



The Rouge Forum

THE BUSH ATTACK ON HEAD START:

“WHAT THIS INITIATIVE IS ATTEMPTING TO DO”

By Gerald Coles

Despite his numerous cameos in classrooms, where he puts on his compassionate conservative demeanor, George W. Bush's actions show a very different picture. As governor of Texas, for example, he used a surplus in state funds to give tax breaks to his oil-rich friends instead of using the money to provide health insurance for all poor children; his indifference to the poor contributed to ranking Texas second highest among states in percentage of hungry children. In the White House, his deep cuts in food stamps, child nutrition and foster care just scratch the surface of his pitiless legislation affecting the young.

I have previously described Bush's actions as following the “W Principle,” that is, in a compassionate conservative hierarchy, one rises to a maximum level of cruelty. In the relentless application of the W Principle to children, a recent example is Head Start, an imperfect program that has nonetheless a documented record of helping poor pre-school youngsters. Why, instead of taking readily-apparent steps that could increase the program's quality and outreach, does Bush want to go in the opposite direction and destroy it?

Head Start

Begun in 1965 during the Johnson administration, Head Start has been based on the premise that providing poor children with basic medical, educational, nutritional, and

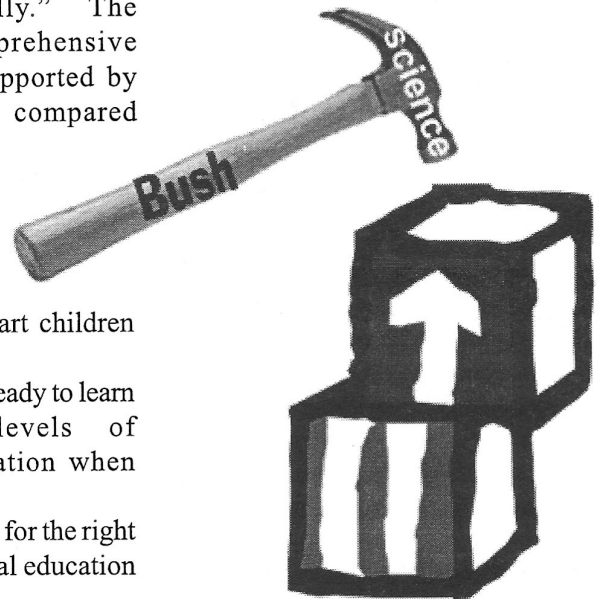
emotional assistance would contribute to their future academic achievement. All areas are essential to early learning and school preparedness in this comprehensive model — none is an “add-on.” Nutrition, for example, is critical because, as Larry Brown of the Center on Hunger and Poverty stresses, national studies have shown that children from “food-deprived homes” have “compromised overall learning ability,” have “higher levels of anxiety and irritability” and hence do “poorly academically.” The benefits of this comprehensive approach have been supported by research showing that, compared

with their peers, Head Start children are more likely to:

- enter kindergarten ready to learn
- have higher levels of achievement motivation when they begin school
- be in the right grade for the right age and not in a special education class
- have higher academic achievement
- stay in school and complete high school
- have higher levels of self-esteem
- be physically healthier
- have fewer delinquency problems

Additionally, because of another key area in Head Start's comprehensive approach, Head Start parents are more likely to be involved in their children's public school education and spend more time working with them on academics.

This evidence of effectiveness does not mean Head Start is the perfect program for poor children. The above comparisons are heartening, but the children on average do less well academically than those from more



affluent families. This difference should not be surprising because Head Start can, at best, be a necessary but not sufficient response to the many needs of poor children, and certainly cannot be a substitute for a full governmental policy answer for eliminating poverty and its consequences.

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Head Start successes and failures also need to be seen in relation to the insufficient resources allocated for its comprehensive approach. As Edward Ziegler, one of Head Start's founders, has observed, "the amount budgeted per child" [has always been] too little to allow for a quality educational program" so that excessive class size, low staff salaries, and constant staff turnover have been perennial concerns. Moreover, even now, nearly forty years after the program began, Head Start is available for only 50% to 60% of eligible children.

Attacks on Head Start

Although the Nixon administration attempted to undercut the program, the first major attack on it was led by Ronald Reagan who, in the early 1980s, tried to fold it into block grants to the states, which would have required Head Start to compete with other educational and social programs for a single amount of money insufficient to begin with and sure to be reduced continuously in subsequent years. Only considerable organizing and a great public outcry forced the administration to back down. Defeated, but unlike General George Custer, whom Reagan played in a movie, he quickly picked himself up and went to attack plan B: failing to eliminate a program, underfund it as much as possible. He successfully opposed all efforts to restore his cuts in staff-child ratios and class size, professional development, staff salaries, and a variety of quality improvements.

George Bush (The First) continued Reagan's weakening of Head Start, so that across the two administrations, the program's real funding per child, adjusted for inflation, decreased 13 percent. In addition to reducing the quality of Head Start, the insufficient funds meant that millions of eligible children were kept out of the program. For example, during its nearly first three decades (1965 to 1992), 11 million poor children had been in program, but 50 million who qualified were left out. Not until 1996, during the Clinton administration, was funding boosted to return Head Start to the level of 1971 of real spending. Even so, these 1996 increases provided a Head Start program for only 36 percent of eligible children. On the other hand, given the Republican control of the House at the time and their 1994 "Contract With America" policies, at least there was movement toward half a loaf!

"The Building Blocks"

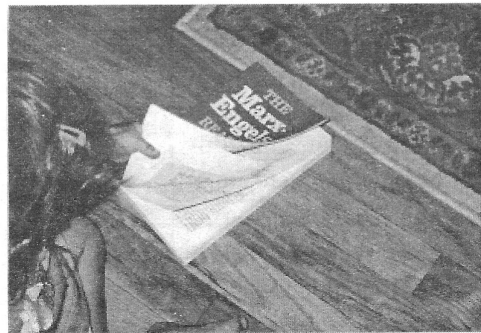
Which brings us to George W. Bush. Head Start is "working okay," he acknowledged when presenting his "School Readiness Act" — the chief legislative instrument for killing the program — to an audience of Head Start educators, but he wanted to make it "better than okay." Giving no more than lip service to Head Start's

comprehensive approach and, as I shall discuss, actually taking legislative steps to enfeeble it, he insisted that the program had to put initial reading skills in the forefront in order to lay “the foundation for children to become good readers.” “Let’s get it right early,” he asserted, “that’s what this initiative is attempting to do.”

According to Bush, the need for this change was not whim but fact proven by “science”— by “researchers” who have studied “how the brain works and spent a lot of time analyzing what works and what doesn’t work.” This “research based” skills curriculum would provide “the building blocks. And these building blocks need to be a part of Head Start programs all across America. That’s the mission. That’s the goal.”

The “research-based” evidence Bush alluded to is supposedly contained in the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (NRP), the document named as the gold standard research summary in the *Reading First* portion of Bush’s *No Child Left Behind* legislation, and in the many studies funded by the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, commonly known as “NICHD reading research.” In two books, I have reviewed all the evidence from both sources and have shown that there is no “research,” as Bush maintains, that demonstrates the benefits of the so-called “building blocks” on later reading acquisition. None! Studies do show that children (poor, “at risk,” or in several other categories) who are directly taught these skills do better on tests of these skills than do similar children who were not taught these skills, but that is as far as the benefit of skills teaching goes. When researchers have looked at how this building blocks training translated into advantages in tests of reading comprehension, the chief measure of reading acquisition, at the end of first or second grade, they found none. Furthermore, this research has never shown that poor children who focused extensively on these skills learned to read as well as did children from more affluent environments who, thanks to good material fortune, had the advantage of a wide range of written language experiences and opportunities at home and in preschool — none of which included heavy skills training!

Anyone actually reading this body of research would be amazed at how little of it has to do with claims made about it. The following is exemplary of building block studies found compelling in the NRP Report: In a *four-day* experiment on phonemic awareness (the ability to hear and distinguish word sounds) with preschool



Getting a “head start”

prereaders, one group was trained to segment four spoken syllables into their initial consonant and remaining portion of a word (e.g., *hem* is made of /h/ and /em/), while a control group was trained simply to repeat the syllables aloud. Both groups were then taught to do a task in which they learned

words related or unrelated to the spoken syllables they had learned. The trained group made fewer mistakes in learning words related to the sound patterns they had practiced in training. A second part of the experiment used another form of phonemic awareness sounds training, and again the trained children made fewer mistakes learning words related to the sounds in which they had been trained. From this four day study, the researchers drew the slightly hyperbolic conclusion that “these results suggested a causal link between phonemic awareness abilities and the ability to benefit from spelling-sound relations in *reading*” (my emphasis). This hyperbole was amplified in the NRP Report, which calculated the effect on “reading” in this

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diminutive study to be between moderate and large! One of the best kept secrets in the “building blocks” research to which Bush constantly refers is that “reading” is almost never defined as comprehension of print.

In contrast to spotlighting the building blocks evidence for changing Head Start, Bush has ignored the results of another body of work, that of successful pre-school programs. For example, High Scope, a well-researched preschool program for poor children, eschews direct training and drilling of building block skills and instead uses a holistic curriculum that immerses children in a “print-rich environment” which provides them “opportunities throughout the day” to “listen to stories, explore books and other print materials, and work with writing tools and materials.” High Scope research has documented the considerable effectiveness of this approach for providing the “foundation for later academic learning” (www.highscope.org). High Scope has been more successful than traditional Head Start programs because of both the curriculum and the greater per-child budget that provides the means for implementing that curriculum. Of course any social program that smacks of greater budget needs is beyond Bush’s policy scope. And why shouldn’t it be? He knows that “the good folks who are focusing on science” tell him all he wants to know.

This research and the actual results are available in libraries for anyone to read and appraise, but since Bush and the educators who serve him can count on very few members of the public or media ever doing first-hand examinations for themselves, false information can readily be transformed into unquestionable truths. In a recent major article in the *New York Times*, for instance, education writer James Traub asserts: "Reading experts have coalesced around the principle that step-by-step phonics instruction works best, especially with children at risk of failure." Then, after quoting one such expert who laments the failure of educators to "understand that there really is scientific evidence" for the heavy skills approach, Traub wonders aloud and critically whether, as these experts fear, some educators "take a dim view of the findings of educational research?" That is, don't they know their uninformed "dim view" is harming children they are charged to teach? Since Traub serves merely as an echo, one can assume he, like most of the media's education writers, has never gone beyond phoning the "experts" for their opinions, never taken on the role of investigative reporter who looks for himself at actual evidence.

Building Blocks Testing

Bush also proposes testing Head Start children "to tell us whether or not children are learning to read and write" so we will know if "every child has been given the tools necessary to be at the starting line at the same time." Given what I have just said about the lack of evidence that early attainment of building block "tools" benefit later reading, Bush's testing program simply increases pressure on programs to skew the curriculum toward a valueless path and away from more fruitful approaches. As child development expert Samuel Meisels has pointed out, this narrow skills testing omits much of what children learn in high-quality Head Start programs, "including appreciation for books and reading; comprehension; early writing; scientific knowledge, skills, and methods; social studies; the arts, and physical growth and development." In addition, Bush's statement ignores the adverse developmental issues that the testing can create. Requiring the children to measure up in tests disregards the research showing the great variability in the pace and ways in which young children learn, and the foolishness of trying to standardize and track development as if it should be or could be uniform among any group of 4-year-olds for any kind of learning. Meisels

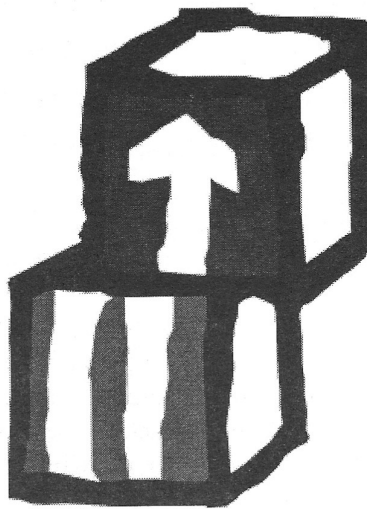
stresses that testing at this age can, first, have a "long-term impact on how children are viewed, stigmatized and tracked," and second, can make "a long-lasting impression on children's self-perceptions, estimates of their own abilities, and motivation and achievement."

Reagan Reincarnated

Reagan's attempt to eliminate Head Start reemerged in Bush's strategy of handing the program over to the states, with all the best of reasons, of course. According to Bush, the governors told him that by getting the money, they would then have "flexibility to be able to dovetail the Head Start program" into their preschool programs, thereby giving them "better control over whether or not the students are given the skills necessary so that when hold us to account we can achieve that which we want to achieve, which is excellence in the classroom" (n.b.: this is an exact quote). Despite the governors' enthusiasm, shortly after Bush floated the idea, the Republicans realized there would be too much Congressional resistance to it, even within their party, and decided to see if they could at least initiate the hand over by paring the number of states to eight.

For these, as in the federal Head Start, building block skills would be the key curriculum ingredient. As for the rest of the program's comprehensive approach — well, that would remain in name only. The School Readiness Act does mention performance standards for the various areas — dental and medical screening and treatment, nutrition, etc. — but the states could do what they wanted because the Bush plan would not require them to adhere to any guidelines for providing services within the comprehensive program.

Fear that the transfer would destroy Head Start's comprehensive approach is supported by several research findings. One, among current state preschool programs, only three states — Delaware, Oregon, and Washington — have duplicated the range of comprehensive services in the federal program. Another, in the last fiscal year, the 45 states with preschool programs have spent less than \$2 billion on them compared with the \$6.5 billion the federal government has spent on Head Start. A third, even this relatively smaller amount of state spending is misleading because most of spending was done in just 10 states. And a fourth, governors program. Head Start programs run by "faith-based" groups would no longer have to comply with non-discrimination hiring laws! Instead, a faith-based institution could reject a job candidate, regardless of the candidate's college degrees and teaching experience,



if that candidate's religious beliefs did not match those of the institution!

Bush's admiration for the "incredibly important profession" also did not extend to the profession's appraisal of his School Readiness Act. On May 8, right after Head Start program directors and teachers learned about the forthcoming legislation and began criticizing it, Windy Hill, Bush's Associate Commissioner of Health and Human Services (HHS)

overseeing Head Start, sent a letter to local programs threatening to take legal action against any one who dared to speak out. As NHSA President Sarah Greene explained, HHS "threatened Head Start teachers and parents with civil action or even jail time if they spoke out against the Bush plan to dismantle" Head Start. Receiving no satisfactory reply from the Bush administration regarding "the Association's grave First Amendment free-speech concerns," on June 11th NHSA took HHS to court to stop the campaign of intimidation. On July 2, after a federal judge reviewed the case, recognized the assault on first amendment rights, and told HHS to write a letter reversing its campaign or face a court ruling, the Bush administration backed down. Hill explained in her letter that she had not intended to "discourage" anyone in Head Start from expressing their "political thoughts and concerns" to their Congressional representatives. Her intention was only to provide guidance, etc., etc., etc. The defeat of the Bush administration's "attempt to stifle free speech" led Greene to exclaim, "This is a great way for Head Start teachers and parents to be able to celebrate their 1st Amendment rights on a day - July 4th - that is all about free speech and other core rights that define what it is to be American."

Saving Head Start

Leading the effort to save Head Start once more has been the National Head Start Association (NHSA), begun in 1973 to combat Nixon's efforts to diminish the program. Combating the current Bush assault, NHSA has spearheaded a diverse coalition of over 100 organizations, including the Children's Defense Fund, United Way of America, National League of Cities, Service Employees International Union, and the National Council of Jewish Women. A letter writing and phoning "Save Head Start!" lobbying effort produced over 30,000 letters and emails to members of Congress and nearly succeeded in beating back the House version of the Bush legislation. All Democrats voted against it and received support from twelve Republicans for a 217-216 vote. Democrats attempted to revise the bill by eliminating the hand over to the eight states, increasing the budget, and adding salary increases

and scholarship funds to help teachers attend college, but none of these nor similar improvement efforts were successful.

About the same time the House voted, a Senate committee met for a hearing on very different Head Start legislation introduced by Christopher Dodd of Connecticut and co-sponsored by ten Democrats and Independent (former Republican) James Jeffords. Although the bill rejects the

*Only considerable organizing
and a great public outcry forced
the administration to back down.*

chief features of the House version and contains many proposals that would further improve Head Start, because the Republicans control the Senate and hence chair the committees, the hearing was stacked with educators supporting Bush's efforts.

Not surprisingly, leading the "scientific" attack on Head Start was Reid Lyon, chair of the division of NICHD that has manufactured the research Bush has used to justify mandating a narrow skills training national reading curriculum for schools that receive funding through Reading First legislation. Dubbed by the *Wall Street Journal* "Bush's Reading Czar," Lyon was in the Senate hearing to convey one more sophisticated version of Bush's Building Blocks Big Lie. A curriculum of direct instruction on "phonological sensitivity" and similar "early literacy skills," Lyons explained, will help young children get an essential head start for later reading acquisition and, by themselves, provide the "pre-academic components" for "closing the achievement gap between children from higher and lower-income environments." A very pretty, though baseless, simple-fix measure, perfect for those in power who want to justify doing as little as possible for education, doing nothing to eliminate poverty and its effects, and doing as much as possible to promote the neo-conservative agenda of cutting social spending to a raw minimum.

What the final version of the Head Start legislation will be is uncertain at this point. With enough pressure through a continued lobbying, letter writing and phoning campaign, the transfer of Head Start to the states and the other egregious parts of the School Readiness Act might be eliminated. Losing these, Bush will most likely still have sufficient support for standing firm on stand-still Head Start budget. In addition, he might still achieve a major victory through a bipartisan vote supporting the skills building blocks curriculum because in previous legislation (the Reading Excellence Act and Reading First/NCLB) the Democrats voted for the same kind of teaching in the early grades. If this part of the legislation is passed, besides skewing the curriculum, Head Start parents will be filled

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The Myth of Neutrality in the Classroom

By Perry Marker

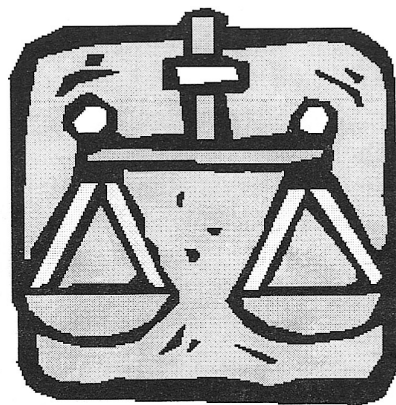
As the War in Iraq continues, many well-meaning people are arguing that teachers remain neutral or not discuss the War at all in their classrooms. At first glance, the idea that teachers can and should remain neutral sounds reasonable, logical and necessary in our democratic society. Unfortunately, the notion of teachers' or any person's "neutrality" on a critical social issue like war is simply an impossible goal. More importantly, this idea impudently assumes that students are passive, unthinking receptors of knowledge that don't have a clue as to how they or their teachers think about social issues.

Anyone who has spent any time at all in a classroom teaching or observing student behavior clearly understands that students

Political beliefs are, all too often, the "unspoken," but highly visible subtexts of a teacher's classroom.

are able to pinpoint a teacher's political and social beliefs in minutes - even when the teacher is striving to be "objective" or "neutral." Ask any student about their teacher's political beliefs and they'll tell you what they are by chapter and verse. Political beliefs are, all too often, the "unspoken," but highly visible subtexts of a teacher's classroom. This encourages students who are seeking to gain the teacher's attention, praise and high grades to engage in a sophisticated "dance" where they spend their time in the classroom figuring out what ideas the teacher wants to hear and how best to repeat and restate those ideas. Under the guise of being "neutral," a teacher's opinions are seldom, if ever, questioned or thoroughly discussed, and

when they are, they are often simply considered to be the source of last resort to be remembered and regurgitated on the next examination. To deny that this exists in today's



classrooms is putting one's head into the sand.

An honest, open classroom discussion regarding social issues such as the War in Iraq should involve many divergent points of view that include interrogating both the teacher's and the students' opinions. To simply cast social issues as having only one or two simplistic perspectives - often belonging to the teacher - is to encourage students to engage in reductionist, fragmented judgments that deny a deep sense and value of critical thinking. Students need to be challenged by the teacher not to simply repeat the teacher's point of view - even when overtly presented. In order to effectively do this, the teacher needs to provide information that represents multiple points of view of the War in Iraq. More importantly, when students seem to be set on a specific point of view, the teacher needs to argue an opposing viewpoint, especially when the students' views support a teacher's known political beliefs. Simply stated, teachers should strive for their students to be familiar with, and passionately argue, many points of view and to vigorously argue ideas they don't support as if they were their own. To do less is to encourage thinking that is based upon simple reaction rather than thoughtful reflection.

Teachers should never insist that students repeat or blindly adopt the ideas

In our democratic society, continuing the myth that teachers can, and should, remain neutral in the classroom does not support the noble and important goal of teaching for democracy.

that they themselves believe; to do so would be to engage in anti-democratic, fascist teaching techniques that dangerously threaten personal liberty and our democratic way of life. But most significantly, such narrow teaching limits students' notions about how to think critically in a democratic society. Teachers must encourage their students to question all ideas brought to an open and honest discussion. This should be done in a classroom environment that sustains and maintains tolerance, reason, and a commitment to freedom and democracy.

It is essential to encourage discussion about the War in Iraq. But, teaching that focuses solely on a condemnation of, or support for the War the Iraq is dangerous and should not be tolerated in our democratic society. We should not promote teaching that has as its purpose to promote any specific political point of view — right, left or middle. Rather, we should encourage students to thoroughly examine all points of view before coming to any final conclusions about social issues such as the War in Iraq. Schools exist to promote and support responsible, thoughtful citizens in a democratic society. In our democratic society, continuing the myth that teachers can, and should, remain neutral in the classroom does not support the noble and important goal of teaching for democracy. ^{RF}

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Why It's Good to Subscribe to Two Newspapers

NEW YORK TIMES, Sept. 12, 2002

Headline: Prostate Cancer Surgery Found to Cut Death Risk

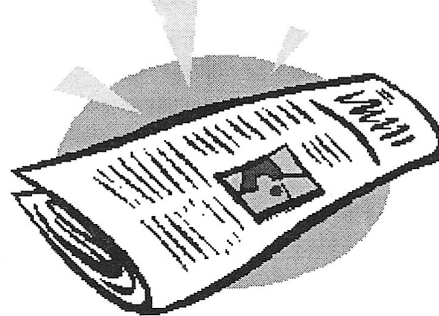
Lead: For the first time, scientists have shown in a rigorous study that surgery to remove a cancerous prostate gland can reduce the risk of death from the disease...

BOSTON GLOBE, Sept. 12, 2002 [reprinted from the WASHINGTON POST]

Headline: 2 Studies Find No Advantage to Prostate Surgery

Lead: Men with prostate cancer who decide not to undergo surgery and opt to have only the symptoms of their disease treated do just about as well as men who are operated on...

Both stories relied on the same study published in the New England Journal of Medicine.



Head Start *Continued from page 5*

with false expectations whose tragic reality will not become apparent for several years.

Whether or not the Bush legislation has been passed by the time this article is published, we can be certain that his attack on poor children's education will continue. Therefore, go to www.saveheadstart.org to see what you can do. As Bush said — and this is the truth — “We got a — this is an opportunity that we better not miss.” ^{RF}

Gerald Coles (gscoles@yahoo.com) is an educational psychologist and member of the National Writers Union who lives in Ithaca, N.Y. Portions of this article are based on his recent books: *Misreading Reading: The Bad Science that Hurts Children* (Heinemann, 2000) and *Reading the Naked Truth: Literacy, Legislation and Lies* (Heinemann, 2003). See the National Head Start Association (www.nhsa.org) for additional documentation and references.

NCLB will Fail in the Same Ways the Oil Invasion Failed But People Will Lose Until We Get Beyond Capitalism

By Rich Gibson

The Political Economy of Win, Lose, Win, Lose---- Overcome

The point in Iraq, and the Caspian Sea region near Afghanistan, is oil—won by any means necessary. The broader point is the US invasion of the world, in the midst of an international war of the rich on the poor.

The point in US schools, and schools throughout the world, is social control-- won by any means necessary. The US cares nothing about democratic rule in Iraq, nor does its rulers care a whit about how education for voluntary servitude is won in the schools. However, in each case, elites are aware of the importance of their domination. Perhaps unlike Iraqis, many school workers have only a limited understanding of why they are being set upon. The former may see a Crusade for oil as simply a Crusade, but most Iraqis surely see the relationship; while teachers may see only the harsh regimentation of their work without considering the social goals of those who profit from ignorance and segregation.

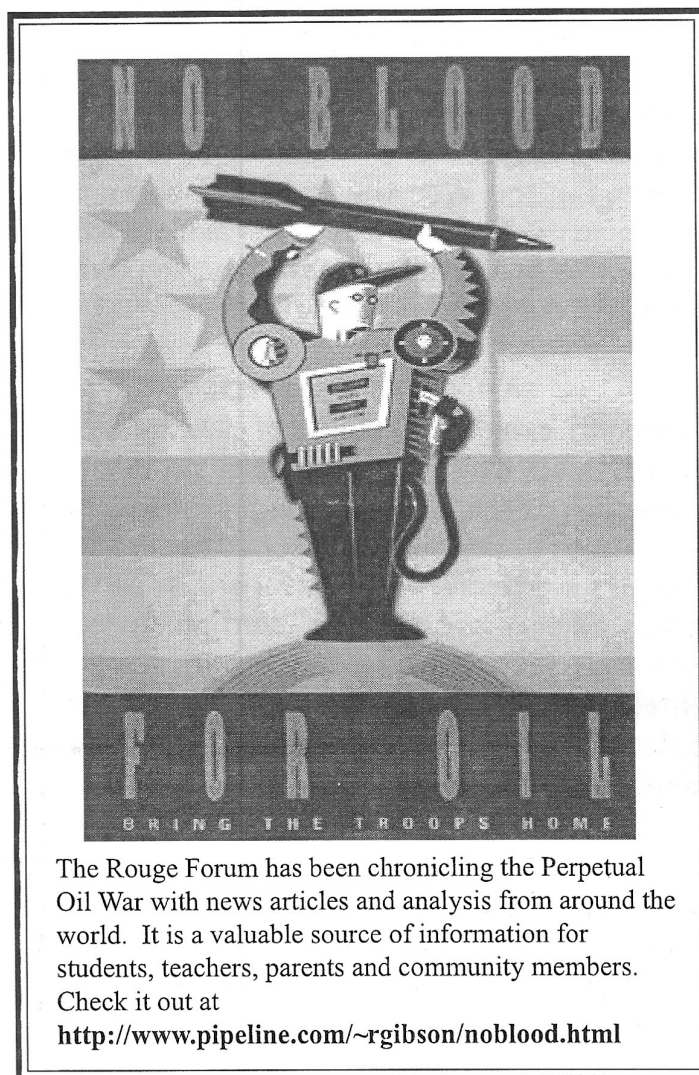
Some critics of the sham school reforms, and the Oil Wars, treat the related crises as if they were initiated by myths, lies. The US did not manufacture a myth of weapons of mass destruction, which did exist in Iraq---creations of the US. The mythical part was when the WMD's were in Iraq (during the US-supported war on Iran, for example) and who provided the information and technology (the US). The US did not manufacture a myth of rotten underfunded urban, suburban, and rural schools where children are taught lies using methods that make the struggle for truth, and curiosity, alien to children as early as the second grade. Those schools were created by the social processes of capitalism triumphant, in its most powerful base (Berliner, *Manufactured Crisis*, 1996).

Class and racial separation at apartheid levels, seen as normalcy, typify most schooling in the US. Overcoming the promise of perpetual war, and the organized decay of education, will require a struggle to go past capitalism, to community, in the midst of serious civil strife.

However, US elites will spend what it takes, including the lives of thousands, to control the oil fields,

and the schools. The point is not merely profits (though the point is surely profits) but social control. Power, not just money, as rulers know, is key to mastery. The war in Iraq can be won by a privatized, or nationalized, or internationalized, military, as long as the oil flows through Haliburton—and imperialist rivals are backed off. The war on knowledge in schools can be won by a privatized education system, or a nationally centralized one, under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The only consistency behind the rhetoric is the relationship of profiteering and control.

Over a long time, the scenario may look like this: The US ruling class wins a quick invasion, loses the people, wins the raw materials, markets, cheap labor and some opportunistic locals who dictate for awhile;



The Rouge Forum has been chronicling the Perpetual Oil War with news articles and analysis from around the world. It is a valuable source of information for students, teachers, parents and community members. Check it out at <http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/noblood.html>

the US loses the mass resistance as people in the occupied territories rise up (supported by competing imperial powers with their own designs), but the people still lose to hierarchy, authoritarianism, and exploitation; then the people get it and win—or the world wars come again: barbarism. It may look like that in Iraq, and it may look like that within the US, in the schools, invaded by the NCLB.

The No Child Left Behind Act uses the same unseeing strategic planning and hubris that now sinks the US in its military escapades in Iraq and Afghanistan. While the pronouncements of war and victory, like the promises of educational equality through curricula regimentation, segregation, and testing, seem powerful at the outset, as they encounter the realities of daily life, it turns hollow—if we could ignore the massive suffering that both already cause.

US troops can never be friends to the people whose resources they steal, nor will school administrators be able to get past the contradictory relationships they necessarily have with kids and educators. US troops are already placed in positions where they see everyone as enemies. They massacre Iraqi police established by the US, and strafe hospitals (NY Times 9/15/03). The next

Other than the fear of death, the lure of money, and the glitter of technology, the US leadership has nothing to offer anyone anymore.

logical move is to try to exterminate everybody, a plan that failed in Vietnam.

Administrators, and many teachers, already see their students as the problem, and at least in the case of Houston's massive fraud, described below, the problem was solved by getting rid of the kids. In each instance, the appearances of tactical invincibility crash into the reality of strategic weakness.

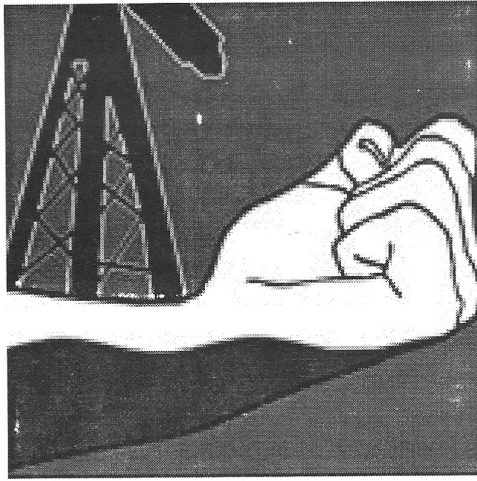
War gamers all over the world are howling at the US failures in Afghanistan and Iraq. In response to the criminal acts of a fundamentalist billionaire who attacked the symbols of US banking, military, and political power, and whose attack swept beyond symbolism to tipping over the fragile US consumer economy; American political leaders invaded the world. In bi-partisan spirit, they declared perpetual pre-emptive—openly imperialist—war. They simultaneously seized oil fields for companies they own. Democrats and Republicans united to gouge the public to pay for, not just the pre-planned imperial adventure, but the elimination of civil liberties Americans believed they once had—in the name of national security, and the liquidation of what social safety net remained, in the name of national defense.

While US techno-might may have swept across the mountains of Afghanistan, where the “Great Game” between Britain and Russia played out for 150 years, and across the deserts of Iraq, established from the betrayed promises of Lawrence of Arabia and the whims of Winston Churchill, the US has not been able to control the peace, to win over the people, or to even sustain the morale of its own troops. They quickly began to complain about the heat, the cold, the absence of bottled water, un-friendlies who they were told would be friendly; troops who started to demand to go home within four weeks of their deployment (London Telegraph 9/14/03 ; Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 1994).

Other than the fear of death, the lure of money, and the glitter of technology, the US leadership has nothing to offer anyone anymore. The ideology of democracy and hope, versus the authoritarian boogeyman in the USSR, sham though it may have been, is gone.

There is, some, resistance. More than three million





people in the US demonstrated against the war, before it began. Trust in politicians sank with the rising, if really minimal, US war dead, much more rapidly than in Vietnam.

More than one hundred local city governments formally opted their citizens out of the Patriot Act, as librarians moved to shred daily records of books checked out, before the FBI arrived. John Ashcroft, the fundamentalist Attorney General who lost a Missouri election to a dead man, spoke only to military and police groups as he toured the US, defending the Patriot Act, while outside thousands of people held signs: "Fascist!"

Resistance rooted in a celebration of pluralism, however, is resistance doomed to a bounded potency.

While there may be a few similarities to the Russian debacle in Afghanistan in the 1980's, or the US

The point in US schools, and schools throughout the world, is social control--won by any means necessary.

fleeing Vietnam in 1975, what is remarkable about the US failures in Afghanistan (where the US only controls Kabul) and Iraq is the weakness of the US' enemy. Usama Bin Laden, Al Queda, and Saddam Hussein's Baathists, are hardly Ho Chi Minh and General Giap, or even the CIA-backed Mujahadeen. The Vietnamese had a modern ideology that could appeal to masses of people (a mix of nationalism over socialism), vital military and civil aid from the USSR and China, experienced leadership steeped in decades of guerilla war as fish in the sea of people. The Afghan mujahadeen had a direct supply line to the hardware and expertise of the CIA, the riches of the US puppet government in Saudi Arabia, a supportive nearby state in Pakistan, a medieval yet popular fundamentalist ideology, and Afghan tribal leadership accustomed to resisting centuries of invasions. With these powerful pillars, the Vietnamese and mujahadeen were able to show the invaders that

nothing is as it appears to be to those who are always outsiders, whose interests can never be friendly to the locals (BBC News 5/16/03 *Al Queda's Origins and Links*).

The Taliban, Bin Laden, Al Queda, Hussein, have little of this. Hussein was a tyrant, hardly the popular leader like Ho Chi Minh. Bin Laden is a billionaire. His view of sending others to get blown up while he remains behind and plans, will wear thin. The Taliban was a suicidal fundamentalist government eager to alienate half its populace (women), momentarily in charge of the devastation of Afghanistan, a nation not as barbarous as it was portrayed, but devastated and open to barbaric rule by the US and Russia in their cold war (*Taliban*, Rashid, 2000).

Al Queda, a criminal terrorist group, is not a state. As Seymour Hersh in the *New Yorker* complained in the past, their vicious acts were treated, not as the crimes they were, but acts of war—not because this kind of retribution would stop Al Queda, but because a war would lead directly to the Caucasus and Iraqi oil fields. Indeed, the Iraq anti-terror invasion is such a stretcher that no serious commentators believe it anymore.

Now, the US populace is told they must stay the course, because to reverse it would be disastrous for foreign policy. George Bush, in full retreat, begs the United Nations for troops, under US leadership—after telling the UN in April that they were irrelevant. With not a single reliable ally, Bush wants UN troops, but not their masters' eyes on the oil fields. A bold declaration of victory staged by the famously AWOL Bush's handlers, on an aircraft carrier, like Dukakis peeping out of a tank on the campaign trail, becomes a call for cooperation from allies who no longer exist. Nevertheless, it appears the US citizenry enjoys its yellow alerts, as much as a good blue-light special, and they applaud by the hundreds of thousands the nationalist spectacles at their football extravaganzas.

Everywhere, the big competing war-gamers chuckle at the US, as they themselves inch closer and closer to the oil and gas resources, nature's fuels of light, heat, and warfare—and they inch closer to World War III, which may have already begun. The little war gamers, in North Korea for example, also feel empowered, having learned the bottom line lesson: Get a nuke.

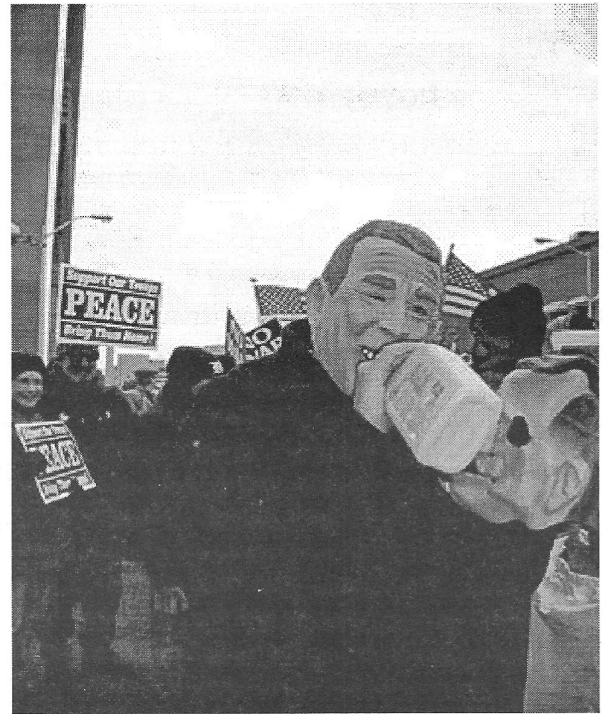
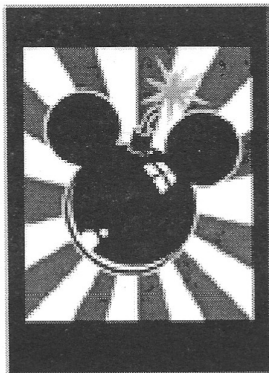
US strategic weakness is not rooted in the power of its enemies, but within its own society. Individualist opportunism blows back on the potential collective power of rulers. In Iraq, for example, the typical tour of duty for a US civilian "expert," is one month. They go

to Iraq, boost the resume, and leave; a new trainee shows up, starting the one month learning curve from the beginning. Military commanders, whose learning curve seems steeper still, remain surprised that the local people keep fooling them, day after day, and that their ex-pat puppet government is unpopular, and unreliable—won't stay bribed (National Public Radio, 9/23/03).

The US is frail in every key element of warfare: in its ideological impotency, bad military judgment, its over-stretched supply lines, its collapsed manufacturing base and teetering economy, its fickle populace steeped in the petty greed of consumerism, obese from watching spectacles, unable to field and sustain even a reliable volunteer army—whose families, after all, are on food stamps. Even so the imperial gaze, and the bombs that sustain it, will not soon be defeated. But the mass of people in the US will—until a choice is made to live another way.

People in the US will see their wages gutted, again, their taxes raised, jobs sped up and eliminated, medical benefits and what remains of the social safety net demolished. Home insurance costs already doubled in some states. The war budget leaped to at least \$500 billion in the last few weeks, as Bush demanded \$87 billion more. The national deficit is projected to soon top \$2.6 trillion, from a surplus of about \$5.6 trillion just 3 years ago. That will come from somewhere, and given the tax system, it will not come from the rich. It will either lead to an outburst of inflation, or the direct impoverishment of the working poor. 2.7 million people lost jobs in the last three years. Those who arrived in 2001 with no base of capital are already near ruins (NY Times, 9/14/03 p1).

In part because of de-industrialization, and in part because of the racketeer nature of US industrial unions, schools will be central in all of this, battle grounds where institutional demands to tamp down the hopes and curiosity of children will run into at least a few parents, kids, and teachers, who think otherwise—and plenty of NCLB supporters who believe they can make careers by tailing the temporarily powerful. School administrators may serve as a model for US experts in Iraq. Like morning glories, they come and go, shifting with the



wind, pumping their individualized hustles and vitae, only ensuring that the organized decay of civil society continues. The disastrous mess that NCLB will cause matters no more to the powerful than US soldiers strafing Iraqi hospitals for hours. Democracy in Iraq? Equitable schools? Shemocracy and Shemequity. At issue is this: Just where will the soldiers for the coming oil wars come from, if not from the schools?

For example, this transparent debacle: Houston lied. As the Houston school model demonstrates, dozens of school administrators, classroom educators, and clerks were complicit in enforcing and covering up the school force-out rate which made the spurious claims of Education Director Rod Paige of a "Houston Miracle" possible. One way to boost test scores is to dispose of those who produce low scores. While rumors whirled around teacher chat-boards on-line, one whistle-blower made the difference. One. He reported that the Houston force-out rate was about ten times the rate reported throughout the district. Did the Houston debacle-miracle blow up? Not hardly. It passed across the front pages, then sank under John Ritter obits. Today the whistle-blower sits in an office, counting paper clips, administratively isolated, while the local union says nothing (Houston Chronicle 9/13/03). And body counts from Iraq only count US bodies.

Yesterday's facts and research mean nothing to those who rut after cheap labor, raw materials, resources,

Yesterday's facts and research mean nothing to those who rut after cheap labor, raw materials, resources, markets, and social control.

markets, and social control. Just as the reporting data of socio-economic status was ripped out of national student test score reportage, so is it easy for the Bush administration to declare that they never said a word to link Saddam Hussein and September 11 (New York Times, 9-16 and 17-03). The only sensibility in their statements is in the rut itself.

Uday and Qusay, Hussein's sons, were blown to pieces with an hours' long barrage of heavy-tank fire, in a Waco-esque scene, making sure they could not testify to anything significant. Perhaps that will be a metaphor for the first courageous superintendent who spills the beans about the racism and class warfare built into the NCLB. Test results will surely be fabricated, in ingenious ways, everywhere, just as the certainty of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and Al-Queda ties became the possibility of weapons of mass destruction, and then, the desire for a democratic regime.

Should the US briefly win in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the NCLB rule; what will the victory produce? There are lessons in history. Over time, the winners will grow ever more distant from the masses of people. US invasion leaders will relax, entice the locals to their lavish games and parties, while the local working people will be enslaved and their oil and natural gas fields robbed. The mullahs and priests might enjoy a boost in collections. The permanent occupation will further ruin the local economy and erode the culture, as troops' dollars compete for purchases, and women. The people, often led by disgusted sectors of the local puppet government, will resist, and over time they will rise up.

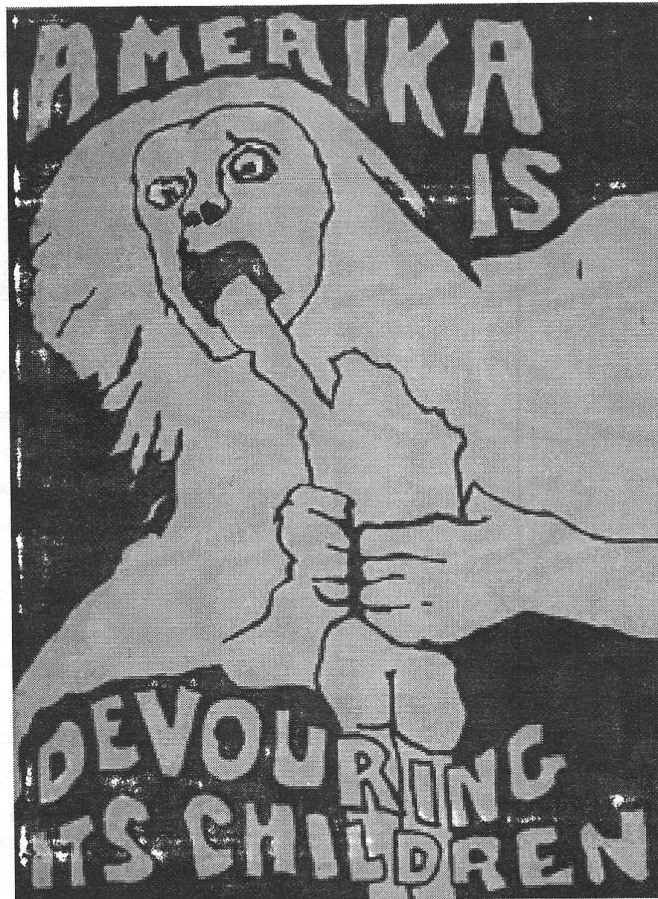
Similar action may take place in schools. With

working class districts will suffer. Merit pay connected to test scores will buttress this. Even the most conservative citizens may be offended by the loss of local, and parental, control the NCLB represents—not allowing parents to opt children out of exams, for example. Some

will raise hell and home school. Suits will be filed, to trail up to the stacked Rehnquist Court (Alfie Kohn, Education Week, *Punished by Rewards*, September 20 2003).

NCLB, after all, was passed by the same bi-partisan congressional majority that lept into the oil war. In some cases, the same companies, like McGraw-Hill, not only profited from the tax shift that ruined the schools they now say they will correct, but the also profit from their ties to the political leaders (Bush), and they will be writing the textbooks in Iraq. NCLB and the oil invasions flow right into one another.

NCLB is so underfunded, as the military is spread so thin, that it will only work in the sense it will, at minimal cost, capture what children come to know, and how they come to know it. It will deepen the segregation of school children by class and race, setting them up to be easily pitted against one another, on tests and in life—using science to prove that some are superior to others, as science propels the one-eyed drones viewing the battlefields (unable to see bin Laden). The rest is just details to the powerful. 60% of the kids in Chicago attend schools defined as failures by NCLB, and they have the right to transfer—to where? NCLB will drive children out of school, and into the military. Whose success is that? Or



whose failure? Without social and economic reform, this counterfeit reform will fail—but only on the face of it. As long as the oil flows, and imperialism is seen as the children's friend, the internal crises matter only a little so long as they sign up to fight their enemy's enemies (Vernon Ehlers testimony on NCLB, May 15 2002).

Fundamental educational shifts have already occurred. Students (as early as third grade) see themselves as future consumers, not workers. They know that school is a lie, and lying to their teachers on exams is a life necessity. At the same time, another degradation: edu-

Daily life, however, just reproduces the ensnared problems of daily life.

cation seen as for employment, not citizenship or ethical life. Employment schooling is seen as training, not enlightenment. Training is linked to delusional ideas about everyone moving up in the economy, based on their meritorious behavior, and institutional demands for certificates. The economy itself is seen as "ours," not, "theirs." Student teachers are positioned to demand to know how to proctor endless exams, not to wonder where the exams come from; liberal studies professors in univer-

sities insist on learning how to maintain numbers for their programs, by aligning curricula with tests, rather than insisting on their academic freedom to profess.

On the whole, cowardice, opportunism, racism, hysteria, and ignorance propel the school worker force, and the invaders of the resource wars. This is the hidden curriculum of the administrative manual, and the unnoted norm for most educators, reduced to being unwitting missionaries for capitalism. Resisters exist, from the outright refusal of a dozen Chicago teachers who overturned the use of the CASE test, to the many networks of teacher resistance online—and to those few Marines who refused to go to Iraq (Fairtest, Kohn, California-Resisters, Chicago *Substance*, Rouge Forum News).

Some courageous teachers will take conscious action, and matter. This is especially true of teachers posi-

tioned in the poorest sectors of society, particularly black and immigrant communities, where the educators can use their skills to listen, to discover the wisdom usually inherent in people at the shortest end of the stick. But resisters are now few in number, unorganized, with no guiding strategy.


As the oil fields will, for some time, remain in US hands, the curricula in the US will remain in the hands of those who need the ignorance required by the fog of war. So will the tests. If this is to be tested in life, resistance of all kinds, from teaching sensitively despite the Big Tests, to home visits, to personal friendship, on to test boycotts, and freedom schooling, must deepen.

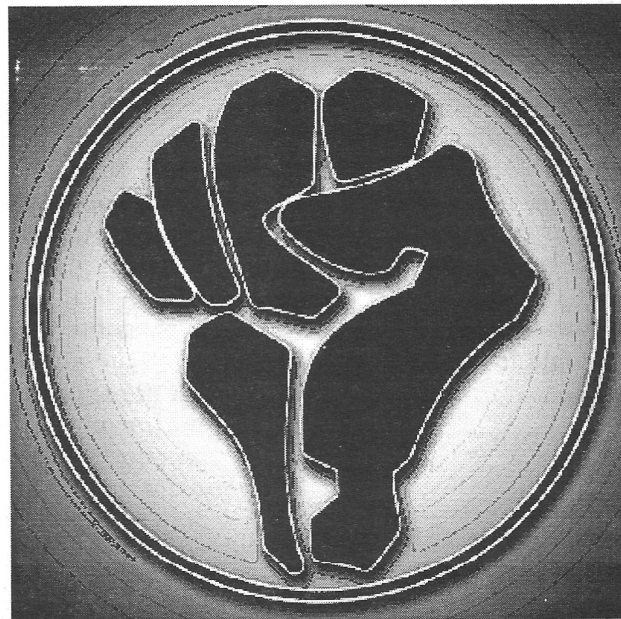
What changes this? On the one hand, daily life changes it. Workers typically hate their jobs and have two lives, one at work and another at home. Their

struggles for time, wages, benefits, freedom, and creativity, are incessant, and opposed to their employers, everywhere in the world. Neighborliness smashes into the mantra of capitalism: Take care of yourself. Sexuality as a matter of pleasure contradicts the dictates of the fundamentalists who hate their bodies.

Daily life, however, just reproduces the ensnared problems of daily life. What changes this, on the other hand, is a vision of what might be, and action based

on what is. Care, love, is the link in the chain that offers a way to see ideas which have not yet been lived. Care, personal integrity tied to close personal friendships, offers the base for courage. In intense times, people define themselves for life. Care is also ground for locating oneself in the social pyramid. Care is especially compelling to school workers, whose products are not Pintos—but usually hopeful kids who may not be natural-born lie-detectors, but who have a sense of: That's not fair!

This, in turn, requires organization and the discipline—against opportunism—that it takes to overcome and go beyond a ruthless, organized, opposition that personifies the relentless struggle for profits and exploitation: capitalism (Perlman, *Reproduction of Everyday Life*, on line). 



The World Changed Today (9.11.01)

By Adam Renner

The world changed today
and I watched it on television
Somehow things should be different now
but
strangely
much remains the same
I sit in a coffee shop
overlooking a campus street on which students
travel
to and from bars
either pretending that the day's events have not
affected them
refusing to admit that they should
or too ignorant to realize that we are all implicated
in today's tragedy

Today's horrific loss of life is
unfortunately
only a continuation of the violence that occurs
daily in our world
violence that global capital advances
and requires
for some to be ultra rich and most to live in
substandard conditions
The leader of the 'free' world has indicated
that we will "hunt" those responsible for today's
act of cowardice

We
as a nation
need to look in the mirror
and ask ourselves what part we play in this act of
cowardice

Clearly
those who propagated the destruction of two
110 story buildings
and a piece of an 'impenetrable' fortress are
misguided
and need to be held accountable for their
despicable act of violence

However
when will this circle of violence end
This act
in part
is a reaction
and retaliation to
capitalistic aggression that has devastated
countries
communities
and individuals
world-wide
for a long time

Today's loss of life
while grotesque and heart-rending
is considered tragic because of its media
coverage and massive loss of life
over a brief period of time
However
when juxtaposed against the totality of recent
(mostly unreported) history
the sheer numbers pale in comparison to the loss
of life
that has occurred in the name of our freedom
and *American* way of life
My heart breaks for the families and friends of those
who
lost their life today
My heart also breaks
though
for the people worldwide who have suffered
and will now suffer more severely
in order for us to protect *our* way of life
I live with the hypocrisy of my privilege everyday
and continue to seek ways to extend it to others
here
and abroad
It is time for us to take a long look in the mirror
and realize the implications of our way of life
Do I live at the expense of others
Do I honor the ethic of a faith (Christianity)
that I *supposedly* share with a majority of
Americans
Am I willing to explore avenues
that increase the standard of living for more
and close the gap between the ultra rich
and the masses that inhabit the earth

I wonder when it will be ok to laugh again
Maybe I should simply share in that steely
American
jingoistic
vener
that reveals a disaffected attitude to the possibility
that our way of life might have to be altered
or wholly rearranged

The scene has not changed outside the window
but I now eerily notice my reflection looking back at
me

The world changed today

What, Me Worry?

By Patrick Shannon

Yesterday the citizens of Pennsylvania were informed that half of the state's public schools failed to make adequately yearly progress in reading and writing according to the state's standards set in order to comply with the federal government's No Child Left Behind law. Ten schools in our county were on the list, including the ones our children attended last year. The local newspaper account explained that the failures could result from poor overall scores on tests given in grades 5, 8, and 11, the continued poor showing of just one subgroup in a school or an attendance level below 95 percent. Each of the failing schools now enters a school improvement sequence, which requires school district officials to inform parents that they have the right to send their children to any district school. If too little progress is deemed to be made next year, the district must fund private tutoring or other supplemental services for any student attending the failing school. If again the scores do not rise sufficiently during the next year, then the state intervenes, adopting a new curriculum, hiring new administrators or replacing teaching staff. If this too fails, the state restructures the district. In Pennsylvania, restructuring has included subcontracting some or all school duties to private corporations.



NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The Superintendent of our school district was quoted in the local newspaper as saying that the failures were an embarrassment and an aberration which can be remedied simply by more attention to the state standards and the importance of the state tests. She did, however, remind local taxpayers that our schools had the state's highest number of National Merit Scholars, one of the nation's top Science Olympiad teams, the top music program in the state, and the state championship in boys basketball. Her need to list some of the school's

accomplishments in her response to the test results demonstrated the pressure which the federal government can exert on local officials. Accordingly, Pennsylvania set achievement standards for all subjects in order to receive Title 1 and other federal funds as block grants, and the district followed suit because its future seems to depend on access to these federal funds. But should I be worried about our children's futures in schools which need "improvement" according to federal policy?



Most policy research begins and ends with functionalist assumptions. That is, after a policy has been recommended or implemented to adjust schooling in order to ameliorate a concern, policy analysts study its process, content, and consequences to judge its adequacy according to the policy's projected outcomes. These analysts assume that any policy is a functional catalyst designed to prevent further breakdown in the system or to thrust the system beyond its status quo. From this angle, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) appears to be a deliberate, rational attempt to assure that all American students receive the same opportunities at school. Those opportunities must keep pace with the demands of jobs in a global economy. Moreover, NCLB seems to be a needed act of discipline for school systems that have been unresponsive to this national imperative for the last twenty years. The policy, then, can be seen as a needed centralizing corrective to failing localism.

The jury is out on whether or not NCLB is working toward its functionalist goals – it has certainly allowed federal officials more input into state and local school decisions, but has yet to demonstrate that students are better prepared in anyway for available jobs. Yet, policy analysts need not adopt functionalist assumptions because policy may be more a matter of the authoritative allocation of values than a natural, rational, and deliberative process. Policies begin with their makers' images of the ideal society, and they are intended to be operational prescriptive statements to realize that ideal. Ideals are based on values, and values do not float independently from social contexts. Therefore, policies have histories and social attachments. As John Prunty (1985) wrote, "the authoritative allocation of values draws our attention to the centrality of power and control in the concept of policy" (p. 136). Therefore, policy analysis requires not only examination of a policy's effectiveness on its own terms, but an investigation of the values embedded within it; of the images used to make the policy seem necessary and compelling; and of the real, expected, and unanticipated social consequences of the policy.

In order to probe the values, images, and consequences of NCLB, I examine one writer in the context of an alternative high school, which is surrounded by a “world class high school” system in a slightly less than world-class state educational bureaucracy. To be specific, Laura just graduated from Delta, a 7 – 12 school of approximately 140 students. The school is famous locally for its respect for students’ bodies – no bells, double periods, no homerooms, open campus, upholstered chairs around tables. Delta also respects students’ minds. It has a seminar advisory system, bi-annual planning sessions with parental involvement, weekly all school meetings, and parent/student/faculty advisory council. Since Laura first attended Delta in 9th grade, she has composed and polished a 45 minute documentary film, installation art, essays, a music video, letters, poems, song lyrics, plays, policy, photographic representations of Delta classes, schematic drawings, websites, advertisements, grant proposals, reports to funding agencies, and a senior project report. All of these

The state’s ideal, however, suggests that you can write well about nothing at all, that assistance in writing of any sort is a sign of weakness, and that writers’ development peaks at age 17.

compositions have been responses to class assignments in social studies, art, science, and English.

If you cornered the Delta teachers and asked them to theorize their interdisciplinary, multi-media, multi-genre approach to writing instruction, they would tell you that this is the way adolescent minds work. Students are interested in content, not in form by itself, and therefore, form must be taught in the context of unbridled pursuit of student interests. Within the context of their interests, students will experiment with forms in any medium. So Laura’s documentary is about the struggle during the school district’s attempt to add sexual orientation to the anti-discrimination policy; the installation art dealt with adolescent women’s body image and advertisements; the music video juxtaposed John Denver’s song Leaving on a Jet Plane with clips from anti-Vietnam War films in order to protest the song’s patriotic use in the blockbuster film Armageddon; letters addressed the editors of our local paper; one play provided a one act conversation in which God and the Devil argue over who had more influence during the Renaissance; a second play sent Margaret Sanger and Emma Goldman to save poor Sue from Jude the Obscure and Thomas Hardy; schematic drawings detailed how to rewire the computer lab; the policy eliminated the sexist language in the schools dress code; and the grant proposals requested funds for a Young Women’s Health Center at Delta.

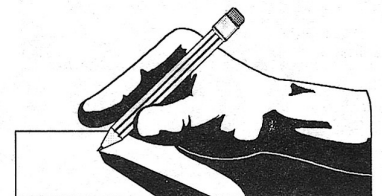
Although all Delta students engage in similar assignments, none followed Laura’s path. Rather each chose his or her content in which to work through the various forms of composition across the many Delta classes.

In correspondence with No Child Left Behind, the Pennsylvania Department of Education requires that all 11th grade students sit for three hours of writing examinations. Students are allotted one hour for each of three essays – narrative, informational, and persuasive. According to the state’s writing standards, each essay will be evaluated according to rubrics on its focus, content, organization, style and conventions. Scores will be reported in three ways. The state will produce an aggregate score for all 11th graders. The District will receive a mean score as well. And students who “pass” the exam will receive a seal on their diplomas attesting to that fact. After a bitter battle, the state’s intention to print the score on students’ transcripts was eliminated from the policy. Students are not allowed to use a computer during the exam (although they must complete a questionnaire on their use of computers during regular classes). Nor can they use dictionaries or any other style aid. Simply they are asked to sit at a desk, grab their pencil and write on a prompt supplied by the state.

And in the end, these three hours and three essays define the state’s performative ideal.

According to the state, writing is the control of form on demand without the control of function or content. If this were not the true state ideal, then another form of assessment would be the capstone experience. For example, if the state possessed a different vision of writing, it might require students to submit a portfolio of their writing across the subject areas and school years. The state’s ideal, however, suggests that you can write well about nothing at all, that assistance in writing of any sort is a sign of weakness, and that writers’ development peaks at age 17. Technical control, independence, and speed are the foundational values, and print is the only valued medium. The state provides the image of the ideal writer as a monastic scribe who receives the prompt with clear expectations, leaving only the visual representation as a creative impulse.

Although immediately tied to NCLB, the Pennsylvania writing standards and assessment system is part of the two-decade old national movement to hold students and teachers accountable for the time and money spent in schools. This movement has historical roots in the school efficiency movement at the turn of the last century when schools were supposed to use business principles in order to prepare students for the jobs in industrial America.



Attempts to translate written compositions into standard scores are direct throwbacks to the adaptation of scientific management principles for schooling. Test scores became the educational bottom line nearly 100 years ago. And the speed to score ratio defined educational efficiency. Currently, the state's writing system employs both measurement and speed to secure Pennsylvania and its citizens' places in the world economy. Our state, like many others around the country, is at the mercy of this economic agenda to reform schools in order to meet business needs, and at the same time, to cut the costs of public schooling, the largest governmental expense for social welfare. "Do more for less" and "you are on your own" are the watchwords for efficiency.

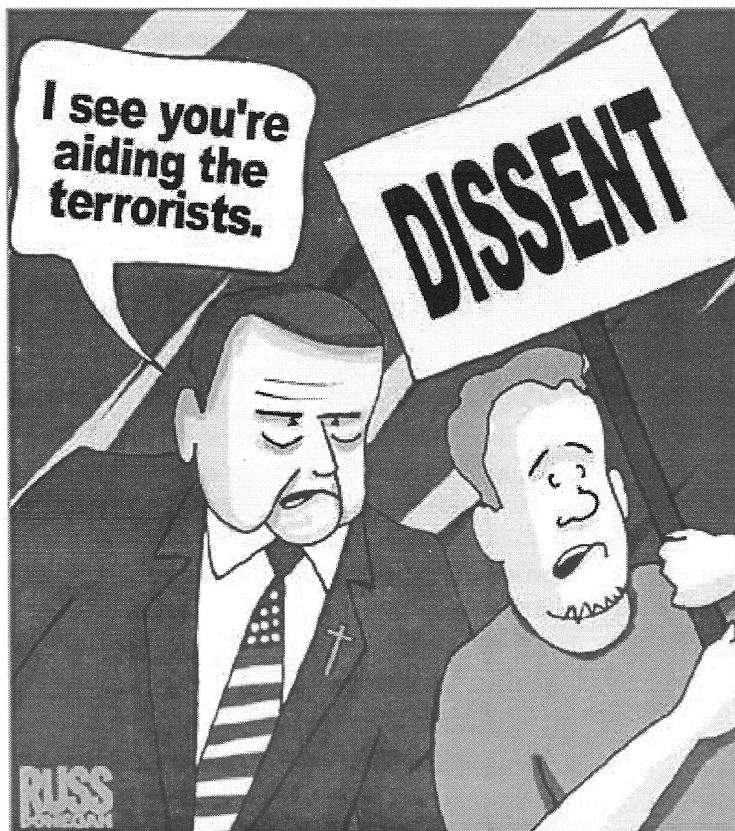
Pennsylvania suffers from these apparent contradictory goals. For example, at the same time that the state received a D- from Education Week for school funding equity, then Governor Tom Ridge usurped the authority for Philadelphia city schools because "the Philadelphia School district does not have the ability to right itself academically or fiscally." While cutting university and large school district budgets, Ridge spent millions to purchase, develop, and implement standards and assessments in order to create an image that the Pennsylvania education system is capable of educating students prepared for the high skill/ high wage jobs that await them in the global economy. In order to enforce school accountability and to attract corporate attention, the Governor hired the Standards & Poors accounting firm to

construct statistical explanations for schools' success or lack of same.

According to the state, Laura has written little while attending Delta. In fact, she seems headed in the opposite direction from the state's ideal. That is, she composed few essays directed by prompts within limited time. Rather she worked collaboratively with others in order to conceive, construct, and polish her compositions. Each had an immediate purpose in her world in and out of the classroom. Although Laura completed the one Delta class that deals directly with narratives – Creative Writing - she used several media and maintained control of her content while writing those narratives. Laura's documentary doesn't qualify as ideal informational writing and her installation art doesn't make it as persuasive writing, although at the end of the composition process both met the state's rubric for successful writing. That is, they were well focused, deep in content, carefully organized, stylish as hell, and conventional fit (for those media). Few of the Deltoids (as Laura refers to them) have practiced much of the state's ideal writing performance. And, this mismatch in values has come to the attention of district administrators.

Following an embarrassing failure of the state's writing test by 31 percent of the AP English students in another local world class school district, our school district administrators applied pressure on all its schools to pay more direct attention to the writing standards and tests. Delta teachers are now required to limit students' options for representing their learning to print essay formats. Moreover, all such assignments are to be scored according to the state's rubric for the writing exam. Starting in seventh grade, students are to write three essays in each genre each year. The district permits school administrators and faculty to decide on the distribution of those essays across subject disciplines. As if this pressure is not enough, the state will implement high stakes exams in civics education, English literature, mathematics, and science over the next five years. With each exam, Delta teachers and students expect to lose more degrees of freedom to design their academic work together.

If left unchallenged, the state's ideal for writing and learning will slowly but surely replace the policies and practices that the Delta teachers have followed with Laura and other students. With nine samples each year and state tests at grades 8 and 11, the Delta teachers will either acquiesce to the federal/state/district pressure or cease to exist. Delta has taken the first step in the school improvement sequence set by the state. They have been identified as a failing school and now must improve their performance according to state guidelines within one year or start to hire tutors for their students. The strain of this pressure is already



visible in the advisory council meetings at Delta. Most members recognize that the school's fundamental values of meaningful context, choice, and multiple media are what are at stake. Some see the power the state exerts as bureaucratic control of standards meets the technical control of the yearly essay quotas and periodic examination within the

This awareness and their continued reading and writing have caused them to form coalitions across previously antagonistic groups and caused them to act in concert.

hierarchical organization of the school district and state. A few members acknowledge that the district's response to NCLB created an educational panopticon, apparently keeping continuous surveillance of the school's director, faculty, and students.

This new knowledge has led to hand to hand combat among the director, teachers, parents and students who, at times, disagree on what should be done. In advisory council meetings, which often resemble the adult version of the Chicken Little story, some accept the authority of the state and the economy to direct the day-to-day activities of writing in the school. They worry about students' abilities to find work and to prosper after attending Delta and seek ways to accommodate the district's new writing policies in the Delta curriculum. Others have started to identify the historical and social attachments of the state's policy on writing and are beginning to untangle the consequences of twenty years of media images of failing schools and economic dominance over civic concerns. Most members of the council, however, sit somewhere in between these two extremes, working toward practical middle ground as well. Their work will become more difficult with yesterday's news that the school is failing.

As concerned as I am that the NCLB inspired writing curriculum will choke the life out of the Delta writing program, and perhaps Delta altogether, I see the struggles at the Delta meetings as signs of hope. Those teachers, students and parents who are beginning to question the largely corporate values that the state has brought to their school are opening spaces in which to imagine a Delta future that would not correspond with the one projected by NCLB. These members see the contradictions between the rhetoric and reality of NCLB as spaces where the federal policy is vulnerable. For example, some members of the council have co-opted the rhetoric of economic necessity in order to justify Delta's interdisciplinary, multi-media, multi-genre approach to writing instruction. They use data from surveys of employers which suggest that new high skill jobs require

writers who can use language in all its forms in multiple ways to get things done and to collaborate with co-workers. Few will be asked to write essays of any type. Of course this assault on NCLB concedes that business interests should direct schooling and it accepts employers' conception of high skill work in America. Even economists are beginning to question these lofty characterizations of work in the future.

Another sign of hope is the growing legal challenge to high stakes testing system in Pennsylvania. For example, the parents of some of the 31 percent who did not pass the writing exam last year have filed a lawsuit challenging the validity and reliability of standards and tests which precluded their children from graduating with a writing sticker on their diplomas. At this point the Pennsylvania Department of Education has not released the test construction statistics to the public. Perhaps, they have none to release, as happened in the Chicago Public Schools with the history test. Of course, lawsuits are often reduced to money talking to power. But the well-to-do may be important allies in the challenge to NCLB because it may expose that "world class school districts" have schools that fail to make yearly adequate progress – like our district. Too much of that publicity may bring property values down. In the end, legal approaches might rely too heavily on the science of writing instruction. What are validity and reliability of tests? Educational scientists were the first to realize that tests could provide an educational bottom line. Time and time again across the 20th century, some among these scientists sold their expertise to the state to develop tightly coupled systems based on tests which they supported with mountains of statistics.

A more remote, but more engaging, sign of hope is the political struggle over the Pennsylvania government's interest in attracting lucrative corporate hog farms. I understand this struggle as a metaphor for what is happening to Pennsylvania's public schools. Pennsylvanians are told that corporate hog farms will bring new jobs to impoverished communities and make the state a player in the agricultural global economy. As I understand it, corporate hog farms are stops in the production of pork for public consumption. Agricultural corporations buy land, hire a manager, and then ship 3 to 5 thousand piglets from corporate breeding farms to the fattening farms in order to raise each hog's weight from 10 to 250 pounds. In order to increase the hog's weight, the farm manager loads the hogs with considerable amounts of grain, restricts their movement, and inoculates them with growth hormones. The hog's job is to eat and poop.

For a variety of reasons this state venture has attracted opposition from Greens, conservatives, traditional liberals, as well as farmers of all political stripes. Together these groups have bypassed the usual scientific strategies to set limits on hog farming in order to minimize the consequent

smell and water contamination that always accompany these corporate ventures. Rather community members have passed laws in their townships that prohibit corporate farms. Ian Dietrich, a farmer from one of these townships, summarized the concerns: I don't like the way they treat the animals. I don't like the conditions for the farmer. I don't like the smell. I don't like the potential to damage the water supply. I don't like the amount of antibiotics they use to keep the animals alive.

Ten townships have managed successfully to authoritatively allocate values in opposition to corporate and state values that they deem harmful to local citizens. The state, corporations and the professional organizations have responded that these citizens have no right to ban corporations and that the corporations know better how to farm and what's good for the economy than the locals. They have attempted to repeal the townships' rights to set zoning restrictions because they say that the new laws discriminate against corporations. Each such response stiffens the resolve in these townships, which are determined to demonstrate that they do have the authority to define what goes on in their jurisdiction when it does not harm or hinder groups of people..

The hope for education and democracy lies in the vivid demonstrations of literate democratic habits of mind among these citizen groups. They are poring through texts – legal, scientific, and economic – in order to learn more about themselves, testing their understandings of their history, cultures and values. They are relating this self-awareness to the lives of others and the social structures put in place to guide those lives. During these literate practices, they have become aware that those structures and their lives could be otherwise. That is, both could be more in their control. This awareness and their continued reading and writing have caused them to form coalitions across previously antagonistic groups and caused them to act in concert.

What makes their action unique is their choice to rely on ethics, history, and culture rather than on science and the market in order to direct their work. These citizens judged the rightness or wrongness of the actions to start corporate hog farming in their communities based on the virtue or vice of the motives which prompted the actions, the praiseworthiness or blameworthiness of the agents who would perform them, and the goodness or badness of the consequences to which they give rise. To set these ethical judgments in context, the citizens have taken inventory of the histories of their townships and the cultures that are



present or ones that might arise because of the struggles. They acknowledge that hogs can be fattened more efficiently on such farms, that additional taxes might help their communities, and that scientists from outside their communities could establish "acceptable" levels of smell and water contamination. They weigh these scientific and economic "facts" against the consequent effects on community health, history, and culture. In these ten townships, the citizens have concluded that the whole thing stinks too much to allow it to happen.

There are important lessons within the civic courage demonstrated by these citizens. Many teachers face the same dilemma in different packages. Teachers are told that others know better about their work, and how to do it, and their lives, and how to live them. Publishers tell them what materials they need. Educational scientists explain how they should teach. And now with NCLB, the federal and state governments tell them when and how to assess teaching and learning. Moreover, the NCLB enforces the authority of publishers and educational scientists in schools. People who don't live in the communities require that teachers adapt to their suggestions because they know better than teachers how to educate America.

A first lesson to consider is the development of the chutzpah to question science and the market. The citizens don't doubt the scientific conclusions or economic predictions. They concede the scientific and economic pronouncements as facts. However, the majority in those communities refuse to elevate those scientific and market facts above the historical, ethical, and cultural facts that they know about their lives and their community. They decided that they do not want to live their lives as science and the market tell them they should. Although advertisers have taught most of us to be skeptical of business and the marketplace, most of us equate science with truth and

Continued on page 25

THE FREEDOM SCHOOLS: WHAT WERE THEY, WHAT HAPPENED?

By Staughton Lynd

Lately there has been renewed interest in the Mississippi Freedom Schools. People are thinking about reviving "freedom schooling." They invoke what happened in the summer of 1964 as hoped-for authority.

I was the director or coordinator of those Mississippi Freedom Schools. Since there were forty-one Freedom Schools¹ and more than 2,000 students, of course I can't know all that went on. On the other hand, at the Oxford, Ohio orientation I was asked by a volunteer named Tom Wahman if he could spend the summer in Jackson, since his wife would be part of the theater group rehearsing there. I said, Yes, if he could answer Freedom School calls at the Jackson COFO headquarters, leaving me free to visit schools all over the state. So I did get to see Freedom Schools in operation in McComb, Carthage, Gulfport, Hattiesburg, Holly Springs, Shaw, Ruleville, and doubtless elsewhere that I have forgotten. In addition, as I will explain, I was naturally involved in every phase of the little-remembered Mississippi Freedom School Convention, held in Meridian in early August.



So as to make sure that what I do know will be communicated clearly, I will share what I remember in the form of frequently asked questions and my answers.

Q. Whose idea was the Freedom

Schools? A. When Bob Moses began to organize in McComb, Mississippi in the summer of 1961, he and others in SNCC set up classes to prepare people to register to vote. After a number of African American students were expelled from the local high school, SNCC created "Nonviolent High" to instruct them in subjects they were missing. The venture ended when (in Daniel Perlstein's words) "much of the McComb staff was jailed for contributing to the delinquency of minors."² A number of students moved to other communities to continue their schooling.

In anticipation of Freedom Summer, in December 1963 SNCC staffer Charles Cobb proposed creation of

a residential summer school (or schools) for tenth and eleventh graders. These grades were targeted so that SNCC could be "assured of having a working force that remains in the high schools putting to use what has been learned." As Cobb imagined it, students would work on projects such as school boycotts, a newspaper and a statewide student conference, and participate in local organizing.³

As Cobb imagined it, students would work on projects such as school boycotts, a newspaper and a statewide student conference, and participate in local organizing.

Q. Why was Staughton Lynd, a white person, asked to coordinate schools for black teenagers?

A. I have no idea whether I was a first choice, or was offered the job after others turned it down. The offer came in the form of a long distance telephone call from John O'Neal, a SNCC organizer in Mississippi who had stayed at the Lynds' home in Atlanta when he first came South to work with SNCC. I do not know why I was chosen.

Even in those days before Black Power I sought to recruit a black co-director. My eye fell on a graduate student at Atlanta University named Harold Bardonille, who had taken part in sit-ins in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Harold said he would take a bus to Mississippi and check out what I was suggesting. When he came back, he said we were all out of our minds because people were going to be killed that summer. So I continued by myself.

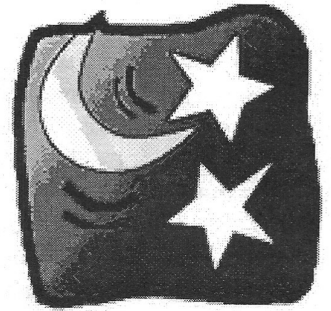
Q. How was the curriculum created? How important was the curriculum conference held in New York City in March 1964?

A. The curriculum was assembled in the Lynds' apartment on the Spelman College campus in Atlanta, and carried to the Oxford, Ohio orientation in the trunk of our Rambler. Its constituent parts came from many sources. The March 1964 curriculum conference projected a number of "case studies" and about half of these were completed. They included segments on "The Power Structure," by SNCC research director Jack Minnis, and on the history of the Freedom Movement.⁴ There were also Liberation magazine reprints on the "Triple Revolution" and nonviolence. Liz Fusco, who was coordinator of the Ruleville Freedom School and who succeeded me as

The Blackout: A Report From Detroit

By Bill Boyer

Our backyard bonfire crackles, dimly lighting the faces of neighbors and their dogs emerging from the shadows. Secure with our bottled water, red wine and campfire grill, over a dozen of us trade clumsily barbecued chicken, whitefish, and green peppers with still-developing vignettes of the worst power outage in American history. It's almost midnight, Thursday, August 14, 2003 in the heart of Detroit, an anarchistic (and anachronistic) darkness has descended, draping the area with an oddly nervous calm. We're quietly chatting only three houses away from the usually noisy and massive Lodge Freeway, yet now, only an occasional car, siren or barking dog interrupts the eerie stillness.



The desolation is disconcerting. Only Ford Hospital oddly flickers (through generators) in the fading distance, like a faint lighthouse over a vast concrete desert. This is the first time anyone can recall seeing a star-bright sky here, of noticing Orion and Taurus instead of the street light glare, that incandescent blur of the typical urban night. Detroit now truly feels like a frontier ghost town; a blanket of quiet restlessness envelopes the platter of our voices and a lone transistor radio. As we consider sleeping under the stars or roaming the deserted streets, a crashing bang suddenly jolts us into the surrounding darkness, armed with only flashlights and baseball bats. One or two intruders have just tried to break into a neighbor's house, kicking in two doors, before mysteriously vanishing into the night. This latest chaos simply circulates into our growing chatter of running blackout stories.

While some struggle with the fear of burglars and car thieves — others wrestle with a vague urge to loot. We would later learn of sporadic pillaging with certain gas stations, pharmacies, and sadly, a small neighborhood restaurant, but most *deserving targets* (such as Target, and other corporate community-killers) have long bypassed this still depressed area. Tonight we seem more preoccupied with our proximity to each other: we're more spontaneously unified, and more concerned about sharing, at least temporarily, our downshifted lives.

Hours earlier, police, stranded motorists and strangely, even some homeless street people had been volunteering as traffic guards for the busiest intersections. A state emergency and general 10 o'clock curfew has been awkwardly imposed, yet the depleted police patrols now remain reserved to certain select businesses, such as the closed gas stations. Perhaps the most amusing sights are the fuel pumps overflowing with vehicles on 'E', where befuddled drivers stand with cell phones, waiting indefinitely.

Most of our curious group decides on a late night walking tour of the neighborhood. An unmarked patrol car pulls up along side us. They bullhorn, "I see you," but the cops seem more wary of us, and they soon lurch away. We wander past the local grocery store parking lot. A truck covers the store's entrance, and several family members obviously connected to the grocer suspiciously greet us. We assume they are heavily armed.

When we finally make it across the major streets, to the nearest real neighborhood (Woodbridge), we begin to notice assorted groups of people, black and white, children and the elderly, cavorting together by candle-light on porches, in a soft, smiling, neo-primitive celebration. A friend's above-ground pool becomes a skinny-dip oasis, as we strip and plunge from this strange day's heat and haggardness.

A young companion points beyond the treeline surrounding the water. "What's that bright light shinning through the trees?" Someone mentions that Comerica Park is awash with massive generators, that a stage and light show are being prepared for a (soon-to-be-cancelled) Kiss/Aerosmith concert, that maybe the glow is from the idiotic bombast of the stadium set-up.

A friend replies, laughingly, "No, look again. Can't you tell what that light is? . . .

"It's the moon." RF

statewide Freedom Schools coordinator, says that the heart of the curriculum was questions such as: 1. Why are we in Freedom Schools? 2. What is the Freedom Movement? 3. What does the majority culture have that we want and that we don't want? What do we have that we want to keep?⁵

Q. How were volunteers assigned to particular schools and how were the coordinators of individual schools chosen? A. It happened at the Oxford, Ohio orientation. To the best of my recollection (39 years later) I made these decisions, after seeking all the input I could as to where volunteers wished to go.

Q. Where did the teachers live? A. Teachers lived with African American families to whom they were directed by SNCC staff and who had volunteered for that dangerous task. Without a doubt, this experience produced some of the most important learning of the summer for both hosts and visitors.⁶ The schools themselves were usually in African American churches.

Q. How did particular schools decide their daily activities? A. It cannot be too much emphasized that the teachers of each school found their own way. Sample daily curricula will be found in Radical Teacher, *op. cit.*, pp. 316-318; Doug McAdam, Freedom Summer (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 83-84, 296; and Pam [Parker] to Mom and Dad, Letters from Mississippi, pp. 108-111. Letters, pp. 120-122, reports a sequence of events in Shaw: the school as such was difficult to get off the ground but once students had begun to picket in a local Freedom Day, school activities could successfully be added.

Q. What was the Freedom School Convention?

A. This was the statewide student gathering envisioned by Charles Cobb, and planned at a meeting of Freedom School coordinators in Jackson. It took place on August 7-9 at the Baptist Seminary in Meridian, at the end of the week in which the bodies of Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney were found in nearby Philadelphia and the statewide Freedom Democratic Party convention took place in Jackson. Each school sent three representatives and a coordinator so that about 120 persons were in attendance. A list of grievances from the McComb Freedom School was presented without signatures, because "until we are assured our parents will not suffer reprisals . . . we will remain anonymous." There were eight committees on different areas of legislation. A demand to boycott Cuba and all countries that trade with Cuba was adopted but finally voted out in the general session. Land reform



was voted down because it was considered too socialistic. After the resolution-passing was completed, one delegate proposed that they be sent to the United Nations and to the Library of Congress for its permanent records.⁷

Q. Why didn't the schools continue at the end of Freedom Summer? A.

This question was seriously discussed at the Freedom School Convention. The conclusion — correct in my opinion — was that it would be too big a project given the

resources at hand, and that were we to try to set up an alternative school system, we might irresponsibly hurt youngsters who were already seriously disadvantaged. But that is not the whole story. Years later, as a law student, I came upon the case of Burnside v. Byars, 363 F.2d 744 (5th Cir. 1966). There I learned that in Philadelphia, Mississippi, where Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney had been killed, black students returned to public schools wearing buttons that said "SNCC" and "One Man, One Vote." They were sent home but the federal court found that their activity was protected by the First Amendment. This was the precedent later relied on by the Supreme Court of the United States to uphold the First Amendment right of a young woman named Tucker to wear a black arm band in her Iowa school to protest the Vietnam war. [RF]

(Footnotes)

¹This is the number suggested by the best scholarly article, Daniel Perlstein, "Teaching Freedom: SNCC and the Creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools," History of Education Quarterly, v. 30, no. 3 (Fall 1990), p. 297. The number of schools depended partly on whether one counted the several Freedom Schools in Hattiesburg as one or many. Perlman's article also contains three photographs of the schools in operation from my papers at the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

²*Id.*, p. 300.

³Charles Cobb, "Prospectus for a Summer Freedom School Program," Radical Teacher, no. 40 (Fall 1991), p. 36. This issue of Radical Teacher is devoted to the Mississippi Freedom Schools and includes a number of photographs.

⁴"Mississippi Freedom School Curriculum — 1964," Radical Teacher, *op. cit.* The actual curriculum included materials not included in this selection.

⁵Liz Fusco, "Freedom Schools in Mississippi (1964)," Radical Teacher, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁶See in general, and also for Freedom School teachers in particular, Letters from Mississippi: Personal reports from civil rights volunteers of the 1964 Freedom Summer, ed. Elizabeth Sutherland Martinez (Brookline, Mass.: Zephyr Press, 2002).

⁷Al to Mom, Dad and kids, August 16, Letters from Mississippi, pp. 125-126; Liz Fusco and Staughton Lynd in Radical Teacher, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 43.

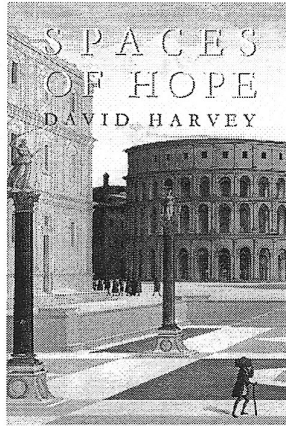
Harvey's Marx

By Jonathan Lee

"I learned my Marx through a process of self-education that obeyed little or no particular disciplinary logic, let alone party line" (4). This is how the multifaceted cultural critic David Harvey begins Spaces of Hope (University of California, 2000), an extended journey into the world of globalized post-Marxism. A simple browsing of ivory tower curricula and syllabi point to the vast series of changes that have occurred since Harvey's personal knowledge construction – changes that he addresses throughout this text.

Taking permission direct from the theoretical architects of the Manifesto (where they write that "the practical application of [our] principles will depend on historical conditions for the time being existing" (21)), Harvey sets out to pour new wine from old bottles, applying 19th Century Marxian analysis to 21st Century issues and (to borrow a phrase from Harvey's muse) increasing the use-value of theoretical leftist postmodernism. Citing an apparently growing feeling that Marx is viewed as the creator of an impossible dream, particularly in light of current discussions on culture, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and environment (among several others), where "the city is a space...in the process of formation" (7) [see post-9/11 New York here] and 'the prevalence of *the post*' is a mainstay of current debate, Harvey views a dire need to apply Marx more than ever, rather than allow him to vanish away.

Although the text takes side trips along the trails of modern utopias, worker politics, and the Greenist 'living wage campaign' [arenas that would certainly pull at the interest of



the Rouge Forum *populi*], it is two main facets of the 'post-' discursive shifting since the great debates of 1968 that take center stage here: *globalization* and *the body*. Initially, Harvey defends his focus on these two by asserting that "globalization is the most macro of all discourses we have available to us, while 'the body' is the most micro, from the standpoint of understanding the workings of society" (12). Harvey intends to attach these terms, eventually answering the

larger theoretical questions regarding the relationship between 'universality' (globalization) and 'particularity' (the body), in terms of knowledge production/construction.

Although this date can be heavily debated, Harvey uses 1421 as a date for the initial conception of 'globalization', at least in terms of the 'Westernized' understanding used frequently in current debates. Since that point, rapid spatiotemporal changes have caused constant shifts in globalization, particularly in its relationship to capital – to the point where "capitalism would have ceased to function without an expanding and *reorganizing* geography" (23). The latter point here is most crucial, in its insistence on a human/nature relationship that fluctuates from *within* [as opposed to a *reorganized* geography – a human/nature dyad that mandated by an external force]. This is particularly important with regard to the notion of 'uneven geographical development' (a term that Harvey takes up as a reason for an increased differential between 'modern' bourgeoisie and 'modern' proletariat), where current 'workers of the world [are forced to] unite'.

In many ways, the connection between capital and globalization is symbiotic in nature. On the one hand, globalization creates a geographical reorganization of capital, particularly in terms of this *uneven geographical development*. On the other, "capitalism produces its own geographical landscape" (59), through a variety of interconnected factors: technological innovation (turnpikes to telecommunications), the building of fixed physical infrastructure to facilitate this technology (a process constantly in flux due to changing perceptions of place in a diaspora world), and the construction of territorial organization (giving new spaces to the previous factors). As with capital, Harvey contends that we must constantly be shifting our view of globalization from its diverging natures as *process*, *condition*, and *political project*.

Looking to Marx, Harvey finds the Manifesto both useful and in need of updating, in relation to *neoliberal globalization*. By intending his text for translation into European languages and using Westernized market terminology, Marx immediately set the Manifesto as a *Eurocentric*, rather than *international* socioeconomic critique. However, in asserting that the *rise* of the bourgeoisie is tied to 'the world stage' *and* that the proletariat is able to use both its local concentration and the 'modern' system of communications available in order to unite beyond national boundaries, Marx (knowingly or not) opened up vast potential for future use. Similarly, Marx's assertion that the bourgeoisie *compels* all states to adopt its system ('to create a world after its own image') can be no more evident than in current government operations (World Bank, IMF) or in current business ventures (Wal-Mart, McDonald's).

While Harvey finds a series of contentions within a modern word-for-

word usage of the Manifesto, he feels that (as with all historical critique) we can better understand the text by re-creating it. Much of Harvey's criticism is not new, but set within the global focus of Spaces, the critique takes on new life. For example, Harvey sees the 'civilized v. barbaric nation' / 'center v. periphery' model as problematic *not* due to current notions of race/ethnicity/gender, but because it oversimplifies the fact that the flow of capital has always found some sociophysical terrains easier to forge than others – in essence, not giving enough heed to globalized forms of capital. Similarly, in terms of 'world money', "there is always a problematic relation between local and particular conditions on the one hand and the universality of values achieved on the world market on the other, and that this internal relation is mediated by institutional structures which themselves acquire a certain kind of independent power" (36). Although, in his defense, it would be nearly impossible to assume that Marx would have the magical foresight to predict the global structures in use today. Harvey also takes issue with Marx's particularly urbanized viewpoint of the proletariat, feeling that this ignores the potential of the rural/agricultural proletariat. Mostly, assertions such as that 'working men have no country' tend to homogenize both 'working men' and 'labor powers' over a geopolitical landscape that is constantly shifting (where some workers are *fully embroiled* in country – again, see the immediate rise in blue-collar nationalism following the events of 9/11). Here can be seen Harvey's desire to shift from an understanding of capital that highlights differentiating universals (bourgeoisie versus proletariat) to one that highlights a combination of particularities within these major universals, the result of which causes Harvey to focus on that most particularized factor of capital – *the body*.

"A contemporary loss of confidence in previously established categories has provoked a return to the

body as the irreducible basis for understanding" (97). Perhaps Harvey would have been better suited to replace *loss* with *shift* (certainly not a by-now cliché), in defining his logic for the second half of his 'universal/particular' dyad. In many ways, 'the body' is the perfect tool with which to define new representations of the global postmodern. For one, the body is "an unfinished and unsealed project, molded in a spatiotemporal flux of multiple processes" (98). Second, not only does 'the body' both create and rely on changing environmental conditions, but it functions to 'create order out of chaos'. Third, perceptions of the body differ based on the geolocal place of the beholder. It is out of 'body' scholarship that come terms such as 'global city' and 'glocalization' – the composite merger of a mass universal with nature's most sophisticated particularity.

Any Marxian study of 'the body' inevitably shifts to discussions of worker politics. Now is the time, according to Harvey, to turn to Marx as a source of assurance that things are going as planned in the world. A recent World Bank estimate has the global labor force as more than doubling since 1966 while, at the same time, technological advances have created conditions for rapid increases in worker productivity and in global trade. This has created, as put by the International Labour Office, a situation where "the world has become a huge bazaar with nations peddling their workforces in competition against one another – offering the best prices for doing business" (42). This is also caused the formation of a new transnational working class, living in repressive conditions with growing inequalities between regions and classes. Right at the point when discussions of the 'third world' have become a no-no in postmodern circles, a *new* 'third world' emerges in post-Marxian globality. Where before, workers were shaped into appendages of capital, they are

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now shaped into global cyborgs (again, technology advances). Where the "creative history of capitalism [once] led to discovering new ways in which the human body can be put to labor" (104), the current situation (particularly in cases of women and children) has caused for re-definitions of traditional concepts of family roles, and how labor can shape them.

Where before, the worker existed as *producer* and *exchanger*, the worker now falls under the categories of *consumer* and *re-producer of self* – causing patterns of consumption to consistently change based on struggles over new notions of 'housework', 'family life', and 'the daily routine'. Where before, few laws existed to protect the worker from slave conditions, now international law does not permit the capitalist to have legal rights over the person ['the body'] of the laborer – creating a new bourgeoisie that must invent new loopholes and secretive policies of subversion in order to survive. And most importantly, where before Marx refers bodies as shaped for *performance*, we can now see bodies [more than ever] poised to re-use these same bourgeoisie tactics to shape themselves for *rebellion*. Truly, workers of the world [can now] unite [like never before]!

To take on Marx at such a crucial point in global worker politics is a task that only a scholar at the level of David Harvey can fully handle. In Spaces of Hope, Harvey weaves his own metanarrative of compliment and critique – demonstrating how texts never go out of style, as long as we continue to style them in. [RF]

What, Me Worry? *Continued from page 18*

consequent progress. Yet, these citizens have learned that marketplace and science are a human endeavors, and not natural, universal or eternal. They've learned that people have developed the market and the science over time and people work currently to maintain them as disciplines or authority in our lives.

The basis for this questioning stems from the ability of both sides in the argument to produce scientific arguments to justify their positions. The coalition produced reports and experts who attested to the negative environmental impact of corporate hog farms, and the state and industry supplied endless streams of scientific documentation that "proved" that the smell and the water contamination are manageable and can be tolerated. This occurrence does not mean that all science is tainted. However, one of the most dramatic trends influencing the direction of science during the past century has been its increasing dependence on funding from government and industry. Rather it means that science has social entailments just like ethics, history, and culture. One is not subjective and the other objective. Outcomes depend on the values of the people asking the questions, setting the conditions of the study, conducting the investigations and interpreting the results. The corporations, professional organizations, and government officials who promote corporate hog farms value more pork, efficiency and profit. Their science attests to these facts. The citizens value clean water, fresh air, and local control. The latter established different criteria on which to base their science and their lives.

This power to develop the criteria is a freedom seldom mentioned in the current talk about school reform and writing education in the United States. Most often our freedom is defined by the metaphor of the market – we are free to buy what goods we find most appealing and can afford among the selection available. Within this metaphor, the choices are set before our freedom begins. We are free to choose, but not free to develop our choices. The writing tests in Pennsylvania demonstrate this fact to students, if they have not already intuited it themselves. Delta writing curriculum, although a failure by NCLB standards, argues just the opposite. It suggests that Laura and other Deltoids should enjoy the freedom to make their own choices and pursue their own topics. That curriculum represents the values of faculty and student who seek to arm themselves with the literacies to engage in civic life as members of any coalition of their choosing.

My fear, then, is not for Laura as a writer who studied in a "failing" school. I fear that the rest of us will not demonstrate the civic courage of those who oppose corporate hog farms in Pennsylvania. ^{RF}

Straight Talk for Teachers: Pride in Privilege, Power in Pain

***A Review of Taking it Personally, Racism in the Classroom From Kindergarten to College* by Ann Berlak and Sekani Moyenda (Temple University Press, 2001)**

By Dr. Gloria T. Alter

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Real feelings and issues about race are explored, exposed, and confronted in *Taking it Personally*. The content revolves around a powerful learning experience in a pre-service teacher education course on diversity taught by white professor, Ann Berlak. This experience was a 2-1/2 hour presentation by guest speaker, Sekani Moyenda, a black teacher of ethnically diverse children struggling with racism, poverty and inequity, in ill-equipped schools. She had previously been a student in the course.

Sekani was concerned that the primarily white (European) teachers in the class and elsewhere "were more likely to contribute to the destruction of [diverse ethnic] children over decades-long careers than to their academic and personal growth and power" (p. 1). The goals of the course were "to encourage the students to rethink their assumptions about race, class, gender, culture, language, and sexual orientation that predispose them, like most teachers, to reproduce rather than challenge injustice as they teach" (p. 3). Prior to the presentation, the students had written racial autobiographies and studied various forms of racism and white privilege.

The content of the book includes the racial autobiographies of the two authors, descriptions of the presentation/simulation and the students' responses, analyses of the simulation, and conclusions.

THE PRESENTATION

The presentation was organized as a simulation of a classroom where the teacher was set up to fail because a lack of resources, a lack of support, and the overwhelming needs of children made learning difficult if not impossible. Script guidelines, included in the book, were given to the students to follow.

The participants in the experience "took it personally." The presentation brought two white women

to tears; one of them ran from the room before it was over. And Jim, a white man playing the role of the teacher, and Sekani became engaged in a heated argument. Jim apparently decided that he was going to succeed even though he was told up front that the simulation was designed for the teacher to fail to be able to teach.

Jim commented after the presentation, that he did not think Sekani was sensitive to everyone's feelings. He admitted upon reflection that he had lost track of the purpose of the exercise, to teach the students, and began focusing on himself. Many others did as well. The simulation brought out their unconscious assumptions about race, class, and gender. Students commented that Jim probably had difficulty learning from a black woman, and didn't accept the agenda of this presenter. He did not plan to fail in his "role" as teacher, because of his years of experience and confidence in his ability to succeed. Some students even failed to see the glaring racism in Sekani's experiences. Denial and blindness to racism were evident.

The presentation allowed the group to "explore the depth, dimensions, and significance of racism to a degree that was unprecedented for all of [them]" (p. 2). The difficulty of talking honestly about race and the fact that education is both personal and political were illustrated by this exercise. Sekani held power in this classroom experience, and those participants accustomed to privilege did not. Some students not comfortable with the truth she shared, focused on how they felt offended by the speaker (blaming the victim). A quotation at the beginning of one of the chapters, "We must keep the perspective that people are experts on their own lives" by Lisa Delpit, seems to support those who would, at best, limit Sekani's truth to her own experiences. Even the chapter title, "What makes you think she is not an expert?" raises the question of Sekani's authority and focuses on students' excuses

for not hearing the truth. The chapter content, however, seems to be more about who is willing to see and who is not. Perhaps it could be titled, *The Truth Hurts or Resisting the Truth*.

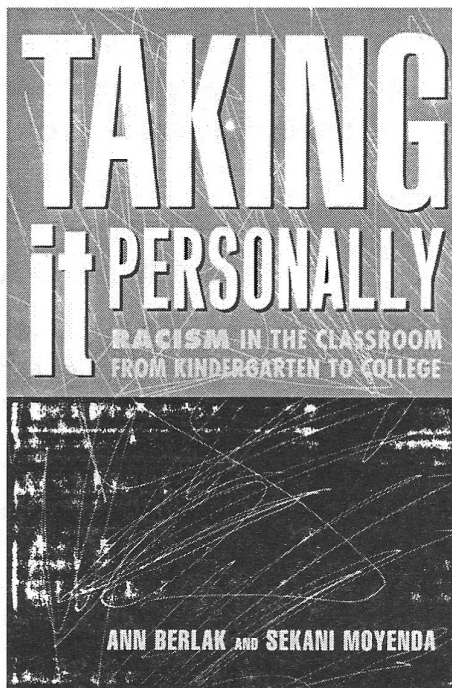
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Sekani's autobiography and parts of Ann's autobiography contain experiences of racism. Sekani's stories are told in an easily accessible narrative style. Ann incorporates academic and historical information. Ann's chapters provide helpful analysis, but long reading. Some condensing of this information from three to two chapters (one presenting primarily student comments and one providing an analysis of the experience) would make it more readable. This would also balance the contributions of the two authors, not privileging the white professor over the black teacher.

Sekani's deeply honest and well-articulated story of the racist treatment that she survives is, to my mind, the most valuable part of the book. It is primarily her experiences in life and teaching that others respond to and interact with. Her autobiography is reminiscent of other excellent ones found in *Picturing Us* and *Names We Call Home*. Ann admits that although the students had "studied" racism extensively prior to this presentation, most of them had not encountered its reality until interacting with Sekani. From their experience, we can learn the limits of academic study without personal and political engagement.

In the professor's racial autobiography, academic and historical conceptualizations of racist experience seem to overpower her personal story. She draws some assumptions from academic analysis about how racist imagery and conditioning operated in her life. Had she taken another approach, fully interrogating and analyzing life experiences, these could form their own shape, rather than the shape of academic schemas.

Repeatedly, the professor states what she did not and does not know. This is the strength of her autobiography. Like privileged others growing up, she did not recognize the larger racist institutions and their realities. She was not familiar with the living conditions or lives of the black maids who cooked and cleaned at her family home. She did not notice the "overwhelmingly white" environment in which she lived, "the visible signs of white supremacy in St. Louis" at that time, or the prosperity of her family in the larger context of those whose poverty was "preserved and accelerated." She is not sure how she viewed differences in economic status



due to race, and she knew nothing of lynchings. The Brown decision (1954) desegregating the schools was not discussed in her home, and she had no idea what the Civil Rights Movement was. Her formal college education did not address racism, and she can recall no classmates that were not white.

Several experiences of racism related to her Jewish ethnicity are noted, an experience of teaching where she was ordered to behave in a racist manner toward her students, and later experiences where she began to address racism in an academic context. The professor's personal story, written to an academic audience, seems to hint of pride in privilege and academic achievement. I wished to see evidence of humility in privilege and more discomfort with the lack of opportunities for others. While this type of academic writing is common, I believe that it weakens the human bond we share and use to overcome racism.

CONCLUSIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING

An examination of "class" differences revealed by the presentation and its aftermath suggest some loosely formed alliances: 1) Ann and the majority of the students find commonalities, and Sekani and a few of the students do as well; 2) as Ann supports the students emotionally, she softens the blows the students feel they have received; 3) a student comes to Ann's defense against Sekani for negatively critiquing the reading for their class; 4) and Ann speaks of being newly exposed to a great deal of knowledge about racism herself. Instances of "class" bonding, observable to the reader, may be unconscious to the participants. The reader can only analyze what is included in the book, however.

Sekani provides readers and participants access to an understanding of our racist world with its illusions and lies. It is not only her personal experience or point of view. She writes, "My reality is questioned daily. I have, therefore, developed a semipermeable mentality that allows for my reality to be challenged without my losing

sight of who I am. The white voice lives in my own psyche, constantly arguing and debating all that I see, hear, think, and feel" (p. 64). And yes, even in this sharing, "My credibility, my sanity, my intelligence, and my integrity were all attacked during the presentation because I triggered the racism of some of the students . . ." (p. 162).

For those white teachers who desire to work with parents, educators, and students of color effectively, Sekani provides some important guidelines: 1) unlearn your racism, 2) gain an extensive education in the ethnic cultures and backgrounds of those who differ from you and that you will be teaching, 3) help children to become committed to fighting injustice, to learn basic skills, the "language of power" (Lisa Delpit), and to become self-disciplined, 4) become informed by scholars/others of color about "child development, cultural differences, and learning," racism and how it affects people of European decent and people of color, diverse views of violence and morality, and ways to "teach children to resist and eradicate the violence of racism and other 'isms,'" 5) "follow the lead of teachers, children, and parents of color," 6) attend a group that talks about racism and deals with its everyday problems, 7) don't teach children of color if what she has said offended you, 8) be sure your reasons for wanting to work with children of color are healthy, and 9) ask yourself what diverse communities have that draws you to them, that "makes you want to teach, learn, and suffer" with them (pp. 153-155).

This book is an honest and daring look at who we are and who we hope to be and hope our students to be. That honesty compels the reader to respond to it in an honest way. ^{RF}

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In 2003 It's More *Gray* than it is Black and White

Some Thoughts on the Relevance of James Baldwin's "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation," as featured in his *The Fire Next Time*

By Chantal Shabazz

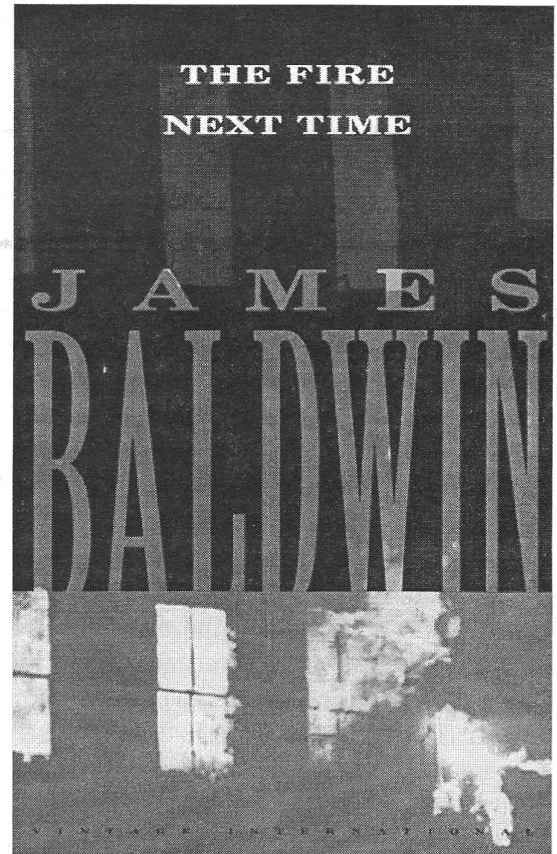
I recently completed a reading of James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, a collection of the two previously published essays, "My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation," and "Down At The Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind."

In "My Dungeon Shook," Baldwin speaks, with an urgency that straddles both desperation and indignation, to America, through a letter to his nephew, about the seemingly tragic fate of the American Negro and his potential, at great odds, to circumvent a spiritual death, if you will, at the hands of a country whose beliefs and practices "intended that [he] should perish" (21). He describes an America during the early 1960's which had, "Destroyed and were destroying thousands of lives," (19) by first believing themselves that black men were inferior to white men, then worse, doing everything humanly possible to convince the former of the fallacy.

I imagine that in 1962, when the *Fire* was first published, the lines drawn about poverty and disenfranchisement were much clearer. One needed nearly only to be born Black. Most Black Americans, having migrated North to escape White Southern death, brutality, and dehumanization, and for the

prospect of better and higher-paying jobs, were and had for several decades been feeling the brunt of systematic racism in the form of low wages, overpopulated and poor housing, inflated rents, police brutality, and the progressive destruction of their families and communities through rampant substance abuse, perhaps as a way of displacing the overwhelming sense of hopelessness, helplessness, marginalization, and the belief in what white America said and thought about them.

In 2003, the distance between black and white rates of academic achievement, high school graduation, college completion, incarceration, death row sentencing, infant mortality, infant birth weight, literacy, household income, property ownership, inherited wealth, poverty, assaults and murder have widened. Yet, the lines of demarcation about the oppressor and the oppressed are no longer as clearly drawn. Much of the urban Black community at large, if such a blanket label can describe such a heterogeneous group, has seemed to internalize the socially and psychologically destructive products of racism,



products once primarily meted out at the hands of white America, and have turned in on themselves, in ways that are, in some circles, thought to be fashionable and are in some instances financially lucrative.

In describing his father, Baldwin writes, "He is dead...he had a terrible life; he was defeated long before he died because, at the bottom of his heart, he really believed what white people said about him" (18). He warns, "You can only be destroyed by believing that you really are what the white world calls a *nigger*" (18). Baldwin's words were written over forty-one

years ago, his admonition immortalized in text, and yet in 2003 many of the images of Black America on TV, in film and in music, not only perpetuate inaccurate and demeaning stereotypes, but more damagingly, serve to affirm not only Black America's belief in what white America has said about it, but their willingness to create/ produce/ give life to a seeming caricature that once only existed in the distorted minds and dark hearts of some white Americans.

It is a sad commentary on the country's thinkers, those enlightened individuals who *know better* than to believe such distortions, and their failure to educate the masses of children who grew up to become adults and are now in a heated race to destroy the Black mind. Our young men and women's failure

to question and challenge such images is our country's failure. Our preoccupation with *things*—cars, clothes, jewelry, electronics; our almost religious devotion to consumerism; our willingness to risk the emotional and mental stability of our families for “a few more hours at work;” our lack of a sense of what is *right* and what is *wrong*; and our inept passion for justice; has left us captive in a veritable prison, neither free to embrace our humanity or emancipated from our previous condition.

I am not in the habit of pointing fingers, because ultimately the responsibility falls on me as to how I choose to fight/ undermine/ act, in spite of racism as a parent, as an educator, as a member of the human community, as a black woman. I am not given to the belief that *one* person does not have the power

to affect change. In fact, I believe just the opposite, that one person is proof that change can be affected. But I am concerned at what I see as the birth and growth of generations of children—both black and white—who believe that being loud, insolent, self-defacing, misogynistic, violent, and criminal are *synonymous* with “acting black.”

One can figuratively think of our generation as having been downstream, in the future, when *The Fire* came out. In it, we were told that the flood waters, racism and its products, would rise and that our only hope was to move to higher ground, to love white people and teach them how to love in return. For many of us we stayed in the valley, forgetting both to love white people and ourselves, and are drowning in what was forty-one years go forewarned. RF

Detroit Teachers Demonstrate the Power of School Workers and The Necessity of Resistance

In 1999, Detroit teachers went on a wildcat strike. Their union leaders told them not to do it, and threatened them. The governor told them not to do it. The state law, one of the most stringent anti-strike laws in the country, told them not to do it. The Detroit Mayor's office ordered them not to do it, as did the local “CEO” of the public schools. They went out anyway, a mass action for more than a week, under the chant: “Books! Supplies! Lower Class Size!”

On Thursday, September 24, 2003, Detroit educators did it again. They shut down the school system so completely that this time the CEO



simply announced that no school would be held.

In many ways, the rank and file educators won the 1999 strike. Above all, they proved that 10,000 teachers who act in solidarity cannot easily be defeated, or even

disciplined. Indeed, no legislator or judge had the nerve to call the wildcat a strike, which would have triggered enforcement of the law. Instead, the wildcat was called, “A job action against unfair labor practices.”

In 2003, a one day action initiated by the

same caucus that led the 1999 strike, the Detroit Federation of Teachers leadership was forced to support the shut-down.

The 2003 strike targeted the same issues that drove the 1999 wildcat, and in addition, the continued seizure of the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) by corporations and the state governor's office, and the possibility that more than 100 charter schools would be opened in Detroit, draining the public school system of funds.

Very few education workers ever want to strike. Closely tied to their kids, it takes a lot to push teachers to job actions, and especially to high-risk wildcats. But Detroit teachers have been cornered. They know they must fight to live, and to have decent schools for kids. A



lawsuit defending the voting rights of Detroit citizens who wish to choose their own school board was defeated by an appellate court in 2002, and an agreement between the governor's office and the legislature to expand charter schools in Detroit was nearly set when the teachers walked out and

demonstrated in Lansing, the state capital.

The city of Detroit, the nation's most segregated city according to recent studies, remains mired in a deep crisis. Once home to 2.5 million people, less than 900,000 people live in the city limits now, according to adjusted census reports. Rather than touting the new buildings being built, the Mayor of Detroit tries to boast about the number of abandoned homes he will demolish in the coming year. The current promise, probably impossible to meet, is 5,000 more homes, on top of more than 12,000 already torn down in the last five years. The school system is hemorrhaging students. About 30,000 kids left the system in the last seven years, both because parents left the city, and because new laws allow Detroit kids to

cross border to attend other schools—which see them as commodities, income.

Five years ago, the Detroit school board was abolished by gubernatorial fiat, replaced with an appointed board of execs from failed corporations like Chrysler. Only one of the seven members of the takeover board ever lived in Detroit, or worked in a school. The

“Books! Supplies! Lower Class Size!”

new board let out no-bid contracts to campaign contributing construction firms, squandering nearly 500 million dollars in construction bonds before they were halted by citizen outcries. And the takeover board went forward with collaborating with a spate of charter scams that hit the city shortly after they came to power. One such scam, a school which was paying \$55,000 per month (about three times the cost of an average school) to a store-front church operator was finally shut down in 2003.

Cronyism, opportunism, structural ignorance (DPS school libraries have nearly vanished), and racism are now the key propellants of the Detroit school system's administration.

The other side of this is the resistance mounted by parents, students, and school workers in Detroit who have repeatedly demonstrated at takeover board meetings, even after SWAT teams were stationed on the roofs of schools to frighten them away. The resistance took the form of petitions, the lawsuit described above, brief school walkouts, test boycotts, and more.

On September 24, the school worker job action won a clear victory. The governor's office called off the deal with the legislature to expand the charter schools, and agreed to more negotiations.

The slogan, “I don't want to fight, but I will,” clearly paid off. When educators take collective action to exercise control over the terrific value they create, the lesson is: We can win. ^{RF}

A Unionized School Worker Cannot be Fired or Disciplined Unless the Action is For “Just Cause.” This is a term in labor law.*

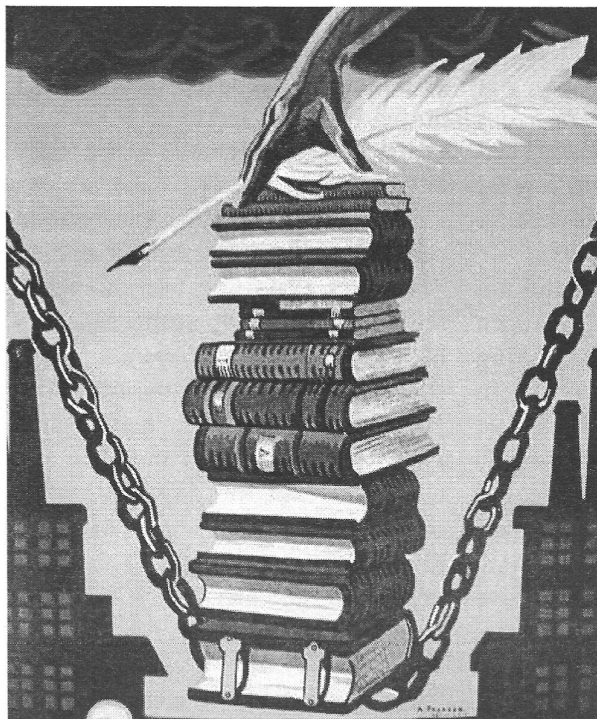


High-Stakes Standardized Tests are a Form of Child Abuse. We believe this is a Fact.

People who refuse to give or proctor high-stakes standardized tests to children would typically be charged with “Insubordination,” another term in labor law, which means for the most part that the employee has refused to obey a clearly understood direct order.*

However, you cannot be found culpable for insubordination if (a) the order is demeaning (“Shine My Shoes,”) or (b) the order is illegal (“Cook the books”) or (c) the order threatens the employees’ health and safety, or the health and safety of others.*

It follows that those courageous enough to take a stand can defend themselves with this basic tenet of labor law. Rouge Forum members, Ph.D’s, M.D’s, practitioners, and experts in the field, are prepared to testify that high-stakes testing is child abuse, on the behalf of school employees who stand up and resist.



Knowledge will rip apart the chains of slavery

Clearly, however, the best form of resistance is mass resistance. The massive strike of nearly 10,000 Detroit teachers, a clear violation of Michigan law, shows that solidarity and action at the work place and in the communities are key to sustainable educational change. No one charged that huge action of Detroit teachers with any violation of law or rule. The CEO of the School Board chose to close the schools himself. Mass resistance, though, must start somewhere. Perhaps it can start with you.

Child abuse causes lasting damage.
Real kids don’t just bounce back.

* *Developing Labor Law*

The Politics of Pronouns

By Doug Selwyn

Consider the pronoun, a modest part of speech too shy to be named formally or frontally. Lacking an identity of its own, the pronoun only stands in for someone or something else. Pronouns are so quiet, so common, and so seemingly familiar that we don't quite notice them. But pronouns are sly as well as shy. They often carry a very strong message about who "we" are and how "we" see the world. And they carry challenging questions: Are "you" part of "us?" Does "we" include "me?" When "we," the people, are working for the common good, does that common good include me? Or you?

The quiet threat and danger in pronouns is the assumed agreements that underlie their usage. One assumed agreement is that the user can clearly define who falls into the category of the pronoun. Sometimes it's easy. "We" went skiing yesterday. I know precisely whom I am referring to, and the listener or reader is clear about this. Sometimes it's not so clear or obvious, as in: "They don't value life the way "we" do. "They" are bad guys; "we" are good guys.

This suggests a second assumed agreement. The speaker or writer using these constructs assumes and implies that speaker and listener (writer and reader) share (or should share) the same frame of reference and value system such that the meaning of the pronoun is clearly the same to each. During the Vietnam era, "we" were presumably Americans, probably Christians, and good; "they" were North Vietnamese/Viet Cong, probably non-Christians, probably communists, and bad. More recently, "they" are Arabs, most certainly Muslims. When someone says, "it's the way we do things around here," there is a clear message implied that if "you" want to be part of "we", you'd better do things that way too.

A third assumed agreement is that those grouped within "we" are grouped accurately and absolutely by the speaker or writer according to a common, significant trait. There are no subtle gradations or exceptions allowed for when categorizing people as "we" or "they," "us," or "them." Pronouns make it very difficult to be less than absolute and categorical, to spin less than a very wide web. You are either with us or against us.

WHOSE WORLD CLASS CITY IS THIS?

I (Doug, self-referential to a fault) began to think about the role that pronouns play in our lives when business and political leaders in Seattle began to lobby citizens of the Puget Sound area to use taxpayer dollars to fund the building of a privately owned baseball stadium. The then lowly Mariners were playing in a concrete mausoleum called the Kingdome. It was an engineering marvel, tons and tons of concrete constructed to outlast us all. Solidly built, utilitarian, no art or pretense to it. Aesthetics? Nah. But it functioned; it kept the rain out (mostly), kept the roof on (mostly), and was relatively cheap. It took a great deal of explosives to implode because it was so resolutely what it was.

But, it was not sexy, it did not have luxury boxes, it did not have open air or sunset views, or a winning baseball team playing in it. It was, in short, not a world class stadium. And the political and business leaders of the Puget Sound region told the citizens of the Puget Sound region, who would have to vote approval for the stadium, that we in the region deserved to have a world class stadium in a world class city. It was time for "us" to step up to the plate and get what "we" deserved.

But who was the "we?" Few of the people I asked felt included by that

pronoun. Not school teachers, not social workers, not students, not working-class folks. A very small percentage of the people I spoke with in the neighborhood in which the new stadium would be built considered themselves part of that particular "we." Many of those living in the neighborhood would be forced to move their businesses or residences so the stadium could be constructed. None of the street folks who populated the adjacent Pioneer Square area, who would be forced out by the "upgrade" to world class status, seemed to feel they were part of the "we." The homeless in the nearby downtown region didn't seem very concerned about whether the city in which they were homeless was world class or not. "We" did not seem likely to include them.

It began to seem like the "we" who were going to enjoy the status that goes with being a world class city didn't actually live in it. "We" lived in the suburbs, across the lake, or a ferry-ride away to the west. Or perhaps in some entirely other city or state, drawn as a moth to flame by the potential profits in a new world-class stadium in the newly designated world class city.

By the end of 1995, some public perceptions and energies had shifted. There was a stunning turn of events: the perpetually lowly Seattle Mariners baseball team had begun to win. Perennial doormats of the American League West, "our" local heroes came from very far back in the pack and eventually, on the day the season ended, won the western division playoffs, and the right to face the dreaded "Damn Yankees" of song and story. And, impossibly, the Mariners won. "We" won. "Our" team beat "their" team. Local media trumpeted the results on an hourly basis. Conversations around

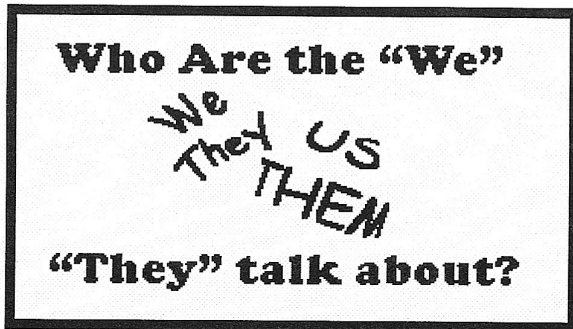
town centered on how “we” did last night. “Our” heroes were elevated to one-name or nickname celebrity status. Junior. Randy, A-Rod, Lou. Our guys. We’re number one.

But, again, there was something wrong with the picture. Our team? Our guys? Interesting concept. The players

were essentially arms, legs, gloves and bats for hire, over-paid workers who happened to be employed by the Seattle branch of the baseball industry during that season. And those four mentioned above are now “their” guys, all playing or managing other teams, in other cities. The owners of the team actually also own Nintendo; “our” Mariners are actually part of a Japanese conglomerate.

Owners around the country echoed the threat made in Seattle: build us a stadium or we will leave, a sort of musical chairs quick-step that featured privatized profits and socialized expenses and losses. We (the owners) make money, while we (the taxpayers) pay the expenses. Now, which “we” were number one? If “our” team left, “we” would be here in a baseball-less, world-class-less city, while “our” team became somebody else’s home team, and “our” guys would be “their” guys. The players would, of course, be paid millions either way. The voters of King County, by a slim margin, voted against raising our taxes to build “them” a stadium. And yet the new stadium stands. “Our” state legislature decided that the voters of King County were surely mistaken and overrode the decision.

“We’re Number One.” But who are we? What does that mean? We didn’t play. We didn’t make millions. Most of us didn’t even go to the games, or paid dearly to do so if we did. It is curious. Our taxes went up to pay for the stadium. Our ticket prices went up to pay for the stadium and for our players’ contracts. Our rents went up in and around the newly world-class



neighborhood surrounding the world class stadium, so much so that some of us could no longer afford to maintain our houses, apartments, or businesses. Our traffic is worse, our parking problems are multiplied, and the stadium was built despite the fact that we voted against it... They own it.

WHOSE COUNTRY IS THIS?

It is not a trivial question. When the topic turns to the more obviously political arena the pronouns take on much more observable heat. “We” have learned that referring to the human race as men is leaving out half of it. And it’s not enough to say, “Well, you know what I meant.” It was more accurate than perhaps intended to have our famous founding document note that “all men are created equal.” Of course, it wasn’t all that accurate either, as Native American, African American, or non-land-owning European Americans knew all too well. Who were, who are, “We, the People?”

The United States is technically a democratic republic, but there are millions of citizens who can not vote, who have no say in what happens to us in “our” lives. Other people decide and tell us what we will do, what we can do, or what will happen to us if we don’t do. For years, young men could be arrested for refusing to fight in wars that leaders they could not vote for commanded them to fight in. Were they included in this notion of democracy, or democratic republic?

When “we” have studied “our” history, the history of the United States, who have “we” studied and from

whose point of view? Accounts of Columbus, through the early 1990’s, presented a very one-sided picture of the “discovery of America.” I (and virtually every other student in the United States) was taught that a European Christian, with bravery and skill, came to an uncivilized, primitive, and decidedly un-Christian land

and claimed it (and all the people on it) for God and for his employer. He was widely recognized as a hero and the date of his landing was celebrated as a national holiday. This was defined as the moment when “our” history as a civilized nation began. The native people who greeted Columbus when his boat touched sand have been relegated for five hundred years to bit players in this European American version of who “we” are. They were cast as godless savages who had finally been discovered, been kissed awake by the explorer prince who crossed the great water, carrying civilization with him.

Stories challenging this Euro-centered version of national history were kept to the fringes until the virtual eve of the five hundredth anniversary of the landing. Finally, stories that brought another point of view were added to “our” history. These stories helped us realize that Native Americans do not view Columbus as a hero, and view his coming not so much as a discovery as an invasion. “Our” story has grown a bit larger, a bit more complex, though the process has not been without controversy. “We” don’t always welcome change.

When I look to the students in many of our public schools I have a hard time finding their stories within the textbook histories of “our” country. When the students and I studied the American Revolution, we had a conversation about the issue of voting and representation, issues of no small importance to the founders. There was only one person in our classroom who would have been able to vote in our

democracy at the time of “our” revolution, and that was me. That’s true even assuming that the students would have been of voting age and from families that owned their own homes (other factors in the voting rights question). None of the girls would have been permitted to vote. None of the Native American students, none of the African American students, none of the students of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Latino/a, Vietnamese, Laotian, or other heritage. I was the only European-American male in the room. So whose democracy was this?

Even the families of most European American students are rarely featured. This country doesn’t really belong to them either, though there are more photos in the books of people who look like them. When students learn that they don’t really belong to “our” story, I wonder what message that carries, what damage that does.

The students and I went through the textbooks supplied by the district and noted the topics, the pictures, the issues, and the points of view expressed in chapter titles, in captions, in maps and charts, and in what is included or excluded. Chapters entitled “Discovery,” “Westward Expansion,” “The Founding of the Nation,” “Manifest Destiny,” “Growth and Expansion,” “The Growing Nation,” “Exploring the Americans,” make it very clear whose story is being told, who is outside, or insignificant, or on the “wrong” side of that story. There is a definite point of view, a frame of reference that is unstated but clear; “we” know who we are, and who we are not.

WHOSE WORLD IS THIS?

The scene is just as problematic when the class is World History. Many public schools in United States offer world history courses that barely give lip service to Central or South America, and scarcely mention Canada. The countries of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and

Egypt have ancient histories, disconnected sometimes even in name from their contemporary forms. The region they occupy is actually defined by where it isn’t (the “Middle East” being midway between Europe and the “Far East.” Asia and China have ancient histories as well, then disappear. Places reappear when they become colonies, or fight wars with the west. Contemporary Afghanistan will undoubtedly make it into the next round of publications, as the country that harbored America’s Most Wanted, and Iraq has re-emerged as a U.S.-declared imminent threat to the security of the world. Students never get any sense of who the people of Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, Burkina Faso, or Guatemala, or Argentina, or Vietnam are on their own terms, through their own eyes. World history is a history of a few places of the world as defined by a western point of view.

This self-centered approach is probably the rule rather than the exception in education systems around the world. There is a limited amount of time, resources, and expertise, and the task of really learning about people on their own terms rarely is taken on in our neighborhoods much less in reference to those who live outside our national boundaries, across the world from us. Throughout history, peoples have tended to refer to themselves as “the people” and the rest of the world in lesser terms (“barbarians,” “heathen,” “savages,” “infidels”). But recent events have made it very clear that this approach to learning about the world is woefully inadequate.

Mr. Hirata, an Aikido teacher in Seattle, used to say that we are each at the center of the Universe. I (said he) am at the center, and so are each of you. We are each at the center, and have both rights and responsibilities as such. No one is more at the center than is anyone else.

We (Doug, Jan, and *all* the rest of us) find ourselves now, at the beginning of the 21st century, in a world with over

six billion “centers.” It is urgently important that we learn both to find ourselves at the center, and be able to understand the point of view of others at their own centers. In order for our own democracy to survive and flourish, “We, the people” of the United States must expand to truly encompass all the people who live within our borders. And “We, the people” of this earth must learn to live together on this fragile planet to secure our future. This is the province of social studies; this is our responsibility as social studies educators. As the National Council for the Social Studies states, “the primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.”

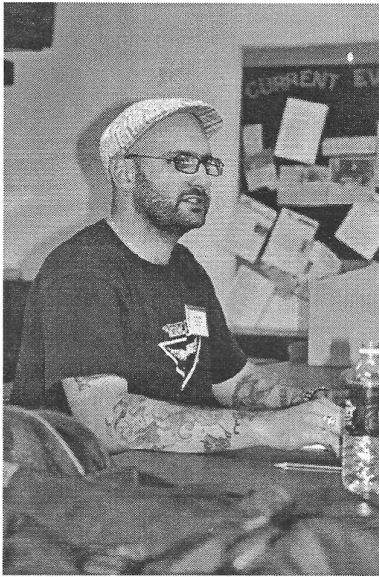
So if we are classroom teachers, we have a crucial choice to make. We are assigned classes to teach, with a specific content, often linked to a (usually) pre-selected textbook. We can retreat into that book, and teach that predetermined content that places few of our students at the center of anything. Or we can recognize the opportunity to help our students connect with their world. We can support them to connect their own lives with the events recorded in history books, and with events happening at this moment. We can support them to see themselves as actors in an immediate context connected to the past and the future, and help them to realize that the choices they and their peers make will be what we read about in history books in the future.

This doesn’t mean throwing out the textbook. But it does mean using it as a reference and scaffold rather than as the final word. It means knowing where to find other resources that bring richness, diversity, complexity, immediacy and context to the course of study. RF

From his book *History in the Present Tense: Engaging Students Through Inquiry and Action* (Heinemann)

1 Punx Pedagogy: The Political Economy of Racism

By Curry Malott



Having gone to junior high and high school in Corvallis, Oregon as a working/middle-class, progressive-sk8punk (punk rock skateboarder) of British, German and Irish descent, I have a strong desire to return and serve the Northwest as an organic critical educational / community worker. It

is because of my connections to underground punk rock counter cultures throughout the Northwest that I seek to return to that region as a more informed and critically conscious sk8punk than when I left more than 8 years ago. What follows is a narrative of how I became engaged in the life-long process of becoming a multicultural educator, and, what, specifically, it means to me to be a teacher/learner informed by multiculturalism focusing on the political economy of racism.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RACISM

As a “critical multicultural” educator, I seek to ground myself in the traditions of critical theory and practice, stemming from the work of Karl Marx (see Darder, Torres, & Gutiérrez, 1997; Freire, 1998; Allman, 2001; McLaren, 1997, 2000, 2001; Allman, McLaren & Rikowski, 2002; etc.), however, misunderstood and demonized his theories have become among much of the left, especially within the US (Allman, 2000, McLaren, 2000, 2001; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2001; Rikowski & McLaren, 2002). Within the past 5 to 6 years, North American critical educator, Peter McLaren, has been a central figure, along with others such as Ramin Farahmandpur and Rich Gibson, leading the struggle to reclaim Marxist analysis and critical pedagogy from liberalism and postmodernism for the purposes of human resistance against an increasingly violent global capitalist system (see Allman, 2000, for a detailed description of global capitalism and the role education currently plays in maintaining its hegemony).

Central to *my* critical theory and practice is the role critical reflection plays in the process of gaining a more

grounded, historical understanding of not only the *self*, but the larger social context of ones surroundings informed by a commitment to social justice. The key here is the dedication to “social justice” for this promise is designed to lead to not just reflection and understanding, but ultimately, transformational action (Freire, 1998; McLaren, 2000). What follows is therefore reflections on how my devotion to social justice has impacted my own critical-interdisciplinary praxis.

Coming from a relatively large family of “white” Dayton, Ohioans historically relegated to the status of “worker,” whose range of salaried/wage labor spans nearly the entire spectrum of employment, from university professors to factory workers, I grew up very aware that I too one day would be a worker of some sort. Leaving the tightness of our southern Ohio family, my mom moved my two sisters and myself to Oregon when I was in the fifth grade in 1982. Having grown up during the Reagan years, which was marked by a “trickle down” economic policy that promised the hope of more jobs and better wages through redistributing wealth upwards, but delivered a more unequal distribution of wealth, the elimination of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs in the US, and human suffering globally, hitting women and people of color especially hard (Albelda, et al. 1988), I saw my generations’ future downsized and NAFTAized. Shortly after moving to Oregon, intuitively aware of the unjust context in which I was embedded, I became involved in the local skateboarding/punk rock community, which I continue to participate in to this day. These experiences paved the way for my increasingly conscious political awakening, which eventually led me to multicultural education and Marxist theory for my desire to not only better understand the world, but to participate in its transformation as well.

McLaren and Farahmandpur’s (2000, 2001) recent work outlining the role whiteness plays in perpetuating the hegemony of capital by ideologically “tricking” working-class “whites” into believing that they have more in common with their “white” capitalist oppressors than their working and middle class counterparts of color has played a central role in my ongoing awareness of self-as-educator. As a critically conscious “white” educator, I am therefore aware of how the dominant, white supremacist, patriarchal society’s educational systems, at all levels, tend to serve the interests of capital. That is, through both the formal and informal curriculums (see McLaren, 1998) the dominant white middle-class culture tends to be normalized and naturalized giving way to white supremacy and the belief that capitalism is our only choice. An age-old tactic employed by the world’s

ruling classes designed to maintain control over the masses has been what the late Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1998), termed “divide and rule.” In the US, racism has arguably been the most divisive tactic serving capital by fomenting mistrust and competition among those relegated to the working and middle classes. Such misguided distrust serves to divert workers attention away from class struggle and real solutions to our collective problems.

Even more disheartening, although less pervasive, than inter-worker mistrust is the ‘hate crimes’ committed by more privileged “white” workers against those deemed an “enemy” (see Novick for a detailed documentation of the history of hate crimes within the US). Having come of age in the Northwest as a progressive sk8punk I was frequently in confrontational exchanges with “Nazi skinheads,” whose ranks continue to swell in the region (Novick, 1995) as jobs become more limited and, consequently, “white” workers become more susceptible to racist ideologies (Callinicos, 1993). It is my belief that if today’s youth counter cultures witnessed a renewed emphasis on critical theory in general and Marxism in particular, they could have the potential to provide a real solution to the human suffering engendered by capital and its divisive tendencies such as racism as well as sexism and homophobia for example. It is also my belief that educators too have a role to play.

That is, because educators play a central role in reproducing a consenting work force, Allman, McLaren and

Rikowski (2002) argue that education has the potential to engender the social transformation needed to overcome the deleterious effects of the labor/capital relation. It is therefore my desire to work, as a sk8punk of European descent, in collaboration with university, college and public school colleagues of varied backgrounds within the larger communities we work in our collective struggle against the root causes of human suffering for a world freed from the constraints in which we presently face.

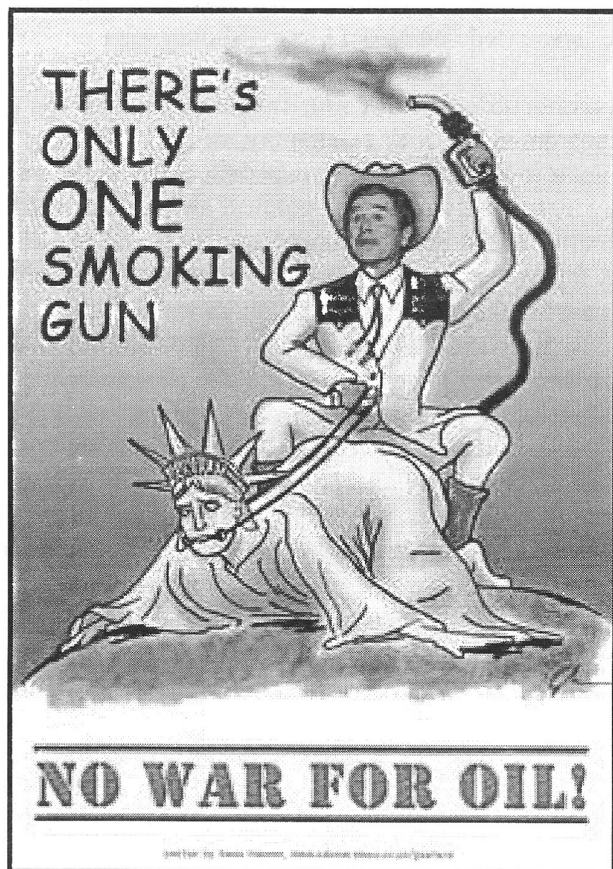
Aware that the Northwest has recently experienced a noticeable increase in Latinas/os, my experience with Chicana/o students through my Dissertation work on Chicana/o student resistance within one secondary social studies class as well as my work for the Chicana/o-led Drop Out Demonstration Project (DPDP) in Southern New Mexico, would be a valuable asset to the Northwest as a “white” educator engaging with students of all backgrounds. That is, my developing understanding of globalization as it manifests itself on the US/Mexican border from employment and education to resistance, could contribute to the struggle against white supremacy currently manifesting itself as anti-immigration policies supported by many Klan-led neo-Nazi organizations (Novick, 1995).

As a result of my on-going critical reflections of my experiences on “the border,” I am increasingly aware of my internalized hegemonies, including the white supremacy prevalent in and around the Northwest, which is representative of the institutionalized racism of the larger US society. Because racism is one of the hegemonies that divides the working-class, and, thus, thwarts class struggle, a Marxist understanding of “whiteness” is important knowledge to have for a critical multicultural educator possibly serving the Northwest. That is, if an educator is to challenge students, and him or her self, to engage with the many ways in which we consent to the oppressive, interconnected hegemonies of whiteness (racism) and the labor/capital relation, one must be conscious of the historical factors that have given way to the material reality of the community in which one works (Freire, 1998).

What is more, my experience teaching both Introduction to Sociology and Social Studies Pedagogy courses at New Mexico State University (NMSU) have shown me that while many students come to embrace a critical perspective and dedication to social transformation once “exposed” to such ideas, many students will resist such engagements and take personal offense to the “evidence” and challenges that are presented and discussed.

ROOTS OF MY POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RACISM

The roots of my political economy of racism can be traced back to my Master’s work in Sociology at New Mexico State University (NMSU). My MA will soon



culminate in the publishing of my Master's thesis as a book, co-authored with my Master's chair, Milagros Peña, with a forward by Dr. Chávez Chávez, and an afterward by Peter and son Jon McLaren. The title of our book is *Punk Rocker's Revolution: A Pedagogy of Gender, Race and Class*. *Punk Rocker's Revolution* is a study of two decades of punk rock music lyrics. We found that while the punk rock that we looked at maintained similar levels of counter-hegemonic content over time, those presenting the messages, the singers, have become less "white" and less male over time. The result is that the issues and perspectives of punk rockers have come to be more inclusive, therefore democratizing the movement. My emerging political economy of racism continued to grow through my doctoral program.

My course work, the classes I taught (discussed below), and the "drop out" prevention grant I work on (discussed below), led me to my dissertation on working-class, Chicana/o, student resistance, in one secondary social studies class, in a local school district that is 85% working-class and 98% Chicana/o, and ten miles from the US/Mexico border. This study looks at how Chicana/o students both contribute to and resist the process whereby they come to sell their labor in the market for a wage. More importantly, however, I have documented the critical transformation that the teacher, the students, and myself, as critical pedagogue, have undergone as a result of the materialization of this study.

To summarize, underling my political economy of racism is the notion that even though class based oppression is the most central manifestation of dehumanization in capitalist society, it is not more important than gender and race based oppression, but that "...capitalist social formations often coordinate and organize and reify these other, equally important, forms of oppression" (Sardo & McLaren, 2001, p. 416). That is, all forms of oppression are intricately connected within the historical process of value production, which serves as the foundation informing my political economy of racism.

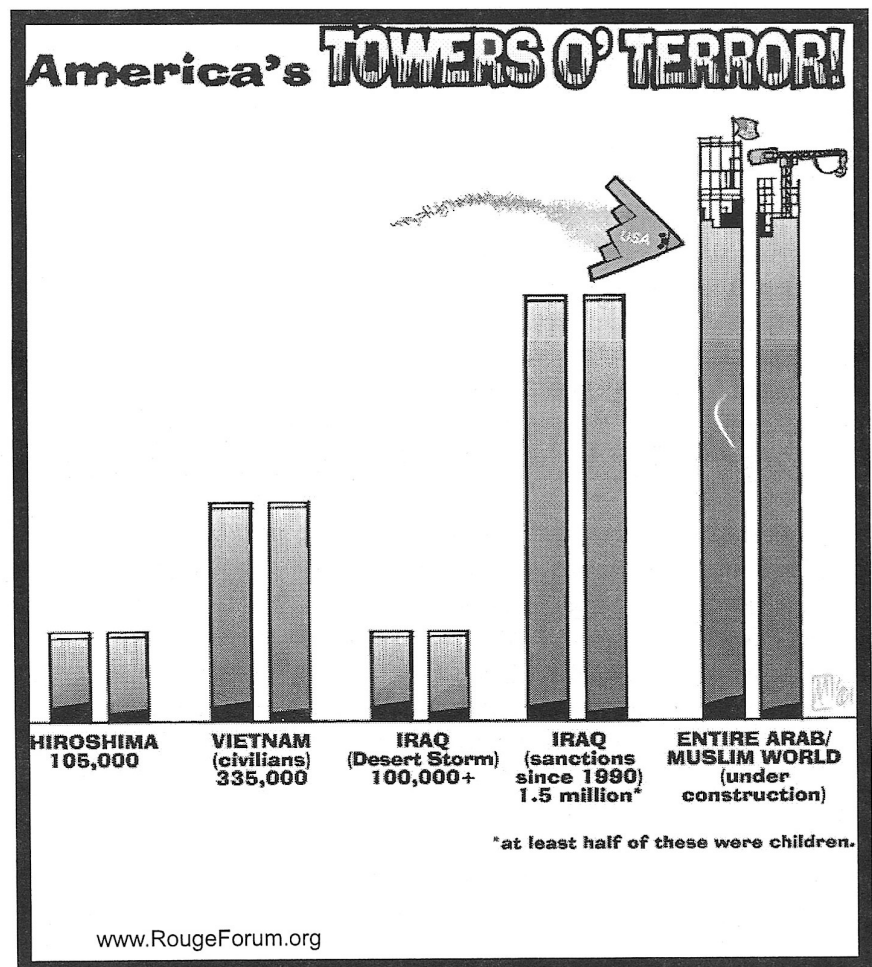
My political economy of racism, therefore, both understands the very notion of "minority" as a social construct that is part of "whiteness," which serves to dehumanize the Other as part of the process of not only justifying the seizure of unpaid labor hours through the wage system, but dividing those relegated to the status of worker (Rikowski, 2002). The recent increase in the globalization of capital has

resulted in an expanding working-class, rendering the historic struggle against the labor/capital relation more important than ever (Allman, 2001; McLaren, 2000; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2000, 2001; Rikowski, 2002). Such insights into the workings of today's increasingly globalized capitalist society (Rikowski, 2002), and possible pedagogies of human resistance to the labor/capital relation, underlie my future research agenda.

CONCLUSION

Through this article it has been my intent to "out" myself as not only a critical pedagogue, but a Marxist one, aware that in these "post-Marxist" days "...to identify your politics as Marxist is to invite derision and ridicule from many quarters, including some on the left" (McLaren, 2002, pp. 36). Why, in the face of such opposition, would I make such a decisive decision? Because, as McLaren (2001) argues, citing the world's increasing inequality, "'going back' to Marx is a singularly progressive move and represents a giant step forward for educational criticism" (pp. xiv). ^{RF}

References for this article are available by request



Got War?

Sure, we got plenty of them. Wars on every continent but two, and those two send combatants everywhere. War in Nepal, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Iraq, Sub-Saharan Africa, Israel, Palestine, Chiapas, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Korea, Burma, Argentina. We got lots of wars. We got cold wars, hot wars, low intensity wars, drug wars, wars on civil liberties, genocidal wars, secret wars, open wars, indeed we got a US budget of nearly \$400 billion for war. Got war? You bought it.



Got Capitalism?

Capitalism won! This is as good as it gets! Capitalism means perpetual war, just as the U.S. national leadership promises to the citizenry. Endless war, forever and ever, amen, always within the context of **an international war of the rich on the poor**, with every government everywhere serving as a weapon of elites. The Masters are always at war on the slaves, and they call that peace and make laws to preserve the peace. When they want slaves to make war on another Master, that is democracy and justice.

Want More?

Capitalism as a social system demands a relentless search for cheaper labor, markets, a war on the earth and its people for raw materials, the destruction of reason through divide and conquer tactics like nationalism, racism, sexism, all to guarantee the greatest profits—for a very few. The only way out of perpetual war is to strike war's source, a system set to work by fear and greed: Capitalism. Want more war? Stick with capitalism. It is 100 % guaranteed. No money back.

The trappings of capital are always on sale: spectacles like the Superbowl, segregated schools and their high-stakes tests, Nike logos, casinos. Sell your soul with patriotic consumer debt on a SUV. Sell your life—to a military recruiter. The more you like capital, the better a slave you will be. If you work hard, someday you might make it all the way up to foreman, captain, or house slave. Well, probably not. Sell your neighbor, sell your kids. Open a for-profit jail. Buy capitalism, racism, nationalism, sexism. Buy war. Get your brass coffin and grave sites early. There is going to be a rush. Open 24 hours.

Money Can Buy Almost Anything!

But not everything. No matter what, for most people work sucks. Those who have jobs face a meaningless future of pushing buttons at McBoss. Bosses must drive work faster, use technology not to improve life but to lay people off, to strip the creative minds of the workers and replace it with the boss's mind, to maximize their profits. Inequality grows, as it must. On every job, ever day, people resist. For most people, we know the bosses and their government lies all the time, especially when they go to war. Despite the main message of capital, "Screw Everyone Else!" we take care of neighbors, family and friends. And while the Masters hate the earth and destroy it for profits, we witness heroes sitting high in trees, risking their lives. Love, work, knowledge, community; that capital cannot buy. United working people, students, soldiers, can win that world that capital cannot create. It might cost us our credit cards—and a massive change of mind.

What to do? Fight back, on the job and off. Organize. Shut down the schools. Close the workplaces. Stop soldiering. Strike, think, strike again. Read the Rouge Forum News at RougeForum.org.

Stop the War. Stop Capital. Unite and Fight. Join Us—or them.

www.RougeForum.org

Growing national “pushout” crisis

US “school reform” throws students into the street

By Steve Light

Adding to the many hardships faced by children in poor communities, thousands of teenagers are now being forced from their classrooms. Reports from New York City and Texas reveal how reliance on high-stakes testing to raise standards of education is compounding the effects of the underfunding of public schools.

In the most recent revelation, the New York Times disclosed a massive undercounting of dropouts in New York City. While the Department of Education reported 12,885 dropouts in the class of 2002, or 20 percent of the class total, an additional 14,891 students were categorized as “discharged” to other cities or to adult programs. Most of these discharged students are in fact believed to have been forced out, which would make the true drop-out rate 25 to 30 percent. Including these “pushouts,” the actual graduation rate for those in the city who began 9th grade in the fall of 1998 would be 39 percent rather than the 51 percent reported.[1]

Even the city’s official drop-out rate, which had dropped to a low of 15.6 percent in 1998 during the economic boom, has returned to its recession-year 1991 level of over 20 percent, or 1 in every 5 students.[2]

Instead of using the term “dropouts,” which suggests that the students are themselves to blame for leaving school, children’s advocates have taken to calling these students “pushouts.” The terminology is meant to indicate that they are the victims of educational policies flowing from the corporate-backed “school reform movement” that originated under the Reagan administration, stressing standardized testing and

“accountability” of the public schools.

A class-action lawsuit filed against the New York City Department of Education cites examples of these pushouts, including a special-education student who was told that services were no longer available, an injured student who was unable to climb stairs, and an 18-year-old student who was held back due to repeatedly failing the state-mandated Regents exam in English. Many of these students were told they had no option to stay in school.

Students with few of the credits needed toward graduation when they turn 17 are told they can no longer be enrolled, even though state law gives them the right to remain in a regular high school until they are 21. Many of these students are told they must get the less-valued, out-of-school General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Adult education centers that give tutoring for the GED have reported a large increase in the number of 16- to 18-year-olds who are signing up. Azi Ellowitch at the Lehman College Adult Learning Center told the Times, “Those kids are the least appropriate for the GED programs. If they need brushing up, we can certainly help them. But that’s not what most of these kids need. They need years of basic learning.”

Elisa Hyman of Advocates for Children said, “We’ve had guidance counselors calling on their cellphones from bathrooms saying they’ve been told to get rid of kids.” Her organization has filed suit against the Education Department to readmit hundreds of students dumped from Franklin K. Lane High School in Brooklyn in the last three years.

Taft High School in the Bronx listed 253 students as “discharged” and 157 as dropped-out from the class of 2002. Only 123 students from that class

graduated. At Brandeis High School in Manhattan, recent budget changes resulted in the layoff of the only staff member assigned to visit homes of absentee students. Brandeis graduated fewer than 200 students in June from the class of 2003, which had begun with around 900 students four years before.

New York City officials have been aware of the push-out phenomenon for at least two years, when then-Director of the Office of Assessment and Accountability Robert Tobias recommended an audit after noticing the heavy use of discharge codes, which can mislabel students who leave the schools as having left the city. Last November, the non-profit group Advocates for Children and the city’s public advocate Betsy Gotbaum issued a special report entitled Pushing Out At-Risk Students: An Analysis of High School Discharge Figures. It pointed to the city’s failure to provide an adequate breakdown of the circumstances under which students left schools and what became of them. Schools Chancellor Joel Klein declined to comment for months, finally declaring the problem “a tragedy” that required the introduction of new programs. He refused to specify, however, what programs would be implemented.

Bush’s Secretary of Ed: Enron-style accounting of dropouts

President Bush’s secretary of education Rod Paige faced his own drop-out scandal last month. In appointing Paige in 2001, Bush touted his reputation as schoolssuperintendent in Houston, Texas, where reported drop-out rates plunged to an unbelievably low 1.5 percent during his tenure. A recent state audit, however, found that some 3,000 of the 5,500

teenagers who left school in the 2000-2001 school year should have been declared dropouts but were not. In fact, Houston's graduation rate of 52 percent places it with Dallas and Fort Worth among the 10 worst school districts in the state for high school graduation.[3] There are obvious parallels between the way the Houston school system under Paige undercounted its dropouts and the accounting methods employed by Houston-based Enron to hide its debts.

George W. Bush made the so-called Texas miracle in education a model for the rest of the country under the federal "No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB). He used his record as governor of raising scores on tests—which some experts criticized as too easy—to win congressional passage of the bill in January 2002. The NCLB is the most well known of a number of right-wing measures inspired by the misnamed "school reform movement." Rather than provide funds for a crumbling public education system—including building repairs, smaller class sizes, and support for students with special needs—these measures substitute high-stakes testing as a cure-all.

Besides their students' scores on standardized tests, schools are rated on their drop-out rates, absenteeism, and percentage of students who graduate in four years. Students pressured to leave are listed as "discharged" rather than "dropouts," since schools with high drop-out rates face new sanctions—up to and including being taken over and completely reorganized—under the Bush administration's NCLB. Principals are under great pressure to improve their schools' ranking in the various categories. For many students pushed out because

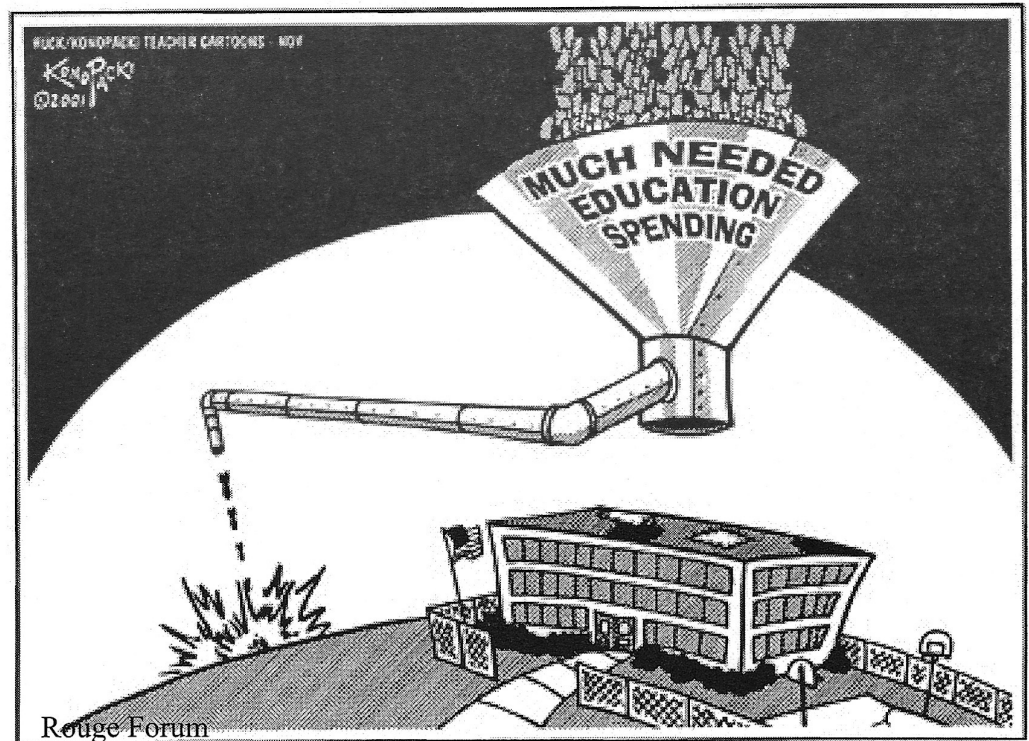
they drag down the ratings, the result is to deprive them of an education altogether.

In May of this year, the Texas State Board of Education was faced with thousands of students failing a new statewide achievement test. To avoid holding all those students back a grade—and having hundreds of schools penalized under NCLB regulations—the board voted to reduce the number of questions that students must answer correctly to pass. Similarly, Michigan officials lowered the percentage of students who must pass statewide tests to certify a school as making adequate progress, and Colorado changed its grading system to lump students previously characterized as "partially proficient" based on test scores with those labeled "proficient."

The NCLB was passed with bipartisan backing four months after September 11, 2001. In order to avoid their responsibility for this law, many Democrats are now saying they are withdrawing support. Representative Richard Gephardt recently described the NCLB as "a phony gimmick,"

duplicitously claiming, "We were all suckered into it. It's a fraud." [4]

In the book on teachers' resistance to the attacks on education, *Silent No More: Voices of Courage in American Schools* (Heinemann, 2003), Alabama teacher Steve Orel describes an earlier example of the educational corruption that encourages students to leave school. In the spring term of 2000, the Birmingham school system expelled 522 high school students, or 5.6 percent of the city's total. The students were reported as having "withdrawn" for "lack of interest." The local school board was afraid that low SAT (Scholastic Achievement Test) scores were going to result in a takeover by the state. The students had been kept on the rolls to satisfy state regulations for school funding based on the number of students enrolled on the 40th day of the second semester, whether they actually attend school the rest of the year or not. On the 41st day, once the funding was achieved, the lower-performing students began to be administratively withdrawn as they



reached their 16th birthday, since they were regarded as a liability to the schools' achievement test scores.

After exposing this sham, Orel was fired from a Birmingham tutoring program for school-leavers, which was then closed down (but which he succeeded in reopening as a free training program). Students are not dropouts, according to Orel, when they are absent because they were sick or hungry or afraid of gang activity, or leave school to help earn income for their families living in poverty, or because they are pregnant, or have a brother who is shot or a terminally-ill parent, or are living in shelters for the homeless. "I have yet to meet a single student who woke up one morning and consciously chose to leave school. My experience has been that the school system left them. Whether it is poverty or the drive to raise test scores, both of which leave students with a sense of low self-confidence and low self-esteem, they continue to feel coerced and pushed out of school... The tests become the subject of education, and the students become the objects. This completely reverses the role of education." [5]

Asked by the World Socialist Web Site about the New York City



pushouts, Steve Orel said, "It is very tragic. Education is being controlled by a corporate agenda. Tests are being used to sort students out. Kids are

The tests become the subject of education, and the students become the objects. This completely reverses the role of education.

being severed from their education and that is creating permanently unemployed people."

Another teacher, James Hope, who recently won a three-year court case in Georgia against suspension for publicly criticizing questions on a high-stakes test, has labeled the "politically motivated, phony high-standards movement" as "child abuse." [6]

The focus by bureaucrats on high-stakes testing as a method of fostering educational reform, while ignoring the real needs of the students, affect most of all families of the working class. In 2000, young adults living in families with incomes in the lowest 20th percentile were six times more likely than their peers from families with incomes in the top 20th percentile to drop out of high school. [7]

Students of low-income families generally need more services and attention to improve their academic skill, but the requirements to administer and teach for the standardized tests mean the needs of these students are often ignored. These students are being pushed out of schools not only because of test scores but also because of the greater costs—in a period of severe budget cuts—of helping children with family problems, physical and learning disabilities, learning English as a second language, or just requiring more time to learn curriculum geared to standardized tests. The schools that these students attend are invariably the worst funded.

Many of these pushouts also face the need to look for jobs at a time of rising unemployment. These youth are

more likely to face joblessness or low-wage jobs; the young women are more likely to become pregnant at earlier ages and struggle as single parents; they are more likely to need public assistance at a time when the system of welfare supports is being dismantled; and these youth make up a disproportionate percentage of the nation's growing prison population. [8]

While the National Center for Education Statistics shows the dropout rate nationwide declined from 14.1 percent in 1960 to a still-high 10.9 percent in 2000, critics of the testing movement fear that this trend is reversing itself, masked by widespread inaccuracies in the data. In the 1990s, the difference between the rates for white and black and Hispanic youth had already ceased to diminish, although the gap had narrowed through the 1970s and 1980s.

Further analysis would find that the underlying motivation for a society in which the school system turns children into numbers, and can decide that they are disposable, lies in the needs of the profit system. ^{RF}

Notes:

1. "To Cut Failure Rate, Schools Shed Students," New York Times, 31 July 2003
2. "Graduation daze: Behind the numbers," New York Teacher, 19 June 2002.
3. "Education Secretary Defends School System He Once Led," New York Times, 26 July 2003
4. "States Cut Test Standards to Avoid Sanctions, New York Times, 22 May 2003.
5. Silent No More, eds. ReLeah Cossett Lent and Gloria Pipkin, (Heinemann, 2003).
6. Ibid.
7. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/droppub_2001
8. http://www.education-world.com/a_admin/admin026.shtml

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It is Right to Fight to Overcome Inequity No Concessions! No Cutbacks! Justice Demands Organization

Few working people, perhaps especially school workers, are eager to fight their employers. Resistance is often portrayed as high-risk, and ultimately unrewarding (if rather vainly heroic). However, as the economy grinds down and inequality deepens, it becomes clear that we who must work to live must also resist to live, and in our resistance perhaps we can discover our many commonalities, and the remarkable power that we hold because of the value we create—collectively.

As the costs of imperial resource wars come home, the battle of who shall pay the price is already being fought.

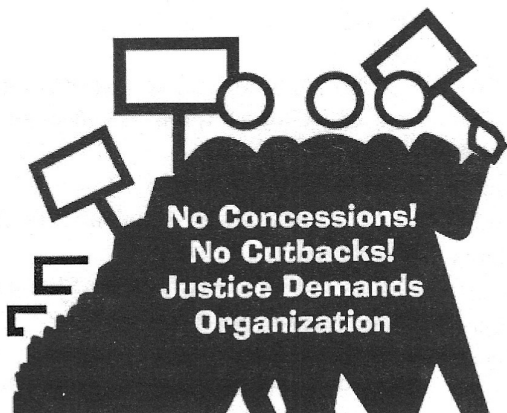
In the US now, grocery workers are on strike against demands for huge wage, benefit, and retirement concessions. Teamsters are, to a limited extent, honoring the picket lines. Even in conservative Southern California, customers boycott the struck stores at about 66%. Detroit teachers, cornered by the failures of administrators in nearly every conceivable aspect of educational life, recently struck their school system with such effectiveness that appointed (not elected) CEO had to announce that school was off for the day. Poor and working people in Benton Harbor Michigan recently set their town ablaze in response to relentless police violence—and subsequently won significant federal assistance to their town.

Pockets of school workers, and individuals, have already made a notable difference. In Chicago, led by the example of George Schmidt, editor of the Substance newspaper, who was fired for publishing the racist CASE test, other educators announced they would not proctor the exam. The exam was cancelled throughout the city. In Houston, one honest administrator's revelations led to the exposure of the fraudulent Houston Miracle: rising test scores were based on expelling kids from school, forcing them to opt out of the tests, teaching only to specific children on the cusp of high scores, that is, the wreckage of real education.

Resistance is everywhere. In Bolivia, workers and peasants together joined in a mass uprising to drive the NAFTA-imposed president out of office. In China, the not-so Red Army is engaged putting down miners' strikes, as is the security force of the government of South Africa, representing the armed might of a new class of millionaires who betrayed the promises of the anti-apartheid movement. In the Middle-East, secular forces of both Palestinians and Israelis, all contending with unemployment and the militarization of their societies, seek to cross the real walls of militarization and irrationalism. At the US's southern border, thousands of people demonstrate against the loss of maquiladora jobs to even cheaper labor in India and China.

Throughout the world, workers of each nation are told that they must fight and sacrifice to "defend *our* economy," and "boost *our* national production." They are being asked to battle the enemies of their enemies, to give up their health care to preserve the privileges of millionaires. It's not our economy. It is *theirs*.

Regimentation of the curricula, and the methods of teaching, is a world-wide phenomenon, but it is especially harsh in de-industrialized America, where the central role of schools in disciplining society is clearly understood by elites, if not by



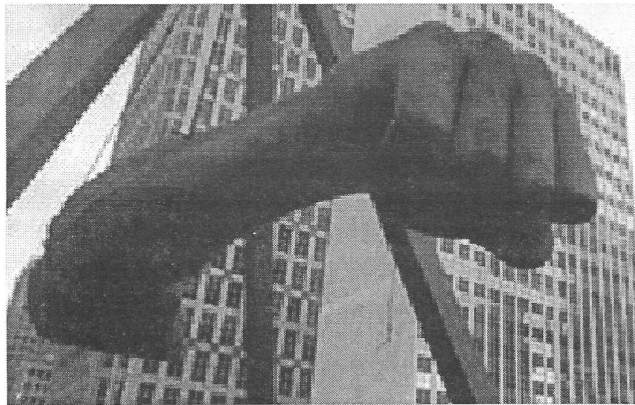
others. Clearly, the same people who profited from the tax shifts that demolished public education's libraries now demand that *their* standards, and *their* high-stakes tests be applied, equally, to hungry kids in inner-cities and the perpetually surveilled children of gated, computerized, communities—making it possible to use the bogus science of test scores to prove that there is reason behind the segregation of kids and knowledge.

School workers, like all working people, will need to fight back. At issue is: How much will be lost before we do? Few of our organizations are prepared for the struggles ahead. Already, unions and community organizations pose the collapsed economy as a fixed reality, as requiring some sacrifice from everyone. But the history of working people for the last 40 years demonstrates that making concessions only encourages employers to demand more. The unions, moreover, represent only the narrowest interests of their members (and frequently the narrow interests of the unions' top leaders), while the social crisis hits *all* poor and working people.

In order to develop the solidarity necessary to launch a successful resistance, we need new forms of organization, prepared not only to address this crisis, but to transform our lives so that real community can stand above profiteering. It may well be, however, that first must come the courageous actions of those who simply say, for example: "No. There are things my integrity will not allow me to do. High-stakes testing is child abuse. I will not continue to do that." That kind of courage, which can spark still more, should have some chance of winning, which is why justice demands organization—and in part is why the Rouge Forum exists.



When They Say Cutback We Say Fight Back!



**Same Enemy -- Same Fight
Educators, Workers, Students, Parents
Unite and Fight
No War -- No Concessions**

Community or Barbarism

I Participate. You Participate. He, She, or They Participate. We All Participate.

They Profit. But Things Change! Join Us.



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 are actively pushing back against and have had some successes 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 rougeforum@pipeline.com

Visit the Rouge Forum online at www.RougeForum.org