

The Rouge Forum

The Rouge Forum is interested in teaching and learning for a democratic society. You are invited to join us.

The *Rouge Forum* is a group of educators, students, and parents seeking a democratic society. We are concerned about questions like these: How can we teach against racism, national chauvinism and sexism in an increasingly authoritarian and undemocratic society? How can we gain enough real power to keep our ideals and still teach--or learn? Whose interests shall school serve in a society that is ever more unequal? We are both research and action oriented. We want to learn about equality, democracy and social justice as we simultaneously struggle to bring into practice our present understanding of what that is. We seek to build a caring inclusive community which understands that an injury to one is an injury to all. At the same time, our caring community is going to need to deal decisively with an opposition that is sometimes ruthless.

We hope to demonstrate that the power necessary to win greater democracy will likely rise out of an organization that unites people in new ways--across union boundaries, across community lines, across the fences of race and sex/gender. We believe that good humor and friendships are a vital part of building this kind of organization, as important as theoretical clarity. Friendships allow us to understand that action always reveals errors--the key way we learn. We chose Brer Rabbit as a symbol to underline the good cheer that rightfully guides the struggle for justice. Every part of the world is our briar patch.

We had modest success in defeating the standardized test, the MEAP, in Michigan. We work in faculty organizations and unions to deal with the racism and sexism in academia. We try to press forward questions of class size, curricular freedom, anti-racist pedagogy, real inclusion, and a just tax system. As part of the *Whole Schooling Consortium*, we have sponsored forums in the U.S., uniting hundreds of people for democracy and equality.

There are no dues to join the Rouge Forum. Just email info@rougeforum.org

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The First Amendment and Young America

Introduction by Katy Landless

When given an open-ended question and the freedom to express their opinion, young people can say the most amazing things. Senior Government students were given a test on the First Amendment after spending three weeks on the topic. Some of their test answers are reprinted here for your pleasure, but before reading their answers, it may help to understand how the unit was structured. The unit contained a series of cases, which restricted the First Amendment, for example: dress codes, CD warning labels, book banning and flag burning. The students were given the opportunity to discuss the cases, assuming such roles as parent, student and community member. They also worked in groups to analyze why we have restrictions and they wrote paragraphs after each case. The paragraphs expressed and defended whether they were for absolute freedoms or whether certain restrictions are necessary to protect certain people. At the end of the unit, they were also given the opportunity to watch a video on Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party and the Attica Prison revolt so they could witness what happens to some people who speak out. The following paragraphs were written in response to one or more of the following three test questions:

1. What have you learned about the First Amendment in the last three weeks?
2. What did you know about the First Amendment before this class that you now have a better understanding of?
3. What else have you learned in this class in the last three weeks?

By Theresa Ellis, St. Clair Shores, MI

I have learned a few new things about the First Amendment. Most of what I have learned is about freedom of speech. I did not know that what you wear is considered freedom of speech. Dress codes are a restriction on this freedom. I have also learned that the school board that chooses the dress code may not be right. I think students should question their authority more often instead of just complaining about it. Another thing I learned was that schools could still ban books. I think this is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. Schools do not push reading enough. If a student wants to read something, I think it would help the student more than it would hurt him.

I knew a lot about the First Amendment before I had Government because I had Business Law last semester and a whole chapter in our book was devoted to the Bill of Rights. Some things I learned more about were the things dealing with freedom of religion. In our class discussions about religion, I was surprised to hear how upset people were getting over the idea of people not standing for *The National Anthem* or *Pledge of Allegiance*.

I never realized so many people my age cared so much and were so patriotic that they cannot see that other people's beliefs might not be the same as theirs. I think Americans who have a problem with people not standing up for *The National Anthem* or *Pledge* due to religious reasons should imagine how they would feel if they were forced to listen to someone else's pledge from another country.

The most interesting thing I learned over the past three weeks was from the video we watched about the Black Panthers. I was shocked to see how horribly they were treated when they were doing nothing wrong. All the times I was taught about the Black Panthers, I was given the idea that they caused trouble and they were bad. The video portrayed them in a better light and I think I now have a better

understanding of what they were about. They just wanted a better life for black people. They wanted to establish some respect. I really enjoyed the video and hope we watch more like it.

By Keegan Filipiak, St. Clair Shores, MI

Collaborating parents and Senators contrive ways to alter our freedom of speech because they feel they know what is best for America's youth while we (minors) sit in their flowerpots, blinded by millions of suns (too many leaders) and their constructed falsehoods. Freedom of speech does not limit the artist from generating music; it limits "underage" consumers from purchasing the albums. If I do not yet have a voice in government, then how can they restrict me? If the people in Washington may decide what I can and cannot listen to, what category of First Amendment rights does that fall under? This selective method in determining who listens to what is ridiculous. I am allowed to listen to "Band X" so long as the government assesses them to be suitable. What is that? Freedom of speech, I guess...

The First Amendment was a good idea until the politicians and lawmakers in office decided to do what they do to everything -twist and distort it until it fits their needs. Then this delicate thing known as freedom of speech becomes the inverse: freedom of speech according to the minority. The minority being Congress. The ideas that our country was founded on are counterfeit and artificial -popular sovereignty and limited government. I thought the people were supposed to manipulate and manage laws until they were for the people, but unfortunately, this is not the case. The government dictates supreme and the people suffer. This makes me sick. I assumed that the Constitution was to limit and prevent this activity. I think not.

The one thing that really inspired and influenced me throughout this class was the whole freedom of speech thing. It cast a die in my head that the First Amendment is currently a myth, but there is something I can do about it. I can have a voice in government if I choose to employ that right and put strength back into the great amendment.

What happens if my picture does not fit into the "big picture?"

In 1676, Nathaniel Bacon organized a rebellion against the ruling class in Virginia (and, unfortunately the local Native Americans).

In 1786, farmers in Massachusetts were being imprisoned and losing their means to life because they could not pay the debts incurred during the Revolutionary period. The farmers organized and battled against the merchant class. The merchant class, with the power of the government behind them, squashed Shays Rebellion.

In 1794, Alexander Hamilton was the Secretary of Treasury. He created a plan that would run the United States Government finances. One piece of his legislation was an excise tax on whiskey. The livelihood of farmers in the western states particularly Pennsylvania were seriously injured by this tax. They took it so seriously that they decided to rebel against the United States government. In the end, George Washington sent about 13,000 reluctant draftees and squashed the rebellion. In my history class, we read and reenacted the rebellion from the view of the ruling class in the government and the farmers. The kids learned some valuable lessons about the role of government.

I spent considerable time teaching these three rebellions.

In 1999, the state of Michigan implemented the social studies MEAP (Michigan Education Assessment Program). There is not an objective that says "students will be able to explain conflict using the concept of class antagonism." Within the Michigan Curriculum Framework, I could find objectives in which I could fit these learning experiences. However, I truly believe that these three events are not events that the curriculum writers and test makers had in mind when creating the Framework and the social studies MEAP. Therefore, when the students take the test, they may not have the knowledge that these curriculum and test makers "expect" them to have, but they will have gained knowledge nonetheless.

This brings me to an experience I had with a MEAP priest. Back in December, to get our social studies staff prepared for the MEAP, the administration accepted an invitation from a Macomb County Social Studies consultant. He was to present information that would help us as social studies educators. He started off assuring us that what we were doing was probably just fine. He said, however, that we should not spend too much time on one subject otherwise we might not be able to cover the curriculum. He would say such things as "on our test" and "just make sure your picture fits into the big picture." I decided that I could not let those two comments stand without being questioned.

I asked him just whose test it was and what happens if our picture does not fit into the "big picture." He brushed these questions aside as he had a presentation to make. After a couple minutes, I said to him that the suggested curriculum would take forty weeks to "cover." If it took forty weeks to cover, was there room for other material. In addition, I asked that if a teacher chose to teach events or ideas that were not emphasized in the curriculum or in the test makers' heads, but the kids were still learning, would the test be a reflection of the knowledge and skills they learned? Again, he did not respond but brushed the criticism aside and continued his canned presentation. I interrupted him and asked him quite frankly why he was doing what he was doing. He said that he was trying to help schools pass the MEAP. I told him that I was opposed to the MEAP as a measure of a school's or student's achievement. He agreed. I then asked him why he was doing what he was doing. He repeated his earlier statement and said that this might not be the place to have this conversation. I told him that I thought through his actions he was supporting the MEAP something he said that he was opposed to. He did not agree. Thus I asked him again why he was doing what he was doing. He finally said "this is my job."

The curious part of the exchanges was that nowhere was it mentioned that this was good for communities, schools or kids. It was being done because it was his job and to help schools pass the test. Education reform at its finest.

By Greg Queen

Boxed Images

Flagged from over-
productivity
submerged in
blues
people sit
comfortably
cushioned
in well contrived
living rooms
silently staring
responsibly
absorbing
fashionable
propaganda
that champions
consumeristic
lifestyles
sit calmly for a
while
take a soma
holiday
the American Way

By Greg Queen

MEAP-free in Government Class

Government is taught to seniors. Seniors do not have to take the MEAP (Michigan Education Assessment Program). Therefore, I do not have to teach to "the test." I am a Government teacher and I have freedoms that unfortunately, many of my MEAP-dictated colleagues do not. I have had the opportunity to spend weeks at a time covering one subject in great depth. I have also had the pleasure of taking a break from my planned lessons to talk about current events and I have used creative strategies that have required the use of the textbook for only two units. Staying away from the textbook was encouraged in college, but now I am not sure how that is done while teaching to a dictated schedule and a test.

Government is a one-semester class in my district and this semester, I will cover eight topics. I have therefore had the pleasure of spending long periods of time on very specific ideas. For example, we spent three weeks discussing the First Amendment. We have spent three weeks on passing bills through Congress and will spend five or six on civil rights. Each of those topics is vital to understanding the United States Government and according to my curriculum guide, all three should fit into a few weeks. Because of the flexibility with time that I have been given, I am able to go deeper into ideas, cover them from more than one angle and avoid the textbook. I have also had the pleasure of extending the time for certain activities as the students and I need it. We have covered a lot so far; at least I think it is a lot. The people who write curriculum guides one inch thick and twenty miles wide may not agree, but I am ok with that. My students also seem to agree and that is whom I am there for. When the seniors walked into second-semester Government knowing that they need it to graduate and thinking that Government is boring, they did not hesitate to inform me of their lack of interest and negative attitude. Three months later however, I still have students from last semester visiting me to tell me they miss my class and I have current students tell me that Government is a lot more fun than they expected. I have not taken a formal poll or anything, but something tells me that students do not have that reaction when they are taught to a test.

Since September, a lot of important events have taken place on this planet. Unfortunately, most young people do not know about them, have little information about them or even worse, they have false information. Because I have not been held to a time frame -- I do not have to have certain topics covered by testing week -- I have taken entire class periods to inform students and discuss with them what is going on around them. It would be ideal if children and young adults were hooked on current events, but speaking from my own perspective in high school, I know most of them are not. Personally, when I was 18, I enjoyed learning about current events, but never took the time to look into the news on my own. In fact, many adults are uninformed about what happens outside of their homes, so it is no surprise that their offspring are equally as uninformed. Anyway, back to my point here, it has been invaluable to my students as well as myself to take the time and just chat. Not only do they crave information once I start giving it, but they crave an opportunity to share what they know. Those who are informed love to tell what they know about the weapons used in Serbia, the sad quotes they heard from Colorado or the conditions they experienced when they went to school in the city that has recently been taken over by an appointed School Board. It makes them proud and helps fill in the gaps I leave unanswered. In addition to taking the time to share facts from the news, teenagers also love the chance to express their opinions about it. For example, most of the students were unaware of the Detroit Public School takeover and that is occurring very close to the district where I teach. Many were very angry about the takeover. They felt it was a violation of the people's right to take part in their own government and community. Some students went to school in Detroit and had personal stories to tell. Some thought that maybe a takeover was a pretty good idea. I told them my perspective on the whole issue and allowed them to voice theirs. Thank goodness I was not planning on covering a core democratic value that day, because I may not have been able to skip it for an unplanned discussion.

One additional benefit of freedom in the classroom, is nontraditional assessment (a.k.a.: avoiding tests). I have given two objective tests this semester and both related to text units. Textdriven units resulted in a text driven tests and I have to admit, giving those tests were not my proudest moments. Much of what the students have enjoyed and learned the most from have been creative forms of assessment. We made timelines and wrote essays for our history unit. To learn about the scientific polling process, we created, conducted and reported on a public opinion poll. The students went around to every classroom in the school, explained the First Amendment, distributed and collected polls on censorship of music. Then, we tallied up the information, analyzed it and wrote a series of articles for the school paper. That took a lot of time and to meet deadlines, it took time I did not plan on dedicating to the project until later. Luckily, I had some flexibility with my schedule. Our class spent three weeks picking at the First Amendment and the restrictions society has placed on those rights. They created dress codes and role-played the Board of Education, trying to get the codes approved to demonstrate that what you wear is a form of speech and dress codes infringe on that right. Then, we had to figure out why we have dress codes if we have the First Amendment to protect us? Now that was fun! Then, I gave them a test which asked them to tell me what they learned about the First Amendment. Three weeks on one topic - I am so lucky. We are going to read a novel next week that would probably not be on any standardized tests. We are spending three weeks playing Congress: writing bills, writing and giving speeches, debating on Committees and as the Floor. I think I can tell by watching the intensity on their face when they give a speech against abortion that are learning about government. I can also sense the author's anger when his bill gets voted down because the people voting do not like him. Does that tell them anything about how government works? We are living through the crony system when they vote for their friend's bills. They get frustrated when they are not allowed to further explain a bill once it is written - it is written how it is written and must be accepted at face value. They cannot see why other people vote against assisted suicide when they are the ones who suffered along side a dying loved one. Neat stuff-- not on the test.

In an additional article I have written, I have included two students' writings on the First Amendment. I wanted to share with you what students will say when they are given the chance to write freely on things they care about. They are included in the article, "The First Amendment and Young America." These seniors impressed me. Most of them entered my room dreading their future in Government Class and they are leaving better citizens. I told them on day one that Government class is to prepare them for being effective and educated citizens. Now they understand my idea of effective and educated.

As a final note, during our congressional debates, I allowed the students to elect a Presiding Officer. One of the boys playing that role learned what it is like trying to keep a class of thirty seniors in some sort of order near the end of the day. He told me he has a new understanding for what teachers go through and now that he can empathize, he apologized for acting out in the past and has been far more respectful. Now, are walking in someone else's shoes, better understanding your own behavior and correcting it some of the core democratic values? I do not think so because they were not on the list of topics I was given to cover.

by Katy Landless

Lest We Forget

Tyranny is time worn - many different faces.

Repression too familiar - far too many places.

Geographic idiom - absolute power phrases.

Command form <<-ISM!>>

Nihil-Catholic-Capital-Marx

Protestant-Commun-Totalitarian- <<-ISM!>>

Kow-Tow Seizure. Seig Hell Caesar--

Hail! Untouchable. Brown Shirt Uniform Cant--

Conform! What a System: Caste, the Party Line

STOP. Right where you are. Political

Power is temporal; the Iron Fist, rusting.

An electronic glove the greater concern:

Minds shackled and bound by television cables.

Soft tyranny of trance.

Psycho-motor-interrupt.

Hypno-program-image dance. The power of

Suggestion.

Where submission reigns and Nielson sweeps the multitudes

**onto co-axial cattle cars bound to the greatest gulag of
all:**

**Choose a channel; don't leave the room; stare into the
light;**

swallow a message; accept; consume.

A slow-burn holocaust, voluntary lock up, mental arrest,

**myriad millions shoot up cadmium rays, tubular, vassals
serfing**

**virtual lifetimes away like moths to artificial moonlight,
lost**

**in a nether world satellite dream dishing double-dose
docility,**

**domestic gridlock automat: compliant component
servility.**

Take the hook. Toe the line. Forget you were a thinker.

Surrender in mind drone; parallel park the video zone;

passive become the universal clone.

**Forget that rapping at your door. This is the world at a
remove,**

the land of never, never, never more! (Lest we forget.)

-Matthew Berrien Smith, 1994

Resisting Test Mania

The use of "high-stakes" standardized tests as the primary tool of school reform is sweeping the United States. Proponents of standardized tests--including most state legislatures, the President, Governors, boards of education, and the leadership of the American Federation of Teachers--wrap themselves in the rhetoric of higher, tougher standards. No one advocates low standards, but this movement is fatally flawed and will not fix our schools. Moreover, the obsession with testing is actually undermining efforts to attain quality teaching and learning in public schools.

Rather than addressing issues that would boost achievement, such as smaller classes, more time for teacher planning, and equitable resources for all schools, politicians and policy makers have imposed more standardized tests on students without providing any evidence that testing improves teaching or learning. The tougher standards and testing formula gets a number of things wrong.

As author/educator Alfie Kohn points out, it gets student motivation wrong. The emphasis on testing in schools promotes anxiety and a preoccupation with test scores that often undermines students' interest in learning and desire to be challenged.

Second, tests drive curriculum and instruction in ways that harm children. Time spent on test preparation and administration cuts into time for teaching and learning; and children internalize judgments as if tests were the final arbiter of one's potential or worth. On the basis of test scores, children are denied access to learning opportunities through tracking, retained in grade, and may be denied a diploma, regardless of what they know or can do in authentic life situations.

Third, standardized tests demand more standardization of curriculum--tighter control of what goes on in the classroom by people who are not there. Standards and tests are designed to promote a particular and singular view of truth, knowledge, and learning.

The bottom-line is that high-stakes testing is not effective in increasing achievement and higher test scores do not necessarily mean better schools. Studies have shown that school improvement is rooted in effective leadership, high expectations for all students, a cohesive staff with a clearly articulated vision and knowledge of effective practices, and strong ties to parents and communities.

The current over-emphasis on testing takes away from changes that would improve schools. Across the nation students, parents, teachers, and principals are taking action against the growing use of testing as the means to school reform.

Parents in a number of states have the legal right to "opt-out" their children from state mandated tests. In Ohio and Michigan, members of the Rouge Forum--a grassroots group of educators, parents, and students--and others have been organizing boycotts of state tests. Parent Mary O'Brien is leading a campaign informing parents of their rights and encouraging them to "opt-out" their children from Ohio Proficiency Tests. O'Brien and other activists were recently successful in derailing a reading proficiency standard, imposed by the legislature, that would have required 40,000 fourth-graders to repeat a grade.

In Michigan the opt-out rate in some districts has been as high as 95 percent. Last year, nearly a quarter of students statewide did not take the Michigan Educational Assessment Program tests. A measure of how seriously the state takes the boycotts is that Michigan's governor has offered scholarships of \$500 to middle school students and \$2,500 to high school students who pass the state tests.

High school graduation and "no social promotion" tests have come under fire in Nevada and Wisconsin. Students, parents, teachers and principals protested Nevada's graduation exam last month at the state

legislature because it tests subjects that students are not required to take. Principals in Clark County are united in their opposition to the test and have written to Governor Kenny Guinn calling it unfair, while others are organizing to pursue legal options in an effort to have the test overturned or proved invalid.

Under a law passed last year, Wisconsin will stop school districts from passing children to the next grade if they twice fail even one part of the Wisconsin Student Assessment test. These tests cover language arts, math, science, and social studies. Parents are organizing against the tests and politicians are starting to respond. Governor Tommy G. Thompson's recent proposal to drop opt-out provisions for the state's high school graduation test produced a storm of protest from parents statewide. State senator Brian Rude described the protest as "one of the largest grass-efforts I've seen." Richard Grobschmidt, Chairman of the Wisconsin Senate's Education Committee, said that changes in the law are likely, due "almost exclusively" to protests from local PTAs and other parent organizations.

Students, of course, are the ones most directly affected by the testing craze and in Massachusetts, Illinois, California, and Michigan they have been organizing to challenge the over-use and misuse of standardized tests, despite negative repercussions in some districts. Thousands of students have refused to take tests to make a point.

Instead of taking the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test, students from Boston, Newton, Danvers, and Cambridge met last month to organize their resistance. Fifty-eight students at Danvers High School signed a petition charging that the MCAS takes time away from learning real content and makes test-taking the focus of their classes. Seven students were suspended and one student arrested for refusing to take the MCAS.

The MCAS rebellion led by students and parents is now being joined by teachers and principals, who note that the massive testing scheme forces teachers to throw their curriculum plans out the window in order to focus on test preparation and teach bits and pieces of information students must memorize for the exam. One Boston teacher was quoted as saying that the test was literally "driving students away from school." Many teachers, and even the states' education commissioner, David P. Driscoll, have expressed concern that the exams will result in a massive number of students dropping out.

California students walked out on the state-mandated test known as STAR and distributed leaflets with the message: "Protest government racism and standardized testing." Students in Marin County have mounted a letter writing campaign to school and government officials, noting that a large percentage of students in California speak Spanish, yet STAR is only offered in English.

Students at one of Chicago's top academic schools, Whitney Young High School, deliberately failed the Illinois Goals Assessment Program exams in February. The protests spread to other schools as the Whitney Young students demanded, in a letter to school officials, that "the time and energy spent on standardized tests be reduced." The students went on to say that "teachers should be discouraged from teaching the answers to the tests except when the skills and knowledge are a part of the curriculum" and that "the school . . . show its academic superiority through the quality of its education and the accomplishments of its students rather than the numbers on its test scores."

Resistance to the standardized testing movement is not without risks. Students may be subject to suspensions, failing grades, or denial of diplomas. Teachers who have publicly criticized high-stakes tests have also been sanctioned. The superintendent of Oregon schools demanded that teacher Bill Bigelow be fired after a Portland newspaper published an article he wrote criticizing the state social studies test. Earlier this year, a monthly newspaper written by Chicago teachers published several parts of the "pilot" Chicago Academic Standards Examinations in an effort to force public debate about the tests. The school system sued the newspaper and editor George Schmidt. District officials won a court order requiring the confiscation of all copies of the paper and are taking action fire teachers involved.

Advocates of high-stakes testing do not want public debate on the nature or use of the tests. As Bigelow said, "Evidently, the [Oregon] Department of Education permits us to criticize the idea of the tests, but not

the tests themselves. And woe to the teacher who crossed the line." Few states release test items and most adopt the position of New York State Education Commissioner Richard P. Mills, who in response to the dismal results on the state's recent fourth-grade English test, stated that the test itself should not be questioned. There is a need, however, for more open debate on the nature and use of high-stakes tests. In Massachusetts, for example, reading passages in fourth-grade tests were found to be primarily fifth- and sixth-grade level.

As the use, and misuse, of testing grows, more people are coming to understand the harmful effects it has on quality teaching and learning. Those who want to join the courageous folks resisting the misuse of testing in schools can get more information from the National Center for Fair and Open Testing in Cambridge, Massachusetts (on the internet at: www.fairtest.org) or by joining a national network of reformers coordinated by Alfie Kohn (www.AlfieKohn.org). It's time to reclaim schools as places for learning, rather than places for testing.

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Review of *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

In the middle of a forest, three American men, each with different personalities and preconceived beliefs about the role of women, enter a civilization with not a male in sight. To me this sentence encompasses the entire novel. By that alone, I'd expect to read a cheery tale of their adventures and all of the comical situations they get themselves into. *Herland* is exactly that, but delves much deeper into the roots of society. I've also read excerpts of *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Gilman, and her story captivates me. A woman of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, her traumas and life experiences are similar to others of her time and ours. Though this novel is pure fiction and fantasy, much can be learned from it and taken straight into today's society. This utopia, when read about, can be beneficial to both sexes, as motivation for females or a knock to the head for males. Perhaps it is the male gender that ought to read this more, because the potential of femininity is usually not recognized.

Our three fine friends that embark on this journey through *Herland* are Van, Jeff, and Terry. In each of their personalities, we see a representation of male views in society. Terry symbolizes the "macho man" of today, and if he had a motto it would be, "the more ladies the better". He has a great love for women, but not of their spirit and uniqueness. It is their submissiveness and willingness to conform to the exact ideals of men that he finds attractive. It is eventually these views that get him banished from *Herland*, and sadly enough, he never improves his behavior or learns anything from his experiences there. Jeff represents the feminine male in society. He has an extreme love for women also, but to him they're considered gems because of the essence of who they are. During their visit he's eager to learn the ways of the women, and doesn't dismiss their ideas simply because they originate from women. He leaves them room to assert their independence, and perhaps that is why Jeff has so much success in his marriage to Celis and in the end, decides to remain in *Herland*. If I saw him in today's society, he'd likely have a woman as his best friend and women constantly running to him for advice. Van is, in simplest terms, a happy medium between the two. He had held many misconceptions like Terry, but wasn't stubborn and unwilling to change like him. Like Jeff, Van heard out the sentiments of *Herland* and wasn't closed minded to their way of life. He didn't hold them up to any standards of regular American society, and loved his wife, Ellador, for the beautiful way she was. I consider Van to be the "normal" guy with his respect towards women, however not worshipping them and bending over backwards for them. It is these three personality types that fuel the story of *Herland* and cause the events of the plot to occur.

Herland is a civilization cut off from society, and the travelers were in awe when they first saw it. "Everything was beauty, order, perfect cleanliness, and the pleasantest sense of home over it all. As we neared the center of the town the houses stood thicker, ran together as it were, grew into rambling palaces grouped among parks and open squares, something as college buildings stand in their quiet greens."

Upon reading the descriptions of *Herland*, I found myself wishing it was a place that existed. It was perfect in every way, and each duty or task they performed benefited their religion of "motherhood", the only thing they cared for. The entire society, and egalitarian social structure was based upon mothering the children, and providing a nurturing environment for them to mature and have children of their own one day. It was interesting for me, that not all people were allowed to have kids. This, in itself, sounds a cruel decision to make, but it makes an immense amount of sense. Having a child is a privilege, yes, but just because you don't have one doesn't mean that you're a failure or any worse off than anyone else. The clothing they wore was for comfort and suited the purpose it was for. It wasn't extravagant or flashy or even trendy. Van and Jeff further exemplified their male personality types by enjoying the garments, and realizing that the women made them to suit individuals for the job they were going to do, and simply that. At several points in the book they were given different types of the plain, yet comfortable clothes, and this made them realize the maturity and effectiveness that was *Herland*. The women did whatever was most efficient and beneficial and didn't go about it in a round about way.

The raising of the children enlightened me too. Today there is such a great deal of animosity about parenting, and in this utopia it is perfect. They realize that raising a child is the most precious of jobs and not all are mentally suited to handle this. The care of the children is then placed in whoever is worthy. It's ideals like this and others that today are taken for something that must and always be like that. Maybe if our world wasn't so afraid of change, and being truthful to one another, we'd survive longer and happier. This a large lesson I learned from Herland. The world today is so based on competition, that the meaning of life is lost. The rationale behind doing things should be to produce a universal benefit, not just a panacea for the moment. We don't stop to think of the long term effects as they do. Everything in Herland was extremely thought out and had no negative effects. The problem with society, even as far back to when Paleolithic was turning Neolithic, is that we aren't aware of the harm we'll cause. When agriculture was developing I don't think anyone thought of the events that are happening today as a cause of it. Everything negative in our world evolved from the settling of humans many, many years ago. Now we're bombarded with problems and not many solutions, but what can we do? I suppose the only answer is to prevent problems from enlarging to a greater extent, but sadly I say that I don't think this is happening.

*by Janet Schoen
High School Student*

Today's School's Leave Room For Improvement

Webster's New American Dictionary defines school as "an institution for learning and education." Just as much is learned about the social world and human psychology as are traditional educational topics. School, especially at the high school level, is a place to find a role in society and learn to communicate successfully. Preparation for career goals is also a main focus. However, as a 16-year-old high school sophomore, I have noticed more than a few discrepancies between education's goals, and its actual accomplishments.

Inadequacies are widely due to the social pressures high school inflicts, but there are problems with the educational system as well. One highly problematic area is the competition for both grades and status. While status influences are more societal than able to be solved by any system, competition for grades can be changed. Social competition within the educational environment is student-inflicted. Conflict that often arises between students distracts from school's goals. Plainly, student relationships can make or break an educational experience. Unfortunately, the disrespect that too many are displaying towards other students, teachers, and themselves cannot be solved as can other minor quirks in the system.

The way to solve problems in education is to get to the root of behavior that negatively impacts on others' schooling experience. Youth behavior is the result of the media, parents, tradition, and a multitude of sources that cannot be suppressed. The problem is societal. If social status, fear of violence, or disrespect detracts from learning, then serious changes in education and common society need to be made. May 10th's issue of Newsweek emphasizes that "lines drawn by teenagers are frequently unfair, often hurtful, and generally enforced by physical and psychological intimidation." This kind of treatment should not be suffered by any student.

The tragedy at Columbine High School shows exactly how a misled school and community can turn disastrous. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold's actions displayed, among other things, the effects media influences and an out-of-control social hierarchy had. The outcast students were verbally and physically abused by classmates, while, strangely enough, little administrative action was taken. Threats to students should not be taken lightly. When this happens, students lose faith in an authority that is supposed to protect them.

As for academic competition, students should be encouraged to strive to reach their best, and not be sorted and categorized by a recognition-hungry system. A modern educational program should allow for a personal, individual school experience. Class size should be small to maximize the time a teacher can spend with a student, and fairness should be actively pursued. Too often are students compared by ability, past experiences, and gender. Impartiality should be a goal in cases of censorship, the stifling of personal style, sexism, and favoritism by teachers.

School should provide a forum for interested students to discuss current events and topics that matter to students. Traditional History and Math are important too, but if we have no emotion or understanding of the world around us, then we will not be able to apply our academic skills to real life situations. More choices as to classes should also be granted. Colleges should consider adjusting their requirements to interests. A student that detests Science should not be required to take four years of the subject in high school in order to attend University of Michigan. This only causes resentment and apathy towards the educational system we are intended to be an integral part of. Students often need to be able to justify the usefulness of a topic for success. Heightened interest in education that an altered system could bring may be enough to improve student attitude, and even reduce the in-school violence that the nation has recently been plagued with.

Public education has the potential to teach far beyond its current goals. Changing the schools America is familiar with could revolutionize the country. It sounds idealistic, maybe it is, but we cannot assume that we've reached the optimal level of education. Action needs to be taken to modify education, to turn the focus towards student needs, and away from placing a monetary value on knowledge.

By Andrea M. Swalec

"Will you fight for the children?"

"Will you fight for the children? Will you fight for the children?" This was the question asked by one of the demonstrators at the first meeting of the DPS Reform Board meeting held at Murray Wright High School. She was eventually thrown out of the meeting. But her question is a poignant one, especially given the strength and many levels of alienation, which were demonstrated at the meeting Thursday night. Unfortunately, the members of the Reform Board never addressed her question. Chasms of distrust and disdain have to be bridged before this question can be meaningfully addressed.

Individuals are a reflection of the society that raises them. Through interaction with its environment, a child develops its understanding of what its place is in society. Although the environment which influences a child is broad, more specifically it can be thought of as anyone who has a role in educating the child - parents, caregivers, teachers, and schools. Certainly the members of the DPS Reform Board will have a large influence on the education of children. But the important question is: What kind of individuals do they want Detroit to raise?

At the meeting Thursday night, the Reform Board gave a strong indication of what its intentions are in terms of what kind of students and individuals they want to produce. Murray Wright students - part of the ROTC program there - were part of the opening of the meeting, marching onto center stage carrying the American and State of Michigan flags. There was a standing ovation. Once the meeting got started, there were about eight ROTC students standing near me watching the proceedings with interest and concern. They were very distressed that the demonstrations against the Reform Board might reflect badly on their school. These students have learned very well that their role is to behave, not to question. On the other hand, Mr. Hendrix perceived the students who were protesting and thrown out of the meeting as having been used by adults to further the adults' agenda. As the student protesters were being thrown out of the meeting they expressed outrage that Mr. Hendrix would think that they could not reason and develop an opinion about the situation on their own. The Reform board has spoken. The role of the graduates of the DPS in greater society will be to passively, unquestioningly follow orders. They may be skilled in the technology of today, may have memorized facts and figures - but they will be followers. That will be their place.

Any CEO or teacher could tell you what the latest research says about increasing production and student performance. In general, it says that you have to nurture and protect the connection between creator and creation. Unfortunately, in most cases, this connection is most often distorted so that the creator has no creative control over his product. So despite the research, most adults and students are told what to do every day. The relationship between the Reform Board and the citizens of Detroit is no different.

The meeting demonstrated how the Reform Board has separated or alienated itself -not only from the students it is responsible for - but the community it should be representing. The board is not connected to the community and the community is not connected to the board. Of course, just the premise of an appointed board, whether or not a democratically elected official appoints it is alienating. There is no political control of the board from the bottom up. The protestors at the meeting were chastised and removed for trying to make their voices heard. Members of the board seemed shocked that anyone would "disrespect" them by disrupting the meeting - they are forgetting that having their voice and their voting rights taken away has profoundly disrespected the people of Detroit. The Reform Board has no intention of giving students and parents creative control over the schools. Management is going to be top down - parents, teachers and students are going to be told what to do. The fear and contempt of the Reform Board for the citizens it is responsible for was symbolized by the strength of the armed guards that ringed their position at the meeting.

The physical, political and emotional alienation of the Reform Board from the community which it will be working for is, in part, a product and a cause of further alienation amongst the individuals of our community. If it is possible for the Reform Board to think that its purpose is separate from that of the purpose of the people it represents, then it is necessary for it to see itself as different and separate from the people it represents.

The climate of disrespect and divisiveness was overwhelming. People on both sides seemed intent on distinguishing themselves - especially along class lines, but also along racial lines. The audience wanted to know where the Reform Board and its supporters - identified as "house niggers" by the protestors - lived and sent their children to school. Almost every time an official was introduced and took to the floor to speak, there were shouts of "Where do you live? Do you send your children to public school?" Those in the audience around me were very curious as to why a white person who teaches in the suburbs would be interested in what was going on. But that should not be surprising, because most of the residents of the Detroit Metro area have been conditioned that their only concern should be with the section of the community they live in. Certainly, the concern shown by suburban school districts about what has been happening in the DPS has been limited to what to do with move-ins from Detroit. And what did those in the audience who support the takeover think of the protestors? The principal standing next to me thought that those protesting were hooligans setting a bad example for the children of Detroit and drawing negative attention to the city. She wanted to know why they didn't show up for parent teacher conferences or to vote in elections. I asked her how she knew that they hadn't.

Will the Reform Board fight for the children? There were no bridges built during its first public meeting. There was no consensus or community building, no listening. Instead, there were actions and attitudes that only served to heighten levels of distrust and disdain. None of this will be good for the children. Can the Reform Board gain control through strong-arm tactics? Yes. Tito did a good job of this in the former Yugoslavia. But we are becoming more and more aware of what happens when the dictators are gone. The divisiveness remains. There will be no meaningful change as a result of the Reform Board.

by Judy Depew

Comparing Animal Farm With That of the United States

By Candice Rusie
12th grade student

Many startling similarities exist between the *Animal Farm* society, as George Orwell present it in his book, and the American society of yesterday and today. When the author wrote the cynical short novel, published in 1945, he intended it to be a satire of the Russian Government under Stalin's command, but it can also be applied as an allegory for some of the more corrupt aspects of the politics, government and class of the United States.

In *Animal Farm*, there was an obvious distinction between the "white collar" workers (ie., the pigs) and the "blue collar" workers (ie., the rest of the animals). In America there is also a definite separation between the management and the nameless workers. In the story, the pigs sleep comfortably in the farmhouse while the other farm animals labor in the fields, build the windmill or engage in other manual drudgery. The pigs, particularly Napoleon, accept the accolades when things go wonderfully, while the rest of the animals, whose hard work produced the few successful occurrences on the farm, remain unacknowledged. In the United States, the management also receives all the praise and most of the revenue if the company is profitable, while the blue collar workers, who are in fact responsible for the prosperous times, remain unknown (Think about the acclaimed corporations in America, like Microsoft and Disney, whose CEOs and leaders are rich and famous. Now think about all the people those corporations employ. Are all those people rich? Are they famous? No, but it is their hard work that makes those few CEOs wealthy.) The self-appointed leader of the farm, Napoleon, is never seen by the lowly workers, save for self-congratulatory ceremonies and parades. The blue collar animals' one connection with the isolated white collars is through Squealer, who does very little except gush about statistics, graphs and calculations, reassuring the animals of the success of the farm. This happens in real life, too. No humble worker has contact with the "Boss;" they meet, instead, with supervisors and overseers. They rely on corporation-produced newsletters for glowing reports on productivity. The Boss is seen as some cold, unapproachable, nonhuman, godlike entity by many employees in many companies. They fear the Bosses and their wrath ("We can't be late for work! The Boss will Find out!" "Now, kids, don't act up at the company picnic! The Boss will be there!") To those people, the Bosses can figuratively buy and sell them. In *Animal Farm*, Napoleon, the Boss literally did buy other animals, and he also sold Boxer to the glue factory. A physical difference exists in the humans' world: the professionals who occupy offices all day don suits and ties, while the ones who toil in factories have to wear uniforms, each announcing their respective status to everyone. Although the animals do not wear clothes (at least not in the beginning), their breed alone sets them apart from each other.

On *Animal Farm*, no animal ever is privy to the whole, unadulterated truth. If good news does exist they do hear about it, but it is often exaggerated and fabricated to sound even better. Negative information is kept from them or twisted around by Squealer, the propagandist, so that the problem appears to be insignificant or nonexistent. This occurs in society today. The U.S. military, for example, often keeps potentially destructive information from the public, but proudly announces any heroic act or triumph that occurs as an indirect or direct result of their actions. NASA behaves in the same manner- John Glenn's return to space was in the headlines for a week, bolstering civic pride in the space program, but articles about the rocket launches that have been failing in the past weeks were regulated to the back pages.

The scapegoat on *Animal Farm* was Snowball; Napoleon and Squealer blamed every misfortune on this absent pig. Since it is easier to blame someone else than to accept fault graciously, scapegoats are often shamelessly used in the United States, too. Music and violent movies were denounced as causes for the recent school shootings. Sometimes entire social groups are pronounced culpable for the ills of society- poor people, gays, teenagers and African-Americans immediately spring to mind. During the McCarthy era it was the communist.

In *Animal Farm*, only the pigs got an actual education. The other animals attempted to teach themselves to read, but with mediocre results. When servitude was still allowed in America it was a crime to educate slaves; since education equals power; Napoleon was aware that if the animals learned to read then they will become more capable of overthrowing him. Also, in America only those who can afford it or earn scholarships can go to college, and only those who have enough money to pay for it can attend private primary and secondly schools.

Fortunately, circumstances are not as bad as they were on *Animal Farm*. There is more fairness in America, more education and more freedom. A dictator does not rule us and we can vote to change things. However, in the beginning that's how it was on *Animal Farm* as well Every American should use this book as a lesson on what will happen if we decide to remain uninformed and let the government gain too much power.

Cold Information is Meaningless

In schools across America, teachers are asking students to merely memorize facts without asking them to apply those facts to other situations. Any high schooler could coronet the location of Hadrian's Wall to memory, for example, and even be able to tell you when it was constructed, but few could tell you its impact on British history. He or she may be able to earn a passing grade on the test, but what have they really learned? Chemistry students could have Periodic Table of Elements' symbols drummed into their heads, but what good is it unless they are able to use their knowledge practically, whether outside of school or just even in the confines of a laboratory? Cold information is meaningless unless the student can logically and efficiently connect it with other scientific theories or different incidents throughout history, otherwise, 75% of education is simply trivia and only beneficial if that person's aspiration is to be a contestant on Jeopardy.

It's no wonder that some of today's children cannot comprehend cause and effect relationships or realize the end results of their actions when they are only taught singular facts and nothing is ever tied together. They fail to see the "big picture". Students become bored easily because some aspects of their education are seemingly useless, the popular question "how am I ever going to use this outside of class?" is heard daily. If it is shown to them that historical events have significance and have made an impact on our lives today, perhaps they would in turn show more interest and the lesson's purpose would be clearer to them. Math and science teachers could emphasize how those respective skills can be an asset to someone looking for employment, particularly in the growing and lucrative field of technology.

Another solution would be to synchronize the assignments in one class with the studies of other departments. For example, a student could learn about the African Revolution in history class, read Philip Morin Freneau's poetry in English class, research and script a play set in the colonies during the late 1700s for drama, etc. Math and science teachers could also collaborate in the same manner. This way, students get a large scope of a specific event to understand its magnitude better, especially since they can see how one thing, such as politics or art, can influence an entire culture.

No occurrence in history is without its consequences and no scientific explanation stands alone, and students and teachers together need to appreciate that in order to make education worthwhile.

By Norma Rusie

Stepping Out of the Box

This year marked the first year for the implementation of the social studies MEAP (Michigan Education Assessment Program). The official reason for the creation of the MEAP is to gauge the effectiveness of public education-to hold public education accountable. In my mind, the reason for the creation of the MEAP is to regulate the knowledge that teachers teach and kids learn.

During the "MEAP frenzy," I decided to write a letter to my school superintendent. The main idea of the letter explained how the MEAP was a form of regulated knowledge, knowledge that served the interest of the elite. The superintendent responded by having my building principal deal with the matter. My building principal said that there is nothing we can do about the MEAP being that it was a state-mandated test. I decided that the debate about the MEAP needed a jolt.

The district in which I teach is networked through email. I sent my letter to all district staff. In case I needed to, I thought that I could defend my actions because a building principal had set a precedent by using district email as a method of disseminating material with an overt political content. I pressed the send button and went home. My thoughts fantasized into all the possible consequences like the dreaded phone call to my home to arrange a meeting with the superintendent and receive a whipping for my irresponsible actions.

I returned the next day. The controller of the computer network decided that he would create a public folder in which staff members could discuss the MEAP. (Unfortunately, at this time, I have been the only teacher to post information.) This was encouraging and sent a message to me that I still had my job. Of the handful of responses to my letter, all but one were supportive. The curious part of the responses and the subsequent conversations with colleagues was the perception that I had taken a bold act. The rumor mill even came up with the idea that my email was being monitored by the administration. I realized that I had stepped outside the box. I asked permission from those who responded to my letter if they would allow me to post their responses in the newly created public folder. All but two said that they did not want their statements made public. During a meeting with about fifteen staff members about a unrelated topic, my building principal made two comments that struck me. First, the principal said that it was good that I was at this meeting because then I could be watched. The second comment was that I had better make sure there is a signature on my next paycheck. I knew that these comments were only jabs but I could not help but think the effects it had on those present.

I found it horribly discouraging that in a public school system in an alleged democracy that a debate about something so close to a person's life could not be discussed publicly.

The results of these actions have somewhat opened dialogue about the MEAP. However, significant change in the way public schools operate will not happen until people feel safe expressing their thoughts. In the school where I teach, MEAP is still the most common word used when discussing curriculum development.

By: Gregory Queen

Teachers occupy a pivotal position in a society

Please let me tell you three stories, all of them pretty short. Perhaps you might consider how they are connected to one another and to our profession.

The first is about the death of my best friend's brother, Tom. He was 55 when he died. Working on a newly purchased graceful cabin in Michigan's north woods, he told his wife he was in great pain, collapsed, and probably died awaiting the ambulance. He was a top executive of one of the auto companies. My friend asked me to attend the funeral. Tom once taught me to ride a bike, patiently, cheerfully. I knew I would miss him.

I drove to the funeral in my small Toyota. The funeral home was a fine mansion set under evergreen trees in one of Detroit's most lovely suburbs. I was early. A suited fellow at the parking lot entrance directed me to park in the street. The main room of the funeral home was Tom's, his body lying in a brass coffin in the front, surrounded by flowers and the smell of their rich summer bloom. Not one to view the dead, I took a seat three rows from the front, leaving seating for the large family. I always carry a book, this time Hinton's "Fanshen." I opened it.

Two stylish middle aged men scented with the latest men's fashion came in and sat down directly behind me. When I heard them begin to talk, I made notes in my calendar book. This is a transcription of their conversation.

"Sure makes you think about mortality."

"Yeah (long hesitation)... I got everything I have in the company's stock."

"You're gonna win, win , win big this year. But the company is going to pay Uncle Sam up the butt."

"Yeah. Well, this funeral bit makes you think about what you want to do with yourself. The company has been good to me."

"Yeah, me too. I just had my thirtieth. Thirty years with the company. More of us are getting to that. Makes you think about what you want to do with yourself, like you said."

"Yup, the money is going to be good this year, as good as ever. Well, at least as good or better than last year."

"Yeah, probably."

"You accountant guys do wondrous things (chuckle). Slow down those payables guys."

"I hear he was up north, in that new cabin."

"Yeah."

"They had a nice article about him in the (company paper). He launched that new little car. He was a manufacturing guy, right?"

"Yeah, I think so. He was general manager of a big plant, then moved up. He was always moving up. Gave it all for the company."

"The car radios in that little car are terrible."

"Why?"

"The CD's jam. I had to replace my own, and the one for the girl who is my secretary."

"Did you tell Jack?"

"No, you know how Jack is. I'm not going to be the one who tells him. It will take the system a long time to catch up."

"I have a real stack of CD's now, a real stack--one of those portable holders to carry'em. Would want a good car player for those."

"Yeah. You gotta have that."

"How many kids did he have?"

I dunno. A bunch. Couple of marriages, lotta kids. Maybe more than five. He did go home a lot."

"Look around. Now it's like a manufacturing reunion."

"Yeah (pause) makes you think about mortality doesn't it?"

"Yeah (long hesitation), I wonder what to do about my cd's. Will you talk to Jack?"

At this point the service began. At the close, the pastor asked if anyone wanted to comment. Several family members did, giving moving speeches about specific instances of Tom's kindness and concern about his family.

Then a young man in a plaid jacket came forward.

"I didn't really know Tom. But I know that he would have told me to read Taylor, and Henry Ford, as he did so many others, and that would be the key to good management and my success. Well, I did read that, and now I *am* moving up. I mean, I have moved already. And I think I can trace some of my success to the atmosphere that Tom set up in my division. Anyway, I think I can say that Tom made my future. For that I thank his family today."

From my back, "That kid, a comer, you know?"

"Yeah, don't know him, but he has moves."

"What are you going to do about the cd players? We need to fix that somehow."

" I don't know."

"Well, makes you wonder about all this dying."

"Yeah, thirty years to the company. It was good. Hope that kid does as well."

The second story is set outside a large ballroom in the Washington Hyatt Hotel, located close to the FBI building, not far from the Smithsonian Buildings on the Mall in D.C. I was attending a meeting of the National Coalition of Education Activists, a group of parents, professors, teachers, and students trying hard to find good ways to do what its name suggests. NCEA did the conference well. One thing done especially well was food. There were piles of good food for lunch, buffet style, just outside the meeting room doors. People lined up, chose from meat and fish and lovely fresh veggies, and sat near whoever had

found a chair and a table. That led to matchless conversations about the sessions--with people you usually had not seen, strangers.

In my sport coat and professorial tie, I made a fine pile of savory cake, carrots, and sprouts. I sat down next to a young tattooed, pierced, spiked-haired woman with, it appeared, two little kids, a girl about 11 and a boy about 9. He turned and walked up to my cake.

"Hi. My name is Kenneth."

"Hey, Kenneth. My name is Rich."

"Are you going to eat all that cake?"

"Yeah, but there is some on that table right behind you."

"Will you give me that?" (Mine)

"Ok."

"Thanks." (Takes a handful and eats it, smiling). Then, "My Daddy's in jail."

Mom, her back to me, whirls in her chair and looks me in the eye.

"Well, Kenneth, my best friend is in jail."

Mom is surprised.

"Yeah, a really lot of people are in jail."

"Sure are, Kenneth."

"Why is your friend in jail?"

"Drugs."

"My Daddy, too. Mom says he will get out in 4 years. That is a long time."

"Sure is. My friend will get out about the same time."

"My Daddy is really not bad."

"Neither is my friend, Kenneth."

"Do you have a lot of friends in jail?"

"Well, actually, yes."

"How many?"

"Eighteen, including my friend. The others are in Grenada. They are in jail because they made mistakes when they tried to build a better government. They have been in jail since 1983."

Mom is puzzled. She turns, collects Kenneth by the arm, and says,

"He is always talking to strangers. Are you really a teacher? How do you know people in jail?" Kenneth escapes, heads for the cake on the buffet table.

The third story: I visited the university for employees and franchise owners of the largest fast food chain in the world. It is a beautiful multi-cultural place. More than one-half of the students are from outside the United States. Immediate translation is provided, constantly, in at least four languages. This is not an English-only spot. No one fails at this university. Tests and papers are not got-cha exercises. What few tests that are given are constructed by the teachers and the students, using guides from the curriculum. Feedback is almost immediate. At this school, tests are important, not because the scores are needed to separate people but because the burgers and fries must be good, tasty. Testing, when there is any at all, is simply designed to build on student strengths.

So what is the meaning of these experiences?

When I was at Tom's funeral, during the minister's lengthy speech, I came upon this passage from "Fanshen," the story of life in Long Bow Village during the 1945-48 revolutionary period in China. The speaker is a peasant, a communist leader, addressing the collapsed morale of cadre who had done a good job, but at the same time had made significant mistakes which were sharply criticized by the people in the village. "Why do we live in this world? Is it just to eat and sleep and lead a worthless life? That is the landlord...point of view. They want to enjoy life, waste food and clothes and beget children. But a Communist works not only for his own life. He has offered everything to the service of his class. If he finds on poor brother still suffering from hunger and cold, he has not done his duty. Anyone who is concerned only with himself lacks the fundamental standards necessary for a Party member." Hinton, writing in 1997, said that today, in the midst of reform, which he suggests is the restoration of the rule of capital, 180 million people are unemployed in China. The minister finished his requiem and invited the mourners to view the body, in its sealed invulnerable bronze casket.

When I was talking to Kenneth, watching him eat my cake, I thought about my close friend, Tommie, the most resolute union organizer I have known. He is one of more than a million people in U.S. jails, more per capita than any other industrialized nation, most of them in jail because of violations of the counterfeit war on drugs. Kenneth's mom and I talked later. She came to the conference as a parent, at her own cost. She is ward attendant in a Boston nursing home, making \$7.00 an hour. The hotel cost \$99.00 a night plus taxes. She came because Kenneth, along with every other black child (even though Mom is white and Dad is black, in the apartheid U.S., the one drop of blood rule is still in quiet force) in his school, is in some form of special education category. Kenneth failed all of his state's standardized tests last year. Her daughter, in another school, is classified as white and is in an accelerated program. She passed the tests in the top 10 percentile. Mom believes Kenneth is just as smart. When Mom found out a group of students, parents, and educators were going to D.C. to discuss alternative ways, she came.

She had a flyer with her. It just said this:

"Education Should be For Justice Too"

"Gaps in the academic performance of black and white students appear as early as age 9 and persist through age 17" (National Center for Education Statistics, "The Educational Progress of Black Students," 1995, p. 3).

"Approximately 13.6 million children under age 12 in the United States -29 percent - live in families that must cope with hunger or the risk of hunger during some part of one or more months of the previous year" (Community Childhood Hunger Identification Project).

- "33.1% of all African Americans, 30.6% of Latinos and 18.8% of other non-whites live in poverty, as compared to 9.9% of White residents" (Cynthia Taeber, The Statistical Handbook on Women in America, 1996, p.145).

- *Hunger in the U.S. has increased by 50% since 1985 (Center on Hunger, Poverty and Nutrition Policy, Tufts University, 1993).*

- *Between 20 and 30 million Americans suffer from hunger (Congressional Hunger Center, 1995).*

Education Can Change Everything---Even Inequality"

Dewey called reflective teaching, "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further consequences to which it leads." (*How We Think*, p9).

The auto executives learned how to balance ledgers, perhaps with passion, but little reflectivity. Kenneth's mom was on the track to discovering why it is her two kids get such different schooling--and what it is that underpins that inequity. The Burger-versity does everything well except to encourage people to wonder about why it is profitable to foist caffeinated colored sugar water, fried gristle and potatoes, on people--and just whose labor makes the billions--sold sign churn along. Most public schools follow the routes offered by the auto-men and the burger school, a superficial analysis of what appears to be, with nothing offered on how to understand the essence lying beneath.

Moreover, school children are now even more intensely segregated by class and race through geography, curricula choices, funding, teaching methods, tracking, and standardized exams. In the most exploited areas in the U.S., schools are Third World. While the best teachers swim against the stream, these schools serve as holding pens. The message to kids from many schools is clear: tamp down your expectations, stifle your analytical abilities, and get in line. Even for what was once known as the middle class, the signal from school is that you will not do as well as your parents--get used to it.

Teachers occupy a pivotal position in a society with a collapsed industrial base. Schools are now the center of communities, the sole organizing force in the lives of many citizens. Educators are the most unionized people in the U.S. The ideas and practices educators foster will have a vital impact on the construction of 21st century society.

What kind of community are we forging when the thoughts of a Chinese Communist leader, which do hold some parallels to early necessities of the American Revolution, seem like a pipe-dream? With the rise of the levels of inequality that Kenneth's mom describes in her leaflet, coupled with the rise of authoritarianism reflected in the boom of the prison industry (where over-production is profitable), come reverberations in teaching and learning. It is a dubious community that is being created when educational leaders are committed to the pursuit of only the most superficial standardized official analysis, and sell that to the citizenry on the promise that it will magically promote desirable subjects, social equality--or rigorous critique. I suggest that this is where my stories crash into to MEAP-- and where education workers may find a point for democratic action.

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Within The Heart

Millions of various voices, diversely beautiful faces, and intriguing minds pass quickly by without a second glance from the other. Within each racing car sits a person, black, white, Hispanic, with thoughts untold and memories innumerable. It seems that many people forget the value and individuality of the masses. We are the masses and yet we criticize and slander each other. It seems that buried under laws, prejudices and petty selfishness lies the principles on which the founders of this country built. They wrote "All men are created equal" yet we have had to make laws to protect our brothers and sisters from tortuous slavery and bondage.

Within many hearts lie subconscious prejudices that emerge from lack of love for all people as opposed to love for those in the immediate surroundings; the people with the same economic status, family structure and upbringing. Society segregates into comfortable towns of each social class. Over here the houses are this much money and over there they are cheaper. Then within each town the dwellers see only one type of status; they do not see the struggles and lives of the other groups. The children within each community learn one way, and one people with only one way to live. It is hard to treat all people the same when the strangers portrayed to be poor because of laziness when in fact the case is completely different. The children see soldiers going into other countries and killing different colored people, the companies from America going to poorer countries and exploiting the people, sanctions that starve families. It is hard though to see the truth through the filters society puts over children's eyes; it is hard to see the filters themselves. These filters seem to say "eye for an eye" or "It is not your responsibility to help. Let them help themselves" when we are all humans created equal. Who will take the responsibility to help people who have never been taught how to maintain a house or a good work ethic, people whose education systems teach nothing because of a lack of supplies, or people who have not received the love and equality that all humans deserve? Life is not about living for self and pushing off any responsibility onto the other person.

The lawmakers try to say that the laws will help to bring about equality, but it is the hearts that need to change; change from greed to love for all humanity. Love is the only thing that can bring people together; not laws forcing people to treat each other equally. The answer is to "Love your neighbor as yourself" and "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

By Abigail Bell

(A senior who "failed" the MEAP writing her first time through)

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You participate.
He, she, or they participate.
We all participate.**

They profit.

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