

High-Stakes Tests: Reasons To Strive For Better Marx

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Abstract

Arundhati Roy has written the following: “What do we mean by the idea of confronting ‘empire’? Does ‘empire’ mean the government of the U.S. (and its European satellites), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the multinational corporations? Or is it something more than that? ‘Empire’ has sprouted subsidiary identities in many countries, and produced dangerous byproducts: nationalism, religious bigotry, fascism, [and] terrorism. All are in alliance with the project of corporate globalization.” [1]

Introduction

This paper has been developed from ideas that were originally composed in order to serve as a discussant at a session called “Rethinking Marx and Education” that occurred at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) on April 23, 2003. I have been engaged in rethinking Marx in reference to school and society for many years. The present global crisis has made it necessary to continue this rethinking. Marx and various Marxists have provided a variegated and powerful set of tools with which to analyze what Roy et al. call globalization. This process is in fact the most current capitalist project to push its totalistic logic – and its concrete manifestations – to convert and/or force every person into labor and related relations that result in living by market outcomes alone. The current offensive can be seen as one more Schumpeterian “gale of creative destruction,” one that allegedly clears away the institutions, organizations, laws, customs, and people that prevent the capitalist

system from attaining new “heights”. However, many working people have realized that the alleged creativity primarily helps the bosses and the very rich; whereas those who have struggled historically to construct safety nets in order to avoid having to live by market outcomes alone have experienced the destructive part of Schumpeter’s formula (or slogan).

I High-Stakes Tests

Marxist analysis of schooling-education is based upon seeing it as part of the larger socio-economic, political, and cultural whole. Furthermore, these forms of inquiry are historically and concretely grounded. The “Rethinking Marx and Education” AERA panel was conducted according to what has just been described above. Most of the panelists spoke about the recent rightist project aimed at turning schooling-education into a process whereby the already precarious opportunities (in all too many schools) to engage in meaningful critical analyses would be seriously jeopardized and even turned back. The educational agents of this rightist/capitalist project resuscitated many ideas from what many know as educational essentialism. Essentialists believe that they know what the essential and/or “basic” curriculum should be for everyone – as well as pedagogical forms that serve it best. Forms that Dewey condemned and Freire denounced as “filling station” pedagogy. Educational essentialism was and is supported by claims that those who are bright and disciplined have epistemological tools that allow them to achieve certainty with regard to relationships between the knower and what is known, i.e., the knower can grasp the known as it really is! The so-called essential/basic curriculum can thus be defended and promoted because it allegedly represents a microcosm for understanding reality itself. Essentialist pedagogy assumes that the experts know and it is their job to teach the unlearned in a straight didactic manner. The progressive challenge to essentialism was partially successful; however, the latter is still the most dominant form of schooling. The current rightist, educational project seeks to roll back progressive gains and strengthen forms of schooling that select and sort in very unfair ways those who will benefit most from the capitalist society that dominates the U.S. The supporters of this project do not take class, as well as race, ethnic, gender, and other “identities” seriously with regard to how these memberships have caused people to compete on playing fields that are not level. Many of my AERA colleagues focused on high-stakes tests – and

related practices – to highlight the dangerous, undemocratic realities of the current rightist offensive.

Rich Gibson’s contribution to the panel is called “The Centrality of Schools for Social Change in North America.” With regard to my own focus herein, Gibson’s claim that so-called objective test scores measure mostly inherited cultural capital – not inherent, objectively discerned intelligence that could be considered to be universal/timeless in its potential and applicability – is right on the mark. High-stakes and even regular A through F grades provide assessments that benefit the powers that be and their less influential allies and beneficiaries. The test scores and letter grades allow for stratification to continue along a historical head-hand divide. The capitalist class-stratification system needs criteria in order to assign various people to specific places on the ladder. Historically race, ethnicity, and gender have been helpful to this assigning. Obviously the system does not work perfectly. Working people have always resisted. Moreover, some kids have been able to rise to the top of a system that was and is basically stacked against them. However, the much maligned (“crude”/“vulgar”) Marxist and neo-Marxist argument that school assessment and outcomes in capitalist societies **correspond** to the extreme stratification along the lines of those who have money, wealth, access, and overall power – as opposed to those who have less or very little – appears to be relevant now. The other concept that has been traduced by many critics of radical analysis is **reproduction**. This concept also allows us to understand better how schooling all too often – albeit imperfectly – reproduces the class stratification from which the students were born into.

Gibson is keenly aware that political power, exercised by federal and state officials, makes these high-stakes tests as well as some kind of rank order grades imperative. There are no “free market” choices here. Marxists and other radicals who study the origins and development of capitalism have argued that it, and the alleged “free market” were imposed by governmental power (including armed force) upon the many by the few. See Ellen Meiksins Wood’s *Democracy Against Capitalism* (1995) and *The Origin of Capitalism* (1999) as powerful and clear representatives of this literature. [2] Bill Bigelow writes about Oregon’s joining the “national testing craze,” and more specifically about the state-wide social studies assessments. He explains that these tests:

were a multiple-choice maze that lurched about helter-skelter, seeking answers on World War I, Constitutional amendments, global climate, rivers in India, hypothetical population projections, Supreme Court decisions, and economic terminology. Evidently, for the state of Oregon, social studies knowledge is little more than acquiring piles of disconnected facts about the world. [3]

Bigelow concludes his article with what he wants the state of Oregon to do instead of imposing high-stakes social studies tests on students and teachers. One example is his desire for state support of teachers who will be able to work together on building a curriculum that comes to grips with social problems such as racism. He insists that wisdom is more than just piling up information.

Gibson and his panel comrades emphasize the fact that teachers are workers. We, like Marx's classic proletariat have only our labor to offer if we are to live and survive. The imposition of these straightjacket tests ignore teachers' professional discretion and judgment. Gibson stresses the fact that externally imposed school standards rob teachers of the best part of our time on the job: creative interactive time with students as we discuss and inquire into issues and problems that command our authentic interest! He understands well that the rightist position has been that people should not be considered within social contexts in order to help explain how they live and are; instead people are seen as movable things upon the capitalist theoretical board game where everyone has equal opportunity to succeed or fail. Their essentialist allies view the school in the same way. They refuse to accept the best of progressive educators' insights that we must consider the whole child and the life experiences s/he and their families have or not had. These anti-democratic, powerful people repeat the naive or cynical slogan that everyone can succeed on the various societal and school contests that capitalist agents and allies have had a central role in constructing. Horatio/a Alger is their "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" poster person. In a recent *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* article it was claimed that there was no need to eliminate poverty **because** kids can still learn and get themselves out the ghettos and barrios.

The current, not quite elected, occupant of the White House has drawn upon "science" in order to push and legitimize the current "gale" of imposed tests and standards. This is a relatively new rightist/conservative source of legitimacy. In the past their claims to certainty have been based on inerrant books belonging to "revealed" religious truths, and/or philosophical claims that are similar in many ways to their religious

allies. Gerald Coles challenges G. W. Bush and his education agents' claims. He explains how the "occupant" promised to eliminate the "reading deficit" in this country by expanding on the so-called Texas education miracle to the entire country. Bush's scientific evidence is based almost exclusively on quantitative studies. Furthermore, the panel of "experts" worked from a priori beliefs about what is central to successful reading instruction. Contrary views were ignored. According to Coles:

The judicial coup d'état that brought us the president has many permutations, one of which is seizing the power to design and enforce the standards of literacy education that will coerce schools into using "scientifically-based" reading programs, especially if they hope to receive federal money. In pursuing and exercising this power, talk about "scientifically-based" instruction has been no more than a string of infomercials justifying the legitimacy of that power. [4]

Coles scores another bull's-eye when he argues that the neo-essentialist characteristics of the rightist reading project do not include equal emphasis on writing. As we have seen, the proponents of educational essentialism claim that what they believe to be the essential/basic curriculum is anchored within the bedrock of ontological reality itself. This allows, or demands, that the teacher act pedagogically as the "sage on the stage" while students are seen as vessels to be filled up with "universal knowledge" and then subjected to tests that feature some regurgitation-like responses. This is profoundly different from teachers, students, et al. searching for contextual and comparative meanings through experimentation, discussion, writing, and other forms of inquiry. Writing about one's own ideas is becoming an interlocutor – having voice – rather than mostly being on the receiving end of someone's putative expert and even infallible utterances and claims. The present administration of this capitalist nation speaks in a voice that encourages little or no response. The word "demand" is one of G. W. Bush's favorites. [5]

Gibson speaks of the rightist counter-revolutionary, reactionary project that has been gathering momentum since the first Nixon administration. One feature of this tendency is the "rising authoritarianism on the job and off, as the vertical discipline of society sharpened. This was especially easy to see in schools" The interests of capitalists, business persons in general, social conservatives, religious fundamentalists, et al. have been served through attempts to rollback real and

imagined gains made by working people, minorities, women, and other subaltern people during the 1960s and '70s. As the corporate and governmental right-wing forces become more powerful they are trying to dismantle the landmark achievements of the New Deal. William Greider argues that the G. W. Bush administration is attempting to roll back the progressive and democratic gains achieved through struggle against the powers that be throughout the entire twentieth century! In Greider's words:

Bush's governing strength is anchored in the long, hard-driving movement of the right that now owns all three branches of the federal government. Its unified ranks allow him to govern aggressively, despite slender GOP majorities in the House and Senate and the public's indifference to the right's domestic program. The movement's grand ambition ... is to roll back the twentieth century, quite literally. That is, defenestrate the federal government and reduce its scale of powers to a level well below what it was before the New Deal's centralization. With this accomplished, movement conservatives envision a restored society in which the prevailing values and power relationships resemble the America that existed around 1900, when William McKinley was president. Governing authority and resources are dispersed from Washington, returned to local levels and also to individuals and private institutions, most notably corporations and religious organizations. The primacy of property rights is re-established over shared public priorities expressed in government regulation. Above all, private wealth – both enterprises and individuals with higher incomes – are permanently insulated from the progressive claims of the graduated income tax. [6]

What Greider describes represents the victory of the capitalist imperative over the democratic one with regard to society and schools! Gibson places high-stakes tests within the context of class war from above upon workers, minorities, the poor, and even some middle-class people. Rule by the wealthy and powerful finds its support in the fascist-like Republican Party. Moreover, the Democratic Party no longer functions well as an authentic opposition organization. Sheldon Wolin supports the growing recognition that the Republicans under G. W. Bush's presidency are taking on all too many fascist characteristics – based on their ideas and actions.

The war on Iraq has so monopolized public attention as to obscure the regime change taking place in the Homeland The change has been intimated by the sudden popularity of two political terms rarely applied earlier to the American political system. "Empire" and "superpower" both suggest that a new system of power, concentrated and expansive, has come into existence Consider how odd it would

sound if we were to refer to “the Constitution of the American Empire or “superpower democracy.” The reason they ring false is that “constitution” signifies limitations on power, while “democracy” commonly refers to the active involvement of citizens and the responsiveness of the government to its citizens.... The increasing power of the state and the declining power of institutions intended to control it has been in the making for some time. The party system is a notorious example. The Republicans have emerged as a unique phenomenon in American history... [namely] a fervently doctrinal party, ruthless, antidemocratic and boasting a near majority.

[Furthermore,] in ceasing to be a genuine opposition party the Democrats have smoothed the road to power of a party more than eager to use it to promote empire abroad and corporate power at home. Bear in mind that a ruthless, ideologically driven party with a mass base was a crucial element in all of the twentieth-century regimes seeking total power. [7]

When I was an adolescent, a working-class, radical activist described fascism to me as: “Capitalism with its gloves off!” Or, said a bit differently: the iron fist without the camouflaged glove.

The class war being waged by those who sit astride the command heights of the economy and with great influence upon the political system, society, culture, schools, etc. is directed against those who are below them on the hyper-stratified class system in the U.S. As we know, places on this vertical, class stratification are dependent in many ways with one’s “identity”: black, brown, woman, lesbian, and many other people who have been considered “other” by the powers that be. The U.S. “neo-imperial” “superpower” wages class war both at home and abroad, aided by some of the other rich capitalist countries. The kind of “democracy” that the current Bush Jr. administration – along with most Republicans and more than a few Democrats – want for Iraq is one where the window-dressing will be based on some kind of elections, ones’ stacked in favor of the U.S. class state’s interest and project, namely to make the whole world safe for global capitalism. Gibson and I agree that capitalists demand having capitalist schools. Schooling-education is a contested site upon which the capitalist imperative is tirelessly pushed upon its weaker, incompatible imperative – the democratic one. Of course people fight back against this offensive against them. We can make our own histories, as Marx claimed; however, the “old man” qualified

this claim by warning that we cannot make history under conditions of our own choosing, or just as we might like. The teeter-totter upon which the conflicting imperatives sit is not horizontally balanced. The capitalist imperative resembles a very obese individual, while the democratic one resembles a very thin person – one who can be kept high in the air by the opponent’s overwhelming weight. In reference to the “better marx” in this paper’s title, we must all score better on the real high-stakes tests of this global struggle. Marx did not believe that bona fide schooling aimed at democratic empowerment, let alone the enacting of working-class power, could be achieved under the regime of capital. This regime includes hegemonic, somewhat persuasive, methods of control **as well as** the police and armed forces power of the class state!

Gibson deserves “better” and even high “marx” for explaining that “value in school ... is created collectively by a wide range of school workers, interacting with kids and communities. At issue, as in every workplace, is who will control the process and product of work. School workers need to organize collectively with their students and community people to gain greater control of the value they create.” Gibson would have the school become an acknowledged site where the power of money meets power in the form of the people.

Patrick Shannon’s AERA paper, “The Commodification of Literacy,” is in fact a Marxist interpretation of reading education. He explains the historical background of the current attempt to regulate elementary teachers around issues of reading instruction. The present phase of attempted control over teachers is part of the historical, capitalist-driven project, but perhaps unprecedented in its intensity, to render reading abilities another commodity. The student then is better able to be useful to capitalist work relations. He writes that throughout our history:

programmed learning, criterion referenced testing, mastery learning, teacher and school effectiveness [effective for what and to whom?], and now curriculum standards and high-stakes testing have been proposed [enacted and monitored] as variations on themes of ensuring that teachers follow the prescribed teacher guides closely in order to make the outcomes of their instruction more predictable and less dependent on teachers.

Shannon makes clear that what he has described can be understood better within the context of Marxist critique:

The ‘rationalization’ of reading instruction is only part of the spread of capitalist logic [and reality] throughout public and private life. According to this logic in order to reduce the risk to capital and to maximize profits, all aspects of business must become [more] predictable.

I would add that the reproductive role of schooling is aimed at making our students very predictable and unaware of: history, their own reflected upon interests as these play out within social contexts, and the possibility that work could and should be intrinsically interesting and worthwhile to themselves and others. Instead, the student who is soon to be engaged in capitalist, paid labor (some will be paid very little while others may be under- or unemployed) must become just one more commodity that can be controlled – along with non-human phenomena.

When *Time* magazine addresses commodification as an issue, conditions must be quite dangerous to/for capitalism. The article’s author is somewhat critical of what he addresses; although most likely with the intent to warn his corporate masters – or at least paymasters. Daniel Kadlec’s piece is called “Where Did My Raise Go?” The readers are presented with the following. Because of fierce competition among capitalists, the U.S. and other leading capitalist “democracies” have out-sourced many jobs to low-wage countries while driving down pay and benefits at home. According to Kadlec:

Underlying the trend is a fundamental shift in how employers view their work force. In the old way of thinking, employees were an investment, like factories or land, says Robert Reich, former U.S. Labor Secretary Adding workers was a major expense, and cutting them was a decision not taken lightly or often [Reich may have too sanguine a view of the good old days on this point]. Today, like copper or cotton bales, or computer chips, most employees are regarded as commodities to be stockpiled or shed as business warrants. Technology not only allows fewer people to do the jobs of the many; it also allows their skills to be taught fairly quickly anywhere in the world. So experience and the investments that companies have made in training count less. Most companies, Reich says, “have started to think of wages as a variable rather than a fixed cost.” [8]

While Kadlec and Reich have a point, let us remember that the public schools have always assisted capital with vocational training and friendly forms of “education.” This means that the capitalist directors and bosses did not have to start specific training from scratch. I think that Kadlec and Reich exaggerate the newness of what they describe and imply as being dangerous for the present system. There have been

other periods of capitalist hyper-exploitation and jobs-benefits insecurities. Seeing capitalism as a historical phenomenon and being knowledgeably critical of it – as Marx and the Marxists have been and are – enable us to understand more accurately what is presented in this *Time* magazine article.

The recent demands, made by rightist-led spokespersons and activists, that schools should produce graduates who are capable of serving the so-called new global economy are presented in terms of greater intellectual efficacy. However, the “high standards,” “basics,” and “high-stakes tests” are not about the development of powerful intellectual tools and modes of inquiry that help students understand the world and believe that they can transform it. There is evidence that the rightist project to strengthen essentialism in schooling, along with specific vocationalization of schooling overall, is driven mostly by the perceived need to change student *attitudes*. This project seeks to convince students, parents, et al., that lack of skills and *attitudes* are the main reasons for low pay and benefits, underemployment, and unemployment are not caused by the capitalist system itself, but by the students’ and workers’ personal mediocrity, laziness, and failure to bow down to conditions of capitalist labor. Unfortunately, the current reactionary assault on the progressive and democratic potential of our schools has already weakened the opportunity for students and their teachers to develop the critical skills that are necessary to unmask the plot that is being directed against them. This conspiratorial plot is not actually against the law in most cases. I believe that this is the case because the plotters have been able to act successfully through earlier conspiracies that have resulted in being able to act injuriously to the public good – all within the law. One might call this the “Enronization” of the U.S. The historical plot in its broadest and historical sense is to make capitalism a total system. Any person, procedure, process, thing, or even an idea that stands outside this totality must be leveled by the capitalist bulldozer so that the wasteland can then be reclaimed for business activities of all kinds. This would be the victory of the “cash nexus” that Marx warned us about.

Returning to reading instruction, Jeff McQuillan explains in his own review of Gerald Coles’ *A Review of Reading Lessons; The Debate Over Literacy* (1998) that “debates over reading are rarely just about whether teachers should teach letter-sound correspondences or use interesting children’s literature. They are [instead] often

rooted in divergent views about the [very] purposes of schooling.” [9] These debates are carried on within the crises conditions in U.S. schools and society. Very much like alleged arguments about philosophy of education, the useful subtitles of these educational and philosophical struggles indicate, in Marxist fashion, what the fights are really about. Most people care little about reading theory or philosophy of education per se; instead, they care about more pressing problems. Parents are concerned about their children’s well-being and happiness; however, they are especially concerned and anxious about how schooling will prepare **their** kids for good jobs. If essentialist pedagogy favors their kids, because of the cultural capital they bring to school, then they are apt to support didactic practices and “objective” exams that allow some to achieve at the honor grades level. If phonics methods coincide with certain parents’ views on how their progeny should develop as persons, then they are likely to favor this method.

Not everyone wants to make public her or his own, real economic concerns. The arguments that have a patina of theoretical or philosophical respect suit them much better. My experience has taught me that parents who may have an authoritarian view of the world and life would be more comfortable for their kids and others to learn how to read well in a rather mechanical sense. I venture to say that these people have a tendency to view reading and writing as what one must do to earn a living and become a “hail fellow [person], well met,” one who goes along to get along. If holistic approaches to reading and writing cause their children to think about issues that challenge their families’ supposed interests and advantages the chances are that such instruction would be opposed. This is especially the case in these times when rightist organizations are waiting in the wings to make a case that favors the allies and minions of the powers that be.

Those who have resisted attempts to make the U.S. a more fair and just society have recognized that the progressive idea of considering the whole child in our schools contains a very radical trajectory, one that was discerned very early on by those who favored essentialism and sought to preserve and defend their social class, racial, ethnic, gender, and other advantages. Svi Shapiro has articulated further and well what I have begun above.

One of the most significant influences in the extension of democratic claims against the [putative] free-market allocations of services, resources, and opportunities has been the emergence of what might be called the welfare-educational system [welfare in the generous, fair, and honorific meaning of the word]. Receiving its impetus from progressive notions of the “whole child,” the assertion that the ability to learn is inseparable from the satisfaction of an individual’s physical and emotional needs has permeated the popular consciousness [copyright 1990]. Successful schooling is understood as necessarily linked to the provision of a much broader set of social services: adequate health care and access to preventive treatment; the availability of adequate food and nutritional resources; the opportunity to alleviate emotional and mental distress; and the provision of an adequate home and physical environment. In short, school has become a major focus of, and the ideology of the education of the whole child a major justification for, the extension of social rights and the provision of the welfare state. [10]

Shapiro goes further, as if social conservatives, reactionaries, religious fundamentalist, capitalists, and their supporters were not frightened and/or vengeful enough! “It is, of course, only a short step from this...to demands for adequate job or income-maintenance guarantees for adults.” [11]

Of course, many progressive, democratic leftists have realized that the present debates raging in the country occur in all too many places where savage inequalities exist. They and I may be roughly in agreement that quality education is difficult to achieve for those who live in communities wherein most other public/civic institutions and practices that serve adults and their children are either inadequate or non-existent. McQuillan writes: It is against this dreary backdrop that schools and teachers are exhorted to “solve the reading crisis.”

As we have learned Shannon maintains that scripted lessons and high-stakes tests are driven importantly by capital’s drive to reduce workers of all kinds to commodified people who carry out the ideas and instructions of others – namely bosses. Harry Braverman’s *Labor And Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (1974) provides an insightful analysis of what has occurred historically to workers who labor under capitalist power. Kevin Vinson and Wayne Ross’s AERA paper, “Education and the New Disciplinarity: Surveillance, Spectacle, and the Case of Standards-Based Educational Reform,

helps us understand that these test scores become alien and “unrecognizable, an objectified product produced for someone else’s benefit (although one which the

worker/student/teacher is forced to pay for.... [Moreover] alienation is a relationship in which those who are represented [by test scores] have little say over *how* they are represented.

Vinson, Ross, and Shannon's work reminds me once again that the venerable concepts, correspondence and reproduction, are still useful. The schools in capitalist America can hardly avoid being forced into correspondence with what capitalist agents want –or demand – namely to reproduce the class-stratified system that features great disparities in income, wealth, privilege, access and other advantages for some. The test scores function as commodities and a form of money. Vinson and Ross assert: “in a standardized testing scheme, desirable test scores are ‘scarce’ and ‘regulated’ by the law of supply and demand relative to some ‘objective’ state of equilibrium (e.g., a ‘mean’).” My experience as a secondary social studies teacher with regard to this scarcity factor may seem humorous to some readers. [12]

Vinson and Ross point out that an “extreme Marxist orientation toward standards-based educational reform (SBER)...might demonstrate the degree to which such a system shares similar threats with market-based capitalist economics Both ensure a ‘competitive’ system of winners and losers. Both are reproductive. Both present dangerous and tempting opportunities for corruption...(i.e., test scores can be easily manipulated via accounting gimmicks – e.g., teaching to the test, test-taking strategies,) – as can stock prices).” Stan Karp expands upon this point, as he addresses the Bush “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

A huge increase in federally mandated testing will not provide the services and strategies our students need to improve. Most states and local districts have already dramatically increased the use of standardized tests over the past two decades without solving the problems of poor schools Many studies show that standardized testing does not lead to lasting increases in student achievement and may in fact reduce it When schools become obsessed with test scores, they narrow the focus of what teachers do in the classrooms and limit their ability to serve the broader needs of children and their communities. Over-reliance on testing also diverts attention and resources from more promising school improvement strategies like smaller class size, creative curriculum reform, and collaborative professional development. High-stakes

tests push struggling students out of school and encourage schools to adopt developmentally inappropriate practices for younger children in an effort to “get them ready for the tests.” Overuse of testing can also encourage cheating scandals and makes the schools and students vulnerable to inaccurate and at times, corrupt practices by commercial testing firms. [13]

Shannon weighs in with:

[Test] scores now define teachers’ success, [they] become students’ cultural capital, legitimize administrators’ plans, and raise property values in communities Inside the logic of rationalized [through positivistic misuse of science] reading programs it makes sense to follow the scripts in order to increase the chances of higher test scores Those who object are dismissed as irrational or political. According to Marxist theory, then, the scripted programs for reading instruction are simply an expression of capitalist logic.

As we know, these scripted programs are commercially produced. The constructors claim objective science for their legitimacy. How can “embedded” classroom teachers argue successfully against those who carry out the logic of the capitalist imperative as the debate plays to a frightened and poorly informed US public? The clash of the conflicting imperatives upon our schools is occurring within the larger contest of the whole society, one that is inundated daily by agents of capitalism and fundamental religions who insist that their closed belief systems are based upon certainty. Without these powerful, supposedly inerrant, belief systems the rightist school offensive could not occur. A crisis-ridden, but for now seemingly triumphant, neoliberal capitalism, and its religious allies are among the main cause(s) for the success of the current war against what is progressive and democratic in our schools. Marxist analyses are able to name what is occurring! This accomplishment is of great importance. Many persons who oppose some or much of what is occurring in U.S. schools and society have not yet been able to construct an in-depth, holistic explanation out of the many snapshots that move quickly before our eyes, as late and/or hyper -capitalism confronts us all with virtual reality along with the compression of space and time.

Vinson and Ross raise an important issue and threat to educators as well as others who are interested in education for democracy, social justice, respect for diversity – and altruistic “dispositions.” Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and Guy Debord

they maintain that so-called school reform can be understood more effectively when placed within the context of one more ominous development in the larger society. “SBER and surveillance-spectacle can, in part, be approached as constituting ... a ‘new’ disciplinarity of schooling, one of normalization and of oppressive and coercive conformity, one based upon the possibility of simultaneously watching and being watched.” I am reminded of Simon and Garfunkel’s music for the film called “The Graduate,” in which the lyric read: We’d like to know a little bit about you for our files. As a high school teacher during the time of the film’s popularity, my students and I understood what these lines meant. The authorities in San Diego (including the school district), California, and the nation sought to discourage dissent against the war in Vietnam as well as the related indictment concerning how the war of aggression was linked to racism, classism, gender discrimination, and other features of the American capitalist society of the 1960s.

According to Vinson and Ross, the imposed standards and high-stakes tests provide vehicles for the imposers and their agents to monitor and watch all who are in school settings as well as their performance and achievement. “This means that larger groups – theoretically the entire news-interested public – [can] watch smaller ones ... as a means of control (as encouragement toward a particular level or type of legitimate knowledge acquisition and/or behavior.)” I agree with my colleagues that this attempt at systematic total observation and monitoring are related – if not in correspondence with – the totalizing logic and practice of capitalism. Surveillance is widespread on job sites beyond schools also because it is deemed necessary by bosses who run capitalist operations. These operations feature conditions of labor in school and society that are not anywhere close to being fair, just, and interesting for students or workers. Disciplining and punishing are characteristic of all capitalist places of work where value (surplus for the capitalist) is generated by the worker who is not paid for all the work that s/he does.

High-stakes tests scores could be compared to Dow Jones and Nasdaq numbers. The scores and numbers go up and down but what they actually mean is difficult to determine. The general public does not understand very well what the relationships are between the scores and the overall achievement of kids – especially when one looks at holistic notions of growth and development. While it is the case that a

significant number of Americans follow the ups and downs of the market, and that many can figure out what is good for them; fewer of us are fully aware of how the real economy is related to what the various indexes tell us every day. In many instances the good news from the New York Stock Market is not helpful to everyone in this country. Laying off workers and/or shipping jobs to low-wage and few if any benefits countries might help investors in the short run; however, it is devastating to laid off workers. There are many other secrets in the movements of the markets that must be disclosed through critical education about the political economy. The same is true for the secrets and hidden agendas of the testing mania backers. It is possible that some of the supporters are unwitting accomplices of those who are more responsible for the injuries done to so many students who do not get high scores.

As Karp reminds us, test scores are related to inequalities in our society; therefore the sharp distinctions among these scores and those who get them should not be surprising. He also stresses the fact that so many who support this kind of testing, vouchers, privatization, and actual attacks on the public schools themselves claim to have the interests of working-class, poor, and minority kids at heart. However, “when did the same politicians who oppose civil rights, affirmative action, more spending for social programs, and universal health care suddenly become champions of poor Black and brown children and their families?” [14]

Coles addresses the question of who the proponents of the current NCLB program are – as it relates to the bigger rightist offensive against the common good in school and society. One of the forces behind these initiatives is the Heritage Foundation a right-wing think tank. Coles explains that the Foundation accepts high poverty as a given; however, it is not considered a factor in school achievement in the minds of these rightist members. As has been mentioned above in the work before you, these kinds of educational “experts” claim that the conditions of one’s life have nothing to do with eventual school achievement. The Heritage “experts” plan for lifting children out of poverty include the following:

replace ‘progressive education’ with basic skills teaching, use rigorous and regular testing, hire principals who will make their budgets ‘work’ and not complain about needing more money, and ‘use the hiring and firing of staff to communicate the ideals of [the school] mission’. [15]

Coles compares the reality to the myth of G. W. Bush's educational success as governor of Texas. His state ranked number two in the percentage of people – especially children – who were hungry. Texas tied for third place in the percentage of children living in poverty. The Lone Star state came in second in terms of the percentage of poor people. It is worrisome that many people in this country seem to consider the current occupant of the White House a man who is interested in schooling that will “lift all boats.” In fact, Bush's budget as president

includes deep reductions in virtually every area that could impact children's learning: food stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, child nutrition, foster care, child support enforcement, health insurance programs for children, child-care grants to states, and the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. [16]

II Reasons to Strive for Better Marx

It may not be necessary to explain the second part of this paper's title: however, I will – just in case. The high-stakes tests characterizing school and society during this historical time of capitalist offensives are ones that condemn many people to the bottom of the class. Because there exists correspondences between what occurs in the society-economy and our schools – occurrences that are heavily influenced, if not entirely caused, by capitalist power – it is necessary to study and familiarize ourselves with Marx's analysis of capitalism-as-a-system in order to pass the tests being imposed on us all. I contend that passing the tests requires dismantling them and overcoming capitalism itself. I begin by drawing from Kathleen Kesson's AERA paper, “Alienated Labor and the Quality of Teachers' Lives: How Teachers in Low-Performing Schools Experience Their Work.”

As a progressive ... scholar, I have watched with alarm as we have slid down ... from voluntary state standards, through ... increasing demands for accountability ... [and] the high-stakes testing craze ... now landing ... in a curricular space inhabited by artifacts that many of us hoped had been relegated to the dustbin of educational history: scripted curricula, teacher-proof texts, a reliance on “scientifically-proven” educational research ... the triumph of the managerial paradigm, and heavy doses of behaviorism in the classroom, especially when dealing with poor students and students of color. This remarkable regression of curriculum policy has been accomplished by the co-optation of left/liberal language of equity and solidarity and

encapsulated in the phrase “no child left behind.” However, if we situate these developments within the larger socio-economic-political currents of the present historical moment ... termed “the crisis in democracy” ... a number of questions need to be raised about the underlying aims and intentions of such policy If we accept as a given this paradigm of “crisis,” we must then ask of current educational policy: what is being gained by a set of curricular policies designed to limit students’ exposure to critical thinking and meaning making, to deskill teachers...and to punish students [who] and schools [that] do not perform well on high-stakes tests?

Kesson thinks that a Marxist analysis is required in order to disclose how the Janus face nature of what is happening, namely how the consolidation of state power and its attempt to minimize political dissent is “couched in language of equity, liberty, and excellence.”

Tim Wheeler writes in the *People’s Weekly World* that a meeting called “Take Back America” will be held in early June 2003 in order to discuss how to build strategies to defeat the ultra-right Republicans in the 2004 elections. Wheeler informs us:

The call to meeting declares, “The right-wing politicians who now run Washington are out of control. They are weakening America in the service of a few. They are dividing us by class and race. Now unemployment is higher, wages are lower and stocks have tanked. Pensions are under attack. Health care is in crisis. Hard-won environmental laws are being rolled back. We are seeing a campaign of many cuts against women, against the rights of working people, [and] against civil rights protections ... [moreover] a foreign policy that isolates America rather than our enemies.” [17]

As we prepare to consider Marxist analysis of various underlying explanations and causes for what has been presented in section one of this paper I wish to share with you the abstract of “Capitalism’s Intrinsic Contradictions: The Accumulation Crisis, Neoliberalism, Political Collaborators, the Military, and Educational Issues,” that I presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Studies Association in the autumn of 2002.

This paper seeks to analyze how capitalism’s current accumulation/profit crisis has caused the recent neoliberal economic responses by the Western “democracies,” along with the rise of Reaganesque and/or liberal “Third Way” politics. All of these serve capital domestically in tearing apart the welfare state accomplishments by democratic

forces in the wake of the Great Depression, and in foreign policy by backing the use of various military responses against real and alleged threats to Western capitalism and neoimperialism. All of the above have contributed to the crisis in education. Schooling has undergone fierce vocational pressures by the capitalist imperative, as well as a diminution of academic freedom. The school has been unprecedentedly commodified and is now subject to what has become a totalistic project that forces every place and person to live by market outcomes alone.

What follows is a presentation of some of the most basic insights of Marxist ideas. Obviously, space limitations permit only an outline of complex arguments and assertions. Historically there have occurred many debates about how **causal** the capitalist political economy is with regard to phenomena that characterize the sociopolitical, cultural everyday life of people in particular places and times. For example, is it warranted to assert that what is being addressed in this paper concerning schools can be explained **mainly** by the dynamics of the capitalist system? Marx never claimed that the economy is **monocausal**, furthermore, he argued that the economy is also social, political, and cultural, i.e., not just a separate sphere where work and money exchange is carried on. With this having been said, let us consider what Marx, Paula Allman, various reds, and I think is going on behind the scenes in order to provide credible/useful theoretical tools that help us understand our historical times and possibly how to begin solving problems and overcoming injustices.

Marx's great examination of the capitalist system of his time, namely the huge book called *Capital* or *Das Kapital* (1867), provides an analysis of what occurs behind the hegemonic, representational screens placed before us, consequently laying bare the dialectical unfolding of capital's essence. He follows the journey of the humble commodity through particular, inherent (to the system itself) contradictions into what the capitalist system becomes and is. Marx described capitalism as "value in motion." Value in terms of what is of worth in various products that are produced by labor. Under capitalism value is equated with profitability, not human use value. Marx argues that only labor creates value, but that the capitalist takes what justly belongs to the worker. Surplus value is what the boss appropriates; in other words, the worker labors for a specific amount of time and is paid by the boss; however, much of her/his labor time is really for the capitalist firm. Marx pointed out that

during feudalism it was obvious that the serf labored for the master, as did slaves under other systems of brutal exploitation. The capitalist contract between worker and capitalist makes it seem as though the relationship is fair; however, with the victory of capitalism as a whole system there is little opportunity for workers to avoid contracts that result in their being exploited by bosses – who add no real value, but take much of the profit! Capitalism means the conquest of labor by capitalism and its agents. It is antithetical to democratic relationships, let alone fair.

The humble commodity is different from other products created by labor; it is created at the outset for use by others – not necessarily for the creators themselves – and is sold to consumers by the capitalists. Obviously, Fordism attempted to include workers as consumers of what they produced. Use value is supplanted by commodities made specifically for sale and profit alone, most of which goes to the capitalist. Labor power itself becomes commodified. The wage relation becomes the mode through which the domination of one class over another occurs. The divorce of the producer from the means of production is the result of victories achieved by capitalists in continuous class wars against the primary producers, i.e., the workers. These battles have never ceased! Paula Allman's book, *Critical Education Against Global Capitalism: Karl Marx and Revolutionary Critical Education* (2001) provides an in depth explanation of what I am presenting herein. My essay review of Allman's important book is forthcoming in the journal called *Educational Studies*.

Allman's book is especially useful because due to its careful presentation of the various contradictions inherent to capitalism. The historical attempts to overcome these contradictions – always futile –help explain the crises of school and society we experience presently. Marx, Allman, et al. have argued that those who oppose capitalism, and its methods of trying to overcome its endemic contradictions, can contest the oppressors' methods as we use them as entry points in the struggle to resolve these crises in ways that are favorable to working people. The favorable solution is to overcome capitalism and replace the system with a moral economy that is genuinely decided upon and run by the great majority of the people who are members of the various collar colors that constitute the working class.

Let us consider how the capitalists and their agents attempt to resolve the interminable crises in relation to the injustices practiced on workers and other non-wealthy persons

in school and society. (1) When profits are not deemed adequate to capitalists they focus on the **labor-capital relation** and figure out how to extort more surplus value (profit) from the workers. This is done in various ways: longer hours, speed-ups, the use of technology and specifically automation. These strategies are easily recognizable today, along with seeking cheaper labor markets abroad. Obviously these strategic offensives have serious consequences for schooling-education. Some teachers may not realize why their jobs have become more supervised, deskilled, and rendered even less intellectual and/or creative.

In addition to focusing on the **labor-capital relation** capitalist strategy claims that there is (2) a **unity of production and circulation**. Capitalists insist that value and profitability are caused by their steering the simple commodity through the circulation process. It is their organizational abilities that make the whole thing work, not the impregnation of value into the commodity by the worker at the point of production. Therefore, in addition to attempting to get workers to work harder and more “productively” for less pay and benefits, they attempt to increase profits through circulating and inundating the world with more commodities. This is called an economy of scale. The revolutions in technology have allowed the capitalist system to become increasingly global in its reach. The speed of communications and of shipping products to various destinations have allowed grand scales *and* chronic overproduction. These strategies do not answer the real needs of people; there is a lack of “demand” because wages have been driven down (an example of “deflation”); furthermore, this onslaught of products made for sale and profit are not intended to answer genuine human needs in the first place. One result of this flawed attempt to solve the profitability crisis is public penury as compared to the favored classes’ affluence.

It is important to keep in mind that these attempts to solve the historic capitalist crises have involved other strategies. For example, the risks involved in production and circulation have been mitigated by: the introduction of credit, widespread use of consumer survey research, advertising that appeals to the senses – along with hidden persuaders – *and getting the government to help bail out the capitalists*. And then there are the constant demands on the schools to concentrate on thinly disguised vocational training for capitalist needs instead of critical education that could

empower students to see through the camouflage. The class state's interference on capital's behalf often includes the support of high profit war industries and occasionally war itself! István Mészáros reminds us in *Barbarism or Socialism* (2001) that even in the most "advanced" capitalist countries the class state is increasingly involved in protecting capitalist profits and the reproduction of the system itself. The capitalists never seem to think there is enough "extraneous help," as Marx called it. It is laughable but sad to read or hear that the US, a particular state, or city is not friendly enough to business needs! *Mutatis mutandis*, we are buffeted by loud and persistent cries that this country is not supportive enough of organized religion. We can only speculate about how much more assistance can be given to capitalism – and various conservative/reactionary institutional allies – before bourgeois/capitalist "democracies" lose" even more of their legitimacy. Teachers and our allies can seize on the failed capitalist driven efforts to solve these crises and to do our best to educate the broader public on what is at stake. Awareness and organizing for action are both necessary.

The last crisis point identified by Allman as she reads Marx critically is within (3) the **social forces/relations of production**. When workers are almost completely under the domination of their capitalist bosses, even the social relations become forces. This third point is obviously closely related to the first one. In fact, Allman presents all three as related to one another. Workers become part of capital itself when they are forced to labor almost entirely for the bosses and the system. As we know, capitalists have always regarded organized labor as the real threat to their profits and very existence. Theoretically armed, solidaristic, and brave workers are capable of and central to the overcoming of capitalism and its exploitive regime over labor. The mainstream, corporate media would have us believe that "competition" is good for all that ails us. However, in most cases this competition is really among capitalist organizations in terms of which ones can extract the most surplus value from its workers. Pay less, and profit more! Most of the world's people are forced into a race to the bottom with reference to pay, benefits, working conditions, the environment, and other factors that help constitute a good life.

Allman uses her knowledge of Marx to get very good marks on the high-stakes examinations and threats we face. She writes:

The social relations that people enter into ... during the turnover of capital ... are their [the present writer says “our”] most fundamental social relations. Of course, people enter into other social relations too, but those they enter into in order to produce their material reality and thus the basis of consciousness as well as their actual mode of existence are ... basic to all others Value’s [the journey of the humble commodity from use-value to surplus-value/profit] dynamic and mediating moments hold the entire framework, or capital’s ‘essence’ together...into a network ... that constitutes the socioeconomic structure of capitalist society in its national as well as global forms.” [18]

The reader’s and/or listener’s reception to the passage from Allman will be crucial to her/his overall reaction to the kind of better Marx and marks championed in the work before you – as well to Marx and Marxist thought overall.

Many Marxists think that a structural analysis of capitalism and social class politics are the most effective things to do in order to bring about revolutionary changes. It is clear that workers - those who have only their labor to offer – are becoming more and more numerous as people around the world are being sucked/forced into the grim realities of proletarian working relations and conditions. This has occurred as a result of the capitalist project to reduce nearly everyone to persons/workers from whom surplus value can be extracted, or appropriated. All of us have multiple memberships. Workers are members of various races, ethnicities; obviously we are gendered as well as having other “identities.” Some have claimed that Marxists neglected to look beyond social class memberships. I believe that this accusation is exaggerated. Marx was convinced that social class – one’s relationships to the various and complex “means of production” – are common to all people. It is as (1) worker vis-à-vis the dominant economy, and (2) citizen, subject, and other relationships to the governments of the world that we are all forced into. It as worker-citizens that ordinary (honorifically used) persons have been able to contest the power of those who considered themselves to be our “betters.” Marx did not select the working classes of his time, i.e. the industrial proletariat, as the agency through which to overcome capitalism because they suffered the most. His reason was because of their position within the wage-labor relation contra the capitalists and how this unfair juxtaposition could be recognized and opposed through knowledge, theory, and collective action.

Conclusion

It has been argued that Marxist thought provides useful tools with which to study and understand what Arundhati Roy calls empire in the introduction of this work. Empire is, in fact, a result of the totalistic logic of capitalist development that features its agents seeking to claim every person and place as conquests for the system of actually existing global capitalism. The “gale of creative destruction” of which Schumpeter wrote includes the not-very-creative-for-everyone destruction of: the U.S. Constitution, our public schools, necessary social services, civilians in foreign countries whose governments have incurred the displeasure of our class-state’s politicians, and of any meaningful form of democracy itself. This a short list of the “collateral damage” suffered during this most recent explosion of manic energy by capitalists and their agents as they seek to solve the value/profit crisis. It seems as though everyone but the powers that be must suffer in order to make capitalism profitable enough for those who inhabit the command heights of this unjust, immoral, and murderously dangerous political economy. In addition to following the journey of the humble commodity, we can correspondingly follow the no longer so humble tests that have become very determinative of our students’ futures. Being able to understand what these school tests really are, as well as the ones they are in correspondence with extramurally requires taking seriously what Marx, the greatest critic of capitalism, has tried to teach us!

In response to a statement by Anthony Arnove: “You often seem more optimistic than other writers on the left”, the historian, Howard Zinn replied:

I think whether you’re optimistic or pessimistic depends on what you’re looking at. We live in a very complex society. Thousands and thousands of images come your way from television and the [print] media Most of the images that you see are ... of “important” people. What you hear mostly in the newspapers is what the president ... [and his advisors are] saying If you compare how much attention is paid to what government officials do compared to what ordinary people do, it’s an enormous gap. So if you take seriously these images ... and take that as representative of our society, it’s very disheartening. Because you’re hearing things that ... confirm the status quo. You’re not hearing signs of resistance to it. But there are thousands of things that are going on all the time that aren’t reported in the major media So if you’re aware of that – if you pay attention ... and don’t allow yourself to be overwhelmed by the images of the great and not so great in Washington, D.C. [with obvious close relations with

Wall Street, corporate headquarters, and the seemingly neutral institutions like the World Bank] – you can get a sense of an enormous potential for change in this country. [19]

Afterword

The following quote from Michael Parenti, who is one of our most important and exceptionally succinct radical writers, deservedly concludes this analysis.

What we need is a 180 degree shift away from unilateral global domination and toward equitable and sustainable development among the peoples of the world. This means US leaders would have to stop acting like self-willed unaccountable rulers of the planet. They must stop supporting despots, and stop opposing those democratic movements and governments that challenge the status quo. The struggle is between those who believe that the land, labor, capital, technology, markets, and natural resources of society should be used as expendable resources for transnational profit accumulation, and those who believe that such things should be used for the mutual benefit of the populace. What we need is to move away from liberal complaints about how bad things are and toward a radical analysis that explains **why** [the current writer's emphasis] they are so, away from treating every situation as a perfectly new and befuddling happening unrelated to broader politico-economic interests and class power structures. What we need is a global anti-imperialist movement that can challenge the dominant paradigm with an alternative one, that circumvents the monopoly ideological control of officialdom and corporate America. We not only need such a movement, we already have one as manifested by mass protests in Seattle ... and other places too numerous to mention. Against all odds, all monopoly propaganda, all deception and intimidation, against the most hopeless situations we continue to struggle as we have in the past, sometimes even winning victories and making gains." [20]

Acknowledgements

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This paper develops from a paper given at the Rouge Forum Summer Institute on Education and Society, University of Louisville, June 28, 2003, and the discussions at that conference. See <http://www.rougeforum.org/>.

Notes

[1] Arundhati Roy, “Resistance is Never Futile,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2003, 16.

[2] See Ricardo Duchesne, “Remarx: On The Origins of Capitalism,” *Rethinking Marxism*, Fall 2002, Vol. 14, No. 3, 129-137 for an informative critique of Wood’s analysis concerning when and how capitalism emerged – or forced its way – onto the English, early modern stage. Duchesne is critical of Robert Brenner’s work with regard to the debate – one in which the former places Wood as a Brenner ally.

[3] Bill Bigelow, “Standards and Multiculturalism,” *Rethinking Schools*, Summer 1999, Vol. 13, No. 4, 6.

[4] Gerald Coles, “Learning to Read – ‘Scientifically,’” *Rethinking Schools*, Summer 2001, Vol. 15, No. 4, 3 and 25.

[5] For an incisive and revealing analysis of this president’s authoritarian language use that is based on well-known linguistic techniques aimed at making listeners feel dependent and powerless see, Renana Brooks, “A Nation of Victims,” *The Nation*, June 30, 2003, Vol. 276, No. 25, 20-22.

[6] William Greider, “Rolling Back the 20th Century,” *The Nation*, May 12, 2003, Vol. 276, No. 18, 11.

[7] Sheldon Wolin, “Inverted Totalitarianism,” *The Nation*, May 19, 2003, Vol. 276, No.19, 13.

[8] Daniel Kadlec, “Where Did My Raise Go?,” *Time*, May 26, 2003, Vol. 161, No. 21, 50.

[9] Jeff McQuillan, “Lessons From the Reading Wars,” *Rethinking Schools*, Summer 1999, Vol. 13, No. 4, 21.

[10] Svi Shapiro, *Between Capitalism And Democracy: Educational Policy And The Crises of The Welfare State* (New York: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1990), 143-4. For critical but comradely comments on Shapiro’s book, see: Richard A. Brosio,

“Review Article – *Between Capitalism and Democracy*,” *Educational Theory*, Fall 1991, Vol. 41, No. 4, 431-8.

[11] Shapiro, *Between Capitalism And Democracy*, 145.

[12] When I was a social studies teacher at Crawford High School in San Diego (1962-68), during one semester my team-teaching partner and I conducted an experiment. The last period of the day American government class we taught comprised of circa 100 students – most of whom were considered “regular” as opposed to “advanced.” We inflated an A grade to 25,000 possible points! A student at the C level might be thousands of points out of reach from a top grade. Very few students argued with us about being around, let’s say, hundreds of points away from a B grade. Even the plusses and minus were divided by very many numbers/points. My partner and I then explained the arbitrariness of the system we had concocted. It made it easier for the students to understand our critique of rank ordering based on student achievement that was impossible to be based on the best ideas and methods of bona fide progressive education. The working conditions we faced left little opportunity for portfolios, and/or individualization – let alone personalization. Many of our male students were headed for Vietnam after graduation. We did our best to prepare them and other working-class students for the kind of society they would soon enter as workers of various kinds.

When I was a freshman at the University of Michigan, 1956-7, it was shocking to me as I experienced students from the East Coast, Grosse Pointe, MI, and other more affluent areas than my native Upper Peninsula of Michigan town who spoke of themselves and others in terms of their IQs. It sounded like they were emulating the auto manufacturers of that time who stuck chrome horsepower numbers on various car body places. I thought at the time that these “hip” students might as well have the IQ numbers sewed onto their upper sleeves. Perhaps this is a minor example of “sign correspondence”? The implication being that those with high IQs would be more likely to afford more horsepower and bigger more luxurious automobiles

[13] Stanley Karp, “Equity Claims for NCLB Don’t Pass the Test,” *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 2003, Vol. 17, No. 3, 3.

[14] *Ibid.*, 4.

[15] Gerald Coles, "Learning to Read and the 'W Principle'", *Rethinking Schools*, Summer 2003, Vol. 17, No.4, 7.

[16] *Ibid.*, 8.

[17] Tim Wheeler, "Timely Meeting On An Urgent Task; 'Take Back America' ", *People's Weekly World*, May 31, 2003, 11.

[18] Paula Allman, *Critical Education Against Global Capitalism: Karl Marx and Revolutionary Critical Education* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 2001), 76.

[19] Howard Zinn, *Terrorism and War* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002), 112-3.

[20] Michael Parenti, *The Terrorism Trap: September 11 and Beyond* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002), 101-2.

Author's Details

Richard Brosio earned a Ph.D in 1972 at the University of Michigan @ Ann Arbor. His dissertation, published as a monograph at the university, is called: "The Relationship of Dewey's Pedagogy To His Concept Of Community". In 1980, another monograph was published: "The Frankfurt School: An Analysis Of The Contradictions and Crises of Liberal Capitalist Societies". He continued to write about schooling-education within a Marxist Critical Theory perspective. "A Radical Democratic Critique Of Capitalist Education" was published in 1994. In 2000, "Philosophical Scaffolding For The Construction Of Critical Democratic Education" was published. Brosio was a Ball State University professor from 1972-2000. He has emeritus status from that university and is currently working as an adjunct/lecturer at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. He is still active as a researcher-writer. In 1998 he was awarded "The James and Helen Merritt Speaker Award For Outstanding Contributions To The Philosophy Of Education". He is presently studying the concept and realities of "civil society" within the framework of Marxist criticism of what has become of this concept that was supposed to exist between the class state and the capitalist system.

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