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Editorial

Winning

"Winning isn't everything; it's the only thing." This statement, often attributed to the football coach Red Sanders, is a mantra in American sports, and perhaps in all American life.

Through Hollywood movies, young people constantly learn that heroes win. *The Karate Kid*, *Hoosiers*, *The Natural*, *Major League*, *Breaking Away*, *Remember the Titans*, *The Bad News Bears*, *Angels in the Outfield*—these and countless other motion pictures conclude with the thrill of victory.

There have been occasional exceptions, of course. In the first *Rocky*, Rocky Balboa didn't win the championship, although he proved his mettle. In the final scene, battered and defeated in the ring, Rocky desperately cries out for his girl friend, Adrianne, hinting that relationships may be as important as championships. But this touching film was followed by sequels, *Rocky II* through *Rocky V*, in which the hero emerges victorious. In *Rocky II* Adrianne, recovering from an illness, tells Rocky at her bedside that she has only one request. As he leans over, she whispers, "Win!," warming the hearts of movie goers everywhere.

Like movies about sports, generations of American Westerns and war movies also have ended with heroic victories (at least until a few social commentary movies, such as *Platoon*, on the Vietnam war). My undergraduate psychology students absolutely loved *A Beautiful Mind*, about the life of the mathematician John Nash and his struggle with mental illness. They found the movie truly inspiring. But would the film have moved them without the triumphant conclusion, in which he won the Nobel Prize?

Ordinary conversation, too, expresses the overriding importance of winning. When today's young adults want to refer to an individual in a particularly negative way, they frequently say, "He's a loser." After last month's nationwide elections, Arnold Schwarzenegger cast the Democrats in the worst possible light when he called them a "party of losers."

Consequences

Although we all like to win, our society's obsession with winning has its downsides. Alfie Kohn observes in his 1986 book *No Contest* that most competitions have only one winner. The rest lose. As a result, most people suffer blows to self-esteem. Even those who win have a shaky sense of self-worth, for they know that they could also become a loser in the next contest.

Kohn also observes that the pursuit of winning, whether in sports, law, or the corporate world, typically means sacrificing other aspects of human experience, such as deep and caring relationships. "In the workplace," Kohn (1986, 134) writes,

> one tries to remain on friendly terms with one's colleagues, but there is a guardedness, a part of the self held in reserve; even when no rivalry exists at the moment, one never knows whom one will have to compete against next week.

What's more, as Kohn observes, a considerable body of social psychology research indicates that competition promotes aggression. This outcome is familiar to us all. From Little League to professional sports, we routinely see fights break out among players, coaches, and fans. In the summer 2004 issue of *Encounter*, Gus Trowbridge (2004, 5) described the aggression-producing effects of competition in his student days in a traditional Pennsylvania prep school.

> The boys were assigned to two feuding teams, the Light Blues and the Dark Blues.… There was no crossing over, not even in our seating arrangement at chapel. I learned the perniciousness of competition. In the name of gentlemanly rivalry, our teams grew to hate each other, and we were taught that mastery meant dominion, that success meant defeating the other side.

On the National Level

According to social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), individual self-esteem partly derives from the success of the groups to which one belongs, which include one's nation. Hence, all those who suffer defeats as individuals can still feel good about themselves by identifying with the victories of the nation. But our nation hasn't always won. It suffered an unexpected defeat in Vietnam, and since then our foreign policy has been concerned with eradicating that defeat. This motive was clear when we overpowered the military opposition in tiny Grenada. President Reagan said America was "standing tall," and commentators suggested the ignominy of Vietnam was finally behind us. But it wasn't, and neither did our victory in the 1991 Iraq war remove the feeling that somehow our nation wasn't the winner portrayed in the movies.

The September 11 terrorist attacks made things worse. When the World Trade Center fell, many people seemed to suffer as much from a sense of defeat as from the loss of lives. In my politically liberal neighborhood in Manhattan, a sign in several windows said, "We shall emerge victorious." A more common sign, which is still widely displayed today, says, "Proud to be an American," suggesting the importance of recovering our self-esteem.

Our nation's insistence on victory stifles diplomacy. Effective diplomacy doesn't center on winning and losing but on the mutual resolution of grievances. But our nation acts as if it cannot live without victories, whether it is the defeat of Saddam Hussein, each city in Iraq, or some newly designated threat. As a result, we keep creating enemies rather than diplomatic relationships. And if we decide it's in our interest to leave an occupied country, leaving becomes very difficult because it looks like defeat.

Signs of Change

Recently, however, there have been hints of change, indications that our society's obsession with winning might start to give way to broader perspectives on life. In past decades, there has been no greater fervor over winning than during the Summer Olympic Games. Commercials and broadcasts have trumpeted the athletes who "Go for the Gold" as stadiums filled with flag-waving Americans have chanted, "USA, USA." But in the 2004 Olympics, several athletes revealed a different attitude.

When four-time U.S. Olympic swimmer Jenny Thompson lost the anchor leg of the 400-meter freestyle relay (to a world record-setting Australian team), Thompson was happy nevertheless. She admitted that her team wanted the gold medal: "It would have been amazing." But she pointed out that the team's achievement, a new American record, "is pretty amazing in itself." Thompson downplayed the importance of her medal count during her four Olympics and emphasized that she felt "blessed" just to have taken part (Kepner 2004).

Thompson's attitude took reporters by surprise, as did the response of her teenage relay teammate, Kara Lynn Joyce. Asked if it was agonizing to watch her team lose the event, Joyce said no. "I wouldn't call it agony, watching the last three legs of the race. It was pretty exciting" (Kepner 2004). Joyce got caught up in the event itself as much as the outcome.

Similarly, swimmers Michael Phelps and Lenny Krayzelburg were among the other Olympians to accept losses with notable grace, keeping their defeats in perspective. Krayzelburg, a 2000 Olympic gold medalist, earned a spot on 2004 Olympic team and failed to win a 2004 Olympic medal by the narrowest of margins. "I experienced joy five weeks ago and I experienced disappointment tonight," Krayzelburg said. "But it's not the end of the world" (Zinser 2004, D1).

During the 2004 Olympic Games, *New York Times* sports columnist William C. Rhoden also expressed a rarely heard attitude. Our country, Rhoden (2004, D2) observed, is "so obsessed with marketing, hype, and gold that we never quite learn that lesson of living in the moment and enjoying the moment." Rhoden quoted a letter from former Olympic gymnast Kim Zmeskal, who had been so upset by her loss in 1992 that she left the games before the closing ceremony. Zmeskal said that at the time she was too young to appreciate the full value of the experience itself: "The Olympics absolutely have to be about the journey rather than its outcome," she wrote.

Several 2004 Olympians, to be sure, expressed a "winning is everything" philosophy. But the signs of change were evident. I also am impressed by the recent movie, *Friday Night Lights*, released in October, 2004. The film, which is about high school football in

Texas, more directly questions the obsession with winning than any American movie I've seen. It shows how intense community pressure to win removes the players' and coach's enjoyment from the sport. This movie hasn't become a huge hit and it has its flaws, but the film, like the 2004 Olympics, might forecast a new perspective.

Personal Reflections

I first read Alfie Kohn's critique of competition, *No Contest,* soon after it was published in 1986. When I finished reading it, I was so impressed by Kohn's long list of the harmful effects of competition that I concluded we'd be better off without any competition at all. Kohn convinced me that cooperation is healthier and more productive. Since then, I have continued to believe that we overemphasize competition, but my opposition has become less sweeping.

I still feel that competition sours academic and scholarly work. I don't like to see students tackling ideas, writing essays, or conducting research in order to achieve a higher standing than others. Students then feel, however vaguely, that there is something hostile about learning, that scholarly work means hurting others. Scholarly activities should be intrinsically motivated. They should be motivated by the love of learning for its own sake.

But I think competition, if kept in perspective, has its uses in some areas of life, such as athletics. Ironically, it is through competition that young people can learn first-hand about the benefits and limits of victory. This was true in my own case.

In high school and college my primary sport was cross country and distance races in track. Running was most important to me as high school, which I attended in Anaheim, California, from 1958 to 1961. I lacked all sprinting speed, but I did run a 4:19.4 mile. (There was no two-mile event in California high schools at the time.) During those years, I thought a great deal about many aspects of the sport, including the motivational language of the coaches, who constantly talked about "guts" and "courage."

Early on, I saw that courage isn't measured by victory, and that it's often hidden and private. I fought harder in some of the races that I lost than in some that I won. I became convinced that many runners, including those who finished in the back of the pack, had often summoned courage no one else would ever know about.

I also learned about the importance of other qualities—especially naturalness and grace. At the beginning of my sophomore cross country season, I thought of distance running as one big battle with oneself. The point was to overcome pain and fatigue. This had seemed very true in my prior year of competition, and I assumed it was simply the way running was.

Then, during our first cross country meet of my sophomore year, I saw something different. Our opponent was Orange High School, led by a senior who already was something of a Southern California legend, Dale Story. I was scared, but determined to fight hard. When our teams were called to the starting line, I was surprised to see that Story was barefoot. After letting me lead for a quarter mile, Story swept up beside me, ran with me a minute or so, and suddenly leapt high into the air to brush away something caught in the sole of his foot. He asked me if I saw what it was, and joked about the dangerous nature of the course. Then he eased away, in a light and flowing stride. I thought, "My god, here I am fighting myself and grinding it out, and he simply runs freely. He's graceful, like a deer. Running for him is a joy." Story, who later won two national collegiate cross country titles running barefoot on frozen courses, made a big impression on me.

During the rest of my high school running career, I looked for ways to develop both strength and my own natural grace and flow. To the extent I succeeded, my success came largely from running in the nearby foothills. There, running up and down sloping paths, I increasingly felt connected to the sandy soil, brush, and rocky hills, warmed by the California sun. I spent many hours in the foothills, on weekends and after my school's track practice, often running to the point of exhaustion, but enjoying my time there. After several months, I noticed that my stride was gaining a bounce and rhythm that seemed to be imparted by the natural setting itself.

At the end of my senior year, I ran my two best mile races. They were not only my fastest; they also were marked by a pure pleasure in running. In these races, there was little conscious effort. I largely put my mind aside and trusted my body to just run as it

had in the hills. In one of the races, when a nationally ranked champion moved past me on the last lap, my body seemed to respond on its own. I thought to myself, "Okay, here we go," as my legs gathered speed and flowed along. One of these races I won; the other I did not; but in both I felt a joy that transcended winning and losing.

Optimal Experiences

In college I learned that my feelings in those two races illustrate what Abraham Maslow (1962) described as a "peak experience." Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) calls it "flow." In such experiences, we lose ourselves in the moment. Our functioning is unified, smooth, and natural. Malsow and Csikszentmihalyi say that peak or flow experiences can emerge in athletics, but also in a very wide range of activities, such as dance, painting, cooking, carpentry work, play, listening to music, meditation, the act of love, the exploration of new ideas, and the appreciation of beauty.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1997) has begun to study the conditions that promote peak experiences, but there is much to learn. As a youth, I learned that peak experiences can occur in a competitive sport, and the experiences gave me a sense of how the sport can transcend winning and losing. But we need to know how commonly this happens. We also need to know more about peak or flow experiences in the many other areas of life, and the extent to which competition precludes them. As educators who may wish to promote peak experiences among your students, I encourage you to think about the circumstances in which peak experiences have occurred in your own lives.

— William Crain, *Editor*

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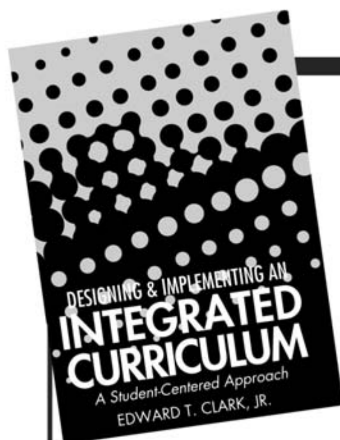

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Becoming a World
Children and Their Poetic Intelligence

Richard Lewis

Poetry is a form of play, an imaginative intelligence that connects us to the world outside ourselves.

Sometimes, when I'm outside my daughter's elementary school, waiting to take her home, I'm fascinated by the vibrant outpouring of children as they leave the school building. When they finally have the school doors behind them, the great squirming, running and yelling—the sheer letting go of energy that spills out on to the street—always makes me think about the inevitable power of childhood to exert itself.

Yet this daily school ritual also reminds me of another form of childhood exuberance that exerts itself when we listen and watch for it. It's a very different kind of energy though—one that for many children is often quiet and personal. One that seeks intimacy and is often hidden from view. And one, because of its intense blending of thought and feeling, does not always fit easily into any particular category of intelligence or knowledge.

Both as a parent and teacher, I have tried to find a way of explaining this way of knowing. It now seems to me that it is basically a poetic exuberance, an intuitive energy that children have without always being able to acknowledge its existence or find a means of expressing.

Given the pressures on children in schools to factualize the world, to maintain a homogenized standard of thought, a poetic way of perceiving experience is simply ignored as an indulgence. There is, in the increasingly test-driven curriculum, little time for it. Still, I have found in my work with children that if we do pay attention to this poetic ability there is dramatic shift in children's sense of themselves and their desire to learn. By affirming their poetic ability we open up a natural instinct in children to bring the outer world into the inner world of themselves—to link the phenomena of the world, in all its complexity, to the phenomena of one's self.

Richard Lewis is the founder and director of The Touchstone Center for Children in New York City. His most recent books include *Living By Wonder* and *When Thought is Young: Reflections on Teaching and the Poetry of the Child*.

When I first began teaching, I was made aware of this process when I asked a group of nine-year-old children to become the grass and to dramatize, with spontaneous movement, the nature of grass. Midway through their improvisations I gave out a small piece of paper so they could write down thoughts—as grass. Wayne wrote, "I am a living thing"; Amy wrote, "A drop of green animal"; and Jackie wrote, "I am grass. I grow just like you grow." In the simplicity of their responses was our inherent human gift, through our thought, to reach beyond ourselves to another form of life, to become what we are not and discover, in return, the connectiveness of our lives to other lives.

By affirming children's poetic ability we open up a natural instinct in them to bring the outer world into the inner world of themselves.

Let me say at this point that, in the traditional definition of poetry, we were not writing poems—but *becoming*, in effect, the poetry of existence itself. By becoming playful, we allow ourselves to enter into the very fibers, as Wayne reminded us, of "a living thing."

From the start I was assuming that this "'play" in all its permutations in childhood, was a form of thinking and doing—and most importantly, intelligence. But what kind of intelligence? It is certainly not the general intelligence that has been tested in schools for decades. Nor does it seem exactly like any of the eight specific intelligences proposed by Howard Gardner (1983, 1999). Rather, it is an intelligence that probes ideas, feelings, and the very essence of objects. It is an intelligence, brilliantly exploited by young children, that has no fear in examining with hands and feet, or lips and tongue, whatever our bodies can immerse themselves in, in order to get at the pleasure and meaning of *why*, both inside and out, something *is*. In poetic terms, it is a way to discover the unknown without flinching from it, to be curious about the mysterious underpinnings that encircle the world we wish to know.

The French poet, Francis Ponge, in his book *The Voice of Things*, declares that the function of poetry is to "nourish the spirit of man by giving him the cosmos to suckle" (1974, 109). And this poetic expressiveness, I am maintaining, begins as an instinctive act of play and imagination. It is an act that, like any other intelligence, has to do with our survival, our capacity to learn from and use our experience.

Many years ago in New Zealand I came across a piece of dictated writing by a five-year-old child who attended a one-room school, where the head teacher would, every so often during the school day, invite all the children to go outside, lie on their backs, and look up at the sky. From this supine view, this particular five-year-old said:

> I hop
> The shadow hops too
> I lie and think about the sun
> And my shadow thinks about me

Once again the directness and simplicity of thought might distract us from the poetic axis upon which this child pivots its deeper understanding. This kind of thinking is also about play and the child's ever-shifting playful attention to all the players: the shadow, the sun, my shadow, and "me." But, as play frequently does, all the players are directly related to each other, with the end result being a profound observation from this child, of a universe in which all things are interactively connected.

Beyond Boundaries

The naturalist in the child often grows from its play; for playfulness allows the naturalist to interpret, imaginatively, the world's aliveness. I am quite convinced that one of the purposes of a child's imagination is to break down the artificial boundaries of human thought so as to move effortlessly between different qualities of being. The child's playful imagination feels no dishonor or shame to inhabit the mind of a flower, a butterfly and a stone as much as its own mind. And by doing so, the child gains a perspective, a footing not unlike the mythic singers of indigenous cultures, and the vast poetic traditions of cultures throughout human history. Recently, a nine-year-old child in one of my classes, speaking of himself, said: "My imagination is part bird—and part wildflowers." And this was from a child on the

Lower East Side of Manhattan, whose usual sightings from his classroom windows are the buildings of a highly urbanized metropolis.

What are we to make of this statement except to consider the possibility that much below the surface of our everyday thinking, another means of knowing exists—a kind of knowing that began far back in the biological history of our thought. Perhaps Thoreau was correct to ask: "Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself? " (1950, 125). Or Edith Cobb, in her book *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, when she states: "As man, woman or child, we are living portions of the vast historical continuum that is nature" (1977, 100-101). Or recently, ten-year-old Man Shan who told me: "I see a lot of nature when I can play."

The child's playful imagination feels no dishonor to inhabit the mind of a flower, a butterfly, and a stone.

Thus exuberance is also what we reveal when our play is our poetry. When our poetic intelligence, with its confluence of thought and feeling, brings us back to our earlier evolutionary past where we felt a kinship with all life forms. It is the same intelligence that allows a nine-year-old urban child, Qweshon, to write: "I think the trees have a conversation of nature." Another child, Angie, in the same school wrote: "My tree likes to look at stars—and its leaves make the wind change colors. My tree likes to give life to dead things." It is an intelligence that has the capacity to widen our collective and individual understandings because, as both player and imaginer, the child and we become active participants in the poetry of ourselves and of others—both human and non-human.

How could I doubt this possibility after working a few years ago with a group of seven- and eight-year-old children in a crowded classroom, thinking together about the rainy and stormy weather of the night before. We were wondering about how rain falls, where thunder and lightning come from, and what perhaps the moon might be doing behind the clouds. As we spoke—it was obvious we had to take the next step—we had to become the storm. And so I asked: "Who would like to be the moon, the rain, the clouds, the lightning and thunder?" Hands went up everywhere—and off in the corner of the room—a small girl, quietly and confidently, went beyond merely *being* the thunder and said: "I want to be *thundered*."

Yes, here again was the poetic intelligence. Not the intelligence of the correct answer, or the right use of language, but an intelligence that takes us, to the primary sense of poetry as a presence, an act of presence within the very thing we are talking about. The late American poet, Cid Corman, echoes this way of thinking when he writes (1983, 99):

> Follow
> the stream:
> Dont go —
> but be
> going.

Within every child I suspect is the same desire to know the stream not only as a subject matter, but also as its moving waters, to be the poetry of the thing itself, whether it happens to be the grass, the sun, a tree, or thunder. And by becoming this poetry, each of us, child and adult alike, have the possibility of becoming ever closer to the very forces, the exuberance, and energy that we share with the intelligence that is nature itself.

> The wind is air that moves to find
> more air. Wind wants to create by
> pictures. Wind is a making of the
> world.
> —Camille, age 11

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Children and Pets

Charles Turner

Children consider pets a vital part of a good life.

CHARLES TURNER has taught elementary school for over 30 years. His interests include philosophy, literature, and environmental issues. Charles and his wife Judy, a preschool teacher, have three grown children.

There is a question that used to appear on the California state reading test for second graders. I wrote in protest about this question because I thought it was particularly unfair to my students. It was a story about a boy who tells his mother at the breakfast table about an occurrence in the middle of the night. While he was sleeping, he was awakened by something on his chest that he felt was smothering him. It turned out to be his pet cat, not a monster. He put the cat next to him on the bed, and went back to sleep. When he woke up, he told his mother what had happened.

The question the test asked the students was: Why did the author write this story? The choices were: A) to make you want a cat; B) to tell you to always eat breakfast; C) to tell you a story about something that happened in the middle of the night; and D) to tell you to go to bed early. The correct answer, according to the test publishers was C; it is about something that happened at night. But almost universally, the students picked A, to make you want a cat. They all wanted a cat. Even the kids who didn't like cats, as compared to dogs or other animals, picked answer A because, given the chance, that's what they wanted to say. Their feelings were strong. I have reached the point that now, if I ever see this question again, I will be tempted to tell them to not mark A. It's a trick! Some would still pick answer A anyway, I'm sure.

What are the children saying? I believe they are telling us their idea of what constitutes a good life. They really don't care about our adult concern, to the point of overkill, about the rate of their learning and how they compare to one another. They are embracing life with animals, and are teaching us adults something important.

In another assignment, as part of studying about the life and times of Martin Luther King, Jr., I have the students write their own versions of the "I Have a Dream" speech. To get started we talk about what

they see as a contemporary social problem on the level of the civil rights problem. For them, it's the homeless problem. And they often conclude that if Martin Luther King were alive today he would help the homeless people to get a house AND A PET. Why a pet? To them, a pet and the house go together and represent a desirable family living situation. They are telling us that they know what they want for themselves and what they think everyone should have. My pupils, who live in very crowded urban conditions, usually don't have pets, but they know if they ever get one, that they will have arrived at a desirable socio-economic level.

I think most of all, by having a pet they will have a way to express their love—love for themselves, love for their family, love for another creature that needs them to care for it. Love for life. Life is special for them because they are alive. They see themselves in other living things. In a way they are agreeing with the existentialist philosopher and biologist Hans Jonas (1966), that life is special, to be taken care of, honored, celebrated.

They feel the same way about plants as well. They love the plants they grow during the science unit on plants. They are willing to sing to the seeds to encourage them to sprout, as they have read in the Arnold Lobel story, *Frog and Toad in The Garden*. One of their favorite plants is the so called sensitive plant, *mimosa pudica,* the one that moves its leaves when touched. They call this their pet plant. They love insects too. They spend much time catching and releasing bugs that they find living in the plants that shield the play yard from the alley, where the homeless people live behind the school.

We often have crickets in the classroom. I keep them to see if we can grow a cricket family. The sound of crickets chirping is a familiar sound in the room. We use it a gauge of the noise level of the students' talking. If they can hear the crickets, then they are not too loud.

One third grade teacher likes to begin the school year by asking her new students to list the characteristics of a good classroom. When they get to talking about how a good classroom should sound, my former students insist there should be the sound of crickets singing.

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Jonas, H. 1966. *The phenomenon of life, Toward a philosophical biology*. New York: Delta.

Two Works by 5th Graders at PS 76 in Harlem, NY

Teach Me More about Nature
by Raliek Young

I like nature and that's why I want to learn more about it. I think that nature is good to our environment. I want to learn about how plants and trees grow real quickly. I also want to know what else does nature give us other than oxygen.

What I really would like to know is if there is such a lady called Mother Nature? I will ask my teacher to teach me more about nature. I want to know what makes the sky so blue, what makes clouds, why does the sun shine so bright and what does the sun have to do with Mother Nature.

When I ask my mother about Mother Nature she says "Read a book about it." Sometimes when I read a book it doesn't tell me much about nature. Sometimes I go outside and look at the trees, sun, and sky and I learn more about nature.

Poem
by Iskask

The trees are blowing
In the wind
The sun is rising
With the sky
The earth is the
Heart of the love.

These works were collected by Tom Goodridge, a former PS 76 teacher, who still maintains a garden for the children at the school.

Janusz Korczak

What it Means to Become an Educator

Joop W. A. Berding

Korczak challenges us to let go of prejudices, to base our practices on authentic observation, and to put respect, dialogue, and participation at the center of our work.

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the educational ideas of the Polish-Jewish educator, physician, and writer Janusz Korczak (1878-1942). Korczak is best known for giving his own life when he insisted on boarding a train to be with the Jewish children sent from the Warsaw ghetto to an extermination camp. Less known is the way Korczak learned as a young educator "how to love a child," and how to live and work with large groups of underprivileged children. Korczak became a leading advocate of children's rights and initiated educational practices of great contemporary relevance.

Becoming an Educator

Janusz Korczak was born as Henryk Goldszmit in 1878 in a rather well-to-do, assimilated Jewish family in Warsaw, Poland. His father was a prominent lawyer who died in 1896 under mysterious circumstances after a period of mental illness. The little Henryk was mainly brought up by his mother and other women, in the rather depressing atmosphere of the drawing-room. At a young age he learned that children are not always respected by adults or given the physical and psychological space to flourish. He initially studied medicine, and it was during his medical training that he entered a writing competition under the pseudonym "Janusz Korczak"—the name by which he is best known (Lifton 1988).

Even then, Janusz Korczak was fascinated by children, especially street children. They—largely underprivileged orphans of both Jewish and non-Jewish origin—became his calling. He wrote about them in novels and, after practicing medicine for a short time, devoted himself to their education. For them he demanded in 1919 in his now famous magnum opus, *How to Love a Child* (Korczak 1967), a Magna Charta

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or Constitution for the rights of children. Among these are the right of the child to be who she is and to live in the present. It is no understatement that on these rights alone, a comprehensive philosophy of education might be founded. This, however, didn't happen. For although Korczak's legacy consists of thousands of written pages (novels for both adults and children, stories, essays, plays, poems, and many more), he was by no means a "philosopher of education" in the current academic sense (Berding 1994). He was even less a theoretician. In Korczak, theory and practice were uniquely blended. He was a *reflective practitioner* (Schön 1990); for him, reflection on what it means to be an educator was central. His open-mindedness towards children, and his great trust and confidence in their abilities, made it possible for him to experiment. He invented ways to have children participate in the communities of which they are members (Dror 1998). In this respect he was far ahead of his time and one of the founding fathers of children's participation and of education for citizenship (UNICEF 2003).

Korczak discovered that to speak of "education" in any acceptable fashion meant that the children themselves had to be involved.

Korczak's shift from medicine to education took its most pronounced turn in 1907 when he volunteered to serve as an educator in a summer camp for Warsaw's working-class children. Prior to then, he had no experience with group education. His experiences were restricted to helping individual children who made their homework. In his *naïveté*, Korczak was hardly prepared for what it meant to be in charge of a group of around 30 children. He wanted the experience and the subsequent holiday to be a pleasant occasion—for *himself!* He brought some fireworks, a gramophone, and some toys, and did not make any special arrangements, trusting that everything would run smoothly. He wrote, "In the naïve belief that it was all very easy, I was captivated by the charm of the assignment ahead of me" (Korczak 1967, 333). He hadn't imagined that it took authority, structure, and especially anticipation to have a group of children and educators live together in an acceptable fashion. The trip to the country outside Warsaw—by train, cart and horse, and finally on foot—turned into chaos. Children jumped out of the train, fought and cried, and overwhelmed Korczak with their worries, homesickness, questions, and problems. Then, arriving at the camp, it seemed that Korczak still hadn't learned, for when the children were asked to change into their summer clothes, chaos erupted. Then things got worse: "How should the children be seated at the table? I had not anticipated this problem either. I decided hastily at the last moment, in conformity with the paramount principle of freedom, to let them sit as they liked, " Korczak reflected (1967, 339). But the effect of this principle was that children constantly changed seats, making it nearly impossible for him to keep track of who was who. When Korczak allowed the children to pick their own beds, further chaos occurred. The children got into several fights.

Contemplating what happened that day, Korczak came to the conclusion that in spite of his knowledge of child psychology, he was at a loss. He didn't have the faintest idea how to get through the month that lay ahead. During the following night the children fought again, and Korczak's feelings were hurt: "So that was their response to my kindness, zeal, effort…. The crystal edifice of my dreams had come toppling down" (Korczak 1967, 343).

Gradually, Korczak began to understand what went wrong. He reflected on his own need for a happy holiday and began to see how his own lack of seriousness had influenced the process within the group. Some days later, there was a real crisis: At night some boys gathered sticks to have a fight. Now Korczak abandoned his sentimental attitude, took the sticks away, and announced that they would talk the next day. This was a decisive moment in the relation between the educator and the children, for as it turned out the next day: "... during a get-together in the forest, for the first time I spoke not to the children but *with* the children. I spoke not of what I would like them to be, but of what they would like to and could be. Perhaps then, for the first time, I found out that

one could learn a great deal from children; that they make, and have every right to make demands, conditions, reservations" (1967, 345). Instead of lecturing children, he invited them to participate in the common tasks: keeping the woods free of litter, stopping noise at the meals, organizing baths and outings. Korczak had begun to develop a new sensitivity to children's individual differences.

The following year at the new summer camp, he tried even more different approaches. First of all, he learned all the children's names by heart, so that he could address them in a personal way. Second, he made notes about everything that was interesting in the children. These observations became his "material," much like a librarian rummages through a newly arrived pile of books (1967, 355). Furthermore, he didn't give the children unlimited freedom but took the lead in the organization of the group. For instance, he collected the postcards that the children wanted to send home, and he took care of the money. He also asked older children to help him. When a younger child cried, he sent an older boy to console him: "He would do it better than I," Korczak said. And if not, "A few tears do no harm." (1967, 356).

Everything now depended on organization, foresight, observation, and the involvement of the group as a whole. In the evening, Korczak told stories about last year's events, and he told the children what to do in case they woke up in the night. Calm spread over the group. Korczak even found time to make some more notes. In the following days the group organized itself more and more, but Korczak was well aware of the social processes that were going on. A boy of twelve had a negative influence on the group. Instead of lecturing, Korczak spoke with him on the conditions of his stay in the summer camp, in a talk between equals. Because this boy had already had begun a career in criminality, there was no reason to be "soft" on him. They came to an agreement, and at the end shook hands (1967, 361). This same sense of real-life was evident in Korczak's treatment of children's fights. He did not forbid them to fight (which would be unrealistic), but kept track of the number of fights. He even made a chart and showed it to the children: "July 5: 30 children, twelve fights; a meeting to stop fighting; next day three fights only; again eight and ten; then six fights…. After a fortnight, one fight only" (1967, 369).

Korczak organized meetings on several subjects like swimming in the river and a mess in the toilet, and he concluded, "The children's assistance is abolutely essential to the teacher, the prerequisite being, however, constant vigilant control and a duty roster" (1967, 372). Furthermore there were no privileges attached to doing a task: it was a case of honor. And by spreading all the necessary tasks across the entire group, the educator had time to devote to children who had special needs (Berding 1995).

Korczak and Orphanage Children

Lessons Learned

What was learned from these experiences? First, Korczak discovered that to speak of "education" in any acceptable fashion meant that the children themselves had to be involved. "Not over their heads," one might say of this participatory view of education. Indeed, these experiences and the way Korczak reflected upon them, made him one of the founding fathers of the movement for youth participation in educational institutions. In Korczak's view, the educational relation is one of partnership, not of power (Eisler 2000).

Second, Korczak learned that becoming an educator involved respect and dialogue. Indeed, the notion of respect became a central one in his philosophy. We must accept who children are and want to become— yes, but not at any cost (Korczak 1992). There are *limits* to self-actualization, to use a popular term from the 1970s. Dialogue was, for Korczak, the ultimate means of education and of learning. As he put it: speaking with children, instead of to them.

Finally—and this is something I wish to emphasize in this essay—Korczak displayed an uncommon attitude of self-reflection, and in an uncompromising way. Today, we accept that self-reflection is at the heart of our undertakings as educators, and in the "education of educators" there is ample space for

learning this art. In this respect, Korczak was way ahead of this time (Joseph 1999).

The Orphanage

In 1912, following his work in the summer camps, Korczak accepted the post of director of the Jewish orphanage, Dom Sierot (Home of the Orphans). Korczak and his few co-workers lived and worked in the orphanage with between 100 and 200 children and youngsters, mostly orphans, but also children from one-parent families. Their socio-cultural background was mixed, but most of them were from the lower-middle classes.

Korczak was determined to create a completely new educative environment for the children. Or rather one should say, *with* them, for later, looking back he wrote: "The child became the patron, the worker and the head of the home" (Korczak 1967, 385). Within the orphanage Korczak organized new institutions, or "educational arrangements" such as a children's parliament, an experimental school (Korczak 1982), a children's newspaper, *The Little Review*, the first newspaper in the world whose editorial board consisted entirely of children, and instituted many other new means of communication, such as a bulletin board, educator's and children's logbooks, a mailbox, the lost and found cabinet, and so on (all this is described in detail in Korczak 1967; see also Lifton 1988).

But the most important institution was the children's court, erected to guard and maintain the idea of justice that Korczak had in mind that was founded upon his Constitution of the rights of the child. Korczak developed his Constitution into a book of laws that consisted of many sections intended to regulate the little community. However, unlike many other systems of law, the main verdict was not punishment, but forgiveness. For instance, when a pupil (or an educator) was found to have violated paragraph 200, the verdict said: "You were at fault. Too bad, it cannot be helped. May happen to anyone. Please do not do it again" (Korczak 1967, 410). Paragraph 400, however, spoke of a serious fault and functioned as a last warning. Paragraphs 500, 600, and so on, up to 1000 supplemented this with other measures such as publication of the trespasser's name in the home's newspaper, or, in the case of paragraph 900 being expelled from the home, unless somebody is willing to vouch for you. Paragraph 1000 finally had the pupil expelled, with the right to apply for readmission after three months. As far as is known, this most severe verdict was only administered once or twice in the 30 years of the history of the home.

The court consisted of a group of pupils that changed periodically. Any of the pupils, who had not been seriously sentenced, could become a member of the court. The pupils filed complaints about each other when they felt they were treated unfairly. These complaints were then presented to the court, which heard defendant and prosecutor, and in the end gave its verdict. Within a few months after its establishment, the court had already heard more than 3000 cases.

I mentioned that the law was also applied to the educators. In fact this was a fundamental aspect of Korczak's view. He felt that children not only have to live together among themselves in a just way, but must also have the opportunity to stay free of any pedagogical arbitrariness. Korczak's Constitution was most fundamentally a law of respect between people. Respect implies that I as a person have my rights, e.g., to be who I am, but not at the expense of the other, who also has rights. So the law protects me by granting me my rights, and thereby gives me freedom, but at the same time it limits this freedom by granting the same rights to others. It is the educator who has to guarantee that this law is maintained, Korczak stated, and this puts her in a two-sided situation. For the educator, who is responsible for the children entrusted to her, cannot place herself outside of the law of respect. She is fully subject to it. The educator also has *her* rights, and longs to be who she is, but at the same time her actions are limited by others. Korczak said: "The limits of my rights and of the child's must be fixed" (1967, 136). So it's not surprising, from Korczak's point of view, that he himself appeared before court a number of times (once, for example, because he had wrongfully accused a pupil of theft).

Korczak made this law the cornerstone of his constitutional outlook on education. But he was not dogmatic in its application. For, in the same way as he experienced failure and success in the summer camps,

he had his ups and downs with the court. Korczak noticed that although the court treated an overwhelming number of cases, pupils still settled many of their disputes by themselves outside the court. As Korczak subtly noted, this diminished the authority of the court, which in turn made it an instrument in the hands of the powerful within the group. He dismantled the court for a while and made a new start some months later (1967, 448).

In his work with the court, we see Korczak the experimentalist educator at his best. Fully aware of social implications, he searched for ways to organize group life along justly, but his treatment of the *means* for attaining this end was undogmatic. His experiments with institutional justice are therefore not prescripts that must be followed. Korczak urged educators to find out what works for them, with the children currently in their care, under the present circumstances. His educational methods were experiential, rooted in real life, and interpretative. "The child," he said, "is like a parchment densely filled with minute hieroglyphs, and you are able to decipher only part of it." (1967, 87). Korczak emphasized that despite centuries of research and all our knowledge and skills, we stand before a great secret: the child. He challenged us to let go of our prejudices, to abandon practices not based upon authentic observation and interpretation, and to put respect, dialogue, and participation at the center of our work.

Korczak Today

Being a follower of Korczak is therefore not a matter of copying his ideas. It is essential to keep in mind that Korczak was an experimentalist. He was not trying to construct educational theory or fixed methods, but was constantly exploring new ways of living with children under very unfavourable conditions. It would therefore be misguided to simply imitate Korczak and install courts of law in our schools. We, too, need to become experimentalists. It would be wise, though, to ask ourselves: What was the original idea behind his practices? How just are our schools, our afterschool groups? How arbitrary are our actions as teachers and group leaders? To what extent are democratic principles instituted and practiced?

From this perspective it seems that a lot of work must be done, for instance in relation to the notion of democratic citizenship, a most pressing matter at this moment in many countries. But it is also clear that in this matter Korczak was certainly not a prophet, alone in the desert. His message of democratic, participative education is very much related to that of progressive educators like John Dewey (Tanner 1997; Fishman and McCarthy 1998; Berding and Miedema 2001) and the dialectic approach of Lev Vygotsky (1986). Those who want to take the road towards real-life, experiential, co-constructive, inclusive, and dialogical education will find an ally in Korczak. In fact, in my country (The Netherlands), more and more schools and afterschool centers take this to heart, and organize their programs in more democratic, participative ways. It is becoming customary to start a day's work at school with a meeting, with a pupil as chair. The program of the day is discussed, and pupils are divided in groups that perform different tasks: investigate a problem, prepare a speech, or search on the Internet. More and more, we are becoming aware that children can learn much from each other, and that it is the stimulating social situation that both invites to learning and facilitates it. The teacher or group leader still has an important role to play—not as the "know-it-all" or the absolute authority, but as the one who guarantees that the law of respect is upheld, so that *all* members of this (small) community may realize their potential and no one is excluded.

Korczak was an experimentalist. He was not trying to construct theory, but was exploring new ways of living with children.

In the end, according to Korczak, the question is: "Who can become an educator?" And his answer was: "She who understands that all tears are salty, can educate children. She who doesn't understand this, cannot"(Korczak 1979, 119). Ultimately all education comes down to the following:

Be true to yourself, seek your own road. Learn to know yourself before you attempt to learn to know the children. You should realize what you are capable of before you begin to bring home to the children the scope of their rights and duties. Of them all, you yourself are the child, whom you must learn to know, rear, and above all, enlighten. (Korczak 1967, 248)

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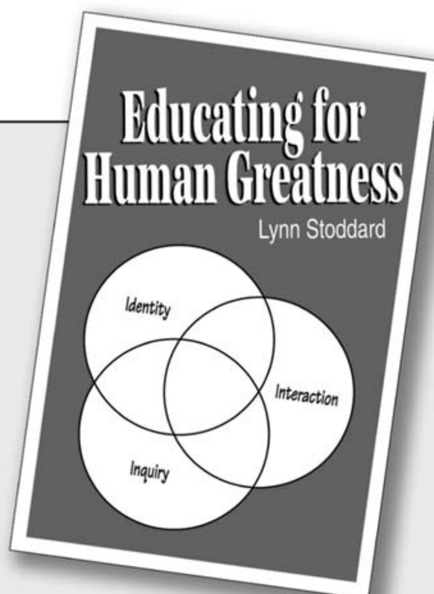

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Educating for Human Greatness

In this wise and perceptive book, veteran public school teacher/administrator Lynn Stoddard surveys the current state of public education in America and concludes that things have gone terribly wrong. His solution is to have parents and educators start by realizing that standardization in education is neither possible or effective. Only then can they focus on creating schools that truly educate for human greatness.

To create such schools Stoddard proposes that parents, teachers, administrators and school board members keep six cardinal principles constantly in mind:

- Value Positive Human Diversity and Cherish Every Student's Uniqueness
- Draw Out and Develop Each Child's Latent Talents
- Respect the Autonomy of the Individual by Restoring Freedom and Responsibility
- Invite Inquiry, Curiosity, and Hunger for Knowledge in the Classroom
- Support Professionalism as Teachers Live by these Principles
- Parents and Teachers Unite to Help Children Grow in Human Greatness

Educating for Human Greatness deserves an honored place on the reading list of every parent who really cares about the future of their children, every teacher and administrator who puts students first in their professional lives, and every school board member who wants schools to be places where student development is a reality, not just a slogan.

The Yummy Pizza Curriculum

A Social Justice Experiment

Bill Morgan

Yummy Pizza gives children a different view of history and teaches them that they can exercise some control over their lives if they work together.

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During my social studies lessons I like to focus on social justice movements—especially the labor movement. This paper describes a classroom experiment in which we studied labor relations by forming a pizza company.

In 1997 I was teaching a grade 3–5 Spanish bilingual class in the Mission District of San Francisco, a low-income part of the city. Sometimes my lessons about working people were successful, and sometimes they were not. They were mostly "direct teaching" lessons that relied on lectures and texts. This time, as part of a unit about César Chavez and the United Farm Workers, I decided to try a simulation, the type of lesson that puts the children *in* a situation instead of just talking about it. I was familiar with the power inherent in such lessons. For example, in the prisoner–guard simulations at Stanford University (Zimbardo 1971), the participants took their roles too seriously and actually thought of themselves as the prison guards they were supposed to simulate. In that case, the administrators of the experiment had allowed it to go on far too long.

But I had also used simulations to good effect in my classroom. In one instance, I asked children to take different points of view in a discussion of Native American rights to their land. Pupils in my class had also put themselves in the place of judges in deciding other important social issues and cases. In fact, less formal simulations happen any time you say, "Pretend you're a ______" or "How do you think that feels when you say that to somebody?" What we're asking in such cases is that children see things, for just a moment, from someone else's point of view. I thought a simulation might let kids learn directly something about labor-management relations in the workplace.

Our Pizza Business

As a resource, I relied heavily on Phyllis Chiu's 1998 book, *Yummy Pizza.* Subtitled *A Labor Studies Unit for Elementary Grades*, it describes how one can organize a company to prepare and sell small pizza cookies made from Bisquick. From the start, my principal was cooperative, even encouraging, and I had an excellent student teacher who took her role as "organizer" seriously.

We held a contest to choose a name. The students chose *Pizza Planet.* We started business sometime in January, with me as owner and the kids as workers. I put in $10 to start the company and buy supplies: pizza sauce, Bisquick, cheese graters and cheese, pepperoni, aluminum foil, and cookie sheets. Following Chiu's curriculum, I hired workers. They had to fill out job applications for the ten or so different positions (e.g., cheese grater, sauce spreader, inspector), be interviewed, and cite relevant experience (helping parents cook at home, shopping, etc.). I offered a salary of 25 cents for a one-hour shift.

We set up the assembly line—two teams of ten students each—and various support staff including publicity people, order-takers, and record-keepers. (Of course, I emphasized the importance of hand washing and a serious attitude toward work.) We sent students around the school to take orders. The first day, we made 29 pizzas and sold them for 25 cents each at lunch. I was mildly surprised that I was actually able to meet my payroll. But what happened in the next few days was nothing short of incredible. Word spread, and orders poured in. Every child in the school, it seemed, wanted "one of them pizza things." Each day, we sold out in a few minutes and had to turn away many disappointed customers. We therefore increased production.

In our second week (selling on Tuesdays and Thursdays), we sold 66 pizzas. Within three weeks, we were selling over 200 pizzas per week. Company assets, after overhead and payroll, climbed to more than $100.

Our classroom academics were transformed. I tried using our company accounts ("found numbers" in teacher talk) in our math lessons, and suddenly everyone was engaged, listening, commenting, correcting, and paying attention as never before. This was, after all, not just any money, but money they themselves had earned with their own work and effort. Math time became Accounting Time, and the kids added, subtracted, multiplied, divided, and made graphs with a vengeance, checking and double-checking as they went. They could now see a good reason to do their math.

Language Arts was similar. I assigned work-related reading and writing assignments. The children wrote and wrote about their parents' jobs, about their own jobs in the company, about workplace issues, about working children around the world, about César Chavez and his movement. I found a story about renowned labor leader "Mother" Jones in our 5th grade basal text, and the 3rd and 4th graders insisted on reading it as well. They had a personal reason to find things out, to reflect, to take sides on some of the writing I assigned. Our advertising department went school-wide with posters, and went into other classrooms with their scripted commercials and presentations, urging the school at large to buy more pizza cookies. Other students thought up promotions, like a "Buy 10, get the 11th free!" punch card, and "Free Pizza on Your Birthday!"

Because some children wanted to keep their money safe and not spend it right away, I organized a bank. Some kids were chosen by the class to work as "guards" to protect our moneybox as the company treasurer carried it to and from the playground sales area and stored our proceeds in the classroom. Our student teacher applied for a grant from the class, and they voted (by a narrow margin) to give her $15 to take a workshop on "Breads of the World," as long as she would report back on what she had learned. We were still studying our subjects, and only cooking and selling two days a week; more and more, the company and its success were becoming the subjects we were studying.

The Owner Makes Changes

Then I, as owner, instituted new policies, challenging the kids to do something when they are treated unfairly, as workers often are. I cut salaries from 25 cents to 15 cents an hour, so I could make more money. A week later, I disallowed the speaking of Spanish on the assembly line, claiming that "English is the official language of this company." I tried to get the kids to work faster and faster. Previously I

had mentioned that we might spend the company profits on a trip to a local theme park at the end of the year. Now, I said, I would spend the money on my new house and some Barbies for my daughter. "After all," I told them, "I'm the owner. I can do whatever I want with the money."

A storm of protest arose. The "simulation" came alive and became reality. Suddenly, my students *were* workers. I could no longer plan what would happen. My student teacher became the union organizer, using the example of César Chavez and the UFW. She called a meeting at lunchtime to discuss the issue. I was not invited, and not one "worker" skipped the meeting to go out to recess. The pay cut and the rule against the speaking Spanish were particularly odious to them.

Twenty-one of the twenty-seven students present that day joined Pizzamakers Local 21, and went on strike for a return to the 25-cent wage, the right to speak Spanish, and some control over company funds. Their reading, writing and, math work became a veritable flood as they filed protests, opinions, and testimonies and wrote letters to ask other classes for support. They wrote about their experiences at work, proposed fairer rules, and juggled figures to prove that I could afford to pay them more. They held union meetings and hammered out a list of demands.

During "lesson time," as regular school now came to be called, I used the process to talk about similar situations in the "real" world. I invited parents and friends into the class from my own installers' union. When the Junior Achievement people came that year, they were greeted with endless questions about workers' rights and benefits. Later, we talked about "socially responsible" companies and their environmental policies and about companies where workers are well treated and included in major management decisions.

In the meantime, the strike continued, as I arrogantly dismissed the strikers to schoolwork with the student teacher while my faithful workers and I continued making pizzas on Tuesday and Thursday. The union kicked out the six workers who sided with me and threw up a picket line around our lunchtime sales tables. Picketers spread the rumor around the school that the cookies had "cooties." Sales plummeted, from an all-time high of 176 to 26. Finally, after two such disastrous days, I began negotiations with elected union representatives.

As in all labor struggles, emotions were running high. One day there was a scuffle as company workers tried to restrain picketers. I could tell that it was time for me, as teacher, to step in before the whole thing got really ugly, as many labor struggles do. And finally, I realized that this *was* a labor struggle, and no longer a "lesson," though the lessons we all learned from it were many, profound, and full of that overworked word, relevance. I settled with the union's representatives. Two months after the company was started, the workers bought the company from me for $25—a return of 150% on my initial investment, and began to manage the company themselves, with me as "consultant."

Pizza Planet ended soon after, as Testing Season arrived. The kids voted to share the $250 or so left in the treasury. Every student received about $8.

Academic and Social Effects

The pizza experience, conducted for ten weeks in mid-year, had an effect on the rest of my social studies lessons that year. There was unprecedented interest and effort. My students did far more and better writing, better arguing and reflecting about issues, more math and reading, and learned more English than I had ever seen in such a group.

In addition, the pizza simulations produced social changes. The pecking order in our class, formerly based on age, gender, English skills, physical size, and "toughness," was altered. For example, a third grader named Helena, who before, had hardly spoken, became, through her sense of injustice and outrage, one of the major spokespeople for the pizza workers. Older kids deferred to younger ones who were better in math and could see through some of my more obvious book-cooking schemes. Kids whose English skills were not yet well developed were particularly incensed about the "No Spanish" rule and said so in no uncertain terms. The basis of classroom leadership changed to include effectiveness in the "movement,", and trustworthiness, and elections for the five-member negotiating team were surprisingly fair and representative across gender, language, and grade-level lines. The class's new ap-

preciation of the abilities of many children persisted the rest of the year.

Conclusion

I have taught this unit many times since, and it never fails to ignite interest and passion. In fact, students sometimes get quite carried away with their roles. In the first Yummy Pizza experiment the students in the end voted everyone a full share in the profits, but they never voted those who left the union back into it. Despite my suggestions, they felt very passionate about this and remained unconvinced.

In other years, we have had instances of attempted bribery of union leaders, a full-blown trial complete with briefs and depositions, and theft of company funds. The children sometimes lose sight of the fact that it's just a simulation (as happened with college students in the Stanford Prison experiment, but not to that extreme degree).

But Yummy Pizza has never failed to stimulate students' questions, stir debate, and promote active reading and research. One key to its consistent success as both an academic lesson and a simulation lies in the fact that it is about working people, the kids and their families. Most Social Studies texts focus on Great White Men at Great Moments doing Great Things. Yummy Pizza gives children a different view of history and teaches them that they can exercise some control over their lives if they work together.

Despite my own pro-labor sympathies, the pizza simulation is not a piece of mindless propaganda—in fact, it is just the opposite. Whatever my personal politics, I am a teacher, and the key to any such lesson is that the kids debate and decide the unit's issues for themselves. The issues and problems they confronted in this instance are the same ones that working people around the world face every day. In these struggles, there are no simple answers.

I believe, in conclusion, that experiments such as Yummy Pizza are very valuable. The children learn different ways of interacting with one another; they often make surprising academic gains; and, most importantly, they become motivated and engage in real thinking.

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High-Tech Childhood

The Alliance for Childhood

Technology is not destiny, and it is still possible for us to reconsider and redirect the impact of technology on childhood.

Verizon Communications recently offered a free home network router that would restore “family harmony.” The device would allow every family member in the house to access the Internet at the same time, but separately. “Imagine how well you’d all get along.... Just think, you could be out on the deck surfing the Net while your kids are online upstairs,” the ad read. (Verizon 2004).

A growing number of parents, educators, and health professionals are expressing reservations about the long-term consequences of a high-tech childhood. “In the pursuit of profits, American business—driven by technology—increasingly recognizes no limits, no boundaries, no traditions,” says Enola G. Aird (2001), director of the nonprofit Motherhood Project.

These values of the “money world,” Aird adds,

> are increasingly at odds with the values necessary for raising human children, what I call the values of the “motherworld,” values such as sacrifice and self-giving, discipline and moderation, humility and forbearance, commitment and dedication.... In the money world, our children are means to ends. They are subjects of research. They are workers, consumers, and producers. They are means to maximizing sales. They are means to advancing technological and economic progress.

A Growing Health Hazard

What are the effects of a high tech childhood? Are the outcomes worse than we would care to see? In a study, published in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, Hancox, Milne, and Poulton (2004) linked watching two or more hours of television a day in childhood and adolescence with serious long-term health risks. The researchers followed 1,000 children from birth through young adulthood and found a

This article is abridged and adapted from Chapter 2 of the 2004 Alliance for Childhood report, *Tech Tonic: Towards a New Literacy of Technology*. The principal authors are Colleen Cordes, Edward Miller, and Joan Almon. The Alliance is a nonprofit association that supports children’s healthy development, love of learning, and joy in living. For further information, contact the Alliance for Childhood at P.O. Box 444, College Park, MD or <www.allianceforchildhood.org>.

strong correlation between TV watching and obesity, raised blood cholesterol, smoking, and poor cardiovascular health.

The researchers could not locate enough subjects who watched no TV as children to measure the health effects of that practice. But they did find that adults who had watched television between one and two hours on weeknights as children rated more poorly on all of the health measures above than those who had viewed TV less than an hour a day. The researchers concluded that the American Academy of Pediatrics was on the right track in recommending that parents limit children to an hour or two of TV a day. But their data, they said, suggest that "less than one hour a day would be even better."

Research across a wide variety of fields indicates that children need face-to-face and hands-on relationships with the living world for healthy intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development (Abram 2002; Board on Children, Youth, and Families 2003). Even as infants many children are now instead immersed in a high-tech world dominated by flat screens, paved-over spaces, and adult-sized pressures.

- Children spend four and a half hours per day, on average, in front of TV, computer, and video game screens, often alone (Woodard and Gridina 2000, 19). A fourth of children under age 2 have TVs in their bedrooms, as do nearly a third of children 2 to 7, and nearly two-thirds of children 8 to 18 (Rideout, Vandewater, and Wartella 2003, 5). New electronic toys encourage children to get back to their screens by moving or "talking" in response to what's happening on their tied-in TV shows or DVDs. Dolls now have their own "secret" online diaries (Eckstein 2004). Many video games are appallingly violent and extremely realistic; research shows that playing such games desensitizes children to human suffering (Grossman 1999; 2000).

- Children spend an average of one hour a day strapped into a car seat (Shaver 2003), increasingly with a TV screen in front of the child's face, and often stalled in traffic in fuel-guzzling vehicles that contribute to ozone pollution and increase health risks, especially for the growing number of children suffering from asthma (American Lung Association 2000).

- Music, art, time for imaginative play and recess, and other creative outlets in school are giving way to a growing emphasis on computers and standardized tests—which are increasingly designed to be evaluated and scored by computer. "Since the arts aren't government tested—like reading, writing, and math—there's more pressure to cut them," a Wisconsin principal explained to his local paper.

The rush to fill classrooms with computers and Internet connections has been partly supported by claims that computers give children more control and power over their own learning. But more than 30 years of studies show that computers do not necessarily improve education, that they quickly become obsolete, and that their high cost can mean less money for proven educational reforms—including smaller class size and integrating the arts in academic classes (Alliance for Childhood 2000). In Florida, for example, state officials have argued for backing away from a plan to reduce class size, in part to free up more money for computers (Richard 2004).

Screened In from the Real World

Concerned about a broad range of potential developmental problems, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2000) recommends that children under two not be exposed to screen media at all and that older children have no more than an hour or two a day of "quality" screen time—but not at mealtime and only after the children have played outside, read or been read to, and spent time in other more active pursuits. The academy also advises parents to keep TVs, VCRs, video games, and computers out of children's rooms so parents can monitor both the time and the content of children's media exposure, and make sure it does not cause sleep deprivation, a growing problem.

Parents are trying to set limits—with limited success. Children report fewer parental limits on their use of video games and online surfing than parents do. "Roughly half of parents say they limit video game playing time and check ratings to select game purchases," the Kaiser Foundation (2003) reports,

> but only 13% of kids report time limits and fewer (7%) say their parents did not allow them to purchase a game because of its rating. Likewise, a majority of parents say they enforce time limits on Internet use, surf together, and check up on sites their children have visited, but most teens say they do not have time limits or go online with their parents, and less than one-third believe their parents have ever checked where they have gone online.

And nearly two-thirds of children ages 12 to 17 in one poll said that the time they spent online reduced their family time, and that the Internet keeps other children their age from doing more important things (Lenhart, Rainie, and Lewis 2001).

Earlier studies showed that television viewing interferes with family conversations and family relationships (Winn 2002). Now the even broader set of electronic distractions, including computers, headsets, and cell phones, has made it possible for children and parents almost to avoid each other's company entirely, even when sitting next to each other in the same room or the same car, suggests Michael Brody (2004), chair of the Media Committee of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Electronic Power Can Exceed Children's Emotional Maturity

Even where strong family relationships exist, the power of electronic toys can be dangerous in the hands of children, who are, by definition, neither emotionally nor morally mature. In Ireland, school officials are under pressure to ban cell phones with digital cameras after a child was photographed partially clothed and the pictures were broadly distributed via other digital camera phones. Schools in the U.S. are discussing limiting or banning their use in locker rooms and elsewhere to avoid student voyeurism and cheating (Carroll 2004).

Girls from 13 to 18 years old, in a 2001 survey commissioned by the Girl Scouts of the USA (2002), reported that they frequently encountered pornography online. About a third reported having been sexually harassed in a chat room but only 7% of those girls had told a parent about it. They also don't think their parents worry enough about their online behavior, especially lying and cursing, or about what kind of people they could run into online, or what information they can access if they want to. They reported often feeling "freaked out" by the information they are exposed to online and not knowing how to respond to online sexual harassment.

The *New York Times* (Harmon 2004) reported a disturbing increase in the amount and severity of online bullying and sexual harassment through e-mail and weblogs that

> enable the harassment to be both less obvious to adults and more publicly humiliating, as gossip, put-downs and embarrassing pictures are circulated among a wide audience of peers with a few clicks. The technology, which allows its users to inflict pain without being forced to see its effect, also seems to incite a deeper level of meanness. Psychologists say the distance between bully and victim on the Internet is leading to an unprecedented—and often unintentional—degree of brutality, especially when combined with a typical adolescent's lack of impulse control and underdeveloped empathy skills.

Equally troubling is the likely impact of the violent video games that have become popular among young boys and adolescents. Chain stores routinely sell the most gruesome of these games to children, and many parents routinely allow their young sons to spend hours on this kind of "play," pretending to be criminals assaulting women, stalking African-American victims, and killing police officers. When parents do ban violent games at home, children find relatively easy access to them at friends' houses, at the local shopping mall, and even at popular family restaurants.

Research suggests that violent video games are anti-social. Recent studies in the *Journal of Adolescence* (Anderson 2004; Gentile et al. 2004) indicate that exposure to violent video games increases aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, and aggressive emotion. Play with violent video games was associated with physical fighting in school, arguing with teachers, lower grades, and less helping behavior.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (1999) has called the negative influence of mass media on chil-

dren a major public health concern. After the shootings at Columbine High School, Les Moonves, the president of CBS, pretty much agreed. "You would have to be an idiot," he said, to deny that the media had something to do with it (Irwin 1999). In 2000, six major health organizations together testified to Congress that more than 1,000 studies "point overwhelmingly to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children" (Congressional Public Health Summit 2004).

Indeed, many studies suggest that watching television itself, regardless of the content, is associated with increased aggression (Winn 2002, 49-52). Pediatrician Michael Rich, director of the Center on Media and Child Health at Children's Hospital in Boston, cites clinical evidence that just having a TV set on constantly in the background at home is akin to exposure to second-hand smoke. As children get older, he adds, they are likely to be more jittery, irritable, and aggressive (Meltz 2003). Most recently, researchers uncovered evidence that children who watched television at the ages of one or three were at increased risk of attention deficit problems by age seven, including difficulty concentrating, restlessness and impulsive behavior, and easily getting confused, and that the risk increased by 10% for every hour they watched daily (Christakis et al. 2004).

The Effects of High-Tech Life on Children's Bodies

Ergonomic experts Alan Hedge (2004) of Cornell University and Karen Jacobs (2004) of Boston University cite the risk of repetitive stress injuries to children and adolescents from poor posture and long sessions staring at screens; punching keys on computers, laptops, handhelds, and cell phones; or hitting the "fire" button repeatedly on video games. The last-named problem has given rise to the term "Nintendo thumb" in the medical literature and has given rise to the warnings that game producers now include with their products (Croasmun 2004).

Studies by Karen Jacobs (Jacobs and Baker 2002), former president of the American Occupational Therapy Association, have found about 40% of middle-school students reporting musculoskeletal pain related to using computers. She is currently studying whether the time students spend playing video games and/or the weight of their backpacks is combining with computer use to cause additional problems.

Jacobs (2004) strongly recommends that parents and teachers make sure students take physically active breaks from keyboards or video games every 20 minutes; that they learn to check their chairs, screen height, and keyboard trays each time, and adjust them if necessary; and that they be taught the proper position for typing to avoid strain. "We're going to have a whole generation of kids going into the workforce who are hurting," she predicts.

Jacobs and Hedge emphasize that more research, public attention, and action is needed on this issue to protect children. But there are few sources of funding for such work in the United States and no national database to track this health issue. Hedge (2004) notes that neither schools nor technology vendors seem eager to participate in research that may have liability repercussions: "Ignorance is the best defense," he says.

Because injuries can take years to develop, his immediate concern about children's computer use at school is that they are forming bad ergonomic habits that will set them up for later workplace injuries. If computer technologies become ubiquitous across the curriculum from preschool on up—as the No Child Left Behind Act and current educational technology standards envision—Hedge (2004) says that children are likely to suffer not just pain but actual injury unless action is taken to prevent it. Laptops are more of a problem ergonomically, he adds, because the screen and keyboard are attached. That makes it difficult to have each in a healthy position. Laptops also add more pounds to students' already too-heavy backpacks, which itself is a growing health concern.

Childhood as an Environmental Issue

One reason indoor passive amusements are so attractive to children is the fact that, especially in cities, few outdoor spaces remain for children to play, walk, or safely ride their bikes. Even many playgrounds are relatively sterile, manufactured environments.

Children age 5 and younger spend an average of about 65 minutes a day being driven around in vehicles, according to the federal government's National Household Travel Survey (Shaver 2003). Children

from the age of 6 to 18 spend about 61 minutes a day in vehicles—not including the time they spend on school buses. Part of that travel time is accompanying adults on errands, but it also includes the time to needed to get to their own carefully orchestrated round of activities. Being stuck in a traffic jam is one more stress on family life, which also reduces the time for the best stress relievers: play and exercise.

"It's certainly a worry that when kids are in cars, they're not out doing other things," said Daniel Swartz, former executive director of the Children's Environmental Health Network. "We're designing cities, school systems, neighborhoods, and life styles in a way that we can only get kids to things in cars" (Quoted in Shaver 2003).

Americans have led the world for six decades in saturating the atmosphere with carbon. Our children and grandchildren will suffer the consequences, especially as China and other developing countries add their demands for carbon-spewing vehicles to the mix. Many children are already suffering, as demonstrated by the 2000 study on ozone and childhood asthma by the American Lung Association.

Our media culture has given birth to a different kind of pollution that is internal. The Parents Television Council (2001) has documented the increasing "raunchiness" of prime-time television. The acceleration of that trend in the last ten years, some critics add, was aided by MTV's pushing the boundaries of misogyny, irresponsible sexuality, violence, and general crassness. Researchers reported in 1990 that viewing music videos tended to improve the mood of boys between the ages of 9 and 15, but that the mood of girls of the same ages tended to be much worse than average while viewing them (American Academy of Education 2001).

"We believe that it is the imagery itself in music videos that results in different reactions of boys and girls," reported Robert Kubey of Rutgers University, who helped conduct the research. "Music videos present a great deal of violent and sexual imagery and are male-oriented and in harmony with male interests. They also frequently present women as sex objects and in states of undress and are thus likely to seem particularly threatening to girls who are just coming to terms with their own sexuality" (*Media Literacy Review* 1990).

What would have been shocking a few years ago draws a yawn today. The landscape includes voyeuristic "reality" TV, more lenient ratings for violence and crudeness in films (Waxman 2004),viciously anti-social video games, mainstream toy retailers selling bombed-out dollhouses to kindergartners, and divorce lawyers citing the prevalence and popularity of graphic pornography—especially online—as a major new factor in the breakup of marriages (Waxman 2004; *San Francisco Chronicle* 2003; Herbert 2002; Paul 2004).

Character Miseducation

With so many children immersed in the world of advanced electronic media, advertising has become the most pervasive instructional experience in childhood today related to character issues. Children now spend more time engaged with electronic media than in almost any other activity.

The commercial assault on children, which has become an estimated $15-billion-a-year industry, is fueled by behavioral research on how to manipulate the feelings and buying behavior of both parents and children (Glendale 2004). Marketers systematically search for and exploit children's and adults' weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Their aim is to sidestep the developing ability to reason and make critical judgments, and to tap into primal emotions and needs. They seek to trigger, as Stephen Fox suggests, "materialism, sexual insecurity, jealousy, vanity, and greed." (Quoted in Ohler 1999, 84).

Now there is evidence that the constant stimulation of desire and creation of needs may actually be making children unhappy, even when they have the money to indulge in the products being sold. Barry Schwartz (2004), professor of social theory and social action at Swarthmore College, writes of the "paradox of choice." He suggests that increases in childhood and adolescent depression reflect, in part, the unhappiness that the excess of marketing and consumer choices is breeding in our young. Suicide, he notes, is at much higher levels among American college students than it was 35 years ago.

"The 'success' of modernity turns out to be bittersweet," Schwartz (2004, 221) says, "and everywhere we look it appears that a significant contributing factor is the overabundance of choice." One of the most

promising antidotes, Schwarz notes, is the cultivation of gratitude in family life and in the lives of children. Gratitude, it turns out, provides a degree of immunity from the virus of discontent and unhappiness that our excess of choices about material things creates.

There is evidence that many Americans are waking up to these issues and ready for change. According to a 2003 poll by Common Sense Media, 9 out of 10 parents believe that exposure to the media is contributing to children becoming too materialistic, using more coarse and vulgar language, engaging in sexual activity at younger ages, experiencing a loss of innocence too soon, and behaving in anti-social or even violent ways. "The majority of parents believe that media negatively affect *their own* children this way."

The Next Technological Revolution

The good news is that, with public awareness and cooperative support from every level of society, families and communities can take action to change the technological environment in ways that benefit children profoundly. Examples that this is possible, if often quite difficult, to do include the passing of seat-belt laws and bicycle helmet laws, recent successful public campaigns to stop placing infants and young children in the front seats of cars, and the history of breastfeeding versus artificial milk.

Technology is not destiny. It is possible for us to reconsider and redirect the impact of technology on childhood. We join with thoughtful parents, educators, and policymakers urging immediate action for social change on behalf of a healthy future for children and for the world they will inherit.

"As we think about nurturing children's emotional, social, and ethical development, our entire relationship with technology has to shift," says Linda Lantieri (2002), a cofounder of Educators for Social Responsibility.

> Our approach right now seems to be that we engineer life and reality itself to adjust to technology. Instead, we should work to change our relationship to technology so that it responds to our human needs. The challenge is not how we can use technology to change who we are, but rather how we can put the needs of ourselves, nature, and society first and let that dictate our technological progress

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PRACTICAL GUIDES TO MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
by Mark Kennedy

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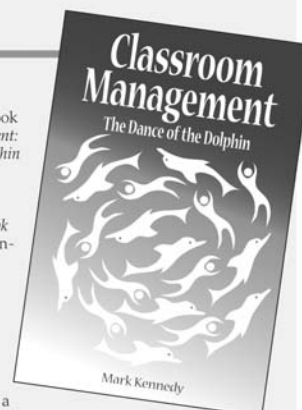

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Multicultural Education

Moving Beyond Heroes and Holidays

Mordechai Gordon

A goal of education is to help students to become more aware and to challenge political, social, and educational systems that perpetuate institutional racism and discrimination.

In fourteen hundred and ninety two
Columbus sailed the ocean blue.
It was a courageous thing to do,
But someone else was already here.[1]

A few years ago, when my daughter was a kindergarten student in one of the local public schools in White Plains, New York, she came home one day in mid-October reciting the famous rhyme: "Columbus sailed the ocean blue, in fourteen hundred and ninety-two." White Plains is a diverse community of about 50,000 people, including many African Americans and Hispanics, many of whom are immigrants from countries like Haiti, Mexico, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. Disturbed by the thought that what children were learning about Columbus was not very different from what I had received in elementary school more than thirty years earlier, I questioned my daughter about what her teacher had said about the man. Her response was rather bland and common, recalling only that he was that poor European who discovered the New World.

Wanting to find out more information about how Columbus and his conquests were being taught today, I decided to attend a monthly meeting of parents, teachers, and administrators in my daughter's school. Although these meetings were devoted to dealing with more "burning" issues, such as testing and planning the school's enrichment programs, I managed to squeeze in a simple question reflecting my concern: "Does the district or school have a policy regarding how to address controversial issues?" I think it was the principal who responded that "there is no such policy, but we are certainly open to considering multiple perspectives." From here the discussion quickly moved on to the next item on the agenda, which had to do with planning for the science fair.

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The following year, my daughter, who was now in first grade, returned from school one day in mid-October singing the same rhyme. This time I decided to go speak to her teacher, believing that maybe she would be more interested in and open to listening to my concerns about this issue. So one afternoon, when I came to pick up my daughter from school, I ran into her teacher in the hall and tried to gently broach this topic with her. "I was just wondering, what the kids in your class are learning about Columbus this year?" She paused for a moment and then muttered something about the busy schedule and the sensitive subject. "I guess I just try to teach them some basic facts about this explorer and his journey to the new world," she said. "At the same time," I replied, "I think it is important that even first graders are exposed to more than one side of this story." "Yes," she said and reminded me as she hurried off that my daughter was doing great in school. Driving back home that day, I remember thinking that it is not a stretch to suppose that many of the descendents of the same people that Columbus had plundered and enslaved are now, after immigrating to the United States, forced to sing his praises. The bitter irony of five- and six-year-old children extolling every October the deeds of the man who oppressed their ancestors stayed with me for a long time.

This true anecdote highlights a problem with the way in which history in general and heroes and holidays in particular are taught in our public schools. Much like my daughter's experience with Columbus, these topics are generally addressed in a way that eliminates all controversy, ambiguity, and conflict. According to James Loewen (1996) who conducted a monumental study of history textbooks, these books encourage students to believe that history is just facts to be learned, devoid of any serious debate, clashes of opinions, and opposing values. Yet, as James Baldwin (1963) reminds us, "American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it." What makes our history at once beautiful and terrible, fascinating and repulsive are precisely the controversies, conflicts, debates, and struggles that are generally eliminated from history textbooks and lessons.

In the same way, most teachers and schools reduce multicultural education to an acknowledgment and appreciation of the holidays, traditions, and heroes of different cultures and religions. That is, multicultural education is frequently interpreted in a politically correct manner that seeks to expose students to the worthy contributions of various cultures in order to get them to become more tolerant of differences and respectful of other people. Indeed, according to Sonia Nieto (2000, 303), "when multicultural education is mentioned, many people first think of lessons in human relations and sensitivity training, units about ethnic holidays, education in inner-city schools, or food festivals." Such a view of multicultural education is not only a complete watering down of this concept but also reflects a profound misconception about its meaning and purpose.

The Problem

But what is wrong with regarding multicultural education as simply the acknowledgement and appreciation of diverse cultures and traditions? After all, for generations this approach to education did not exist in American schools and there was relatively little awareness that such an approach was even needed. Isn't a limited conception of multicultural education better than not addressing this issue at all? In short, don't we make our children better people and improve our society when we recognize cultural differences and celebrate those differences? In order to adequately respond to these questions we must first look more closely at two vital issues that are at the basis of multicultural education: the structure of our society and the purpose of education.

The Structure of Society

By the "the structure of society" I mean how American society is constructed and organized economically, socially, legally, and politically. Examining these economic, social, legal, and political structures immediately calls our attention to the issues of power and wealth and to the ways in which power and wealth are unequally distributed in this country. Moreover, to truly understand these structures we must look at the United States and its different races and ethnic groups from a broad historical perspective. And any honest historical investigation

of this country from the time of Columbus to the creation of the American Republic and from the African slave trade through the Civil War, up to the present must arrive at the conclusion that this history is not pretty.

Take the issue of racism, for instance, and specifically racism against African Americans in this country. James Loewen has vividly documented how even though today's history textbooks discuss the slavery of African Americans and its impact on blacks, they generally ignore the racism instituted by white Americans that was largely responsible for slavery. Indeed, Loewen rightly suggests that for the most part the teaching of history in public schools marginalizes racism in American history and even makes it invisible. The reality, however, is that it is impossible to understand the institution of slavery as a major event in our history, whose lingering legacy still haunts many African Americans, without confronting the issues of racism and white supremacy. For Loewen (1996, 144),

> the very essence of what we have inherited from slavery is the idea that it is appropriate, even "natural," for whites to be on top, blacks on the bottom. In its core our culture tells us—tells all of us, including African Americans—that Europe's domination of the world came about because Europeans were smarter.

Equally significant is the problem that by making racism invisible in history textbooks and lessons, we encourage students to believe that race relations have been steadily improving on their own and that racism and discrimination are no longer serious problems in our society. The truth, however, is that racial segregation and discrimination are alive and well in this country, most notably in our public schools as evidenced by Jonathan Kozol's (1992) study of numerous disadvantaged schools across the country. In addition, massive racial disparities remain in such key areas as income, career opportunities, and life expectancy. For instance, in 2001, according to the U.S. Census Bureau website, the median family income for whites was $54,067; for blacks it was $33,598; and for Hispanics, $34,490. Earning more money in our society is closely connected to better education, job opportunities, health care, and housing, and, more generally, to a life that is free from danger and stress.

What accounts for these huge racial disparities between African Americans and Hispanics in the United States as compared to whites? How can we interpret, for example, their lower educational achievement on reading and math tests? The simple explanation offered by some theorists that whites have higher intelligence levels or that non-whites have some cultural deficit is contradicted by numerous studies that indicate that the relationship between achievement and race disappear when certain economic and social factors are controlled. Moreover, if we follow the IQ and the cultural deficit theories to their logical conclusions we should expect to see the largest discrepancy in achievement between white students and students of color before they entered school. In actuality, research shows that this difference increases during the students' tenure in school, suggesting that environmental and social factors rather than innate abilities have the most impact on student learning and achievement (Persell 1977, 2).

An adequate explanation of the achievement gap between whites and students of color must therefore begin by looking at various historical laws and practices, such as the Jim Crow statutes that were enacted by whites to segregate blacks and seriously curtail their civil and economic rights. As Loewen (1996, 161) notes, especially between 1890 and 1920 white Americans from both the North and South joined hands to terrorize black communities and reduce blacks to the status of second-class citizens. Of course, even before the Civil War whites in many states made it a crime for African Americans to learn how to read and become better educated. Even today, huge discrepancies continue to exist between white middle-class and lower-class, predominantly minority districts in access to funding, resources, and, most importantly, quality teachers. These "savage inequalities," as Kozol has called them, are not a result of bad luck or poor choices made by people of color. Rather, they are the product of various historical, political, and legal efforts among whites to systematically prevent or restrict the educational development of blacks and others. Thus, as Loewen writes, "without causal historical analysis, these racial disparities are impossible to explain."

Another key issue that high school students as well as younger children are misinformed about is the conquest of the Americas by the Europeans and their relations with the Native Americans who were here before. Loewen has described in some detail how history textbooks and teachers generally downplay the cruelty, destruction, and even genocide that Columbus and other European conquerors wreaked on the Native Americans. Likewise, the teaching of history is silent about the way in which Native Americans were systematically driven from their lands following the creation of the American Republic, about how the natives fought back and resisted these initiatives, and how the United States continuously broke treaties it enacted with the Indians.

Moreover, our students are graduating from public schools with little awareness of how Native American (as well as African) ideas and practices have influenced our shared American culture past and present. They leave school without gaining even a basic understanding of the extent to which the American society and our ways of life have always been multicultural. This is in large part because there is almost no mention in history textbooks and lessons of how Native American traditions were one of the sources of our democratic institutions, farming practices, foods, names, and other cultural artifacts. Acknowledging these important contributions to our culture would require us to reevaluate the racist assumption that Native Americans were not as civilized as the European colonists who immigrated here some 400 years ago. In Loewen's (1996, 113) words,

> if we recognized American Indians as important intellectual antecedents of our political structure, we would have to acknowledge that acculturation has been a *two*-way street, and we might have to reassess the assumption of primitive Indian culture that legitimates the entire conquest.

This brief sketch of the relations between whites and African Americans and Native Americans is not meant as a history lesson but merely as an illustration that the United States was established from the very outset on a political, legal, economic, and social structure that was fundamentally one-sided. This structure was designed to make sure that wealthy and middle-class white Americans could get the kind of benefits that enable them to develop and thrive financially, educationally, and socially. At the same time, the same structure ensured that African Americans, Native Americans, minorities, and the poor would remain as the underclass and therefore never achieve the same material, educational, political, and social benefits as middle and upper-class whites. Despite the changes that came about as a result of the Civil Rights Movement, American society remains unfair and undemocratic even today, preventing African Americans and other people of color from getting the same kind of privileges and benefits as whites. Understanding the way in which the United States is constructed and organized is essential in order to bring about any kind of meaningful change to this unjust system of power.

To be sure, one can be aware of the grim realities of American history and still deny that this history has an impact on the opportunities and achievements of different races, ethnic groups, and classes. According to Gary Howard (in Banks 1996, 327) , this attitude of denial is very common among many white Americans who claim that

> the past doesn't matter. All the talk about multicultural education and revising history from different cultural perspectives is merely ethnic cheerleading. My people made it and so can yours. It's an even playing field and everybody has the same opportunities, so let's get on with the game and quit complaining. We've heard enough of your victim's history.

For Howard, this denial is harmful not only because it suggests an unwillingness to face up to the truth but also because it is based on a deep fear of diversity. It would seem, therefore, that education has a key role to play in helping students come to terms with the ugly realities of the past and to confront their fear of diversity.

The Role of Education

Given the unequal power structure that exists in the United States that benefits some races and classes and hurts others, what is the role of education? Historically, the education system in this country as well as in other democracies has for the most part been

traditional; that is, it has functioned as an instrument of the government to maintain the status quo. Loewen's research illustrates that by feeding students a huge amount of insignificant and isolated facts, history textbooks and lessons attempt to get them to become proud and obedient Americans, content not to think critically and ask too many questions. Such an approach to education attempts to get students to adapt to the political, social, and economic situation that exists, unfair though it may be, rather than seek to change it.

In stark contrast to the traditional model of education, Critical Pedagogy attempts to empower students to become more deeply aware of the various problems that affect their lives, problems that are related to larger social, political, economic, and moral issues. The advantage of focusing on problems rather than mere facts, as happens in traditional education, is that students will gain a critical awareness of themselves in relation to the world. This awareness will hopefully lead students to become committed to changing oppressive and undemocratic laws, institutions, and practices.

Informed by the insights of thinkers like Paulo Freire, Critical Pedagogy seeks to liberate the disadvantaged groups in each society from their bondage and to empower their members so they can live decent, humane lives. Friere wants to nourish the capacity of oppressed people to both understand and transform their world. Although he first developed his pedagogical approach at the end of the 1960s in the context of the poor and illiterates of northeastern Brazil, his educational insights are particularly relevant for the problems of the disadvantaged in this country. As Richard Shaull argues in the Foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1994), the educational philosophy and methodology that Freire developed may be as important for addressing the problems of education in the United States as they are for helping the dispossessed of Latin America.

My contention is that Critical Pedagogy is an educational approach that is particularly useful in addressing problems such as the inequality, poverty, racism, and discrimination that plague our society. The reason that Critical Pedagogy is so helpful in getting students to understand and confront these problems is that it considers the world from the vantage point of the powerless, a perspective that is typically marginalized or ignored. Such a perspective is invaluable not only because it enables us to genuinely understand the plight of the dispossessed in their own voices, but also because it is based on the democratic principles of freedom, equality, and social justice. Unlike more traditional approaches to teaching that seek to maintain the existing power relations in society, Critical Pedagogy insists that education must serve democratic and humane purposes. From this perspective, education must *empower students to make changes* in society rather than *condition them to adapt* to it.

A Broad Conception of Multicultural Education

We are now ready to revisit our initial question: Should multicultural education only acknowledge and appreciate diverse cultures and traditions. Based on our discussion of the structure of society and the role of education, it is clear that this narrow and limited view of multicultural education is inadequate. Specifically, we will need to acknowledge the extent to which the United States was founded on an undemocratic and unfair power structure and attempt to correct it. We cannot pretend to support multiculturalism by celebrating cultural diversity and having food festivals, while we continue to operate in political, economic, and educational systems that perpetuates inequality and discrimination. If we truly believe that the role of education is to get students to become more aware of and respond to the inequalities that exist in their communities, then we should reject the feel-good approach to multicultural education and replace it with a broader approach that can empower students to bring about social transformation.

A broadly conceptualized multicultural education, then, confronts the various forms of inequality and works to change them. Such an approach recognizes that some students have a better chance than others to succeed in our educational institutions as they are currently structured. As mentioned earlier, there is an achievement gap between white middle-class students and students of color. But this gap should not be attributed to certain characteristics of the lower achieving students, but rather to the differential opportunities and treatment that students re-

ceive once they arrive in school. For instance, research shows that the achievement gap is increased by factors such as school resources, teacher attitudes, and biased testing. Yet, according to Geneva Gay (in Banks and Banks 1997, 213),

> too many teachers still believe that students of color are either culturally deprived and should be remediated by using middle-class Whites as the appropriate norm, or do not have the aspirations or capacities to learns as well as European Americans.

These teachers cling to the misguided notion that the students themselves, not the way they are regarded and treated, are to blame for their poor performance in school.

Banks (1997) also make it clear that multicultural education should not be reduced to what he calls "content integration," which is the infusion of content related to various ethnic and cultural groups into the curriculum. Conceptualizing multicultural education in this way is problematic for two reasons. First, content integration usually does not get much beyond tokenism, or the inclusion of mere representative examples of different ethnic and cultural groups. Students in high school may read Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*; they may celebrate Black History Month and the International Women's Rights Day. Yet such tokenism rarely leads to an in-depth study of diverse races, genders, and cultures and it usually does little more than depict the different groups as *other* than the norm.

Second, since a multicultural content is easier to connect to disciplines such as language arts and social studies, teachers in other disciplines may dismiss multicultural education as irrelevant to their subject. It is fairly common to hear math and science teachers state that "multicultural education is fine for social studies and literature teachers, but it has nothing to do with me. Math and science are the same, regardless of the culture of the kids" (Banks 1997, 20-21). This attitude is defensible only if we subscribe to an overly narrow definition of multicultural education as content integration and ignore its other dimensions. Once educators realize that multicultural education is as much about *how* we teach kids as it is about *what* we teach them, the resistance of math and science teachers to this approach may well decrease. From a Critical Pedagogy perspective, multicultural education is based on the assumption that students are not passive consumers of information, but rather active and reflective participants in the learning process. This means that teachers need to conduct their classes and interact with students in ways that are more democratic, and they need to design their lessons to encourage students to express their opinions and become more critical. When teachers give students a voice and show them that they value their opinions, students gain a better understanding of the complexity of the world and the multiple perspectives that give it meaning. As they become more comfortable thinking critically, their new attitudes will apply to math and science as well as to literature and social studies. In science, they will recognize that theories are not unassailable truths, but that they change, and are even to some extent tied to their social-historical contexts. Recognizing the relativity and tentative nature of theories, students will more aggressively question, debate, and question them and the evidence on which they are based. They will become more active learners.

Tackling Problems Head On

Another problem with conventional multiculturalism is the false belief that merely "having" a multicultural program automatically takes care of the problems of discrimination and racism. As Sonia Nieto insists, a multicultural program that does not address the problems of racism and discrimination head on is deeply flawed. Nieto argues that educators should focus on all the areas in which some students are favored over others: "the curriculum, choice of materials, sorting policies, and teachers' interactions and relationships with students and their families" (Nieto 2000, 306).

Taking on the ugly realities of racism and discrimination, whether the issue is an historical event such as slavery or a current unfair educational policy, is a dangerous topic for many schools and teachers. To name these issues for what they are is risky because there is a chance that some students will react strongly or highly defensively. The fear of educators to take on these risks leads to the practice mentioned

above of sanitizing the curriculum in order to eliminate all controversy, ambiguity, and conflict; it also leads to the tendency of teachers to teach a feel-good history that will not offend anyone.

The irony here is that teachers who teach history as though clashes of opinions or struggles between different classes and races did not exist, ultimately end up offending other students, most notably students of color. I remember observing a few years ago a diverse high school history class in Brooklyn in which the teacher was facilitating a discussion on "Ancient African Cultures" with the aim of trying to determine if they were "civilized." This particular discussion happened to take place only a few days after the massacre at Columbine High School so I was hoping that the teacher would relate this horrific incident to the topic. When this did not happen I was disappointed, feeling that a genuine opportunity had been missed to engage the students in a discussion about the various meanings of "being civilized." My disappointment was confirmed a few minutes later when the bell rang and two African-American students sitting next to me looked at each other in disbelief, one of them remarking: "Is what happened in Columbine civilized?"

This incident suggests that if we agree with Nieto that multicultural education needs to be explicitly antiracist, teachers will need to expose students to the subject matter in all its complexity, including the parts that are risky and not pretty. Being antiracist also means that teachers, students, and educators in general must work constructively to combat racism. For Nieto (2000, 307), this means

> making antiracism and antidiscrimination explicit parts of the curriculum and teaching young people skills in confronting racism. It also means that we must not isolate or punish students for naming racism when they see it, but instead respect them for doing so. If developing productive and critical citizens for a democratic society is one of the fundamental goals of public education, antiracist behaviors can help to meet that objective.

Basic Changes

This broad conception of multicultural education would involve several basic changes. It would mean, for one thing, that students will become fluent in a second language, familiar with the history and geography of not only the United States but of other countries around the world, and aware of the literary and artistic contributions of different peoples (Nieto 2000, 310). It also implies the development of what Kincheloe and other scholars have called "media literacy," which has to do, among other things, with the ability to detect cultural stereotypes and to recognize how different races, religions, and ethnic groups are represented in the media (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1996, 232-233). If students do not acquire this literacy, there is little chance that they will develop an understanding and appreciation of the diverse interests, cultures, and values that co-exist in this country.

Ultimately, adopting a genuine multicultural approach will require educators to transform the entire culture of the school. As Nieto insists, multicultural education is not just another subject area to be covered or something that happens at a set period of the day like lunch or recess. Limiting multicultural education to a particular period that is taught by a specialist gives the impression that this approach is separate from all other school knowledge. Instead, a true multicultural approach must be widespread and integrated throughout the curriculum and the daily school schedule. According to Nieto (2000, 313),

> a true multicultural approach is pervasive. It permeates everything: the school climate, physical environment, curriculum, and relationships among teachers and students and community. It is apparent in every lesson, curriculum guide, unit bulletin board, and letter that is sent home; it can be seen in the process by which books and audiovisual aids are acquired for the library, in the games played during recess, and in the lunch that is served. *Multicultural education is a philosophy, a way of looking at the world, not simply a program or a class or a teacher.*

What might such a pervasive multicultural approach look like in practice? Although a comprehensive approach might vary significantly from school to school, there are a number of general changes that we should expect to see in most institutions. First, the curriculum would have to be completely overhauled to include the perspectives, contributions,

and histories of different cultures, races, genders, and classes—not just those of the people in power. Topics that have been traditionally considered controversial and even dangerous, such as racism in the United States, would be discussed in classes and students would be encouraged to reflect on them in order to come to their own conclusions. We would also expect to see a major shift in the way that subject matter is taught in schools to incorporate a variety of instructional strategies so that students from diverse backgrounds and cultures could learn up to their true potential. Teachers would no longer rely on one instructional approach and would become proficient in a number of strategies and techniques that address the needs of different students.

A pervasive multicultural approach would also necessitate the reorganization of public schools as we know them today. This means that schools could no longer be one of the most segregated places in our nation and that drastic changes would be made to integrate the student population so that children from diverse classes and ethnic backgrounds would learn together in the same schools and classes. Efforts would also be made to change the entire school staff so that it is more representative of our country's diversity. Moreover, a reorganization of schools would mean that practices, like tracking, that favor some students over others, be discontinued. Parents and other community members would be invited to collaborate with teachers and staff to design curricula and plan school events. In this way, schools would become learning environments "in which curriculum, pedagogy, and outreach are all consistent with a broadly conceptualized multicultural philosophy" (Nieto 2000, 313).

Conclusion

This essay has attempted to dispel the widespread myth that multicultural education is essentially about the acknowledgment and appreciation of the heroes, holidays, and traditions of different cultures, nationalities, and religions. Such a notion of multicultural education is inadequate not only because it is far too narrow but also because it fails to acknowledge the institutional racism and discrimination that exist in this country. At the core of multicultural education is the recognition that the United States was founded on the basis of an unjust system of power, one which continues to flourish today, and that the role of education is to help students become more aware of and challenge this system.

To achieve this end, multicultural education must be fundamentally antiracist, as Nieto teaches us, striving to combat the various forms of discrimination and inequality that benefit some students and hurt others. Besides being antiracist, a comprehensive multicultural approach must receive the same weight as other core subjects and be pervasive throughout the school curriculum, climate, and culture. This means that multicultural education should not be reduced to a particular class period that is taught by a specialist and distinct from all other school knowledge. In addition, a broadly conceived multicultural approach has the advantage of helping us avoid the tendency of equating multicultural education with mere content integration. It enables us to realize that multicultural education is just as much about *how* we teach and interact with students as it is about *what* we teach them.

Note

1. From a song titled "1492" by Nancy Schimmel. In *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*, edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson (1998).

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Historias from the Margins

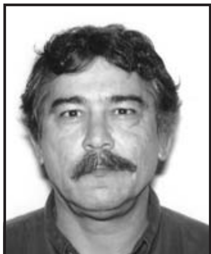
Indigenous Cultures in Modern Mexico

Gustavo A. Teran

The challenge to maintaining traditional ways of life is highlighted through stories from rural Mexico.

For the past eight years I have led groups of university faculty and students to the margins of Mexican society. By margins I mean places removed from the turbulent mainstream of Western development, places where communities are struggling against modernizing forces to maintain their sense of place and belonging and to maintain relationships based on mutual trust and care for the environment. I do not want to romanticize their lives. Many struggle to make a living under harsh conditions. Yet most of the people encountered at the margins reject Western notions of progress and economic development that commoditize almost every aspect of daily life. Through these journeys I attempt to expose university students to perspectives of life that contrast sharply with the dominant Western narrative of economic development based on individualism, competition, and dominance over others. By facilitating cross-cultural encounters I have sought, as Witherell and Noddings (1991, 4) have done in their writings, to "illuminate with the rich, vibrant language of feeling the various landscapes in which we meet the other morally."

In this article I use personal narrative to give voice to the struggles of oppressed peoples silenced by dominant narratives of progress and economic development. In particular, I share stories that illustrate how various indigenous communities in the Mexican State of Oaxaca struggle to promote caring relationships that foster harmony and balance with their environment



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An Enchanted World

Nestled among cloud covered peaks of the Sierra Madre, the Triqui village of San Andres de Chicahuaxtla has a magical feel about it. The steep mountain slopes and green valleys are blanketed by an al-

most perpetual mist. As we walk off the highway onto the narrow, winding gravel road that leads to the village, Triqui women in their traditional red, embroidered *huipils* (dresses) appear out of the mist. Men walk hurriedly past us, up narrow paths and disappear into their cloud-covered *milpas* (corn and bean fields). Children follow our brigade of 20 backpacking students as they wind their way to the village center. Although Chicahuaxtla is not a tourist village we are not a novelty here: I have been bringing students to Chicahuaxtla for six years.

We stop at the open pavilion at the center of town and wait for Marcos, the village authority. The village seems quieter than usual on this day. People walk by, stop, and greet each other in hushed tones. They whisper as if not to wake someone sleeping. Even the children seem subdued. Later that night in a conversation with Marcos and his cousins I find out that a young mother has died. Apparently there was nothing wrong with her. She seemed healthy and strong the day before. She had not been sick or ailing nor had she had any accident with physical trauma. She just died. Piecing together various indirect references to spirits and unexplained deaths, I finally understood that people in the village believe her *nagual* was killed. In indigenous cosmology, throughout Mexico, each person is born with a corresponding animal spirit, their *nagual*. This spirit is an actual animal in flesh and blood. The belief is that if your *nagual* suffers illness or is killed, you too will suffer the same consequences. In the neighboring Mixtec village, the day before, we stopped at a traditional health center and many of the students, for a nominal charge, had a healer reveal to them their *nagual*. According to this particular healer, one has not only an animal spirit but also an allied force of nature, such as lightning or wind. I usually stop at the Traditional Health Center to introduce students to alternative notions of health and wellbeing. Although our experience at the health center is, in a sense, a staged performance, the rituals and beliefs are nonetheless very real for many Mexicans. The situation in Chicahuatla was a "real life" crisis involving *naguals*. It is not the sort of thing villagers share with outsiders, and were it not for my long association and friendship with Marcos and family we probably would not have known what was going on.

The Pico de Zarzamora at about 9000 feet on the northern edge of the village has special significance to the Triqui. According to the elders, it is the birthplace of the founding father and mother of the village. As we climb the steep, winding path to the summit of Zarzamora the students gasped for air. When our young Triqui guides stopped halfway up the mountain to point something out, everyone welcomed the break. Canec, one of our guides, pointed to a denuded line just below the top of the peak we were climbing. "There," he said, "you can see the place where the *naguals* of the neighboring village tried to steal our mountain." In this case the *naguals* were shamans who could transform themselves into their animal or nature spirits. In the old days, it seems, the power and daring of shamans was more evident than it is today. The invading *naguals* transformed themselves into a powerful gust of wind and with great force attacked the mountain, trying to carry off the peak. But the local *naguals* from Chicahuaxtla, arrived in time to push them back. For our young guides, the bare rock was testimony to the determination of this Triqui village to protect and preserve its territory. The surrounding mountains and valleys are imbued with a spiritual significance that called forth great respect and shaped their relationship with the land.

The entranced world that Berman calls *The Reenchantment of the World* (1981) is evident in the Triqui experience. For Marcos and his children and grandchildren, the forested mountains and the valleys are alive with nature spirits that are also human. As their ancestors before them, the Triqui are participants with nature in the life force of an enchanted world. The stories of *naguals* are the narrative strands that connect the Triquis to their history and their present sense of place. Young people are taught by elders a place-based notion of moral ecology through stories such as these. This vernacular narrative tradition is also found in other villages throughout Oaxaca.

"Comunalidad": Convivial Living in a Zapotec Village

I encountered the will and determination of young people to *re-member* and re-generate community through the art of convivial living in many other traditional indigenous communities. These commu-

nities maintained their language and many of their customs through personal narrative and storytelling. *Re-member* here is used to refer to "how personal identity is shaped by memories that are commons; shared stories of ways in which people name and treat each other" (Esteva and Prakash 1998, 70). This process of building community through narrating common memories reconstructed from oral histories and through documentation of cultural practices was evident in the Zapotec village of Guelatao. Here I was introduced by my friend, Mexican activist and scholar, Gustavo Esteva, to a dynamic and talented leader, Jaime Luna. This was in January of 1996; the following year I started taking students to visit this community.

The Village of Guelatao, birthplace of Benito Juarez, the only indigenous president of Mexico, is the hub of a regional cultural revival initiative that celebrates Zapotec culture. The initiative, spearheaded by members of a creative and innovative grassroots organization known as "Comunalidad," strives to promote and preserve traditional ways. The director, Jaime Luna, explains that "comunalidad" is the essence of community life or convivial living. A singer and composer, Jaime usually greets our students with a song. He often tells stories of his native village through music. A favorite theme in Jaime's music is the *tequio*. *Tequio* is a tradition of community work where everyone in the village, children, adults and elders, come together for a day every month to work on a village project. The project can be anything that serves the community as a whole, such as road or a school building. Participation in the *tequio* is a reflection of the villagers' deep sense of community, people coming together, not as individuals, but as knots in a net of mutual relations with each other and with their environment. (Esteva and Prakash 1998).

On a number of occasions when our students have visited Guelatao, Jaime has expressed his concern about the loosening of community relations brought about by schools. For some time now Jaime has been campaigning for significant changes in the way children in the village are taught in school. During our visits, in his usual hospitable way, treating us as family, Jaime shares his concerns with us.

> Our children live in this beautiful forested mountain, surrounded by streams and rivers and forests inhabited by a great diversity of plant and animal life. These are all part of our community. Our elders know the names of every plant and animal in this forest and they know their medicinal and nutritive properties. They make use of them in their daily lives. But our children are taught about the natural environment through drawings on a black board or pictures from a textbook. Many of the plants and animals in these texts are not even native to this region. So children learn about a natural environment that is often not their own from experts who know nothing about the local environment and history, through abstract and inaccurate representations on a blackboard or textbook. (Teran 1999)

Jaime speaks about his dreams for reconnecting education to the life of the village, about the importance of connecting childrens' learning to the wisdom of the elders and of the land and to the language and traditions of the Zapotec people.

> The school teaches children about the environment not as a dwelling place but as a resource to be managed and exploited. And what is worse, they totally disregard the knowledge that our elders have of the geography, the traditions and the oral history that makes a place a community. Parents have been made to feel irrelevant and unneeded in the education of their children. They have been urged to transfer all responsibility for education to "knowledge experts" who devalue the traditional knowledge of the elders. We have tolerated this for too long. I am taking advantage of a provision in the new education law that calls for the participation of parents and community members in curricular decisions. We will insist that teachers teach about our local environment, about the history of our community, our geography and plant and animal life. What is more, we will insist that parents accompany teachers and students on field trips. Parents will ask "Really, can we do that?' and I will say, "Yes of course, this is our school. (Teran 1999)

Jaime Luna's concern for sustaining the spirit of "communalidad" is evident in the non-formal education projects he and his colleagues promote in Guelatao. They are not waiting to reform schools. They are engaging youth directly in cultural regeneration projects that connect young people directly with the local knowledge of their elders. One example is an oral history documentary project where young people interview elders and collect stories, songs, and descriptions of folk rituals that are no longer practiced. The information is used in documentary television and radio programs and often in the production of community theatre. As in other indigenous communities, stories of the Zapotec elders connect young people to history and sense of place.

Learning from Lives on the Margins

The stories of Triqui *naguals* in Chicahuaxtla, and of Jaime Luna's cultural regeneration of Zapotec traditions in Guelatao, are examples of the living stories from the margins that are part of my own and my students' education. The stories connect us with a way of knowing and teach about the inseparability of learning from life, of the importance local knowledge and the sense of "comunalidad" in living and learning.

The *historias* sketched out here connect me personally to lives on the margins of a dominant and domineering narrative, the narrative of development and Western notions of superiority. I believe as Witherell and Noddings (1991, 8) do that there is power in these narratives, the power to create a shared knowledge that enriches and invigorates our work as educators and cultural workers.

> The power of narrative and dialogue as contributors to reflective awareness in teachers and students is that they provide opportunities for deepened relations with others and serve as springboards for ethical action. Understanding the narrative and contextual dimensions of human actors can lead to new insights, compassionate judgment and the creation of shared knowledge and meanings that can inform professional practice.

My hope is that these stories will help educators reflect on their own journeys and raise critical question about their obligation to respond in culturally sensitive ways to the differences that matter in their students' lives.

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The Death and Rebirth of Ivan Illich

Dana L. Stuchul and Madhu Suri Prakash

When Illich's influence began to wane among academic intellectuals, it started to blaze anew in the daily lives of indigenous people.

Ivan Illich died December 2, 2002. He died as he lived—in the same style in which he fought, flourished, and enjoyed "the good life." Un-hooked from state-of-the-art cancer treatment or life-prolonging medicines and technologies, Illich died in his own simple bed at home, surrounded by his friends. Until his death, Illich remained free of mainstream ministering institutions—economic, educational, religious, political, medical. He remained free of the "caring professions," unchained from the illusions that come with care as the "mask of love" (McKnight in Illich et al. 1977).

At the time of Illich's death, his thought had been considered largely irrelevant within the academic establishment. But he had become increasingly significant among de-professionalized intellectuals, activists, and peoples living and flourishing at the grassroots (Esteva and Prakash 1997; 1998). His thought is especially pertinent to those seeking liberation from the global economy and all of its mainstream modern "goods" and "services"—not the least of which is education and other modes of professional institutional "care"—that now are destroying peoples' traditional commons, capacities, and relationships. This article considers the two thinkers: the Academic Ivan Illich, and the Grassroots Ivan Illich who continues to flourish outside the Academy.

The Birth and Death of Academic Ivan Illich

Academic Ivan Illich was "born" in 1971 with the publication of his pamphlet, *Deschooling Society*. Although his was a critical voice, Illich departed from

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the chorus of radical social and school critics and reformers of his time—people such as Freire, Kozol, Kohl, Spring, Postman, Gintis, and Greene. Rejecting people-shaping through compulsory schooling, Illich objected to the assumption that people could be helped, regardless of how "free," "conscientized," or "alternative" the means, to participate in "Progress" that the schoolhouse certifies.

To follow Illich's argument, one must begin with the moment in the late 1960s and early 1970s when there was great interest around the world in increased educational investment. Spurred by Kennedy's Alliance for Progress and similar efforts on behalf of the "underdeveloped" world (Sachs 1992), school expenditures were promoted by advocates for Western-styled socio-economic development, human rights, and equal educational opportunity, particularly for the poor of the world. Investment in education was advertised as a "human capital" expenditure having as one of its purposes the satisfaction of "basic human needs."

Illich, then Vice Chancellor of the Pontifical Catholic University in Ponce, Puerto Rico (1956–1960, saw through all the professionally engineered delusions of equitable educational opportunity via schooling. It will never be possible, Illich argued, to provide all of the world's poor with the educational treatment enjoyed by the world's rich. "Universal education through schooling is not feasible," he wrote (Illich 1971, xix). Simply, there would never be enough resources. In the educational race, the poor would never catch up to the rich. Far worse, the poor would blame themselves. Social interveners the world over denounced these suggestions as anathema.

But Illich's criticism went beyond the purely practical. People, he argued, are taught to confuse education with schooling; his interest at that time was to rescue education from its monopolization within the school. Under the regime of compulsory schooling, lllich asserted, the young are indoctrinated to believe that what is learned must be taught, and that knowledge must be properly packaged, increased, and updated in order to be successfully mass consumed. Whether progressive, radical, alternative, holistic, or free, our schooled society is committed "to the fundamental axioms of a schooled world" (Illich 1971, 67). Illich (1992, 164) writes:

> At the time I was engaged in these reflections we were at the height of the international development effort. One could see that the school was like a world-wide stage on which the hidden assumptions of economic progress were being acted out. The school system demonstrated where development could not but lead: to international, standardized stratification; to universal dependence on service; to counterproductive specialization; to the degradation of the many for the sake of a few.

Schooling, Illich argued, fosters the necessary habits of mind for living within a society built upon assumptions of consumption and production of services and goods. The dominant "lesson" is acceptance of that level of consumption proportional to the level of schooling at which one drops out. Those who drop-out last—that is, the highest "educated"—can rightfully expect, even demand, the highest levels of consumption. Those who drop out first must therefore be logically content with far lower levels of consumption while remaining committed to the system that ensures more consumption.

Further, Illich's analysis pointed to the role of schooling in legitimating the pyramidal and hierarchical organization of industrial (now post-industrial) societies. Probing much deeper than Marxist critics (Gintis 1973), Illich's analysis cut across ideological divides (Left/Right, Liberal/Conservative) in recognizing the school's central function within society whether capitalist, socialist, or communist. Illich argued that schooling, in its graded and sequential curricula, amounts to a "ritualization of progress." He writes that "schools select for each successive level those who have, at earlier stages in the game, proved themselves good risks for the established order" (Illich 1971, 34). The demands made by the sufficiently educated translate into the consumption standards (of edu-credit hours plus other "stuff") desired by the rest.

Within mainstream academic contexts, in the 1970s and 1980s, nearly everyone misinterpreted Illich. The radicals and others in the *avant garde* of the educational establishment recognized the freshness

of Illich's analysis, but they mistakenly concluded that Illich's call was either for the reform of the educational system or for its complete abandonment. Illich recommended neither. He urged *disestablishment* (Illich 1971; Gartner et al. 1973).

Illich recognized how the American constitution disestablished the marriage of State and Church. This disestablishment (1) rendered the State powerless in wielding its power to suppress anyone's religious belief or observance; (2) made illegal any imposition of religious belief in any public venue; and (3) resulted in a beautiful flowering of free, voluntary, and diverse arrangements for gatherings of faith communities. Illich offered strong and clear arguments that what had been made possible for religious observance could happen with learning. Illich said,

> But the deschooling I meant was the disestablishment of schools. I never wanted to do away with schools. I simply said, We live under the American constitution—I spoke to Americans—and in the American constitution you have developed the concept of the disestablishment of churches. You disestablish by not paying public monies. I called for a disestablishment of schools in that sense. I suggested that instead of financing schools, you should go a little bit further than you went with religion and have schools pay taxes so that schooling would become a luxury object and be recognized as such. In that way discrimination because of lack of schooling would be at least legally discontinued in the same way that discrimination because of race or sex has been made illegal. (Illich In Cayley 1992, 64)

No longer monopolized within publicly funded schools, opportunities for learning would emerge, serving the growth of young and old alike. Once disestablished, schooling would no longer have public support for its primary function as a sorting mechanism for all as either certifiably stupid or "smart"—a function primarily serving the interests of society's elite, no less the middle class. Discriminations engendered through compulsory school attendance inevitably limiting the access of school dropouts and failures to many forms of social participation would be made illegal. Illich declared school-certified social access to be an indecent privilege—a privilege that should be made constitutionally illegal.

Illich's call for the demonopolization of the educational functions of state-supported schools fundamentally also celebrated opportunities created organically by "ordinary" and "unschooled" people rather than engineered by expert professionals, the elite. His was an argument advocating that the plethora of learning possibilities in the everyday world no longer be rendered scarce. Deschooling amounted to the decoupling of learning from school attendance. Radical on first thought, Illich's proposal was quickly dismissed by professional educators as impractical for the majority of school-aged people.

In the 1960s and 1970s, democratically minded educators, desperate to propose every ilk of school reform, continued to cite Illich. They said that more student-centered classrooms and democratic schools would address Illich's main criticism. In a sense, they co-opted what they could from Illich's analysis. His deschooling recommendations, however, were basically ignored. Misinterpreted as utopian, romantic, and unfair to the poor, his proposals were not hard to dismiss. Moreover, from the professional perspective, his proposals seemed to offer nothing concrete—at least within the traditional academic context. Called an "anarchist" and the topic of jokes within the Ivory Tower, Illich was soon dismissed altogether. His mistake in part was the late recognition of how deeply and widely seated the belief that "educational needs of some kind were a historical given of human nature" (Illich 1992, 164-165) had become. The Academic Ivan Illich, who had such a glorious birth in the educational stratosphere, collapsed and died, becoming little other than a historical footnote, an intellectual curiosity (Martin 2002).

The Rebirth of Grassroots Ivan Illich

At the moment he "died" within the Academy, Illich was "reborn" among grassroots cultures. Regenerating their commons from their destruction by the moderns' modernity, to common peoples Illich continues to offer intellectual nourishment as well as moral hope—practical wisdom as well as visionary possibility (esteva 2004). Illich's thought becomes

increasingly meaningful for grassroots peoples making every effort to protect and liberate themselves from the depredations of the global economy now spreading its economic tentacles across the world.

Grassroots Ivan Illich blossomed initially among deprofessionalized intellectuals who, with Illich, had moved out of the Academy having recognized its "counter-productivity." At the grassroots, Illich's critique of schooling—along with his thoughts on *Homo educandus* (educational "man," the belief that humans are born in *need* of education)—offered a new vision for regenerating diverse, incommensurable cultural spaces (Prakash and Esteva 1998). Grassroots Ivan Illich has matured into numerous initiatives after gestating for decades. As schooling and education continue to monopolize the bodies, minds, and imaginations of those within schooled societies, grassroots peoples increasingly recognize how they must reverse the effects of both. That is, they must stop the uprooting of the young from their traditions and places in order to liberate them from the effects of "global progress" and globalized "needs."

Unitierra

In Oaxaca, Mexico, the Universidad de la Tierra (Unitierra) provides a beautiful illustration of the rebirth of Grassroots Ivan Illich. Articulating the voices of the indigenous peoples throughout Oaxaca, the Indigenous Forum of Oaxaca, Mexico stated in a bold 1997 public declaration that public schools have been the main tool of the State to destroy their nation's indigenous cultures. Constructively addressing this educational disaster, the indigenous peoples of Oaxaca and their coalitions of grassroots organizations created Unitierra in February 2001. Guided by their elders while working in close collaboration with well-known friends of Ivan Illich, Unitierra initiated a wide range of innovations in learning and study for all the different indigenous linguistic groups marginalized by the educational system of Mexico. Unitierra activities currently operate in 400 indigenous communities (consisting of 15 cultural groups) throughout Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Guerrero, the three provinces deemed most "economically underdeveloped" within Mexico. These activities focus on innovative workshops and apprenticeships held in the communities, complemented by reading circles as well as by a wide circulation of cassettes and videos (in order to include the illiterate). Among the seminars held regularly in Unitierra, one series entitled, "Paths for Liberation," focuses on Illich's vast corpus of Spanish publications.

No longer monopolized within publicly funded schools, opportunities for learning would emerge, serving the growth of young and old alike.

Beginning on the first day, students at Unitierra learn by working as apprentices with people doing, in the real world, what the students want to learn, be it to become agrarian lawyers, alternative healers or therapists, sanitation technicians or philosophers. "Tutoring" is a generic name for the sharing of highly diversified skills and activities by those who know and do with those who yearn to know and do. The method is as old as the hills: learning *from* the world rather than *about* the world.

Because the regeneration of tradition, of cultural roots defines the work undertaken at Unitierra, this center for study and learning deliberately sets itself apart from conventional schooling and its promise of social and economic mobility. Instead of uprooting young people from their village or town commons, promising them careers in the national or international global market, Unitierra creates new openings for work (and leisure) that nourish and strengthen the primordial human yearning to stay home in intimate relationship with elders while "yoked" to others and to particular places. Respect and regard for the places of one's ancestors are prized. Applicants to Unitierra with an interest in leaving their traditional places in pursuit of modern professional development, career or otherwise, are advised to go to mainstream educational institutions instead.

Unitierra affirms people in their places, within their web of relations that hold intact the fabric of culture. Those affiliated with Unitierra acknowl-

edge what the people dwelling in villages know very well: that schools and all other educational institutions actually prevent their children from learning what is needed to continue living well in their community.

Just as conventional schools fail to provide the young with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for living well in their communities, they also fail to offer their graduates appropriate preparation for life or work outside of their communities. Part of the discrimination and humiliation of the majority of those who chose to leave their communities to get "higher education" is that, unskilled for life in their traditional places, they are equally lost in the cities, in degraded and all-too-scarce jobs. A recent Mexican Ministry of Education study found that only 8% of all graduates of Mexican universities are able to use their diplomas for the work in which they are credentialed. Certified lawyers or engineers find themselves condemned to driving taxis or tending stalls in polluted city centers. Paradoxically, the young of these communities become caught in a double bind once they are "schooled." No longer possessing the skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be useful within their communities, their diplomas and degrees render them similarly useless outside of their communities.

Grassroots Ivan Illich has matured into numerous initiatives after gestating for decades.

Unitierra represents one attempt to respond to these brute facts, which include all the manufactured illusions about the enlarged opportunities opened up by higher education for its graduates in the global economy. Instead of using diplomas to sort and sift applicants, Unitierra seeks to create new possibilities for school dropouts, refuseniks, and others without diplomas to learn skills that are not available in their traditional commons, although they are essential for sustaining the health of those commons.

Regenerating the roots of their cultures, Unitierra is one little knot in a far-flung, fabulously diverse, and culturally differentiated global net of mutually supporting initiatives for study and learning being conceived and created by ordinary people seeking to escape the modern addiction to schooling and education. In communities throughout the "two-thirds" world, people are becoming increasingly aware that the education through schooling that is advertised as a need, a requirement, and a universal human right is simply a new form of cultural imperialism. It is the new humane face of economic globalization that seeks to redefine all people as consumers and all aspects of living as commodities for purchase.

As Illich's *Deschooling* (1971) and other writings became dispersed around the globe, people living at the grassroots listened with a different ear. Considering Illich's proposals with those of educational proponents of every stripe—radical, conventional, emancipatory, spiritual, and otherwise—grassroots peoples contemplated numerous educational projects that purported to alleviate all and every human hardship. The only hardship that the various educational projects are totally incapable of eliminating, however, is the insatiable need for more education.

Education for what, anyway, peoples at the grassroots ask?

Shikshantar

On the other side of the world from Mexico, grassroots peoples within India also address this question as they seek liberation from schooling, development, and the global economy. Shikshantar: The People's Institute for Rethinking Education and Development in Udaipur, India, has been explicitly conceived to celebrate and affirm cultural diversity while seeking, in Gandhi's words, to "be the change they wish to see in the world." Engaged in "unlearning"—detoxifying and de-addicting themselves from the addiction of "McEducation" (Prakash and Stuchul 2004)—this vast coalition of grassroots peoples and communities is attempting to create spaces for dialogue and action toward cultural regeneration. (For more information on this initiative, please visit <www.swaraj.org/shikshantar>).

Working in collaboration with local, state, national, and international partners and advisors through a dynamic process of action-research,

Shikshantar's core team works to radically transform existing models of education and development and to elaborate upon practices of societal learning and Gandhian *swaraj* (self-rule). Grassroots peoples all across the world now demonstrate their "unwillingness to be constrained by the apparently all-determining forces and structures of the industrial age." They are demonstrating their freedom, their courage, and their commitment in the present and for the future. Shikshantar, through its publications and unlearning initiatives, seeks to articulate and disseminate the innumerable visions of grassroots peoples who are liberating themselves from addictions to disabling professions, professional labels, policies, and prescriptions. Shikshantar contributes to cultural regeneration by and for peoples, places, and cultures not enslaved by the "educated imagination"—an imagination characterized by disinterest in commons and community and bearing fruit in cultural and environmental decimation. Through its vast network of grassroots organizations and initiatives on five continents, Shikshantar assists dropouts and discontents all over the world, not just within the Southern Hemisphere, to first imagine, then articulate, and then construct the relationships and structures for regenerating commons and culture—a world that is "convivial."

Shikshantar has attempted, in the words of John Berger, to "name the intolerable." In a publication titled, "Resisting Schooling" (Vimukt Shiksha 2003), Manish Jain of Shikshantar writes of Illich's influence:

> Illich tried to warn us about the cataclysmic man-made miseries that are emerging as by-products of industrialized society and dominant notions of Development and Progress. Driving this process are "manipulative social institutions" such as hospitals, schools, etc. Illich called these institutions "false public utilities" because they aggravate the very problems (physical pollution, social polarization and psychological impotence) that they claim to do away with. (Vimukt Shiksha 2003)

Far more devastating for grassroots peoples, however, are the consequences for their commons and cultures. Commenting on this devastation, the Shikshantar author continues the elucidation of Illich's analysis and contribution:

> What makes these institutions dangerous is that they replace our autonomous modes of living (based on self-reliance and interdependence) with heteronomous modes (that rob us of our confidence to "do" without professional care or external certification). As a result, "rich and poor alike … view doctoring oneself as unreliable, and community organization as a form of aggression or subversion." Illich focused on exploding the myth of schooling, because "the stakes of society are much higher if a significant minority loses its faith in schooling…. This would endanger the survival of the economic order built on the co-production of goods and demands, (and) the political order built on the nation-state into which students are delivered by the school." Schooling is particularly insidious, because it claims to promote independent, critical judgment while relying upon a pre-determined, pre-packaged process. (Vimukt Shiksha 2003)

In the current educational climate of high-stakes accountability and standardized curricula, Illich's insight into the contradiction of schooling rings more bold and clear for people at the grassroots not yet wholly subsumed within schooling. In recognizing its insidious consequences, grassroots peoples are creating their path toward liberation.

CITA

A third illustration of the rebirth of Grassroots Ivan Illich is found once again in Mexico, where alternatives to the "forces and structures of the industrial age" are being created and disseminated throughout the "underdeveloped" world. Opened in 1996, the Center for Innovations in Alternative Technologies (CITA) in Cuernavaca drew both its theoretical foundation and catalyst for its establishment from Illich's (1973) text, *Tools for Conviviality*. CITA explicitly seeks practical applications for Illich's conception of convivial, communal, sustainable tools (technologies). Through initiatives including community outreach (seminars, workshops, etc.), CITA participates in the co-creation and

dissemination of decentralized, low cost, sustainable, culturally appropriate, and small-scale technologies. These technologies and learning initiatives include water collection, distribution and treatment; solar energy collection; and home construction that liberates communities from dependence on experts, while utilizing locally available, minimally impacting, renewable materials, thereby dramatically reducing waste.

CITA provides grassroots communities with convivial tools where access to conventional, industrially generated goods and services do not exist or do not conform to local environmental and cultural standards. CITA learning centers annually draw community, NGO, and governmental leaders and representatives from every economic strata and state within Mexico, as well as from countries such as China, Singapore, Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, Germany and Japan. Through CITA's efforts, grassroots communities maintain both their autonomy and their dignity in the resolution of social difficulties and challenges facing them. They adopt solutions which are neither professionally imposed nor universalized by experts—solutions that preserve and augment their traditions and their commons.

The Range of Illich's Thought

Schooling, according to Illich, was only one of the many "absurdities" of the modern world, a world in which nearly all the activities of living have capitulated to the axioms and practices of *home oeconomicus* (as opposed to home economics à la Berry 1987). Schooling was simply one locus for learning how to be a consumer, a preparation for both survival and upward mobility in a consumer society. Illich repeatedly noted (1977; 1992) how schooling implies that opportunities for learning within society are scarce. The implied message provided by education-via-schooling about people—about the relationship of people to themselves, to their world, and to others—is that all are now subject to transactions defined in economic terms. Illich alone recognized how schooling and belief in it had been elevated to the status of religion and no longer accessible for critical and scholarly analysis. Schooling and education had become modern certainties, unquestionable and inextricably linked to living in the modern (no less postmodern) world.

Schooling and education, paradigmatic of a new way in which modern human beings conceived of themselves and of social reality, would be but one among a host of certainties that Illich would analyze during the decades of the 70s and 80s. Illich's oft-repeated lament was that in and through the existence of these arrangements, people would become irreversibly altered, their human nature remade or recast. In this change, Illich's prescience foresaw as unavoidable increasing degrees of social polarization, ecological despoilage, and human diminishment. No longer versed in the "arts of living, suffering, and dying," human beings and their societies would soon resemble a Huxley-like, techno-nightmare. In an age in which our bodies have become a collection of systems (immune, respiratory, reproductive, etc.), people would no longer feel; in the epoch of genetic intervention from sperm to worm, people would no longer suffer; and in the era of services, people would no longer become moved in their innards to pick up the guy lying in the ditch. Illich's question: Would it be possible to act as human, to act humanely in this new world gone absurd?

Illich's inquiry into schooling, and later into education, is best understood as part of a 40-plus year study into those certainties that define and undergird contemporary living. He sought to understand historical as well as contemporary conditions within which these certainties could arise. And he sought their origin—often stating "as I look for the roots of modernity, I uncover them in the history of the Christian Church." Illich explained that:

> Powerful and unprecedented ideas, brought through Christianity and through the Gospel into Western history, have been perverted into normative notions of a cruelty, of a horrifying darkness, which no other culture has ever known. The Latin *adagium, corruptio optimi pessima*—there's nothing worse than the corruption of the best—became a theme in my reading and reflection. (Illich in Cayley 1992, 213-214)

Illich further explained,

> I study history to become sensitive to those modern assumptions which, by going unexamined, have turned into our epoch-specific, *a priori* forms of perception. I am neither using history nor do I want to escape into history. I study the past to look out of its perspective at the axioms of that mental topology of thought and feeling which confronts me when I write and speak. And, coming out of the past and entering the present I find that most of the axioms generating my mental space are tinged with economics. (Illich in Cayley 1992, 35-36)

Illich's investigations into what had become the redefinition of the human being as well as those societal arrangements that purport to serve all yet operationally sustain the status quo continued unto his death. In the last two decades, the centerpiece of his study became the emergence of *Homo miserablis cum Homo economicus*, "an image of man … in which he is born needy, with wants which can be satisfied only through recourse to commodities." (Illich in Cayley 1992, 190) According to Illich, by redefining human beings as the conglomeration of their accumulated needs, an entirely new conception of self, of social arrangements, and of the human condition had emerged. Illich explains:

> Needs, therefore, are neither necessities that cannot be changed, nor desires that can't ever be satisfied. Needs, in the sense in which I want to discuss them, when I speak about needs for education, needs for medical inputs, needs for transportation, needs for income, result when technique is accepted as a means to change, to abolish, the necessities which the human condition imposes. (Illich in Cayley 1992, 165-167)

No longer understood to be "suffering the human condition," people are now thought of in terms of ever-present and ever-changing needs—needs that can be manipulated and controlled by institutional and disabling professions (Illich 1977). The new needs, including the needs for commodities, render human beings subjugated to the marketplace in perpetuity.

As his interest in the Academy as a place for initiating radical social change waned, Illich directed his attention elsewhere: to writing, walking, talking, inquiring among friends. Illich's deeply personal quest—a quest to be fully alive—led him to inquire into certainties, into the modern mental topology, into the taken-for-granted assumptions that order and give shape to today's world. Inquiring into the arts of living, suffering, and dying, Illich referred to his method as one of "'epistemological *askesis*,' a purge of those corrupting concepts that give 'fictitious substances' the semblance of a sensible existence" (Illich in Cayley 1992, 50). Education, economics, health, and even life itself are but a few of those corrupting concepts that Illich sought to first expose and then purge from his thinking and speaking. Cayley (1992, 4) continues:

> Illich is an anomaly among modern scholars because he insists that the habits of the heart are as crucial to scholarship as the habits of the head. He calls the cultivation of the organs of inner sense which root in the heart by its traditional name, *ascesis*, and says that it is the indispensable complement to critical habits of mind. "For a full millennium," Illich has written, "the Church cultivated a balanced tradition of study and reflection … The habits of the heart and the cultivation of its virtues are peripherals to the pursuit of higher learning today…. I want to argue for the possibility of a new complementarity between critical and ascetical method, and discipline a status equal to that the University now assigns to critical and technical disciplines." *Ascesis* prepared the ground for insight. Without it, insight becomes predatory, self-aggrandizing, one-

Just as conventional schools fail to provide the young with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for living well in their communities, they also fail to offer their graduates appropriate preparation for life or work outside of their communities.

> sided, and ultimately heartless. Insight grounded in *ascesis*, that mental/spiritual grasp which the Middle Ages called *intellectus*, is the primary mode of Illich's writing.

Given his insistence on "purging," Illich became irrelevant to mainstream scholars and their scholarship. So against the grain were his inquiries, so counter to a host of political projects that accompanied particular scholarly pursuits were his thought and proscriptions that the abandonment of Illich was all that most potentially interested scholars could do while promoting their careers. Grassroots peoples, in contrast, recognize that only by no longer defining themselves as *"economic beings"* can they and their communities hope to flourish. For them, Illich remains prophetic and hopeful in the present precisely to the extent that he invites devotion—to each other, to traditions, to places, and to each unique mode of living, suffering, and dying.

Grassroots Ivan Illich is compelling in that he invites all to aliveness, in full recognition of the radical contingency within which we all live. And so it is that we find Grassroots Ivan Illich now flourishing, his appeal to grassroots peoples continually growing as they recognize possibilities apart from and beyond what is taken as certain and inescapable in contexts far removed from their marginalized world. To those at the grassroots, Illich continues to speak:

> So I say let's be alive and let's celebrate—really celebrate—enjoy consciously, ritually, openly, the permission to be alive at this moment, with all our pains and with all our miseries. It seems to me an antidote to despair or religiosity—religiosity of that very evil kind. (Illich in Cayley 1992, 284)

Avoiding Utopianism

In our attempts to write about and to speak about the relevance of Illich's thinking among grassroots peoples and his comparative irrelevance within academic contexts, we find solace in his reflections on the spirit of reform and revolution that flowered during the 1960s.

> There were people who were searching for renewal. They sought this renewal through giving themselves totally to the possibility of making a new society, right now! I asked myself, Where does this idea come from? And I reflected, within this spirit of renewal, on how one could avoid ending up in the well-known American tradition of utopianism. (Illich in Cayley 1992, 213)

Illich's desire to avoid utopianism grows from the recognition that the derivation of utopia suggests no where, or no place. To live and to be really alive, incarnated, in the flesh means that neither you nor I can be no where. Utopianism, therefore, is a doomed project.

When we practice any such project not only is our failure inevitable, it also avoids the very practice that peoples fully alive at the grassroots recognize as the antidote to illusion and delusion. This practice, this antidote, is identified by Illich:

> So I began, for the first time in my reflections on history, to go back from a present experience and ask, What are the antecedents of today's revolution? Of social change today? Of the possibility of desiring social change? And I slowly remounted the ladder until I found, in Ladner, this early certainty which had so surprised him, that the most important service to the world and to others consisted in turning around one's own heart. (Illich in Cayley 1992, 213)

In attempting to "turn around one's own heart," we begin to understand how it is that peoples living at the grassroots are freeing themselves from "intimate enemies" (Nandy 1983) and social interveners alike. Just as they resist outside attempts to rescue or change them, we seek to free ourselves from these urges to do so to others—be it through consciousness raising, empowerment strategies, or engineered "A-ha's." It is this revolution that we humbly seek to realize with others, particularly those fully alive at the grassroots.

Throughout his life, Illich remained devoted to his circle of friends, naming his own vocation as one of friendship rather than one of prophesy. Together, Illich and his friends kept alive conversations across cultural boundaries—with people still close to the soil. Incarnated/organic intellectuals with grassroots peoples together celebrate the commonness of common women and men living in commons, culti-

vating common sense while remaining marginalized from the mainstream. These common men and women experience the joy of being alive and present within their commons, continually regenerated and strengthened, while not succumbing to the longest modern war: the war waged by industrial powers against subsistence and against local communities.

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Moon and Clouds

Two Poems by Gerald McCarthy

Looking for the Moon

From my sons
I have learned to look up at the sky
again, to cherish
such simple things—
this leaf
fallen to the curb
spreading its web of color
in his hand,
the pinecone
nestled in the grass
opening.
And this life
culled from so many years
of anger,
this one life surfacing now
in late autumn.
As he gives me his hand
I feel a hope welling up,
Dad, he asks
where's the moon?
Oh, how can I tell him
of that other world,
of the stupid cruelty of men
who should have known better?
The moon is there—
rising above the houses, the river
throwing its pale glow
over us, as if together
the two of us might rise
above this life,
the clouds moving
the earth moving.
Moon, moon
and so many stars.

The Clouds in the Lake

A loon
out over the flow
near Chimney Rock Wilderness
in August,
summer smells
of pine woods, wild mustard,
Queen Anne's Lace.

Look, Nathaniel
says—the sky's
in the water.

GERALD McCARTHY is the author of two volumes of poetry: *War Story: Vietnam War Poems* and *Shoetown*. He is a Professor of English at St. Thomas Aquinas College in New York and teaches poetry workshops with children at the Blue Rock School.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

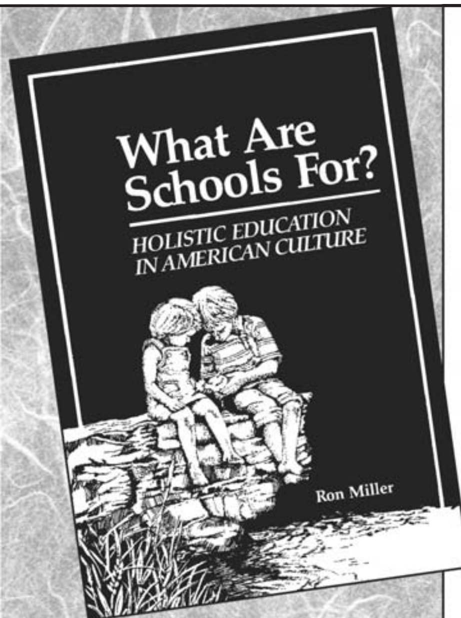
Michele Forman's criticism of vouchers in the Summer 2004 issue of ENCOUNTER is poorly argued and really attacks a "straw man." Many of her claims are simply false when applied to the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP), the nation's oldest and largest voucher program for low-income families. As a result of the MPCP, schools are more integrated, not less. Families choose schools, not the other way around. By law, no student can be turned away if the participating school has space. If a participating school has more applicants than space, a lottery must be used to determine who will be enrolled.

Ms. Forman writes: "We have two systems of education in this country.… We have one system of education for the middle class and the affluent … and we have a second system for everyone else." This is actually an argument in favor of vouchers. As Alan Wolfe of Boston College points out on the cover of Viteritti's 1999 *Choosing Equality*, "If middle class parents were unable to choose schools for their children, there would be no need for vouchers. But because they can, America, if it is to be a just society, has two alternatives: it can forbid the middle class to move to the suburbs or use private schools on the one hand, or it can allow poor and working-class parents school choice on the other. Since the former is impossible, the latter is inevitable."

Finally, Ms. Forman claims that "vouchers are an attempt to privatize education" and goes on to suggest "the answer is community involvement in our public schools." This use of language has always puzzled me. Are the families who choose to use vouchers no longer part of the "public"? Aren't private schools part of the community? If it takes an entire village to raise healthy children, why wouldn't we welcome private schools into an ecosystem of learning opportunities? (The truth, of course, is that we do, but as Alan Wolfe points out, only for those with the means to use them.)

Ms. Forman's article perpetuates the myth that people supporting vouchers are "attacking public education" while voucher opponents are "defending public education." How about "transforming" it?

Daniel Grego, Exec. Director
TransCenter for Youth
Milwaukee, WI



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Book Reviews

Confronting Racism, Poverty, and Power: Classroom Strategies to Change the World

By C. Compton-Lilly

Published by Heinemann (Portsmouth NH, 2004)

Reviewed by Theresa McGinnis

What assumptions do you hold about poor urban children and their parents? What assumptions do you hold about literacy learning? How do these assumptions support power structures within institutions like schools? Admittedly, these are tough questions to answer. However, honestly questioning our own assumptions is a step toward challenging the limitations of our taken-for-granted societal "truths" (Howard 1999). In *Confronting Racism, Poverty and Power,* Compton-Lily asks educators to question such assumptions.

The book is particularly relevant to new and pre-service teachers. In the first two sections of the book, Compton-Lily, a first grade teacher in an urban community for twelve years, uses accessible language to challenge the assumptions and myths that often surround poor urban students and their families. She draws on research she conducted with ten of her students and their families to dispel these myths and assumptions. In the last section of the book she shares with her readers classroom projects she has conducted to "create a third space where teachers, students, and parents come together" (p. 57).

"I have come to realize my assumptions are not just the result of flaws in my individual psyche, they reveal commonly accepted yet seriously flawed ways of viewing the world" (p. 6). Compton-Lily begins the book by addressing often unrecognized workings of power. Drawing on critical theories of discourse (Fairclough 1989; Gee 1990) she discusses how her assumptions or "flawed ways of viewing the world" are a part of "generally accepted dominant understandings about the world" (p. 16). The status of these dominant understandings renders the power within them invisible, and thus serves to sustain established inequities. In particular, they serve to sustain the deficit views held by educators about poor urban students and their families. The assumptions of families as not caring and as having poor parenting skills situates blame in them as individuals and diverts attention away from these workings of power in schools and societies. She states that those with power in our society are the ones with the ability to "label and explain the circumstances of others" (p. 16). Of particular import in this discussion is the idea that individual teachers do hold power, and she therefore calls upon teachers to challenge established ways of positioning students and their families.

Distinctive to this text is Compton-Lily's discussion of the unchallenged assumptions about reading. She argues that assumptions about reading are often based on the ideas of reading as the acquisition of a set of isolated skills devoid of any social or cultural context. She criticizes the National Reading Panel (NRP 2000) report as supporting "commonsense" assumptions about reading and not recognizing the sociocultural aspects of reading, though she does not offer a discussion of reading from a sociocultural perspective. Interesting to this discussion is how the parents she interviewed also support these commonsense assumptions about reading, because it was the way they were instructed when they were in elementary school. Critical to this discussion, however, is that several parents expressed their schooling experiences as painful and are now reluctant to visit schools to listen to teachers describe their own children.

In the second section, Compton-Lily confronts the myths about poor and diverse parents in poverty-stricken communities that extend beyond the myths that parents don't care about education and that they can't read. She poses many important questions that new, pre-service, and seasoned teachers should be asking themselves on a daily basis.

Confronting myths is important, because myths provide a means for laying blame (Shipler 2004). However, Compton-Lily misses many opportunities to delve deeper into the issues of power she is

Dr. Theresa McGinnis is an assistant professor in the Literacy Studies Department at Hofstra University. She has worked with urban youth for over twelve years as a teacher, tutor and professor. Her research interests focus on the connections among literacy, discourses and identity, particularly for young adolescents.

presenting. She implies that these dominant beliefs, assumptions, and "master myths" are nested in normative whiteness. Her text would be better connected if she had explicitly discussed how normative whiteness serves to sustain these beliefs and myths. Readers would benefit from a stronger connection between the sociopolitical nature of the assumptions about families and the commonsense assumptions about reading. She does not provide a critical look at how these assumptions, based on the idea that middle class literacy practices are taken as natural or normative, work in schools. For example, she does not discuss how the privileging of these traditional reading practices work in schools to marginalize poor urban students. Further, her discussion of each of the myths about poor families is limited to brief points. She does not question the ideas presented within them. This uncomplicated way of presenting the myths does not allow for the ways that people do not fit into myths or into countermyths.

In the final section, Compton-Lily provides examples from her own first grade classroom of critical literacy projects and language studies which have the potential to connect families, communities, and schools. Through these examples she demonstrates that critical literacy projects surrounding sensitive issues such as violence, gangs, and lead poisoning can be implemented with first graders. Although her descriptions of the projects leaves the reader wanting more of a critical analysis, she reveals the importance of providing students with a space where they can address the issues that are very much a part of their world. She argues, "By choosing not to deal with these issues in school, we create a boundary between the children's experiences at school and their experiences in their community. We deny the children's fears and trivialize their experiences" (p. 63). In addition, the chapter provided by her husband provides an example of how critical literacy projects can create real and meaningful dialogue in suburban classrooms and contribute to the learning of middle class students.

Though at times the discussion of issues is thin, *Confronting Racism, Poverty, and Power* can provide new and pre-service teachers with an initial look into the assumptions and myths they hold about poor urban children and their families. It also provides ideas for classroom practice that unlike the current mandated literacy curriculum, acknowledge the cultural knowledge students bring into the classroom. If educators accept Compton-Lily's call to honestly question, confront, and challenge current myths, assumptions, and curricular mandates, important changes in dominant ideologies might be made, one student at a time.

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All Work and No Play: How Educational Reforms Are Harming Our Preschoolers

By Sharna Olfman

Published by Praeger, 2003

Reviewed by Jack Petrash

It is the first day of preschool and the parents have expectantly gathered for a talk by the school's head teacher. There is both anticipation and awe about this new beginning, so the parents listen with more than usual interest. But as the talk begins, it is clear that the following message is different.

> Education today is under heavy pressures. These pressures come from outside the educational enterprise itself. It is not the teachers and the children … who account for the acceleration of education today. The demands are being made chiefly by those responsible for the economic and political policies of our nation in a difficult, threatening world.

Jack Petrash is the director of the Nova Institute <www.novainstitute.org>. He is a member of Encounter's editorial board and the author of *Understanding Waldorf Education: Teaching from the Inside Out*.

> Education is under pressure to produce smarter graduates at a faster rate…. The goal of education today: greater knowledge and greater skill. The method: start early, work hard, speed along as fast as possible…. We agree that teachers should put all their thought, heart, and will into the job of teaching…. We agree that children should work hard every day in school with might and main…. We agree that curriculum should be reviewed ever and again, so that subjects may be taught more comprehensively, yet at the same time more economically. The intelligence of children should never be underestimated…. But making children old before their time, using them up before the long race of life is well started … to this we do not agree.

These remarks, made by John Gardner (1995), a noted Waldorf educator back in 1961, pointed to a changing mood in American Education. This shift began with the surprising launch of Sputnik in 1957. In response, American schools were asked to pick up the slack and educate the country's children more rigorously to keep our nation from falling behind the Soviet Union. It was simply a matter of national defense.

Today we are still in a state of heightened concern about the education of American children. The Soviet Union is no longer the threat, but a pronounced sense of urgency remains nonetheless. Standards-Based Education has been adopted with bipartisan support on federal, state, and local levels. President Bush has urged us to raise the standards and insure that *no child is left behind.* We are lengthening the school day and the school year and introducing a rigorous academic curriculum in the preschool. Again it seems to be a matter of survival. We are told that the times are changing. Our kindergarten programs no longer have time for rest or recess, and there seems to be no time for play. But how will our children fare?

This is the question that Sharna Olfman addresses in her new book, *All Work and No Play: How Educational Reforms Are Harming Preschoolers.* In this fine edited compilation, Olfman enlists the assistance of highly respected educators—Jane Healy, Frank Wilson, Jeff Kane, Joan Almon, Dorothy and Jerome Singer—and others to explore the question: "What price will we pay for this new emphasis on early learning?"

The writers question the growing stress on preschool instruction and make a strong case for protecting our children from the invasive practice of academic acceleration. *All Work and No Play* disputes the current notion that earlier is better and makes a strong case that many of children's most important capacities are being ignored in the name of "testing and technology." What is clear from this book is that early academic instruction comes with a sizable price tag and that the children are the ones who will pay dearly for this exchange with a loss of diverse, important capacities that would have eventually strengthened and supported their long-term cognitive development.

One of the capacities that will go undeveloped is imagination. In their fine piece, Imagination and the Growth of the Human Mind, Jeffrey Kane and Heather Carpenter make a strong case for the important role that imagination plays in the work of innovative and inventive individuals like Frank Lloyd Wright, Albert Einstein, and the Nobel Prize winning scientist, Barbara McClintock. What Kane and Carpenter show convincingly is how this childlike, *playful* quality of imagination enabled these individuals to make their breakthrough discoveries. For McClintock's, it was "her ability to imagine herself within the cells themselves" which led to her groundbreaking work with DNA. "She was not on the outside looking in (at a chromosome), but on the inside looking out" (p. 132).

> I found that the more I worked with them (the chromosomes) the bigger [they} got, and when I was really working with them I wasn't outside, I was down there. I was part of the system… I was able to see the internal parts of the chromosomes—actually everything was there (Keller 1983, p. 117).

Childlike qualities of wonder and flexibility of thought were also evident in the work of Albert Einstein and Frank Lloyd Wright. What is clear from Kane and Carpenter's piece is that this invaluable capacity of imagination is developed at a young age. In fact, one of the most convincing aspects of their piece is the visual comparison of Wright's architectural designs with illustrations of paper folding and wooden block construction from the Froebelian kindergarten

that Wright attended. The similarities between his "child's play" and his innovative designs are undeniable.

Biologist Frank Wilson is also concerned with the growing emphasis on early learning. In his chapter, Handmade Minds in the Digital Age, Wilson points out that by increasing the time that children are sitting in front of a computer or at a table with a worksheet, schools impede the development of hand dexterity, a facility which will in turn impact on cognitive development.

> When personal discovery and desire prompt anyone to learn to do something well with their hands, an extremely complicated process is initiated that endows work with an emotional charge. People are changed, significantly and irreversibly it seems, when movement, thought, and feeling fuse.… In other words, if the hand and brain learn to speak to each other intimately and harmoniously, something that humans prize greatly, which we call autonomy, begins to take shape. (p. 118)

What is clear to Wilson is that the point-and-click hand movements used with a mouse do not constitute learning by doing.

In her chapter, Cybertots, Technology, and the Preschool Child, author Jane Healy takes the concern about computers in the preschool classroom even further. Healy is certain that computer use with young children will hinder the development of imagination and dexterity, but she also sees the impact of computer time leading to deficiencies in a number of other areas: ability to regulate one's own emotions; problem solving skills, flexibility, originality; motivation and persistence; attention; social skills; causal reasoning; visual imaging; and language development

What Healy finds most problematic about the use of computers with young children is how they limit human contact and connectedness. For this, Healy believes, is the key to learning.

In a large study of day care, researchers at 14 universities found that children's intelligence, academic success, and emotional stability were determined primarily by the personal and language interaction they had with adults (*New York Times* 1997, April 5). Optimally, the brain does its important work in a context of relaxed exploration guided primarily by the child and supported by helpful and emotionally responsive but not overly intrusive adults (p. 86). These thoughts are shared and expanded in Stuart Shanker's chapter, The Vital Role of Emotion in Education, and Eva-Marie Simm's piece, Play and the Transformation of Feeling: Niki's Case.

As the title of *All Work and No Play* suggests, the increasing emphasis on early learning is pushing play out of the preschool. These articles have been compiled to underscore the dramatic importance of play in the lives of young children. Joan Almon's lead article, The Vital Role of Play in Early Childhood Education, makes this clear from the start.

As play disappears from the landscape of childhood, we need to recognize that its demise will have a lasting impact. Decades of compelling research has shown that without play, children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development is compromised. They will develop without much imagination and creativity. Their capacity for communication will be diminished and their tendency toward aggressiveness and violence will increase. In short, human nature as we have known it will be profoundly altered, intensifying many of the problems that are already afflicting children and society" (p. 39).

All Work and No Play provides a variety of perspectives on the dilemma facing early childhood educators in this era of No Child Left Behind. It is an excellent resource for early childhood programs committed to a child-centered, developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum. But perhaps the greatest value of *All Work and No Play* is that it forces the reader to examine the growing push for early academics. Hopefully, this compilation of convincing articles will find its way into the hands of teachers, parents, and policy makers who can influence the governmental decisions that will affect our nation's children for years to come.

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