

# **Bush's Education Plan, Globalization, and the Politics of Race**

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## **Introduction**

George W. Bush's "blueprint" to "reform" education, released in February 2001 (*No Child Left Behind*) (Bush, 2001), crystallizes key neo-liberal, neo-conservative, and business-oriented education policies. The main components of Bush's plan are mandatory, high-stakes testing and vouchers and other supports for privatizing schools. These policies have a long history, going back to the free market proposals of Milton Friedman (e.g., Friedman, 1962), Chubb & Moe's (1990) argument for introduction of market forces and school choice, and the education reforms advocated under Reagan. Beginning with *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission, 1983) and other education reform manifestos of the 1980's, there has been a steady push for standards, accountability, and regulation of schools, teachers, and students and an explicit linkage of corporate interests with educational practices and goals. Business rhetoric of efficiency and performance standards and the redefinition of education to serve the labor market has become the common vocabulary of educational policies across the U.S. Indeed, apart from Bush's proposal to use public funds for vouchers for private school tuition, his plan is not unlike Clinton and Gore's emphasis on standards and tests. It was, after all, Clinton who declared Chicago, with its high-stakes testing and sanctions for failure, a model for the nation.

Critical scholars have written extensively about the ways in which these policies undermine democratic purposes of public education, intensify inequality, and bring schools increasingly under the economic and cultural domination of corporations and the market (see for example, Apple, 1996; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Asher, Fruchter & Berne, 1996; Molnar, 1996; Saltman, 2000). Bush's plan solidifies and streamlines these trends while also promoting favorite neo-conservative causes, including vouchers and the dismantling of bilingual education. In this essay, I want to focus on some implications of these policies for increased inequality and racial and class polarization created by economic and ideological trends of globalization.

These policies have defined the education reform agenda not only because they have been promoted by politicians, neo-liberal intellectuals and business, but because they provide "sensible" solutions to real educational problems. Tough accountability based on standardized tests resonates with parents' deep, and justifiable, frustrations with the failures of public schools, especially the failure to educate children of color. It seems something is finally being done to make sure that all children can read and do mathematics, and schools, educators, and students are being held accountable for results. Tying educational programs to their effect on test scores also resonates with the often-repeated idea that schools have not improved despite a proliferation of reforms -- in

Bush's words "Congress has created hundreds of programs . . . without asking whether or not the programs produce results." The plan also follows the pervasive neoliberal logic that proclaims the market can do all things better than public institutions, from managing retirement funds, to providing health care, to running prisons. In an era of "welfare reform" and managed care, it seems logical that the market can produce more efficient and productive schools and drive out bad public schools by making them uncompetitive.

Although these trends may be dominating the agendas of school boards and education policy makers and winning the battle of common sense (Gramsci, 1971), they do not go uncontested in classrooms and schools or in school districts and in the national conversation about education. This is reflected, for example, in recent opposition to high-stakes testing coming from various professional organizations such as the National Council on the Social Studies and the National Council of Teachers of English, as well as from parents, students, and teachers. There are also competing educational reform movements that have taken hold in specific schools and districts. Moreover, educational policies are never imposed or adopted unilaterally but exist in tension with both residual and emergent ideologies and policy histories and the cultures of individual schools and school districts (see Ball, 1994).

Bush's proposals are as much about larger questions of the role of public institutions, the power of capital to dominate all spheres of society, and what constitutes the common good as they are about schools. Tensions around these issues can only become more acute as the forces of globalization exacerbate inequalities and injustices. Indeed, I would argue the policies are partly a response to the need to contain these tensions (or at least the students and teachers involved).

### **Bush's Education Plan**

The centerpiece of Bush's plan is annual state-wide mandatory testing of all students in grades three through eight and a system of sanctions and rewards based on the scores on these tests. Trends in test scores would be the basis for giving states bonuses or taking away federal money, for providing information about schools to parents, for funding programs for non- English speaking students (e.g., bilingual education), and for giving students vouchers to attend private schools. Performance criteria (inevitably linked to raising test scores, since this is the single measure of "effectiveness") would be the basis for awarding money for teachers' professional development, for funding math and science education partnerships with universities, and for grants for technology. In short, programs, funds, rewards and punishments are all linked to test scores.

The second major proposal is to use federal Title I funds for vouchers which students in failing schools (again determined by test scores) could use to attend private schools or to receive educational services from private providers. Other Bush plans that would promote privatization are funding for charter school start ups, creating a fund to promote "school choice," and raising the ceiling on tax-free education savings accounts which could be used for k-12 private schools as well as college tuition. Although not the most publicized feature of Bush's plan, a third set of proposals centers on tougher discipline

and penalties for "disruptive students." The Bush plan would "empower" teachers to remove "violent or persistently disruptive students from the classroom," make it easier for school districts and law enforcement "to share information regarding disciplinary actions and misconduct by students," establish "Project Sentry" to "identify, prosecute, punish, and supervise juveniles who violate state and federal firearms laws," increase funds for character education, and "shield" teachers, principals, and school board members from federal liability arising from classroom discipline practices. These measures are a very serious institutionalized escalation of the demonization of youth and the criminalization of African American and Latino youth in particular. Not incidentally, Bush also proposes to end the federal government's funding priority for English language learning programs that promote proficiency in the student's native language as well as English. The provision could effectively lead to the dismantling of bilingual education in favor of English-only programs.

As a whole, the plan is an interesting mix of strong and weak state interference. It is best understood, I think, as what Roger Dale calls a policy of "conservative modernization" -- "simultaneously freeing individuals for economic purposes while controlling them for social purposes" (Dale quoted in Apple, 1996, p. 29). Taken together, the policies both promote an unfettered market (a key element of neo-liberalism) and a strong state in areas of values, standards, conduct, and the knowledge that is to be considered legitimate (Apple, 1996). They bring under one umbrella social conservatives (anti-bilingual education, stronger discipline and authority in schools, character education), neo-liberal proponents of the market, and business interests demanding a literate disciplined workforce (as measured by test scores). These policies and the interests they represent can only be fully understood in relation to globalization and economic and cultural processes in the U.S.

### **Globalization and Intensification of Inequality**

As an ensemble of global economic processes, globalization is characterized by the world-wide primacy of financial and speculative capital, highly integrated and flexible systems of production of goods and services, the global reorganization of the labor process and increased mobility of transnational circuits of labor, and deep structural changes in national economies. These new dimensions of capital's historical drive to dominate national economies and world markets are the product of changed economic, political, and technological conditions. In part, global economic restructuring was precipitated by the world-wide crisis of capital accumulation in the early 1970's. New forms of transnational capital accumulation and new systems of global production processes were made possible by the revolution in information processing and transformations in the speed and efficiency of global transport of goods. Further, the dissolution of the Socialist Bloc opened up the globe to the primacy of the market and world-wide financial speculation on a new scale. Under the global regime of capitalist accumulation, these global economic changes are magnifying existing inequalities and creating new ones. We are living through the world-wide degradation of the standard of living and working conditions of millions of people, dislocation of populations, and increasing social polarization along lines of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and nationality

-- the intensification of human misery on a global scale.

In post-industrial economies like the U.S., globalization requires a highly stratified labor force created through simultaneous processes of upgrading, downgrading, and exclusion of labor (Castells, 1989). A dramatic increase in service jobs, which are highly segmented by wages/salaries, education, and benefits, and dramatic decrease in manufacturing results in a fast rate of growth at both ends of the occupational structure: high-skilled, high-paid technical, professional and managerial jobs at the upper end and low-skilled, low-wage service jobs at the lower end. The flexible, "just-in-time production" that is essential in the new globalized economy also requires a flexible work force (Ray & Mickelson, 1993) to perform multi-task, part-time and temporary jobs with few-to-no benefits. This new contingent workforce is primarily women, people of color, and immigrants, many of whom work two, three, even four part-time or temporary jobs to make ends meet. High-income professional, managerial, and technical workers in major cities also require new low-wage workers to perform customized and personal services -- dog walkers, nannies, producers of gourmet foods and custom-made clothes, etc. (Sassen, 1994). The combination of these trends means that the bulk of new jobs have lower wages and less social protection than in the recent past (Castells, 1989; 1996). At the same time, large sections of the potential new labor force, African American and Latino youth in particular, are, from the standpoint of capital, increasingly superfluous and have no work at all in the formal economy (Castells, 1989; Sassen, 1994).

Processes of globalization also destabilize populations on a national as well as global scale. In major cities, globalization is producing "a new geography of centrality and marginality" (Sassen, 1998, p. xxvi). Urban gentrification and massive funds for the development of gated enclaves of high-paid knowledge workers and luxury zones of expensive restaurants and cultural venues are matched by increasing social isolation of immigrant, Latino, and African American communities divested of city resources. In cities integrated into the global economy, disparities between "the glamour zone and the urban war zone" (Sassen (1998) are enormous and glaring. Low-income communities of color and especially the youth are targets of police occupation, harassment, and brutality. Forces of globalization intersect with white racist ideology and structures of racial power and privilege to pathologize and criminalize young African Americans and Latinos and other youth of color.

As capitalism extends its domination to new social, cultural, and geographic spheres, the politics of neoliberalism imposes the logic of the market on every facet of social life. The neo-liberal state (a response to the failures of Keynesian state policies and pressures of global competition for markets and investment) is characterized by drastic cut-backs in spending for social services, loosening government regulation of corporations, privatization of the public sphere, weakened regulation of corporations, environmental degradation, regressive tax policies, and attacks on organized labor. The gutting of social welfare programs and privatization of public institutions and services in the name of individual responsibility, efficiency, and freedom has opened up new opportunities for corporate investment and provided new sources of super profits in the globalized economy. The growth of the for-profit health care industry and the prison-industrial

complex are but two examples. Education may become a third. I turn now to the implications of Bush's proposals in relation to these globalization trends.

### **High-Stakes Testing, Accountability and the Labor Market**

Bush built his reputation as an education reformer on the "Texas accountability system" (McNeil, 2000) based on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test (TAAS). (Actually the test, begun in 1990, preceded Bush but was refined under his administration as the centerpiece of Texas education reform.) TAAS is a multiple choice standardized test in reading and math. Since 1994, it has been given to all Texas public school students every year in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10. Other subjects are tested at other grades. Students must pass the tenth grade TAAS to graduate, and evaluation of teachers and principals and principal salaries is tied to the TAAS. Holding everyone's feet to the TAAS fire has been credited with the "Texas miracle" -- huge gains in scores on the TAAS and reduced gaps between the average scores of white students and students of color. Bush's national education plan to reform education is modeled on Texas.

#### **A Closer Look at the "Texas Miracle"**

It is important to look closely at the Texas policies in order to infer what might be the concrete implications of national high-stakes standardized testing. Assessing the Texas miracle empirically and within its own framework, robust gains on the TAAS should show up on other achievement tests such as the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), Advanced Placement exams, and college admission tests. There should also be reductions in grade retention, more students completing high school, and growing participation in higher education. However, recent studies suggest just the opposite. A Rand Corporation study (Klein, Hamilton, McCaffrey, Stecher, 2000) compared the huge achievement gains and significant reductions in racial gaps on the TAAS with scores on the NAEP, which compares a representative sample of students across the nation. While the TAAS presents a picture of very large gains for all groups of students, the Rand study found that between 1994 and 1998, the average test score gains on the NAEP in Texas exceeded the rest of the country in only one comparison, 4th grade math. While Texas credited its reforms with reducing racial gaps on the TAAS, the Rand study found that the Texas Black/White test score gap on the NAEP in 4th grade reading and 4th and 8th grade math actually increased from 1994 to 1998. The Rand study found the same trend for "Hispanics," a slight increase in the gap with whites on the NAEP. Similarly, Haney (2000) found that from 1990-2000 Texas students' math scores on the SAT declined relative to students nationally. The authors of the Rand study concluded:

Our findings from this research raise serious questions about the validity of the gains in TAAS scores. More generally, our results illustrate the danger of relying on statewide test scores as the sole measure of student achievement when these scores are used to make high-stakes decisions about teachers and schools as well as students.

Haney (2001) also found extremely high grade retention in Texas in ninth grade, the year before students take the 10th grade TAAS which determines if they can graduate from high school. By 2000, 25-30% of African American and Hispanic students compared with 10% of whites were failed in grade 9. Haney concludes, "These results clearly suggest the possibility that after 1990 schools in Texas have increasingly been failing students, disproportionately Black and Hispanic students, in grade nine in order to make their grade 10 TAAS scores look better" (p. 11). It is likely that high failure rates and grade retention would also increase the drop-out rate. In fact, in Texas, 90% of those who dropped out in 1995-96 were over age. During the 1990's (the period after TAAS was phased in), slightly less than 70% of students actually graduated from high school (one in three dropped out), and the racial gap in progression from 9th grade to graduation increased. By the time the 9th grade cohort got to 12th grade, only about 50% of African American and Hispanic students graduated. There is also an increasing number of General Education Degree (GED) test takers under age 20 (who take a general education test in lieu of a high school diploma and who are not counted as drop outs in Texas). Haney also found that Texas dramatically increased the number of students classified as special education students between 1998 and 1999, thus eliminating these students' scores. Haney contends these data suggest that improved pass rates on the 10th grade TAAS and reductions in racial gaps in the pass rate may be due to classifying students as special education and retaining high percentages of Black and Latino students.

Thus, rather than increasing the graduation rate, the TAAS may have worsened it, especially for African American and Hispanic students. Moreover, Haney notes that three separate studies (Haney, 2001; University of Texas, 1999; National Center for Public Policy, 2000) show that the Texas educational system under TAAS hasn't been very successful for those who do graduate high school. It has made little progress relative to the rest of the U.S. on preparation for and participation in higher education. In short, recent studies indicate that Texas' system of high-stakes testing, the prototype for Bush's national plan, is not increasing academic achievement, at least as measured on standardized tests. The studies also point to increasing racial inequality, high drop out rates, and poor preparation for college.

**"You Can't Fatten a Pig by Putting it on a Scale" --  
What's Behind the TAAS Score Gains?**

When the fate of individual students, whole schools, teachers, and principals is tied to the results on a single, high-stakes test, that test becomes the center of teaching and learning. McNeil's (2000) ethnographic account of Houston high schools paints a picture of teachers and administrators pressured to gear teaching and curriculum to passing the TAAS, especially in low-achieving schools serving low-income students of color. For example, McNeil reports that in a low-scoring school serving primarily Mexican-American students, although the school had no library, a shortage of texts and little laboratory equipment, the administration spent \$20,000 for commercial test-preparation books. McNeil's findings are echoed in my own qualitative data from Chicago elementary schools. (See Lipman, 2000b; Lipman & Gutstein, 2001). As Robert Hauser, Chair of the Committee on Appropriate Test Use of the Board of Testing and Assessment at the

National Research Council, put it, "The NRC Committee concluded that Chicago's regular year and summer school curricula were so closely geared to the ITBS [Iowa Test of Basic Skills -- Chicago's high-stakes test] that it was impossible to distinguish real subject mastery from mastery of skills and knowledge useful for passing this particular test." McNeil (2000) elaborates educational consequences in Texas:

The clear picture that emerges is that the standardized reforms drastically hurt the best teachers, forcing them to teach watered down content because it was computer gradable. The standardization brought about by the state policies forced them to teach artificially simplified curricula that had been designed by bureaucrats seeking expedient (easily implemented, noncontroversial) curricular formats. The quality of their teaching, their course content and their students' learning all suffered. In addition, those relations within the school essential to fostering a culture of both equity and authentic academics were undermined (p.192).

While education geared to standardized tests degrades the work of the best teachers, it is little help to the weakest teachers, because it does not increase their knowledge, skill, or commitment to richer teaching and learning. Nor do high-stakes tests address the huge inequalities between affluent schools and low-income and urban schools. As one Chicago teacher put it, "you can't fatten a pig by putting it on a scale." If Texas' high stakes testing actually intensifies inequality in educational outcomes, pushes students of color, in particular, out of school, and reduces education to test preparation, particularly in low-income schools, the implications of a national education plan centered on high-stakes tests are dire, particularly in the present political, economic, and cultural context.

### **Implications in the Globalized Economy**

Globalization creates a highly segmented work force and polarized social structure and the reorganization of urban space on the basis of class, race, national origin, and gender. In the new, "dual America," economic growth is enriching the wealthy while further driving down the wages and working condition of the poor as well as pushing down a section of the middle class. The ratio of total CEO pay to total worker pay grew from 44.8 times in 1973 to 172.5 times in 1995 while real average weekly earnings for production and non-supervisory workers went from \$479.44 to \$395.37 (Castells, 1998, p.130). By 1995, almost 30% of U.S. workers earned poverty-level wages (Castells, 1998), and poverty is increasingly reflected in homelessness and social exclusion. Although a majority of the growing occupations are projected to require education or training beyond high school, there is expected to be only a modest change in educational levels for all new jobs created in 1992-2005. The bulk of jobs being created do not require sophisticated new knowledge but basic literacies, ability to follow directions, and certain (accommodating) dispositions toward work. Sassen (1994) projects that by 2000 over half of all jobs will require only a high school diploma. A national system of standardized tests with strict penalties for failure helps to ensure a workforce that has the literacies and dispositions needed for the low-wage labor market. In addition to basic

literacy, employers are particularly concerned with future workers' attitudes and "work ethic" (Ray & Mickelson, 1993). Carlson (1996) points out,

The "basic skills" restructuring of urban schools around standardized testing and a skill-based curriculum has been a response to the changing character of work in post-industrial America, and it has participated in the construction of a new post-industrial working class . . . of clerical, data processing, janitorial, and service industry jobs. The new entry-level jobs increasingly require more in the way of basic reading (word and sentence decoding), comprehension and direction-following skills (pp.282-283).

Thus, focusing testing on competency in reading and math assures business that workers will have the skills basic to most new low-wage jobs. For example, the majority of 51 urban and suburban Chicago employers interviewed in 1997 said they needed employees with "eighth grade math skills and better than eighth grade reading and writing skills" (Rosenbaum & Binder, 1997). In the era of Fordist, industrial production, workers needed to know very specific, job-related skills (such as welding), but because of rapid technological advances, specific tasks are increasingly accomplished through informational technology (computers, robotics), and jobs are constantly being redefined. What is most important for the new low-wage service and production workforce is that workers can be flexible. In a post-Fordist work context, they need to be able to adapt to changing job demands and changing jobs. Good reading skills (and sometimes math skills) are necessary for most jobs and essential for learning new jobs and adapting to the constantly changing nature of work.

High-stakes tests, then, frame schooling in a language business understands -- regulation, control, accountability, and quality assurance. Discursively, the policies define education as a commodity whose production can be quantified, regulated, and prescribed much like any other product. Symbolically, as well as practically, national testing would constitute a system of quality control, confirming that those who survive the gauntlet of tests and graduate have passed industry standards and have the specific literacies and dispositions business demands.

Tying teaching and learning ever more tightly to standardized tests has particularly negative consequences for low-income students and students of color. The pressure to focus on preparing students to pass these tests -- as opposed to concentrating on enriching and deepening the curriculum -- is most acute in the schools with the lowest scores, generally schools serving low-income students of color. Although high-stakes testing potentially degrades education for all students, it is likely to have the most drastic consequences in low-achieving schools that are compelled to use test preparation materials as texts, narrowly focus on tasks on the tests, concentrate much class time on test-taking skills, and reduce learning to passing the tests (see McNeil, 2000). Meanwhile high-scoring schools are relatively freer to maintain their on-going curriculum. There is evidence of this disparity in my own qualitative data from four elementary schools in Chicago (Lipman, 2000b). Thus, as the tests further institutionalize a two-tiered education system, they may widen racial and social class differences in the quality of



curriculum students have access to. The consequences of a dual education system are more severe than ever. In the informational economy, one's intellectual resources are a key determinant of whether one will be a high-paid knowledge worker or part of the downgraded sector of labor, and education is central to who has which job.

In a case study of an elementary school serving Mexican immigrants in Chicago (Lipman & Gutstein, 2001), we found that the technical rationality of Chicago's high-stakes accountability, is also undermining opportunities for teachers to promote critical approaches to knowledge. Teaching directed to standardized test preparation promotes an emphasis on one right answer, speed over thoughtfulness, and a narrow, standardized definition of what constitutes legitimate knowledge. Test preparation runs counter to notions of knowledge as socially constructed, education as dialogue and debate among multiple perspectives, and curriculum that is socially/culturally situated. Yet, these are precisely the kinds of educational experiences students need. Particularly in the present context, students need an education that helps them develop the capacity to think critically and ethically about the social inequalities that constitute their daily realities and that are enveloping all our lives.

In our case study, we conclude that the emphasis on high-stakes tests, standards, and accountability also undermine curricula and pedagogies rooted in the language, culture, lived experiences, and identities of Mexican/Mexican-American students. Our data suggest that policies that accelerate testing in English and transition to English in three years, as Bush proposes, not only fly in the face of research on second language learning, but they concretely and symbolically devalue students' home language. The pressure to succeed rapidly in English on standardized tests is so severe that even bilingual teachers are sacrificing the Spanish fluency of their own children. While these policies strengthen conservative attacks on bilingualism and multiculturalism, coincidentally, privileging English language fluency also intersects with capital's need for an assimilated and manageable workforce.

In the face of growing economic polarization in the globalized economy, increased grade retention, dropping out, and test-driven teaching that will accompany a national policy of high-stakes testing are likely to widen the gap between white and middle class students and low-income students of color, further reducing the life chances of these students in an economy increasingly dominated by those who have access to the production and processing of knowledge. The boredom and regimentation of schooling geared to standardized tests may also weed out youth who are already largely dispensable in the restructured economy and are socially marginalized, especially in global cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago (see Lipman, 2000a). In the racialized context of the U.S., these youth are primarily African American and Latino. If Bush's policies succeed in driving more of these students out of school, as evidence from Texas and Chicago (Roderick, Nagaoka, Bacon, & Easton, 2000) suggests, they will push them into the surplus labor force and the informal economy and make more youth of color targets of police enforcement, criminalization, and prison (Parenti, 1999).

### **Vouchers, "Choice," and the Marketization of Education**

One of the most important implications of globalization and post-Fordism for education is the altered role of the state. As Morrow and Torres (2000) note: ". . . in response to the failures of the previous welfare-state, Keynesian model of development . . . Thatcherism and Reaganism became the ideological reference points for a vast process of restructuring that reduced demands on the welfare states and provided a more flexible regulatory environment within which globalizing economic process could proceed with fewer obstacles" (p. 37). The ideological and material conditions engendered by this new "hollowed state" provide the context and conditions for Bush's proposals to privatize education and open public schools to the market. Although these proposals ultimately may not become public policy under the Bush education plan, their introduction signals an effort to test the waters of public opinion and to begin to attempt to construct a common sense around them.

Underlying Bush's plan is the neo-liberal assumption that the competition of the market can produce better schools and force bad public schools to improve. Even within narrow notions of academic achievement and school improvement, there is no compelling empirical evidence to support this claim. Witte's annual evaluations of the highly-publicized Milwaukee voucher plan, which he conducted from 1991 to 1995 when Wisconsin discontinued annual evaluations, found no gains in achievement for students who used vouchers to attend private schools as compared with Milwaukee public school students as a whole (Olson, 1996). A counter evaluation by Peterson and others who advocate vouchers reported students gained in achievement in their third and fourth years in the voucher plan; however Peterson's study is of a very small sample of students in only three private schools who were not compared with MPS students as a whole but with students who had failed to get into private schools with vouchers (Olson). Studies on privately funded voucher plans in New York, Washington, Cleveland, and Dayton, Ohio are also inconclusive.

There is also little evidence that corporate-run schools are an improvement over public schools, even in the narrow sense of test scores (Walsh, 1996). A study of the Cleveland voucher plan by researchers from the University of Indiana found that the academic performance of kids in corporate-run schools in the voucher plan was dramatically lower in math, reading, science, social studies, and language skills than Cleveland public school students (Walsh, 1998). And in Baltimore where the corporate Education Alternatives Inc. (EAI) took over or was consultant to 12 Baltimore public schools, researchers from the University of Maryland found EAI was more expensive with no better results. To cut costs, EAI eliminated teaching and counseling positions and replaced experienced paraprofessionals who lived in the neighborhood with interns.

From the standpoint of equity, evidence on voucher and private school choice in several countries indicates that they increase race and class inequalities in access to quality education. Whitty, Power, and Halpin (1999) conclude that in Sweden and England voucher plans increase social segregation by race and class as private schools choose public school students who are middle class and white. Blackmore draws the

same conclusion in relation to Australia: "paradoxically, the market exacerbates differences between schools on the basis of class, race, and ethnicity, but does not encourage diversity in image, clientele, organization, curriculum or pedagogy" (Blackmore, quoted in Whitty et al., p. 120). Of course, those with more capital of various kinds will benefit from the market, and those with less will suffer. Indeed, throwing more students into the private school market with public funds allows these schools to be even more selective.

Choice plans favor parents who have the knowledge and time to research and identify high quality private schools and successfully complete admissions processes and discriminate against families who have to face more urgent problems than finding a different school. They favor the students who have the social/cultural/class background, behaviors, and academic records preferred by most private schools (as well as favoring students based on race, ethnicity, fluency in English, lack of "disability," etc.). Even if getting a voucher to attend a private school may be a solution for a few students, it cannot solve the problem of transforming public schools for all students. Bush's proposals to take tax money from under-funded public schools and give it to private schools and corporations divert attention from the resources and changes that are needed in public schools. Choice will not necessarily spur bad schools to improve. Vouchers will withdraw money from already drastically under-funded public schools leaving the remaining students with even fewer resources. Children whose families do not have the social class resources to escape from bad schools will be stuck in them, and the schools will have an even higher concentration of students with the least social clout.

We should be clear what vouchers and private charter schools will mean for most students who receive them and what the long range consequences will be for public schooling. Few public school students, particularly urban students of color, will be trading in their vouchers for admission to an elite private school whose tuition is far more than the typical per pupil expenditure in an urban school district. Nor are they likely to get into good parochial schools which already have long waiting lists and are likely to become more selective with the windfall of voucher applicants knocking on their doors. Unlike public schools, private schools have the option to choose their students. Nor are private schools obligated to provide services for students who speak languages other than English or for students with disabilities. Although the Bush plan is being promoted as a program for failing schools serving low-income students, low-income students would likely be used to open the door to privatizing the educational system and subsidizing private school tuition for the affluent. This is already the object of Bush's proposal to raise limits on educational savings accounts.

### **Bush's Plan: Corporate Profits and Social Dualization**

Given the selectivity and limited capacity of private schools, the likely destination for many vouchers would be new corporate-run schools. Indeed, education has been growing as a major new investment sector. The U.S. investment in learning (everything from corporate training to teaching kids) is more than is spent on defense. A 1998 *Fortune* magazine article reported: "Many analysts believe that education, broadly defined, will

emerge as one of the leading investment sectors over the next 20 years . . . comparable to, say, the health-care industry over the past 20" (Justin, 1996). In fact, the education industry is booming and poised to take advantage of new opportunities. Much of the boom has been in corporate training, educational technology, adult education, and tutoring services. DeVry Institute, in Chicago, which offers classes in technology and computers to high school graduates and Sylvan Learning Systems, which provides tutoring and testing services, tripled the value of their stock between 1995 and 1998 (Schmit, 1998). (Bush's proposal to give students in failing schools Title I vouchers to purchase additional educational services would be a boon for Sylvan.) But as *Fortune* reports, "public schools are the big quarry . . . If for-profit hospital chains can squeeze overhead out of the not-for-profit hospitals they've acquired, why can't the same be done for public schools?" (Justin). Already about a fifth of charter schools are managed by private companies, and Bush is proposing funds to promote more charters. Meanwhile, Whittle Communication is planing to open one thousand for-profit schools, serving two million children within the next ten years (Burbules & Torres, 2000).

Globalization reframes all social relations, all forms of knowledge and culture in terms of the market. All human production and all sites of social intercourse, all services that a society establishes for the common good are potential targets for investment and profit making. In the discourse of neo-liberalism, the society becomes synonymous with the market, democracy and individual choice are equated with being a consumer, and the common good is replaced by individual gain and advantage. This is the essence of Bush's proposals to open up public education to the market. His plans for vouchers for private schools and for supplementary educational services like tutoring, as well as federal funding to support the start up of charter schools, represent the potential for a massive transfer of public funds to corporations. Moreover, privatization would remove those schools from public scrutiny and debate about what and how they should be teaching. Even if Bush eventually withdraws the proposal for vouchers, the debate around the issue serves to further legitimize the marketization of public education. The implications of authorizing corporations to define the purposes of education, to determine what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and to set the parameters of social relations and discourse in schools are profound (see, Saltman, 2000).

In sum, if enacted, the privatization measures would intensify racial, ethnic, and class inequalities. Rather than increasing the quality of education for all students, making education another arena for the market is likely to lead to a dual system, as has been the result with the corporatization of health care through HMO's and for-profit hospitals -- relatively elite, unregulated private schools for the wealthy and increasingly regulated minimalist public schools and new corporate-run schools for low-income children of color in urban areas. ". . . [These] schools will be tightly controlled and policed, and will continue to be under funded and unlinked to decent paid employment" (Apple, 1996, p. 29). A dual system is ideally suited to an economically and socially polarized society. As Whitty et al. argue, "the main purpose of the recent moves toward greater choice is not to build a more fair and generous educational system but to put an end to egalitarianism, and rebuild a differentiated educational system that will more closely aid social reproduction" (Wolford, quoted in Whitty et al., 1999, p. 124). They conclude, "the ideology of choice,

which implies that anyone can benefit, acts partially to mask and thus legitimate this process."

### **Disciplining and Criminalizing Youth: The Politics of Race**

The brutal suppression of demonstrators at the World Trade Organization conference in Seattle and other meetings of supranational globalization organizations leaves no doubt that those who organize and benefit from globalization intend to use force as well as false promises to control those for whom the new global order produces devastation and impoverishment. This is true on a national scale as well. McLaren (1999) points out that the process of globalization is often accompanied by efforts to strengthen the state against civil society by increasing the power of the police, building more prisons, and so on. Bush's get-tough discipline policies and further integration of schools with police and the juvenile court system are part of a discourse of regulation and enforcement that permeates the entire "blueprint." Everyone from students and teachers to schools and states will be subject to punishments and rewards meted out by the federal government. The authoritarian character of the plan as a whole (despite the rhetoric of choice) reflects the intersection of the conservative impulse to reestablish the order and hierarchies of an imagined, golden past (Apple, 1996) and the needs of the state to address problems of control, authority and legitimacy in a nation ripe with potentially explosive contradictions of wealth and poverty, privilege and racial oppression, development and abandonment, economic restructuring and deindustrialization, and blatant signs of economic and social power alongside powerlessness.

With whole sectors of the population -- particularly people of color and immigrants -- relegated to the informal economy or marginal positions in the formal economy and confined to underfunded urban areas or decaying outskirts of cities, both strict enforcement policies and legitimation of the social order are a necessity. Bush's education plan employs these dual tactics, merging discourses of equity ("Leave No Child Behind") and stepped-up policing of youth. The focus on youth is important. Just as globally "it has become possible for vast tracts of humanity to be dismissed now as simply having nothing of relevance to contribute to the new world economy" (Gee et al., p.149), many African American and Latino youth are, from the perspective of capital, largely irrelevant in the new economy and the social landscape of major U.S. cities.

In cities tied into the global economy, attracting the new gentry of technical, professional, and managerial workers is dependent on securing urban enclaves against those to whom the global economy offers little but dreams of consumption. At the same time, as Saskia Sassen (1998) argues, the global city is a strategic site for those who are disempowered because "it enables them to gain presence, to emerge as subjects, even when they do not gain direct power. Immigrants, women, African Americans in U.S. cities, people of color, oppressed minorities emerge as significant subjects in a way they are unlikely to do in a suburban context or small town" (p. xxi). The claims they might make on the economies and space of cities increasingly dominated by new city users (highly-paid knowledge workers, international business people and tourists) is a source of potential contestation and challenge to corporate capital and to the state. This challenge

has been explicit in sporadic urban rebellions of youth of color (as in Los Angeles and Cincinnati) struggling for representation and entitlement in the city (see Sassen). In this context, Bush's proposals to further criminalize "disruptive" students would help weed out those that capital and the new elites write off as extraneous yet "dangerous".

Policies that discipline and control are not simply motivated by economic concerns. They also represent cultural struggles over race, ethnicity, and power which are intensified by the contradictions of globalization. In a racialized society like the U.S., African American youth in particular (and Latino youth by association) are viewed as pathological and in need of control. The racial subtext of urban gentrification, militarization of urban high schools, and criminalization of youth is the white supremacist desire to police and contain "dangerous" African American youth who threaten "white places" of order and civility (Haymes, 1995). Given that African American, Latino, and other youth of color make up the majority of the 20 largest school districts, are disproportionately suspended and expelled from school, and often attend schools that are more like jails than education institutions, these youth are certainly the target of Bush's "safe schools" policies. With more African American youth headed for prisons than college, they, and Latinos, are the youth from whom "our" schools would be made safe, whose school records would become police records and whose police records would become school records, and whom teachers and schools could punish without liability.

Bush's proposals are part of a virulent cultural politics of race which has demonized and criminalized a whole generation. The ideological force of policies that construct African Americans and Latinos as "dangerous" and in need of discipline and control is to further publicly demonize them and legitimate their subordination, social exclusion, and imprisonment. Policies that discipline, regulate, and control also teach students their "place" within a racial and class hierarchy -- attempting to bring into line those that comply, exclude and contain those who insist on staking a claim, on their own terms, on an increasingly unjust social order.

### **Conclusion**

Bush's education proposals can be interpreted as an effort to further integrate education into a global and national economic agenda and an intensification of the war on youth of color. They are motivated by fear that the U.S. will lose its competitive edge in the global competition over markets and investments and by cultural struggles over race, ethnicity, language, and national identity. By framing education in the language of efficiency and accountability and individual choice Bush further consolidates corporate, neo-liberal trends. The policies themselves and the discourse surrounding them become a "discourse policy" directed to society as a whole, defining educational problems and their solutions so as to limit the possibilities we have of thinking and acting otherwise (Ball, 1994). When we step outside this hegemonic discourse, we can only be outraged at the inevitable suffering and loss, the shameful waste of a generation sacrificed at the altar of greed and racism and cynically promoted under the slogan "Leave No Child Behind."

An alternative discourse rooted in social justice would speak to the real urgency to

address the dramatic inequalities and miseducation that goes on in public schools. It would propose massive new funds and programs to rebuild crumbling urban schools, to reduce classes sizes of 35 to 40 students, to vastly improve the quality of science and technology in the poorest schools where there are often no science labs or lab equipment and little technology, to fund the further education and increase the salaries and professional working conditions of teachers; to build school libraries, arts and athletics programs and facilities in under-funded urban and rural schools. (Instead, as a cynical insult, Bush proposes a \$400 tax credit to compensate teachers for classroom expenses, underwriting the common practice of teachers in poor districts digging into their own pockets for books, paper, supplies, and field trips that are present in profusion in wealthy districts.) An alternative discourse would focus on fostering rich scientific and mathematical literacies; knowledge of history and society, of arts and literature, and the ability to examine knowledge critically from multiple perspectives. It would call for schools that encourage students to ask questions as well as answer them; that require students to use knowledge to work on real-world problems of personal, social, and ethical significance; that respect and build on students' cultures, languages, experiences; schools that give them the tools to survive and struggle against race and class oppression.

Critical scholarship over the past 30 years has illuminated the ways in which public schools reproduce race, gender, and class inequality. It is important to criticize public schools while defending the institution of universal public education and its democratic potential. With all their profound failures, public schools can be forums for democratic public debate about not only what kind of education we want, but what kind of society we want. Public education policy has historically been an important arena to struggle over issues of difference, over the rights of oppressed groups, over what constitutes our culture and history, how identities are to be represented publicly, and what is the common good. Although contentious, debates about language, racial justice, gender equity, sexual orientation, "disability," inclusion of immigrants, cultural diversity, school knowledge, sex education, civic responsibility, how schools are connected with communities, and so on are critical to strengthening democratic civic life. Unlike the private sector, public schools can't avoid these debates. As Henig notes, the real danger of policies that privatize education and throw it into the corporate market is that they "will erode the public forums in which decisions with social consequence can be democratically resolved" (quoted in Asher et al, 1996, p. 9). In a world circled ever more tightly by the forces of global capital, the institution of universal, free public schools needs to be fought for as a democratic public space *and* fought over ideologically. The popular strength of the Bush agenda is that it makes sense in the absence of a sharply defined alternative discourse that not only reframes education in the language of democracy and social justice, but rethinks schooling in relation to the racial, ethnic, gender, and class oppression and conflict of the present (global) moment.

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