

## Why We Need a Teacher Liberation Front

Here's a modest proposal: teachers should recall that their first loyalty is to children and parents, not the elite educators who manage the system. As I'll show, these people are often indifferent to the misery they cause, and that's why we need a Teacher Liberation Front:

In 1944 Life magazine reported that "Millions of children in the U.S. suffer from dyslexia." This was a phony epidemic created almost entirely by Whole Word. Did the educators pushing this hoax apologize or change course? Not at all. These are not people who apologize or look for better ideas. That's why we need a Teacher Liberation Front.

In 1953 Paul Witty, one of the main architects of Whole Word, mused, "Is it true that one-third of our high school students can't read at the fifth grade level? That's what one magazine writer estimated in 1946. Other articles have painted almost as bleak a picture." Witty tried to downplay the drumbeat of bad news, but my point to you is that he knew the bad news. As Dr. Samuel Orton had reported all the way back in 1928, Whole Word creates some creepy side effects. Witty had to make the obvious connection: he is personally causing all these problems. What can we conclude--he was a useful idiot? he was a Communist agent? he was too addled to be allowed out of the house? In any event, Witty and his successors ought not be allowed near a public school. But they run the schools! That's why we need a Teacher Liberation Front.

In 1955 Rudolph Flesch unleashed the thunderbolt titled "Why Johnny Can't Read," explaining in simple terms (that even ed school professors could understand) why children were ending up illiterate. What did the professors do? They circled the wagons. They formed the International Reading Association (IRA), a very aggressive lobbying group for all the bad ideas in the field of reading. They didn't bat an eye, these pretenders. They went right on producing dyslexia and illiteracy. That's why we need a Teacher Liberation Front.&nbsp;

in 1973 Samuel Blumenfeld published "The New Illiterates," which stated that there was a "plague" of illiteracy and other reading problems.&nbsp; Blumenfeld said that Whole Word was the thalidomide in our intellectual drinking water. He mentions that our big problem is "the teachers of teachers [e.g., professors at ed schools]...Why don't some of these Ph.Ds get into the classroom and help undo some of the damage they are responsible for?" An excellent suggestion. But here's the key point: this book was published 18 years after the Johnny-can't-read book. But there had been no improvement. Indeed, in a 1988 paperback version of his own book, Blumenfeld indicated the plague had gotten even worse! That's why we need a Teacher Liberation Front.

In the early 1990s The International Reading Association and the ed school professors were sailing along just fine, thank you. They had contemptuously ignored a second Flesch book; they had morphed Whole Word into Whole Language (like most criminals, this thing has a lot of aliases). The USA was said to have, by this date, more than 40,000,000 functional illiterates. Way to go, guys; you're all heart. Finally, after 60 years of this nonsense, the IRA relented to this degree: perhaps some phonics was acceptable. But why did they relent? Because reading scores in California had dropped so low (by 1994) that there was a huge scandal, and Whole Word was kicked whimpering into the streets. The IRA gang was only conceding what had already been ripped from their hands. Their fallback position was called Balanced Literacy--best understood as Whole Word with only as much phonics as they are forced to put up with. In practice, little children today are still forced to memorize sight words. Now we have closer to 50,000,000 functional illiterates and the number grows. That's why we need a Teacher Liberation Front.

Bottom line: elite educators won't self-correct. They're set in ideological concrete, apparently. I've been thinking that maybe teachers could rise up and be more demanding. They merely have to realize that their present circumstance might be described as living on a plantation. I bet a lot of them know this and they're ready to become more assertive. Power to the teachers!

(These ideas are more fully developed in a companion piece titled "[31: Teacher Liberation Front](#)" on Improve-Education.org. There's an epilogue titled "Educator Liberation Front.")

## About the Author

Bruce Deitrick Price is an author, artist, poet and education activist. His main site is [Improve-Education.org](http://www.improve-education.org), now up to 31 articles and 50,000 words of original content. Recent articles are "30: The War Against Reading" and "31: Teacher Liberation Front."&nbsp; &nbsp;

Source: <http://www.edarticle.com>