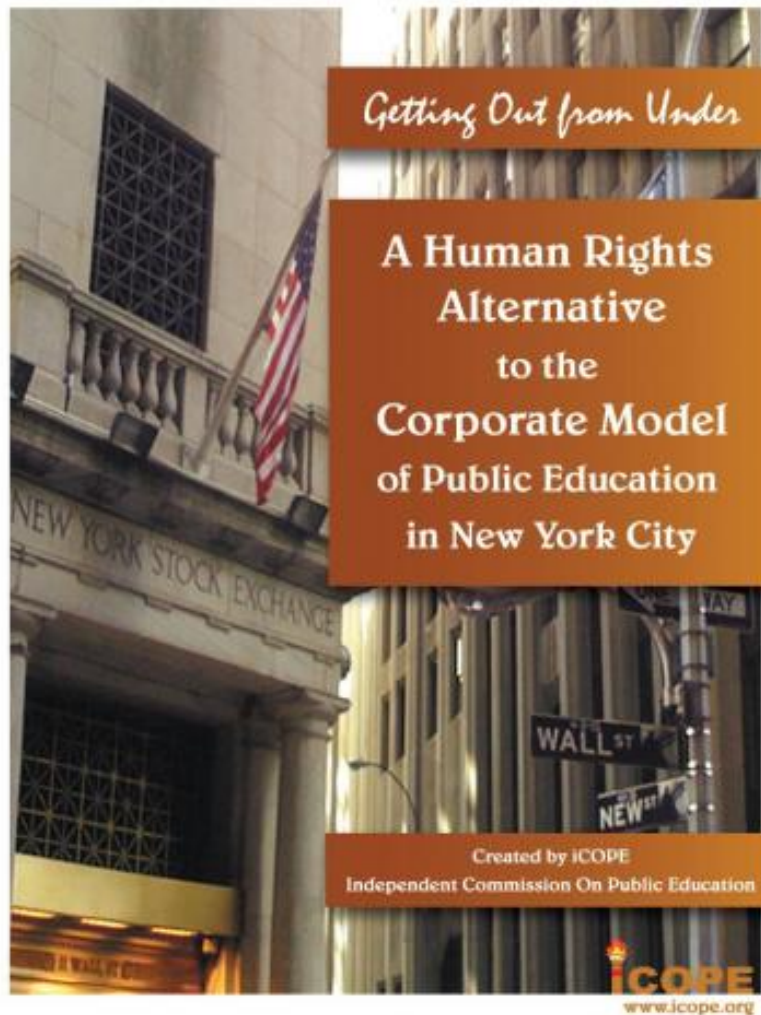


RADICAL TEACHER

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

News for Educational Workers

by Leonard Vogt



COURTESY OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION WWW.ICOPE.ORG

Wealth and Education

The Chronicle of Higher Education (June 8, 2015) published "Executive Compensation at Public and Private Colleges." At public universities, the median salary for presidents for a year is \$428,250, with two presidents earning more than \$1 million (Rodney A. Erickson of Penn State University at \$1,494,603 and R. Bowen Loftin of Texas A&M University at \$1,128,957). At private colleges, 36 presidents earn at least \$1 million.

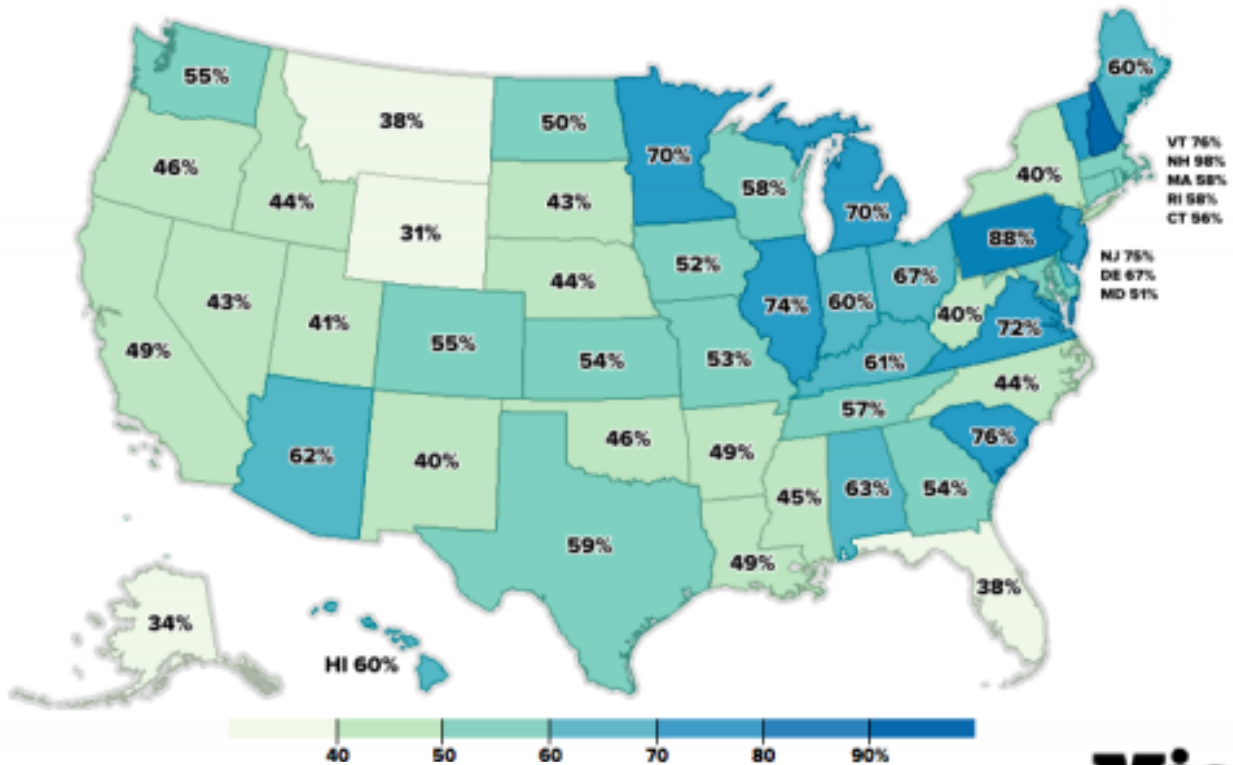
Since Arizona's higher education funding cuts were the deepest in the country since 2008, *The Nation's* "The Gentrification of Higher Ed" (June 8, 2015) focuses on this

those lucky enough to get Pell grants, which max out at less than \$6,000 per year, the tuition at many public four-year colleges can be upwards of \$10,000 a year, requiring the difference to be squeezed out of those minimum wage salaries (Policy.Mic, September 8, 2015).

"Higher education wears the cloak of liberalism, but in policy and practice, it's a cutthroat system of exploitation": so begins an article on AlterNet (June 29, 2015) which uses the example of New York University (NYU) as "a predatory business, hardly any different in ethical practice or economic procedure than a sleazy storefront payday loan operator." In a report called "The Art of the Gouge" 400 NYU faculty members describe how their place of employment can be a corrupt institution of power, money,

For minimum wage workers, tuition at four-year public colleges and universities represents a huge share of their income.

Total pre-tax annual income for minimum wage workers working 40 hours a week, divided by average 2014-2015 in-state tuition and fees at public four-year schools in each state. Does not take into account grants or financial aid.



COURTESY OF U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR/COLLEGE BOARD



state for its 70 percent tuition increase for in-state students between 2008 and 2013, the biggest hike in the country. At the same time, to appeal to the students (or their parents) who can afford these hikes, and want even more from their tuition than classes and professors, the University of Arizona in the last two years has added food pantries, food courts, swimming pools (with hot tubs, steam rooms, and tanning salons), and luxury apartments for the very wealthy students offering one-bedroom apartments for as high as \$1,640 a month.

For students making minimum wage, college is becoming almost an impossibility. The cost of one year of in-state tuition and fees could cost anywhere from 31% to 98% of a minimum wage earner's annual income. Even for

and exploitation that is severely unfair to students and professors alike.

Although asked to move large numbers of lower-income students into the middle class, community colleges receive far less public financial support than do highly selective public four-year colleges (Education Opportunity Network, June 4, 2015).

Poverty and Education

Scientific American writes "For children, growing up poor hinders brain development and leads to poorer performance in schools. . . Up to 20% of the achievement

gap between high- and-low- income children may be explained by differences in brain development. . . Children who grew up in families below the federal poverty line had gray matter volumes 8 to 10% below normal development” (Education Opportunity Network, July 30, 2015).

Schools in Latino and African American communities regularly are targeted for turnarounds, state takeovers, and transfer to charter schools without the consent of the people whose children live in these communities. All the school takeovers from New Orleans to Detroit to Newark to Tennessee have one thing in common: they enroll primarily children of color (the Diane Ravitch blog, September 18, 2015).

A report by the Center of Civil Rights Remedies at UCLA found that during the 2011-2012 school year, 3.5 million public school students were suspended at least once. Within this group, African American students received suspensions at more than three times the rate of white students (portside.org, September 5, 2015).

An investigation by the U. S. Department of Justice found that in Alabama thousands of students with behavioral issues or disabilities were given subpar educations and isolated in decrepit buildings used during Jim Crow (ProPublica, July 29, 2015).

A new report by the Education Law Center shows that in many states in the United States, the poorest children, who actually need the most support in order to succeed in school, get the least support. In Vermont, Wyoming, and North Dakota, poor districts receive only 80 cents for every dollar in wealthier districts. In Nevada, poor schools receive only 48 cents to the dollar of wealthy districts (portside.org, June 14, 2015).

Inequalities at the Starting Gate: Cognitive and Noncognitive Skills Gap between 2010-2011 Kindergarten Classmates explores gaps by race/ethnicity and social class in both the cognitive skills of reading and math but also the noncognitive skills of self-control and interactions with teachers and peers (Economic Policy Institute, June 17, 2015).

Student Debt

The U. S. Department of Education will forgive outstanding loan debts of former students of Corinthian Colleges, the now-closed for-profit educational chain that preyed on students and bribed employers to temporarily hire and then fire graduates to beef up their success rates. The chronology is as follows: on February 23, 2015 fifteen former Corinthian students refused to pay off the student loans they received to attend Corinthian; on March 31, the Debt Collective, an offshoot of Occupy Wall Street and an organizer of the debt strike, hand delivered to the Department of Education hundreds of “Defense to Repayment” requests asking the government to forgive the Corinthian students’ debts because the company lied about future job prospects for the students; on June 8, the Department of Education agreed to forgive the debts on an individual basis (*The Nation*, July 6/13, 2015). For the

excited response from Occupy Wall Street, see the Diane Ravitch blog of June 13, 2015.

“The Student Loan Crisis and the Debtfare State” (*Dollars & Sense*, May/June 2015) compares the student loan crisis to the sub-prime housing industry, saying that both depends on the ability of borrowers to meet their debt obligations. Since the majority of student debtors cannot get decent paying jobs after leaving college, they cannot pay back their loans and, since 2003, default rates on student loans have been climbing.

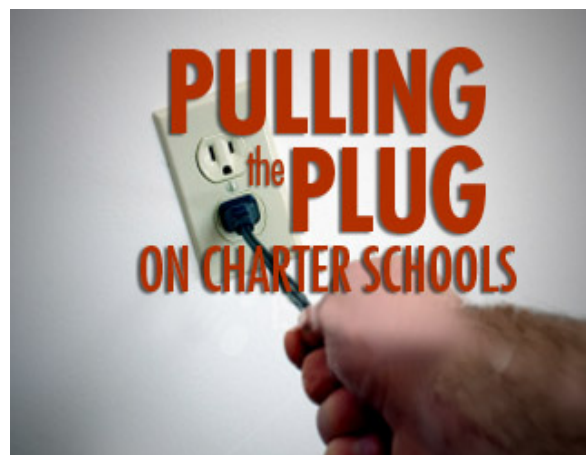
Teacher Strikes

In Chicago, 12 members of a coalition of public school parents, grandmothers, and education activists were on hunger strike for 34 days to protest the closing of Dyett High School, the only remaining open-enrollment public high school left in the Bronzeville community. Under Mayor Rahm Emmanuel, the city has closed about 50 schools in its attempt to privatize education. Under pressure from the hunger strikers, officials plan to reopen Dyett High School (DemocracyNow, September 4 & 9, 2015; portside.org, August 21 & 26, 2015).

For the first time in 30 years, Seattle teachers went on strike on September 8, 2015, which would have been the first day of classes for about 53,000 students. The strikers’ demands are for fewer standardized tests for students, more time to prepare for classes, and better pay. For an interview with a striking teacher, see DemocracyNow, September 15, 2015. For a complete report on the strike, see portside.org, September 9, 10, and 15, 2015.

On June 12, 2015, 10,000 people in Mexico City, along with teachers announcing a strike, protested the neoliberal education reforms of President Enrique Peña Nieto (DemocracyNow, June 12, 2015).

Charter Schools



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Charter school advocates have had a setback with Washington State’s Supreme Court landmark ruling stating that charter schools are unconstitutional based on the fact that they are not really “public” schools (portside.org,

September 12, 2015 and Education Opportunity Network, September 10, 2015.

Charter schools, in general, are receiving a bad rep, even in mainstream sources like *The New York Times* (August 27, 2015) which reports that the post-Katrina all-charter New Orleans urban district has “stark problems”: “Principals engage in widespread . . . selecting, or counseling out, students”; “No agency is responsible for keeping track of [students]”; “Louisiana’s official dropout rates are unreliable”; and “Louisiana’s education data has been doled out selectively, mostly to pro-charter researchers, and much of the research has been flawed.” In addition, charter schools are fraudulent “and marked by a lack of transparency that leads to even more fraud” (inequality.org, July 12, 2015) and the Walton Foundation-funded charter schools are marred by fiscal mismanagement (alternet, June 25, 2015). As the Obama administration asks Congress for a 50 percent increase for charter school funding, a report called “New Documents Show How Taxpayer Money is Wasted by Charter Schools” by The Center for Media and Democracy claims that charter schools are spending billions of dollars with no oversight, regulation, or accountability. The report says the federal government has spent over \$3 billion dollars over the past two decades by the charter school industry but has no database showing how the money was spent or what results were produced (DemocracyNow, May 8, 2015).

Testing

In the Phi Delta Kappa annual opinion poll about U. S. education, nearly half the public supports opting out of mandated standardized tests, which is great news for the Opt Out movement. Fifty-four percent of the public do not want their schools to implement the Common Core standards. Fifty-five percent oppose the use of public test scores to evaluate teachers. Most notably, “A strong majority—about 8 in 10—of the U.S. public believes the effectiveness of their local public schools should be measured by how engaged the students are with classwork and their level of hope for the future” (Diane Ravitch blog, August 23, 2015).

Even though the vast majority of textbook publishers say their books are aligned with the Common Core, they are simply repackaged versions of earlier books. The publishing giant Pearson has no textbooks evaluated as aligning with the Common Core (The Daily Beast, July 16, 2015).

An editorial “Teaching as Defiance” by the *Rethinking Schools* editorial staff delineates ways teachers can survive in a high-stakes testing environment but still be creative and collaborative. The editorial includes testimonies from many teachers about how they defy testing while struggling to defend and transform public schools.

The Harvard School of Public Health’s 2013 study starkly states, “Fewer than 50 percent of U. S. youth currently get the recommended amount of moderate to vigorous exercise they need to become healthy adults.” Since recess is being eliminated in many schools to set aside more time for test preparation, the problem is likely

to continue (“Physical Education Takes a Hit: Schools’ Emphasis on Testing Is Making Kids Sick” Truthout, May 8, 2015).

Steven Salaita

The firing of Steven Salaita from the University of Illinois Urbana campus has become a cause célèbre of academic freedom. Hired in 2013 to teach Native American Studies, he moved himself and his family from Virginia to Illinois to start the new school year. In 2014 after the Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, which killed some 2000, 400 of them children, Salaita wrote some Twitter entries using hyperbole and ridicule to criticize the Israeli attack. At the July Board meeting, the trustees and the chancellor received pressure from pro-Israel donors to the university to fire Salaita, and the trustees did (Informed Comment, August 15, 2015). At its annual Washington, D.C. meeting, the American Association of University Professors censured the University of Illinois, saying that firing him “violated Professor Salaita’s academic freedom and cast a pall of uncertainty over the degree to which academic freedom is understood and respected” (*The New York Times*, June 14, 2015). Salaita sued the university and a federal judge recently has allowed the lawsuit against University of Illinois to proceed, with the chancellor who originally fired Salaita having resigned under an ethics investigation (*The Nation*, August 12, 2015).

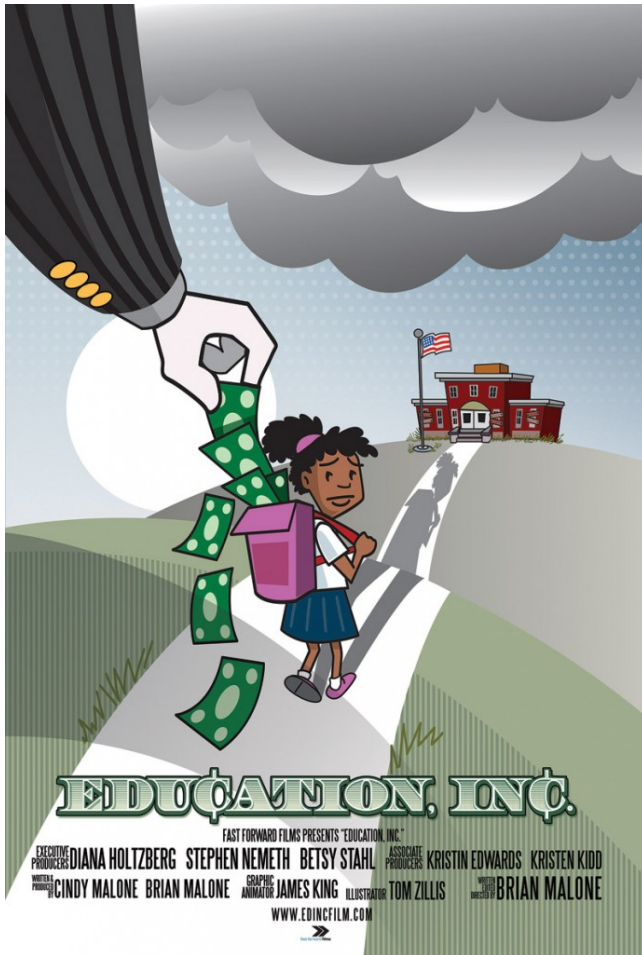
Divestments

The Columbia University student activist group, Columbia Prison Divest, has forced the university to sell its 220,000 shares in G4S, the world’s largest private security firm, as well as its shares in the Corrections Corporation of America, the largest private prison company in the United States (portside.org, June 23, 2015 and *In These Times*, August 2015).

Sheldon Adelson and Haim Saban, fellow Zionist billionaires, gathered at a secret summit in Las Vegas to raise \$50 million to fight campus campaigns to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel (Portside, June 13, 2015).

A Slanted Civil War

After recent controversy over raising, and finally lowering, the Confederate flag, it has become obvious that many Americans believe false things about the Civil War because our textbooks teach false things about the Civil War. Teaching or implying that the Confederacy broke away because of states’ rights rather than its unwillingness to give up slavery bends, and perhaps even breaks, the historical facts. This continues today, says *The Washington Post* (July 9, 2015), when in Texas “five million public school children” will be taught social studies “that barely address racial segregation.” Slavery is seen as “a side issue to the Civil War.”



of hate crime, joblessness, homophobia, intolerance, alienation, and violence. For information on ordering PUZZLES, go to <http://andersongoldfilms.com/films/documentaries/puzzles.htm>.

A North Carolina-based queer youth media project just released its third issue of *I Don't Do Boxes* magazine:

<http://www.idontdoboxes.org/issues/act-out/>.



THE TRUE COST, BULLFROG FILMS

Bullfrog Films has two new videos good for both secondary and college level education. *The True Cost* is a story about clothing, the clothes we wear, the people who make them, and the impact the industry has on the world. *Weather Gone Wild* explores recent extreme weather events and the scientific projections of what we can expect over the next few decades. For information on either film, go to www.bullfrogfilms.com.

Resources

Brian Malone's *Education Inc.* shows the huge pot of money coming from organizations connected to the Koch brothers, Jeb Bush, Michael Bloomberg, and other advocates for dismantling the public school system and replacing it with unregulated private schools and charters.

PUZZLES is a documentary that follows the story of a violent hate crime in New Bedford, MA, when an 18-year



old entered an LGBT bar and attacked three patrons with a hatchet and a gun, bringing the community together with greater understanding of and connection between the roots



WEATHER GONE WILD, BULLFROG FILMS

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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