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‘Social Justice’: Code Word for Anti-Americanism

Why did 18-to-29-year-old evangelicals vote for Barack Obama despite his apostasy on the fundamental moral issues of abortion and same-sex unions? They voted 32% for Obama, twice the percentage of that demographic group who voted for John Kerry in 2004.

Many of these young people identify “social justice” as the reason that led them to relegate the prime moral issues of life and marriage to the back burner. But the term “social justice” does not define a moral cause; it is leftwing jargon to overturn those who have economic and political power.

What caused young evangelicals, the children of the so-called “religious right,” to change their moral imperatives so dramatically? Most likely it’s the attitudes and decision-making they learned in the public schools, which 89% of U.S. students attend.

The vast influence of the so-called “father of modern education,” John Dewey, had already spread disdain for objective truth and authoritative notions of good and evil. A socialist and signer of the *Humanist Manifesto*, Dewey viewed education as a process of socializing the child, rather than educating him to achieve his individual potential.

In the 1970s, Sidney Simon’s best-seller *Values Clarification* taught students to cast off their parents’ values and make their own choices, often aided by Kinsey-trained sexperts determined to change our sexual mores.

In 1983, *Humanist Magazine* featured an article that boasted: “The battle for mankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom. The classroom must and will become the arena of conflict between the old and the new, the rotting corpse of Christianity and new faith of humanism.”

In the 1980s, many radical anti-war activists of the 1960s and 1970s acquired a new identity and became tenured college professors. Among them was William Ayers, a founder of the infamous Weather Underground, the organization that set bombs in public buildings such as the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon.

Ayers escaped prosecution only because of government misconduct in collecting evidence against him. Ayers later boasted: “Guilty as hell. Free as a bird.” In a remarkable co-

incidence, Ayers was quoted in the *New York Times* on the morning of 9/11 as saying, “I don’t regret setting bombs. I feel we didn’t do enough.” Later that week, Ayers was quoted in the *New York Times Magazine* as saying “This society is not a just and fair and decent place.”

Ayers enrolled in Columbia Teachers College, where he picked up a Ph.D., and emerged as a Professor of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He launched a new career, directing his revolutionary energy into changing classroom curricula instead of setting bombs.

Ayers’s political views are as radical now as they were in the 1970s. “Viva President Chavez!” he exclaimed in a speech in Venezuela in 2006, in which he also declared, “Education is the motor-force of revolution.”

Ayers has been on a decades-long mission to transform education into anti-American indoctrination and to get young people to demand that government control the economy, politics and culture. We see the result in 2008 post-election surveys: seven out of every ten voters between the ages of 18 and 29 now favor expanding the role of government, and agree that the government should do more to solve the nation’s problems. It’s obvious which party and which candidates will get their vote.

One might assume that Ayers’s peculiar resumé would put him on the outer fringe of the leftwing education establishment. However, Ayers developed quite a following as he taught resentment against America. In 2008 he was elected by his peers as vice president for curriculum of the American Education Research Association, the nation’s largest organization of education professors and researchers.

What Is ‘Social Justice’ Teaching?

From his post as Professor of Education, William Ayers became a leading advocate of “social justice” teaching, *i.e.*, getting students to believe that they are victims of an unjust, oppressive and racist America. After a few years of this indoctrination, young people are ripe targets for community organizers to mobilize them to vote and carry out “revolution.”

The National Association of Scholars reports that the term “social justice” is today understood to mean “the advocacy of more egalitarian access to income through state-sponsored redistribution.” That is academic verbiage for Barack Obama’s assertion that he wants to “spread the wealth around.”

David Horowitz of the California-based David Horowitz Freedom Center is more blunt. He says that “social justice” teaching is “shorthand for opposition to American traditions of individual justice and free-market economics.” He says it teaches students that “American society is an inherently ‘oppressive’ society that is ‘systemically’ racist, ‘sexist,’ and ‘classist’ and thus discriminates institutionally against women, nonwhites, working Americans, and the poor.”

On October 29, 2008, the pro-public-school-establishment journal *Education Week* featured a long front-page article describing “social-justice teaching.” This article provides ample evidence that “social-justice teaching” should be a major concern to everyone who cares what the next generation is taught with taxpayers’ money.

Education Week defines “social-justice teaching” as “teaching kids to question whoever happens to hold the reins of power at a particular moment. It’s about seeing yourself not just as a consumer [of information], but as an actor-critic” in the world around you. This revealing explanation comes from the words of Bill Bigelow, the curriculum editor of a Milwaukee-based organization called Rethinking Schools, which publishes instructional materials relating to issues of race and equity.

The purpose of Rethinking Schools instructional materials is to teach teachers how to “weave social justice issues throughout the curriculum.” Lessons include “Rethinking Mathematics: Teaching Social Justice by the Numbers,” which shows teachers ways to “weave social justice issues throughout the mathematics curriculum,” and “Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word.”

Bigelow assigns students to role-play various oppressed groups in foreign countries. Students can easily infer that Americans are oppressed like people in foreign countries, and most young people have no store of information to see how ridiculous this is.

“Social-justice” lessons concentrate on past mistakes in U.S. history rather than on our many remarkable accomplishments and opportunities. Emphasizing problems and injustices rather than achievements is given the highfalutin label “critical pedagogy.”

“Social-justice teaching” does not mean justice as most Americans understand the term. Those who use the term make clear that it means the United States is an unjust and oppressive society, and that the solution is for community organizers to organize the poor and minorities to demonstrate and to demand political power so they will be given government handouts.

Indoctrinating Teachers

Education Week identifies the “special-interest groups” that promote “social-justice teaching” and provide curricular materials, online resources, and “professional development” (i.e., conferences and seminars to indoctrinate teachers). These groups include an affiliate of the American Educational Research Association, the Cambridge-based Educators for Social Responsibility, and the Washington-based Teaching for Change, in addition to Rethinking Schools.

The lobbyists for “social-justice teaching” and “critical pedagogy” sponsor conferences to mold the thinking of teachers, which are well-attended at taxpayers’ expense. Teachers 4 Social Justice attracted 1,000 educators to an October 2008 seminar in Berkeley, California.

The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) sponsors seminars with sessions entitled “Our Work as Social Justice Educators,” “Teaching for Social Justice in Elementary Schools,” “Dismantling White Privilege and Supporting Anti-Racist Education in our Classrooms and Schools,” “Talking About Religious Oppression and Christian Privilege,” and “Creating Change Agents Who Teach for Social Justice.”

School boards and principals allocate large amounts of money for teachers to receive this type of so-called “professional development.” Registration for NAME’s November 2008 conference in New Orleans cost \$375 per NAME member or \$475 per non-member, in addition to airfare and hotel expense.

Lesson plans are available from a 30-year-old magazine called *Radical Teacher*, which was founded as “a socialist, feminist, and anti-racist journal on the theory and practice of teaching.”

Education schools are lining up behind “social justice” teaching and forcing it on aspiring teachers so they will possess politically correct liberal attitudes and character traits. At Humboldt State University in northern California, Professor Gayle Olson-Raymer teaches the social studies methods class, which is required for prospective high school history and social studies teachers. Her syllabus states: “It is not an option for history teachers to teach social justice and social responsibility; it is a mandate.”

When a teacher engages in this type of advocacy in lieu of teaching literature, math, history, or science, the teacher is engaging in political indoctrination.

Some “social justice” professional development seminars have urged teachers to begin inculcating “correct” sociopolitical attitudes in children as young as age two because it is so easy to impose their views on children who enter school at such a young age.

Professor Ayers declined to be interviewed for the *Education Week* article. His comments were unnecessary since the article was generally favorable to “social-justice teaching” and dismissive of its critics.

Where Did 'Social Justice' Come From?

"Social justice" is certainly not a new concept, but leftwing educators have redefined the term to mean teaching for "social justice" **by overthrowing the current money and power structure.** *Education Week* identifies this new meaning of "social justice" as coming from the writings of the late Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. His best-known book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), is considered a classic text of radical education theory and is regularly assigned in education schools.

Paulo Freire developed his liberation pedagogy out of his experience with illiterate peasants in northeastern Brazil, who probably were victims of an semifeudal society. But Brazilian oppression has no relation to the U.S. economic or social structure, and it is dishonest to pretend that it is relevant to educating minority children in the United States.

A survey made of the principal books used in the basic "foundations of education" and "methods" courses in the most prestigious schools of education discovered that the most frequently used books were those of Paolo Freire and William Ayers.

After Freire's theories indoctrinated teachers in teachers colleges, his notions made their way into public schools, especially where low-income and minority kids can be taught what is colloquially called Oppression Studies. It is easy to find schools that specialize in "social-justice teaching" in Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and other big cities.

The Social Justice High School in Chicago has a 100% Hispanic or black student body. The principal admits that the lessons taught there are often "atypical," such as teaching the relative likelihood of whites and minorities being pulled over by police.

Howard Zinn, author of the anti-American *People's History of the United States*, which is used as a history textbook in some schools, urges educators to prioritize "social justice" education over political neutrality. In a 1998 interview, he said his goal in writing *People's History* was to move us toward "democratic socialism" by a "quiet revolution." Zinn cites Germany, France and Scandinavia for the United States to use as models.

This "social justice" curriculum results in a heavy cost in time *not* spent on the basics. Young Americans who are exposed to these radical leftwing ideas generally have no background information to help them evaluate bias and errors.

Ayers's Influence on Education

Sol Stern of the Manhattan Institute describes Education Professor William Ayers as one of the leaders in "bringing radical social-justice teaching into our public school classrooms." Most of Ayers's socialist propaganda is financed with taxpayers' money at state universities and teachers colleges.

Ayers teaches that America is oppressive and unjust, that

wealth and resources should be redistributed, and that only socialism can solve our problems. He speaks openly of his desire to use America's public school classrooms to train a generation of revolutionaries who will overturn the supposedly imperialistic regime of capitalist America.

From his prestigious and tenured university perch, Ayers for years has been teaching teachers and students rebellion against American capitalism and what he calls "imperialism" and "oppression." The code words for the Ayers curriculum are "social justice," a "transformative" vision, "critical pedagogy," "liberation," "capitalist injustices," "critical race theory," "queer theory," and of course multiculturalism and feminism.

That vocabulary is typical in the readings that Ayers assigns in his university courses. He admits he is a "communist street fighter" who has been influenced by Karl Marx, as well as Che Guevara, Ho Chi Minh, and Malcolm X.

Ayers sees his education work as carrying on his radicalism in a new sphere. What he calls education "reform" focuses almost exclusively on teaching a "social justice" agenda in the classroom and a race-based approach to education policy. That's been his mission since he realized that revolution could be achieved easier by teaching lies about America to public school students than by planting bombs.

Ayers wants teachers to be community organizers dedicated to provoking resistance to supposed racism and oppression. His education philosophy calls for infusing students and their parents with a radical political commitment, and downplaying achievement tests in favor of activism. His books are among the most widely used in America's 1,500 schools of education. Ayers even uses science and math courses as part of his "transformative" political strategy to teach that the American economic system is unjust.

Ayers teaches a course at University of Illinois at Chicago called "On Urban Education," in which he calls for a "distribution of material and human resources." The course description states: "Homelessness, crime, racism, oppression — we have the resources and knowledge to fight and overcome these things. We need to look beyond our isolated situations, to define our problems globally. We cannot be child advocates . . . in Chicago or New York and ignore the web that links us with the children of India or Palestine." The readings he assigns for the course include Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, two of Ayers's own books, and *Teaching to Transgress* by a radical black feminist.

Ayers maintains a busy lecture schedule at other schools of education and is a welcome visiting lecturer at Columbia Teachers College. He also does teacher training and professional development for Chicago public schools.

In a 2006 interview with *Revolution*, the magazine of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party, Ayers attacked American conservatives as "the most reac-

tionary cabal of ideologues I've ever seen." Ayers complained that conservatives control "all three branches of the federal government, control many state governments, control the media — the kind of bought priesthood of the media that does nothing but bow down to them and kowtow to them."

Ayers endorsed a book called *Queering Elementary Education* by William J. Letts IV and James T. Sears, a collection of essays to teach adults and children to "think queerly." The blurb on the cover quotes Ayers as saying this is "a book for all teachers . . . and, yes, it has an agenda."

Ayers's far-out education theories have had a significant effect in education schools. One after another, teachers colleges are using their courses to promote socialist notions of wealth distribution, diversity and environmentalism, and to punish students who resist this indoctrination by giving them low grades or even denying them graduation. The Department of Education lists 15 high schools whose mission statements declare that their curricula center on "social justice."

Ayers's Friend: Barack Obama

Barack Obama claims that he knows William Ayers only as "a guy in the neighborhood." In fact, the unrepentant Ayers is a longtime friend and associate of Obama.

Is Ayers's transformative public school curriculum the kind of "change" that President Barack Obama will bring us? Activists who teach "social justice" know that influencing public school teachers, who can then influence the next generation, is the most effective way to bring about the change they hope will soon become majority opinion.

Ayers and Obama worked closely together during the 1990s when Obama headed the Chicago Annenberg Challenge (CAC) and Ayers co-chaired the CAC's Collaborative and also was ex officio a member of CAC's board. Obama served on the CAC board until 2001.

The CAC board made the fiscal decisions and the Collaborative set education policy. It's obvious that they had to have significant consultations about disbursement of the education grants. Obama was essentially authorizing the funding of education projects chosen by Ayers. The CAC gave \$160 million in grants to so-called "school-reform" projects. Grant decisions initially put in place continued even after personnel changes.

Ayers was the founder and developer of a project known as the "small schools" movement, a scheme that enabled Annenberg grants to be guided to "social justice"-themed schools built around specific political themes such as "inequity, war, and violence." The small-schools movement was heavily funded by CAC. CAC also funded teacher-training to "teach against oppression" and America's alleged history of evil and racism.

According to Stanley Kurtz, senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a lot of CAC money was disbursed

through so-called "external partners" with whom the small-schools were required to affiliate, such as ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now). ACORN is identified with the organizing tactics of the Chicago radical, Sol Alinsky.

The Chicago Annenberg Challenge appears to be just another example of Republican foundation money taken over by the leftists and used to advance leftwing causes. CAC's own final report compared the progress of students at schools that received Annenberg grants and schools that did not, concluding that "There were no statistically significant differences in student achievement between Annenberg schools and demographically similar non-Annenberg schools. This indicates that there was no Annenberg effect on achievement."

Obama authored two autobiographies but never wrote about his important executive experience in the 1990s with the Chicago Annenberg Challenge. Nor did he mention that his first candidacy for public office, when he ran for the Illinois State Senate, was launched at the home of William Ayers.

"Social justice" teaching is not only a terrible waste of precious school hours, it is grievously harmful to poor children. Sol Stern of the Manhattan Institute says that "Teaching for social justice is a cruel hoax on disadvantaged kids."

Barack Obama announced that his crony, Chicago School Superintendent Arne Duncan who also had ties to the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, will be the new Secretary of Education. In the fall of 2008, Duncan announced plans to open a "gay-friendly" public high school called Pride Campus with 600 students, half homosexual and half heterosexual. Official materials proclaimed that the curriculum would "teach the history of all people who have been oppressed and the civil rights movements that have led to social justice and queer studies." After the announcement of Duncan's promotion, the opening of this unusual school was quietly postponed.

It's no surprise that propaganda favoring Barack Obama is already finding favor with textbook publishers. The McDougal Littell 8th-grade advanced-English literature book (Houghton Mifflin Co., 2008) has 15 pages featuring Barack Obama and his "life of service."

A good way for parents to identify the bias of social studies textbooks is to check the index and then compare the coverage of Barack Obama and Ronald Reagan.

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