

Schooling in an Era of Corporate Dominance: Marxism against Burning Tires

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Abstract

This paper looks at the most current manifestations of the restructuring of teacher education programs in the US designed to meet the needs of capital. Drawing on personal experiences of being "let go" I highlight how the business plan for education (Hill, 2003) directly impacts the content of teacher education courses through both the focus on standards and fear, therefore effecting the retention of those professors specifically working against capital such as the Marxist professoriate. Attention is given to NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) because of its role in further corporatizing the university culture into one that more closely resembles that of mid-level corporate management transforming the focus from knowledge and content to outcomes and performance. Working as a teacher educator in New York City, I also make connections to the business plan for and in NYC's public school system—a system run by and for global capitalists such as Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein. Finally, resistance and possible strategies for change are explored.

Bourgeois liberal educational theorists in the United States have enjoyed a long-standing apostolic advantage to Marxist scholars who for the most part are characterized as political extremists, idealists, untrustworthy and intransigent intellectuals, and rouges and renegades. The works of Marx and his heirs have been placed on the librorum prohibitorium. Regrettably, too few Marxist analyses are published in U.S. educational journals, and even fewer works by Marxist educators appear in the syllabuses of teacher education programs in the United States.

(McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, pp. 75-76)

The boundaries for free expression in the university, though broader than in the larger society, are still watched carefully. When that freedom is used, even by a

small minority, to support social change considered dangerous by the guardians of the status quo, the alarm goes out: "The communists are infiltrating our institutions"; "Marxists have taken over the curriculum."...The axes then get sharpened. Yes, some of us radicals have somehow managed to get tenure...but we have seen the ax fall countless times on colleagues less lucky.

(Zinn, 2005, p. 93)

Education and training are implicated in a process of reducing 'the human' to capital: human capital... In resisting the social drives incorporated within capitalist education and training we simultaneously resist the reduction of our personhoods to a form of capital...[However] the stick is always in the background; refusal to employ, discriminate against Leftists in recruitment and redundancy and so on.

(Rikowski, 2005, p. 13)

Given this less than embracing environment and negative perception of radicals in general and Marxists in particular it is not surprising that such professors tend to be treated as undesirable employees, especially those engaged in resisting the commodification of humanity (Rikowski, 2005), that is, undermining what Dave Hill (2003) has coined the "business plan *for* education" (discussed below) through their work in teacher education programs. Those of us who do not have tenure, and especially those who contractually work semester by semester, are in particular vulnerable positions to the whims of increasingly business-dominated administrations (Zinn, 2005), but such are the risks true revolutionaries uncompromisingly live with (Newton, 1973/1995). Similarly, Glen Rikowski (2005) argues that rather than abandon schools, universities and colleges because, with few exceptions, they serve as capital's training ground for their future labor force, Marxist educators should work within them as agents of counter-hegemony in an effort to transform their purpose against capital while taking the risk of redundancy. It has long been noted that Marxist and radical educators have been kept out of schools of education (and higher education generally) thereby limiting the range of debate making the challenge of being "out" and vocal not only that much more arduous, but critical (Chomsky, 2000).

In a discussion on freedom within universities, and the lack thereof, Howard Zinn (2005) argues that the "pluralism in thought that is required for truly free expression in higher education has never been realized. Its crucial elements—[such as] an ideologically diverse faculty...have always been under attack from outside and from

inside the colleges and universities" (p. 91). Radicals, such as Marxists, according to Zinn (2005), have had only limited stable access to higher education through the "...control of faculty appointments, contract renewals, and tenure..." (p. 91).

In addition, I would add what I refer to as the "adjunctization" of the professoriate to Zinn's list of tactics used to keep counter-hegemonic curricula and pedagogy out of higher education. In many colleges and universities throughout the U.S. adjuncts currently teach as many as 50% to 80% of all undergraduate and graduate courses. Adjuncts are particularly vulnerable to punitive measures because they tend to work from semester by semester with no long-term contracts. Not only are adjuncts easy to dismiss, they are also "cost effective," earning far less than their tenured and tenure-track colleagues for comparable work.

Radical and revolutionary educators who take class antagonisms as a focus of analysis in their teaching and scholarship and who identify their politics with Marxism, are not only in constant danger of termination, but also tend to be viewed by neoliberals and much of the left as, among other things (see McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005), shriveled up and outdated because, they naively argue, class no longer exists, and Marxism is inherently undemocratic and therefore oppressive. Countering such claims:

- If a Marxist-based class analysis is no longer relevant because of claims that class is no longer a central feature of contemporary global society, a look at the levels of world poverty and the concentration of wealth and power in fewer and fewer hands stands as a naked example of the existence of class as a defining characteristic of current social relationships. For example, citing Fox (2004) McLaren & Farahmandpur (2005), underscoring capitalism's current imperialistic tendencies, note that "in the 1960s, the overall income of the richest 20 percent of the world's population was thirty times that of the poorest 20 percent. Today, it is 224 times larger!" (pp. 8-9). If class were fading away, as some would like us to believe, such trends would in fact be reversing. Rather than fading away the existence of social classes are becoming more pronounced.
- If Marxism is shriveled up, in the US it arguably is (Hill, 2003; McLaren & Farahmandpur), then we need to reinvigorate it and make it more powerful

than it ever has been to meet the challenges posed to us radicals by global capitalism, the new imperialism, as Peter McLaren, Dave Hill, Mike Cole, Glenn Rikowski, Ramin Farahmandpur, Rich Gibson, Paula Allman, Marc Pruyn, David Gabbard, Wayne Ross and many others have made significant progress towards.

- While it would be unwise to ignore the many atrocities committed under the name of Marxism, socialism and/or communism, it would be equally unwise to throw Marxism out with the bloodied, undemocratic bath water of Stalinism (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; Rikowski, 2005). One need only examine "Stalin's awesome atrocities" (Chomsky, 1999, p. 29) such as his killing of peasants in the name of industrial progress (Zinn, 2003) and his oppressive legacy in the former Soviet Union marked by labor camps as a gross example of state capitalism peddled as communism (Tucker, 1969).

Having established a rudimentary argument for the current relevance of class analysis, I now place the existence of Marxist teacher educators in the context of the current business plan *for* teacher education programs focusing on the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as the driving force.

NCATE, the Business Plan *for* Teacher Education and Examples of Redundancy

Once again, if we are "out" non-tenured Marxists and stick to our principles through our work as educators/scholars, we are in constant danger of termination. This is the danger any revolutionary faces, a true soldier for the people, to paraphrase Huey P. Newton (1973/1995), co-founder and former Defense Minister of the revolutionary Black Panther Party, whose central focus was to "...raise the consciousness of the masses through educational programs..." (p. 16). That is, it is the responsibility of the radical teacher to provide people with the tools of liberation, critical thinking and class consciousness being the most important devices needed for self and ultimately, global emancipation from private property, the process of value production and its divisive tendencies such as white supremacy (Hill, 2003; Ignatiev, 1995; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; Rikowski, 2005).

Otherwise, following state mandates (see below), teachers serve the interests not of the many, but of the few, and are therefore at best naïve bystanders and at worst

acting as enemies of the people, and thus not educators but indoctrinators. It is because true education is the freedom to question and to seek answers (Hill, 2003) that this is so. Without such opportunity for critical analysis education becomes indoctrination and a hindrance to the liberation of people from the relationships that oppress them—namely, the labor/capital relationship.

Outlining capitalism's deleterious impact on education, focusing on how educators' *public* language, traditionally couched in hymns of duty and service, increasingly resemble the discourse of *private* capital, dominated by rantings on outcomes and performance, Dave Hill (2003) argues that:

Education as a social institution has been subordinated to international market goals including the language and self-conceptualization of educators themselves...Within Universities...the language of education has been very widely replaced by the language of the market, where lecturers 'deliver the product', 'operationalize delivery' and 'facilitate clients' learning', within a regime of 'quality management and enhancement', where students have become 'customers' selecting 'modules' on a pick'n' mix basis, where 'skill development' at Universities has surged in importance to the derogation of the development of critical thought. (p. 7)

While Hill takes aim at capital's influence on education in general, I now focus on teacher education programs in particular. Even a superficial examination of the discourse of NCATE quickly reveals the predominance of market rhetoric (outlined below) and the systems' business plan *for* teacher education. Such language and its manifestations in practice can now be observed invading schools of education like the smog of burning tires suffocating those who set them ablaze, the Mexican oppressed suffering horrendous conditions engendered by the World Banks' Structural Adjustment Policies and the subsequent North American Free Trade Agreement, in a desperate attempt to bear the bitter cold of a Mexican borderland winter under the flimsy shelter of cardboard and tin shacks. However, because the plight of relatively privileged radical professors pales in comparison to the conditions suffered by those toiling in borderland factories, the responsibility for us to choose not to burn tires is great. In a classic essay on the responsibility of academics Chomsky (1966/1987) argues that:

Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyze actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions. In the

Western world at least, they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression. For a privileged minority, Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities, and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology, and class interest through which the events of current history are presented to us... It is the responsibility of intellectuals to speak the truth and to expose lies. (p. 60)

While the freedom of academics that Chomsky highlights is currently under attack by right wing corporate forces such as NCATE, it nevertheless remains true that professors within the United States, as well as other industrialized nations, remain in positions of privilege and therefore have a moral responsibility to use their power to academically rebel against the social form of value that has resulted in a material reality where "...34.6 million Americans are living in poverty...[and] 43.6 million Americans are lacking any access to health insurance" (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005, p. 8). While it is true that it is increasingly dangerous to be an untenured Marxist educator who makes no pretensions about the obvious connection between global capitalism and education, even if we get moved on from time to time, we remain professors with PhDs and can usually always find part-time and even full-time teaching work that provides a standard of living well above the world's oppressed relegated to the bowls of sweat shop misery. However, people enjoy a certain amount of relief from job security, and will therefore tend to make ideological compromises when feel a potential (real or imagined) threat to that security. Let us now refocus on the accreditation association that is leaving a trail of burning tires wherever it goes.

Again, the regulatory body driving teacher education programs to burn metaphorical tires and away from its liberatory potential, I argue, is NCATE. In "Under Surveillance: NCATE and the Impoverishment of Education" (draft) Peter Taubman offers a rare and timely critique of the corporatizing impact of NCATE on teacher education programs. Summarizing the replacement of the language of education with the language of business Taubman argues that:

It is a system that translates students into "candidates," ways of evaluating and understanding students' and our own work into "targets," and "objectives," teaching into "delivery systems," intellectual engagement into "performances," understanding into "data aggregation" and "accountability," and schools of education and the colleges or universities in which they reside into "units." (3)

In his analysis Taubman takes special care to highlight NCATE's support for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)—a policy that has proved to serve the interests of the wealthy and the powerful, not the masses of people who comprise the working and middle classes (outlined below). For example, Taubman cites Arthur E. Wise, who took control of NCATE in 1991, as arguing "accountability and high standards are empty promises without quality teaching...NCATE welcomes President Bush's call that every child in America deserves a quality teacher" (p. 8). It has been well documented that the underlying motive behind the NCLB Act is to hand public education over to private management companies for profit (see Coles, 2003; Karp, 2003; Miner, 2003). What such foci have ultimately meant for teacher education through NCATE is the dominance of the business plan *for* education.

Other than turning public schools into direct-profit-generating institutions what is it that business is interested in getting out of education and training that have them acting so punitively, as suggested above? In a cutting-edge overview of capitalist schooling and the criticality of the role of radical educators in transforming our social realities Glenn Rikowski (2005) lays bare the motivating force behind such endeavors arguing that:

The substance of capital's social universe is value. Labour-power produces value, and education and training in capitalist society are heavily implicated in the social production of labour-power: the commodity that generates the social universe of capital. Furthermore, labour-power is capital's weakest link, as it resides within us...and is hence subject to our wills. Hence, education and training in capitalist society have massive strategic significance for the maintenance and expansion of capital... Of course governments instinctively sense this... On the back of these instincts, they attempt to control and regulate the labour of teachers and education researchers. (p. 39)

Because education is arguably the primary method for creating indirect surplus value by creating workers willing to sell their labor power for a wage less than the value it produces, that is, as an ideological force of production, radicals tend not to be welcome candidates as future teachers, as indicated above. This is the driving force behind education policy for all levels, that is, the development of future workers willing to do whatever the job is required of them without talking back or asking the *wrong* questions—that is, the business plan *for* education. Highlighting this indoctrinating tendency of education Chomsky (2000) notes:

Early on in your education you are socialized to understand the need to support the power structure, primarily corporations—the business class. The lesson you learn in the socialization through education is that if you don't support the interests of the people who have wealth and power, you don't survive very long. You are just weeded out of the system or marginalized. And schools succeed in the "indoctrination of the youth—borrowing the Trilateral Commission's phrasing—by operating within a propaganda framework that has the effect of distorting or suppressing unwanted ideas and information. (p. 17)

The idea Chomsky (2000) brings to the fore of being weeded out if one does not take to capital's indoctrinating tendencies is particularly relevant in the context of NCATE as Taubman stresses when he argues that "NCATE accreditation is all that stands between us and extinction" (p. 2). In other words, if schools of education do not comply with the terms NCATE has established and are not granted accreditation then such teacher training programs could be "weeded out" and made redundant. The underlying message: following the party line or you will not be allowed to play the game. The hidden curriculum of NCATE therefore has a chilling effect and is engendering a culture of fear where professors tend to feel powerless at mounting an effective anti-NCATE resistance.

This situation poses a challenge to radical teacher educators who, following Freire (1998) and others, teach their students to fight against oppression in general and unjust administrations and educational policies in particular, while they themselves are failing to do so. Freire (1998) argues that the relationship between students and teachers breaks down when there is too big a gap between what educators say and what they do. University professor is a relatively good job, the price of which seems to be increasing as business interests invade more areas of the public sphere.

Given educators relative economic privilege in capitalist societies such as the U.S., it is not surprising that few, fearful of termination, choose the path of resistance, as argued above. The power of the state therefore creates the conditions for self-censorship, which, in the long run, has the same toxic effect as burning tires. In this context the question posed by Marxist educator, co-founder of the Rouge Forum and former labor organizer, Rich Gibson (2000), "How do I keep my ideals and still teach?" makes increasing sense. In other words, how do Marxist educators stay safe in increasingly impoverished business-dominated teacher education programs without burning tires, that is, without surrendering ones values and beliefs?

For many Marxist educators, such as myself, the answer is: we move from job to job surviving from time to time, often with the help of public assistance, on pieced together part-time adjunct work juggling various teaching loads across a wide range of urban universities and colleges. Resting just beneath the surface of the many short-term appointments littering our vitae are bruise patterns, the trace marks of the heavy-hand of capital. Such description has been indicative of my seven years of experience teaching at "American" universities as I demonstrate below. The first example I provide of the relative restrictive tendencies of higher education, although not situated within a teacher education program, puts the issue in a larger context demonstrating the conservative nature of the whole institution of higher education not just colleges of education.

The Justice Stand

After earning an MA in Sociology at New Mexico State University (NMSU) in 1998 I began teaching the weekend college section of Introduction to Sociology at NMSU. While my class was not explicitly taught from a Marxist perspective, I did engage students in radical inquiry, examining the role of the prison industrial complex in US white supremacist capitalist society, for example. I used texts such as *All Things Censored* (2000) by Mumia Abu-Jamal, former Minister of Information of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Black Panther Party, renowned journalist, and current death row inmate, which celebrates the spirit of resistance that has become a tradition in a society built on actual slavery and perpetuated on wage slavery.

The semester I began teaching this class I also started what I named *The Justice Stand*. The Justice Stand was modeled after an organizing strategy I observed and participated in for a summer in Oakland, CA. The hub of organizing was a literature table/political sticker stand. "John," the organizer of the "eyes of telegraph," sold political stickers as a street vendor as his sole source of income, which also funded his leaflet, which reported police attacks on the homeless population, which the cops dubbed "Operation Ave. Watch." I used my teaching income to pay my monthly student loan bill and supply the justice stand with free literature rather than rent an apartment. So I was forced to live in my 1971 Volkswagen bus.

The Justice Stand was a huge success. It grew with incredible force as people began to show up daily to hang out, play drums, read literature, discuss politics, casually socialize, play hacky-sac, in short, to create and occupy a space that looked and felt unlike mainstream capitalist society. Even though we had a permit to distribute literature, our activities were terminated by the Student Activities Administration after only a few months of operation. Ruined by the small taste of freedom engendered by what grew out of The Justice Stand, those of us engaged in the activity were in no position to go away quietly—to burn tires. So we fought, and refused to go away, developing a free speech campaign so strong that it made The Justice Stand look like a joke. During this time of activism I was in constant threat of termination, which went as far as having an armed university state police officer visit my class. This was a direct result of my refusal, both inside and outside the classroom to burn tires, that is, to compromise my beliefs and position.

The Justice Stand free speech campaign developed into such a powerful movement that my sociology position remained stable while it was under way. Once the movement subsided as a result of internal conflict stemming from external pressure, I was dismissed with the excuse that the weekend class I was teaching for three years had a history of serving to give their MA graduates post-graduation teaching experience, which, it seems, became a tradition with me, their second graduate to teach the class. The woman who taught the class before me left because she moved. Despite the fact that my students both consistently passed my class with high marks and gave me positive evaluations, reporting how much they learned in my class as a result of being challenged to think deeply and critically the entire semester, I was the first to ask to leave the position, not of my own will. That tradition seems to have started and ended with me.

Despite my termination and the fading out of The Justice Stand movement, the story, while still in process, for the purposes of this paper, ends on a positive note. The free speech policy at NMSU was eventually overturned and students, faculty and staff continue to use the campus to organize against war, the militarization of the border, among countless other Justice Stand issues. To quote the late Joe Strummer, "the future is unwritten."

Curriculum & Instruction

After leaving The Justice Stand, although still organizing with activists from The Justice Stand days, I moved across campus to the Department of Curriculum & Instruction to sharpen my skills at educating *against* oppression and *for* humanity, which, it turned out, required a lot of critical self-reflection (see Malott & Peña, 2004).

While teaching a Social Studies methods course in NMSU's teacher education program a disgruntled student, whose parents, who were of the same class of New Mexican land-owners as the university's ruling body, The Board of Regents, wrote a letter to the president of the school, bypassing myself, the head of social studies education, and the entire School of Education, complaining that I not only committed the cultural sin of wearing "shorts to class," but I also used a song in class, "Body Count," by rapper Ice-T's hard-rock band, also named *Body Count*, that contained profane (shit and fuck) and sacrilegious (god damn) language. Such complaints were enough to get me "reassigned" to a teacher/research assistant position, and effectively banned as an instructor from teacher education at NMSU. This *reassigning* occurred after I let all my supervisors and bosses know (the majority of who were and remain close allies) that I did not intend to water-down my classes in anyway. In other words, I let them know that under no circumstances would I burn tires.

The "official" reason given to me for not being allowed to teach social studies methods courses was that I was not a certified public school teacher, which violated NCATE's law of who was allowed to teacher classes required for certification, such as social studies methods. Even though I had experience working with youth in public schools, I was deemed unfit because my work did not require that I become a certified public school teacher. However, such concerns were never an issue until I was put under scrutiny. It was no secret that the complaining student never liked the focus of the course, which critiqued traditional social studies instruction and advocated for a critical multicultural social studies, spending a considerable amount of time on what that might look like in practice. In the end, this is an example of how NCATE was used as the law of the land whose policies were interpreted to exclude an instructor (who happened to be a multicultural, anti-racist, Marxist) from instructing.

Brooklyn College/CUNY

Once I finished the PhD program at NMSU, I moved on to Brooklyn College/CUNY to teach the foundations of education and social studies methods. The students I have had the honor of working with have been fantastic. Many of the faculty are equally exceptional—professors dedicated to working with their students in the context of the communities in which they will work. I have without a doubt learned as much as I have taught, if not more.

However, this story has taken an unexpected turn for the worst. My semester-by-semester contract for a full-time position was not renewed demoting my status to adjunct resulting in more than a 75% reduction in salary! While the official reason given to me for my demotion was a lack of funding, such arguments do not hold water when the very same semester new professors were brought in on various full-time and part-time appointments. From where I stand I see an evaluation made of my curricula and pedagogy by a senior faculty who told me that I should retire the critical theory approach and adopt a standards-based approach because it was better suited to prepare teacher educators for teaching—a position held by NCATE—as the only reason that makes sense for my demotion and inevitable redundancy. I rejected the proposition outright and stuck to my Marxist guns. I see a direct link between my approach and the heavy stick of standards. Indeed, the stick *and* the ax *are* "always in the background" as Rikowski (2005) and Zinn (2005) experientially *and* prophetically warn.

Summary

While instability does dominate the lives of many radical educators as those professors who toe the party line are rewarded with tenure and economic stability, those toiling in the world's free trade zones from China, Pakistan, Haiti to Mexico carry the brunt of the burden of what McLaren & Farahmandpur (2005) argue is the New Imperialism marked by "...a combination of old-style military and financial practices as well as recent attempts by developed nations to impose the law of the market on the whole of humanity itself..." (p. 40).

However, while it remains true that more market-friendly professors enjoy greater stability than their colleagues who teach and write against class, it is increasingly difficult, for even mainstream faculty, to toe the line as NCATE influences teacher education programs to refocus attention from content and information to outcomes and results. Before we get carried away with this technocratic analysis, let us not forget, content and pedagogy are not the only actors in this drama. Culture also plays a significant leading role in the dramatization of educational affairs. The culture of universities in general and schools of education in particular reflect a conservative, middle-class, "white" culture (McLaren, 1997) that tends not to take too kindly to infiltrators who do not value such homogenization, such as myself, a Marxist punk rocker of European descent (Malott, & Peña, 2004).

From the time I first strolled down the halls of Brooklyn College's James Hall, I was met with both the warmth of radical solidarity from some colleagues and unapproving eyes from others—it tends to be the negative experiences that haunt one's sense of stability. For example, there were a few instances after faculty meetings where a small minority of my colleagues let it be known that they read my black leather, spikes, full-sleeve tattoos, and skateboard as a sure sign of apathy and unprofessionalism, which I returned with both punk rock snarls and the epitome of professionalism, refereed journal articles and a book, *Punk Rockers Revolution: A Pedagogy of Race, Class and Gender* (2004) with Milagros Peña. While this *false professionalism* (that is based almost solely on one's cultural background, which, to paraphrase Paulo Freire (1998) in *Teachers as Cultural workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*, never lacks an element of class) is prevalent in higher education, it is even more dominant in the US's public K-12 schools.

No Child Left Behind and the Business Plan *for* Public Education

The connections between teacher education and public school policy in the U.S. are as clear as the connection between the process of value production and white supremacy. While capitalists rely on a divided and thus weakened working class unable to mount a unified resistance against their oppression, capitalist education is dependent on teacher education programs that will train teachers to support the capitalist imperative so they in turn teach their students to uncritically work within the system that exists. Leading the neoliberal charge to ensure public education serves the needs of capital

through their business plan *for* education (Hill, 2003) is the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005).

It is argued by its creators and proponents that NCLB is a policy to increase the academic performance of underperforming schools, which disproportionately serve working class and minority students, through an increase in high-stakes standardized tests to ensure accountability. Such tests not only have high stakes for students who face being held back if they do not pass, but the stakes are high for entire schools as they face privatization if their student bodies do not pass at high enough levels. Such has been the fate of many "failing" schools. The focus of NCLB testing is on math and reading, which has meant that if it is not on the test, it is not taught. In many classrooms the social studies has therefore been marginalized.

Unlike other subjects, within the social studies there resides an overt potential for counter-hegemony because it is the subject that directly concerns itself with citizenship formation. A Critical Multicultural Social Studies (CMSS) (see Malott & Pruyn, in press; and Malott, 2005) is designed to counter the business plan *for* education through Marxist pedagogy where market forces are problematized as inherently undemocratic challenging students to understand the role we play in our own oppression as workers, who produce, through our labor, that which oppresses us, capital. However, a focus on standardized testing limits teachers' ability to creatively employ their professionalism and potential counter-hegemony as they are forced to teach to the tests.

In addition to the testing craze NCLB also endorses "choice" and "vouchers" where students can opt out of attending "failing" schools and invest their state and federal education monies to privately run charter schools, contributing to the privatization and commodification of public schools. School choice effectively transfers much needed funds away from already under-funded schools that tend to serve working class and minority students.

In New York City, for example, Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Chancellor, Joel Klein, head of the City's Department of Education, in a 2004 address to the New York Charter School Association Conference, made it clear that "...Charter Schools present a tremendous opportunity. I want them at the forefront of our reform effort here..."

The "tremendous opportunity" referred to by Klein becomes clear when one looks at his background. Klein, a transnational capitalist, was Chief Executive Officer of Bertelsmann Incorporated, one of the world's largest media companies based in Germany, with annual revenue of twenty billion dollars employing over 76,000 people in 54 countries.

Mayor Bloomberg is also of the ruling class making billions through media interests such as TV, radio, print and computer software. To be sure of the corporate influence in NYC's current education programs one need only to look at the members of the Mayor's Panel for Educational Policy, the majority of whom have business backgrounds ranging from Alan Aviles, CEO/President of Health and Hospitals Corporation to Philip Berry, the Divisional Vice President of the Colgate-Palmolive Company. Outlining the extent to which ruling classes dominate every aspect of the material and cultural life's of the populations they rule Marx and Engels (1996) in *The German Ideology* explain, in some detail worth quoting at length, that:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are no more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. (pp. 64-65)

It is therefore not surprising that Bloomberg and Klein's ideas about education, among other things, represent the interests of their class, the ruling capitalist class. Likewise, it is similarly predictable that President George Bush's ideas about and subsequent policies for education serve the interests of his class, the ruling class, which is to maintain existing material relationships "...expressed as an 'eternal law'" (Marx & Engels, 1996, p. 65).

Resistance

Never has there been a more urgent time for teachers to refuse to burn tires and heed the challenge posed by capital's new imperialism threatening the democratic potential of a yet to be realized public education uninfluenced by market forces and politics.

A message needs to go out to radical/socialist/Marxist-friendly comrades able to give refuge to those professors and teachers unwilling to burn tires who have been *pushed out* of universities and public schools for what seem to be politically motivated reasons, as the system of education, under pressure from national accreditation associations such as NCATE and federal policies such as NCLB, restructure to fit the needs of global capital. Such trends have been observed by this writer from the NAFTA-ized borderlands of New Mexico to Brooklyn College/CUNY situated within the financial heart of global capitalism, as my classes have consistently included an uncompromising class and race analysis, which I have also brought to my scholarship (see Chávez, Chávez, 2004; Malott, 2003; Malott & Carroll-Miranda, 2003; Malott & Peña, 2004; McLaren & McLaren, 2004). While continuing to support each other in whatever ways we can, we also need to continue to reiterate and expand on the reasons why it is important to be a radical teacher and uncompromisingly refuse to burn tires in this era of new imperialism (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005).

As a fundamental aspect of our professional and moral responsibility as academics and teachers through our pedagogy and curricula both in and outside of the classroom we need to also support those people throughout the world who produce the cloths we dress ourselves with in the morning, who build the cars and trains we travel to work in, who grow the food that sustain our daily existence, who assemble the computers we write these very papers on, in short those who directly produce all value. It is labor power that produces all value, the commodity that Rikowski (2005) argues is capitals' weakest link, that is the substance of the social universe of capital. Because it resides in the hands of those relegated to the status of worker, it is capital's potential downfall. It is capital's business plan *for* education that requires future workers not to get the idea that they can unite with other oppressed people and take control of their labor power and use it to create relationships and labor not based on creating value, but fulfilling human need in our own vision, that is, to create non-alienated labor. Such materialization requires a humanizing education that will not materialize as long

as tenured and non-tenured radical educators alike, concerned with their own self-interests, willingly burn tires and pollute the educational environment, allowing their labor power to be contaminated with commodification and therefore alienation. Marxism against burning tires, a call to action!

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