

# Youth Liberation Program

Youth Liberation of Ann Arbor

1972

# Contents

Youth Liberation Program . . . . . 3

*Youth Liberation, an Ann Arbor-based group (see Section 6 [of the book this Program is from] for a fuller account of their activities, publications, and services), has issued a fifteen-point program “to put together truth about what is wrong with our present situation and to lay out changes that must be made. . . . If our program strays from the specific needs of youth, it is because we know that we are not free until all people are free and the earth is a healthy place to live.”*

## Youth Liberation Program

Every day, it becomes clearer that we might be the last generation in the experiment with living. The problems facing humanity are so huge that some of us think working for change is futile. We of Youth Liberation, however, will not be led either to the treadmill or to the slaughterhouse like “good Germans.” We know there is a basic decision to make: either we stay quiet and become part of a system of oppression, or we seize control of our lives, take risks, and struggle to build something new. We believe that problems have causes and that by studying these causes we can learn solutions. We know that young people have power if we take it and use it. We must liberate ourselves from the death trip of corporate America. We must take control of our lives, because within us is the seed of a new reality—a seed that cannot grow until our lives are our own. It is a reality of ecstasy, made up of love, justice, freedom, peace, and plenty.

The Youth Liberation Program is an attempt to put together truth about what is wrong with our present situation and to lay out changes that must be made. This process never ends. To win, we must know very clearly what we want and what we reject. We are learning to struggle together. If our program strays from the specific needs of youth, it is because we know that we are not free until all people are free and the earth is a healthy place to live.

1. “WE WANT THE POWER TO DETERMINE OUR OWN DESTINY.

2. WE WANT THE IMMEDIATE END OF ADULT CHAUVINISM. We believe ideas should be judged on their merit and people on their wisdom or kindness. Age *in itself* deserves no recognition. Adults who want to support youth struggle or “improve communication” should show their concern by providing concrete resources. Words alone are not enough. Age might once have led to wisdom, but the old have proved themselves unable to deal with present reality. If the human species is to survive, the young must take the lead.

3. WE WANT FULL CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS. We believe young people are necessary participants in democracy. We must have complete freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion, and the right to vote. We believe that all people are created equal and are endowed with certain unalienable rights; among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

4. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO FORM OUR EDUCATION ACCORDING TO OUR NEEDS We believe compulsory education is a form of imprisonment and must be abolished immediately. Grades and all forms of tracking must end, because they stimulate competition, divide us, and make us work for other people’s ends. All discipline procedures must be decided democratically within the school community. No school staff should be hired or fired without the democratic consent of students and teachers. Students and the community must have the right to use school facilities whenever they feel it is necessary.

5. WE WANT THE FREEDOM TO FORM INTO COMMUNAL FAMILIES. We believe that the nuclear family is not in the best interest of the people involved. Young people are now considered property — to be molded in the image of their parents. Since we demand self-determination for our lives, this is intolerable. In communal families children can grow in the company of many people, both peers and adults. They can learn the co-operation of community rather than the oppression of ownership. Until communal families are a reality, some healthy provision must be made for young people whose present conditions of life force them to become cultural refugees.

6. WE WANT THE END OF MALE CHAUVINISM AND SEXISM. We believe women must be free and equal. We recognize that sexism is all-pervasive and often subtle and demeans the humanity of everyone. All forms of sex-role stereotyping must end. Macho must go. Abortions must be free and legal. We consider the women's movement our natural ally since both young people and women are systematically oppressed by male-supremacist society.

7. WE WANT THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE AN AUTHENTIC CULTURE WITH INSTITUTIONS OF OUR OWN MAKING. We believe western culture is decadent and we refuse to continue it in our lives. People's appearance must not affect their civil rights. All drugs must be legalized, as we see that it is not laws that govern people's use of drugs, but societal conditions. We hope to create a society in which people will not need death drugs. Our music and cultural gatherings must be allowed to flourish in peace. We must be set free to begin living in the new age and begin to accept a responsibility for developing plans and examples of institutions that build joy, justice, and a respect for life.

8. WE WANT SEXUAL SELF-DETERMINATION. We believe all people must have the unhindered right to be heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or transsexual.

9. WE WANT THE END OF CLASS ANTAGONISM AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE. We believe that those in power cultivate elitism and class divisions among youth which only serve to weaken us. The survival of young people of all classes and races is threatened by the few who run this world. We condemn academic tracking, honors, and all other class divisions imposed upon us.

10. WE WANT THE END OF RACISM AND COLONIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD. We believe America is an imperialist country. America uses over 50 per cent of the world's resources for less than 7 per cent of the world's population. Racism in schools is severely damaging to students, particularly minority students. Students must eliminate racism and stop fighting each other. We must unite to fight the real enemy until we have education that meets the needs of all races. We support the liberation struggles of colonized people of all colors everywhere.

11. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL UNJUSTLY IMPRISONED PEOPLE. All young people in juvenile homes, training schools, detention centers, mental institutions, and other penal institutions for minors must be set free. They did not receive a trial before a jury of their peers, and the society they offended is itself criminal. Young people must never receive discriminatory treatment before the law, whether in the courtroom, going to a movie, buying alcohol, or leaving home. The military draft must be abolished and the military made democratic.

12. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO BE ECONOMICALLY INDEPENDENT OF ADULTS. We believe we are entitled to work or to unemployment benefits. Child-labor laws and extended schooling now force youth into the status of a dependent colony.

13. WE WANT THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH NATURE. We believe that to survive we must have clean air to breathe, pure food to eat, water fit to drink, products built to last, free medical care, and an end to population growth. Life exists in balance and harmony, but greed and stupidity have now sent us disastrously out of balance with our environment and earth death seems certain. Each person must learn to live a sound ecological life, and all people together must change the economic structure of the world until the needs of the earth and its people are met.

14. WE WANT TO REHUMANIZE EXISTENCE. We believe that to do this we must recognize and deal with the invisible dictatorship of technocracy and bureaucracy. We are the crown of creation, and we announce that it is not our destiny to become robot parts of the Great Machine.

15. WE WANT TO DEVELOP COMMUNICATION AND SOLIDARITY WITH THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE WORLD IN OUR COMMON STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM AND PEACE. We believe national boundaries are artificial and must inevitably be abolished. In the new world, all resources and technology must be used for the benefit of all people.

*Youth will make the revolution. Youth will keep it young!*

The Library of Unconventional Lives

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The Children's Rights Movement: Overcoming the Oppression of Young People, Ed. Beatrice Gross &  
Ronald Gross, 1977

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