

# *The Rouge Forum*

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## **Tyranny Or Terror? Educators Can Choose Reason Over Fascism**

A nation which tutored a generation in the doctrine of pure self-absorption now begins to feel the results of that tenet: citizens can only be motivated, collectively, by sheer hysteria; jingoism, a desperate search for authoritarian command. Once the hysteria climaxes, and collides with selfishness, things begin to fall apart: New York firemen brawling with New York cops (not about lost buddies but overtime); California Governor Gray Davis seizes the podium to steal the thunder from the FBI's suspension bridge warning, reciprocal finger-pointing between the sham Northern Alliance and the US military bosses. Every nation's military is left with a singular motivator for front line troops: kill whoever is out there or you and your buddies will be killed—useful for any locale. Tyranny against Terror. The twin towers of opportunism engage in full battle. Such is the apparent choice for citizens and educators, a deadly shell game. These are the times when the outside appears to be in; not just inverted times, not upside-down, but outside-in, when all that is air is presented as solid, when every appearance is presented as essence. Five weeks into the Perpetual Oil War and counting. Two thousand years of religious mysticism and superstition, three hundred years of capitalism, and what society has to offer its children is endless war, militarization, fear, all underlined by calls to remain greedy and consumptive as the glittering freeway out of the morass.

The task of educators is not to construct techno-widgets for unremitting warfare. We must not be positioned to choose between tyranny or terror. Those who struggle for reason over irrationalism, the philosophy of fascism, have no stake in promoting the international war of the rich on the poor. Let us see what is, so we can hunt for clues of what ought to be, a movement from despotism to democracy and community: freedom.

In early January 2001 it was easy to foresee a worldwide recession, teetering on the brink of full economic collapse. Rising international unemployment (massive layoffs in Maquiladoras), skyrocketing inequality, serious problems of industrial overproduction (as in auto, with more than a 180 day backlog of cars), brush-fire wars spreading across boundaries (Colombia, Chechnya, etc.), millions of peasants driven off ancestral lands entering the cities as homeless (estimates of 200 million in China), a collapsing technology sector and the energy robbery in California (\$12 billion shifted from the state budget to the energy cartels in the world's sixth largest economy); all this meant profound economic and social instability. It was easy to see this coming, if not this in particular.

The terrorist attack of September 11, an assault inspired by billionaire Bin Laden if the circumstantial evidence plays out, turned a series of quantitative shifts into a qualitative leap. Unemployment in the US quickly topped 5.5% (and is really around 9% if we count those working part-time, the 2 million in jail and forced to work at gulag wages, those drafted by the economy into the military) with no ceiling in sight.

Only those economies which retained some form of state dominated capitalism (Russia, China, parts of Eastern Europe) are not in deep recession already. Japan is near collapse. Argentina is about to default on its debts. The world's middle class and small business people, believers in the promise of capital, are under assault everywhere, especially in the technology sector. Those who owned little operations with minimal backup capital and those who were simply paid to watch others, or who sought to profit from fabricating desire, advertisers, are joining the army of the unemployed as well. The third world, including many urban areas of the US, is being devastated, as it already was.

A war based economy is customarily inflationary, money is simply printed to pay for the bombs and money becomes worth less. But this economy is more and more deflationary; people simply have no money—the tendency that dominated the last world-wide depression. Mainstream economists are saying this is an international crisis with no end in sight. Eternal war, economic collapse, witless nationalism,

racism, religious fervor, the corporate state (government solely as a weapon of the rich); there is nothing untoward about pointing at this and saying: Fascist. Let us turn to specific indicators.

In the US, masses of citizens abandoned their communities on Halloween and took their precious children to private shopping malls, where they would be safe from their neighbors. Church attendance is booming. Hate crimes directed against swarthy people continue apace.

Teachers in the US are conducting daily Pledge of Allegiance drills, in schools where the same teachers have no rights, and in communities where whatever rights existed before September 11 have been stripped away, under the cover of the Patriot Bill, a 98-1 vote in the Senate. The Pledge drills come at the exclusive sponsorship of Scholastic Incorporated, the company that set out to control all publications within schools, by their statement, by 2003. Scholastic sent free Pledge of Allegiance books to several classrooms, complete with teacher instructions. Documents that critique tyranny, like the Declaration of Independence, were buried under the deluge.

My top prize of the current era has to be considered a near tie: a red ribbon pinned to the chest of every child in the local school district that says, "Working to Keep Kids Off Drugs, sponsored by Long's Drugs." The chief competition is my New York Times Magazine from Sunday October 21, which boasts a series of articles debating whether or not citizens should be panicked—and a ten page advertising section for anti-depressants.

In the name of economic recovery, US national leaders urged consumers to spend, despite massive layoffs in every sector and warned of unnameable terrors just around the corner. Citizens were told not to worry about anthrax and not to overdose on antibiotics. Then the leaders shut down the House of Representatives and the Supreme Court, fled to secret underground tunnels, and ordered a force of mostly black postal workers to work despite the death of their colleagues from anthrax poisoning. The entire D.C. postal workforce was dosed with Bayer's Cipro. Cipro is not the drug of choice to combat anthrax but Bayer has been running full-page ads in the NY Times for two weeks touting Cipro, even though they charge ten times the cost of the generic substance. Bayer is a German company that built its fortune on slave labor in the Nazi era. The international drug lobby employees nearly 700 people on capital hill, far more lobbyists than representatives, and spent almost \$200 million in lobbying and campaign contributions in 2000, more than any other industry.

Then the political leaders in the House popped up from hiding and passed a bill that includes :

- \$1.4 billion for IBM
- \$833 million for General Motors
- \$671 million for General Electric
- \$572 million for Chevron Texaco
- \$254 million for Enron

The bill also includes a rider that says the salaries of airline executives, who had laid off more than 20,000 workers before receiving their own multi-billion dollar bailout. could not be capped. Little companies, like Dallas Power and Light, with about 15, 000 employees (compared to GM's 350,000) got a healthy chunk too, about \$699 million, perhaps as a hope offering to entrepreneurs.

Northern Alliance members, curiously titled "fighters," in crispy new US camouflage outfits, complained that after three weeks of heavy bombing from B-52, helicopter and fixed-wing gunships, the Taliban appears to be untouched and fires at them when the bombing stops. The top Northern Alliance leader was quoted in the New York Times of 11-4-01, " We do not train in the rain." Unruffled, the US leadership points out that since this is a perpetual war, it does not matter much if the targets are hit right away, as everything will probably be hit eventually.

The Washington Post, on November 2 2001, carried an article exposing an internal CNN memo demanding that reporters not focus on civilian deaths in Afghanistan and, that whenever those deaths appear, that they are to be covered with photos of the World Trade Center and reminders that there are lots of US dead who should count far more.

All war is based on the art of deception. The lying to the US public began immediately, and kept up through all the official channels. Reporters are completely banned and censored, following the lessons of Vietnam and early practice in Grenada. Sy Hersh, who exposed My Lai, has reported a firefight between Taliban and US crack Delta Forces in which the Deltas were mauled, fleeing with twelve wounded.

More than a thousand people were arrested and jailed, with no habeus corpus protections, for over a month. Attorney General Ashcroft, under mild pressure, said that three of those arrested with connections to Michigan, for sure, were guilty of something to do with the September 11 terrorist atrocity. The next day, Justice officials retracted the claim. The day following, George W. Bush crowed that 1,000 detainees was not enough, that he is still on the hunt for enemies, both outside and in the Homeland. California's Gray Davis then quickly appointed his own Homeland Czar, unrepentantly, able to count on a population that is certain not to know that the last famous use of the word Homeland came out of the Nazi Party of Germany. That the last notable Czar was a Russian tyrant, the terror of the serfs and head of the Cossacks, a monarch slaver in the twentieth century overthrown by masses of workers and peasants during WWI.

Two famous American terrorists, renowned educator and Weathermen Billy Ayers, son of a millionaire, and his companion, Bernadine Dohrn, remained comfortable in their prestigious university positions (and trendy Hyde Park quaters) in Chicago, where they continue to assist the Dailey administration with the corporate takeover of the public schools. Ayers in his recent book, *Fugitive Days*, regrets that he did not do enough bombing during his days as, what many people at the time believed, an agent provocateur. Dohrn and Ayers may have been disturbed by right-wing university donors who threatened to withhold their money, but Ayers' Dean, the postmodernist Stanley Fish who believes that one form of truth is as good as another, quickly came to their defense, citing their recent good works and the first amendment. George Schmidt, the Chicago high school teaching veteran who was fired for releasing the Chicago k-12 high-stakes test, remained fired, with no defense forthcoming from Fish.

The stifled debate about the WTC death figures sifted momentarily into the press. The New York Times suggests that the body count may be closer to two thousand than five thousand, but five thousand remains the official figure. The Bureau of Labor Statistic cites all workplace death figures for '92-'99 at an average 6,250, a median 6,217. The year 2000 was 5,915, down 5+% from that average. But this is far from the whole story. Reported deaths don't include (when delayed, sometimes 30-40 years) the thousands from cancer due to exposure to asbestos and hundreds of chemicals on the job; delayed asbestosis, mesothelioma, silicosis, asthma; alcoholism and other drug abuse, depression, and suicides connected with industrial work. De-industrialization, though, appears to have had a significant impact in the US, where industrial workers once suffered 10,000 deaths per year. Even so, world-wide, tobacco accounts for 400,000 deaths a year. There are no calls to defoliate the Carolinas and Virginia, although the failed drug war continues apace against the people of Columbia.

Absent the press almost entirely were the stories, initially reported in the New York Times, of the looting police and firemen did shortly after the bombing, inside enclosed police lines, in the depths of the WTC where jewelry stores and banks were located. The Swiss Bank, however, whose vaults were in the deepest depths of the Center, issued a statement saying they are sure their \$20 million in gold is safely vaulted deep under the rubble, even though evidence suggests that police looters attempted to enter the vault via nearby tunnels. Non-heroes were quickly hushed by the press, like the woman who was dog-sitting for a friend who was lost in the bombing. The sitter quickly entered her friend's apartment, found her identification and credit cards, and ran up a twenty thousand dollar bill before police finally arrested her.

Somewhat hushed is the word: Oil. Silenced altogether is: Capitalism. The Saudi oil fields, centrifugal to US foreign policy for 50 years, and to the Western Empires for nearly 100, are topped by a medieval regime which, according to Amnesty International, is built on censorship, torture, and totalitarianism. Trade unions and political parties are banned. Women are demonized, other than the prostitutes routinely recruited from all over the world to serve the royals. With 22 million people, about 2/3 the population of California, Saudi Arabia is the world's number one purchaser of arms and weaponry. With the richest oil reserves in the world, the decadent royalty managed to outspend itself. The country is now deeply in debt. One-third of the Saudi people remain illiterate, yet the Saudi royals built a palace to literacy--- at George

Washington University in D.C. The Saudi royals, themselves the product of the British and later the US, produced the wealth now available to Usama bin Laden.

The Central Intelligence Agency, key recipient of \$30 billion per year of federal funding, completely bungled its mission, again. Doubly demoralizing, perhaps, was the fact that their clandestine office in 7 World Trade Center, where the CIA conducted illegal activity by posing as US businessmen to spy on both foreign and domestic commerce, burned down as collateral damage from the Twin Tower collapse. The agents fled. It is not known what intelligence data might have gone missing—perhaps to police and fire looters. Their CIA's partner, the ultra-secret National Security Agency, is at least four times the size of the CIA. NSA, until 1989, denied its own existence. NSA, tasked with mostly electronic surveillance, did manage to break Japanese business codes which, in 1997, allowed AT&T to subvert bids on cell phone operations in Japan and to win the contract for the US-based company. It could not, however, crack the intelligence of, if allegations are true, Taliban leaders who live in caves.

Nguyen Van Thieu, the US puppet who ran the South Vietnamese government through most of the war died on September 30, 2001. His New York Times obituary outlines a corrupt neurotic life, dedicated to self over all. Installed following a CIA coup that killed the previous puppet, Thieu's death offered no lessons to a nation disconnected from history and reason. The CIA and related intelligence agencies are now cobbling together a similar coalition in Afghanistan, presumably to be led by an 86 year old former king who, after being chased from the country 25 years ago, is being rescued from his walled villa in Italy. The projected monarchy will, presumably stand above the centuries old ethnic and political rivalries that have undermined Afghan life. Meanwhile, well out of the public eye is the pipeline Unocal would like to build from Kazakstan through Afghanistan to the sea.

Kazakstan "possesses enormous fossil fuel reserves," according to the CIA Factbook, second only to those reserves in Saudi Arabia, and perhaps, given more exploration, second to none. The country suffered under the collapse of state-capitalism, what was called socialism, and while so-called free market capital boomed, the country, a fertile land, lost a sizeable portion of its oldest and youngest generations to starvation. Doctors Without Borders decried the bombs and food-drop campaign, noting that the bombing is aimed at the civilian infrastructure, like water supplies, and the ludicrous food drops, insufficient for even 1/20th of the population for one day, are more designed to lure people into the open than to feed them. Thousands of Afghans will soon starve again.

Afghanistan is the world's top producer of heroin, surpassing the heroin rings started by the CIA and Guomindang in Burma. The Taliban was rewarded with more than \$25 million in the spring of 2001 for their drug interdiction programs. At the same time, current US allies in the Northern Alliance were identified as the key drug dealers in the country. Given that a major drug dealer has never been captured in the US, and the longstanding relationships of US intelligence agencies and drug traffickers, it is reasonable to predict that the Afghan poppy fields will be pouring out opiates—aimed directly at US inner cities where, as the economy contracts, resistance is likely to originate.

The international coalition George Bush tossed together is every bit as unstable as the Afghan coalition government he hopes to impose. Every major player has an eye on oil reserves, and profitability, and the moment any one of them sees an opportunity to inch closer to the oil fields, to steal another imperial resource, the coalition fragments and the parties start choosing sides for WWII. Or, in another ugly scenario, Pakistan and India become fully destabilized and begin trading nuclear attacks. Unless the US leadership stops pursuing its own rhetoric, the chances for not just eternal war (which will not happen) but world war, intensify.

The malignant subtext of death-loving cultures of Islamic Fundamentalism meeting Christian and Zionist Fundamentalism cannot be ignored. All forms of militant irrationalism, the religious fanatics control several nations, considerable firepower, and appear to be expanding into every sector of life. Each of the fundamentalist wings have pursued a murderous policy to democratic movements, women's movements, and even trade unionism.

This year oil is the vital artery of capital, but capital demands war anyway. The imperial global gaze must settle on whatever location can best exploit nature and people, and the processes of capital care not a whit who does that best. Ever-fickle, capital shifts illuminates whoever it the most cruel, the most divisive, the most deceptive. Now it is in full heat, in a lusty search for new pals.

What of schools, students, education workers, parents, and community people? What can we say should be done? What is being done now?

Let us first dispense with the cul-de-sacs of resistance, the trade unions, and sham political parties (Democrats, Republicans, and the entire dogmatic left). The education unions, the NEA and the AFT, are wholly on board with the war, as well as all of the preparations for war that were in the works before the WTC: high-stakes tests, restrictive standards, vouchers and the privatization effort, the militarization of working class schools, and the corporate takeover of urban districts. The NEA and the AFT are simply not designed to answer the crisis.

The mainstream parties, Republicrats, are indistinguishable in their Seig Heil to the wealth and the eternal war.

The left is so set on telling poor and working class people what to do that it has no possibility of learning from the lives and wisdom that are cornered by the war and the collapsing economy. Ruined by dogmatism on one hand, and balkanized by incoherent postmodernism (whose personifications promptly supported the Perpetual War) on the other hand, the left may be able to promote considerable distrust in the government, which has never been erased since Vietnam, and offer an umbrella for some demonstrations of resistance, but it cannot offer an organization base for serious resistance. Instead, the left moves from spectacle to spectacle, lecturing itself in interminable meetings, having entirely forgotten its door-to-door patient roots in the civil rights movement, the early CIO, the battle for the eight hour day, and the interracial abolitionist movement. No idea has every preceded the life practices of working people. Should that memory be awaked, there will be some reason to rekindle hope in the left, but that appears to be unlikely.

What do radical educators have to work with? We have day to day life and the inexorable struggle for freedom and truth. Work sucks, everywhere. That is a certain advantage to those who can understand why. Official rhetoric cannot match reality, anywhere. Again, those who wonder why can be offered critical methods that can be used to test for what is true. Despite the horror in front of us, the overwhelming majority of people continue in their eager search for love, and wonder why it is so hard to find, why reason and community cannot, under the spell of capital, prevail over segregation and hate. Selfishness and hysteria will not hold the Empire together for long. While it appears the universe is inside-out; work, knowledge, and love are still the organizing factors of daily life.

The first US deaths in the Perpetual Oil War were youths from militarized schools in Wyoming, who wrote in their yearbooks that the only way out for them was to join the vaunted Rangers. The mother of one said that when his son returned home from boot camp, he was proud that he had learned to eat worms and ants to live. The reversal is likely to be quite apparent to his comrades now.

The incessant attack on urban education and urban ghettos in the US is part of the war now. At some point, these children will be needed as fodder for the war machine. Given their profound alienation from official society, the success of that project is most unlikely.

These processes, and more that we do not now notice (probably developing in the most oppressed and officially silenced sectors of society), comprise cracks in the Empire, ways out, for reason to prevail over irrationalism, rationality to overcome fascism. But with these openings, it remains that justice demands organization.

In the Rouge Forum and the Whole Schooling Consortium, we have struggled with the question of how to organize in democratic and effective ways for the last five years. We have led the fight in research and

action against the harbingers of war and fascism in schools, high-stakes tests for example, and demonstrated that there is now a clear and direct line from standards to high-stakes exams-to deepened segregation and regulated knowledge to the commodification of children and educations and then to war preparations and the draft. What was once a jagged line is now clear and distinct.

Only the Rouge Forum has said that at issue is this question: How do we get rid of capitalism and learn to live in loving communities where free people can fully exercise their creativity? How can we use what is to reach toward what ought to be; the fact that capital has not only offered us the horror we now can see, but also the technology and international connections of transportation, communication, and industry that can serve as the basis for a reasoned decision to live with this as a guide: From each according to their commitment to each according to their need.

Only the Rouge Forum was clear in demonstrating that this war was coming. We have a considerable base of organizers, and a much wider readership. Now, we are in the process of setting up more formal organizational structures that are also more welcoming, more inclusive. Those who want to be in a movement that values inclusion, anti-racism, reason, democracy, and direct action on the job and in communities are welcome to join us. The logic of change is the logic of freedom. We must move with a patient sense of urgency to connect reason and power.

## September 11 & You

By Bill Blank

After only three weeks of eager grassroots organizing, a much-needed Teach-In addressing "September 11 & You" sprang into place last October 13th, at the University of Michigan Dearborn campus. Centered in the heart of the largest Arab community outside the Middle East (and Paris), with four college lecture rooms and about 200 metro-Detroiters, this Saturday-long event featured twenty speakers and ten sessions covering a variety of overlapping 9-11 related issues.

Co-sponsored by the Detroit Anti-War Network (DAWN) and the Detroit Coalition for Global Justice (CASL), the ambitious program commenced with introductory presentations by activists Anan Ameri and Ishmael Ahmed (of the local Arab community organization ACCESS) regarding "US Foreign Policy in the Middle East and the Arab American Response." Several break-out panels followed, including discussions on threats to civil liberties, stress and trauma, "Afghanistan, Pakistan and Beyond," the media ("What is the Message?"), Islam, Islamic fundamentalism and revivalism, and a special workshop for educators and students, "War, Youth and Education."

The education panel featured a parent-teacher-student overview from Brenda Smith (of the Committee for Political Resurrection of Detroit, or CPR) before social studies teachers Greg Queen of Warren Fitzgerald High School and William Boyer of Oak Park High contrasted their ongoing experiences in teaching the war to a predominantly white, patriotic middle class community versus a poorer, less jingoistic, urban black district.

The afternoon concluded with two timely, impassioned and frequently haunting speeches. Author David Watson presented a particularly chilling assessment of the United States as it mimics other empires throughout history, as an empire now in deep trouble, where catastrophe is now a "way of life." "Empires don't have friends, only interests," he reminded the audience before summarizing a new world (dis)order of violence, more collateral damage, and the "certainty of our uncertainty." Maureen Taylor, a Detroit city council candidate and Michigan Welfare Rights activist closed the Teach-In with some welcome reflections on the history of other terrorists attacks on American soil, such as the loss of innocent life in the 1963 bombing of a Birmingham, Alabama church. While linking this struggle of civil rights workers in the south to the persistent racial harassment against not only African-Americans but now Arab-Americans as well, she urged further coalitions in the fight for real human welfare with true communities of resistance, communities which could grow from events like this special teach-in. More activists have since taken up this challenge invoked by the participants; to keep organizing teach-ins, conferences and fundraisers, to offer alternatives to war, alienation and the utter powerlessness so pervasive since 9-11-01.



## **An International Education Summit: "Freedom to Teach, Freedom to Learn; Critical Literacy for Caring Democratic Classrooms" July 26 - 29, 2001 — Chicago**

This is a quick summary of the Education Summit in Chicago, sponsored by the Whole Language Umbrella, the Whole Schooling Consortium, and the Rouge Forum. While a final count is not in, it appears that between five hundred and six hundred people attended the summit, the overwhelming majority of them school workers, though some students, parents, and community people did join the meeting. This was the second meeting of people from worlds which have been too far apart for too long: Whole Language, Inclusion Activists, and Critical Educators. A pre-conference meeting of education activists, initiated by a call from Carole Edelsky, brought together about 45 activists from around the US and Canada. While a report on the discussion is probably as significant as the upshot of the meeting, brevity requires a move to the latter. The body called for a season of resistance to high-stakes standardized exams in May 2002 to be prefaced by intense educational action, ranging from teach-ins to petitions, coffee clatches and one-to-one discussions through the fall, winter, and early spring. The Rouge Forum has called for Teach-ins on campuses across the country and has offered an instructional packet to those who make the request. The RF also has an on-line petition at: <http://www.rohan.sdsu.edu/~rgibson/petition> Large Teach-Ins are planned for the Fall 2001 at Wayne State, and in February 2002 at San Diego State, led by the Rouge Forum. Smaller teach-ins are being scheduled across the US and in Canada. The conference workshops did begin to reflect a cross-discipline unity that clearly needs to be deepened. There were problems with the conference which leaders from each of the sponsoring groups are moving to address. It was too costly. The Palmer House in Chicago is a beautiful, but expensive, venue. It was not truly inclusive. Genuine inclusion, solidarity across race, sex/gender, ability/disability, remains more a lighthouse beacon than a reality, and an understanding of the dividing line of social class is hardly embraced by all. Leaders of the sponsoring groups are discussing moving future meetings to campuses, like Wayne State and San Diego State, where facilities and housing are available at much lower costs. That alone, however, will not set aside the problems of authentic solidarity, which needs to be consciously organized day by day, in the lives of each person who seeks either social justice or the freedom to struggle for what is true in schools and communities. Even so, the Education Summit II has to be seen as a remarkable step forward, not only in building a movement to resist, but in forging a community of activists where caring, creativity and joy can be coupled with the real need to fight back.

# Teaching History, War and Class

Paul Gilmore

In the years before the destruction of the World Trade Centers we witnessed the creation of a national World War II nostalgia machine that rivals that of the white Southerners' Confederate Heritage industry. Perhaps it has not been apparent to everyone, but these memory factories have been working at full speed for several years now churning out ever more profitable "rememberings" of the Big One. After a few "50th Anniversary of --" successes, the machinery suffered some glitches at the Smithsonian Institution. It seems somebody had let some historians in the room and they proceeded to muck up the works by producing history. The ensuing Enola Gay "controversy" seems to have convinced our cultural gatekeepers that our history cannot be trusted to historians, and that things would be better all-around if we just handed this stuff over to the dream factories in Hollywood and the myth-makers at the major cable and network TV news organizations.

This new-and-improved, streamlined WWII nostalgia machine came fully on line with the release of Saving Private Ryan, and every year the factory has stamped out new models without even retooling! The once trickling revenue streams from the selling of our past have become torrents. From Tom Brokaw's "book," The Greatest Generation, to this past summer's Pearl Harbor, to historian Stephen Ambrose's collaboration with Tom Hanks and other Hollywood patriots in HBO's Band of Brothers, we have seen the packaging and commodification of history beyond the wildest dreams of Ken Burns' measly PBS ventures. These folks demonstrate some savvy niche marketing skills too; their offerings match up nicely with GM's demographic categories. Is not The Greatest Generation obviously meant for the Oldsmobile crowd? The sporty and youthful Pearl Harbor has Pontiac written all over it. And Saving Private Ryan is nothing if not a Chevy.

From its inception in the early 1990s, this cultural obsession with WWII was intertwined with the end of the Cold War. With the Soviet Union no more, a rational person may have expected at least a moment of national stock-taking -- an honest accounting of our recent past uncluttered by the defensive mythologies of Cold War ideology. But this potentially fruitful moment was lost in the parallel anniversary celebrations of WWII. Our leaders, in their self-congratulations over the fall of the Eastern Bloc, wrapped themselves and the nation in nostalgic memories of WWII. Our infotainment ministry drafted the memories of sacrifice in the "Good War" into service against a searching history of the Cold War that followed. It all has a certain symmetry to it -- like bookends. The victory celebrations sit there on our collective history bookshelf, framing the last fifty years so nicely that nobody much wants to touch the actual books anymore, for fear of damaging the display. More importantly, despite the fall of the "evil empire," the US still has its New World Order to protect and extend, and historical mythology is a very useful tool to further those ends. So, for the last ten years, instead of history, we got a parade of triumphalism. The historical experience of the struggle against fascism -- its massive toll in human life -- has been diluted, de-historicized, re-packaged, and sold at enormous profit as a mass-produced spectacle glorifying The Nation -- I cannot think of a better tribute to Hitler, or worse insult to those who fought him.

I mention all of this by way of introduction to the point that we are viewing the current crisis through the prism of this recent WWII celebration. The glaring white light of the present has been

refracted into a Technicolor package of fictional past -- "our" Pearl Harbor. The suicide attacks on the WTC were so cinematic, and Congress and television talking heads so quick to make analogies to Pearl Harbor, that for a moment it seemed like the most cynical publicity stunt in history. Instead of placing corporate products in the movies, the geniuses in the studios were placing their product, Pearl Harbor, in the news to boost lagging late-summer ticket sales. To use some corporate-speak, the "synergies" between the news division and the entertainment division -- between commodity and reality -- had already been explored extensively by Tom Brokaw for the past couple of years, as he nightly plugged *The Greatest Generation*, a profit generator for both Brokaw and NBC, as "news."

The blurred lines between the communication of historical knowledge and the exchange of entertainment commodities may strike some as trivial, but in those blurred lines I think we see the intellectual disarming of citizens. While on the one hand, we are encouraged to view "America's New War" through the prism of a freshly re-mythologized story of World War II, we are, on the other hand, admonished to ignore all history before September 11th. The nostalgia machine's products fit seamlessly into this project. They offer history as a combination of trivial detail (vintage 1941 uniforms, perfect replicas of Japanese fighter planes) and simplistic moral lessons about good and evil, and national solidarity. Ordinary people do not act in these renditions; they fulfill destinies. The stories are not histories, but spectacular timeless fables.

As a teacher and historian, I am greatly disturbed by these developments. Since September 11, students and others have asked me, as if following a script, if I thought their "generation" was capable of making the sacrifices that the "greatest generation" had. Are we unified enough? Are we good enough to defeat The Enemy? These are the questions our recent experience with history has taught us to ask. To many people, history offers little in the way of understanding, critique, or (horrors!) a tool for active participation in decisions. Their experiences as consumers of the past have trained them well in their roles as consumers of the present, consumers of the destinies that others have laid out for them. But what do we expect when this has been the cultural drumbeat of the past decade? As Tom Brokaw says of his greatest generation, "They didn't complain." The implication here is that, of course, neither will we.

In recent weeks, this language of uncomplaining unity and sacrifice has entered the discourse surrounding the so-called war on terrorism. I must say it has a forced sound to it. But forced or not, this call for unity and sacrifice is already taking its cues from those nostalgic recollections of WWII. Just this morning, a story on NPR from Springfield, Missouri explicitly made the comparison between WWII and now, and the interviewees dutifully voiced their willingness to live up to the example of their implanted memories. Some of this has descended to the level of just plain pathetic, as when one interviewee solemnly declared how many thousands of dollars he had spent in his patriotic effort to keep the economy afloat in our nation's time of need. Talk about synergy! Perhaps he will complete the circuit by spending all his money on war movies.

At the risk of seeming cold, let us leave aside for this article the connections between the nostalgia machine and the enormous toll the people of Afghanistan are paying for the protection of "our interests" in their neighborhood. I want to argue that this constant rhetorical connection to a particular narrative of selfless sacrifice on the home front in World War II is dangerous not only for the people of Afghanistan, but also for the rights and hard won gains of workers here in the United States. It seems that some folks are using the good will and unity of the American people in the face of massive death at the WTC to try to force through their own reactionary political agendas. They equate the "war on terrorism" with WWII and argue for an equal level of sacrifice, which translates into an acquiescence to their agenda. The implications of this are obvious and

ominousthe endless war on terrorism means eternal sacrifice.

We have seen this already when the Minnesota public workers went on strike in the weeks following the attacks. Jesse Ventura called in the National Guard to, as the news reports put it, "help out," in public facilities. In defense of calling in the National Guard, veterans administrator Pam Barrows, in a Minnesota Public Radio interview immediately appealed to the emergency, saying that now when the nation is pulling together following the terrorist attacks, it is not the time to strike. To Barrows, the workers shouldn't have struck because "Our world changed on September 11th. And with the economic downturn, the fact that we're basically at war - I just was extremely disappointed that something wasn't worked out."

How a war in Afghanistan in any way bears on the issues of a public employee dispute in Minnesota is beyond me, but there it is. Minnesota's governor, Jesse Ventura, also intimated that striking at this moment was somehow anti-American; of course Ventura is against the public employees' right to strike anyway. It is, he says, "a philosophical viewpoint I have." Ventura's public relations efforts to tie the strike to the war by calling in the National Guard to scab, especially to work in veterans facilities, strikes me as a particularly cynical ploy. Publicity stunt or no, this action should have been condemned in no uncertain terms. But the PR campaign seemed to work; a poll found that over half of respondents felt it was "wrong for state employees to be on strike now." The strikers went back to work after two weeks with, as far as I could tell, merely face-saving gains (Asking for 5% and offered 3%, one union settled for 3.5%). No one I read suggested that perhaps the state of Minnesota, in this time of war, ought show some patriotic solidarity with its employees and give in to their demands.

Just a few decades ago, after thousands upon thousands of strikes and job actions over the course of a century and more, the US government officially recognized the rights of workers to organize and strike. One would think workers would be wary of an institution so late to the game. Since then, the folks at all levels of government seem to be of the belief that they "gave" workers the right to strike and therefore have the right to take it away. I hate to speculate, but I would say that a great many workers think this as well. Even in the best of times, the failure of workers to recognize their own inalienable power to shape their world by refusing to shape the world spells serious trouble, but these are not the best of times.

How can teachers of history address this problem? Well, I think a large part of the problem comes from the way teachers themselves have approached the latest wave of WWII nostalgia. I must admit that although I never embraced the cultural memory machine, I felt somewhat ambivalent; after all, these movies and books exposed people to history, right? That must be good. We have accepted it without much critique. But such productions encourage us to be consumers of history, not makers of it. This is not only an abdication of our responsibilities to present needs, but also a disservice to our students' counterparts in the past, who despite admonitions of their leaders (and probably their history teachers) made their own history. In times of peace, when all this seems more or less academic, it is all quite easy to dismiss, but in times of war (perhaps especially phantom wars like this one), when one hears stories of kids lining up to enlist and bloodthirsty calls for a crusade in the Middle East, it is not an exaggeration to say that it becomes a matter of life and death.

Here, perhaps some history of WWII is instructive as an antidote to our leaders' scornful (and worse) reactions to those who would have the nerve to continue their demands for a just and democratic world in a time of declared national emergency. I think it is safe to say that in World War II, the language of patriotism and unity was at a much higher pitch than it is even today.

Then, like now, workers were urged to sacrifice for the common good. And sacrifice they did; they left their homes and moved to cities to work in factories; they rationed their food and other essentials; they worked harder than ever before; and they went to war and died by the hundreds of thousands. Were they unified? Indeed, people were unified like never before in wartime. World War II was undoubtedly the United States' most popular war.

But let's not go too far here. The United States was not the fictional fascist world of the nostalgia machine's dreams; it was not a mass of individuals submitting themselves to the service of the nation. Government leaders called for unity and equality of sacrifice in World War II, but what those words would mean was fought out on the ground. And in that fight other words were used; like goon, stooge, toady, and war profiteer. Within a world of shrill patriotism, many people still demanded a just world and dared to think that that was what they were fighting for. Because while millions made selfless sacrifices, some were making sacrifices of others.

This fight over the meaning of war-time sacrifice was also a fight over the shape of the post-war world at home. This was a constant struggle during WWII. One of the most important moments in this struggle began in the cold of late December 1942, among a group of anthracite coal miners in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Organized labor, as represented by the CIO and the AFL, had agreed to a No Strike Pledge for the duration of the war, but miners in Pennsylvania chafed under these restrictions and they revolted. Their strike began as a wildcat over, of all things, an increase in dues, but it also quickly came to challenge the national bargaining structure set up by the National War Labor Board.

In the early months of the war, workers suffered from a rising cost of living and progressively more dangerous working conditions. Meanwhile, the government had set wage and price policies that ensured enormous profits for corporations while capping workers' wage raises to halt inflation. A particular sore point was the Little Steel Formula. This referred to a July 1942 deal brokered by the NWLB between the Little Steel companies and the United Steel Workers which basically capped raises for the duration of the war in return for the union's right to receive a closed shop. This became the precedent by which the NWLB would make future decisions. Here is the rhetoric of equal sacrifice in action. As patriotic dollar-a-year men of corporate America reaped the profits of government contracts often filled in new government-built plants (paid for in large part by the subscription to war bonds by workers), every effort by unions to increase workers' pay would be ridiculed as unpatriotic and greedy. And when workers themselves demanded more pay and more power on the shop floor, union leaders were expected to patriotically discipline them. John L. Lewis, head of the United Mine Workers, summed up the sham of the Little Steel Formula and its appeal to patriotism as "a policy . . . that fattens industry and starves labor, and then call[s] upon labor patriotically to starve."

Lewis was no saint; he quickly crushed the leadership of the wildcat strikes in the Pennsylvania coal fields. But he recognized that he could not control his membership forever; the miners demanded better pay and they would have it. Here too, we see the reality of wartime sacrifice. Their cost of living in some areas had doubled, while the operators were making huge profits. And in their efforts to produce more coal, the miners in 1943 suffered a casualty rate that was higher than that of the US armed forces (many of whom, of course, were miners as well). Lewis also recognized that the power of the CIO and AFL laborites who now had a "seat at the table," helping direct the economic affairs of the nation, rested with the very thing they had traded to get that seat -- the strike. Lewis had no particular faith in government action, and neither did the miners.

Some 416,000 coal miners officially struck four times in 1943. Some 200,000 struck in several unauthorized wildcats. And these were no public worker strikes in Minnesota, either; they were strikes in a key war industry in the middle of the biggest war ever. Again, here is the reality of WWII unity. Each time they struck, the union had negotiated agreements with the coal operators only to have those agreements rejected by the NLRB. Each time they struck, the President and Congress and the Press howled that they were being held hostage by an arrogant labor boss who was duping his members into undermining the war effort. FDR even had troops seize the mines and threatened to draft strikers and use more troops to mine the coal. Lewis famously retorted that "you cannot mine coal with bayonets," and he was right. He came back with more too -- hardly the words of patriotic unity the strikes, claimed Lewis were "the unanimous protest of men who were tired of serving as guinea pigs for Washington's campus theorists, and sick of sabotage and double crossing."

In the end, the coal miners won, not through the efforts of their representatives in government, but through their own solidarity -- their refusal to work. Through various mechanisms they got a nearly 30% raise, obliterating the Little Steel Formula. Despite all the blather about aiding the enemy, these strikes never threatened the nation's supply of coal. In fact, the strikes amounted to twelve lost days, and the miners produced 590 million tons in 1943, a record. The miners of 1943 had a hand in their own history; they helped define the meaning of wartime sacrifice. They did not wait for some benevolent government or corporate agency to define it for them and feed it to them. They ignored the name-calling from those who profited from their misery. They rejected the agenda of reactionaries. They called them profiteers and worse. And they won. But more than that, the struggles of the miners in 1943 inspired others to do the same. Workers all over the country refused to abdicate to their bosses and the government their power over the meaning of patriotism and solidarity and sacrifice. In 1943, there were 3,700 strikes, and in 1944, a record-setting 5,000 strikes. Did this mean that these workers supported Hitler? Such a question is absurd.

So to bring it back to today and our current crisis, what is to be done? All of us, history teachers especially, need to engage in an important political project -- reclaiming our history. Right now, we need a knowledge of history to help us make history. This is not just about helping ourselves or our students become smarter, more well-rounded people (although that's nice). Instead, this is about stopping a viciously reactionary agenda at home, as right now, in the name of patriotism, our leaders are pouring billions into the airline and insurance industries and planning much more. This is also about stopping a bombing campaign in Afghanistan, and a long, nebulous, phantom war in the near future that will wrap itself in those warm memories of WWII greatness. Right now, as we are hypnotized by the waving flags and the calls for unity and nationalism, capital, that flagless, state-less, disintegrator of all, is securing its domination of ever larger areas of the world. Mark Twain wrote a long time ago of the big lie; the national lie; the "lie of silent assertion"; the never-spoken lie that says that nothing is happening that people of conscience should be duty bound to try to stop. I feel like our leaders are stockpiling such lies right now, readying themselves for an onslaught against perhaps a fourth of the world's population that we will be asked to ignore. Our leaders are well-practiced at doing this, and sadly, so are we. But historical knowledge can help us; it says the lie and then refutes it. History offers citizens a tool to participate in decision-making -- to be active, democratic citizens. This is the danger of history and the reason why people worked so hard to fix the early nostalgia machinery. Active citizens do not consume "freedom and democracy;" they build democracies, exercise freedoms, and they shape history.

# Standards: The Aggressive Push For Power and Control

John F. Medina

I really enjoyed reading One Size Fits Few by Susan Ohanian. She has a style that is both informative and witty. In this book, Ohanian makes a strong case against the Standards movement which seems to have overtaken the education establishment here in the U.S. In the introduction to her book she says, "... it is my moral duty to offer a counterargument to people who would try to streamline, sanitize, and standardize education." This book is also an urgent call to teachers to arise and unveil the dubious agenda of the Standards movement-- "Standardistos offer a viciousness that must be laid bare. With Standardistos storming the media ramparts, teachers cannot maintain their preferred role of closing their doors and keeping quiet."

In many respects, Ohanian's call has already gone unheeded too long. In the past six years that I have been teaching, I have noticed an unsettling entrenchment by the Standardisto forces within our public school system. About the same time that I started work as a teacher, I was handed a document which outlined a "District Framework" for achieving a standards based curriculum. The district declared that this Trojan-horse of a document was only a "Draft Copy," but one would have to be insufferably naive to believe that the district actually intended to get real input from the teachers before publishing the final version of this document. The district administration, of course, had enough political savvy to schedule standards informational meetings throughout the district. For these meetings, teachers were herded into large auditoriums and were ushered into seats as if awaiting a movie feature presentation. Without knowing it, the teachers had been politely coerced into sitting quietly as the administrators prepared to unleash a barrage of pro-standards propaganda. For starters, the administrators employed a familiar divide and conquer technique. A few known Standardisto teachers were asked to sit on top of the auditorium stage, so when the auditorium was hushed, these Standardisto teachers promptly started giving their pro-standards testimonials. Essentially, the "special" teachers on stage started to tell the "regular" teachers in the audience what it really takes to have an authentic "conversion experience" into the standards movement. The "regular" teachers had been reduced to being mere spectators pliantly exposed to a glossy multimedia show which advertised the merits of a standards based curriculum. After some time, an administrator finally grabbed the mike and fervently sermonized the audience with statements like- "We must do it for the children!" and "We must all learn to put children first!" and "We must insist on holding everybody to high standards!" In One Size Fits Few, Ohanian described this Standardisto self-righteousness perfectly when she satirically said, "Anybody who sets himself up as the savior of culture and literacy is of course, on the side of the angels." Needless to say, during the meeting, the district strategists definitely achieved a new standard in the area of tawdry salesmanship. Towards the end of the meeting, an administrator, in a hushed tone, finally said that the meeting was now open for questions or comments. Predictably, at that point, nobody wanted to take the risk of looking like a teacher with low standards, so only a few teachers sheepishly made some comments. It was my first year as a teacher, but even then, I had a good idea about the ultimate meaning of this meeting. This meeting gave me a small but potent glimpse of the meanness and indoctrination that was to come in the name of standards.

After staging the aforementioned propaganda campaigns, the district could then claim that it had consulted with the teachers and that it had received input from them. Thus, it then moved quickly to finalize its own version of a standards based curriculum. Not long after, my principal handed me hefty exhaustive documents which detailed district standards for language arts, math, science, social studies, music, and art. There is no doubt, at least in my mind, that the disingenuous administrative bureaucrats were already adding the finishing touches to these documents while still pretending to solicit input from the rank and file body of teachers. Undoubtedly, the district brought in the usual ubiquitous cohort of paid consultants, paid "education experts," and an assortment of other paid opportunists in order to help streamline the

process. Apparently, the first rule of being a paid consultant is to know how to charge a parasitically exorbitant rate so that the district feels that they have hired someone with "high standards." Probably, the second rule of paid consultants is to discourage teacher input because the teachers might make the inexcusable mistake of reminding the district administration that there actually is a real world out there with real schools and real classrooms having real children.

At any rate, leaving teachers out of the actual decision making process is nothing new, and in fact, it is a common occurrence within the education establishment. Sane people could never imagine having a National Medical Summit without first inviting large contingents of practicing doctors to the event. Yet, predictably, from Ohanian's account, it seems that no one raised an eyebrow when practicing teachers were conspicuously missing from the list of invitees to the 1996 National Education Summit. Ohanian states, "Also notably absent from this summit meeting were teachers. Teachers, of course, have good reason to know that CEOs, politicians, think tank scholars, and media pundits may not be the best people to decide what needs to go on in classrooms across America, particularly when they're enshrining testing and social Darwinism." For many years now, the private enterprise propagandistic con artists have been relentlessly trying to convince Americans that public schools can never succeed unless they are run like businesses. Therefore, we should not be surprised to learn that the list of invitees to this National Education Summit seemed like a list of invitees to a National Business Summit. Of course, politicians and business power brokers have always maintained a symbiotic relationship, so again, we should not be surprised that the politicians sniffed the money trail all the way to the National Education Summit. Ohanian states, "The Planning Committee included the governors of Wisconsin, Nevada, Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, and North Carolina, as well as business leaders from IBM, AT&T, Bell South, Eastman Kodak, Procter & Gamble, and Boeing. Participants included governors and business executives from forty-three states."

The reality is that hidden behind every standards document there lies an aggressive push for power and control. As usual, when one investigates any issue having to do with power and control, the usual culprits show up. Ohanian aptly refers to these power mongers when she states, "What I do know is that across the land teachers are bowing to the pressure of corporate-politico-infotainment pronouncements..." These power brokers know that it is easier to maintain their grip on power if they have access to the lives and minds of school children. In a nutshell, if you can control what is being taught in schools then you have a reasonable chance of controlling the perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of current and future generations. Adolph Hitler knew this simple rule quite well which is why he immediately pounced on the German school system. History teaches us that people who are fixated on the pursuit of wealth, power, and status are usually weak-willed when it comes to issues of social and economic equality and justice. Ohanian states, "Politicians, corporate leaders, media pundits, and education entrepreneurs don't talk about social responsibility." Ohanian also mentions that they don't talk about compassion or caring. More concretely, Ohanian states, "It is morally bankrupt to cooperate with politicians and corporate CEOs in preaching 'world-class standards' while burying the real problems of political malfeasance, corporate greed, and the shocking number of children living in poverty under a cloud of semantic obfuscation. Such tactics lead to the deforming rather than the reforming of educational opportunity."

Closely connected with the aforementioned concept of power is the use of propaganda to encourage the idea that the "corporate-politico-infotainment" people are involved in the Standards movement only because they have the best of intentions and that they just want to make sure that our children are prepared for the jobs of the future. The California State Department of Education reveals this behind the scenes propaganda machine when, according to Ohanian, it states that it has created standards that reflect "the knowledge and skills necessary for California's work force to be competitive in the global, information-based economy of the 21st century." A simple translation of the Department's corporate sponsored jargonistic statement is--- start marching to our drum now or risk sentencing your child to a future of unemployment lines, or still worse, welfare lines. As an antidote to the Department's global market capitalist sentimentality, parents would be wise to listen to Ohanian when she declares, "To barter the present lives of young children for some promise of future job security is a delusion and a fraud." Ohanian mentions a book entitled, Shell Game: Corporate America's Agenda for Schools by Clinton Boutwell.



Ohanian states, "Its (Boutwell's book's) premise, documented with lots of facts and figures, is that, contrary to the claims of big business, U.S. schools and colleges are producing lots of well-qualified graduates, but there aren't enough high-paying jobs to go around. Boutwell says that business executives like Gerstner want educators to produce more and more students with high-tech skills, building a large labor pool from which he and his cronies can choose 'the pick of the litter' and pay them low wages." Furthermore, Ohanian states, "Soon after receiving his signing bonus, Gerstner fired 90,000 of IBM's 270,000 employees, the same kind of highly-trained workers he insists the schools aren't producing."

In addition to the above mentioned fraud, one of the dangers of the Standards movement is that it has the potential to destroy whatever joy of learning still remains at the elementary school level. Ohanian states, "... across the land teachers are bowing to the pressure of corporate-politico-infotainment pronouncements: They are eliminating recess and putting away the building blocks, the tempera paints, and the picture books ... They are bringing out the skill drill worksheets..." As a school teacher, I am personally aware of meanness of the Standards regime. In my district, classroom parties were outlawed because, ostensibly, they do not fit under any standard. Fieldtrips must also fit under grade-level standards or they risk being canceled. Administrators have told us that every lesson must be tied to a standard. Technically, even bulletin boards must be based on the standards. At one point, administrators even suggested that we make enlarged copies of standards statements and post them throughout the room. Teachers finally had the sense to object when administrators began to enter classrooms to ask children if they knew what standard was being taught at that moment. Then came all the talk about "aligning" the standards, the curriculum, and the SAT9 standardized test. For teachers that are aware of code talk, this means "teach to the test and forget everything else." Of course, the ultimate losers of all this madness are the children. Ohanian states, "What I do understand is that the trickle-down theory of academic competitiveness and preparing kids for their SAT's means that kindergartners no longer have time to play. Maine, heretofore regarded as a state with a sane and sensible education system, now has standards with 178 indicators for kindergarten success."

Part of what is fueling this insanity is that the Standardistos do not really trust teachers. In the minds of the Standards-based obsessive compulsives, teachers are not deemed as professionals worthy of respect. We are crudely perceived as simple technocrats who can manipulate "variables" all day long in order to "cause" learning to occur. Even worse, in the eyes of some Standards mongers, such as University of Houston professor Barbara Foorman, teachers are even lower than technocrats. In Foorman's opinion, the teachers themselves can be viewed as variables to be manipulated by someone else. According to Ohanian, at a Reading Summit, Foorman arrogantly stated, "The teacher variable does not contribute significantly above and beyond the curriculum, so what we have here is a powerful mathematical model." Ohanian counters by stating, "This tenet cuts to the core of the Standardistos argument: Choose the right technique/text/program and any teacher can deliver it. Call me paranoid, but isn't the next step reducing costs by getting an aide to deliver the material?"

In the end, I believe that the Standards movement carries within it the seeds of its own destruction. The bottom line is that it promises way more than it can deliver. It props itself up as a panacea for our problems without having to address the real issues of injustice, inequality, and corruption that exist in our social/political/economic system. Under the velvet glove of the Standards movement lies a corporate iron fist which is intent on snatching our children and feeding them to the industrial-military machine. Ohanian sounds the battle call for teachers, "... we teachers can resist the Standardisto imperative that would turn us into train conductors, programmed to keep our students operating on an ideal schedule devised by a complicity of politicians and bureaucrats. As teachers, we must resist much."

## Education Majors Can Fight

Kathleen McNulty & Stacey Silvestri

There is always some bandwagon that education seems to jump onto. Unfortunately, sometimes when the majority is in support of the same system, there is a loss of objectivity. They are unable to see both the good and the bad because they are anxious to have developed the "perfect" system. You don't have to be an educator, but simply a citizen who reads the newspaper or watches the news, to realize that the newest bandwagon is high-stakes testing. In fact those who are parents or have some involvement in a child's life are most likely seeing the change occurring in the school they are involved with. Some people may argue that testing has always been done. So what is different now?

The difference is that now testing (in the form of "high-stakes" testing) is leaving dangerous aftereffects. The end result that may come leaves one even more wary.

So, what exactly is high-stakes testing? Is there an exact definition? Personally we believe that one may describe what high-stakes testing is. But, it is more important and more effective to emphasize the unfair strategies high-stakes testing utilizes as well as the disturbing effects it is causing.

High-stakes testing is an assessment of students, which carries serious consequences for students or educators. If the student passes, they proceed. If they do not pass, they must repeat the level they are currently at. Why do some people think high-stakes testing is the answer? What are the effects of high-stakes testing? Are there alternatives to high-stakes testing? Fortunately, these are some of the questions we have addressed in this article.

High-stakes testing has been implemented in order to "raise the bar for all students and add accountability for academic performance" (Tennessee Department of Education). Many states implement the tests so that they can gather information about student achievement over time. Policy makers have good intentions in that they believe that these tests will improve education. The major goal and hope is that setting high standards of achievement will inspire greater effort on the part of students, teachers, and educational administrators (AERA position statement).

As stated previously, many policy makers have good intentions when they implement high-stakes testing. We are not pointing fingers at who is bad and who is good. We are simply pointing out the fact that perhaps the policy makers and society as a whole need to reevaluate what we want from our education system. Children should be focusing on the "how" involved with learning instead of the "what". The education system they are provided with should focus on teaching them how to be lifelong learners. High-stakes testing only succeeds in instructing children on how to take the next test they will be faced with. It only leads to short-term success for the children who can do well on the tests.

The effects of high-stakes testing on children, parents, teachers, and administration are very harsh. Students are put in a very stressful situation. A student's ability, knowledge, and overall worth should not be determined by a multiple-choice test. To emphasize this point simply examine this statement, "Reactions to the failures of students to meet the standards are varied, ranging from blaming the teachers for poor preparation and inadequate instructional strategies, to blaming the principals for inadequate or inappropriate instructional leadership, to blaming parents for improper childbearing strategies and lack of involvement with the school, to blaming students for lack of motivation and for watching too much TV, to blaming publishing companies, to blaming schools for poorly developed curricula (Neve, 460)." It seems as though there are a lot of people to blame. In fact the blame has been placed on everyone. The odd thing is that the blame is being placed everywhere except on the assessment.

Blaming really doesn't solve anything. Although it is understandable that people take that approach. They are running around scared for the children. But, they are not looking directly at the thing that is causing

the problems?—high-stakes testing. Perhaps it is simply because testing has been around for so long that people are not recognizing that they are the problem. But, they must realize that an assessment that carries such serious consequences is not really a fair system. If people would look deeper, they might not be in such support for high-stakes testing. Is it hard to see why high-stakes testing might not work?

High-stakes testing determines whether an individual passes or fails, graduates or stays in high school another year, goes to college or doesn't get in because of a poor test grade. Policy makers and the public are being misled by spurious test score increases that are unrelated to fundamental educational movement. Should the overriding goal of education be high-test scores, rather than learning (AERA position statement)? The way society is being influenced it seems as though many people feel that way. But, the question is how does this system become ingrained in society and become the "standard" way for the majority of people to think?

In the beginning it is usually the superintendent, school board member, or other influential member in a school who decides to ignore the negative effects of standards. In essence they ignore the fact that teachers become technicians and are forced to follow exact guidelines that they are controlled by. They ignore the children who suffer from the tests because they simply can't compete with the rest of the children. They ignore the fact that students are unable to construct their own learning. Alfie Kohn points out, "When teachers are told exactly what and how to teach, when they feel pressured to produce results, they in turn tend to pressure their students. That is exactly what another study found: teachers who felt controlled became more controlling, removing virtually any opportunities for students to direct their own learning (The same thing is on display in corporations: the middle managers who are most rigidly controlled by top executives tend to do the same to their subordinates) (Kohn, 1999)." The schools are turned in looking more like businesses.

The next thing that influential member does is to give the tests more often and get more publicity by distributing test scores, Educators care because they are forced to care. If their students don't do well, they are punished. The students can be punished as well for low-test scores. This is more of a scare tactic than a form of motivation. People cease to be motivated from the inside and instead focus on the outer forces of test scores.

In reality test scores are not indicators of a person's worth. They are indicators of how affluent a person's family is and their economic background. Teachers who administer the tests one year are held accountable (or punished) for the educational background their children have had in the previous years they did not have that teacher. More money is given to those schools who produce high-test scores instead of to the schools who would benefit most from the money. It leads to teaching to the test because in order to keep their jobs teachers need the students to do well on the tests (Kohn, 1999).

After discussing these horrible and damaging effects of high-stakes testing, many people may feel that there is no hope. They may question what we can do in a system that is so clearly controlled. The good news is that there are steps to take. But, the road is not easy and there are obstacles ahead. A person must be clearly decisive in order to proceed. If decided, we have included some strategies that will be informative and helpful.

First of all, do your research. We have produced a web site that will provide links to research and books to look into. It also provides you with strategies to take. With easy access to the Internet you can do your research there. Most local libraries can help. You can use that research to help influence your school superintendent and/or state legislators. Alfie Kohn, a renowned author of many books about standardized testing, suggests that a survey be done in the school. He states that, "A group of psychologists at the University of Michigan have found it useful to ask these questions:

Do the tests improve students' motivation? Do parents understand the results? Do teachers think that the tests measure the curriculum fairly? Do administrators use the results wisely? How much money is spent on assessment and related services? How much time do teachers spend preparing students for various

tests? Do the media report the data accurately and thoroughly? Our surveys suggest that many districts will be shocked to discover the degree of dissatisfaction among stakeholders. (Kohn, 1999)"

It is a person's right and responsibility to look into these questions. Is it not right to support something you don't know much about? Just because everyone else is doing it, doesn't make it right! Teachers may have to prepare the students for the tests but then get back to the real teaching. There may be different ways to develop learning the information for the tests where students are more involved with the construction of learning. We should all be working on developing alternatives and not becoming too content with the high-stakes system.

Teachers, administrators, parents, and children should become part of the effort to phase out high-stakes testing. They have to create alliances in order to do this. They can ignore the media publicity of high-scores on tests. They can educate other people on the fact that high-scores do not indicate the worth of the education a child is getting. They can lobby for changes. They can create enthusiasm for the community instead of for the grades.

It takes courage to take any of these steps because you will be going against the majority. It will be worth taking a stand. We are supposed to do no harm to our children. How can we continue to stand silently by while this high-stakes system continues? To stand silently and not cause waves is not worth the destruction that will come (and already has) to the children if changes are not made. It is your responsibility as a citizen and we put our faith in you.

Please visit, <http://www.education.cortland.edu/~slekart/silmcnweb/spashscreen.html> for a comprehensive strategy.

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# **Bertell Ollman's How to Take an Exam...And Remake the World: Marked Down**

By Alan Haskvitz

After three readings of Bertell Ollman's, *How to Take an Exam...and Remake the World*, I have come to the conclusion that this is an extended essay on political science and not really a book that offers significant insights into assessment. The few ideas brought into the mix about evaluation are interesting, but hardly worth the battle.

Starting with the interesting title, which should draw the attention of all standardized test plagued administrators in the US of A, and if you can overlook a cover, designed by his son, Raoul Ollman, that should challenge the artistic, this book contains a series of opinions extracted from carefully chosen selections of works to offer readers a good dose of sardonic humor in the author's quest to bring political thinking into more close alignment with his views. (Yes, the author uses this type of sentence structure.)

Always seeking to be witty, Ollman best sums up the contents of his work by asking the reader to answer one question: "How many capitalists does it take to screw in a light bulb?" It is not that his one accepted answer is not clever, but it violates most of his beliefs. He offers you a grade, which, in a way, is a form of capitalism, a form of existence that in decries at length, and through the years, needs work. He dislikes the concept of grades because they obviously create classes of achievement. This process thus promotes an atmosphere of differences rather than togetherness. And, yet, he offers you either an F or a future of bliss on his "final."

As an objective, Ollman wants this book to be of value to helping young people improve their skills in remaking the world and taking an exam. I don't know what Ollman meant by young people, but having taught every grade level and in several countries, I can only assume that he meant college students with SAT scores over 1200.

He is not trying to hide his agenda from the reader. Indeed, he writes that in his 35 years as a professor he has acquired a great deal of "exam lore" and then adds, "But, to tell you the truth, I don't feel any strong urge to share it with you. That's the problem. What I really would like to do is tell you about capitalism, the system by which we produce and distribute the wealth of our society, but I suspect that most of you could care less about what I have to say on this topic. Yet, you'd probably like to hear my exam advice."

To get additional input, I wrote to a professor who recommended this book for an education class and was told by this *New Yorker* that it was done in the interest of broadening a student's insights. She failed to elaborate further, but based on her recommendation I can safely say that it has value at the university level.

Perhaps it's Ollman's self-serving sardonic sense of humor that keeps the reader from having access to a table of contents. Anyway, despite being chock full of interesting tidbits and cartoons, I found the real meat of his book difficult to dislodge from the a light typeface and capricious flow of data. For example, he explains that on essay exams it is best to take your time to get organized before starting to write in the first sentence of the paragraph. In the last sentence he tells you not to be too confined by the outline that you took time to establish. In the middle he states, "As someone—I can't recall who—once remarked, writing is a 'raid on the inarticulate'." I believe that paragraph is typical of how Ollman organizes his insights. His style definitely requires your attention.

The fact that Ollman's book has been marked down to around by various Internet sellers from the suggested list price of \$19.99 perhaps gives credence to Professor Ollman's personal questioning of the capitalist system.

Ollman must have had a great deal of fun writing this work and, with his reputation for poking holes in conservative philosophies, should draw readers looking for fodder to support their causes. In addition, if you want to challenge your students or yourself to an interesting read with the above caveat I would recommend it highly. If you are interested in improving test taking skills there are other resources that are better documented and better organized.

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# Democracy and Miseducation

## Book Review of Chomsky on Miseducation

By E. Wayne Ross

Chomsky, Noam. *Chomsky on Miseducation*. Edited with an introduction by Donaldo Macedo. (Lanham, Maryland: Roman and Littlefield, 2000), 199 pp., \$19.95, cloth.

The central concern of democratic theories of all types is how people can have the information, knowledge, and forums for communication and debate necessary to govern their own lives effectively. Schools and the media are the key mediums in the pursuit of a democratic society, and if these systems undermine democracy then it becomes “difficult to conceive of a viable democratic society.”<sup>[1]</sup>

*Chomsky on Miseducation*, the first book to systematically collect Chomsky’s writings on education, provides a penetrating analysis of how schools miseducate students in the name of “democracy” as well as offering readers useful prescriptions for change. In his typical fashion, Chomsky’s analysis situates the particulars of classroom teaching and learning in relation the broader contexts of neoliberalism, capitalist democracy, and global technological change. In building a broad understanding of our educational needs, Chomsky links the primacy of responsible media with the role of schools and universities in the effort to achieve a democratic society.

Chomsky’s analysis of US schools is particularly relevant in light of the current assault of test-driven educational reforms on progressive forms of education. While Chomsky does not specifically discuss current education reform efforts—such as George W. Bush’s education plan, which intensifies both high-stakes testing and state regulation of what is taught in schools—his critique is a useful tool. Second, and relatedly, *Chomsky On Miseducation*, rescues John Dewey’s democratic education legacy from neoliberals such as Richard Rorty.<sup>[2]</sup> Chomsky highlights Dewey’s democratic radicalism, particularly in relation to education.

Chomsky reaffirms Dewey’s observation that the principle obstacle to achieving democratic education (and thus a democratic society) is the powerful alliance of class privilege with philosophies of education that sharply divide the mind and body, theory and practice, culture and utility.<sup>[3]</sup> In Dewey’s day, and still today, prevailing educational practice is the actualization of the philosophy of profoundly antidemocratic thinkers. One of the major stumbling blocks in efforts to create democratic schools and society has been the tendency for educators to fall prey to an ideology of neutrality, that is, the belief that advocacy in teaching is to be avoided—a tendency that encourages passivity in learning and undermines inquiry as a key classroom activity. Even preeminent progressive educators have become “weak kneed” over teaching against the status quo, as can be seen in the debates from the 1930s over indoctrination and counter-indoctrination in education.<sup>[4]</sup>

With this background in mind, it is notable that Donaldo Macedo begins his introduction to *Chomsky on Miseducation* by describing the paradoxical tensions that schools in so-called free and open societies face today. On one hand, schools are charged with the responsibility of teaching the virtues of democracy and on the other they are complicit with—indeed play a primary role in the construction of—the inherent hypocrisy of contemporary democracies. Democracy, as a term is used in schools and society today refers to what Noam Chomsky has described as:

A system of government in which elite elements based in the business community control the state by virtue of their dominance of the private society, while the population observes quietly. So understood,

democracy is a system of elite decision making and public ratification...Correspondingly, popular involvement in the formation of public policy is considered a serious threat.[\[5\]](#)

Nowhere is this form of “democracy” more clear than in the latest wave of educational reform. Since the mid-1980s, discussions about how we might reform schools have been dominated by a discourse of decline, which has produced a search for the “magic bullet” to save public schools.[\[6\]](#) A combination of crisis rhetoric, unduly simplified conceptions of the problems schools face, and policy elites working to protect their own political and ideological interests has yielded a series of one-dimensional proposals intended to save the public schools including: vouchers, technology, and now, curriculum standards and high-stakes tests.

In this context, *Chomsky on Miseducation* is an important tool for the analysis of the antidemocratic effects of current educational policies and practices. Much of what is found in this volume draws on Chomsky’s previous critiques (from the late 1980s to the late 1990s) of American democracy and neoliberal economic policies, however, his analysis as applied to institutions and processes of education illuminates both the oppressive and liberatory possibilities of schooling.[\[7\]](#)

In the 1999 interview that opens the book, Chomsky describes the deep level of indoctrination that takes place in schools. “Because they don’t teach the truth about the world,” Chomsky argues, “schools have to rely on beating students over the head with propaganda about democracy.” Like the media, schools succeed in “domesticating” youth by operating within a propaganda framework that has the effect of distorting or suppressing unwanted ideas and information.

This domestication takes place as part of the tacit or “hidden” curriculum of schools (e.g., questions that are not asked; content that is not taught; assumptions that are never questioned), however, it is also a bold part of the explicit curriculum of schools, especially in social studies classes. Take, for example, the role of schools as described in *Magruder’s American Government*—for many years one of the most widely used high school textbooks—where in a chapter ironically titled “Government By the People” we learn that,

[F]rom the very first day schools teach children the values of the American political system. They very purposely work to indoctrinate the young and train them to become young citizens. School children salute the flag, recite the pledge of allegiance, and sing patriotic songs. They learn about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln and other great figures of the past...high school students’ political knowledge is refined, often through textbooks such as this one.[\[8\]](#)

Many teachers and the majority of textbooks reinforce historical myths that lead to a skewed and simplified version of America’s past and that obscure the racial and economic inequalities of the present.[\[9\]](#) As a result, students are rarely taught to think critically about the world. In fact, the function of schools according to Chomsky “is to keep people from asking questions that matter about important issues that directly affect them and others.”

At the heart of Chomsky’s description of miseducation is his, by now somewhat familiar yet still profound, account of thought control in democratic society, in which schools play an important role.

[T]he media, the schools, and popular culture are divided into those who have rationality, and are the planners and the decision-makers in the society, and the rest of the people. And to be successful, those who have rationality and join the specialized class have to create “necessary illusions” and “emotionally potent oversimplifications,” in Reinhold Niebuhr’s words, to keep the “bewildered herd”—the naïve simpleton—from being bothered with the complexity of real problems that they couldn’t solve anyway. The goal is to keep people isolated from real issues and from each other...Questions that are offensive and embarrassing to the doctrinal system are off-limits. Information that is inconvenient is suppressed.

A concrete example of this process is the current movement known as standards-based educational reform (SBER). SBER exemplifies how elites manufacture crises (e.g., the widespread failure of public



education) and consent (e.g., the way to save public education is through standardized schools driven by high-stakes tests). SBER is the product of three “National Education Summits,” which brought governors and corporate executives together in what has proved to be a successful effort to hijack the content and instruction of public schools to serve elite interests. A prime example of how neoliberal democracy works to thwart meaningful participation of the many by allowing the few to speak for all, SBER is a scheme in which states regulate the knowledge taught in schools through the application of curriculum standards, while segregating and disciplining students (and teachers) via the strict accountability mechanism of high-stakes tests.[\[10\]](#)

The objective appearance of standards-based reforms, which aim to reform schools by focusing on test scores, conceals (partially) the fact that these reforms are the result of deepening economic inequality and racial segregation, which are typically coupled with authoritarianism. For example, in Chicago, public schools have been militarized—six schools have been turned in military academies and over 7,000 students in 41 schools are in Junior ROTC—and teachers have been given scripted lessons, keyed to tests, to guide their instruction. In a dramatic shift away from democracy, the Detroit school board was disbanded last year by the Democratic mayor and Republican governor, who then appointed a new board—whose members represent corporate interests and of whom only one has had children in the schools and is a city resident.[\[11\]](#) The primary justification for the seizure of schools in Detroit (and the city hall school seizures in Chicago, Cleveland, and now possibly New York) and the imposition of standardized curriculum has been poor test scores and high dropout rates and the false promises of SBER.

Chomsky offers what counts in this context as an innovative solution to miseducational reform—struggle to teach the truth in the tradition of Dewey and Paulo Freire. He says, “if schools were serving the general public, they would be providing people with techniques of self-defense, but this would mean teaching the truth about the world and society.” Chomsky recalls his own early education in a Deweyan progressive school as one example, a school “where children were encouraged to study and investigate as a process of discovering the truth for themselves....I feel lucky that my school experience was not based on memorizing falsehoods about how wonderful our democracy was.” We know, and Chomsky reiterates, that true learning takes place when students are invited to discover for themselves the nature of democracy and its functions.

Dewey is an important source in turning miseducative schools into educative ones for Chomsky. Described as “a relic of the Enlightenment classical liberal tradition,” Chomsky portrays Dewey as an important source of anarchist ideas in America, particularly emancipatory universalism. Dewey has been vilified by many standards advocates, who blame today’s educational woes on Dewey, which is one of the great ironies of the right’s attack on public education, since Dewey’s ideas have rarely been practiced in schools. Indeed, Dewey’s theory of learning points out that the path of inquiry cannot be merely mental or internal. Knowing involves some doing and active participation that alters existing conditions. This is, of course, one of the reasons why enemies of democracy and democratic are working so hard to strip teachers and local school communities from employing Deweyan methods and running their own affairs.

Chomsky describes Dewey as someone who “opposed the rule of the wise, the onslaught of the Jeffersonian aristocrats.” Dewey understood that “‘politics is the shadow cast on society by big business,’ and as long as this is so, ‘attenuation of the shadow will not change the substance.’” As Dewey argued, so does Chomsky that reforms are of limited utility. Democracy requires that the source of the shadow be removed because private powers undermine democracy and freedom, as we see with current status of media and education. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey argued that workers should be the masters of their own industrial fate. Chomsky notes that Dewey argued it is immoral to train children to work “not freely and intelligently, but for the sake of the work earned,” in which case their activity is “not free because [it is] not freely participated in.”

Chomsky recognizes that Dewey’s conceptions were deeply rooted in a workers movement, holding that industry must be changed from its feudalistic form to a system based on worker control and free association, traditional anarchist ideals with their source in classical liberalism and the Enlightenment.[\[12\]](#) In the 1920s, Dewey argued, “power today resides in control of the means of production, exchange,

publicity, transportation and communication. Whoever owns them rule the life of the country...Business for private profit through private control of banking, land, industry reinforced by command of the press, press agents and other means of publicity and propaganda” is the system that must be unraveled if we are to talk seriously about democracy and freedom. Education, Dewey and Chomsky believe, should lead to the production of free human beings and thus “the means to undermining this absolutist monstrosity.” An educational ideal Chomsky describes “as American as apple pie.”

Public schools in the United States have always been portrayed as the foundation of an informed and enlightened citizenry; the site where students are prepared for active participation in a democratic society. If schools are to actually achieve this role (as opposed to being institutions of indoctrination and propaganda for the status quo), educators need to adopt a language of critique, such as Chomsky offers, and take bold stands against social injustice and the pretense of objectivity that is used as a means to distort and misinform in the service of the doctrinal system. As Chomsky asserts:

It is the intellectual responsibility of teachers—or any honest person, for that matter—to try and tell the truth. That is surely uncontroversial. It is a moral imperative to find out and tell the truth as best one can, about things that matter, to the right audience. It is a waste of time to speak truth to power.... One should seek an audience that matters. In teaching, it is the students. They should not be seen merely as an audience but as part of a community of common concern in which one hopes to participate constructively. We should be speaking not *to* but *with*. That is second nature to any good teacher, and it should be to any writer and intellectual as well. A good teacher knows that the best way to help students learn is to allow them to find the truth by themselves.

Chomsky’s prescription is deceptively simply, for it calls for nothing short of a revolution in the social education students receive in schools today.

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[1] Robert McChesney, “Journalism, Democracy,...and Class Struggle,” *Monthly Review*, vol. 52, no. 6, (November 2000), p. 2.

[2] Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth Century America*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[3] See: Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[4] David W. Hursh and E. Wayne Ross, *Democratic Social Education: Social Studies for Social Change* (New York: Routledge/Falmer, 2000).

[5] Noam Chomsky, *On Power and Ideology*, (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 6.

[6] For an antidote to this discourse see David C. Berliner and Bruce J. Biddle, *The Manufactured Crisis: Myths Fraud and the Attack on America’s Schools*, (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1996).

[7] Essays in this volume include: “Democracy and Education,” originally delivered as a lecture at Loyola University, Chicago in 1994; “The Craft of ‘Historical Engineering,’” a chapter from *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies*. (Boston: South End Press, 1989); “Market Democracy in a Neoliberal Order,” originally delivered as the Davie Lecture at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, in May 1997, and later published in two parts by *Z Magazine* (September/November, 1997); and excerpts of Chomsky’s debate with John Silber, with an editorial introduction by Macedo.

[8] William A. McClenaghan, *Magruder’s American Government*, (Boston: Silver Burdett, & Ginn, 1994), p. 88.

[9] E. Wayne Ross, “Redrawing the Lines: The Case Against Traditional Social Studies Instruction,” in David W. Hursh and E. Wayne Ross, *Democratic Social Education: Social Studies for Social Change*,

(New York: Routledge/Falmer, 2000), pp. 43-63; James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996).

[10] For a more complete description of the origins of SBER see: E. Wayne Ross, "The Spectacle of Standards and Summits," *Z Magazine*, vol. 12, no. 4, (March, 2000), pp. 25-48.

[11] Rich Gibson, "'Pay No Attention to the Man Behind the Curtain': A Critique of Hope," *Theory and Research in Social Education*, vol. 27, No. 4 (Fall 1999), pp. 541-601.

[12] See Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1999), on how much of the Enlightenment project belongs to not just a pre-capitalist, but non-capitalist society, particularly the vision for a general human emancipation.

*Author Note:* E. Wayne Ross is Distinguished University Scholar at the University of Louisville, where he chairs the Department of Teaching and Learning. His most recent book is *The Social Studies Curriculum: Purposes, Problems and Possibilities* (SUNY Press, 2001).

## General Mills

### More Than Just Soggy Cheerios

Jonathan Lee

SUNY-Binghamton

“Here they come! Here they come!” With the first sight of the NYSPSC ‘STOP High-Stakes Testing’ banner, the hoard of media wildly rushed around, grabbing cameras and tripods, pencils and stenopads. The march was here.

Sitting beneath the graphically-graffitied red-croched (yet green bodied) statue in front of the New York Capitol Building, I bore witness to the irony of ironies. Fifteen minutes prior to the main event, a tour group of middle school-aged students walked down the steps of the building. As they lined up before me, I overheard their tour guide lathering their brains with facts about the cost of the capitol building, the date of its completion, the name of the top state officers who played key roles in the development of New York’s (apparently) ‘illustrious’ history. How funny. This type of statistic-oriented learning was precisely what was about to be protested (in the very same locale). The kids were poking each other, pointing at the news ‘celebrities’ in attendance. History - learning - was at the back of their minds. It was *not* funny, but I had to laugh.

As the group of 1500 moved down the right-hand side of the building, another thought entered my mind. A few years back, SUNY-Binghamton played host to the SUNY Board of Trustees. The rumors flew. We all heard about the boardmember who was receiving six-figures from SUNY, but who also was VP of Fleet Bank (another hefty paycheck) - a major conflict-of-interest blunder. True or not true, and needless to say, protest ensued. Students marched on the University President’s office verandah, they marched on the ‘peace quad’, they marched on the vast concrete ocean separating the library from the rest of campus. And, for the most part, the protest was *thoughtless*. By this, I do not mean rude or insensitive. What I mean is, simply, ‘without thought’. Many of the students did not know what they were protesting; they did not understand the meanings of ‘privatization’ or ‘corporatization’, nor did they have a clear notion of how the conflation of the two creates an entirely different monster. They wanted, simply, to *protest*. My favorite sign said it all: ‘Trustees Suck!’ . Come on! Trustees don’t suck - it is what *these particular trustees stand for* that sucks. *Thoughtless*.

The NYSPSC March on Albany was radically different (pardon the pun). As the students, teachers, and parents filled in, we were bombarded with tens of smart and *thought-full* placards and call-and-response patterns. ‘Hey hey, ho ho, high-stakes tests have got to go!’ ‘They are trying to destroy our schools, turn us into testing fools!’ ‘High-stakes tests are anti-enlightenment!’ ‘Teach Fascism in schools, but not by example!’ It was quite impressive.

As the main event unfolded, the mass was treated to a mix of parents, teachers, politicians, national icons, and - most importantly - *students*. More precisely, three of the most articulate and poised high school students I have ever seen. On the steps of this national landmark, and in front of hundreds, these students, these products of positive alternatives, these examples of educational promise and system potential, spoke clearly and directly. Yes, we know that they were there to protest the tests. But, rather than focusing on that, these students called for *higher standards* and *more work*. They pleaded to be prodded by the system to the fullest of their abilities, and demanded to have their brains worked to the bone. They wanted a system where they had to justify their work and defend their actions, not one where they simply filled in a bubble sheet and started summer vacation. They wanted to learn about the community. They wanted to learn about *learning*, and they were not taking *no* for an answer.

As Assemblyman Richard Brodsky said, “this is a grassroots movement against a mindset”. His mindset, included. For, just after he made that statement, he told the crowd that he was a ‘child of the sixties’, and it felt great to be back! I say, *no no no!* We are not back. Yes, this is a grassroots protest, but it is much more than that. In the sixties, borders were clear and boundaries were set in stone. But *this* protest is one of all colors and pay-scales and levels of materialism. The freedom we seek is not one defined by any physical or legal jurisdiction (at least not like forty years ago). This freedom is mental and without demarcation. I tutor a high school student from Africa, who is having trouble with the English Regents. It is not because of a language barrier or a nationalistic divide. Plainly, the tests in Africa allowed the students to explore all potential options and interests before writing their exam. But here, students are stifled and pre-destined. Or, as she put it, they have no *freedom*. Ironic, no?

What is clear is that the army, led by General Dick Mills, needs to be stifled, itself. Referring to the title of this text, General Mills needs to stop creating its easily-sogified academic zeros (Cheerios of sorts). Seeing these students and hearing their words and thoughts, this fight and its justification is very much a caricature of the pro-test contingent: a *no brainer*.

Ross, E. Wayne. (2001). *The Social Studies Curriculum: Purposes, Problems, and Possibilities* (Rev. Ed.). Albany: State University of New York Press.  
Reviewed by Gloria T. Alter

Visiting Scholar (2001-2002), Harvard University Graduate School of Education; Associate Professor, Dept Teaching and Learning, Northern Illinois University

## **"To Understand and Transform the World,"**

### **A Review of *The Social Studies Curriculum***

#### *The Curriculum Challenge*

*The Social Studies Curriculum* informs and inspires social studies teachers and other educators to improve practice by questioning our assumptions and challenging curricular content and policies which limit and distort reality and possibility. This work reflects perhaps the most important development in the field of social studies--that of examining controversial curricular issues related to democracy and society in a serious way and embracing them as essential, even central, to the field.

#### *Possibilities for Teaching and Learning*

The framework of the book, within which a wide range of topics are addressed, is provided in E. Wayne Ross's introduction and first and last chapters. Readers are initially oriented to a particular understanding of several key concepts: a) the conception of curriculum as student experience, not only formal content, b) the role of teachers as curriculum developers, not mere implementers of the curriculum, and c) the goal of social education as "helping children and young adults to learn to understand and transform their world," not simply to amass a body of information.

A major goal of the book is to "enable teachers and other curriculum workers to better understand and act on the nature, scope, and context of the social studies curriculum concerns in today's schools." Chapters address issues which engage citizens and communities with the politics of curriculum and instruction, as recurrent themes connect the chapters.

The first section of the book focuses on the "big picture" of social studies including curricular debates in historical perspective, the role of history in social studies, and citizenship education as it relates to oppression. In the first chapter, E. Wayne Ross expands the usual history of social studies to include "alternative roots" of the field. These alternative sources and current literature on the topic are especially strong. An analysis of frameworks for understanding the goals of social studies is also highly reflective and carefully prepared. Grassroots movements and the voices of teachers who support inquiry and social criticism find a place in this review. Critical educational limitations related to the control of the curriculum by the states and textbook publishers are raised here as well.

Michael Whelan addresses the role of history in the social studies curriculum--its natural ability to meaningfully integrate disciplines, its character as essentially interpretive activity, and its nature as an intriguing relationship between the past and a continually evolving present. Cautions are given--that history can be distorted when one's experience to interpret it is insufficient, and knowledge can be acquired for its own sake, or worse still, for domination and oppression. Instructional guidelines are also clearly articulated. This engaging work should spark an interest in the substantive and meaningful learning of history.

Kevin Vinson writes an inspiring and hopeful chapter envisioning citizenship education as a force for opposing oppression. A careful analysis of the social studies and civics standards (including Civitas) reveals that they fail to adequately address the issue of oppression or fully develop a vision for education opposing it. Contemporary critical bodies of literature, examples of structurally oppressive conditions, and Iris Young's "faces of oppression" (exploitation, marginalization,

powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence) are utilized in this chapter to explore new possibilities for citizenship education.

The second section addresses social issues with special attention to diversity and inclusion in the context of community. Sandra Mathison with Ross and Vinson critique standards-based educational reform, focusing on stated goals and underlying agendas. They analyze the ways in which conservative and liberal concerns about this issue converge and diverge, and address the misuse of testing and limits that are well-known to measurement and evaluation experts. This material is much needed for community members and parents as well as teachers, given the often misleading presentation of the merits of high-stakes testing. The chapter exposes the reality of who it is that benefits from these practices and at what expense.

Rich Gibson and J. Michael Peterson address whole schooling and reform with reference to the Rouge Forum. Recent reform efforts in Michigan and Wisconsin and a whole schooling research project are discussed. Reform results and principles upon which the projects were based are included. The work provides an empowering example of the personal, public, and political intersections of educational practice.

David Hursh (multicultural social studies), Jack Nelson and Valerie Pang (racism), Nel Noddings (feminism), and Jane Bernard-Powers (gender) integrate a multitude of excellent insights with practical guidelines. "A central goal of multicultural social studies" identified by Hursh--"to enable students to analyze cultural, political, economic and historical patterns and structures so that students will not only better understand society but also affect it" extends throughout the subsequent works. "Not only race and diversity but gender and class" are central here. Students can learn to see themselves as racialized, classed, and gendered and can examine the worlds of the oppressor and the oppressed through their various identities and in the context of structures of power. They can question and change reality.

Further, content should be more accurately addressed and appropriately contextualized. Multiple interpretations of diverse histories and student realities can empower learners to be more than passive recipients of information. The hypocrisy of the American credo in light of American experience needs to be faced both in society and in the curriculum (Nelson and Pang). Nelson and Pang suggest how history, science, literature and the arts as well as the social sciences can more effectively address racism. They analyze the very problematic construction of "race" and the roles of teachers, professional organizations, and the social studies field itself as well as textbooks in perpetuating racism.

Noddings' writing assesses the state of integration of feminism with social studies education. Although women are seen more frequently in social studies, this does not mean that women's perspectives and realities are being articulated or discussed with students. The need remains for a feminist culture to become a presence in the curriculum. Many substantive ideas are discussed in a way that suggests possibilities for fascinating learning about women and women's concerns.

Jane Bernard-Powers reviews gender equity concerns in historical perspective with an assessment of future needs. The gender-biased social sciences and social studies still leave fundamental assumptions unquestioned. Outside of the classroom, bias and gender coding still prevail, and appropriate attitudes and behaviors toward females is needed. Role modeling, personal contacts, and the use of biography/autobiography are noted as tools for learning. Yet, natural opportunities for questioning traditional practices are often silenced.

The third section focuses on instruction and "an issues-centered curriculum." Topics complement those in the second section: assessment with the work on standards and testing, decolonizing the mind and culturally relevant teaching with multicultural social studies and subsequent chapters, and science and the arts with themes previously introduced.

Sandra Mathison explains assessment concepts in the context of technical, practical, curricular/educational, and political problems. Gloria Ladson-Billings describes culturally relevant teaching as that which "empowers students to critically analyze the society in which they live and to work for social change." Attention is given to the concepts of self and others, social relations, and knowledge. Examples of teaching reveal that knowledge is viewed critically and in continual

creation, teachers are passionate about their subject, they attend to prerequisite knowledge or skill needs, and recognize the diverse nature of excellence.

Terrie Epstein presents art as an intellectual process and type of knowledge uniquely useful in social studies. An engaging arts-based curriculum is discussed which allows for a variety of forms to represent historical knowledge and to be employed in constructing knowledge. Stephen Fleury's in-depth discussion of science analyzes the creation and use of knowledge especially as it relates to social studies and as political contexts influence their practice historically and currently. Fleury calls for "a more emancipatory form of social knowledge in social studies" and for problem-posing and critical-constructivist pedagogical approaches to citizenship development.

Ronald Evans notes the political challenges to an issues-centered approach to social studies, reiterating battles over whose knowledge (disciplines) and practices (cultural transmission versus social criticism) are of most worth. Interdisciplinary approaches support the types of social inquiry necessary to fulfill the goal of understanding and transforming the world, as "inquiry into any real world matter related to citizenship is naturally holistic" (Evans).

Real world perspectives are inescapably global, as well. Merry Merryfield and Binaya Subedi present strategies for the development of a true global citizenship that confront nationalistic biases and colonialistic assumptions. The "interaction of power, culture, and knowledge construction" is revealed when students are exposed to alternative explanations of reality, experience alternative realities, and through this develop the ability to see multiple perspectives and challenge unsupported assumptions.

### *Overcoming Curricular Problems*

*The Social Studies Curriculum* helps to bring integrity to the field and develop it as a viable force for social change. The concluding chapter by E. Wayne Ross examines the readings in light of critical perspectives on democracy, democratic ideals, and democratic education. This text should contribute to a more democratic social studies teacher education, integrating social justice issues within the context of the curriculum.



## "We Are Not At Fault, Since We See Nothing Wrong."

by L Jackway

Basing performance and subsequent reward or punishment on standardized high-stakes tests, even if based on local standards, cannot determine the degree to which a person is "educated." If the development of thought processes, including inference and judgment, are not to be evaluated as inherently part of an "education," much of what happens during student-teacher interaction in schools is being labeled - by exclusion - as meaningless to not only the mere acquisition of knowledge, but to the sequential building of an "education." Further compounding the problem in is the fact that some test questions have multiple logically-correct answers. If a student chooses an answer which is logically correct, based on the content and structure of the question, but is not the answer which has been identified by the test design as the only correct answer, that student is said to have answered incorrectly. The years of student-teacher interaction which aided the student to choose, by some process other than rote memorization and mechanical regurgitation an equally acceptable conclusion, is discredited. With the final posting of test results, the AIMS promoters reveal to the world they care little about the dynamic learning processes which result in educated people; they want only their correct answer to be marked.

The education system in America has much that is good; it also has some things that are not good. Educators know what is wrong and know how to improve the system. Superintendents who rely on easy-to-sell-proposals-because-I-want-to-further-my-political-career plans are not focused on the most basic components and procedures to effect improvement. School boards that fail to establish philosophically- and educationally-sound system components, including evaluation, need to be called to task. Apparently this is a common strand in thinking because State Departments of Education, chairs in the Legislatures and Governors have dumped the responsibility for solving the high-stakes test controversy on other state entities. As seen from a non-political point of view, it appears the State Departments of Education do not always perform as the voters had intended, thus the controversy.

In Arizona, at least, our "great" education leaders feel they can sit back in their politically-comfortable postures and say, "**We are not at fault, since we see nothing wrong; it is up to the State Board of Education to justify our programs and procedures.**" What the State Board of Education has established, permitted and justified so far is an educational system that is at or near the bottom of state rankings regarding providing for the education of children. We, the people, cannot be complacent with the continuation of policies, programs and procedures which continually fail our students, educators and parents.

Members of the State Boards of Education, perform your statutory responsibilities and reaffirm your expectations for effective performance and accountability from the departments and personnel "in your purview," to use a well-known phrase. Many of our children are hurting and not enough people seem to care.

## **A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN SOUTH AFRICA RELATING TO THE SHIFT FROM A SPECIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM TO AN INCLUSIVE SYSTEM.**

**By Sigamoney Naicker**

The Ministry of Education in South Africa has launched Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. This brief document attempts to emphasize the importance of interrogating conventional discourse in South Africa in order to move in a constructive manner towards an inclusive ethos. Secondly, it concentrates on the core philosophical, structural and practical changes in Education White Paper 6. Finally, it outlines the long term plan of the White Paper.

### **CHANGES IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**

To shift from disabilist theories, assumptions, practices and models to a non-disabilist inclusive system of education in South Africa, there has to be changes that ensures theories and practices are consistent with the human rights discourse of inclusive education.

In South Africa we must take seriously the influence of conventional theory since the majority of special education discourses are located within conservative education theories. As Fulcher (1989) correctly points out the theme of professionalism influences the medical discourse and its associated discourses: psychology, social work, occupational therapy, rehabilitation, counseling and physiotherapy. Whilst these discourses can play an important role in an inclusive model, there is a need to examine its consistency with a new human rights model regarding the theory practice relationship.

Many of the psychological theories underpinning much of the understanding around learning breakdown shapes the belief that problems are located within learners. For example, very little is said about system deficiencies. The manner in which learners are socialised, exposure to intellectual work, poverty and its concomitant social problems have not been taken seriously in understanding why there is a breakdown in learning.

Special education theory is located within a predominantly functionalist paradigm and is concerned with learners who experience learning breakdown. The belief that the system worked and any breakdown was caused by individual deficits resulted in invoking the pathological label. That there was something always wrong with the individual is a common explanation for failure.

In order to shift paradigms, a rethinking is required around one's consciousness around disability. The first step is to move from an understanding of disability that is shaped by the medical model to an understanding underpinned by a rights model. Secondly, barriers to learning *in the system* need to be identified and interventions need to be made. In other words one needs to examine what impediments exist in the system that prevent access to learning. These barriers could include poverty, ideology, physical access, inflexible curriculum, inappropriate language, communication channels, inaccessible built environments, lack of or inappropriate transport and similar factors within the system that impedes access to learning. Arguably, there are some barriers that exist within children, for example, neurological impairment. These barriers need to be addressed through pedagogical responses, for example, take seriously the different intelligences such as linguistic, musical, logical?mathematical, spatial, bodily?kinesthetic or personal areas of competence or expertise in trying to establish which is the best way to respond to the learner's needs.

## THE CORE PHILOSOPHICAL, STRUCTURAL AND PRACTICAL CHANGES OF EDUCATION WHITE PAPER 6

# PHILOSOPHICAL SHIFT

The philosophical changes suggested by Education White Paper 6 is a radical departure from the special education model. The special education model excluded learners from the mainstream because of a disability that is thought to be natural and irremediable characteristic of a person. Education White Paper 6

suggests an inclusive model that:

- Is about acknowledging that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support.
- Is about enabling education structures, systems and learning methodologies to meet the needs of all learners.
- Acknowledges and respects differences in learners, whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases.
- Is broader than formal schooling and acknowledging that learning also occurs in the home and community, and within formal and informal settings and structures.
- Is about changing attitudes, behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and environment to meet the needs of all learners; and
- Is about maximising the participation of all learners in the culture and the curriculum of educational institutions and uncovering and minimising barriers to learning.

This inclusive model focuses on changing the system and therefore attempts to create space and possibilities for all learners.

# STRUCTURAL

Instead of special schools, special classes and remedial classes in the special education model, the White Paper, structurally, emphasizes the following:

- Establishment of district-based support teams to provide co-ordinated professional support service that draws on the expertise in further and higher education and local communities, targeting special schools and specialized settings, designated full-service and other primary schools and educational institutions.
- Converting special schools into resource centers that will be part of the district support team.
- **Beginning** with 30 school districts that are part of the national district development programme. Here the focus will be reflecting on policy development and a research exercise will cost an ideal district support team, conversion of special schools to resource centers, full-service school, full service technical college, determine minimum levels of provision for learners with special needs for all higher education institutions, personnel plan and non-personnel expenditure.

- **Phased conversion** of approximately 500 out of 20 000 primary schools to full-service schools. Full service schools and colleges are schools and colleges that will be equipped and supported to provide for the full range of learning needs among all learners.

## **PRACTICAL SHIFT**

At a practical level, there is a radical shift from a dual to a single system relating to curriculum. In this case C2005 (a new curriculum introduced after the democratic government was put into place) becomes the core curriculum. Other important aspects that constitute alternative practices relates to the following:

- Overhauling of the process of identifying, assessing and enrolling learners in special schools and settings, and its replacement by one that acknowledges the central role played by educators, lecturers and parents.
- Use of multiple intelligences and various learning styles as a framework for understanding differences
- Injecting co-operative learning that celebrates different ability levels
  - Adapting C2005 (a single curriculum) to meet the needs of diversity

## **SHORT, MEDIUM AND LONG TERM PLAN**

In developing this plan for inclusion, policy makers have taken seriously the limitations any developing country should consider at a fiscal and other levels. Therefore, a twenty year plan has been proposed. This plan is captured briefly below:

### **In the short term (2001-2003) the emphasis will be on the following:**

- a) Implementing a national advocacy and education programme on inclusive education.
- b) Planning and implementing a targeted outreach programme, beginning in Government's rural and urban development nodes, to mobilise disabled out of school children and youth.
- c) Completing the audit of special schools and implementing a programme to improve efficiency and quality.
  - d) Designating, planning and implementing the conversion of thirty special schools to special schools/resource centres in thirty designated school districts.
  - e) Designating, planning and implementing the conversion of thirty primary schools to full service schools in the same thirty districts as (d) above.
  - f) Designating, planning and implementing the district support teams in the same thirty districts as (d) above; and
  - g) Within all other public education institutions, on a progressive basis, the general orientation and introduction of management, governing bodies and professional staff to the inclusion model.
  - h) Within primary schooling, on a progressive basis, the establishment of systems and procedures for the early identification and addressing of barriers to learning in the Foundation Phase (Grades R-3).

### **In the medium term (2004-2008) attention will be paid to:**

- i) Transforming further education and training and higher education institutions to recognise and address the diverse range of learning needs of learners, especially disabled learners;
- j) Expanding the targeted community outreach programme in (b) from the base of Government's rural and urban development nodes to mobilise disabled out-of-school children and youth in line with available resources.
- k) Expanding the number of special schools/resource centres, full-service schools and district support teams in (d), (e) and (f) in line with lessons learnt and available resources.

**In the long term (2009-2021) the focus will be as follows:**

Expanding provision to reach the target of 380 special schools/resource centres, 500 full service schools and colleges and district support teams, and the 280,000 out of school children and youth.

The Ministry of Education will implement this White Paper after a comprehensive audit of all special education provision is undertaken. This audit will raise issues from the gaze of an inclusive education framework.

**References:**

Department of Education. 2001. Education White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education. Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. Pretoria. Government Printer.

Fulcher, G. 1989. Disabling policies? A comparative approach to education policy and disability. London: Farmer Press.

# **NEW HIGH-STAKES TESTS FOR AMERICA: How Much Damage Can Be Done?**

by L Jackway

We, the enlightened State Department of Education, the omnipotent source of testing strategies, are continually designing new methods of evaluating the degree of compliance to our crafty standards. However, we are aware that some groups of citizens have not been subjected to the present threats associated with failure of our high-stakes tests. Therefore, we are asking the Legislature for \$10,000,000,000 to establish standards, create testing materials and administer the following new evaluation tools:

## **LAIMS: for legislators**

This test will determine the success level for each state legislator in terms of her/his positive participation in legislation designed to keep money flowing (1) to the State Department of Education, (2) to private and charter schools, and (3) for additional programs to increase pressure and disgrace on our state's teachers, students and parents.

## **DAIMS: for the people at the State Department of Education**

In keeping with our goal of improving education in our state and funding the omnipotent source of the knowledge to do so, this test will evaluate the extent to which oppressive programs and protocols are developed and executed in the schools of our state.

## **MAIMS: enhanced version of our high-stakes test for students who passed it once**

This test will attempt once again to trap the students who slipped through the net by passing the earlier holy version of our high-stakes test. These students must be tested again and again until they fail to pass, otherwise the test may be judged ""too easy"" and therefore we will look as though we have not done our job, which is: test, test, test so we know where all students are, not that we are going to create programs and adequately help schools so the students will pass. That's not our job. That's the job of the lazy teachers.

## **HAIMS: for the Head Start children**

Following the lead of President Bush, and in keeping with our recognition that learning to read early is critical for a child's future success, the creation of this test will give a baseline for additional norm-referenced testing. This test will be similar to existing standards as embedded in the State Standards, such as: Reading: ""Students learn and effectively apply a variety of reading strategies for comprehending, interpreting and evaluating a wide range of texts including fiction, nonfiction, classic and contemporary works."" We stand firm with our position that evaluating reading proficiency cannot begin too early.

## **PAIMS: for prenatal testing of embryos**

This test of readiness for reading and math will help establish a baseline for creation of a norm-referenced battery of tests to administer to expectant mothers. The administration of the tests will be with ultrasound. The results of PAIMS will allow for development of standards and curricular materials that can be used to inculcate embryonic future students with the facts necessary to become contributing citizens in an expanding world culture. Mothers who fail this high-stakes test will be required to delay birth until a passing grade has been achieved.

## **GAIMS: for the genetically altered children of the future**

This test will be a bold leap forward into the future and will spotlight the State Department of Education as the outstanding generator of predetermined educational performance standards based on our forced goals. It will be used to identify deficient products (we used to call them 'students') of the mechanics (we used to call them 'teachers') in the knowledge factories (we used to call them 'schools') which we have

mandated to program the minds of the products with facts which we can then test with the other evaluation tools in the high-stakes test set. Disposition of the identifiable deficient products and incompetent mechanics, at this time, has not been resolved. We will need further appropriations with which to study such disposition.

## A Critic's Critic

### Debord's Spectacle Manifesto

Jonathan Lee

SUNY-Binghamton

REVIEW: Debord, Guy. 1983 (1967). *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red.

In the mid-1950s, a group of European academics and artists gathered together to form the *Situationist International*, an organization grounded in cultural critique and the institutionalization of postmodern mayhem. At the center of this group was Guy Debord, whose *Society of the Spectacle* (first published in a 1967 French edition) became a conglomerate manifesto for the critical turns of the *SI* and its affiliates. Marxist and anarchist, postmodern and anti-modern, structured and without form - this text has become the basis for art movements as wide-ranging as Philip Glass' minimalism and Johnny Rotten's super-punk, and remains a primary source for those wishing to take issue with liberal democratic capitalism, whether your mindset is socialist or anarchist or, even itself, democratic capitalist. A fresh perspective on waxing cultural, *Society of the Spectacle* (*SOS*) offers the social educator an opportunity to rethink their perspective, turning the gears of critical thought that often sit rusting, unforeseen, for long spells at a time.

The text, itself, is brief and dense. One could skim it in an hour, and then spend the next week mulling over a single passage. Divided into nine chapters, *SOS* takes the form of 221 emotionally-charged stanzas (page numbers absent). Some short and some quite long (and rambling), these statements act as loose guidelines to steer the reader toward using their own examples and making their own connections. Debord specifically makes the point, as with the majority of *Situationist* writing, of claiming no copyright or reserved rights to the text; its words are fair game for all that wish to use them. Within the schooling arena, full advantage of this opportunity need be taken.

At the core, *SOS* takes issue with the nature of a society whose vision is based on quick, popular, and commodity-driven media images; images which seek to subjectify history to the point of transforming television sets to memory banks, newsrags to sensory organs, and movie theaters to halls of learning. *Spectacle*, itself, is defined not as a single event, but as a social relationship driven by the navigation and mediation of such images. Debord writes, "it is the heart of unrealism in the real society". Further, "in all of its specific forms, as information or propaganda, as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, the spectacle is the present model of socially dominant life".

The notion of domination looms darkly throughout the text. Like a chameleon, it jumps from Gramsci's suggestive hegemony to Marx's isolating social alienation to Foucault's violent panopticon. It is a domination that places power in the hands of the *immediately* powerful, with little regard for those standing in its place. This type of 'subjectified objectivity' - where simplified methods yield fast and self-serving gratification for the few at the cost of the many - is quite similar to the current debate surrounding high-stakes testing and the variety of political-economic uses for these examinations. Similarly, the society that Debord critiques likens itself with the HSTs in a tautological nature: "its means are simultaneously its ends". As "the main production of present-day society" (a *spectacle* society), "the goal [of the spectacle] is nothing, [while its] development is everything". What exactly is being done with the results of these exams - other than refinement and regurgitation in the form of new exams? Nothing. The goals remain faceless - and yet the results are devastating. And somehow, neither the goals nor the results seem to ever overshadow the criticism of performance and the constant call for re-examination.



"The spectacle is *capital* to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image". Thus, in a liberal capitalist democracy, the spectacle becomes everything everywhere. Once set into place, the spectacle transforms itself into a condition of being always already present (excuse my Heidegger), creating a notion of commodity fetishism that pervades every corner of society. In such a society, as Marx rightfully predicted, there exists a distinct class base and overarching reality based on alienation and separation. According to Debord (and similar to Marx), the *spectacle* society is divided into two types of individual. Those in power, those favoring a constant promotion of the spectacle, are the *celebrities*, the *stars* ("spectacular representations of a living human being"). This class of individual is connected by "the presupposition of their excellence in everything". This is achieved by the simple manipulation of media - made even simpler by the condition and mindset of the lower class within this society: the *spectator*. Due to the permeation of the spectacle throughout society, and the absolute irreversible nature of spectacular control, the spectator exists in a permanent condition of homelessness in their lived environment. They become, essentially, diaspora in their own backyard. Unfortunately, Debord does not go into much detail regarding how one actually is transformed into being within one of these two classes - or the process of duality in which the two classes must simultaneously co-exist within *spectacle* society. Still, for social educators, this illustration can be highly useful in detailing a modern version of Marxian society.

In terms of history (and time in general), *SOS* provides another alternative for historical critique, parallel to those set into motion by Zinn, James Loewen, and others. In another way, however, the text can serve as a harsh voice *against* these alternative movements - movements which often surround themselves with the very explosiveness and drama that Debord directly ties to the invocation of the financially-driven spectacle ("the spectacle is the other side of money; it is the general abstract equivalent of all commodities"). In other words, in selling history as exciting or brutal or dramatic, Debord would probably see Zinn and Loewen as almost going over to the other side - ignoring the goal of creating an alternative historical trajectory while concentrating solely on the various steps within. For as much as these 'historical alternates' proclaim the necessity of taking historical sources with a grain of salt and questioning all possibilities, they barely (if ever) add a disclaimer to do the same to their work. Simply put, they preach against established metanarratives - and then sell their own.

"History has always existed, but not always in a historical form." Debord's central statement on time and history is crucial to an absolute historical revisionism. By simply rewriting history as differential reactions to similar events, many alternative historians do very little to actually break free of a system from which they claim to separate themselves. Debord differentiates *cyclical time* from *irreversible time* ('true time' from 'spectacle time') by critiquing all previous *written* chronicles of the past. "With writing there appears a consciousness that is no longer carried and transmitted directly among the living: an *impersonal* memory, the memory of the administration of society". Quoting Novalis, Debord writes: "writings are the thoughts of the State; archives are its memory". In this sense, historical writings in the form of chronicles are seen as manifestations of power, easily edited and transformed by editors and ghostwriters to co-exist perfectly with the spectacle (and *within* its society).

Essentially, what Debord calls for is something completely new in historical writing - something that he had not yet placed his finger on during the late 1960s. The point, then, is for the reader to go on a search - constantly evaluating, never settling, and without losing sight of whatever goals are desired by the project-at-hand. Taken as a work of philosophy, *Society of the Spectacle* has as much head-in-the-clouds umph as the most complex Confucian proverb. Taken as a text for social critique, each stanza can be read as a cog in a dense set of instructions with which to critique and avoid the pitfalls of modern society. And taken as a source for social education, Debord has written a useful tool for looking within even those things which we consider revolutionary, as a constant reminder for the importance of critical and reflective practice within the discipline.

A sidebar: I would direct you to reading Debord's follow-up to *SOS*, entitled simply (and unspectacularly), *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*.

# TOWARDS WHOLE SCHOOLS

The Journey is Long, The Road Hard, The Goal Worthy

## Building a Movement for Creativity and Collaborative Learning

*In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Michael Peterson

### EDUCATION FOR WHO, WHY, HOW?

#### *Creating Schooling For An Inclusive Multi-Cultural Society*

This book asks a critical question: “How can we harness the capacity of people to work together, to use human creativity to create learning that will lead towards an inclusive, multicultural society?” It is one of our most important questions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

When we talk about education, about schooling, we have some very fundamental questions to first ask, questions that affect any and everything else we do. Questions like:

Why do people go to school? What is the real purpose?

Who is school for? Who goes to school together? Who gets separated and why?

How do we do schooling (a broader term and concept than ‘teaching’)? What does it look like?

It is clear that schools will look very different depending upon their *social purpose*. Schools have served many, often conflicting purposes – the national acculturation of immigrants, preparation of the elite for their ‘proper role’ in society, teaching technical skills to the working class, sorting who belongs in what role. Schools were also supposed to help solve great social problems, poverty, violence, social unrest. At their idealist best, many had hopes that schools would be tools of a new, strong democratic culture, a view best known in the works of John Dewey.

The purpose of schooling, of course, depends upon our image of the type of society for which schools prepare young people. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we are in the midst of fundamental social decisions – whether we move towards great democracy, inclusion, and equality or more towards autocracy, segregation, and inequality. Virtually every political conflict can be framed in these terms. Schools are critical conflicted territory in this struggle as it is in schools that children will learn to either be obedient to the existing social order or thoughtful, creative actors who help analyze and shape the world in which we live.

At the present time, major shifts are underway that lead us towards inequality and autocracy. Consequently, it is not surprising to see policy initiatives all over the world which move schools away from democracy, away from teaching children skills to analyze and change their social situations through political advocacy, away from engagement in real thought. We see increases in . .

1. Rigid, narrow teaching – phonics only (follow the rules and you can read all you need to know), textbooks, the ‘bunch of facts’ curriculum (rather than real thinking and questioning).

2. Standardization of the curriculum and assessment -- focus on 'knowing the facts', thinking technically but not critically, being able to answer questions, sorting kids, schools, and communities by those who know and those who don't.
3. Segregation – by race, class, culture, language, ability, behavior. We have an amazing array of mechanisms to sort children so we can easily see who is the 'best and brightest' and who is to be avoided. Special education classes and schools, alternative schools, classes for 'gifted' students assure that we don't build a real, diverse community where people support one another and critically question interests that seek to divide people.
4. Autocratic rule. We say we live in a democracy and most schools say their purpose is to create democratic citizens. However, most schools operate with a top-down, autocratic rule that makes a mockery of these claims.

We are, however, the makers of our social world. Collaboration which brings people together under a joined vision of a caring, inclusive, democratic community has power. Creativity which will allow us to use our resources and energy holds great promise. We hold in our hand more than we know. So, we have choices.

### THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF WHOLE SCHOOLING

1. **Empower citizens in a democracy.** The goal of education is to help students learn to function as effective citizens in a democracy.
2. **Include all.** All children learn together across culture, ethnicity, language, ability, gender & age.
3. **Authentic, multi-level teaching for learners of diverse abilities.** Teachers design instruction for diverse learners that engages them in active learning in meaningful, real-world activities; develop accommodations and adaptations for learners with diverse needs, interests, and abilities.
4. **Build community & support learning.** The school uses specialized school and community resources (special education, title I, gifted education) to build support for students, parents, and teachers. All work together to build community and mutual support within the classroom and school; provide proactive supports for students with behavioral challenges.
5. **Partner with families and the community.** Educators build genuine collaboration within the school and with families and the community; engage the school in strengthening the community; and provide guidance to engage students, parents, teachers, and others in decision-making and direction of learning & school activities.

### WHAT MUST BE DONE?

#### *Whole Schooling As A Framework For People Centered Schools.*

While we must fight against injustice and bad policy, we first and foremost need a vision of the type of society and schools that we seek, a vision that can be understood and embraced by many people, a vision that can serve as a practical alternative to more controlling, segregating, disempowering visions of community and school, a vision that can guide both policy, practice, and political advocacy.

Towards this end, in 1997, I and several colleagues developed an alternative vision for schools based on what we have come to call the Five Principles of Whole Schooling. We drew from and built on the experiences of progressive school reform organizations, particularly Accelerated Schools, Comer's School Development Program, Howard Gardner's Project Zero, and Sizer's Coalition for Essential Schools. Like the developers of these programs we were concerned with the lack of engaged teaching, the failure of schooling for students in

poverty, the need to better support families and connect schools with their communities, the need to support teachers in being real learners and decision-makers in the school as partners with parents. However, we were also concerned about the lack of explicit attention to two major additional dimensions of schooling: (1) the ongoing segregation of students with different learning styles and abilities into special programs for students with disabilities, at risk, gifted, limited English speaking and (2) the lack of attention to the social and political context of schooling – the increasing inequality in schools and communities, pressures for standardized testing that separate students, families, and whole communities by race, socio-economic status, and ability. Collectively, the Five Principles of Whole Schooling describe a culture of a school that seeks to be a place of care, belonging, human growth, a place where community

is experienced, a place where preparation for an inclusive democracy, communities where people of different color, culture, ability, and wealth are welcomed as partners, is the central thrust.

## PARALLEL PATHS

### **Bridges To Be Built, Connections To Be Made**

Since our articulation of these principles in 1997, we've been amazed at the degree of response we've had. We've struck a chord of need we believe and have provided a framework that serves many purposes, one of them being to unite people who have different beginning points in seeking to build inclusive, democratic communities and schools. Seeking to build such 'whole schools' challenges much, as one parent recently said to me, "You are seeking to shake up everything".

Many people are engaged in work and struggle related to at least one important issue embodied in the Five Principles of Whole Schooling. Parents and teachers concerned about the segregation of children with disabilities have been building a movement towards inclusive education. A growing number of courageous teachers and parents are challenging the rampant growth of high stakes standardized testing that links scores on dubious examinations to the future of children, the funding of schools, teacher's salaries, and real estate prices. People of color and other 'minority' groups have long fought for recognition and respect for different cultures and ethnic groups, learning across languages. Whole language teachers have built an international movement dedicated to supportive freedom, choice, and empowerment in the learning process.

Yet, people do not adequately see how intimately and inextricably connected are these issues. As the stories above and our ongoing research indicate, engaged teaching, authentic assessment, community, inclusion, and democracy are wedded to one another. As those pushing narrow teaching, standardized tests, control of children, segregation, and autocracy have created a multi-dimensional, integrated onslaught, so we too must understand that, at their root, all these issues are connected to a common core – a vision of more caring communities and schools that will support that vision. We must see connections if we are to build such schools. We must join together. We must act together.

## BUILDING A GLOBAL MOVEMENT

### **Schooling For An Inclusive Democracy**

To move the direction we want, we don't have much choice than to build a community for change with people whose position, role, starting interests are different than our own. Parker Palmer in [The Courage to Teach](#) describes our coming together as a major decision, a decision to no longer be alone, a decision to make a difference. Coming together to build a community for change, where people care for and support one another and commit to engaging in change efforts is difficult. Building a community goes against the many trends in our culture that separate and segment. Building a community for change, by definition, means that we struggle with power structures, seeking to build a new power base among people in a growing movement. Can this be done? We believe it can.

In the summer of 2000 a momentous event occurred in Detroit, Michigan. For the first time, some 250 leaders in progressive education came together from all over the United States and two additional countries. What was unique about this event was that it drew together people who represent the many starting places embodied in the principles of Whole Schooling, parents, teachers, professors, consultants, administrators talked and shared about inclusive education, whole language practice and politics, the movement against standardized testing, community service, critical pedagogy. People had the opportunity

to begin to understand connections, develop relationships, and talk and strategize about building a movement for change.

Since it's inception in 1997, the Whole Schooling Consortium has grown organically, not bureaucratically, providing various methods of involvement that include:

- Individual initiatives. Members of the Consortium exist as of this writing in 23 states and four countries and have taken action based on the Whole Schooling principles in various activities.
- Action and learning networks. In some communities, educators, parents, students, university faculty meet together to share, learn, support one another, and take action locally.
- Schools. Some schools have joined as mentor schools to be studied as part of research and to provide support to other schools in a learning partnership. Other schools have adopted the Five Principles of Whole Schooling as a framework for their school renewal efforts and are working with support partners to develop a process model that can support positive school change.
- Support organizations. Other organizations include university-based programs that provide support to schools via training, technical assistance, and consultation who have used the Five Principles of Whole Schooling to organize their work in schools.

#### WHOLE SCHOOLING

If you are interested in the Whole Schooling Consortium, contact Michael Peterson, [jmpeterson@mediaone.net](mailto:jmpeterson@mediaone.net).

For more information, go to:

<http://www.coe.wayne.edu/CommunityBuilding/WSC.html>

The work of the Whole Schooling Consortium provides one example of the work described in this book. The work of the present and the future is to build coalitions, have courage and ingenuity to take action, link with other coalitions. We have ideas, knowledge, tools. We have but to harness our inventiveness and capacity for group effort to build a better world and hold back the terrors of the one that threatens to overtake us.

May we all gather from the wisdom of the authors of this book to begin the journey, gathering fellow travelers for

the road.

# Whole Schooling Consortium

## WHOLE SCHOOLING

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The Whole Schooling Consortium is a network of schools, university faculty, teachers, parents, and community members whose goals are to:

1. Promote Whole Schooling practices through research, professional development, and advocacy, particularly in schools that serve children from low income families and/or who are at risk.
2. Build a grassroots network of schools, university faculty, and community members who can provide mutual support to one another.
3. Link urban, suburban, and rural schools in promoting Whole Schooling practices.
4. Develop a network of exemplary schools who are intentionally seeking to promote both equity and excellence in educational practices.
5. Conduct research to understand best educational practices.

Whole Schooling is based on the following **FIVE PRINCIPLES**:

1. **Empowering citizens in a democracy:** The goal of education is to help students learn to function as effective citizens in a democracy.
2. **Including all:** All children learn together across culture, ethnicity, language, ability, gender, & age.
3. **Authentic, multi-level teaching.** Teachers design instruction for diverse learners that engages them in active learning in meaningful, real-world activities at multiple levels of ability, providing scaffolds and adaptations as needed.
4. **Building community & supporting learning:** The school uses specialized school and community resources (special education, title I, gifted education) to build support for students, parents, and teachers; build community and mutual support within the classroom and school; provide proactive supports for students with behavioral challenges.
5. **Partnerships:** Educators build genuine collaboration within the school and with families and the community; engage the school in strengthening the community; and provide guidance to engage students, parents, teachers, and others in decision-making and direction of learning & school activities.

## AN INVITATION

If you want to promote schools like this, we invite you to join us as an individual, a school, or organization. We work together in many ways that include: (1) organizing a yearly summer institute, (2) monthly meetings to share, learn, and organize for action, (3) work with schools to use Whole Schooling as a framework for school renewal, (4) conducting research and professional development, and (5) developing materials and documents including a quarterly newsletter. You can be involved in any of these areas of work.

**For more information**

<http://www.coe.wayne.edu/CommunityBuilding/WSC.html>

**Whole Schooling Consortium, c/o 217 Education,**

**WSU, Detroit, Michigan 48202**

[Wholeschool@mediaone.net](mailto:Wholeschool@mediaone.net)

To: The President, Congress, and the Governors of All 50 States

## ***Rouge Forum Petition on the Big Tests***

([http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/rouge\\_forum](http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/rouge_forum))

Whereas high stakes standardized tests, an international phenomenon, represent a powerful intrusion into classrooms, often taking up as much as 40% of teacher time,

And whereas the tests pretend that one standard fits all, when one standard does not fit all,

And whereas these tests measure, for the most part, parental income and race, and are therefore instruments which build racism and anti-working class sentiment-- against the interest of most teachers and their students,

And whereas these tests deepen the segregation of children within and between school systems, a move that is not in the interests of most people throughout the world,

And whereas inner-city families and poor families are promised tests as an avenue to escape the ghetto and poverty, when the tests are designed to fail their children, boosting dropouts, leaving more children trapped in the ghetto and poverty, deepening inequality and all forms of injustice,

And whereas the tests set up a false employer-employees relationship between teachers and students which damages honest exchanges in the classroom,

And whereas we have seen repeatedly that the exams are unprofessionally scored, for example in New York in 2000 when thousands of students were unnecessarily ordered to summer school on the grounds of incorrect test results,

And whereas the tests create an atmosphere that pits students against students and teachers against teachers and school systems against school systems in a mad scramble for financial rewards, and to avoid financial retribution,

And whereas the tests have been used to unjustly fire and discipline educators throughout the country,

And whereas the exams represent an assault on academic freedom by forcing their way into the classroom in an attempt to regulate knowledge, what is known and how people come to know it,



And whereas the tests foment an atmosphere of greed, fear, and hysteria, none of which contributes to learning,

And whereas the tests destroy inclusion and inquiry-based education,

And whereas the high-stakes test pretend to neutrality but are deeply partisan in content, reflecting the needs of elites in a world becoming more inequitable, less democratic,

And whereas the tests become commodities for opportunists whose interests are profits, not the best interests of children,

And whereas education organizations like the faculty association of the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Council of Teachers of English, the International Reading Association, and the American Educational Research Association have all supported long-term authentic assessment, and opposed high-stakes standardized examinations such as, but not limited to, the SAT9 in California, the Michigan MEAP, the Texas TAAS, SOL in VA, FCAT in Florida, MCAS in Massachusetts, OPT in Ohio, and the New York Regents Exam,

And whereas there is a rising tide of education-worker resistance to the high-stakes exams, as well as student and educator boycotts:

***Be it therefore resolved*** that we the undersigned sign this petition as an indication of our support for authentic long-term assessment in schools, and our support for popular resistance to the tests, particularly teach-ins, job actions and boycotts—and creative civil strife such as theater, art, songs, demonstrations, sit-ins, and other methods to inform, unleash creativity, and resist.

Sponsored by [The Rouge Forum](#), [The Whole Schooling Consortium](#), E. Wayne Ross, Rich Gibson, Michael Peterson, Sandra Mathison, Susan Ohanian, Staughton Lynd, Amber Goslee, Susan Harman, Kevin Vinson, Valerie Pang, Perry Marker, David Hursh, Steve Fleury, Judy Depew, Greg Queen, Katy Landless, Patrick Shannon, Kathleen Keeson, George Schmidt, Sharon Schmidt, Marty Kaye, David Strom

Sincerely,

[The Undersigned](#)

[Click Here to Sign Petition](#)

[View Current Signatures](#)

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

**They profit.**

But things change.  
Join us

[Rouge Forum](#)



School reform requires social and economic justice  
<http://www.coe.wayne.edu/CommunityBuilding/WSC.html>

# Why Do You Call it the Rouge Forum?

The River Rouge runs throughout the Detroit area. Once a beautiful river bounteous with fish and plant life, it supported wetlands throughout southeast Michigan. Before industrialization, it was one of three rivers running through what is now the metropolitan area. Today the Rouge meanders through some of the most industrially polluted areas in the United States, past some of the poorest and most segregated areas of North America, only to lead some tributaries to one of the richest cities in the U.S.: Birmingham, Michigan. The Rouge cares nothing for boundaries. The other two Detroit rivers were paved, early in the life of the city, and now serve as enclosed running sewers. Of the three, the Rouge is the survivor.

The Ford Rouge Plant was built before and during World War I. By 1920, it was the world's largest industrial complex. Everything that went into a Ford car was manufactured at the Rouge. It was one of the world's largest iron foundries and one of the top steel producers.

Early on, Henry Ford sought to control every aspect of a worker's life, mind and body, in the plant and out. Using a goon squad recruited from Michigan prisons led by the infamous Harry Bennet, Ford instituted a code of silence. He systematically divided workers along lines of national origin, sex, race, and language groupings—and set up segregated housing for the work force. Ford owned Dearborn and its politicians. He designed a sociology department, a group of social workers who demanded entry into workers' homes to discover "appropriate" family relations and to ensure the people ate Ford-approved food, like soybeans, voted right, and went to church.

While Ford did introduce the "Five Dollar Day," in fact only a small segment of the employees ever got it, and those who did saw their wages cut quickly when economic downturns, and the depression, eroded Ford profits.

The Rouge is the site that defined "Fordism." Ford ran the line mercilessly. Fordism which centered on conveyor production, single-purpose machines, mass consumption, and mass marketing, seeks to heighten productivity via technique. The processes are designed to strip workers of potentially valuable faculties, like their expertise, to speed production, expand markets, and ultimately to drive down wages. These processes seek to make workers into replaceable machines themselves, but machines also capable of consumption. Contrary to trendy analysis focused on globalization and the technique of production, Ford was 1930s. Ford was and is an international car-maker, in recognized the need to shift to smaller cars, and built early globalism.

Henry Ford was a fascist. He contributed intellectually Hitler. Ford accepted the German equivalent of the operate in Germany, untouched by allied bombs,

At its height, more than 100,000 workers held jobs at in huge caverns under the plant. It was the nation's It was also the worst polluter. The Environmental Pro- violations. Today there are 9,000 workers, most of them

Ford ruthlessly battled worker organizing at the Rouge. during the depression, leading to massive street dem- armed goons on UAW leaders, a maneuver which led to ing monument to what was once the largest UAW local



and materially to fascism. His anti-Semitic works inspired Medal of Honor from Hitler, and his factories continued to throughout WW II.

the Rouge. Nineteen trains ran on 85 miles of track, mostly largest computer center, the third largest producer of glass. tecton agency, in 1970, charged the Rouge with nearly 150 working in the now Japanese-owned iron foundry.

His Dearborn cops and goon squad killed hunger marchers onstrations. In the Battle of Overpass, Ford unleashed his the battle for collective bargaining at Ford, and was the found- in the world, Local 600, led by radical organizers for years.

On 1 February 1999, the boilers at the aging Rouge plant blew up, killing six workers. The plant, according to workers, had repeatedly failed safety inspections. UAW local president made a statement saying how sorry he was for the families of the deceased—and for William Clay Ford, "who is having one of the worst days of his life." Papers and the electronic press presented the workers' deaths as a tough day for the young Ford who inherited the presidency of the company after a stint as the top Ford manager in Europe. The steam went out of Local 600 long ago. The leaders now refer to themselves as "UAW-FORD," proof that they have inherited the fascist views of the company founder.

When environmentalist volunteers tried to clean the Rouge River in June 1999, they were ordered out of the water. It was too polluted to clean.

So, why the Rouge Forum? The Rouge is both nature and work. The Rouge has never quit; it moves with the resilience of the necessity for labor to rise out of nature itself. The river and the plant followed the path of industrial life throughout the world. The technological advances created at the Rouge, in some ways, led to better lives. In other ways, technology was used to forge the privilege of the few, at the expense of most—and the ecosystems which brought it to life The Rouge is a good place to consider a conversation, education, and social action. That is why.

While we chose the name, Rouge Forum, we selected 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 would like you to join us. You can reach the Rouge Forum at:  
[http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/rouge\\_forum/](http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/rouge_forum/)

Key Sources: Working Detroit by Steve Babson, American Odyssey by Robert Conot,  
Tales of Uncle Remus by Julius Lester