

The Wisdom of Myles Horton

A Biographical Sketch

Myles Horton was born in 1905 and died in 1990. He grew up and lived most of his adult life in the hills of Tennessee. In 1932, he founded the Highlander School as an experiment in adult education. This controversial school worked closely with the union movement and then assumed a significant role in helping to develop civil rights leaders. A plain spoken man, Myles believed that education arising within the people and centered on their problems of life led to action. He is now seen as one of the foremost adult educators of this century. The school is still active and can be accessed on the web at <http://www.hrec.org>.

The Deep Purpose of Highlander

"We decided at the beginning that the purpose of Highland was to bring about social change in this country, and that there would be no discrimination, that we would deal equally with men, women, blacks and whites."

"This type of educational work involves a different way of working with people that community or labor organizers use. I've always taken the position that Highlander was not in the position of organizing, or even training organizers, but in education for action, and in helping to develop social leadership."

The Power of Movements

"It's only in a movement that an idea is often made simple enough and direct enough that it can spread rapidly. Then your leadership multiplies very rapidly, because there's something explosive going on. People see that other people not so different from themselves do things they thought could never be done."

Life as a Whole

"I have a holistic view of the educative process. The universe is one: nature and mind and spirit and the heavens and time and the future are all part of the big ball of life. Instead of thinking that you put pieces together that will add up to a whole, I think you have to start with the premise that they're already together and you try to keep from destroying life by segmenting it, overorganizing it and dehumanizing it."

Of Means and Ends

"I think it's important to understand that the quality of the process you use to get to a place determines the ends, so when you want to build a democratic society, you have to act democratically in every way. If you want love and brotherhood, you've got to incorporate them as you go along, because you can't just expect them to occur in the future without experiencing them before you get there."