

Point to the first stooped figure. Have you ever seen a real person walk or stand this way? A Negro? A white man? Why? Age? Illness? Shame? Fear? Guilt? How about the other figure? Have you seen that? Which figure do you like? Why?

What do these figures represent? Above the two stooped figures draw arrows pointing down upon them and pressing them down. What do these arrows do? What do they represent?

We are talking about what lies do to people. What do you think about this? Do lies destroy something in man? Yes. Living, telling, or believing lies destroys something in us all. If somebody tells you that you are bad or lazy or inferior or guilty --you can either believe them or not. Suppose you do not believe them. Suppose you know better, but still they continue to tell you are bad . . . what happens inside you? Anger? Frustration? Despair? Sickness? Suppose you believe the lies? Do you know Negroes who have come to believe that they are inferior? How do they act? How do they stand? Walk? What about whites? Have you seen the face of a white man twisted in hate, fear, anger? Is it the face of a free man? A happy man? Have you seen the empty faces of the whites on Main Street--faces that look through you--blank and empty. Are they the faces and eyes of free and happy people? No. No, they are not. White men have lost their health too--the health of their minds and of their bodies . . . from living the lies. No man can live the lie without being bent. The whole South is bent . . . and broken.

Can we really compare Negroes and whites in this matter of being free? It is clear to anyone who looks around that Negroes are not free to grow, to move about, to learn and develop and become whole inside. How about whites? Look down the biggest street in town. You see fine houses, cars, pools, trees, lawns. Do most whites live this way? Do whites who live this way have freedom? Does it show in their faces? If they had freedom, why would they also have fear? Do free men fear? Why

would they have hatred? If they were free, why would they lock the doors of their big houses? What about the rest of the whites? Those who have no fine houses and cars? What do they have? White skin? Are they free then? Is the KKK a group of happy men?

No. No, we are not free and not happy. Because we are bent, broken, divided, not whole. We have taken a piece of ourselves and turned it over to the "power structure" which is simply to say, we have turned ourselves over to a lie.

1. The "power structure" is one force that helps to maintain the world; in the South, that helps to maintain the terrible world of segregation.
2. That "power structure" derives its power, in the final analysis, from the fears of both whites and Negroes.
3. Poor whites and Negroes are oppressed by the "power structure." We have much in common.
4. If poor whites and Negroes could get together and move out from under the "power structure," it would fall.
5. We do not move because we are afraid.
6. Generally, the Negro's fear is based upon very real danger.
7. Generally, the white's fear is based upon guilt.
8. Fear--whatever the cause--produces lies. We live in the South.
9. Living lies bends and breaks us.
10. That is to say--keeps us from being whole. That is to say--keeps us from being free.

Have you ever heard this: "Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free?"

Have we seen in this unit that lies and the fear behind lies and the guilt behind the fear . . . work together to enslave men?

If lies enslave us, then Truth will free us.

What IS the truth? That is . . . what will make us free?

In the next unit, we will try to find the answer to the question: What is the Truth? Or, the same question: What is freedom?