

Radicalization of Teacher
Education Programs in the United States

Nine Essays



September 2012

Contents

Introduction.....	1
The Cult of Paulo Freire.....	3
Radicalizing Early Childhood Education	7
The Zinn of History: Shape It Into a Social-Justice Weapon.....	9
Activist Advocacy Masquerading as Research on Teacher Preparation.....	12
Stereotyping, Scapegoating, and the Doctrine of“White Privilege”.....	14
Radical Politicization at University of California Campuses	16
Critical Race Theory.....	18
Preparing Teachers to Propagate a Doctrine of Social Justice in their K-12 Classrooms.....	21
Transformative Learning	23

Radicalization of Teacher Education Programs in the United States

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Introduction

These nine essays chronicle prominent examples where the advancement of radical agendas has displaced the development of subject-content mastery in America's schools of education.

Institutional racism, redistributionist ideology, resisting oppression, and equipping teachers with the tools to transform their students' perspectives – each of these factor heavily into the entrenched indoctrination to which many education school candidates must prepare to expose themselves. Reading lists of prospective teachers are top-heavy with near-cult figures for the Left, such as Brazilian Marxist Paulo Freire and revisionist historian Howard Zinn. The examples described in this paper are steeped in these and other agendas.

Proponents of these agendas are not difficult to find within education school communities. And at national and regional conferences held by organizations like the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy and the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), workshop titles and painted banners proclaim their intentions in bold strokes.

“...It is pretended that, as in the Preamble to the Constitution, it is ‘we the people’ who wrote that document, rather than fifty-five privileged white males whose class interest required a strong central government. That use of government for class purposes, to serve the needs of the wealthy and powerful, has continued throughout American history, down to the present day. It is disguised by language that suggests all of us — rich and poor and middle class — have a common interest.”

— Howard Zinn, A People's History of the United States

Many who attend these conferences do so using taxpayer funding, and are able to satisfy professional development requirements toward becoming “highly qualified teachers.” The conferences are co-sponsored by entities that receive funding presumed to ensure that the nation’s elementary and secondary educators are equipped with the knowledge of their craft and the content they will be teaching. For instance, the 2011 NAME national conference was cosponsored by the National Education Association (the nation’s largest teacher union), Northern Illinois University and the University of Michigan.

In that conference’s keynote address, radical educator William Ayers challenged his audience, “How do we resist the oppression we find all around us?” He led the crowd in applauding the Occupy movement protestors who had shut down the Port of Oakland days earlier, and he bemoaned “the triumph of corporate power.”

NAME President Christine Sleeter followed, also expressing solidarity with the Occupy movement and its “linking capitalism with international racism globally.” She asked, “How do we (NAME) build a more powerful social movement?”

Their audience, which included educators and administrators from public school districts and some two dozen public universities enrolled in the conference, applauded with enthusiasm. Over a week in downtown Chicago, they attended workshops, film screenings, and lectures. And despite enjoying the session with help from taxpayer funding while satisfying teacher training requirements, there was no evidence to be found that the proceedings would inform their own knowledge of history, mathematics, or the teaching of reading.

This collection of essays addresses nine representative examples of radical agendas found in teacher preparation programs in the United States. Some discuss authors, most notably Paulo Freire and Howard Zinn, who remain broadly popular across schools of education, and whose work is regularly assigned as required reading in even the most prestigious.

Others discuss more recent trends, such as the increasing pressures to radicalize early childhood education by introducing the teaching of social justice, gender identity, and “unlearning racism” to three and four year olds. Still others among the topics discussed here (Critical Race Theory, Transformative Learning and Social Justice Education) have gained popularity on higher education campuses over the past thirty years, while K-12 teacher candidates continue to be exposed to indoctrination campaigns as part of their preservice training.

It is an unfortunate, but well documented, reality that this training too often includes only minimal formal instruction in the subject areas for which aspiring teachers will be responsible once they take charge of classrooms of their own. Lacking in basic knowledge they could have gained studying the subjects they will teach leaves many teaching candidates under-equipped to address the well-documented, worrisome decline in student levels of skills and knowledge in American public schools.

“Oppressor” versus “oppressed,” and the latter rising up to overthrow the existing system.

The Cult of Paulo Freire

By Robert Holland

How many parents, who expect their kids will be taught the basics during the school day, have any earthly idea who Paulo Freire was? Do they have a clue why his way of thinking remains a powerful influence in U.S. education 15 years after his death?

Have they ever heard of Freire’s masterwork, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was first published in the USA in 1970?

Do they know that Freire, a Brazilian educator who drew on Marxist class-warfare ideology to devise strategies to radicalize schools, is a figure deeply revered in many of the schools of education that train our K-12 teachers and prepare them to be state-certified?

Are they aware that a 2004 study of syllabi (Steiner and Rozen) used in some of the nation’s most prestigious schools of education found that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was one of the most commonly assigned texts in Foundations of Education courses?

Most of the other required books were from the constructivist or progressive schools of thought. Few schools assigned the works of E.D. Hirsch, Jr., founder of the exemplary Core Knowledge schools, or those of acknowledged experts in the teaching of beginning reading such as Louisa Moats, Jeanne Chall, and Marilyn Adams.

UCLA’s Graduate School of Education even houses a separate Paulo Freire Institute, one of nearly a dozen worldwide, to help spread the radical ideas of the Brazilian pedagogue as widely as possible. The Institute will celebrate its 10th anniversary this September. Its website describes its current work this way:

The oppressed must see examples of the vulnerability of the oppressor so that a contrary conviction can begin to grow within them. Until this occurs, they will continue disheartened, fearful, and beaten.

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

“We are working on a number of fronts to maintain and expand Paulo Freire’s teachings, through a 16-country globalization project that looks at educational reform, through teacher training programs that introduce and augment social justice themes, through interaction with communities across the Americas, through a growing series of publications and presentations spreading the Freirian message and through classes and

programs that are helping to educate the next generation to more seriously consider the ramifications of standardized testing, standardized curricula, loss of teacher autonomy, and the corporate colonization of our classrooms.”

Do parents have any idea that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* over the past four decades has achieved what conservative commentator Sol Stern describes as “near-iconic status in America’s teacher-training programs”?

Indeed, close to one million copies have been sold, making it a runaway bestseller among professional education books.

Yet, as Stern pointed out in a 2009 article for *City Journal*, Freire’s heralded work is not even a book primarily about education, or at least not the education of children. It delves into none of the issues that concern mainstream American education thinkers, such as ability grouping, the role of parents, the place of phonics in beginning reading, or the constructive uses of testing. Instead, this ed-school favorite is “a utopian political tract calling for the overthrow of capitalist hegemony and the creation of classless societies.”

Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression.

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

Freire’s work might be most appropriate in a political science course comparing international ideologies of left and right. It is understandable how in working with Third World peasants in Brazil and elsewhere, Freire came up with a world view lumping all people into either an “oppressor” or “oppressed” category. However, it is absurd when U.S. multiculturalists attempt to transfer the Freirian classifications straight into American classrooms and implement oppression studies based on those assumptions, without regard for this country’s well-documented progress in equalizing opportunity.

Again, do parents who entrust their children to the government-controlled schools have a clue about the radical agendas that many ed-schools are pushing upon teacher candidates? Do they believe that if state education departments certify teachers as a result of completing all those education-school credits, their academic preparation was sound? They should not make such an assumption unless they believe schooling should be about political indoctrination instead of transmitting critical knowledge and skills, and encouraging kids to become well-informed, independent thinkers.

Freire’s notions about teachers taking a passive role in classrooms do reinforce those long held by many professors of education.

For a century or more, education progressives have advocated for instruction being child-centered instead of teacher-directed. The idea is that instead of being “a sage on the stage”

transmitting knowledge, a teacher should be a “guide on the side” working with kids on an equal basis to construct their own knowledge. Believers in teacher-directed instruction have sometimes gotten the upper hand, as achievement scores inevitably plummeted, and so the battle has gone back and forth.

In recent years, Freire’s dismissal of teacher-directed instruction as a terribly misguided “banking concept” — with students just passively receiving and filing away “deposits” of knowledge dispensed by teachers — meshed perfectly with progressive thinking, and caught a wave that now washes over education.

So with the anti-knowledge mindset ascendant, a big push now is the teaching of social justice. This is by no means about the ideals of truth-seeking and justice embedded in the American constitutional system. Rather, in keeping with Freire’s theories, it is about “oppressors” versus “the oppressed,” and the latter rising up to overthrow the existing system. (Freire is complimentary of such revolutionary leaders as long-time Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, praising him for sacrificial love bestowed on those who had been brutalized by the Batista dictatorship. He says nothing of Castro’s own brutally repressive practices.)

Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* — as reinterpreted by American multiculturalists — is about government-enforced redistribution. It is about schools being all in for political activism. It is about kids being taught to hate the common culture, American heritage, and capitalism.

Another term for social-justice education is critical pedagogy. One of the ed-school advocates and authors who has followed in the Freire tradition is Chicago professor William Ayers, a Sixties-era domestic terrorist who turned to education as an alternate way to advance his anti-capitalist agenda. His books rival Freire’s in ed-school popularity. Ayers actively worked with Barack Obama on education issues in Chicago before Obama’s 2008 election as President.

At conventions of the National Association for Multicultural Education, the “oppressor” versus “oppressed” dichotomy dominates many discussions. If you are a white European-American, you are an oppressor, no matter if your ancestors fought slavery or if you grew up poor. If you are a member of any minority of color, you are oppressed, even if you are the child of a multi-millionaire. The individual is nothing; the group is everything.

At these gatherings, participants cite the late Paulo Freire as if he wrote gospel. Rarely if ever do they disagree among themselves. These sessions are evangelical about “white” and “Christian” privilege, and insist that all the presumed privileged folks reject their status, recognize their bias, do penance, and become warriors for “social justice” back in their classrooms.

And so it is that schools gradually concentrate less on their traditional mission of teaching useful academic skills and factual knowledge, and more on leftist indoctrination of the nation’s youth and radical transformation of schools and society.

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Providing teachers with the tools to change the world.

Radicalizing Early Childhood Education

By Don Soifer

The value of early childhood education in closing achievement gaps is a concept that has continued to gain prominence across American education. High-quality pre-kindergarten classrooms that incorporate research-based instructional programs are increasingly demonstrating that children from financially disadvantaged households do not need to arrive at their first day of kindergarten less prepared to learn than their peers from more prosperous homes.

But educators looking to make gains in early reading readiness are not the only ones eyeing the pre-kindergarten classroom door. Others harboring various agendas are also maneuvering teacher training channels, seeking opportunities to gain leverage in influencing young minds, some of which include decidedly murkier and even definitively radical elements.

“We believe that social justice and ecological teaching offers a much-needed vision for early childhood education in the face of the challenges weighing on the field and confronting the planet,” surmises Ann Pelo, editor of the anthology *Rethinking Early Childhood Education*, published by Rethinking Schools, which actively promotes a social-justice agenda.

*Early childhood educators
have a serious responsibility
to find ways to prevent and
counter the damage before it
becomes too deep.*

— Louise Derman-Sparks,
*Rethinking Early Childhood
Education*

Among the ways the textbook instructs early childhood educators to raise awareness in their classrooms is this observation, in a section about ways gender labels can be confusing: “Between 3 and 5 years of age, children try to figure out... what aspects of self remain constant. They wonder: Will I always be a girl or a boy?” Such a discussion raises questions of gay and lesbian identity, as well as bisexual and transgender (GLBT) roles. Far from the earshot of parents, introducing children to transgender identities does certainly empower teachers with opportunities to frame the ways children perceive the world and their role within it.

Education journals, such as that of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, direct teachers to pursue such questions further, using such approaches as “Adapt stories and songs to reflect and include GLBT families,” while warning that, “silence on this issue will have damaging outcomes for children.

Often, teacher training programs move quickly past questions of race to focus early childhood teachers on perceptions of white privilege. “In order to develop robust action plans to challenge racism and privilege in their classrooms, early childhood education students need access to a range of anti-racist education resources,” argued a 2001 article in the journal, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*. Its author proceeds to discuss “anti-racist leadership camps” where “unlearning racism” is a central element to teacher preparation.

Beyond simply publishing articles, some activist organizations espousing political agendas have become directly involved in early childhood education. Teaching for Change, a Washington DC-based group that operates a popular chain of progressive coffeehouses and bookstores, has expanded into professional development and training programs for early childhood educators.

The group, whose stated mission is to “provide teachers and parents with the tools to transform schools into centers of justice where students learn to read, write, and change the world,” encourages teachers to “question and re-think the world inside and outside their classrooms.”

Teaching for Change places emphasis on civil rights history and lessons, but is rarely hesitant in associating its work with more radical progressivist proponents. It maintains a partnership with Rethinking Schools on the Zinn Education Project, dedicated to advancing the radical teachings of popular author Howard Zinn, and works closely with the National Coalition of Education Activists and the National Association for Multicultural Education. Since 2003, the Teaching for Change Early Childhood Equity Initiative has conducted professional development training for early childhood educators in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

“Between 3 and 5 years of age, children try to figure out... what aspects of self remain constant. They wonder: Will I always be a girl or a boy?”

— *Rethinking Early Childhood Education*

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Washington's Farewell Address, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and Reagan's speech at the Brandenburg Gate all fail to merit a mention.

The Zinn of History: Shape It Into a Social-Justice Weapon

By Robert Holland

Numerous studies have established that college students preparing to be teachers study precious little U.S. history. However, what little they do study may well come from the work of one revisionist, Howard Zinn, who has treated the totality of American history as an exercise in depravity and class warfare, with the rich oppressing the poor at every turn.

Zinn published a modest paperback entitled *A People's History of the United States*, in 1980, with a press run of just 4,000 copies. However, largely due to its popularity in academe, including the teacher-training colleges, total sales are now approaching 2 million. At teacher conferences sponsored by such organizations as the National Association for Multicultural Education and the National Council for the Social Studies, Howard Zinn's work is treated as thoroughly authoritative and he is an adored cult-like figure, not unlike the late Brazilian Marxist Paulo Freire.

Zinn casts the United States as the villain in virtually every event since its founding, and right up to the present. In his view, capitalist greed has oppressed not just minority-groups and women, but 'workers' throughout history. As Daniel J. Flynn observed in a review for History News Network, "If you've read Marx, there's really no reason to read Howard Zinn."

When they meet with their child's teacher throughout a school year, parents might want to inquire in a friendly way what historians the teachers studied in college, or which ones they most admire. Chances are that they will name Zinn and *A People's*

History instead of Pulitzer-Prize winning historians of the caliber of David McCullough and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. Amazon.com surveys have shown that Zinn's work ranks high in popularity in universities and college towns across America, a sign that many professors are assigning the work.

"In a series of moves abroad and at home, it {the Truman Administration} established a climate of fear — a hysteria about Communism — which would steeply escalate the military budget and stimulate the economy with war-related orders. This combination of policies would permit more aggressive actions abroad, more repressive actions at home."

— Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*

If their child's teacher studied Zinn as the final word in history, parents should follow closely the lessons their kids bring home from school, and be prepared to challenge anti-American-heritage propaganda. They also might want to join other parents in raising issues with curriculum supervisors and even the school board.

One positive feature of Howard Zinn, who died of a heart attack in 2010, is that he was upfront about his objective of pushing a radical political agenda in classroom teaching. In a November 16, 2008, keynote address to more than 800 teachers at a National Council for the Social Studies conference in Houston, Zinn said he thought teachers of social studies wanted more than transmission of knowledge that can be tested on an exam.

"They want it that young people should come out of their classes, I think, you know, imbued with desire to change the world. A modest little aim, right? That's what we want."

Zinn's appearance was sponsored by the Zinn Education Project, which continues to promote and support use of *A People's History* and other Zinn works in middle and high schools throughout the nation. For instance, the project offers teachers more than 100 downloadable lessons from its website. Its sponsors are the non-profit organizations, Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change, both of which were launched in the 1980s to push "social justice" agendas via public-school teaching.

Examples of Zinn's class-warfare take can be found on practically every page of his 729-page book. In his view, most major historical developments from the nation's founding to the Civil War to both World Wars are explainable by the greed of rich men seeking to exploit the downtrodden. Nor did he spare the British:

"Behind the English invasion of North America, behind their massacre of Indians, their deception, their brutality, was that special powerful drive born in civilizations based on private property," asserted Zinn.

As for the stirring words of the Declaration of Independence, Zinn opined that "the reality" behind them was "that a rising class of important people needed to enlist on their side enough Americans to defeat England, without disturbing too much the relations of wealth and power that had developed over 150 years of colonial history."

In one of the final chapters of *A People's History*, Zinn lets go of any pretense of writing an historical account and goes on a conspiratorial/redistributionist rant that sounds like (and might actually be) script for the recent "Occupy Wall Street" movement:

"The American system is the most ingenious system of control in world history. With a country so rich in natural resources, talent, and labor power the system can afford to distribute just enough wealth to just enough people to limit discontent to a troublesome minority. . . .

"One percent of the nation owns a third of the wealth. The rest of the wealth is distributed in such a way as to turn those in the 99 percent against one another: small

property owners against the property-less, black against white, native-born against foreign-born, intellectuals and professionals against the uneducated and unskilled...

“Against the reality of that desperate, bitter battle for resources made scarce by elite control, I am taking the liberty of uniting those 99 percent as ‘the people.’ I have been writing a history that attempts to represent their submerged, deflected, common interest. To emphasize the commonality of the 99 percent, to declare deep enmity of interest with the 1 percent, is to do exactly what the governments of the United States, and the wealthy elite allied to them – from the Founding Fathers to now – have tried their best to prevent....”

This creed reveals (if there was any doubt before) that, rather than the work of a legitimate historian, his is the product of some other messenger, perhaps a left-wing messianic complex. Zinn omits virtually every positive accomplishment of the U.S. in striving to become a society of equal opportunity for all.

As reviewer Flynn noted, “Washington’s Farewell Address, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, and Reagan’s speech at the Brandenburg Gate all fail to merit a mention. Nowhere do we learn that Americans were first in flight, first to fly across the Atlantic, and first to walk on the moon. Alexander Graham Bell, Jonas Salk, and the Wright Brothers are entirely absent. Instead, the reader is treated to the exploits of Speckled Snake, Joan Baez, and the Berrigan Brothers Valley Forge rates a single fleeting reference, while D-Day’s Normandy invasion, Gettysburg, and other important military battles are skipped over. In their place, we get several pages on the My Lai massacre and colorful descriptions of U.S. bombs falling on hotels, air-raid shelters, and markets during the Gulf War of the early 1990s.”

The widespread substitution of Zinn’s leftist slant for serious study of U.S. history in colleges and universities, including their programs of teacher preparation, makes one almost despair for the revival of serious scholarship. This is a serious concern that ought to be higher on the agenda of school reform than it currently is.

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Activist Advocacy Masquerading as Research on Teacher Preparation

By Robert Holland

Objective research on what works best in the classroom could be of immense help to both new and experienced teachers. Unfortunately, much of what is presented as research in teacher education is nothing more than blatant propagation of left-wing ideology.

A prime example is found at the University of Illinois/Chicago where two academic organizations associated with the School of Education – the Center for Anti-Oppressive Education and the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy – push the agendas of activist research on teacher preparation.

The organizers of the Center's 2009 International Conference on Teacher Education and Social Justice lamented that educators face "economic, social, and political contexts that make difficult our attempts to address differences and oppressions {sic} in schools and society." They thought that presentations on "cutting-edge research" would be part of the solution.

For its part, the Center states on its website that it focuses on "promoting and coordinating engaged research on racial justice and related issues of poverty." It adds that a central aim is "to increase the quantity, quality, and relevance of research on persistent racial inequalities, and to advance policy solutions linked to social justice outcomes."

"Even {Che} Guevara's unmistakable style of narrating his and his comrades' experiences, of describing his contacts with the 'poor, loyal' peasants in almost evangelical language, reveals this remarkable man's deep capacity for love and communication."

— Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

These statements clearly show that research is viewed as a tool to push a redistributionist agenda and not as a search for truth free of preconceived notions.

This slanted view of research within the education world is not isolated to particular schools of education. The largest organization of education researchers, the 25,000-member American Educational Research Association (AERA), actively promotes a radical agenda in teacher preparation, even though its website self-description sounds quite benign. The AERA professes to be "concerned with improving the educational process by encouraging scholarly inquiry related to education and evaluation and by promoting the dissemination and practical application of research results."

In practice, the AERA is far more about advocacy, especially related to teaching, than it is about objective research. Its annual conferences typically put that bias on full display. The 2010 gathering in Denver featured 136 sessions on “social justice,” 96 on “diversity,” 52 on “critical race theory,” and 28 on “feminist theory.”

Sample fare from the 2011 international conference in New Orleans included sessions such as the following:

- “Abolishing Whiteness for the Public Good: A Critical Analysis of Whiteness Studies.” Sub-topics included “From Sadomasochism to Humanization: Toward an Abolitionist Theory of White Guilt,” “Maintaining Equilibrium: A Challenge to White Silence in Racial Discussions,” and “White ‘Supremacy’ and Me: The Making and Breaking of Race(ism).”
- “Preparing to Teach for Social Justice: What Novice Teachers Tell Us.”
- “Preparing White Educators to Enact Critical Multiculturalism in Non-dominant School Communities Through Mindfulness.”
- “What Do You Mean ‘Teaching for Social Justice?’ Different Conceptions in Social Justice Teacher Education.” Subtopics: “Enacting Compassionate, Critical, Justice-Oriented Teacher Education,” “Playing Well With Others: Redistributing Knowledge, Roles, and Relationships in Social Justice Teacher Education,” “Mathematics as Un-Neutral: Teaching as a Political Act,” “Podcasting for Social Justice?” “Seeing with New Eyes: The Power of Equity Audits in Teachers’ Commitments to Social Justice.”

Clearly, personal feelings and political agendas play heavily into what passes for research at the AERA. In a 2009 newsletter, AERA’s then-vice president of curriculum studies, Bill Ayers (a Chicago education professor and founder of the terroristic Weather Underground in the 1960s), urged that “teachers, scholars, and researchers appropriately think about and consider questions of identity and proportionality in our work — what history and orientation and structural ecologies create the frames through which we define ourselves and view the world? What lived experiences of privilege or oppression shape our sense of entitlement or possibility?”

Many school systems send teachers to conferences such as the AERA’s where they can receive professional development credit for attending sessions that are little more than radical-left brainstorming sessions. Taxpayers should have a right to know they are bankrolling this indoctrination of teachers and the power to terminate their support.

*A journey in understanding white supremacy,
whiteness, privilege, power, and oppression.*

Stereotyping, Scapegoating, and the Doctrine of “White Privilege”

By Robert Holland

The notion that all white people enjoy special advantages unavailable to non-white people, and that teachers therefore should be super-sensitive to the needs of the presumed victims, became popular with the 1988 publication of an article by Wellesley College professor, Peggy McIntosh, entitled “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack.” She opined that white privilege is a “package of unearned assets which {whites} can count on cashing in every day...”

Liberal academe has proceeded to make white privilege a central element of oppression studies for future teachers. Christine Sleeter, a teacher-ed professor at California State University/Monterey Bay and leader of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), has argued that multiculturalism should be about fighting white racism rather than appreciating diversity: “Both historically and in contemporary society, the relationships between racial and ethnic groups in this country are framed within a context of unequal power. People of European descent generally assume the power to claim the land, claim the resources, claim the language. They even claim the right to frame the culture and identity of who we are as Americans. This has been the case ever since Columbus landed on the North American continent.”

“To emphasize the commonality of the 99 percent, to declare deep enmity of interest with the 1 percent, is to do exactly what the governments of the United States, and the wealthy elite allied to them – from the Founding Fathers to now – have tried their best to prevent...”

— Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States

Over the past 12 years, teachers from across the country have flocked, at taxpayer expense, to a White Privilege Conference sponsored by a variety of activist groups. The most recent session at the University of Minnesota on April 13-16, 2011, attracted 1,500 teachers and asked participants to confront their biases in a “journey in understanding white supremacy, whiteness, privilege, power, and oppression,” and “agree to take action in {their} own sphere of power.” Meanwhile, the Omaha (NE) public schools recently spent \$130,000 in federal stimulus funds to buy a training manual instructing teachers to acknowledge the reality of white privilege in everything they do. The district gave the manual, 8,000 copies in all, to every employee in its system.

Clearly, the purpose of this advocacy is to induce a sense of guilt among white educators, and particularly white males, in keeping with the following pronouncement by Paul Gorski, a NAME activist and professor of integrative studies at George Mason University in Northern Virginia:

“I must acknowledge that, as a white, heterosexual, first-language-English-speaking man in the U.S., I have access to a degree of institutional likability that most people of color, lesbians and gay men, people who speak first languages other than English, and women, do not enjoy, and that this discrepancy is based on nothing more than unearned privilege.”

The doctrine of White Privilege organizes all individuals, regardless of their circumstances or goodness of heart, into one of two groups: oppressor or the oppressed. Non-whites are supposed to think of themselves as perpetual victims, while whites are to atone for their sins by acceding to any social remedies prescribed by the left-liberal intelligentsia. As a National Association of Scholars analyst has observed, this noxious doctrine “is based on envy, resentment, false pride, false humility, and a desire to gain power over others without having to earn it. It is the opposite of education in every sense.”

Radical Politicization at University of California Campuses

By Robert Holland

Many of the radical concepts espoused in many of the nation's teacher-preparation institutions, including themes such as teaching for social justice and Critical Race Theory, have an underlying political agenda. The pursuit of such subjective agendas tarnishes academe's traditional mission of pursuing truth objectively and teaching students to possess basic knowledge and reason independently.

In a richly sourced, hard-hitting report prepared for the Regents of the University of California and released in April 2012, the California Association of Scholars (CAS) found pervasive radicalism throughout all nine campuses of the Cal system. While documenting politicized courses taught by hard-core leftist professors in a wide range of academic departments, the researchers concluded that UC schools of education "completed the cycle of politicization." They demonstrated how such an assault on the core mission of preparing capable teachers is having a devastating impact on the quality of K-12 public schools.

In the 1990s, the report noted, a respected scholar who studied schools of education found that the goal of professional education had shifted from one of transmitting the common culture and basic skills of literacy to converting public schools into agencies of social change, with indoctrinated teachers acting as the change agents. Rita Kramer (*Ed-School Follies*) found that many schools of education consciously seek to denigrate the historical institutions that make America what it is. And she connected that kind of politicization to the worrisome decline in student levels of skills and knowledge of such subjects as U.S. history in American public schools.

Noting that Kramer had visited more institutions in California than anywhere else, the California Association of Scholars said her general conclusions certainly applied to the Golden State. Moreover, they presented evidence from a very recent report by the Sacramento-based Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy that the condition of public education has grown even worse well into the 21st Century partly as a result of the continuing politicization of academe:

"The state ranks no better than 39th in the share of 8th graders who score at the proficient level or better on the National Assessment of Educational Progress The high school graduation rate for the state is 68%, ranking 36th among the states. . . . In terms of academic preparation for college, California performs worse than most states. . . . The state ranks 41st on the number of bachelor's degrees awarded per 100 high school grads 6 years earlier."

The conclusion that a bad college education is leaving would-be teachers "unable to write, read, and reason, as well as lacking in basic knowledge" is buttressed by the mounds of evidence these researchers gathered on how the academic mission is being perverted by leftist politics. Consider just this small sampling of the report's findings:

- There has been a sharp rise in UC professors who self-identify as radicals, leading to the widespread phenomenon of “one-party” academic departments. For instance at UC/Berkeley, left-of-center faculty outnumber right-of-center faculty by a ratio of 28:2 in political science, 29:1 in English, and 31:1 in history. Some of the leftists openly embrace Marxism.
- In a number of departments, the advance of “social justice” (which, translated, means government-enforced redistribution) is the upfront objective of faculty members and even entire academic departments. As noted elsewhere in this paper, preparation of teachers to be advocates for social-justice ideology in their classrooms is common at many schools of education throughout the nation. The CAS report documents many instances of students being punished with low grades if they challenge their professors’ radical views expressed in the classroom.
- Many curricula on UC campuses advance political activism, in violation of explicit University regulations against such practice. One example is “Critical Race Studies” at UCLA’s School of Law, which has the objective of providing a “training ground” for advocates of this theory of racial justice. This brand of politicization is reminiscent of that of Professor Derrick Bell at Harvard Law School in the 1990s, and his backing by a young law-journal editor named Barack Obama. Critical Race Theory is widely championed by today’s ed-school professoriate as well.
- Numerous departments “attempt to erase the study of Western tradition.” History majors are not required to take so much as a survey course in Western civilization at any of the UC campuses. Four UC campuses have dropped history requirements altogether. The steady elimination of the academic discipline of history cannot help but further reduce the historical knowledge that young teachers bring into public-school classrooms.

As the CAS report points out, the effect of these destructive trends is to cancel the leveling influence of higher education that particularly has benefitted the have-nots of society. In particular: “For minorities, the transformation of the curriculum by radical activists has been nothing short of catastrophic. In effect, control over an education that should be leading to full equality in the mainstream of our society has been placed in the hands of people who loathe that mainstream and do not want students to join it. Anyone who cares about upward mobility for minorities should be saddened by this result.”

Source

“A Crisis of Competence: The Corrupting Effect of Political Activism in the University of California,” a report prepared for the Regents of the University of California by the California Association of Scholars, a Division of the National Association of Scholars. <http://www.nas.org/images/documents/ACrisisofCompetence.pdf>

The need to “reprogram” pre-service teachers.

Critical Race Theory

By Robert Holland

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a radical academic doctrine that gained currency in elite U.S. law schools in the 1980s and ‘90s, and has more recently taken hold with multiculturalism advocates in teacher-training institutions. Its central tenet is that institutional racism pervades and drives American culture – an assertion consistent with the multiculturalist view popular in many schools of education that America has been an oppressive force from its formative days to the present.

One of the progenitors of CRT, the late Derrick Bell, a Harvard University law professor, berated liberal civil-rights scholars for their championing of a colorblind society. Like many of his allies, he relied largely on narrative and anecdote to advance his arguments, and argued for sweeping societal transformation generated more by political organizing than rights-based legal remedies.

Critics rightly point out that by relying on such untestable stories and theories, CRT radicals reject the Western tradition of rational inquiry and analysis. In short, they depend on stereotypes rather than reason. (Recently, controversy arose with the airing of a 1991 video showing Barack Obama, then the law-review editor at Harvard, heaping praise on Derrick Bell and embracing him at a Harvard Law School rally demanding greater faculty diversity.)

The spread of CRT doctrine to other branches of academe, notably including education, was evident in a January 2011 event at the University of New Mexico. An organization called the UNM Critical Race Theory Working Group hosted a combined teach-in and school-board candidates’ forum. The teach-in focused on introducing students from high school to grad school to CRT “by considering the effects of structural and institution racism on public education in New Mexico.” Participants then developed questions to pose to local school board members with the obvious hope of influencing their views.

Composed of students, faculty, and staff dedicated to “race-conscious analysis,” the Working Group stated its dedication to “a perspective that rejects colorblindness {sic} and liberal notions of individuality . . . and that asserts that race and color matter in this society and that our racial affiliations also matter to how we see and interpret the world.”

“Reprogram” preservice teachers by promoting in them “an understanding of Whiteness and the prevalence of racism.”

— Dr. Thandela K. Chapman,
University of
Wisconsin-Milwaukee

A review of biographical information for the Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies faculty of the UNM College of Education shows that several professors have scholarly connections with Critical Race Theory and related fields.

Also in Spring 2011, the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee showed in a special release of a publication called *Myriad* how Critical Race Theory figures into schemes for transforming society through teacher preparation. In an introductory essay, Dr. Gary L. Williams, a research director and clinical assistant professor at the Milwaukee school, wrote that as CRT scholars, “we seek to demonstrate that our experiences as CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse) people are legitimate, appropriate, and effective bases for analyzing the legal system and racial subordination.” Citing several authorities on education and law, he concluded that CRT is a theory that. . .

1. Recognizes that racism is endemic in U.S. society, deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and even psychologically.
2. Crosses epistemological boundaries. It borrows from several traditions, including liberalism, law and society, feminism, Marxism, post structuralism, cultural nationalism, and pragmatism.
3. Reinterprets civil rights law in light of its limitations, illustrating that laws to remedy racial inequality are often undermined before they can be fully implemented.
4. Portrays dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for the self-interest of powerful entities of society.”

“The oppressed must see examples of the vulnerability of the oppressor so that a contrary conviction can begin to grow within them. Until this occurs, they will continue disheartened, fearful, and beaten.”

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

In an article on the need for CRT-focused transformation of teacher education, Dr. Thandeka K. Chapman, a professor in Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s Department of Curriculum and Instruction, wrote of the need to “reprogram” pre-service teachers by

promoting in them “an understanding of Whiteness and the prevalence of racism. . . .” Quoting several CRT scholars, she said this reprogramming must be done “before he/she is allowed to teach children.” A particular concern of CRT theorists is the predominance of white female candidates for teaching who (as Chapman puts it) “have very little understanding of racism, sexism, classism, and national origin.”

Chapman's analysis does make some legitimate criticisms of the monolithic nature of teacher certification. For instance, she points out how alternative certification often advocated by conservatives actually allows more non-traditional candidates into teaching. However, the relentless racial obsessiveness built into CRT is a serious barrier to the doctrine ever being a viable organizing principle of teacher preparation. CRT grossly downplays the importance of the individual and a teacher's being able to transmit fundamental skills and knowledge to her or his students in an objective manner. While some advocates may be sincere in their critiques of the public education system, the more radical strains of Critical Race Theory have much in common with Marxist schemes to enforce redistributionist change on a free society.

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Implementing an agenda of radical social transformation.

Preparing Teachers to Propagate a Doctrine of Social Justice in their K-12 Classrooms

By Robert Holland

Advocates typically fail to define the term “social justice” with any clarity. However, from the writings of long-time University of Illinois/Chicago education professor Bill Ayers, and teacher workshops conducted by organizations like the National Association for Multicultural Education, the premise is clear: The United States is a culturally and economically oppressive nation in dire need of radical transformation. The objective is the redistribution of wealth and power by means of government action.

As Nobel laureate economist F.A. Hayek once observed, the price of such a course would be “the complete abolition of personal liberty,” but that does not deter social-justice advocates who value the rights of groups over individuality.

Parents and taxpayers deserve to know when and where teachers of their children are being indoctrinated to work for this radical-left agenda instead of teaching pupils literature, math, history, science, and computer skills. And school boards and governing bodies should guard against letting taxpayer funds be misused to support such propaganda.

Many schools of education have elements of social-justice advocacy in their curricula, but two examples that deserve special attention are:

“More and more, the oppressors are using science and technology as unquestionably powerful instruments for their purpose: the maintenance of the oppressive order through manipulation and repression. The oppressed, as objects, as “things,” have no purposes except those their oppressors prescribe for them.”

— Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

The University of Massachusetts/Amherst’s School of Education offers an entire “Social Justice Education Concentration,” complete with numerous required courses and a practicum for implementing social-justice initiatives in schools starting with kindergarten. <http://www.umass.edu/sje/courses.html>

The menu of 3-credit courses begins with EDUC 522, an exercise in “self awareness” whereby students are to ponder their own group identity and analyze “multiple forms of oppression and {their} impact on leadership ability.” In EDUC 609, students explore the dynamics of working in small “multicultural groups.” EDUC 624, required for first-semester SJE majors and doctoral students, “focuses on a range of theoretical issues

related to different manifestations of oppression,” with attention to “historical roots” and “contemporary constructions of social justice issues as they play out in educational contexts.”

As an indication of how deeply SJE’s tentacles are to reach into everyday education, EDUC 627 is all about how to plan, implement, and evaluate social-justice curricula for local schools. The would-be teachers visit schools where this ideology is practiced and then collaborate with classmates in designing their own curricula.

Among other courses of note is one (EDUC 691E) that requires students to attend a series of weekend seminars, each of which delves into a “different form of social oppression,” such as “sexism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ableism, and classism.” One Practicum (EDUC 693N) entitled “Social Justice in Schools” is designed “to guide students in implementing, evaluating, and reflecting upon social justice education initiatives in elementary and secondary schools. Among other things, this course promises students ‘an introduction to action research methods.’”

Clearly, this course of study is intended to send its graduates into classrooms to be agents of radical social change rather than as teachers of basic knowledge and upholders of values parents would like their children to hold dear.

At California State University/Fresno (“Fresno State”), the Kremen School of Education & Human Development offers online a Masters of Arts in Teaching that is heavily focused on social justice, multiculturalism, and action research. Plainly, so-called action research does not entail pursuing objective evidence wherever it may lead, but instead means strengthening one’s case to implement an agenda of radical social transformation. See <http://www.csufresno.edu/kremen/ci/graduate/ma-teaching.html>

One Fresno State course, “Social Justice and the Multicultural Classroom,” envisions “enhancing educational equity, providing a multicultural classroom, employing culturally responsive pedagogy, and using culturally appropriate assessment.” It places emphasis on using the Internet “to conduct classroom research” and to communicate with colleagues and members of the community.

Among other objectives of the online courses are: Students learning to persuade each other and members of the community about tenets of social-justice multiculturalism; preparing to conduct their action research by “exploring various aspects of the movement in education where teacher-practitioners are viewed as researchers of their own practice and where teaching is viewed as a form of educational inquiry”; and completing the master’s candidate’s own action research study.

A unit on “Critical Pedagogy” calls on students to “develop knowledge and skills to critically examine and improve planning, instructional decisions, assessment, and student learning. Students engage in systematic reflection of teaching practices consistent with multicultural, social justice education.”

A final project “consists of a significant undertaking appropriate to multicultural, social justice education such as the development of curricula and instructional materials, educational policy, educational theory, and educational technology.”

Programs such as those at U/Mass/Amherst and Fresno State clearly seek to have teachers carry a distinct sociopolitical agenda with them into their classrooms. Teachers with a conservative or politically neutral orientation or those who want to teach academic disciplines in a traditional way need not apply.

Instruction to transform their thinking.

Transformative Learning

By Robert Holland

“Transformative learning” is a central focus at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC), which for the past 10 years has had a Diversity Curriculum Infusion Program (DCIP) intended to get faculty members from all disciplines on board with the goals of “diversity and social justice.” According to the founder and facilitator of this program, Omiunota Nelly Ukpokodu, the objective of the DCIP is “to provide a forum where faculty from across campus, in various disciplines, would come together in dialogue to collaborate and learn, developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to successfully infuse critical diversity into coursework for more inclusive teaching.”

In UMKC’s School of Education, the drive to transform the thinking of K-12 teachers as well as school curricula is especially aggressive. In a published paper, Ms. Ukpokodu, an associate professor in UMKC’s ed-school, gave a revealing look at how a graduate course in multiculturalism purportedly “fostered {students’} learning transformation and moved them from color-blindness to color-vision.” The goal of breaking down “resistance” to multiculturalism and opening the door to a “transformative practice and change agency” (evidently a coined term for becoming a change agent) plainly was aimed mainly at white students, who made up two-thirds of the class. The paper notes the troubling reality of many teachers being “European Americans” of middle-class backgrounds who are “socialized to conservative ideologies and mind frames that negate their abilities to engage in effective cross-cultural and culturally responsive teaching.”

The paper primarily focused on white teachers who said the instruction had transformed their thinking. One said the experience had made it “easy for me to share with the class about my racist family and dating out of my race.” Another offered these remarkably disjointed thoughts:

“From my own racial identity development, from dealing with issues that I have had inside me and interacting with those in class who, like me have been dealing with their own racial identity struggles, and maybe, until this class have been unaware of them

and having had the opportunity, for once in my life, to be in such a multi-cultural class, has helped me see how I have been racist and segregated. The point is not to make me feel guilty, or ashamed of who I am, and who I was raised to be, no, the whole idea behind the theories of social justice and social awareness, is just that. To be aware of my power and to use it for good, rather than bad, and to slowly, one student at a time, pass the power on to the next generation of multi-culturally aware individuals.”

The instructor noted approvingly the eagerness of many class members to “adjust their dispositions and practice to make them more humane, democratic, equitable, and just.” Citing the work of the late Brazilian Marxist Paulo Freire, a hero of social-justice multiculturalists, she indicated the ultimate stage of transformative learning would come in challenging the students “to mobilize or organize themselves to get power.” She saw the participants in her class as being ready to take that step by altering curricula, or by serving on committees with responsibilities for textbook adoption, professional development, or “advocacy.”

Success was not quite 100 percent, given that five of the 45 students still exhibited what Ms. Ukpokodu termed “passive resistance” to multiculturalist transformation. However, in the final analysis, she deemed the outcome positive for one of these recalcitrant students who “realized, upon reflection, that she did not have what it takes to teach diverse students and so decided to resign from teaching.”

Thus, even if this teacher did a wonderful job teaching her elementary or secondary students math, English, history, or other subjects, she would be leaving teaching because of the upsetting effect of this exercise in indoctrination. Clearly, that is what this version of “transformative learning” is all about – inducing white guilt and causing teachers to acquire the “dispositions” of leftist activists who believe in government-enforced redistribution. No matter how expert a politically conservative mathematics teacher might be in the academic discipline, or how highly skilled in making the subject come alive for students, he or she would flunk the “dispositions” test posed by these agents of transformative learning. And that is a shame, because American classrooms should prize intellectual diversity every bit as much as cultural diversity.

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