

“The Revolution Was Televised:

Looking Back at Charles A. Reich’s *The Greening of America.*”

Abstract: “1970’s publication of *The Greening of America* discussed the social, cultural and economic status of the United States. Charles A. Reich criticized the contemporary lifestyle of the nation as needing serious readjustments. This presentation will review the observations and forecasts of this author with practical changes in American life. Contemporary matters of Feminism, political orthodoxy and cultural behaviors will be discussed.”

Read the entire poem of *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*

By Gil Scott Heron (1974)

Charles A. Reich proposes that three states of “Consciousnesses” exist

Each one was a reaction to the existing conception of life

Consciousness I was a rejection of class status and village life

Consciousness II focused on organization of corporations and government

Consciousness III focuses affluence, technology, liberation and ideals

Author feels Consciousness III exists due to Vietnam War, neon ugliness and boring work. He covers many topics in his book. We will discuss six salient topics

Gil Scott Heron, the poet and musician, wrote and recorded a poem in 1974 entitled “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.” In this poem he forecast that the expected revolution would be in the streets rather than on television. He forecast that consumer products would not longer be relevant since human values would become more relevant.

The revolution was televised. Every major change in American society was recorded and broadcast and discussed by the free networks and now cable news networks. Some things changed and some other things changed but essentially remained the same.

I will discuss the Vietnam War itself, the importance of the Women’s Movement and Expected Rejection of Envy, Jealousy and Competition

The Vietnam War as Social Change:

The Vietnam War was the major social division of American culture.

Military service was expected for American males from 17th through 20th Century

It has been said by more than one commentator that today’s military expedition to Iraq and Afghanistan would not be continued if there was a draft from the general population
The draft during the Vietnam Era was part of the cause of the social division
Today’s military is an all-volunteer force rather than conscripts

The pacification wars from 1600s on East Coast through Apache warfare in Arizona in 1900 demanded regular Army or irregular Volunteer military service.

Doctor John Holliday’s father was an officer in the US Army in the Mexican – American War of the 1840s. He was an officer in the Confederate Army in the 1860s.

Nicholas Earp, the father of Wyatt Earp, served in the military in six conflicts in his life.

Once pacification of native nations was completed there was less frequent conflict American forces engaged in combat infrequently enough that a veteran of one war was not likely to fight in another war in the 1900s.

World War I was sold to the American people as needed to make the world safe for democracy

World War II was a self-evident threat from two oceans

The culture of the USA in the 1900s was shaped by huge immigration
Even now about one-third of Americans is an immigrant or a child of an immigrant
This foreignness means never being sure of understanding the recipes of the culture

Being an immigrant may impel a man to establish his American identity
Being the son of an immigrant may impel a man to secure his American identity
Being the son of natives impels a man to confirm his American identity
Native or of foreign stock, Americans agreed with political authority for warfare

The draft was instituted in 1940 as a precaution against World War II
The military draft was not ended until 1973.
Selective Service was a poorly-conceived process where any male might be drafted
At some times in the 1960s college students were drafted
At other times in the 1960s college students were not drafted
The unfairness and unpredictability of the system undermined confidence

The Vietnam War was hampered by unclear goals
Television’s daily images made clear to home viewers the vagueness of the war’s aims
The lack of clear political goals as a marker of victory made the war absurd

The American people, especially its draft-vulnerable sons, disagreed with this war
Returning veterans often disparaged the military and its strategy and tactics

There was a lack of support from isolationists on the right
There was a lack of support from many internationalists on the left
President Johnson widened the war then left it to be completed
President Nixon fumbled with the peace process then eventually withdrew

The generation gap of middle-aged WWII veterans and Vietnam possibilities was deep
WWII veterans had usually obeyed political and military orders
Their sons and nephews and grandsons saw no need to join in a futile war

From this lack of agreement on cultural symbols came other movements
The Civil Rights Movement had existed before but gained strength
The Women's Movement had existed but been dormant than revived
Consumer culture was spurred by the infusion of war money into the economy

Some say the long-range goal of Vietnam was to destroy the economics of the USSR
The spending for Vietnam eventually resulting in destroying the USSR

Vietnam alienated many from established roles and expectations
The most major alienation was of gender: Women's Movement changed American life

The Women's Movement as Social Change:

Reich discusses the Women's Movement for only a paragraph.
He is prescient about many other items but is surprisingly unaware here
The Women's Movement had been building up for several years by 1970

His only statement here is:

"Wives of middle-class professional men occupy a particularly questionable position: well-educated and highly intelligent, they are forced into a position in which they cannot do any real work or assume any real independence. When their children grow up, they are left with empty lives, and often there are divorces and some rather sad middle-aged attempts to 'begin a new life.' But the wife feels a strong responsibility to her children and home, a strong sense of duty in her chosen role. And on the outside, should she seek a different life, there is no community waiting for her; the world is made up of married people, and there is no one to help her or affirm her new existence. So she doubts and wonders."

He has marginally noticed a social phenomenon already chronicled by Betty Friedan.

The revival of the Women's Movement is usually credited to Betty Friedan
Her book *The Feminine Mystique* is generally credited as recognizing a need
I believe her book recorded and reported a social movement about to occur
I think she was fortunate to find herself at the head of a parade
She led the parade where it was going to go anyway
Her followers were already going in that direction

Betty Friedan had surveyed well educated married mothers who felt alienated
Friedan said these women were asking themselves: "Is this all?"
Unprecedented financial security and technology isolated them
These women were sealed off from meaningful achievements

Friedan said these women had a "*problem that has no name.*"
It can be called ennui or depression or boredom
She said her respondents lived comfortable lives
Contemporary media cast the idea of a happy homemaker & mother as their roles

Friedan said these women were being infantilized
She felt jobs were needed for self esteem
She was sure American women should join the ranks of the employed

Her ideals were echoed by others
Letty Cottin Pogrebin in *Getting Yours: How To Make The System Work For The Working Woman* stated women needed a job, as well as a husband, home & children

The change here had its difficulties
Erica Abeel in *I'll Call You Tomorrow and Other Lies Between Men and Women*
Said mating became complicated by new gender expectations

Friedan and other writers, especially authors of magazine articles in women's media,
Expected men to support women's employment and agree to it wholeheartedly.
The social convention of *The New Man* was of a supportive friend or partner
Some men fit this profile and others were completely disconnected from it
Men were expected to be successful and sensitive now

The Media made women's careers with marriage look easy
If the career and marriage did not work out then divorce was made to look easy

Some data and some opinions warned of practical problems.

Sylvia Ann Hewlett, in *A Lesser Life: The Myth of Women's Liberation in America*, stated that having a career & family proved more difficult than advertised
Hewlett, an economist, said 1970s women were expected to have successful
Lucrative careers "*while raising our children in our spare time.*"

Hewlett also warned about unforeseen liabilities in a legal reform: No Fault Divorce
Hewlett said this equal division of property but not income hurt women terribly

The Equal Rights Amendment was defeated by traditional home makers
Phyllis Schlafly and her friends declared war on the Women's Movement
These comfortably-placed homemakers convinced state legislators to abandon ERA

Mindy Cohen *The Sisterhood* noted Women's issues were mainstream by 1970
She also noted how racial minorities were baffled about the Women's Movement
They could not see how a well-supported white woman was oppressed

Education and employment changed the relationship of the genders
Srully Blotnick in *Otherwise Engaged: The Private Lives of Successful Career Women*
Noted "Professionalization" meant viewing others as "foreigners"
Career life then had no "social matching mechanism."
Some career women focused on their career above relationships as did some men

Germaine Greer in *The Female Eunuch* said the Movement was "leaderless"
The main focus of middle class women was equal opportunity as a replacement for love

Widespread educational and employment opportunities had results
Some results were unforeseen in rejection of the career model

A recent *Philadelphia Magazine* article entitled "Rocks On" gave one example
It was reported upper class women now require a "push present"
When they deliver a child their high-income husbands are required to deliver too

The delivery is of an expensive item of jewelry from a name jeweler
If a new mother is not presented an "important piece" she secures it herself
She will go to her favorite jeweler, "borrow" it, then inform the husband
The erring mate is expected to immediately purchase it
Cell phones mean transactions can be done from the dinner table

What had been a central function of marriage is now a function of commercialism

Whereas women have opportunities in education and employment, marriage changed too
Time Magazine reported in an article “Let’s Remake A Deal” about renegotiations

When one spouse is suddenly enriched sometimes a “postnuptial agreement” occurs
A prenuptial agreement defines property in case of divorce or death
A lawyer friend of mine refers to the prenuptial agreement as “The death of love.”
The prenuptial agreement is an exercise in mistrust

The postnuptial agreement admits a relationship and delineates property
I am told it is a pre-divorce legal maneuver usually done a year ahead of time
Every postnuptial agreement I know of is presented a year before the divorce filing

No Fault Divorce originally expected the woman to support herself
A Postnuptial agreement gives the spouse an uneven property settlement
The supposed equality of the genders has developed this social/legal innovation

Leslie Bennets’s book *The Feminine Mistake: Are We Giving Up Too Much?*
Brings us to an interesting paradox for educated women
Some educated women want to be full-time homemakers and mothers
She discusses **Choice Feminism**: the choice to not have an outside career
These well-educated women want to practice **intensive mothering**.

Bennets’ decries “*the public glorification of stay-at-home motherhood and the failure of the media and other analysts to warn women about the risks of sacrificing their Independence.*”

Bennets’ credits *The Feminine Mystique* for fundamental cultural changes
However many young professional women now have a deep sense of
Entitlements and options as if all gender battles have been won

Bennets quotes information about women leaving paid employment
once married, once a mother or even once engaged.

She admits today’s jobs often are never-ending due to cell phones and the Internet
She quotes Hewlett that career off-ramps are many but career on-ramps are few
Bennets wants women to have full-time professional careers
She quotes surveys of today’s Ivy League undergraduate women
These women want to marry well and live well “at home” as wives and mothers

Jessica Pressler in *Philadelphia Magazine* wrote an article about Eagles cheerleaders
She said today's young women have intelligence and drive and achievement
She says today's young women are expected to "*do it all.*"
Therefore these women are expected to do everything.

Overall *The Greening of America* completely missed the Women's Movement
It has been a crucial part of American culture and society for decades
Reich forecast an interesting cultural and commercial development:
Rejecting Envy, Jealousy and Competition is a cultural conundrum

Rejecting Envy, Jealousy and Competition:

American culture has always been a culture of abundance
The only question has been: can you afford it?

Reich expected people would not longer be competitive in class terms
He expected non-conformists or the handicapped would not be ridiculed

Class differences are usually defined in terms of education and income
Another dimension is consumer goods ownership
Clothing, homes, cars and boats mark income level and class status

Reich expected any envy, jealousy or competition to shrivel away
This friction is especially important in terms of class consumerism
He seemed to foresee a change in American consumer life

Christopher Byron in *Martha, INC: The Incredible Story of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia* states Martha Kostyra, later Martha Stewart, was in the high school Class of 1959. This high school class was the last one to accept traditional values
The class of 1960 was of a world where the youth culture was dominant

Martha and her peers matured before the Anti-War or Women's Movements
She was a business woman who has defined a new type of homemaker
She was driven to improve her class status from the lower middle class
She was driven to gather money and fame

Her negative energy always was aimed at her husband Andy Stewart
Her difficult childhood due to her parents' angry marriage made her avaricious
She focused on an image of upper class calm and serenity via consumer goods

Martha Stewart got in front of the parade and led it where it was already going.
She was a young woman when American culture wanted to jettison social upheaval
She and her peers focused on home, family and local interests

She adapted psychotherapeutic and aspirational American ideals
Independence, self-fulfillment and self-actualization were her aims
She told and sold her audience a legend of Lady Bountiful

She observed the 1970s generation of American career women
They women were stressed out, overworked and disappointed
These women wanted calm lives and serene homes

Martha Stewart and a friend had a catering business in NYC suburbs
It was **The Uncatered Affair**: she prepared meals for busy women
The customer received all components for a dinner party
The customer did only the final step of heating or reheating
The customer could pretend she had done all of this kitchen work

Martha Stewart sold an image of a woman without cares and with skills
The ideal was of the Superwoman: perfect wife, mother, professional
Domestic tranquility became a goal
Her audience reads her books and magazine and watches her TV programs
The daydream has been called **Time Porn**
The wish is for time to bake muffins, plant a garden or make curtains

The Lady Bountiful is not to be envious but is to be envied
She is “at-home” and has no jealousy or competition
Others look at her and wish to be her, to be Martha Stewart

Leslie Bennets in *The Feminine Mistake* decries this cultural aim
She says young Ivy League female students want to be Lady Bountiful
They expect a high-income husband to support her
His support is either to be in a continuing marriage or “to keep the alimony flowing”

Survey research has found that female executives want to be “at home”
They reject the high-stress world of the executive suite
Bennets finds a lack of harsh emotions but a surfeit of exhaustion and hopes

Robert Frank in his book *Richistan* defines a concept of **Mass Luxury**
Thorsten Veblen defined **Conspicuous Consumption** as the mark of wealth
Frank says the middle class buy products which are knock offs of wealthy goods

David Brooks in *Bobos (Bourgeois Bohemians) in Paradise: The New Upper Class and how They Got There* says traditional classes no longer make sense

He says the society and culture changed so radically we need new definitions
Bourgeois capitalism and Bohemian counterculture has mixed and mingled
Rebel attitudes and social-climbing mixed and mingled in work, home and family

Bobos are high achievers with a seemingly casual attitude about life and work
The Post-Industrial information culture was unforeseen by Reich
Reich did predict a lessening of obvious conceit and social friction

Brooks says Bobos were diligent students who networked and worked hard
They usually did not evidence adolescent rebellions
Their focus is on smooth functioning without lacerating competition

Malcolm Gladwell in *The Tipping Point* describes social harmony
He finds today's high achievers tend to be Connectors, Mavens or Salesmen
A Connector meets and networks many people
A Maven knows about and informs others of good bargains
Salesmen persuade others to buy or vote for or consider new concepts

These social archetypes focus on harmony and good will
There is a minimumization of open racial, religious or gender hatred
There is hatred but it is socially disapproved and generally hidden

American society expects to function smoothly in its many subcultures
Reich forecast a true vision of a more harmonious life
This revolution has been televised

“All Rules and Structure Are ‘Violence.’ “
is one original viewpoint of Charles Reich in his book.
This point has been made by many writers either pro or con

E. Digby Baltzell in his writings about the American upper class
Stated that every society has an elite which has power or wealth or influence
These leaders are the “bricks and mortar” of every society.
Such leaders either were born to the manor or were self-made strivers.
In either case they did impose their rules upon the society.
The society may have felt imposed upon or grateful or uninterested

Traditional or legal expectations impose structure
This structure may or may not be fair or reasonable
This structure gives a reformer or a revolutionary a structure to disown
Any established procedure, formal or informal, is its own glass ceiling, floor and wall

Today’s students, Millennial students, born after 1980, grew up with few firm structures
Today’s undergraduates expect faculty to reply to e-mails at 4 a. m.
Today’s undergraduates see faculty as people with expertise rather than experts.
The formal walls of 1970 are much more flexible in 2008.

Robert Bly predicted such as likely transformation
He stated that “Father Hunger” made some young men feel rootless and unloved
He stated the “Sibling Society” meant 35% or so of adults were locked into adolescence
The informality of superiors and subordinates or most power relationships is widespread
Formality is rare outside of military or other rigid power relationships.
Charles Reich had this view in proper context
Americans have greatly rejected the violence of rigid relationships

Betty Friedan, in *The Feminine Mystique*, saw homemaking as oppression
She wanted reform so women could work as professionals
She wanted the workplace to become more humanized.
The American workplace is not as flexible as once predicted
There are many workplaces with day care facilities and flexible hours
The situation is not optimum but it is better.
There is less rigidity in the American workplace so there is less institutional violence

Sylvia Ann Hewlett has said some large corporations expect to hire single mothers
These individuals may make up most of their workforce
The workplace will change for such employees
There is less violence of rule-making here

Leslie Bennetts in *The Feminine Mistake* interviewed many women “at home.”
These women left their jobs upon marriage, motherhood or even engagement.
These Ivy League-educated women found the white collar workplace too difficult
There were unrealistic deadlines, little appreciation and no rapid promotion
Media news stories and magazine articles had promised joyful careers
These women opted out of the male career model
38% of the females of the Harvard M. B. A. classes of 1986, 1991 & 1996 are at home
These women would not accept the violence of the workplace.

These aspects of “the revolution” have been televised.
We have seen them all play out in front of our eyes in the screen or in your lives.
End of Presentation.

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