

Karl's New Manifesto

By [DAVID BROOKS](#)

I was in the library reading room when suddenly a strange specter of a man appeared above me. He was a ragged fellow with a bushy beard, dressed in the clothes of another century. He clutched news clippings on class in America, and atop the pile was a manifesto in his own hand. He was gone in an instant, but Karl's manifesto on modern America remained. This is what it said:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Freeman and slave, lord and serf, capitalist and proletariat, in a word oppressor and oppressed, stand in opposition to each other and carry on a constant fight. In the information age, in which knowledge is power and money, the class struggle is fought between the educated elite and the undereducated masses.

The information age elite exercises artful dominion of the means of production, the education system. The median family income of a Harvard student is \$150,000. According to the Educational Testing Service, only 3 percent of freshmen at the top 146 colleges come from the poorest quarter of the population. The educated class ostentatiously offers financial aid to poor students who attend these colleges and then rigs the admission criteria to ensure that only a small, co-optable portion of them can get in.

The educated class reaps the benefits of the modern economy - seizing for itself most of the income gains of the past decades - and then ruthlessly exploits its position to ensure the continued dominance of its class.

The educated class has torn away from the family its sentimental veil and reduced it to a mere factory for the production of little meritocrats. Members of the educated elites are more and more likely to marry each other, which the experts call assortative mating, but which is really a ceaseless effort to refortify class solidarity and magnify social isolation. Children are turned into workaholic knowledge workers - trained, tutored, tested and prepped to strengthen class dominance.

The educated elites are the first elites in all of history to work longer hours per year than the exploited masses, so voracious is their greed for second homes. They congregate in exclusive communities walled in by the invisible fence of real estate prices, then congratulate themselves for sending their children to public schools. They parade their enlightened racial attitudes by supporting immigration policies that guarantee inexpensive lawn care. They send their children off to Penn, Wisconsin and Berkeley, bastions of privilege for the children of the professional class, where they are given the social and other skills to extend class hegemony.

The information society is the only society in which false consciousness is at the top. For it is an iron rule of any university that the higher the tuition and more exclusive the

admissions, the more loudly the denizens profess their solidarity with the oppressed. The more they objectively serve the right, the more they articulate the views of the left.

Periodically members of this oppressor class hold mock elections. The Yale-educated scion of the Bush family may face the Yale-educated scion of the Winthrop family. They divide into Republicans and Democrats and argue over everything except the source of their power: the intellectual stratification of society achieved through the means of education.

More than the Roman emperors, more than the industrial robber barons, the malefactors of the educated class seek not only to dominate the working class, but to decimate it. For 30 years they have presided over failing schools without fundamentally transforming them. They have imposed a public morality that affords maximum sexual opportunity for themselves and guarantees maximum domestic chaos for those lower down.

In 1960 there were not big structural differences between rich and poor families. In 1960, three-quarters of poor families were headed by married couples. Now only a third are. While the rates of single parenting have barely changed for the educated elite, family structures have disintegrated for the oppressed masses.

Poor children are less likely to live with both biological parents, hence, less likely to graduate from high school, get a job and be in a position to challenge the hegemony of the privileged class. Family inequality produces income inequality from generation to generation.

Undereducated workers of the world, unite! Let the ruling educated class tremble! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have a world to win!

I don't agree with everything in Karl's manifesto, because I don't believe in incessant class struggle, but you have to admit, he makes some good points.

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