

INDYPENDENT READER

Baltimore

Winter 2007 Issue 3

THE POLITICS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION



THE UNFINISHED LEGACY OF
BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

THE INDEPENDENCE SCHOOL IN
HAMPDEN

THE BALTIMORE ALGEBRA PROJECT

TRACKING IN OUR SCHOOLS

QUESTIONING THE ORDER OF JROTC

JHU AND THE BUSINESS OF WAR

Indydependent Reader

building a new society on the vacant lots
of the old...



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&

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WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

The first Independent Media Center was founded to cover the Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization in November and December 1999. This first IMC created an environment for independent media makers of all types (audio, video, print, Internet) to work together covering the protests in a democratic and collaborative manner. Seattle IMC was the beginning of a global independent media movement which focuses on reporting the world-wide struggle against neoliberal capitalism and a range of local issues. There are now over 130 IMCs around the world. Baltimore IMC has been publishing since July 2001.

WHAT IS campbaltimore?

Campbaltimore is an ongoing project employing research, communication and organizing with a commitment to building solidarities with others. Its participants share an interest in interrogating, understanding, and changing how power is exercised upon individuals and manifested through our physical spaces.

Indydependent Reader

The Indydependent Reader is funded by benefits, donations, subscriptions, and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

Participate

The Indydependent encourages the contributions of activists, journalists, and new writers. The editorial group reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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This Issue:

This issue is about education. Education has always been so important that no society permits it to go unregulated. In Baltimore, a large group of high school students, in what has been called the "Algebra Project" has challenged the control of the Board of Education through strikes, rallies, and a citizen's arrest of the state superintendent. Most recently Project participants have organized a shadow Board of Education. At stake are millions of dollars in school funding. We tell the story in three articles.

The Algebra Project is among the latest episodes in the history of struggles to determine the meaning of "equal protection of the law." We briefly review the legal history of the steps towards equal educational opportunity.

Toward the end of this issue the editors present capsule descriptions of other educational experiments. While they are a long way from the Independence School in the Hampden neighbor-

hood of Baltimore, they share a common struggle against the commodification of education and for self-directed education. Although they vary philosophically they share a common approach to students: Summerhill, a middle class school with a radical focus on student self-direction and participatory democracy, the anarchist academy of Francisco Ferrer, and the focus on political oppression of Paolo Freire—all combined self-education and political independence. The Highlander School, like the others, saw education as a tool for social change and directed its resources to teaching community activists and union members.

We look at the overt militarism of some of our local schools from the weapons designers at Johns Hopkins to the military training of teenagers in Junior ROTC. Finally, we review the covert tracking of working class students in the high schools and community colleges.

- HJE

Thanks and Solidarity

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Race, Class and Tracking in Public Schools

Fred L. Pincus

One of the most difficult things for teachers is to have a class with students who have widely different levels of skill. What do you do with an 8th grade class when some students can do algebra while others are still having trouble with fractions?

The most common answer to this question is to place students in different groups or classes based on their skills. You teach algebra to those who are ready for it and work on fractions for those who still need it.

This grouping process often begins in elementary schools by forming different reading groups within each classroom. By middle school and through high school, this usually means separate classes for the faster and slower students. Sometimes, there are even separate programs for the faster and slower students.

This process of assigning students to instructional groups based on their skills can be called tracking. I use the term skills rather than ability for a simple reason. Ability implies that reading and writing are largely due to some inborn or genetic characteristic of an individual. Skills, on the other hand, recognize the reality that some students can read better than others, regardless of the reasons.

Although the system of tracking is widespread in public schools across the country, there are serious educational and social implications that are often not discussed. While it may be convenient for teachers, tracking creates substantial class- and race-based segregation within public schools and depresses the learning of the least advantaged students.

If you were to visit an all-white public school that has both rich and poor students, most of the low-track students are likely to be from poor and working class families while most of the honors students are likely to be from middle- and upper-class families. This economically integrated school is internally segregated.

The main reason for this is that the higher a student's family income, the more likely they are to be able to read, write and do math at high levels. This is due to a variety of factors including the quality of school they had attended, their parents' educations, their nutritional levels and their lack of exposure to lead paint and other toxins.

Since race and class are highly interrelated, race-based internal segregation is also problematic. If you were to visit a racially integrated school, most of the honors students would be white while most of the lower-track students would be black and Hispanic. The reasons for the racial differences parallel those that explain class differences.

Studies have also shown that when things like grades, test scores and parents' education are statistically controlled, white students are more likely than students of color to be placed in the honors track and less likely to be placed in the lower track. This can only be explained by the discriminatory actions of school teachers, counselors and administrators.

Segregation is not the only negative consequence of tracking. There are also problematic educational consequences. Many studies have shown that the quality of instruction is higher in the honors track than in the lower track. This means that more privileged students (white, upper income) tend to get better instruction than the less privileged (lower income people of color).

Other studies have looked at how track placement affects student learning. It is not uncommon for a highly skilled student to be placed in the middle or low skilled student to be placed in the middle track. A recent study in the journal *Sociology of Education* compared student performance in the higher and lower tracks after controlling for things like grades, test scores, how hard they work, how much time they put into homework and how attentive they are. The study found that students in the honors track learn more than comparable students in the lower track. In other words, being in the honors track is good for students while being in the lower track is not.

Finally, other studies have looked at the performance of average students that were placed in middle-level tracks versus those placed in untracked classes with students of all ability levels. These average students were no better off in a tracked class than in an untracked class.

In other words, the available research shows that tracking is not a good way to organize public education for a variety of reasons. First, it helps to create both racial and economic segregation within school. Second, it tends to help the more privileged students at the same time as it hurts the less privileged students. Tracking helps to reproduce educational and social inequality.

The solution is to detrack the educational system by developing creative ways to teach students with a variety of skills in the same classroom. The quarterly publication *Rethinking Schools* contains articles by educators like Linda Christensen, Bill Bigelow and others who teach detracked classes.

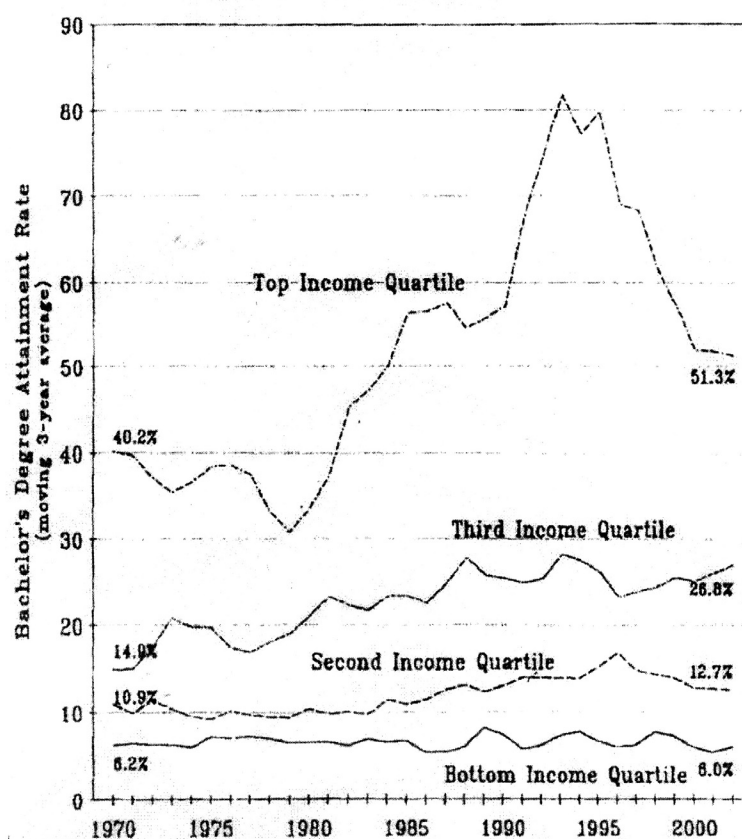
One important factor is to recognize the different skills that students bring to the classroom. In addition to traditional academic skills, there are also skills like creativity, art, music, class participation and passion for the topic. While the goal is to have all students learn the academic skills, teachers must build on the skills that students already have.

It is also important to organize the detracked class around thematic units where all students can participate. In dealing with the civil war period, for example, teachers can provide students with books written at different levels that deal with the same topic. That way, all students can write book reports, give oral presentations on their book and participate in discussions of the civil war. Teachers must insure that the voices of the less-privileged students are heard and that the class is not dominated by the more privileged students.

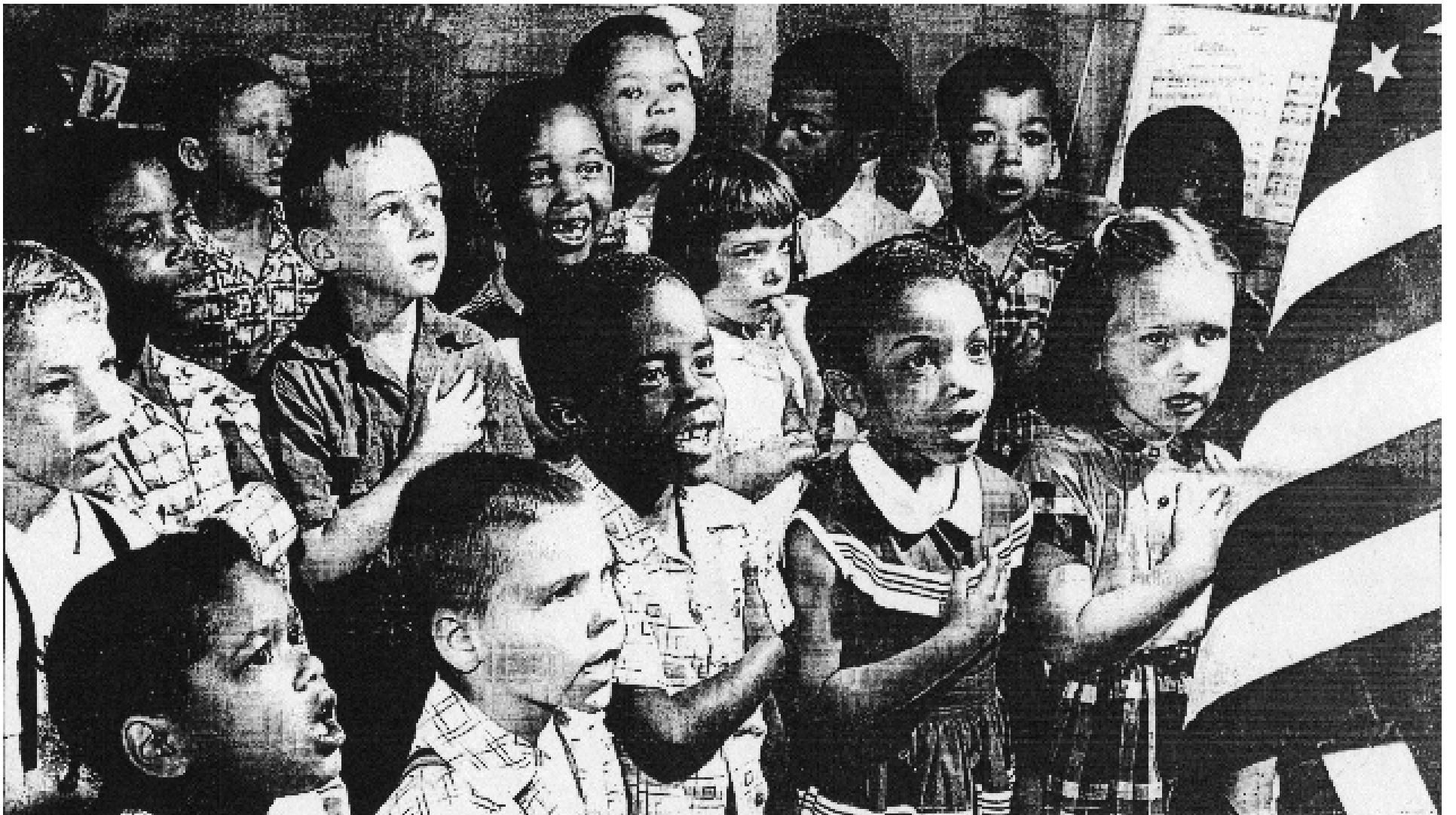
School systems, particularly in large urban areas, must explore alternatives to tracking. Schools of education must show future teachers how to handle detracked classes. Otherwise, the schools will continue to perpetuate inequality. ■

Fred L. Pincus is professor of sociology at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. He studies the relationships of class and race to education.

Estimated Baccalaureate Degree Attainment by Age 24 by Family Income Quartile 1970 to 2002



Note: This chart shows the average rate by which students from four different income families received a college degree. For example, in 2002 only 6% of persons from low income families had received a bachelor's degree while 51.3% of those from the top income families had achieved a degree. (Source: Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education)



The Baltimore Sun ran this image in 1955 with an article titled "How Desegregation has Worked". Ironically the same image appeared again in May of 2004, in an article titled, "Inherently Unequal". photo, Baltimore Sun Staff

The Unfinished Legacy of Brown v. Board of Education

William Igoe

After the Civil War, the United States Constitution was amended by the 14th Amendment*. The Amendment was sweeping in its language, and on its face, seemed to prohibit publicly funded segregated public schools. The Amendment states that no state shall "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." However, it was not until *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954 that the U.S. Supreme Court finally acknowledged that segregated schools violated the right of a pupil to equal protection of the laws under the 14th Amendment. The Court decided "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs . . . by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment."

Despite the *Brown v. Board* decision, public schools throughout the U.S. remain largely segregated; and schools with a high percentage of black and other minority students receive less funding than districts with largely white populations of students. This is because later Courts have severely limited the *Brown v. Board* decision. The Court has held equal protection clause is not violated as long as the state governments do not purposely discriminate against students because of their race. This means that a state can maintain a system in which schools with a high percentage of minorities are underfunded as long as they do not pass laws that require segregation.

After *Brown v. Board*, the Supreme Court then went on to decide that only intentional discrimi-

nation could be remedied. This meant that the courts did not order the desegregation of urban school districts in many areas and did not order equal funding. In *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* (1973), the Supreme Court decided that students were not entitled to equal funding for education. The Court held that the State of Texas could set up a funding scheme that left schools in poorer areas underfunded and failing. In this case, the Supreme Court found that students in poor districts had received equal protection of the law, even though their school districts received only half the amount of public funds to educate them when compared to neighboring districts.

Similarly, in *Milliken v. Bradley* (1974), the Supreme Court overturned a federal judge who had ordered the desegregation of the Detroit Area School Districts. The Supreme Court refused to uphold the lower court's decision, even though the inner city schools were almost completely African-American and underfunded, and the suburban schools were almost completely white and received much higher funding. Instead, the Supreme Court found that the State of Michigan had not intentionally created this situation and that they therefore had not violated the U.S. Constitution.

In these cases, the Supreme Court essentially found that the 14th Amendment does not guarantee students equal education. The Supreme Court upheld state school funding schemes even if they resulted in public education funds consistently flowing toward white and wealthy school districts and away from poorer and mi-

nority districts.

This created a crisis as families with any means fled underfunded schools in the inner cities to private, charter and suburban schools. The flight out of the cities eroded local tax bases which had been used to fund schools, resulting in greater inequality.

In *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* (2002), The Supreme Court used this crisis as justification to allow publicly-funded school vouchers for private religious schools. Prior to *Zelman*, the Courts had always struck down public funding of religious primary schools as unconstitutional citing the non-establishment of religion clause of the U.S. Constitution. The Supreme Court used the crisis in the Cleveland schools to justify allowing such vouchers. These vouchers further drained dollars and talent away from the failing public schools and left the remaining students in even more desperate situation.

Some states' Supreme Courts have found that their constitution does guarantee equal funding of education. For example, in its 1994 and 1997 *Abbott v. Burke* decisions, the New Jersey Supreme Court found a state constitutional right to equal funding in education and ordered the state aid

to bring revenues per-pupil in some districts up to the expenditures per-pupil in the state's 110 successful, suburban districts. In 1983 in *Hornbeck v. Somerset County Board of Education*, the Maryland Supreme Court did not find a state constitutional guarantee of equal education funding. However, the Maryland Supreme

Court did state that the Maryland Constitution required that students receive “an adequate education measured by contemporary educational standards.”

In *Bradford v. Maryland State Board of Education* (1996), a Maryland trial court found that Baltimore’s schools were not providing an adequate education and the state entered into a settlement agreement. The parties returned to court in 2000, and the circuit court declared that the state “is still not providing the children of Baltimore City...a constitutionally adequate education,” and had failed to comply with the 1996 agreement. The court ordered Maryland to provide “additional funding of approximately \$2,000 to \$2,600 per pupil” in 2001 and 2002. The state did not comply with that order and Baltimore Schools remain underfunded.

On the federal level the Courts have limited the ability of the states to remedy racial disparities in education. While, the Federal Courts have refused to remedy actual disparities in funding and segregation resulting from state policies which are not specifically based on race, they have banned most policies that specifically address race. This has resulted in the Federal Courts banning state affirmative action programs under the equal protection clause, even

though the programs were meant to remedy inequality.

In *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, the Supreme Court severely limited affirmative education in higher education. Here the Court struck down a California affirmative action program as discriminating against whites, even though whites made up a much higher percentage of students in the state medical school in question. In *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003), the Supreme Court recently allowed a much narrower University of Michigan Affirmative Action program to exist so long as the purpose was to promote diversity (not remedy racism) so long as the program does not use quotas. Michigan voters recently eliminated this program through a ballot measure.

In two cases currently before the Supreme Court, white plaintiffs have asked the Court to declare programs instituted to integrate public schools in Kentucky and Washington State unconstitutional because the programs specifically consider a student’s race as a factor for making school assignments in order to keep schools racially integrated. These programs consider race as means to achieve integration, not segregation. If the Court rules against the states in these cases, it will further erode the ability of

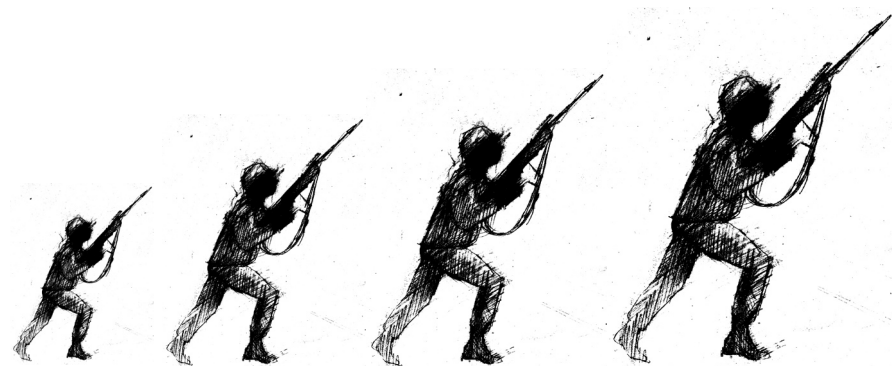
states to address school segregation.

The Supreme Court’s decisions have limited affirmative action and failed to address de facto segregation and underfunding of schools that serve African Americans and other minorities. This has left many African American students exactly where they were before *Brown v. Board* was decided; in underfunded segregated schools with little hope of advancement and little chance of competing with their white counterparts. This is especially true for students from poor and working class communities.

* Amendment XIV (adopted 1868):

Section 1: All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. □

William Igoe is a lawyer.



Questioning the Order of JROTC

by Nicholas Petr

JROTC was introduced through the National Defense Act (NDA) of 1916. This document combined and transformed existing military forces by merging state militias, the National Guard, the Army Reserve, and the Regular Army into the United States Army. It also stated that officers in this army would receive military instruction in colleges and universities under a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC), and that recruitment and instruction would be regulated by the United States Army. Under the provisions of the NDA, high schools were authorized the loan of federal military equipment and the assignment of active duty military personnel as instructors to head up JROTC programs. In 1964, the ROTC Vitalization Act opened the training programs up to the other armed services and replaced most of the active duty instructors with retirees who worked for and were cost shared by the schools.

In 1916, there were six units nation wide. At the present, there are 1,555 Army, 794 Air Force, 619 Navy, 260 Marine Corps, and 1 Coast Guard unit, bringing the total number of JROTC units to 3,550.

The Army has stated that the objectives of the JROTC program are to instill “the values of citizenship, service to the United States, personal responsibility, and a sense of accomplishment.” It has also emphasized that JROTC is “not a military recruiting program”.

Recruitment or not?

In 2000, then-Secretary of Defense, William Cohen called JROTC “one of the best recruiting devices that we could have.”

Why is the military so set on convincing us that JROTC is not a recruiting program?

The answer is simple. Admitting that JROTC is a recruiting program would be a blatant affirmation of the U.S. military and federal government’s interest in maintaining the class differences in so many of our public schools. A readily available stock of underprivileged youth with nowhere else to turn is beneficial to the military. Many of those who enter into the program do so under the impression that a successful military career, affordable college education, and advanced job skills awaits them. There is

are also heavily clustered in Southern high schools (65 percent of the units). The program attracts large numbers of women (40 percent of the total), but female JROTC teachers are extremely rare.” - (7). The reality of it is that with a drop out rate of 85%, and very few going on to college level ROTC, most of these kids never enjoy the benefits their recruiters sell them.

Although it is apparently “not a recruiting program”, more than half of all JROTC graduates join the military. According to objector.org, “of the half that join up, 70 % enter as privates (the lowest rank), with only

“It is appalling that the Pentagon is selling a military training program as a remedy for intractable social and economic problems in inner cities.”

actually no evidence to support the claims that ROTC programs actually accomplish any of this. - (7)

In a New York Times op-ed, retired Rear Admiral Eugene J. Carroll, wrote: “It is appalling that the Pentagon is selling a military training program as a remedy for intractable social and economic problems in inner cities. Surely, its real motive is to inculcate a positive attitude toward military service at a very early age, thus creating a storehouse of potential recruits.” Carroll’s claims are supported by inquiries revealing that “JROTC programs are more often found in schools with a high proportion of non-white students, who now represent 54 percent of JROTC cadets, and in non-affluent schools. They

30% going on to college ROTC programs or service academies.” How many of them go through the self-proclaimed officer training program and actually become officers? No one seems to know or at least no one wants to talk about it. The Department of Defense has never published this information.- (7)

JROTC Curriculum

It is a common misconception that the military pays for JROTC programs. 50% of funding comes directly from school budgets and costs an average of \$75,000 annually per school. That’s twice the \$28,000 the Department of Defense claims these programs will cost. Usually this money comes di-

rectly out of funds designated to the arts, athletics, and other school-wide extracurricular activities. Instead, JROTC redirects these funds to instructor's salaries and benefits, uniform purchases and maintenance, special teaching facilities, weapons storage, and extra curricular activities for cadets. (6).

In 1995 the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) released a report that looked at the JROTC curriculum. The report found that when compared to history and civics textbooks used by most educational institutions in the United States, JROTC textbooks fall well below the accepted standard. In fact, the curriculum itself was found to be extremely culturally biased and justify historic acts of aggression by the U.S. military on all accounts.

"Fortunately for the Army, the government policy of pushing the Indians farther west then wiping them out was carried out successfully." (3, 185).

Opponents to JROTC and other junior military programs, argue that when the horrors of war and mass genocide are heralded, contemplation of violent activity comes very easily. And, concerns have increased in recent years due to a series of JROTC related violent crimes and scandals. Incidents ranging in nature from gang activity to military style executions have called into question, among other things, the program's approach to violence and firearms. (8)

According to instructors, marksmanship is "intended to improve self-confidence and self-discipline." (1, 246). While it could be argued that safe weapons handling and firearm awareness are a positive thing, the programs intentions are questionable when confronted with Army Regulation 145-2, Appendix P, which orders JROTC instructors to encourage students to join the National Rifle Association. It seems we are now in the practice of using our public school system as a tool for lobbying groups.

Another text explains that, "Modern advocates of gun control, registration, and the banning of gun ownership should at least be aware that their efforts, well intentioned as they may be, are probably unconstitutional." (3, 76). - Note: these students are taught that the effort, that is the very questioning of the legality of firearms is unconstitutional.

Beyond the use of guns, bigotry, sexual assault, and intimidation by JROTC students and instructors are

commonly reported. JROTC has developed a track record not unlike that of its senior military organizations.

The Junior Officers' Training Corps mandatory curriculum also claims to help "Develop mental management abilities" and "the skills necessary to work effectively as a member of a team". The AFSC report's inquiry into "loyalty, drill, and discipline" training reveals the type of team mentality JROTC is interested in.

- **"Soldiers are trained to obey orders instantly, without questioning them."** (2, 217).

-**"Respect for authority and discipline go hand in hand, but the first one to be acquired must be discipline. Self-discipline involves full and voluntary acceptance of authority."** (1, 65).

-**"When troops react to command rather than thought, the result is more than just a good-looking ceremony or parade. Drill has been and will continue to be the backbone of military discipline."** (1, 87).

-**"Among the traits of a good follower, loyalty is at the top of the list. This means loyalty to those above us in the chain of command, whether or not we agree with them."** (5, 24).

While many of the retired military personnel who follow this curriculum as instructors, may have the experience and know how for war games, it turns out that JROTC instructors are not required to have college degrees or credentials for the subjects they teach. Of course, "mental management" is easy to teach when the core of your lesson plans is, follow orders, and don't ask questions. □

1. Leadership Education and Training, U.S. Army JROTC textbook, 3rd year
2. Leadership Education and Training JROTC textbook, 2nd year
3. Careers in Aerospace textbook, Center for Aerospace Doctrine, Research, and Education, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1985 (Air Force JROTC)
4. Leadership Education 1, Air Training Command, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1989. 1st year AFJROTC
5. Naval Science 1 textbook
6. Trading Books for Soldiers: The True Cost of JROTC. <http://www.peaceworkmagazine.org>
7. Making soldiers in the Public Schools. American Friends Service Committee, April 1995
8. www.objector.org

Ten forty-three,
In exactly TWO MINUTES
I'll ring the
FIRST BELL and
they'll all
stand still!



All, that is, except
your potential DEVIATE!
Your fledgling REBEL!
Your incipient BOAT-ROCKER!
They'll try to move all right!
THEY'LL have to
learn the HARD
way not to move!



So I'll SCREAM at 'em
and take their NAMES
and give them FIVE
DETENSIONS and EXTRA
HOMEWORK! Next time
they won't move
after the first
bell!



Because when they've
learned not to question
the FIRST BELL, they'll
learn not to question
their TEXTS! Their
TEACHERS! Their
COURSES!
EXAMINATIONS!



They'll grow up to accept
TAXES! URBAN
REDEVELOPMENT! POL-
LUTION! INFLATION!
NATIONAL DATA BANKS!
CORRUPTION! RACIAL
DISCRIMINATION! UNEM-
PLOYMENT! EMPLOYMENT!
SLAVERY! GENOCIDE!



Non-movement
after
the first
bell is
the
backbone
of Western
Civilization!



-Something Else-

Short Takes on Education

Who can teach?

- James graduated with honors from Johns Hopkins, completing an honor's thesis of original research. Uncertain about his career plans, he decided to try teaching. Like many who lacked a degree in education, he was required to take an exam. Weeks after the exam he received notification from the Board of Education that he had been rejected, stating that he had failed the written exam! Shocked and dispirited he nevertheless inquired about a review of scoring. He was told that he was barely literate and that there would be no review. So ended his potential teaching. He returned to school, earned two master's degrees and is now a practicing professional in Baltimore.

- Sam came to Baltimore with years of middle school teaching experience and an Ed.D. from Harvard.. When he applied for a teaching job, he was told that until he achieved certification, he would only be considered as an on-call substitute. Sam now directs a local nonprofit organization.

No child left untouched

- Eighty-percent of the children nationwide who are eligible for tutoring in reading and math did not receive the assistance they were entitled to last school year.

- Neil Bush (the President's brother) along with Barbara and George H.W. have developed learning centers (called Ignite! Learning) across the country offering courses for middle school students in social studies, history, and science. Most of their business has been obtained through sole source contracts financed under the No Child Left Behind legislation. There is a hitch. NCLB is funded to address reading and math neither of which is offered by this multimillion dollar Bush enterprise.

Reading

- According to the Washington Post, one-third of all first year high school students in a 2006 state of Maryland assessment will need help, extra help in reading. The matter is worse for black and Hispanic students. Fifty percent of black students and 47 percent of Hispanic students are not reading at a freshman grade level.

Grades

- A US Department of Education survey reports that 47 percent of white students say that grades are very important to them. In contrast, 62 percent of the black students say grades are very important to them.

Feeling safe

- Twice as many black students as compared to white students say that they do not feel safe at their school.

What happens to drop-outs?

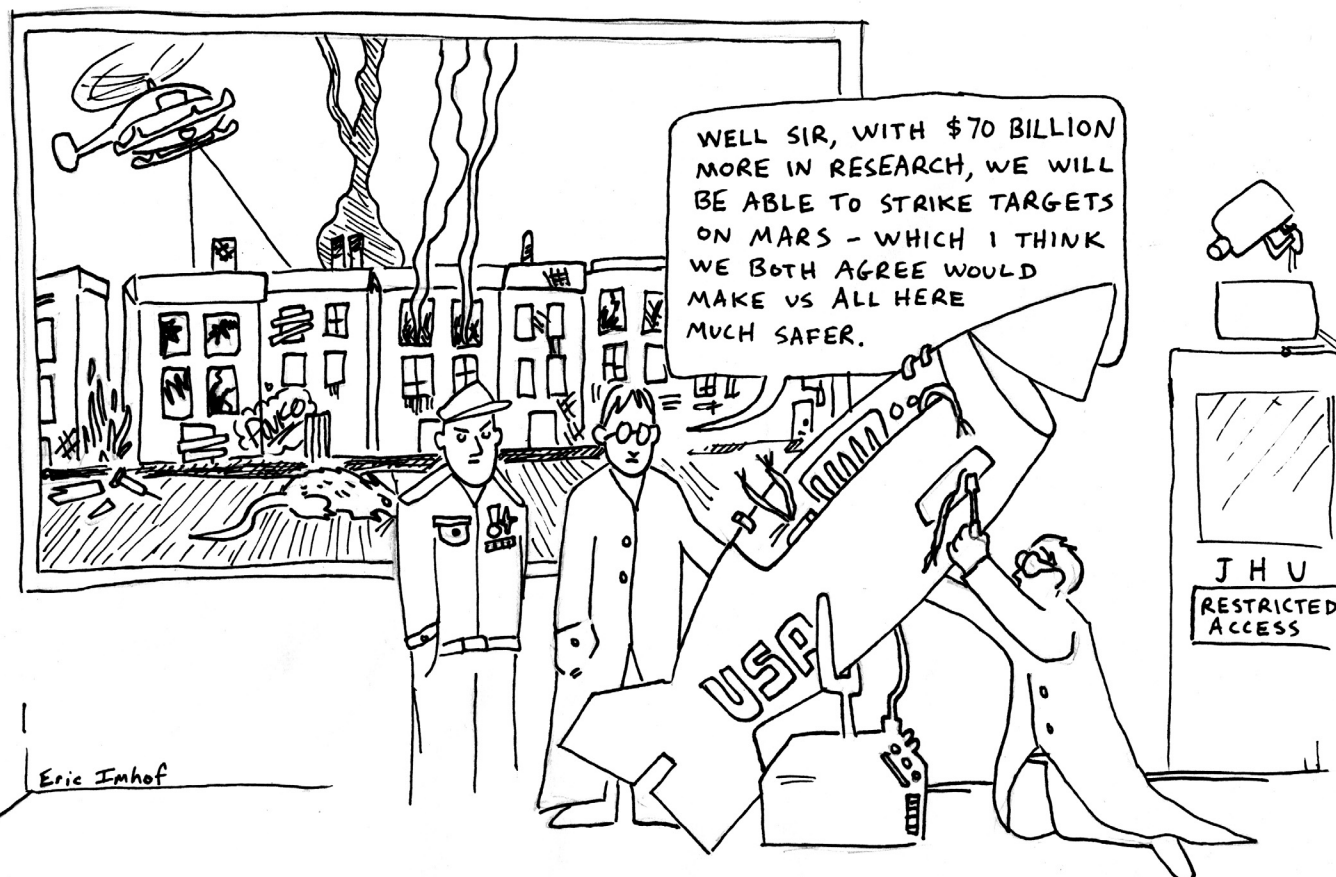
- Four million young adults (18-24) nationwide, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, are "disconnected." They are not in school, have no degree, and are not working. The Maryland drop-out rate appears to be 29 percent.

What does it cost to go to college?

- In 2005-2006, a public college costs 12,127 dollars a year. Private colleges cost more than double that amount.

Johns Hopkins University and the Business of War

...by Howard J. Ehrlich



About 20 miles south of Baltimore on US 29 on the way to Washington, DC you will find a small road marked Johns Hopkins Road. If you turn there and go about three-quarters of a mile you will come to the entrance of what looks like a small college campus. There's a lovely lake with ducks and swans and on up the road, spread over 365 acres, is a group of low slung buildings. In those buildings scientists, engineers, and technicians work on the design of new ways to make war. This is the Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) of Johns Hopkins University.

The history of the APL goes back to World War II when it was established to design the proximity fuse for artillery shells. Primitive by today's standards its ability to shoot down Nazi missiles was the equivalent of radar in its impact on the war. This division of JHU is geared to the study and design of innovative systems for the waging of war--that is killing people. There are about 4,000 people employed in this enterprise, two-thirds are scientists and engineers and they are at work on 400 projects at this time. With a budget of \$700 million, this is big business. It is the leading university military contractor and is ranked 70 among all "defense" contractors in the country. While the Navy is the primary sponsor, accounting for about 60 per cent of their budget, the APL also receives substantial funding from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and, more recently, from the secretive Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency and Homeland Security. APL's public relations describes the Lab's work as "primarily for national security and for non-defense projects of global significance."

"The APL is perhaps best known for its work on the guidance systems of submarine launched ballistic missiles. The TRIDENT has the capability of delivering a

nuclear warhead in a first strike and is a major component of "national security" because of its power, range, speed, and presumed invulnerability. Hopkins has routinely denied their involvement with nuclear weapons because their work is on communication and navigational systems, not on warheads. Although this appears like a distinction that does not make a difference, former JHU President Steven Muller clarifies: "At Johns Hopkins we don't work on anything that goes boom."

Much of the work for the Navy, the Lab's chief sponsor, deals with guidance systems particularly for submarine launched ballistic missiles. They are also involved in the continuation of star wars research and are deeply involved in what some analysts refer to as the militarization of space. APL has been involved in the design, building and launching 62 space craft and over 150 instruments. They have projects underway studying the influence of the Sun and humans on the upper atmosphere, the search for the presence of water on Mars, the lunar robotic landing, the reconnaissance of Pluto and a fly by of Jupiter. The Cassini Project, which just revealed a hurricane-like phenomenon on Saturn, was another project APL is involved in. It distinguished itself by the presence of a plutonium reactor, and the public opposition to it given the inescapable catastrophe that might have been caused had the spacecraft failed and crashed on earth.

In collaboration with JHU medical personnel, scientists are involved in a not very public way with biological warfare agents. As is typical in public representations of United States involvement with chemical and biological weapons, the Labs research is said to be concerned with antidotes and the neutralization of such agents. There doubtless is a line between offensive and defensive weaponry, but such a line is hard to draw and, ethically, may be indefensible.

On the domestic front, the APL has established a warfare analysis lab which has taken on the

role of an advisory counterspy and counter-terrorism organizer for Homeland Security. They have been engaged in such projects as warfare planning, lie detection, and controlling prison violence. The Lab has recently established a war gaming room where they can coordinate information on a large array of incidents and sociological occurrences which may forecast attacks or other problems of security in the Baltimore, DC, and Virginia region. The Homeland Security projects appear to be classified.

Building the new society

There are at least two ways Hopkins and the APL could make a positive contribution to this community. One is by contributing its fair share of tax money. Baltimore is, after all, a poor city, JHU is the largest private employer in the state of Maryland. It is responsible for one of every \$28 in the state's economy. Within Baltimore City, JHU owns \$505 million worth of tax exempt property. If subject to taxation, Hopkins would have to pay the city \$12 million a year in property taxes.

Given the array of talent assembled to develop new and improved ways to wage war, we can only imagine what the Lab could do if it were dedicated to civilian research and development. Although many of its supporters can point to by-products of military research that served the public good, how much more could be accomplished by directing the research to reduce or resolve our social problems. □

"I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones."

-- Albert Einstein

The Algebra Project

“Whenever the ends of Government are perverted, and public liberty manifestly endangered, and all other means of redress are ineffectual, the People may, and of right ought, to reform the old, or establish a new Government; the doctrine of non-resistance against arbitrary power and oppression is absurd, slavish, and destructive of the good and happiness of mankind.” - Article 6 of the MD Declaration of Rights

The Algebra Project is a nation-wide project initiated by 1960s civil rights activist Bob Moses. Moses was field secretary for the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and primary organizer of the 1964 Freedom Summer in Mississippi. This project brought 1,000 volunteers to the state and focused national attention on the murder of three civil rights activists. Freedom Summer registered 75,000 disenfranchised blacks to vote in Mississippi.

Prior to his 1960s activism, Moses was a mathematics teacher at a private school in the Bronx, after having earned a masters degree in philosophy at Harvard University. While a recipient of a MacArthur 'genius grant,' Moses searched for an organizing project and found one. He had returned to Harvard in 1976 to work on a PhD. In Cambridge, his oldest daughter, a middle school student, did not have the opportunity to learn algebra as there were no courses at her school. Moses offered to teach his child algebra during her math class time; his daughter's teacher responded by offering several other students for his instruction. Thus was born the concept for the Algebra Project.

Formally founded in 1982, Moses took the idea of teaching higher math learning to middle school students with parent-student-teacher collaboration to other states. He argued that mathematics literacy is necessary for an egalitarian workforce in the developing 'knowledge economy.'

In 1989, Moses was in Mississippi again. Moses and lawyer David Dennis and discussed bringing the Algebra Project to the South with Moses beginning to teach algebra in a Mississippi middle school in 1996.

There are 13 states with Algebra Projects today. The Baltimore Algebra Project began in 1993 with a middle school program at Harlem Park. Later, the tutoring and advocacy project grew out of the Stadium School, which started participating in the Algebra Project in 1995.

--CD

Strategy of the Baltimore Algebra Project

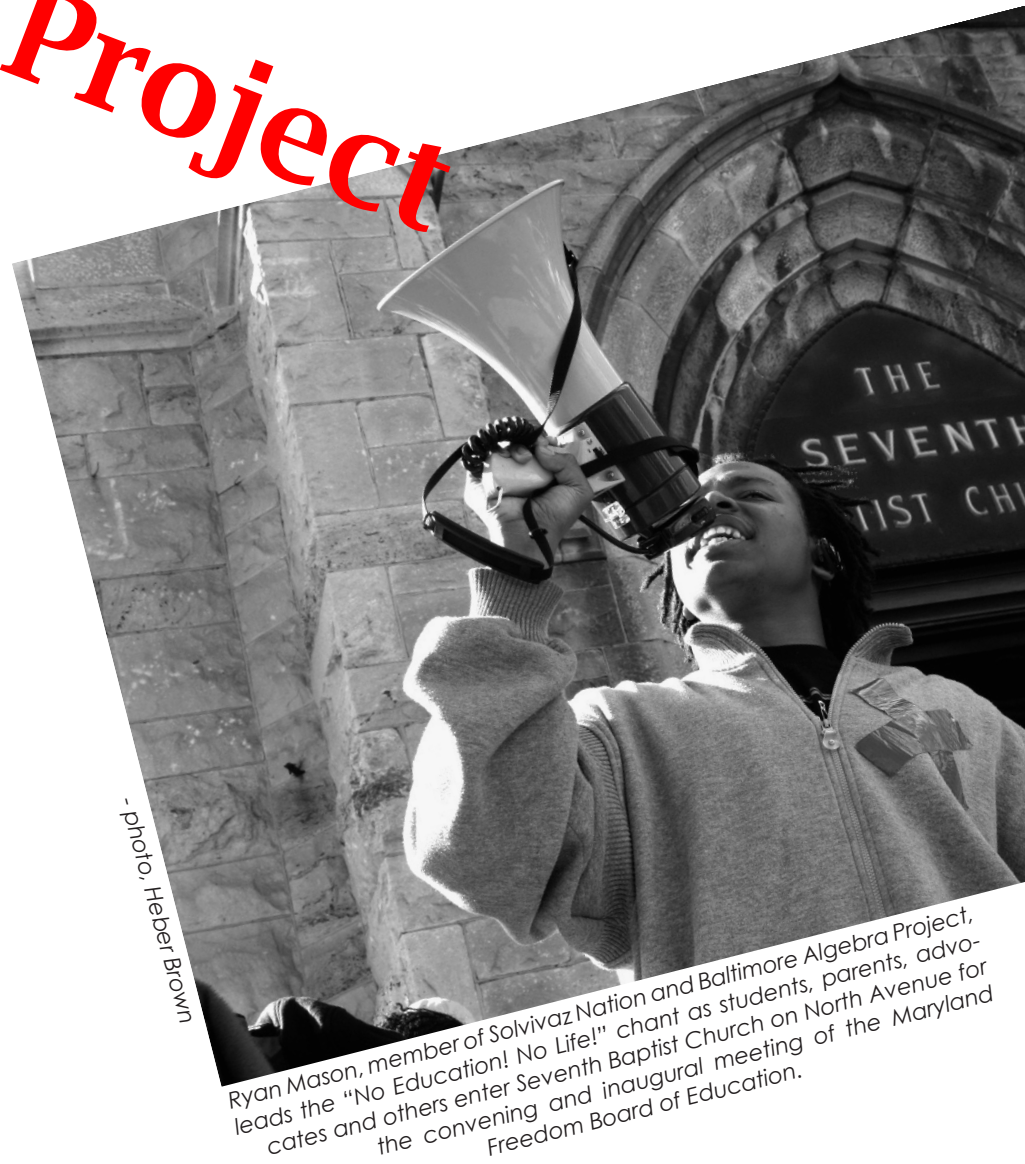
by Jay Gillen

The Algebra Project has a strategy for organizing young people to cope with flux. We use math literacy as a comprehensive organizing tool. If a consensus could be developed about some other aspect of young people's lives, that would be fine, too. But we have placed our bets on math literacy as a wedge for opening up very large political and social questions. We help students understand how this wedge works and then, if they choose, we help them begin to control their political lives by hammering that wedge deeper and deeper into the society that keeps them excluded. What will open up exactly, we don't know. But we work the demand side of education reform. Our goal is for thousands and thousands of young people nationwide to demand what everyone says they don't want.

We have had some success so far. Hundreds of our students tutor math after school for ten dollars an hour, paid as a student-run, non-profit contractor to the city school system. When the students began to get political, demanding more state money for the entire system, the local board tried to eliminate their funding. But student-organized public pressure resulted in renewal of their \$80,000 contract last year and even an increase for the current year to \$140,000. The students' political campaign to try to win enforcement of court orders requiring hundreds of millions of dollars in additional school funding has continued aggressively now for three years, headlined often in the local press and television news. Through strikes, rallies, sit-ins, a citizens' arrest of the state superintendent, mock trials, and *pro se* intervention in the state's major education funding lawsuit, the students have placed themselves in the central role they should have, clarifying reality and envisaging change despite the fog of the politicians' hypocrisy and inaction.

Our work in Baltimore is an extended analogy to parts of the voting rights movement in Mississippi. The analogy goes like this:

Since reconstruction, the law permitted blacks to vote in Mississippi and across the south. After 1876, however, access to the vote was denied through arbitrary registration requirements, economic consequences of attempting to register, intimidation, violence, and so on. Many whites contended that blacks failed to



-photo, Heber Brown

Ryan Mason, member of Solviva Nation and Baltimore Algebra Project, leads the "No Education! No Life!" chant as students, parents, advocates and others enter Seventh Baptist Church on North Avenue for the convening and inaugural meeting of the Maryland Freedom Board of Education.

register and vote because they were apathetic: they were happy with their lot, or uninterested in politics, or ignorant of the political process, or satisfied to allow whites to operate the government on their behalf. The voting rights movement of the 1960's confronted this charge of apathy and specifically organized to make black people's demand for the vote visible. When thousands of black citizens lined up at courthouses attempting to register, risking imprisonment, beatings and even death, the pretense dissolved that apathy, rather than access, was the problem. Sharecroppers and domestic workers were demanding what everybody said they didn't want.

Similarly, the right to an education is formally guaranteed by state law in every state, just as the right to vote was guaranteed since reconstruction. There is a very broad consensus today that learning algebra in particular is vital to economic citizenship. From corporate board rooms to ghetto corners people agree math and science drive education in our technologically advanced world. Formal policies of state and local school boards and funding priorities at all levels of government piously reiterate the obvious: all children must learn more advanced math and science than ever before.

Despite the pieties, however, many informal structures prevent black children's access to math, just as informal barriers to voting were instituted in the south after 1876. Most importantly, there are too few teachers today who both know the math and know how to teach it. Trained mathematicians can make more money in other lines of work. Suburban jurisdictions buy up the relatively few mathematicians who decide to become trained teachers, leaving crisis-level teacher shortages in the inner cities. This causes very large math classes in urban schools, and these large classes tend to be taught by the least experienced teachers who know either nothing about math, nothing about teaching, or nothing about the children in front of them. Students learn very little math and fail tests, thinking they are bad at mathematics or just bad in general. Many are tracked into boring remedial classes, often taught by even less-qualified teachers, and end up confused and ignorant.

Rather than address the issue of inadequate supplies of math teachers, residents of the "outer city" often blame the apathy of black children and inner city families just as black people's apathy about voting was used as an excuse in Mississippi:

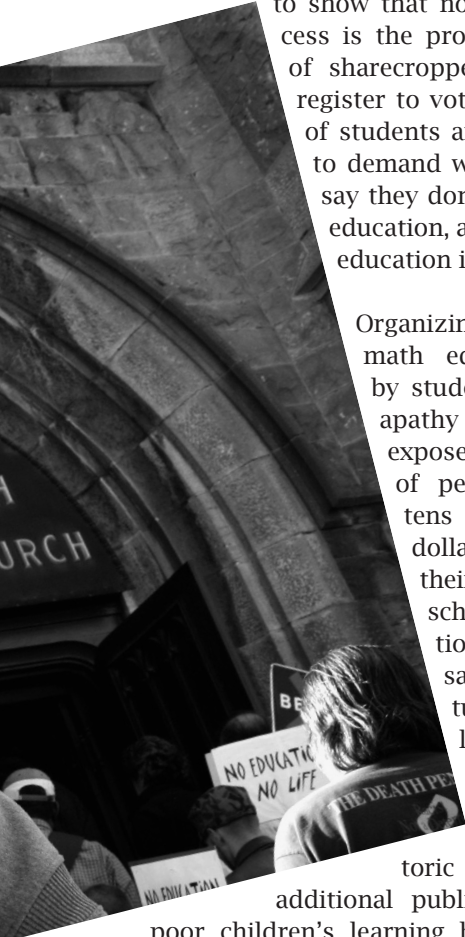
the students don't care about learning; they don't bother coming to school; they don't do their homework; their families aren't involved; black people are apathetic about education.

And just as SNCC workers in Mississippi organized demand for voting rights, so the Algebra Project organizes demand for education to show that not apathy, but access is the problem. Thousands of sharecroppers attempted to register to vote, and thousands of students are now beginning to demand what many people say they don't want: a quality education, and a quality math education in particular.

Organizing demand for math education directly by students removes the apathy argument and exposes the hypocrisy of people who invest tens of thousands of dollars every year in their own children's schooling, and additional tens of thousands in camps, tutors, music lessons, museum memberships, and expensive vacations to historic places, but decry additional public investment in poor children's learning because they say those children don't care.

Finally, just as in Mississippi, scores of young people are learning to articulate these demands for themselves. They don't rely on one or two leaders to speak for them, but support each other and make demands on each other to share the burden of speaking out, since the speaking itself is freedom. Bob Moses personally passes on Ella Baker's advice to the Baltimore student leaders: they must be thoughtful about not dominating, and should make space for their peers who are perfectly capable to step forward and learn for themselves what it is to make a demand. ▣

Jay Gillen has been the adult facilitator for the Baltimore Algebra Project since 2001 and was co-founder of the Stadium School in 1994.



The More Things Change, the More They Remain the Same

by Ron Kipling Williams

At the Baltimore Leadership Alliance for Quality Education (BLAQE) conference held at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) on October 14th, educators, parents, and concerned citizens gathered together to discuss how to improve the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS). Congressman Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD) organized the conference, and he and Bishop Walter S. Thomas, Sr., served as hosts. It included educators and administrators who have achieved success in the school system. One was Jason Botel of the KIPP Academy (Ujima Village), who invited everyone to come to his school and see the outstanding progress it has made with its students. A Johns Hopkins University health official, as well as the CEO and President of the Philadelphia School system, also participated. [KIPP Ujima Village is a branch of the national Knowledge Is Power Program; together with the Crossroads School, it was established as part of the Baltimore New Schools Initiative in 2002.eds]

Two separate panels had discussions, each of which was followed by a question-and-answer period that outlined problems and solutions, or failures and strategies for success. Both panel discussions were interspersed with humor and words of wisdom. There was an intermission between them, followed by a screening of clips from HBO's fourth season of "The Wire," which focused on the BCPSS.

Some participants questioned Cummings about his role in exposing the crisis in the BCPSS, a system that many say has been in a downward spiral for the last twenty-five years. "It's not about the business of airing dirty laundry. It's about the business of lifting up our children who need urgent action," Cummings replied.

Although the education issue has dwarfed crime as the most contentious issue in Baltimore City politics, many audience members were dismayed at the lack of political support. Those who did appear made their rounds, smiling and pressing palms before being whisked to their next election year gig. There was hardly an official face in the audience at the second panel discussion, which consisted mainly of community leaders and parent advocates. One prominent City Council member was present for less than fifteen minutes. This, many believe, indicates how officials deal with the children in the public school system. "They don't care whether our children are standing upside-down or right-side-up," remarked Grandmother Edna, longtime advocate, activist and after-school program founder, who was present at the conference. "I do not like it when our children are used as a pawn for a political agenda, and it was just like the Oscar red carpet effect for a political agenda," she added.

Education and Elections

Nowhere was that political agenda more prevalent than in the October 14th televised gubernatorial debates between Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. and Mayor Martin O'Malley. The two candidates clashed over several issues, demonstrating their mutual disdain. On the topic of education, O'Malley used statistics to defend his record of success, attacked Ehrlich's management and inaction on his pledged commitment to education during his administration, and blasted him for withholding \$1.08 billion of court-ordered funding that the State of Maryland owes BCPSS. Ehrlich defended his own record, and also used statistics to point out O'Malley's failures, reiterating that he would not fund failing schools.

Aside from the fact that it

sounded like politics as usual, the real tragedy of these debates was the failure to recognize that the suffering of the BCPSS is non-partisan.

The State's Debt to the Schools

Equity amongst school districts has historically been contentious. The Maryland Supreme Court's decision in *Hornbeck v. Somerset County Board of Education* was that Maryland's constitution did not obligate all school districts in the state to spend equally per pupil. At the same time and in equal measure, the court's ruling upheld the Maryland constitutional education clause assuring the right to "an adequate education measured by contemporary educational standards."

With this in mind, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Baltimore City took the state to court in 1994 on grounds that its students were being inadequately educated. A summary judgment was rendered in their favor in *Bradford v. Maryland State Board of Education*, where Baltimore City Circuit Court Judge Joseph H.H. Kaplan not only ordered the State of Maryland to compose a plan to resolve its budget deficit, but also to pay \$50 million a year to the BCPSS until it was adequately funded.

However, not even a court order can force a state to pay. In 2000, the plaintiffs returned, demonstrating that the State of Maryland was still under-funding the city's public schools. Kaplan ruled that Maryland had to provide "additional funding of approximately \$2,000 to \$2,600 per pupil" in 2001 and 2002, totaling \$260 million. In June 2001, Governor Parris Glendening (D-MD) and the Maryland State Legislature designed the Thornton Commission, which was to implement a six-year plan to fund the much-deprived school districts and to increase achievement standards in Baltimore City. A year later Glendening signed the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act that was slated to increase state-wide education funding by \$1.1 billion over five years. The ACLU touted this plan. But do more plans equal more political smokescreens? In 2004, Judge Kaplan found that the State of Maryland still owed the BCPSS \$2,000 to \$6,000 per student per year, totaling \$439 to \$839 million since 2001.

A Movement to Fix the Problem

Since 2004, numerous organizations have taken the State of Maryland to court, yet no additional funds have been awarded. Many hope this will change in January 2007 when Governor-Elect O'Malley takes office. However, there are those who are not holding their breath. "O'Malley doesn't care about us, so we don't care about him," declares Ryan Mason, student activist and member of the regional Black Power group Solvaz Nation and the Baltimore Algebra Project. The juxtaposition of the ever-expansive waterfront development and tourist attractions to the shrinking of affordable housing, increased juvenile detentions, closing of recreation centers, and a failing school system demonstrates to many residents in a predominantly African American city that they are not given a political priority.

The Algebra Project is one of the youth organizations that have been vociferously petitioning for the state to comply with its court order. They have been very public in the last two years, organizing protests in front of the office of the State Superintendent of Schools, Nancy Grasmick, which included an attempted citizens' arrest during one of her Board of Education meetings. On the afternoon of October 14th, just one hour after the BLAQE Conference came to a close at MICA, the Algebra Project led students and advocates in a march past the Baltimore City School Board to the Seventh Baptist Church where they convened the Maryland Freedom Board of Education (MFBE), invoking Article Six of the Maryland Declaration of Rights, and declared themselves a legitimate body designed to be an alternative to the current State Board of Education.

The MFBE was modeled after the historic Freedom Summer of 1964 where legendary civil rights orga-



On day one of a three day strike in March 2006. Students are demonstrating outside of the Maryland State school Board building on Baltimore Street -- the Nancy S. Grasmick Building. - photo, Betty Robinson

nizer Fanny Lou Hamer organized the Mississippi Freedom Party after being shut out of the Democratic Convention. In the following election cycle, they were included, a turning point in the struggle for voting rights for blacks. The MFBE looks for a similar turning point—namely, to be recognized by the Baltimore City Council as a legitimate body—as they continue the fight to wrest the \$1.08 billion in court-ordered funds from the grip of the State of Maryland.

Privatization of Schools

What is equally puzzling is the growth of charter schools in Baltimore City. Two years ago, the Maryland General Assembly legalized charter schools at the behest of Ehrlich. This year, the Maryland State Board of Education ruled that school systems must provide as much cash money per student to charter operators as they do in standard public schools. In effect, the Board and the State Superintendent of Schools Nancy Grasmick rubber-stamped the privatization of schools. This decision severely affects the BCPSS, which under the new ruling receives \$7,500 per student, as opposed to \$11,000 per student in a charter school. Worse still is evidence that charter schools fail, according to the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress, published by the U.S. Department of Education. The Department of Education came out with a similar report the following year. This could be seen as even more injurious, considering that the BCPSS for years has suffered with building neglect, understaffed security, outdated textbooks and a scarcity of school supplies.

Adding insult to injury is the State Board of Education's outrageous policy of requiring many teachers to conduct a yearly High School Assessment (HSA) Test. Last year, the State pass information to the City stating that students need not be worried about the HAS test, and that it would not count against them. Trust the State, the City forwarded the information to its students, and what resulted was disastrous. Many students failed the tests because they didn't take them, or merely wrote their names on the exams and left. As a result, seven schools were placed on the State of Maryland's list of schools to take over. The City greeted the State's deception with indignation. The General Assembly granted the City one year to turn the schools around. There are those who wonder how BCPSS can succeed in 12 months in what they have failed to do for 12 years.

Perhaps it was in this context that Governor Ehrlich felt justified in making the public remark that some Baltimore City students were unable to read their diploma. Perhaps it is a horrible tragedy, a statistical phenomenon that plagues urban schools nationwide. But young people like Chantél Clea, Chair of the Baltimore Youth Commission feel that remarks like Ehrlich's are inappropriate and counterproductive to improvement efforts. "They are supposed to be our leaders. They're not setting a good example," remarked Clea. Furthermore, many feel the remarks only serve a political agenda. Clea expands, "A lot of the issues around Baltimore City didn't just happen. It's been going on for a while. These young people are aware that [the politicians] wait until the proper time so it's fresh in people's minds, so it's the first thing they think about when they go to the polls. But if you really want to affect young people, don't wait until the last minute when it's convenient for you. Work with us all year long."

What is the ultimate tragedy in this current climate, where education is a pawn on a political chessboard, where ineptitude reigns supreme in local government, where mainstream media are rendered impotent by political pressure not to air dirty laundry, and where suffering is imposed on the most abused and neglected constituency? The children. ■

Ron Kipling Williams is a writer and poet.

The Maryland Freedom Board of Education

By Kevin James



The beating drums played by students from the Connexions Community Leadership Academy sounds the alarm as marchers make their way down the middle of North Avenue stopping traffic as they protest the deplorable condition of public education in Baltimore City. - photo, Heber Brown

On Saturday, October 14, Baltimore City students and their supporters picked up the torch of the Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party (MFDP) and established the Maryland Freedom Board of Education (MFBE). The MFDP grew out of the majority black population's attempt in the 1960s to combat the racist power structure in Mississippi that served to undermine that population. So too the MFBE has grown out of students' desire in the first decade of the 21st century to challenge the State of Maryland to give \$1.08 billion it owes to the Baltimore City Public School system, which serves a majority black student population. Just as the MFDP was the culmination of the multifaceted Freedom Summer program of 1964, so too is the MFBE the result of a similar, though shorter, Freedom Fall program that was designed to educate and recruit students for participation in the establishment of a new Board of Education.

On Friday, October 13, high school and college students, as well as teachers and advocates, set up tables and gave presentations at various high schools throughout the city as part of the Freedom Fall campaign. Freedom Fall was meant to heighten awareness among students about who is to blame for their sub-standard education and what other students are doing about it. The symbol of the campaign was a red X, and its slogan was "No Education, No Life." High schools took most of the Freedom Fall's activities well, but at the Baltimore Freedom Academy (BFA) where students staged a sit-in protest against the under-funding of their school system, 50 students were suspended for participating in it. According to their website (www.baltimorefreedomacademy.org), the BFA's aim "is to provide an environ-

ment that cultivates young adults who will emerge dedicated to serving their families and their communities and prepared to be informed problem-solvers and effective advocates for positive social change."

As people gathered near the intersection of Greenmount Avenue with North Avenue on that Saturday, red Xs and "No Education, No Life" buttons could be seen emblazoned on chests, arms, backs, and backpacks. Placards with an X over Baltimore's empty "BELIEVE" slogan on one side and the movement's "No Education..." slogan on the other, deftly captured the mood that echoed Fanny Lou Hamer's statement "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. We must stand up for our freedom." High school students dominated the microphone at the rally with eloquence that raised the question "If they're this passionate and articulate after having been denied a quality education, how much more dynamic and adept could they be, if they were armed with the resources that they deserve?"

The students ended the rally with stirring poems that artfully connected the history of their movement, the state's neglect of the students, and crimes of poverty so common in their communities. Then they led us into the streets chanting "No Education, No Life!" We marched a few blocks, just past the Baltimore City Board of Education building to the Seventh Baptist Church on the corner of St. Paul Street and North Avenue, where the formal establishment of the MFBE would be realized. Chris Goodman, 18 years old, one of the head organizers of Freedom Fall discussed the article in the state constitution that the movement employed to create the MFBE. He wrapped his speech up with an im-

promptu call-and-response, reading of Article 6, which made it sound like the preamble the Declaration of Independence. It states, "Wherefore, whenever the ends of Government are perverted, and public liberty manifestly endangered, and all other means of redress are ineffectual, the People may, and of right ought, to reform the old, or establish a new Government; the doctrine of non-resistance against arbitrary power and oppression is absurd, slavish and destructive of the good and happiness of mankind."

The students also outlined the history of how the state was found to owe the city school system \$1.08 billion. In the 2003 Bradford decision, Judge Joseph Kaplan found that the state owed the city schools \$800 million. The state did not pay the money to the schools, and it was subsequently found delinquent. The sum now stands at \$1.08 billion, a debt made more odious because the state currently has a \$2 billion surplus straining the locks on its coffers (see also "Baltimore City Students Outraged" in this issue).

A slate of 13 board members representing various schools and organizations was proposed and voted upon by all in attendance. It included students, a teacher, and activists like Betty Robinson, who had participated in Freedom Summer back in 1964. She spoke of her experiences in those months and how dangerous the work was, not just for those registering voters and setting up freedom schools but also for blacks who lived in Mississippi and would remain there long after Freedom Summer was over. She spoke about what she has seen students around the country doing in order to establish freedom schools in recent years, and she said that

Baltimore students seem to be at the front of that movement. Another veteran of Freedom Summer and the MFDP was Bob Moses, who founded the national Algebra Project in 1982. The Algebra Project is an initiative driven by students, parents, and teachers, a branch of which was established recently in Baltimore. (See "Algebra Project" this issue.)

The newly ratified board opened the floor to testimony, and people in the audience shared their experiences of the school system and pledged their support for the MFBE. Students, radical teachers, activists, and members of the Nation of Islam stepped up to the microphone. Bill Bleich, a city high school teacher and member of the Progressive Labor Party, connected the issues of race and class to the inherently exploitative nature of capitalism, revealing how the condition of the schools and the reluctance of the state to act are not unique to Baltimore but are typical of the larger system. Many individuals and representatives of community groups pledged their support for the MFBE. The author spoke about his experience as a teacher, during which the principal of his school once told the teachers at a faculty meeting, about half way through the school year, that when the remaining paper ran out, they would have to purchase their own if they wanted to make copies for the students. The author also proposed that the board pass a resolution condemning the suspension of the 50 students at the BFA and discuss possible actions to show our support of the students. Alex Bennet, from the Baltimore branch of the International Socialist Organization was the last speaker from the floor, and he expanded the scope of the discussion, framing the issues facing students in Baltimore as systemic and rooted in an economic system that would rather spend billions on weapons and racist wars than funding education as a weapon to fight racism, let alone funding healthcare, welfare, and a living wage as weapons to fight poverty.

Freedom Then, Freedom Now

(as spoken at the Freedom Fall Rally, Saturday
October 14th 2006)

Freedom then, Freedom now
 We can no longer wait, the time is now
 We have found this system to be inadequate
 So we ain't having it no more
 They try to close doors
 In our faces
 Because of their hatred
 Of the beautiful black faces
 They can't erase our history
 My people fought back and that's a fact
 People like Nat Turner and Marcus Garvey are shunned from the history books
 Because of the tactics that they took
 To resist the arbitrary power of the crooks
 They tried to brain wash us with that separate but equal bullshit
 We grew tired of it and took a stand across the land
 From education to voter registration
 From Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to
 The Maryland Freedom Board of Education
 We fought to be placed in legislation
 For universal equality and quality education for all
 But the law says that we can but we can't
 To be quite frank, your talk must be cheap cause you don't make cents
 Work for education but their minds are real dense
 This feeling that I'm feeling is not content
 I'm quite enraged
 Because I feel like a slave in a cage
 That once I break through
 I'm ready to slay all that try to deny me my freedom
 Freedom fall
 Freedom for all
 We must remember this and throw our fists in the air
 We will prevail through this inadequacy
 Because thankfully we are taking over
 No more Grasmick, no more school commissioners
 Just the true listeners, the public
 Ready to spend the \$ 1.08 billion properly
 So we ain't going down quietly
 We ain't going down without a fight
 Because No Education, means No Life
 So we must unite to fight for what is right
 OUR EDUCATION!!!!

-Chelsea Carson
First Lady of Militant Advocates

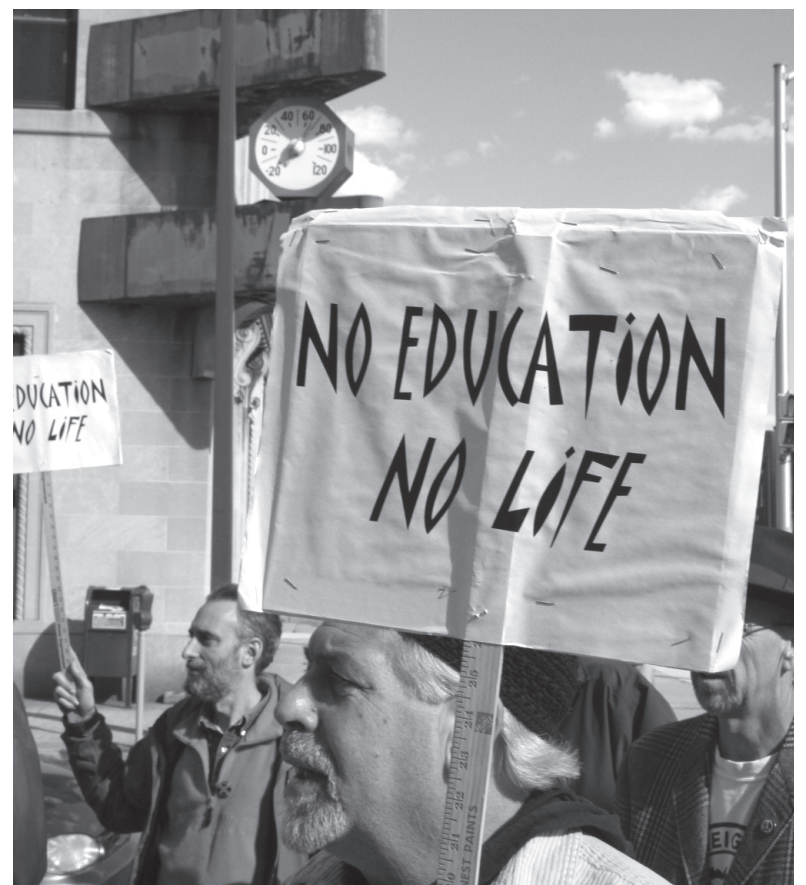
The MFBE proposed a budget for how the \$1.08 billion would be spent over the next 10 years, allocating various amounts for hiring new teachers and bringing their numerous inadequate resources up to par. They made this proposal with the caveat that significantly greater funding would be needed to sustain the improvements and lift the city schools to a level of education all students deserve. They demanded that whoever is elected governor in November fully fund the school system. Disabled navy veteran and Green Party candidate for governor, Ed Boyd, addressed the board and promised to support them if elected, noting the conspicuous absence of his opponents on such an important occasion, not to mention the absence of the mainstream media.

The MFBE and the Baltimore Education Advocates, a coalition consisting of the Baltimore Algebra Project and various other teachers and activists, continues to meet at the same church Wednesday evenings from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Chris Goodman, who was elected president of the MFBE, spoke about the lessons he had learned in this struggle, protestors having gone to school board meetings to try to be heard, having gone to the State House in Annapolis to try to be heard, demonstrating first outside and then inside and finally both simultaneously and still not being heard. Then he decided that he and his fellow students would have to rely on each other because the people who were supposed to represent their interests would not even give them the time of day. Many individuals and organizations on the left would do well to learn the lessons that this powerful 18-year-old and his colleagues on the MFBE have so clearly grasped and applied. ■

Editors note: Soon after the Freedom Fall Rally in October of 2006, the City Council did recognize the legitimacy of the Maryland Freedom Board of Education in a letter to the Mayor, the Chair and Members of the Maryland Freedom Board of Education, the Members of the Baltimore City Youth Commission, the President of the Baltimore NAACP, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council. The additional funds the MFBE has demanded have yet to be distributed.

\$1.08 Billion for Baltimore City Public Schools: What the Algebra Project Would Do!

Proposed Disposition of Funds	Amount
Hire more than 300 teachers: reduce class size; boost arts, music, sports and technology	\$595,000,000
Equipment for arts, music, sports and technology	\$135,000,000
Renovate buildings and make them safe	\$135,000,000
Total Proposed Disposition	\$1,080,000,000





Situated Learning:

A Conversation with the Independence School Local 1

Scott Berzofsky and Nicholas Wisniewski

The Independence School Local 1 (formally the Community Learning for Life Program) is an innovative high school located in Hampden that allows Baltimore City youth to learn through real life experiences. Students engage in a wide range of activities including internships, field trips, cooking, reading and math courses, extended projects, computer workshops and a Wilderness/Art Initiative that involves hiking and camping trips. When we sat down to talk with some of the students and faculty one afternoon in November, they were busy analyzing an article about their school that had recently appeared in the newspaper. (Abigail Tucker, "An Uphill Hike to Self-discovery," Baltimore Sun, Nov. 12, 2006, p. 1A)

Helen Atkinson: This week the students have been working on a letter to the Editor of *The Sun*, in response to an article that was written about them. What they have been working on is really a critique of labeling, which is something that I think kids all across the city would be able to identify with. What were some of the things that you guys really didn't like being called?

Shannon Kates: "Wild-things, challenged, low-income, city kids, defiant, violent, at risk of dropping out." They said that we curse and push and shove our teachers.

Student: "Students that most teachers wouldn't even take to the zoo." She [Tucker] said we were abusive towards our teachers, but they just respect us and we really have a lot of respect for them.

Brittany Warren: And we interact with them on so many different levels, not just on a school

basis. Helen and Cranston and all the teachers around here know more about my personal life than my mother does in most situations, because I talk about everything with them.

Jessica Nelson: She [Tucker] only looked at it one way, the bad way. Like she referred to a boy who got stabbed as an example of violence, but he was the victim not the aggressor, and he wasn't even in school at the time. Why was it important to put that in the paper?

Warren: Also, most of the quotes from the kids where quotes like, "Let's eat Michelle and Cranston." And then there were maybe five quotes from the same boy and they were all negative.

Nelson: The headline is, "Troubled Baltimore Teens." She said that we have sex and have experience with drugs.

Warren: I've been to the county and they do the same stuff, but because they have a little bit more money it doesn't get publicized. Clearly she wrote that this was an alternative school for kids with behavioral problems, but if you look at our description it says nothing about that.

Nicholas Wisniewski: How would you describe the Independence School in relation to more conventional Baltimore City Public High School programs?

Warren: It's better than anything.

Nelson: They give us freedom so we can learn responsibility.

Warren: Its like instead of handing you an assignment and saying, "Ok, have this done in half an hour," they say, "You have this, this and this to do today; you can pick the one you are interested in and work on it." Plus, we get breaks, because most of us do have a short attention span and we can't sit there and pay attention to something for seven hours, so they give us the breaks we need. I think it's better than regular schools. In Middle School I think I learned more about discipline, about how not to do my work and how to get out of class, because I was just so tired of sitting there looking at a book.

Nelson: This is my third high school and this is the only one I like coming to. I like this school, whereas before I would try and think of any possible way to leave school early. Here, we don't read out of textbooks all day or have someone talking for hours and hours at a time.

Warren: Most of the stuff we study, we go out and learn about it.

Richard Mabe: Its hands on.

Warren: Like for Science class, we went out to a power plant in Pennsylvania and had a whole tour, which I found much more interesting than if I was to just sit down and read it out of a book. I probably wouldn't even read it, but this way we get to witness things first hand rather than just read about it.

Nelson: We go to museums in Washington DC and witness things for ourselves.

Warren: I think my favorite part is that we don't just get the credits we need; we also get a lot of experiences through our internships. I probably won't go out and get a real job until after school, but instead of being nervous for my interviews I will have already had interviews for my internships. It helps us experience stuff now so that we'll be prepared for it when we get out into the real world. Like when we went to DC, using the transportation system is different from here, using the subway is really confusing, but by doing it we learned.

NW: Do you guys get to choose what you will be learning? How is your curriculum organized?

Student: We get a say in it, it's kind of like a majority rules kind of thing.

Warren: I think regardless we have to earn a certain number of credits, and how we earn them has to be approved by Helen. We can ask to do something and she'll say, "Ok, that's substantial and that's not."

Nelson: If the teacher says 'no' and most of the class is saying 'yes,' then she'll compromise with us.

Warren: I guess she realizes that if she says, "This is how you have to do it," and we don't like it, then we're not going to put much effort into it. That's why I think it's a good idea that we compromise on things, and get to choose how we want to earn our credits.

NW: What do you guys think about the Wilderness/Art Initiative?

Warren: It's always a good experience, but going into it you don't want to do it. My first backpacking trip was so horrible, I cried every day because we were out in the woods with no phone service, and I'm not used to being away from my friends for days at a time. But it always ends up being a good experience, you always end up appreciating things much more when you get home and you realize all the stuff you did in the woods. When you're out there it really is hard, but when you get over it you think, "Damn, if I can do that then maybe I'm not as ..."

Nelson: Most of all it's about bringing everybody together, being somewhere away from your parents. This is the family you got out there. We're close anyway inside or outside of school, but it's like a totally different kind of feeling being out in the woods, you just know that if you needed something they'd all be behind you, even the person who gets on your nerves. But there are still so many things you have to be careful of - on my first trip I didn't prepare my tent right and I got soaked, I was sleeping in a puddle of water! Next time I'll know how to do it differently, and I won't put the tent in between two rivers.

Later in the afternoon we continued our conversation in the faculty's offices.

NW: How do you plan the curriculum?

Atkinson: Well, I hadn't decided before this week to spend ten hours analyzing the *Sun* article. The article came out on Sunday and I had my reaction to it and on Monday morning I picked up ten copies on the way to school and I showed it to the kids. And then as I listened to their reactions and realized that it was really emotional for them, I decided that in order to give them some distance from it we would work on analyzing the article, and that this work could be incorporated into our Media Studies

course. I don't do Media Studies from 9 to 10 on Fridays; I wait until something pertinent comes to us, whether it be a video, this article or whatever, and my goal is that they start to be able to use vocabulary to analyze what they are doing from a critical perspective. I want them to think about power relations and not assume that the perspective from which an article is written is the only possible perspective. So when they had such a wild reaction I was just thinking on my feet. I knew all the way back in the summer that I wanted to do critical analysis of the media, so a certain amount of stuff is planned and then when we get into a situation that lends itself to Media Studies we take advantage of it. In general, I'll judge by their reaction to a particular subject, or I'll have a selection of options and we will vote. So it's a responsive curriculum.

NW: So how would you distinguish between this kind of curriculum and that of other public high schools?

Atkinson: I call it backward mapping: you show them all these opportunities to work and all kinds of experiences and in the back of your head you have a running idea of what all the state requirements are. So often their work is not done in any one subject area, it's just an experience that they get in involved in, and then three times a year they make a collection of everything that they have done and we go through it and decide what work will count for what subject credit. So generally speaking they are all taking the same course, but if one person chooses to focus their studies on a particular subject they can. In addition, they have to read some books that I assign them and we do these things called Project Weeks eight times a year, which consist of research into a particular subject both through first hand experiences with field trips and guest speakers and second hand through reading on the internet and in books and newspapers. They then create a significant project based on their research, engage in debates, and in the end focus on a applying this information to a local issue in Baltimore.

Scott Berzofsky: Can we go back for a moment and get some historical information about the school, how did it get started?

Michelle DeBruin: This building used to house a high school called Robert Pool High School, and somehow the school system didn't even know that it existed. So it got shut down and the community was up in arms for not having a school. Then in September of 2004 it was reopened with just four of us as staff and a program based on learning from real life experiences, with the students going to internships twice a week and spending the rest of their time developing their own projects. We did a lot of outreach in the neighborhood trying to recruit students and got a total of 49 kids. We spent a lot of time trying to figure out their interests and finding local internships where they would fit in. The school is still small, we all share chores like cleaning,

and because of it the students are much more conscious and responsible.

NW: Can anyone attend? Can kids just show up at the beginning of the school year?

DeBruin: Yes, anyone living in the city can attend, but there is a school acceptance process, which includes a shadow day, an essay and an interview with the student and their parents.

Atkinson: So we will know by December 13th whether or not we are a charter school, which would give us a three-year contract. Right now we are at the mercy of the school system with only three paid staff members and 42 kids. We have been allowed to "incubate", learn from our mistakes, and develop the details of how to run a school without the pressure of actually being a school.

SB: And becoming a charter school would give you more security and autonomy?

Atkinson: We want to be a full school, and if they give it to us then our non-profit called the Baltimore Teacher's Network will be running two small schools in the city. What is unique about these schools is that they are run by teachers. The Teacher's Network has been in existence for 8 years now. We started with the purpose of organizing teachers to take control of their work and the education of children, first at the classroom level and now at the school level. We believe in teachers being able to make decisions, while obviously complying with the law and doing what the state and city requires.



Students from the Independence School enjoy a hiking and camping trip as part of the school's Wilderness/Art Initiative.

SB: This is interesting, because I have always associated charter schools with a conservative agenda.

Atkinson: If we receive charter school status the program will grow to have about 112 kids with 11 paid teachers. If we don't receive it then several teachers who have been working with us will not be able to return because different temporary grants and funding will run out. Within the charter school movement you have a range of interests, from people who want for-profit schools to people like us who are willing just to scrape by in solidarity with other public schools. We don't want to be a poster child for the conservatives, but it's our best option to stay open. At the margins of any political movement there is room for alternatives. ■

.a brief history of four pedagogical alternatives.



1. the libertarian educational movement in Spain and francesc ferrer i guardia aka. francisco ferrer

The political climate in Spain at the turn of the 19th century precipitated a libertarian educational movement, the most well known exponent of which was Francisco Ferrer. Ferrer, a Catalanian free-thinker and anarchist, opened la escuela moderna or modern school in 1901. His ideas of rational education were a reaction to the state of education in Spain at the time. Schools were generally run by clerics who used brutal teaching methods, emphasized Catholic dogma and aggressively censored or denounced any political group, scientific theory, or cultural tendency that countered the Church. Public education was severely inadequate, only accommodating a third of all school age children and illiteracy rates could be as high as 73%. La escuela moderna's curriculum focused on the natural sciences without the insertion of religious dogma and, in theory, political bias. There were no grades, prizes, or examinations and instruction was to rely on the spontaneous interests of the students. Much emphasis was placed on teaching students the interconnectedness of all things, so as to do away with "artificial dualisms," such as mind and body, man and woman, wo/man and nature. Although la escuela moderna's professed goal was to educate working-class children, due to the high tuition, the school was only accessible to wealthy middle class students. Despite this contradiction, Ferrer ran a publishing company that produced textbooks that were widely distributed and accessible. Ferrer helped organize lower cost schools with Alejandro Lerroux, leader of the Radical Republican party. By 1906, thirty-four schools with over 1,000 students were directly or indirectly influenced by la escuela moderna, many of which used the textbooks Ferrer printed. Unfortunately that year Ferrer was accused of being involved in an assassination attempt on King Alphonso XIII and was imprisoned for a year before being released due to lack of evidence. During his imprisonment la escuela moderna was forced to close. On October 13, 1909 during the Tragic Week, Ferrer was executed by firing squad. Soon after his execution Modern schools or Ferrer schools were established in the United States, the most noteworthy of which opened in New York City in 1911. Leonard Abbott, Alexander Berkman, Voltairine de Cleyre, and Emma Goldman originated the Ferrer Center. Philosopher Will Durant became an instructor and principle of the school 1912. As with la escuela moderna, publishing was an important aspect of the Ferrer Center, which hand-printed the Modern School magazine. Also much like la escuela moderna, the Ferrer

Center was seen in connection with a failed assassination attempt. A bomb meant for John D. Rockefeller exploded prematurely at the apartment of several individuals who attended adult classes at the Ferrer Center. Due to the new hostile environment in the city, the Ferrer Center moved to Piscataway Township, New Jersey and became a part of the Stelton Colony. - AH



2. summerhill and a.s. neil

Summerhill is a free school established by A.S. Neil in 1921, located in the small town of Leiston, Suffolk County, England since 1927. One hundred miles northeast of London in a bucolic landscape, children learn in a non-coercive environment. The Summerhill philosophy consists of two interrelated concepts. First, all classes are non-compulsory, giving the students responsibility over their own education. This encourages self-reliance, critical consciousness and personal development. It is believed that students learn better and faster when they choose to absorb the material. Second, students and faculty alike manage the school, creating a democratic non-hierarchical community. Laws are created by consensus and continually reassessed. Weekly tribunals resolve conflicts and disputes within the school. This dual aspect of the school, as A.S. Neil would say, ensures that "freedom did not become license." A.S. Neil's was influenced not only his own coercive and often abusive educational experience, but also by Homer Lane's "Little Commonwealth," a self-governed community of "delinquent adolescents". Homer Lane introduced Neil to the work of Freud, developing his belief that the emotional well being of a child should precede any academic achievement. The Summerhill model has inspired the cropping up of countless free schools, especially during the 1960s, most of which were short-lived. One example is the Albany Free School, established in 1969 by Mary Leue, which sought to make the ideas of democratic participation and non-coercive learning accessible to the impoverished urban youth of south Albany, New York. Although Summerhill has come under continual scrutiny and attack from the British government, it continues to this day guided by the same principles. - AH

3. the highlander folk school, miles horton, and the citizenship schools

The Highlander Folk School was opened in 1932 by Miles Horton and Don West outside Monteagle, Tennessee. It's original mission was to "to provide an educational center in the South for the training of rural and industrial leaders, and for the conservation and enrichment of the indigenous cultural values of the mountains." Highlander was a key player in the Southern Labor Movement throughout the 1930's and 40's. By the 1950's however

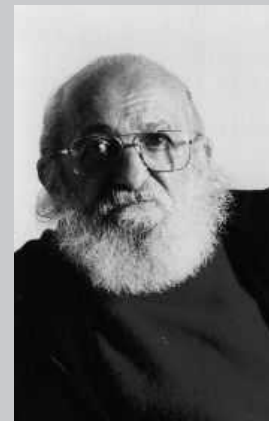
Highlander's participants found new energy in the civil rights movement and quickly allied themselves with many of the movement's leaders.

In what became one of the most important meetings during this time, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and other members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference attended Highlander and planned the infamous Montgomery Bus Boycott. The result was that in 1957, the Goergia Commission on Education published a pamphlet entitled "Highlander Folk School: Communist Training School in Monteagle, Tennessee." McCarthyism and the racist south took its toll on the school and in 1961 the state of Tennessee confiscated Highlander's land and property for violation of state segregation laws. The school relocated the same year to Knoxville, Tennessee, where it remained until 1971. Now called, The Highlander Research and Education Center, it currently resides in New Market, Tennessee.

One offshoot of the Highlander School was the Citizenship schools of the 1960's In 1954, Esau Jenkins came to highlander from John's Island South Carolina with an idea for increasing the numbers of eligible black voters in the south. Under the leadership of Jenkins, Bernice Robinson, and Septima Clark, the Citizenship Schools aimed to teach literacy to help potential Black voters pass the mandatory voter literacy test. The curriculum was simple; create a horizontal space for learning and discussion, teach via group interests, and no instructors with formal classroom training. Above all, students were to be treated as adults and not subjected to childish curriculums. Bernice Robinson taught the first class to read from a poster of United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights. That class went on to form its own community organization.

Between 1957 and 1961, this grassroots literacy program enrolled more than 4,000 students with an 80% of whom learned to read and registered to vote, increasing the number of voters in some regions by 300 percent.

The program continued to grow for almost two decades under the guide of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Each Citizenship School was unique and specific to the needs and interests of its participants, but based on a loose curriculum passed down from one group to the next. - NP



4. pedagogy of the oppressed and paolo freire

Freire's central argument is that education is always a political act. It can be used to maintain the status quo or it can be used to bring about social change. Through what he calls "banking

education," learners are not encouraged to think critically and consequently do not challenge their social and political position. Instead, they receive knowledge "deposits" which are absorbed without reflection. Their "oppression" is perpetuated by this inability to question. Failing to take into account the notion of agency, Freire assumes that the oppressed blindly follow what they are "taught" and that no resistance to this oppressor identity takes place.

Through dialogue, Freire argues, the nature of education is changed. The oppressed are able to actually experience their world, and as a result question it. In turn, "the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed" can be accomplished: "to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (p. 20).

Freire has described the pedagogy of the oppressed as consisting in two stages: First, "the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation" (p. 36). Freire's belief is that this critical reflection will lead to action on the part of all -- oppressor and oppressed -- involved.

This early example of Freire's work is useful for the revolutionary ideas it puts forth. By identifying all forms of education as political -- in both a positive and negative sense -- Freire calls to the reader's attention the danger of education as it is and the importance of recognizing it for its potential. As noted by many critics since the first publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, however, this book is limited due to the omission of issues surrounding gender, race, ethnicity, language, and multiple-class social structures.

Granted, Freire was writing about a particular population for whom some of these variables may not have been relevant. It is undeniable, however, that gender roles play a part in every society. How could Freire ignore issues of access and power within classes that are inevitable based on gender? Similarly, although he might argue that homogeneity of race, ethnicity and language was present within the population he was addressing, if his work is to be useful and applicable elsewhere, it must be addressed. Each of these variables, together with position within a social class (however that may be defined), requires the critical attention he has reserved only for class as defined by "oppressed" or "oppressor."

Taken alone, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* contains numerous vague and ill-defined terms. Freire's descriptive techniques and sentence structure create a very dense, often difficult read. It seems that one problematic aspect lies in Freire's tendency to be both general and specific at the same time. More precisely, Freire talks very specifically about the process of liberatory education and its necessary components, but he rarely ventures to provide demonstrative examples of what he calls for. By leaving his discussion on a more abstract level, Freire limits the usefulness of this work for actual practice.

- Freire, Paulo (1993/1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing Co.

Review by Karen McClafferty (UCLA)

Source: Reviews of Paulo Freire's Books organized by Daniel Schugurensky
http://www.wier.ca/~%20daniel_schugurensky/freire/km.html

Education Resources for Teachers

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Website: www.greatideas.org

Feminist Teacher

Subscription: University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak St., Champaign, IL 61820
\$32 yearly; feministteacher@uwec.edu

Feminist Teacher is published for feminists involved in education. Collectively run, with a "commitment to publishing articles that challenge the dominant paradigm of the classroom," this journal is for feminist teachers at all levels (from early childhood through higher education), in both traditional classroom and non traditional teaching situations. Because of the wide range of the prospective audience, the editors avoid articles with excessively technical or abstract language. In addition to research based articles, the journal publishes bibliographies, lesson plans, teaching resources, materials on feminist pedagogy, and book reviews. Published biannually.
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Website: www.radicalteacher.org

Rethinking Schools: An Urban Educational Journal

Subscriptions: 1001 E Keefe Avenue, WI 53212
\$14 yearly; RSBusiness@aol.com

Rethinking Schools is published for activist-oriented, progressive teachers and educators. It covers educational issues on both the national and local level in the U.S. The magazine advocates the reform of elementary and secondary public schools, with an emphasis on city schools and the issues of equity and social justice. Aimed at promoting teacher, parent, and student activism, *Rethinking Schools* stresses "a grassroots perspective combining theory and practice and linking classroom issues to broader policy concerns." Based in Milwaukee, this magazine has become an increasingly important voice in the US education scene, and articles appear from contributors around the US. This magazine includes features, short news stories, reviews, and resources lists of policy and curriculum materials appear. *Rethinking Schools* has been a focus point of educational debates including bilingual education, school vouchers, and "No Child Left Behind." It has also published readers such as *Rethinking Globalization* and *Rethinking Mathematics*. Published quarterly.
Website: www.rethinkingschools.org

Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy

Subscriptions: New Jersey City University, 2039 Kennedy Blvd., Jersey City, NJ 07305
\$20 yearly; transformations@njcu.edu

Transformations is published for educators interested in women and curriculum development. Personal, analytical, and curricular articles fill this journal aimed at teachers in institutions of higher education. Articles are written by practitioners who are engaged in integrating issues of gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, and culture into the curriculum. Personal narratives illustrate how a specific course or curriculum was transformed by the inclusion of this type of scholarship, focusing on changes in the curriculum, pedagogy, and/or the process/impact of making the changes. Syllabi accompanied by narratives may also appear. Research papers examine the effects of or questions surrounding these issues. "Forum" discussions pose a particular question (e.g., Do educators have a responsibility to raise social justice issues in the classroom?) that is then commented on by a number of different academicians. Annotated bibliographies and reviews of multimedia and textbooks also appear. Published biannually.
Website: www.njcu.edu/Assoc/transformations

Source: Annotations: A Guide to the Independent Critical Press (Alternative Press Center: 2004)

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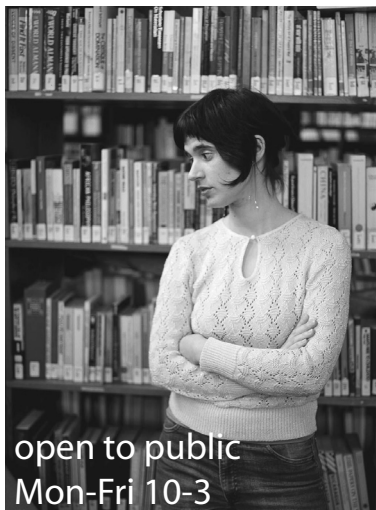
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