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Book Review

Education as Enforcement: The Militarization and Corporatization of Schools edited by Kenneth J. Saltman and David A. Gabbard.
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Reviewed by

Mark Daims

Education as Enforcement incorporates 21 compelling essays (including the foreword and introduction) on the subtext of the process of education in America. Whether or not a reader agrees with any particular essayist, each writer defends children passionately and should be heard. Henry Giroux's foreword forcefully attacks the current administration's tactics concerning education and the greater society. Alluding to a "tyranny of emergency" and an inauthentic use of the country's fear of terrorism, Giroux feels the President is changing the nature of our society -- community is constructed "through shared fears rather than shared responsibilities." Giroux wants educators to act collectively to instill democratic and social values in children and move back towards a society of shared responsibilities.

The greatest struggle Americans face is not terrorism, but a struggle on behalf of justice, freedom, and democracy for all the citizens of the globe, especially youth.

The introduction by Kenneth Saltman's that follows explores the messages given to the nation's children. He examines the nation's "walk" not its "talk" and finds all the discussion about conflict resolution denied by the nation's military responses and violent actions. He notes that on the pages following a Time's article on Columbine, there was a two page advertisement by the Internet search engine Alta Vista that pictured a Lockheed martin F-16 fighter. The search words that found the fighter were "Who will guide my sleigh tonight." Examining

movies and other media, the essayist finds that militarism is us. Even our economic structure, including free-trade agreements, undermines the lives of children. With globalization, Coca Cola has infiltrated every niche in the globe, yet inexpensive medicines and nutritious foods are unavailable to many, many children.

Forty seven million children in the richest twenty-nine nations in the world are living below the poverty line. Child poverty in the *wealthiest* nations has worsened as national incomes have risen over the past half century.

The first essay, "The Function of Schools: Subtler and Cruder Methods of Control" by Noam Chomsky, begins the argument that education is enforcement, enforcement of the ideas and ethics of the dominant culture and also mirrors John Taylor Gatto's (former New York state teacher of the year) assertion that "school trains children to obey reflexively." Chomsky feels that it is the well-behaved, obedient students that do well and this means that our educational system selects for the obedient and conforming. The educational system constantly pressures students and even faculty towards conformity:

In the fourth grade you're a "behavior problem." In college you may be "irresponsible" or "erratic" or "not the right kind of student." If you make it to the faculty, you'll fail in what's sometimes called "collegiality."

The essays that follow range from range from critiques of the "No Child left Behind" policy to a revealing dialogue between the author and several inner city kids. "Rivers of Fire: BPAmoco's iMPACT on Education" (Kenneth Saltman and Ruth Goodman) examines corporate interest in education BPAmoco's children's video "Rivers of Fire" explores volcanoes while delivering a subtle corporate message that nature is an entity to be managed and used (not preserved). After presenting an overview of BPAmoco's and Monsanto's human rights violations overseas, the authors point out that while BPAmoco was distributing "Rivers of Fire" to children it was creating real rivers of fire in Michigan where one city was trying to force the company to stop leaking petroleum products into the city's sewers. A quotation from Mark Evans, a senior vice president of Scholastic Inc., might serve to partially sum up the essay.

More and more companies see education marketing as the most compelling, memorable, and cost-effective way to build share of mind and market into the 21st century... Gillette is currently

sponsoring a multi-media in-school program designed to introduce teenagers to safety razors -- building brand and product loyalties through classroom-centered, peer-powered lifestyle patterning.

The next essay, "Education *IS* Enforcement," by David Gabbard is convincing in its hypothesis that the function of school is to mold children to fit the goals of the government which in America's case is the market. The daily process and form of education serve to train workers:

Insofar as the majority of future workers will likely find little intrinsic rewards in the jobs they will come to perform in the workplace, the relative meaninglessness of school provides a perfect "boot camp" for teaching them to accept alienation as an inevitable part of life.

Compulsory education and standardized tests sort children into the roles that will be of the most benefit to the market economy. Gabbard compares the military's use of IQ tests to track soldiers into their best roles with the role of standardized testing.

In military terms, then, compulsory school assigns persons their rank relative to their future use-value as human resources.

Many of the essays that follow assert that the "No Child Left Behind" program tracks minority children into low paying jobs. Underfunded schools struggling to provide mandated requirements can only provide a emaciated education which in turn funnels any graduates into meaningless work or jail. The minimum standards for an education are those that would only qualify a person for a low paying job. Schools in trouble are punished while those that succeed are rewarded. This merely reinforces current inequities. "Freedom for Some, Discipline for "Others," by Enora Brown compares two Chicago schools: Groundview Technical High School attended mostly by non-white working-class students and Mountainview Township High School attended by mostly white, professional-class students. The names of the schools are painfully apt. JROTC programs are spreading - another essay details - spreading disproportionately among certain types of schools. Mountainview has a wing devoted entirely to the fine arts; Groundview a wing devoted to JROTC.

Mountainview resembles a small liberal art college with over three hundred multilevel, discipline-based academic courses... Groundview's curricula resembles the industrial education model

designed for ex-slaves, which prepares poor African-American youth to take on the "simpler trades."

Groundview's students must always wear their student IDs and their class schedules. Brown also opposes the corporatization or privatization of schools. "In fact, *privatization redirects public funds for private accumulation.*"

All the essays have something valuable to say but Pepi Leistyna's "Facing Oppression: Youth Voices from the Front" presents the author's dialogue with seven troubled inner city kids; only one is white with the rest being fully or partly African-American, Puerto Rican or Cape Verdean. In this essay the children speak many of the arguments made by the adult essayists seeking to positively affect their lives.

PEPI: Are the drugs and booze in school? (There is an enthusiastic group response, "Oh Yeah! "Everywhere")

CARLOS: It's a joke cause that ain't no high school. The whole time I was there I got one book.

OLAVO: They dictate all the rules in the high school man.

STEVIE: It is a prison.

OLAVO: If you do something in the cafeteria, like you supposed to sit four on the table, and you sit five on the table, they'll grab you and give you three days suspension.

(Later in the discussion about the school)

ROLAND: If you black, the attitude is, "You Dumb."

CARLOS: If you come from a bad neighborhood they make sure you never make it.

STEVIE: They think that you are a trouble maker.

DION: Automatically, Automatically!

(Later at the end of the discussion)

PEPI: Most all of you have kids now, what are you going to tell your kids? What's your advice to any kid?

STEVIE: I wanna tell them to stay in school man, no matter how bad it is, juss do it, juss stay in school!

DION: Get through yo!

Mark Daims, DVM, Hudson, New York, USA. Email: zona-pellucida@zona-pellucida.com

The essays are:

- "The Function of Schools: Subtler and Cruder Methods of Control," Noam Chomsky
- "Rivers of Fire: BPAmoco's iMPACT on Education" Kenneth Saltman and Ruth Goodman
- "Education *IS* Enforcement," David Gabbard
- "Cracking Down: Chicago School Policy and the Regulation of Black and Latino Youth" Pauline Lipman
- "Facing Oppression: Youth Voices from the Front" Pepi Leistyna
- "Freedom for Some, Discipline for "Others," Enora Brown
- "Forceful Hegemony" Don Jacobs
- "The Proliferation of JROTC: Educational Reform or Militarization" Marvin Berlowitz and Nathan Long
- "Education for War in Israel: Preparing Children to Accept War as a Natural Factor of Life" Haggith Gor
- "Post-Columbine Reflections on Youth Violence as a (Trans)National Movement" Julie Weber
- "Imprisoning Minds: The Violence of Neoliberal Education or "I Am Not For sale"" Sheila Macrine
- "Taking Command: The Pathology of Identity and Agency in Predatory Culture" Ron Scapp
- "Commentary on the Rhetoric of Reform: A twenty Year Retrospective" Sandra Jackson"
- "Controlling Images: The Power of High Stakes Testing" Kevin Vinson and E. Wayne Ross
- "Dick Lit: Corporatism, Militarism, and the Detective Novel" Robin Goodman
- "Virtuous War: Simulation and the Militarism of Play" Eugene Provenzo
- "We Were Soldiers: The Rewriting of memory and the Corporate Order" William Reynolds and David Gabbard
- "The Politics of Compulsory Patriotism: On the Educational meaning of September 11" Michael Apple
- "Critical Revolutionary Pedagogy at Ground Zero" Peter McLaren and Ramin Farahmandpur