

How the Left Wants to Reform Public Education

A portrait of a middle-aged man with a receding hairline, wearing a brown patterned suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a dark tie with small white dots. He is smiling slightly. The background is a light blue wall with a word cloud of news-related terms in various sizes and orientations. The words include: NEWS, HEADLINE, ECONOMY, HISTORY, POLITICAL, U.S. NEWS, HEALTHCARE, WORLD NEWS, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY, and HEAD. The word 'NEWS' is the largest and most prominent.

Many Americans are once again invoking democracy, rejecting its association with the empty formality of voting and its disingenuous use to legitimate and justify political systems that produce massive wealth and income inequality. . . .

If real reform is going to happen, it has to put in place a viable, critical, formative culture that supports notions of social and engaged citizenship, civic courage, public values, dissent, democratic modes of governing, and a genuine belief in freedom, equality, and Justice.

As the meaning of democracy is betrayed by its transformation into a market society, corporate power and money appear unchecked in their ability to privatize, deregulate, and destroy all vestiges of public life.

How can democracy be betrayed by becoming a market society? We were always a free-enterprise society from our very beginning, when the federal government was miniscule compared to what it has become under statist legislators. He continues:

The call for shared sacrifices on the part of conservatives and Tea Party extremists becomes code for destroying the social state, preserving and increasing the power of mega-rich corporations, and securing the wealth of the top one percent of the population with massive tax breaks while placing the burden of the current global economic meltdown on the shoulders of the working people and the poor.

The “social state” is the socialist state. Giroux, who has written over 50 books, has been criticizing capitalism for so long, that his litany of complaints has become part of his DNA. None of it makes any sense in the real world. He simply hates capitalism and individualism with such passion that he and his



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fellow Marxists see public education only as an instrument to be used to destroy the very system that has created the greatest wealth and material betterment for mankind in all of history. He writes on page xi:

Ideology does not seem to matter any longer as right-wing Republicans have less interest in argument and persuasion than in bullying their alleged enemies with the use of heavy-handed legislation and, when necessary, dire threats, as when Wisconsin's Republican Governor Scott Walker threatened to mobilize the National Guard to prevent teachers' unions from protesting their possible loss of bargaining rights and a host of anti-worker proposals.

He is particularly concerned with the radical role teachers must play in educating the new generation. He writes (p. 11):

Democratic struggles cannot overemphasize the special responsibility of teachers as intellectuals to shatter the conventional wisdom and myths of those ideologies that would relegate educators to mere technicians or adjuncts of the corporation. As the late Pierre Bourdieu argued, the "power of the dominant order is not just economic, but intellectual — lying in the realm of beliefs," and it is precisely within the domain of ideas that a sense of utopian possibility can be restored to the public realm.

It is this infantile "sense of utopian possibility" that drives so many far-leftists into their political nihilism. To them, the word "democracy" is understood only in its utopian sense, not as a method of merely electing legislators. Of course, the Founding Fathers were very much aware of the dangers of democracy, and that is why they created a Constitutional Republic which limited government power and permitted individual citizens to pursue their own economic objectives. That system has produced the "massive wealth" that bothers leftists. They prefer a system of egalitarian poverty, which the Cubans and North Koreans live under and which the Russians suffered under for seventy-five years. No one should be able to become rich because that causes economic inequality and injustice. Giroux writes (p. 9):

[A] critical education demands that its citizens be able to translate the interface of private considerations and public issues, recognize those anti-democratic forces that deny social, economic, and political justice, and give some thought to their experiences as a matter of anticipating and struggling for a more just world. In short, democratic rather than commercial values should be the primary concerns of both public education and the university.

In other words, public education should become an appendage of the Communist Party USA, anti-commercial, meaning anti-capitalist, anti-massive wealth. What Giroux never admits is that neither socialism nor communism creates wealth of any kind. They are parasitic systems that feed off the wealth confiscated from the producers. In the Soviet Union, the system lived off the slave labor of the gulag inmates who mined for gold in Siberia that the government could then sell to the capitalist countries for cash. Like so many Marxists, Giroux has a very deranged view of economics.

Nor is Giroux at all impressed by neoliberals who are trying to improve public education by creating Charter schools. He writes (p. 18):

Charter schools have become the dressed-up symbols of the new politics of disposability—presenting well-scrubbed, uniformed children as symbols of order and middle-class values. . . .

The educational force of the wider culture has now become the weapon of choice in promoting



market-driven educational reforms and denigrating American public education and its struggling, hard-working teachers. This marketing machine explains the well-publicized and orchestrated hype over the movie *Waiting for Superman*, a bought-and-sold product that offers no critiques and lets the right-wing talking heads and hedge fund advocates provide most of the commentary.

In Giroux's analysis of the Obama administration, he is particularly critical of Arne Duncan, Obama's Secretary of Education. He writes (p. 41):

Arne Duncan's "Race to the Top" agenda emphasizes expanding efficiency at the expense of equity, prioritizes testing over critical pedagogical practices, endorses commercial rather than public values, accentuates competition as a form of social combat over cooperation and shared responsibilities, and endorses individual rights over support for the collective good — all of which are values that come out of the neoliberal playbook....

Of course, Obama could not have been elected without the support of the liberals and neoliberals. The failures of public education had become so apparent to everyone, that even liberal supporters of public schools knew that they had to offer some plan for reform.

Giroux is also highly critical of the growth of for-profit colleges and universities, such as the University of Phoenix. Their success as free-enterprise institutions is due to the fact that they offer students the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in our economy. If there were not a need for such institutions, they would not exist. Giroux writes (p. 54):

[F]or these schools to be profitable, they do away with tenure, hire teachers on short-term contracts, charge inflated tuition rates, and promote aggressive marketing campaigns to secure students who are forced to take out huge federal loans to attend these schools.

Try getting into one of the prestigious Ivy League schools, which charge the highest tuition rates in history. But of course in a Marxian utopia, education would be free because the ultimate purpose of education would be to serve the social state. In a free-market economy, education is of necessity a service that one must pay for. Teachers and administrators need to be paid. But in the world of utopians, a free education should be everyone's right. And that education must not serve selfish individualism. It must serve the collective.

So if Giroux is against Obama's neoliberal reform of public education, what is he for? He writes (p. 65):

Clearly, schools must reaffirm their role as foundational institutions preparing students for citizenship in a global democracy. Education is essential not just for educating students for the workplace but also for teaching them the skills of civic courage, leadership, and social responsibility.

"Global democracy" is another utopian dream that the far left loves to prattle about. Forget about American sovereignty and the U.S. Constitution. Forget about all of those countries that neither share our "democratic" values nor have any sense of human rights. Giroux also favors "critical pedagogy." He explains: "Pedagogy is not merely providing information for consumption — what [Brazilian communist] Paulo Freire called banking education. It is about actively engaging classroom knowledge through critical dialogue, judgment, argument, and analysis."

All of that is expected of public schools that can barely teach children to read. Yet he expects the students to become "critical, knowledgable, imaginative, and informed citizens, workers, and social agents."



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In other words, Giroux wants public schools to become indoctrination centers for a collectivist society. He wants teachers to become “critical intellectuals” when colleges of education can’t even tell them how to teach reading.

Giroux devotes his final chapter to honoring his mentor, Paulo Freire, the Brazilian Marxist revolutionary utopian. There have never been schools anywhere like the kind that he and Freire have advocated. They don’t exist in Cuba, or North Korea, or even Communist China. And there have never been students and teachers like the idealized models described by Giroux. They are fantasies in the minds of those who hate American reality. Although our present public schools are trying to turn American students into socialists, Giroux sees it all as run by corporate neoliberals and progressives who have no intention of destroying the market system. They can’t destroy it because without it there would be nothing.

Throughout his book, Giroux shows nothing but contempt for the ideology of the Founding Fathers and the tenets of Biblical religion. To him, the “social state” owns the children and the teachers are obliged to educate children to support this utopia. He totally disregards the relationship between parent and child, a relationship spelled out in Deuteronomy, which commands parents to educate their children in the love and admonition of God not the state. That’s why the homeschool movement has become the preferred form of education for two million American families.

The tragedy of America is that God has been taken out of its education system, and without God there is nothing there but nihilism. Yet Giroux represents the thinking of an important segment of our academic elite whose goal it is to corrupt their students with ideas of social perfectibility that require the destruction of the most productive economic system in history and the rejection of God, the true source of our rights and our freedoms.



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