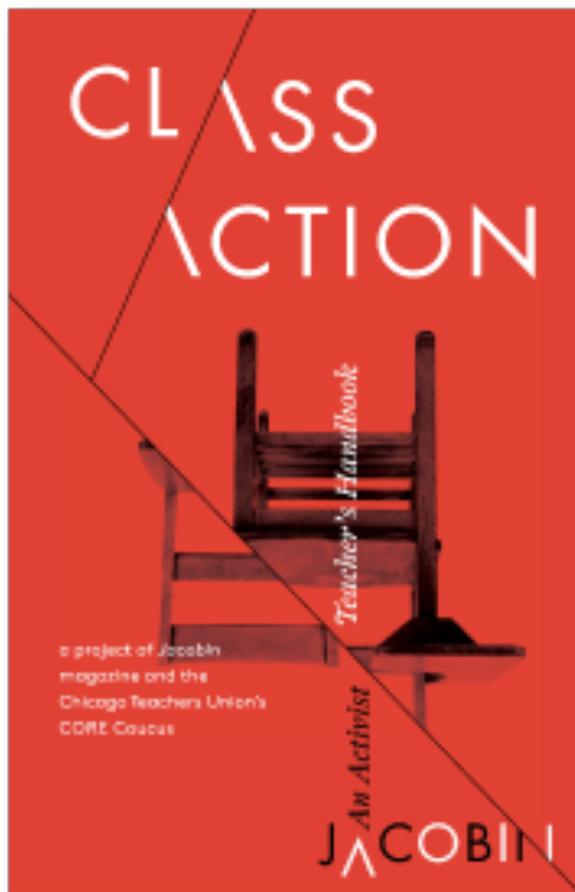


RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

News for Educational Workers

By Leonard Vogt



CLASS ACTION: AN ACTIVIST TEACHER'S HANDBOOK

Unions and Education

On February 18 and 19 of 2014, hundreds of teachers, students and other supporters picketed the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) campus as part of a "ministrike" called by the UIC United Faculty, the union representing more than 1,100 tenured and nontenured faculty members. The union has been negotiating its first contract with the university for a year and a half (www.portside.org, February 17 and 19, 2014 and www.jacobinmag.com, February 14, 2014).

Perhaps as a result of this two day walkout, The University of Illinois at Chicago faculty union was offered and reached a tentative agreement for a contract that covers the past two years and extends into April of 2015 (*Chicago Tribune*, April 17, 2014).

The University of California (UC) system and the AFSCME 3299 union that represents 8,300 custodians, food workers, gardeners and other campus service workers reached a tentative contract agreement that ends tense labor negotiations that have dragged on for more than a year. The agreement calls for an immediate 4.5% pay increase and then 3% annual raises through 2016 (*Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 2014).

In early April, 2014, one of the most important labor unions in U. S. higher education, United Auto Workers Local 2865, staged an unexpected two-day strike. Local 2865 represents 12,000 teaching assistants, associate instructors, and undergraduate tutors at University of California campuses (*Aljazeera America*, April 14, 2014).

Graduate students at New York University (NYU) have for the second time voted to unionize, making NYU the only private university to recognize a graduate-employee union (*In These Times*, February, 2014).

In the world of college sports, unions are also being considered. In January of 2014, the football players of Northwestern University became the first group of intercollegiate athletes to sign and file a petition with the National Labor Relations Board to seek collective bargaining and union recognition from the university. The athletes have cited the extensive hours required for the sport, the tenuous year-to-year nature of their scholarships, and the long-term medical repercussions, not to mention the tremendous profits their labor generates, as the key issues behind the union organizing campaign. Needless to say, Northwestern coach Pat Fitzgerald is encouraging his players not to form a union (*Jacobin*, February 26, 2014 and *Portside Labor*, April 5, 2014). For an idea of how much money is made on college sports, and how little the players get of it, see Jesse Jackson's "Big Money for College Sports, Nothing for Players," March 31, 2014, www.rainbowpush.org.

Adjuncts

Three very personal accounts of the status and suffering of academic adjuncts have appeared in the last few months.

Becky Tuck (*Salon*, March 17, 2014) appeals to the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), informs them that 70% of all college classes are now taught by adjuncts, and challenges them with the question as to why at the recent AWP conference, not a single panel was dedicated to the plight of adjuncts nor their underpaid and overworked contribution to academia.

Maura Lerner (*Star Tribune*, March 31, 2014) writes about adjunct Anne Winkler-Morey, who loves teaching history at Metro State University in Minneapolis but has no benefits, no job security, no desk or coat hook to call her own, and makes \$17,000 a year. Dr. Winkler-Morey has become involved with Adjunct Action, an offshoot of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and started a Facebook site inviting adjuncts to share their concerns so "we can move toward a list of demands."

Ana M. Fores Tamayo in "Adjunct Justice" (www.counterpunch.org, January 21, 2014) describes how she gave up her adjunct position and her \$15,000 a year salary. She writes, "There are 1.5 million faculty members in Higher Education today. Only 25% of this number is tenured. Thus, I am one in 1 million, and of this number, over 50% average \$2,700 per semester, no healthcare, and another 25 % have no tenure and are hired on limited contracts."

On August 4-6, the 11th COCAL Conference (Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor) will take place at John Jay College, 524 West 59th St, in New York City. Plenaries, forums, and workshops will deal with problems faced by contingent faculty in higher education in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, as well as around the globe. Possible solutions and actions will be planned. For more information on COCAL and the conference, go to www.cocalinternational.org.

Corporate Education and Privatization

"Why Corporations Want Our Public Schools" (*Yes! Magazine/Political Image*, February 22, 2014) gives three reasons to answer the title of the article: 1. A corporation like Pearson controls the \$20 billion to \$30 billion a year standardized testing and textbook industry and, with the cooperation of the Gates Foundation, produces the Common Core courses with the accompanying tests and testing standards, thus setting themselves up, rather than the teachers, as the arbiters of success or failure; 2. The closing of "failing" public schools opens the doors for privatization and charter schools which means more than \$25 billion dollars a year of taxpayers money going to private companies; and 3. According to teachers in Michigan, charter schools cut instruction money, raise administration costs, and come out ahead by \$366 per students.

"How Privatization Perverts Education" (www.nationofchange.org, February 18, 2014) gives three reasons why privatization must be stopped, or at least examined, before it becomes a full-scale new vehicle for inequality: 1. Charter schools, according to the CREDO study at Stanford University and the National Education Policy Center, have not only not improved education but in the cases of states like Ohio, Texas, and Louisiana have produced inferior schools with lower graduation rates; 2. The profit motive perverts the goals of education and makes "education reform" synonymous with standardized testing. Even *Forbes Magazine* notes, "The charter school movement began as a grass roots attempt to improve education. It's quickly becoming a backdoor for corporate profit"; and 3. Charter schools can leave lower-performing students behind by excluding students with special needs, low test scores, English-as-a second-language learners, or students in poverty.

In March of 2014, the United Opt Out National Spring Action conference in Denver gathered together over 100 students, parents, and teachers to brainstorm resistance to corporate education reform and high stakes standardized testing across the country. The education activists included a Finnish teacher and education scholar, a parent turned education activist, and a high school senior (www.nationofchange.org, April 13, 2014).

Class and Education

Class Action: An Activist Teacher's Handbook, a joint project of *Jacobin* and the Chicago Teachers Union's CORE, is a booklet that can be downloaded for free. The gist of the handbook is the following: "It's common in policy circles to claim that improving the quality of education in inner cities and impoverished rural areas is the answer to halting the growing gap between rich and poor. This view reflects not only the illusions about the potential for substantially improving education for children from low- and moderate-income families without deeper economic and political shifts, but also a serious misunderstanding about the growth of inequality over the last three decades."

The Economic Policy Institute offers a series of charts and tables to show that long-term unemployment is elevated for workers at every education level, with additional breakdowns by age, gender, race/ethnicity, occupation, and industry (www.portside.org, April 12 2014).

Austerity and Funding

In a fight against austerity measures, over 100 students and faculty occupied the provost's office of Portland's University of Southern Maine, the same office from which 15 full-time faculty from nine departments recently received lay-off notices (www.commondreams.org, March 21, 2014).

"U.S. University Science: The Shopping Mall Model" states that U. S. universities now resemble high-end shopping malls which use nice buildings and good

reputations to attract good students and good faculty. The cost of this external funding is now a necessary condition for tenure and promotion. This article argues that this model emerged at the initiative of universities not the federal government and that today's economic stress is partially the result of what universities and faculty asked for in the 1950s and 1960s (www.voxed.org, March 20, 2014).

Teaching History

In January of 2014, faculty at Colorado State University at Pueblo awaited news from the administration as to how many jobs would be eliminated, with a predicted high of approximately 50. A sociology professor, Timothy McGettigan, sent out an email to students and faculty urging them to fight the cuts. The email's subject line was "Children of Ludlow," referring to the 1914 massacre of striking coal miners in southern Colorado, and the email's content compared the way the university administration was treating its faculty to the way the coal miners were treating their workers 100 years ago, thus showing a repeated example of those with power mistreating those without. Hours after the email was sent, McGettigan's email account was shut down (www.insidehighered.com, January 20, 2014).

In *The Atlantic*, January 20, 2014) David Cutler interviewed Eric Foner, the historian who has earned the adoration of both academia and popular culture, and asked him about the teachers who influenced him and how high school history teachers can better prepare students for college.

Divestment in Fossil Fuels

In April, 2014, nearly 100 members of the faculty of Harvard University released an open letter to its president calling on the Ivy League school to sell off its interests in oil, gas, and coal companies. The letter states, "If the Corporation regards divestment as 'political,' then its continued investment is a similarly political act, one that finances present corporate activities and calculates profits from them. . . . Slavery was once an investment issue, as were apartheid and the harm caused by smoking." About the same time, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote in *The Guardian*, "We can encourage more of our universities and municipalities and cultural institutions to cut their ties to the fossil-fuel industry." For an interview on Democracy Now with James Anderson, one of the Harvard signers of the divestment letter, go to www.democracynow.org, April 11, 2014 or see www.nationofchange.org, April 13, 2014 for additional information.

Reactions to American Studies Association Academic Boycott of Israel

Following a university statement against boycotts of Israeli academic institutions, Syracuse University (SU) students issued their own statement in support of the ASA

boycott and a rejection of SU's pro-Israel position. After relating boycotts to the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and explaining that their support of the ASA boycott is neither to limit free expression nor to promote anti-Semitism, the student statement related Israeli occupation to U.S. foreign policy: "We recognize that the Israeli apartheid state is a strategic deployment of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East, and our own government is responsible for the promotion of massive inequalities in the region. The fight against the Israeli apartheid state is also a fight against U.S. imperialism" (*Daily Orange*, January 14, 2014).

William Kelly, interim Chancellor of The City University of New York, added his voice to those university leaders opposed to the resolution of ASA to boycott Israeli universities (www.insidehighered.com, January 24, 2014).

On February 3, 2014, *The New York Times* had an editorial opposing the New York State bill to penalize colleges and universities that support the ASA because of the boycott. In the exchange of letters that followed, two supported the boycott and two opposed it.

Resources

A newly created academic mailing list, Queer Kinship and Relationships, hopes to engage in and understand the multiplicity of issues concerning non-heterosexual families and relationships in their everyday lives. Researchers and academics interested in non-normative intimacy, kinships, relationships, and broadly defined family, are invited to join in. To subscribe, visit the website www.jiscmail.ac.uk/queerkinship.org.

The Winter 2013-14 issue of *rethinking schools* has a cover story called "The Problems with the Common Core." Stan Karp's article delves into the roots, problems, and trajectory of the Common Core and looks at funders, origins, and uses of the new standards that explain why pushback to the Common Core is building.

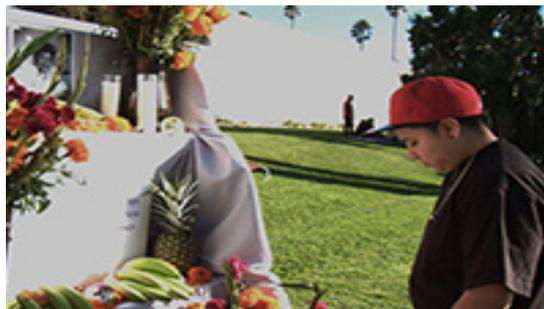
Bullfrog Films has three new videos relevant for K-12 to college classrooms:



SCHOOL'S OUT: LESSONS FROM A FOREST KINDERGARTEN

School's Out: Lessons from a Forest Kindergarten is a documentary combining pure observational footage of the children at a Swiss kindergarten in the forest, paired with

interviews with parents, teachers, child development experts, and alumni, offering the viewers a genuine look into the forest kindergarten. There are also scenes of a traditional kindergarten in the United States to show the contrast between the two different approaches.



VALENTINE ROAD

Valentine Road is about an outrageous crime where 14-year old Brandon shoots and kills fellow student Larry, a gender-variant youth of color, and an even more outrageous defense of it. The film focuses on bigotry and prejudice as community-wide problems, rather than only the acts of individuals and how schools can respond to the full complexity of students' and support students in crisis before such crimes occur.



ADDICTION INCORPORATED

Addiction Incorporated tells the story of how former Philip Morris scientist Victor DeNoble's unexpected discovery of an addiction ingredient in tobacco led to more addictive cigarettes, and how his Congressional testimony forever changed how tobacco is sold and marketed. DeNoble's unwavering determination to expose the tobacco industry leads to a career as an educator who informs students about the world's only industry where success is measured by a corporation's ability to addict its customers.

Is there a news item, call for papers, upcoming conference, resource, teaching tool, or other information related to progressive education that you would like to share with other Radical Teacher readers? Conference announcements and calls for papers should be at least six months ahead of date. Items, which will be used as found appropriate by Radical Teacher, cannot be returned. Send hard copy to Leonard Vogt, Department of English, LaGuardia Community College (CUNY), 31-10 Thomson Avenue, Long Island City, New York 11101—or email items to lvogt@nyc.rr.com.



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