

Black Mask Answers Leary

Fifth Estate Collective
Black Mask

1967

The column, "You are a god, live like one" by Timothy Leary that appeared in the last issue of the FIFTH ESTATE [FE #25, March 1-15, 1967] was originally published in our sister underground paper, the EAST VILLAGE OTHER (EVO). The letter that follows is a letter written in response to that column by a New York based group of revolutionary poets calling themselves BLACK MASK.

To the Editor:

The Leary article "You Are a God Act Like One," in the last EVO is one of the best examples of double speak we have yet seen—1984 must be getting near.

No, Leary, we are not "Gods" we are flesh and blood men. Men like those whose lives are being crushed by this system you try so hard to protect. "No abrupt destructive, rebellious actions, please." The Luce Publications know a good thing when they see it. If enough of them (Watts, Santo Domingo, Vietnam) "Drop-Out" we won't have to wipe them out. But they won't "Drop-Out"—instead they will drive you out—you power hungry politicians, you corrupted poets, you Madison Avenue Gods.

What is "The most practical, liberating message" that prophet Leary brings us? "Your state of consciousness is reflected in your environment. You create your environment." No, Leary, we don't create our environment, it has been created for us by those perverted creatures of government and business. But we will create a new one; one built on the ashes of the old, one where man doesn't have to be a "God" (or priest) to enjoy the fruits of this world, one where all men will be "Tuned-In"—Tuned in to life and all its glory. "No destructive, rebellious actions." How else? Everyone in Harlem can "Turn-On" but Harlem won't change. Everyone in India can "Turn-On" but hunger won't vanish. Maybe you can "Turn-On," Leary and forget it, but we can't. But then we aren't Gods.

This letter is not meant as a criticism of drugs in general but of Leary in particular. Drugs are and should be a personal matter for the individual to decide (not cops and courts); but Leary is another matter. His advocacy of religion and his attempts to de-fuse, not spread, rebellion make him the enemy along with the cops and courts.

Needless to say, the letter was not printed and Leary still inhabits Mt. Olympus while the EVO serves as oracle for the "New Establishment."

This new establishment has all the mind-sapping and anti-revolutionary characteristics of the old, with religion playing a dominant role: besides Leary, we have Allen Ginsberg acting as salesman for both Hinduism and Buddhism (this represents no conflict since sectarian theology is not the object, any religion will do, so long as it prevents revolution); and the cross follows close behind. The most dangerous aspect of this establishment is the "radical" mantle with which it seeks to cover itself and thus delude many dissatisfied youth with a false bourgeois sponsored "rebellion." The artists speak against the war for one week, but serve the capitalists all year. The poets clamor at the gates of the university while the real poets are in the streets crying "Burn, Baby, Burn!"

Revolution.



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Fifth Estate #26, March 15-31, 1967

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