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TOWARDS AMERICAN APARTHEID

The day after the rapture, someone will need to do bro hugs.

Many of the homogenized left-behind will depart the pedagogic birth canal, so outraged at 'otherness', that they'll volunteer in an animus agenda against diversity. Some will embrace the naissance of an American apartheid, which is as invested in disenfranchisement as the original flavor.

A few will choose emancipation. This short piece is about them.

During a recent breakaway discussion I was asked, whether you reached a satisfying conclusion in your argument. I said you didn't go far enough. The premise that education is akin to root canal sans Propofol – with the added benefits of indelibly ingrained patterning – is persuasive. As is the idea that deliverance from Panglossian mass-distraction is critical: an erudition trigger, if you will.

I propose expanding the argument by going further than false dichotomies: mandatory education vs homeschool; perpetual consumerist indulgences vs consumer abstinence; obeisance vs independence. Going AWOL beyond binaries, against an academic behemoth, we'll need all the grayscale we can get.

While under duress to deny as much, the privileged frequently pontificate that equal opportunity exists for all. But playing fields are not level, and some attempt to participate, despite their conditions resting a heavy finger on the scale. Against this reality, insulation and separatism are cousins of extreme polarization. It is the me-me-me in measles, willfully re-animated by homeschooling anti-vaxxers who 'vote their conscience', while stepping over debris fields of consequence.

A restrained interpretation of the challenge reveals that even the worst schools, acting more as a brick and mortar soporific than a place of learning, often act as a refuge. For some kids, it represents the only meal of the day. A safe space from abuse and societal disconnect where one man's failed school is another kid's sanctuary. When mayors close schools in vulnerable neighborhoods, already battling food desertification, the wrecking ball of a swath of school closures cannot be overstated.

But, truth is 'alternative fact' and garbled whoppers fit into 280 characters. We are instructed not to believe what we read or hear; rather to believe what we are told. But memes have consequences.

A number of school curricula, determined at state level, embolden anti-intellectualism, germinating a view that smart is not cool. Coupled with cultural conditioning, it widens a schism between the Ivy League elite and the Mason-Dixon chaperoned. The proposal to become an egghead is catnip to critics of the intellectual class, playing into a pernicious us-and-them construct.

None of this is new. University of Chicago educator Gerald Graff, has long held that the specters of Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield, replete with folksy anti-establishment parlance, are just two more examples of a thorny relationship between frontier tamers and aseptic academia.

I appreciate your encouragement of renegades, freeing themselves from the educational tether. Allen Ginsberg was a radical who already as teenager, took issue with politics and social conditions. Does your championing of independence equally embrace anti-establishment mindsets and lifestyles, which often keep the inquiring intellect company? I suspect that Messrs. Mencken, Conant, Inglis and Wilson turned in their privileged graves when Ginsberg read 'Howl' in '56. And you, Mr. Gatto? Did you howl in recoil? Or did Ginsberg's intellect, output and bourgeois-loathing views illustrate opportunity

Rejecting the ethos of the public school, implies cognizance of societal and political leverage. A bored, docile kid begot by a patriarchal, heteronormative institution is tomorrow's insecure, bellicose adult who – manipulated by extremist media and aroused by white patriotism – commits breathtaking acts of terrorism against the innocent.

And we do nothing. Blunted, we post 'thoughts and prayers' on wall after wall as our only response to a low-level war fought in our backyards. We blame the victim, laugh at the tweets and get distracted. We are bricks in a wall built through mass manipulation. Pink Floyd's wall, not the other one.