

RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Poem
denvergoddamn

by Chris Steele



CHRIS STEELE, (PHOTO: SEAN GRUNO)

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They made a gun and named it civilization
They told me I had a learning disorder and needed more patience
When i was young they said columbus was a hero for us
They never told me he was a genocidal maniac who killed and enslaved the
Indigenous
I learned about not chewing gum and the "maybe true" greenhouse effect
Now I'm older and there's not much time left

Upon reflecting on how i woke up from my brainwashed lessons
It was hip hop who woke me and made me ask questions
When I first heard NWA my brother said never repeat what they say
So I memorized every word and repeat them to this day
No matter how good a pamphlet is it's read once and thrown away, but a song
Is memorized by the heart, that was said by Joe Hill
Rap shook me Kweli said why did 50 shots hit Sean Bell?

Rap taught me about MOVE being bombed by the Philly police in 85
The year I was born, white supremacy was erased, my history was a lie
A tree never grown, 41 shots hit Amadou Diallo when he was reaching for
his wallet
They say he sold loosies, he stole cigarillos, but murder is what we call it
They make lies seem truthful and murder seem respectable as they collect
more metals
While the memorials on street corners slowly decay as tears fall like
marigold petals

Ras Kass told me about the nature of the threat
I started to reflect on privilege, capitalism, slavery, and debt
Dead Prez taught me about Nat Turner, my textbooks silent... propaganda is
clever
I asked my teacher, he yelled wait in my ear until it fermented to never
In high school 9/11 happened
Gangstarr was my GURU, Marvin said war is not the answer
On our lunch break they would try to recruit us their lies were foolish
They said you got to fight for freedom, a fatigue wearing Judas

Now there's no yellow ribbon on the oak tree, you see
Cause We chopped it down to make more recruitment papers for the next war
to be
Looking at yearbook photos, we were on a basketball team, now some are
veterans
We were born good, Vonnegut called this original virtue
Our rage was learned, now truth has less limbs

All this from the muddy heart of denver, swimming in a tar pit of
foreclosed bricks
Illegal to sleep outside, the shelters are full, pushing the rock of Sisyphus
The ghost of Nina, denver god damn
Lynchings in Limon, did my silence play a hand?
You could turn a tree into a club or a prison or you leave it be
I say let it grow and plant seeds
Because that's what hip hop was for me



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