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'Social Justice' Education is Already Shaping America's Future

"Each generation chooses [its] own cause, and ours is AIDS in Africa, or poverty or social justice," 25-year-old Judy Naegeli, who works in Christian philanthropy, told the *Seattle Times* (5-11-08). Jonathan Merritt, a Baptist preacher's son who now leads the singles and college ministry at his father's church, sounded the same theme. "When you look at the political party that has traditionally championed poverty, social justice and care for the least of these, it's not been the Republican Party," said Merritt, also age 25. (*Washington Post*, 8-15-08)

Naegeli and Merritt speak for the growing cohort of young, evangelical Christians willing to vote Democratic despite their moral conservatism on issues such as abortion. 32% of evangelical voters between the ages of 18 and 29 chose Sen. Barack Obama on November 4. Only 16% of that demographic group voted for John Kerry in 2004. In October, 55% of registered Catholic voters between the ages of 18 and 34 favored Sen. Obama, while just 40% planned to vote for Sen. John McCain.

In interviews, in political blogs, editorials, and casual conversation, young Americans like Naegeli and Merritt are identifying "social justice" as one reason they are choosing Democratic candidates, even when they disagree with those candidates on other issues.

William Ayers, one of the leading exponents of "social justice" education in schools, made headlines in the recent presidential election as a former Weather Underground terrorist and associate of Barack Obama. While some scoffed at conservatives who tried to call attention to Ayers's radical ideas, the "social justice" education that is already occurring in America's classrooms was a significant factor in the 2008 presidential campaign. 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. Overall, 66% of voters under 30 voted for Obama.

Ayers-style "social justice" education has already influenced young Americans, even those who deeply disagree with the Left on abortion, gay marriage, or other important moral issues.

Putting 'social justice' into the curriculum

The week of the election, the most respected education journal, *Education Week*, featured a front-page article on "social justice teaching." The article served as additional evidence that "social justice" education vitally concerns everyone who cares what the next generation is taught

with taxpayers' money.

Education Week identifies Ayers-style "social justice teaching" as rooted in 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.

After Freire's theories took hold in teachers colleges, they made their way into public schools. Teachers lead low-income and minority kids in Oppression Studies, and schools that specialize in "social-justice teaching" exist in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia, among other cities.

Education Week defined "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 explanation comes from Bill Bigelow, author of *Rethinking Columbus*.

Bigelow admits that this is "a subversive act in some respects because it is not always encouraged by the curriculum." Bigelow encourages his own students to walk in the shoes of groups that have been oppressed or disenfranchised. He assigns students to role-play oppressed

groups in the U.S. and foreign countries. His lesson plans, like most "social justice" lessons, highlight past mistakes in U.S. history to the exclusion of our accomplishments and opportunities.

David Horowitz of the California-based David Horowitz Freedom Center 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."

The National Association of Scholars reports that "use of the term 'social justice' today generally equates with the advocacy of more egalitarian access to income through state-sponsored redistribi-

tion. The phrase is also frequently used to justify new egalitarian rights for individuals and whole categories of people — i.e., legally enforceable claims of individuals or groups against the state itself."

It is clear that "social justice teaching" does not mean justice as most Americans understand the term. Those who speak of "social justice" mean the United States is an unjust and oppressive society and the solution is for government to "spread the wealth around." Activists who favor this solution know that influencing public school teachers, who can then influence the rising generation, is the most effective way to disseminate ideas they hope will soon become majority opinion.

Creating 'social justice' classroom resources

Bill Bigelow, author of the definition

(See *Social Justice*, page 4)

Federal Government Plans Student Database

The U.S. Department of Education plans to consolidate nine separate databases into one giant database of grant, contract, and student loan recipients. The Department of Education would have to waive certain privacy rules in order to allow the database, which would contain personally identifiable information, to exist. The personally identifiable information would include Social Security numbers, birth dates, and possibly financial information about students and their families.

The proposal comes from the ED's Office of Inspector General (OIG), the office that audits and investigates various

educational programs.

OIG believes

the enormous database would help to combat fraud and abuse of federal student loan programs and other grant programs. There is some evidence to suggest that such fraud is rampant, but advocates of universities and students are arguing that the database is not the right way to solve this problem.

"We are . . . quite alarmed by the scale and scope of data collection proposed in [the database], by OIG's apparent belief that it has an unfettered right to engage in data mining on records of individuals who have had any interaction with the department, and worse still, OIG's apparent belief that it may disclose individually identifiable information from [the database] to various outside entities, including foreign agencies and private organizations, without the consent of the individual," the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers wrote to OIG in mid-November. That association wrote on its own behalf and on behalf of seven other associations of colleges and students.

OIG has named an alarming list of people whose personal information would appear in the database: "Employees of the Department; consultants; contractors; grantees; advisory committee members or others who have received funds from the Department for performing services; students who have applied for Federal student financial assistance; Pell Grant recipients; borrowers of William D. Ford Federal Direct Loans, Federal Family Education loans, Federal Insured Student loans or Federal Perkins loans; owners, board members, officials, or authorized

(See *Student Database*, page 4)

Obama Wants To Spend \$2 Billion on Education in Other Countries

On the campaign trail in September, President-elect Barack Obama promised to spend \$2 billion a year to educate children in other countries. Obama identified an international "education gap" between

the United States and third-world countries. "Above all, we must do our part to see that all children have the basic right to learn," said Obama. "There is nothing more disappoint-

ing than a child denied the hope that comes with going to school, and there is nothing more dangerous than a child who is taught to distrust and then to destroy."

The United States Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has established 2015 as the goal year for universal free education.

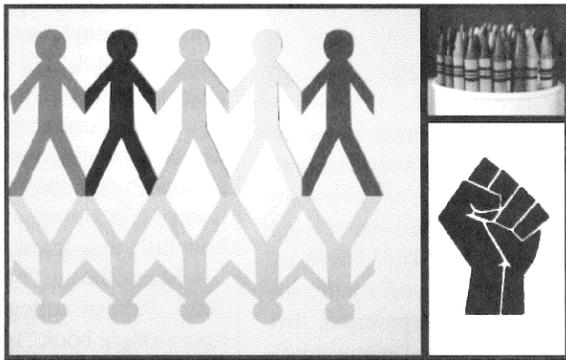
Obama did not specify how the \$2 billion would be spent, but he did mention the year 2015, which implies that the money would be redistributed through UNESCO.

Obama's proposal borrows from Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's Education for All Act, which she introduced in 2004 and 2007. Clinton has estimated that universal worldwide education for all children not currently in school would cost between

\$5 and \$10 billion a year.

The proposal also lines up with the Democratic Party platform for 2008, which promised to "create a \$2 billion Global Education Fund . . . with the goal of supporting a free, quality, basic education for every child in the world." The

(See *Obama*, page 4)



EDUCATION BRIEFS

A Swedish documentary, *From Bill to Barack*, showed one clip of Asheville, North Carolina teacher Diantha Harris berating her students for supporting John McCain. Harris asked the 5th-graders whom they supported, and when one named John McCain, she said, "Oh, Lord, John McCain. . . . Oh, Jesus, John McCain." To a child whose father is in the military, Harris said, "It's a senseless war! And by the way, Kathy, the person that you're picking for president said that our troops could stay in Iraq for another hundred years if they need to! So that means your daddy could stay in the military for another hundred years!" (Swedish SVT2, 11-2-08)

Barack and Michelle Obama will send their daughters, 10-year-old Malia and 7-year-old Sasha, to the private Sidwell Friends School. Tuition at Sidwell Friends, Chelsea Clinton's alma mater, costs \$30,000 a year. "Most D.C. parents would also love to be able to choose a better school for their child, but they lack the financial means to do so," lamented the *Wall Street Journal's* opinion page (11-24-08). "The Washington Opportunity Scholarship Program each year offers up to \$7,500 to some 1,900 kids to attend private schools, but Democrats in Congress want to kill it." President-elect Obama, too, opposes voucher programs.

The Arizona legislature passed a bill to limit the collection, storage and sharing of biometric data on children. "Biometric data" includes fingerprints and other electronic measurements of personal characteristics, such as characteristics of the voice, eye, hand, or face, which can be used to identify individuals with a high degree of certainty. The original version of the bill, introduced by state Sen. Karen Johnson, would have prohibited the state government from collecting such data. The final version did not go quite that far, but did prohibit the collection of biometric information without parental permission.

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Students Sabotage Their Rivals for College Admissions

Applications, recommendations, and transcripts aren't the only contents of the modern admissions department's incoming mail. The mail also brings some applicants' attempts, usually anonymous, to sabotage other students who are competing with them for coveted spots.

"It is one indicator of the high anxiety that seems to be out there, the inability of some families to deal with rejection," Mabel Freeman of Ohio State University told the *Chicago Tribune*.

Admissions directors often suspect that parents have as much or more to do with sabotage attempts as their teenage children do. More American high school seniors will graduate this spring than ever before — 3.3 million of them. The percentage attending college, too, is breaking records. Each top college only accepts a small number of students from any one high school, and anxious applicants and their parents reason that their real rivals are the other qualified students from their own schools.

Anonymous notes accuse other applicants of lying or cheating, reveal that they have been suspended for underage drinking or discipline infractions, or otherwise mar the flattering self-portrait students paint on their own applications. Some saboteurs send clippings from the local paper's crime blotter, exposing other applicants' criminal activities. Or, they tip

off admissions officers to incriminating evidence on the web — inappropriate photos or notes on the popular social networking sites Facebook and MySpace, for example.

Some letters accuse students of lying on their own applications. The University of Chicago recently received a letter informing the admissions department that an applicant had lied about being president of the senior class.

Several admissions directors said they throw anonymous letters straight in the bin, although they will follow up on signed ones. Dan Saracino, admissions director at the University of Notre Dame, said he does check into anonymous letters. "If the person is saying something that might have some credence, you don't want to dismiss it," he pointed out. "We will contact the student who is being maligned and ask them if they care to respond."

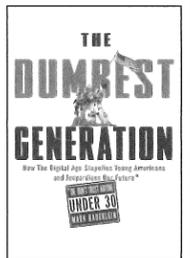
Northwestern University received one accusatory letter written in crayon. "I guess they thought we couldn't trace it if it were in crayon," said admissions dean Christopher Watson. "We see everything. Nothing shocks us anymore." (*Chicago Tribune*, 10-20-08)



Book of the Month



The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future, Mark Bauerlein, Tarcher, 2008, 272 pages, \$24.95



Young Americans have more free time, disposable income, and educational opportunity than any generation in history. Yet survey after survey shows how little they know.

Many have "bibliophobia": in 2005, 19% of college seniors did not read a single book "for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment," and 54% read fewer than four. The hype says that young Americans possess new skills that replace the tried-and-true skills of close reading, clear writing, and historical and civic knowledge. Mark Bauerlein explodes that hype in this shocking book.

The time American 8- to 18-year-olds spend with TV (3 hours 18 minutes a day), computers (48 minutes), and video games (49 minutes) doesn't make them smarter or more competent. Rather, screen time "conditions minds against quiet, concerted study, against imagination unassisted by visuals, against linear, sequential analysis of texts, against an idle afternoon with a detective story and nothing else."

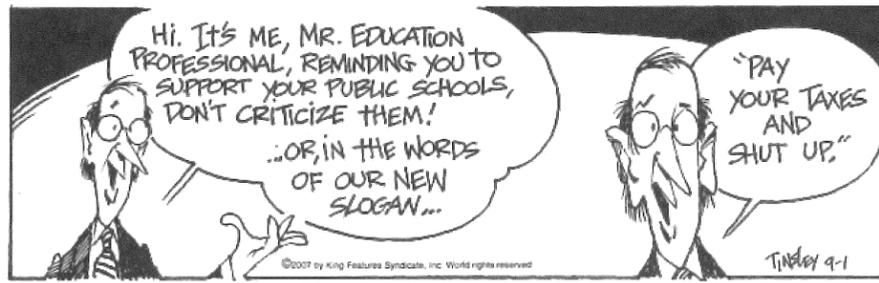
Paradoxically, the internet's endless offerings actually narrow users' minds, instead of opening them. "With so much abundance, variety, and speed, users key in to exactly what they already want," Bauerlein observes. RSS feeds bring 20-somethings the views they already agree with, and bring teenagers the same celebrity news and banal peer-group updates of which they already have too much.

MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, teen blogs, and other outlets for teen peer consciousness all help to isolate teens from adult mentors, great art, history, the classics, or the questions of work and family that have traditionally served to draw young people out of adolescence.

Bauerlein calls on parents, teachers, and other mentors to intervene and save the Millennial generation from itself. Stop bringing pop culture into the classroom in an effort to engage them; they spend enough time with it outside of school. 36% of high schoolers who say they doubt they will graduate blame the fact that they are "not learning anything." Only 11% say that "schoolwork is too hard."

"Young Americans need someone somewhere in their lives to reveal to them bigger and better human stories than the sagas of summer parties and dormitory diversions and Facebook sites," writes Bauerlein. They need their parents to set limits on screen time, and to engage them from an early age with other interests that will awaken their intellects and draw them out of themselves.

MALLARD FILLMORE / by Jeff Tinsley



Schools Adopt Unusual Electives

Unusual electives are gaining ground in some public high schools, especially ones in affluent areas where most students are college-bound. Parents and students ask for such electives in hopes that they will interest admissions committees at top colleges.

Ridgewood High School in New Jersey is adding global economics, 3-D animation, and woodworking as electives over the next two years. Pelham Memorial High School in New York recently extended its school day and reworked its schedule in order to offer 50% more electives. The new electives include military history, guitar, jewelry and metalsmithing, ecology, and the history of rock and roll. There is even an elective course on SAT math preparation, which students normally pay steep prices to study outside of school with Kaplan or the Princeton Review.

Newport High School in Oregon added an elective called "Oregon Outdoors" this year. The class integrates some

science and state history, but its primary attraction is instruction in outdoor sports such as surfing, scuba diving, kiteboarding, hunting, and fishing.

The students, of course, love Oregon Outdoors and the associated field trips, but the class also has its critics. "What are they doing on the weekends, or summer vacation?" asked one Oregonian. "Most of the population in Oregon utilizes the wonderful outdoors in one way or another. These teens need education, not playtime." (*Newport News Times*, 11-7-08)

Greg Bratone, a senior at Pelham High School in New York, was enthusiastic about his school's new elective offerings. "With some classes, you don't like the subject that much — I wasn't a big science person — but now that it's military history, I'm all ears," he said.

While some districts are adding new electives, others are cutting them in order to add more math, science, or languages. (*New York Times*, 10-27-08)

FOCUS: Where the Education Gender Gap is Leading America

By Bill Costello

As early as kindergarten, a gender gap in academic achievement is evident in American schools. Girls are excelling; boys are underachieving. The longer students are in school, the wider the gap becomes.

Boys' academic performance relative to girls has been plummeting for decades. Boys are more likely than girls to earn poor grades, be held back a grade, have a learning disability, form a negative attitude toward school, get suspended or expelled, or drop out of school.

This is not news. You've most likely heard all of this before. What may be news, however, is how the growing education gender gap is beginning to impact — and will continue to impact — colleges, the workforce, the marriage rate, and the fatherlessness rate in America.

The Changing College Campus

U.S. college enrollment is higher than ever. This is great news for Americans. Well, actually, it's great news for women, who now outnumber men in college by four to three. Forty years ago, the opposite was true: men outnumbered women in college by four to three. The tipping point occurred in the late 1970s. The College of William and Mary could now be more accurately described as the College of Mary and Mary.

In absolute numbers, more men are attending college than ever before. However, the rate of increase among men has been one-sixth that of women over the past 20 years. The problem is *not* that more women are attending college; the problem is that men aren't keeping pace with them.

The disparity is even greater among minorities. For example, African-American women outnumber African-American men in college by two to one. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that minorities will be the majority in America by 2050. As minorities make up an increasing share of the citizenry, the college gender gap will grow even wider.

Not only are men less likely than women to go to college, they're also less likely to graduate once there. And the ones who do graduate are less likely than their female cohorts to do it within four years. Tom Mortenson, senior scholar at the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, warned that if statistical trends were to continue at their current rate there would be no men graduating from college after 2067.

While college enrollment is growing, college graduation rates have remained stagnant, which means that more and more students are dropping out of college; most of them are men. Forty years ago, one in five mid-20-something Americans was a college dropout. Now it's one in three. That represents a lot of wasted potential.

It turns out that when the gender ratio on campus tips decidedly toward women, both men and women become less attracted to that campus. Men don't want

to enroll in what is perceived as a women's college, and women want men around to date.

This presents a dilemma for college admissions officers because most of the applicants are women and the average female applicant has a higher G.P.A., participates in more extracurricular activities, and writes a better essay than the average male applicant. So admissions directors must either admit less-qualified men or risk losing the gender balance on campus. Increasingly, they are choosing the former.

Perhaps many men are dropping out of college because they can't keep up with the diligent, accomplished women they're competing against.

The Changing Workforce

Hillary Clinton came as close as one possibly could to becoming the Democratic nominee for president. Sarah Palin made history as the Republican Party's first female candidate for vice president. Nancy Pelosi was elected as the first female speaker of the House. There are now more female senators, congresswomen, and state legislators than ever before.

Women have a growing influence on the fields of law and government. They represent half of law school students and one-third of lawyers. By 2050, they're projected to represent 60% of law school students. Women constitute half of medical school students and one-fourth of physicians. They're projected to constitute 70% of medical school students and the majority of physicians by 2050. According to a U.S. Census Bureau report, women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men. They're also rapidly rising into managerial and administrative positions.

In short, women are becoming richer and more powerful — and this is a good thing for America. Fueling this trend is the growing number of women earning college degrees. More education pays off in a big way. Those with a bachelor's degree earn, on average, nearly twice what those with just a high school diploma earn in a year, and roughly \$1 million more over a lifetime.

Among 25- to 29-year-olds, 33% of women have earned at least a bachelor's degree compared with just 23% of men. This is the first generation of women to be more educated than their male counterparts. This shift means that women will increasingly get the high-paid jobs while men will experience a drop in earnings. This is already happening. Men in their 30s are the first generation to earn significantly less income than their fathers' generation did at the same age.

As the number of jobs that require little education decreases, more and more men will become unemployed. In the current economy, unemployment is higher and rising faster for men than for women.

Some may argue that it's still a man's world. After all, men still wield more power and earn more money than women. This is all true — for now. But a change is coming.

The reason it is still a man's world is that previous generations of men earned more college degrees than previous generations of women. However, as women's academic achievement soars, the male advantage will gradually end and the female advantage will begin.

The Changing Marriage Rate

Fewer Americans are getting married. Married couples now represent a minority of all American households. For the first time ever, most women are now living without a husband. Driving this trend is the growing ratio of college-educated women to college-educated men. As the ratio continues to grow, there will be fewer college-educated women who are able to find college-educated men to marry.

Many of these women choose not to marry at all rather than marry non-college-educated men who are likely to earn significantly less than they do. At the same time, many non-college-educated men are not interested in marrying college-educated women. A study led by Columbia University economics professor Ray Fisman found that these men tend not to pursue women whom they perceive as smarter than themselves.

Consequently, non-college-educated men are finding it increasingly difficult to get married. Thirty years ago, only 6% of men in their early 40s without college degrees had never married. Now it's 18% and still rising. The problem is that there are fewer and fewer women without college degrees for them to marry. And even these women are striving to marry college-educated men with better financial prospects. It is also becoming increasingly difficult for a husband without a college degree to support a wife, as blue-collar jobs move to low-wage countries.

This is not to say that college-educated women and non-college-educated men never get married. But these marriages tend not to last. Marriages are more likely to end in divorce when wives earn more than their husbands. Thirty years ago, wives earned more than their husbands in 16% of marriages. Now it's 25% and continuing to rise. By 2050, nearly half of married women will earn more than their husbands.

Wives who earn more than their husbands are still often saddled with most of the household chores and child-care responsibilities. Being a full-time or even a part-time stay-at-home dad is not a role that men are actively stepping into. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are currently 5.6 million stay-at-home moms and only 143,000 stay-at-home dads. The traditional marriage wherein the husband brings home the bacon and the wife fries it up in a pan is becoming less common. Even more uncommon is the marriage in which the wife brings home the bacon and the husband fries it up in the pan.

Very few husbands choose to shoulder half or more of the household chores and child-care responsibilities — even if they are unemployed or only working part-time. When a wife is the family bread-

winner and comes home to more than her share of the chores, she often decides that she would be better off without a husband.

For better or for worse, the future is not bright for the institution of marriage.

The Changing Fatherlessness Rate

The rise in the number of single American women has given birth to another trend: the rise in single motherhood. The nonmarital birth rate rose sharply from 18% in 1980 to 39% in 2006. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, this trend is not being fueled by teenage mothers, but rather by women in their 30s and 40s.

Women are choosing single motherhood because men, we hear, have nothing to offer. Books such as Peggy Drexler's *Raising Boys Without Men: How Maverick Moms are Creating the Next Generation of Exceptional Men* contribute to this growing perspective.

Do men have nothing to offer? The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that children from fatherless homes are more likely to commit suicide, run away, have behavioral disorders, abuse alcohol, use drugs, commit rape, and end up in prison. This is true regardless of the mother's age, race, or socioeconomic status.

Clearly, fathers matter and have much to offer their children. So do mothers. On average, children raised by both parents experience fewer problems than children raised by single mothers.

Our sons are seeing fewer male role models in their lives. 91% of elementary teachers and 65% of secondary teachers are females. At home, more boys than ever live without a father. Some single mothers recruit males — uncles, grandfathers, friends — to serve as role models for their sons. While helpful, these men are no substitute for a father who has a vested interest in his son's life.

The rise in fatherlessness is a vicious cycle: fatherless boys are twice as likely to drop out of school; they earn less money without a college education; women are becoming more educated than men and aren't interested in marrying men who earn less money than they do; so the number of single women rises; they choose single motherhood; fatherlessness rises; the cycle starts all over again.

The National Center for Fathering conducted a poll that found that 72% of Americans think that fatherlessness is the most significant family or social problem facing our nation. America is the world's leader in fatherless families.

(See *Gender Gap*, page 4)



Social Justice (Continued from page 1)

of “social justice” *Education Week* cited, is curriculum editor of a Milwaukee-based organization called Rethinking Schools, which publishes instructional materials. One Rethinking Schools publication, *Whose Wars? Teaching About the Iraq War and the War on Terrorism*, encourages teachers explicitly to teach far-left views of these topics in the classroom.

Even math teachers can join the fun: *Whose Wars* suggests that they show their students all or part of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the inflammatory and propagandist Michael Moore documentary. Math teachers can then help their students to “see the importance of mathematics as it relates to three controversial issues that were touched on in the movie.”

Whose Wars also suggests lessons in which students reevaluate, “Who are the terrorists?” For example, the United Nations has said that sanctions against Iraq killed as many as half a million children. Teachers who use Rethinking Schools’ suggestions will guide their students to decide that those who imposed the sanctions against Saddam Hussein’s inhumane regime were, in fact, the real terrorists.

Rethinking Schools also offers such resources as *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up: Teaching About Social Justice and the Power of the Written Word*, and *Rethinking Mathematics: Teaching Social Justice by the Numbers*, which shows teachers more ways to “weave social justice issues throughout the mathematics curriculum.”

Groups that lobby for “social justice” education rarely pull punches in asking teachers to take specific political stances in the classroom. In an interview entitled “A Pedagogy of Resistance,” Howard Zinn, author of *A People’s History of the United States*, urges educators to priori-

tize “social justice” education over political neutrality or other things the public expects from public school teachers. “The first thing teachers have to do,” says Zinn, “is make a decision for themselves that they will not be obedient in staying within the boundaries that are usually set by the principals, school administrators, and parent-teacher associations. The teacher has to make a decision right from the start that ‘I am not here just to prepare these students to pass tests so they can move ahead and become successful and take their dutiful place in society.’”

Professional development for ‘social justice’

Lobbyists for “social justice” teaching and “critical pedagogy” sponsor well-attended conferences, largely at taxpayers’ expense. Teachers 4 Social Justice attracted 1,000 educators to an October seminar in Berkeley, California. Lesson plans were 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.”

The Lexington Institute, a libertarian think tank, recently issued a report examining “professional development” seminars encouraging teachers to integrate “social justice” teaching into the classroom.

NAME, the National Association for Multicultural Education, sponsors annual conferences with seminars such as “Our Work as Social Justice Educators: A Workshop for First Timers,” “Teaching for Social Justice in Elementary Schools,” “The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Dismantling White Privilege and Supporting Anti-Racist Education in our Class-

rooms and Schools,” “Talking About Religious Oppression and Christian Privilege,” and “Creating Change Agents Who Teach for Social Justice: Working With Predominantly White Middle-Class Preservice Teachers.”

Other social justice professional development seminars have urged teachers to begin inculcating “correct” sociopolitical attitudes in children as young as two. The Lexington Institute report asks whether some advocates of universal government preschool have in mind the relative ease with which teachers can impose their views on children who enter full-time school at such a young age.

School boards and principals allocate large amounts of money for teachers to receive this type of training. Registration for NAME’s November 2008 conference in New Orleans cost \$375 per NAME member or \$475 per non-member. Each day-long or half-day institute cost an additional \$60 to \$175. \$159-per-night hotel rooms, airfare and substitute teachers all added to the expense.

The Lexington Institute believes the public pays an even higher price for “social justice” education seminars such as NAME’s annual conference. “Ultimately, the heaviest cost comes in precious time lost for learning because teachers have been convinced they need to push a leftist agenda.”

“Social justice is a redistributionist political agenda any individual or party is free to advocate,” concludes the Lexington Institute report. “But when a teacher does that advocacy in lieu of teaching children literature, math, history, and computer skills, the teacher is engaging in indoctrination, pure and simple.”

‘Social justice’ teaching in the Obama Administration

On National Review Online, Andrew C. McCarthy recently underlined the fact that William Ayers is not the only associate of President-elect Barack Obama’s who advocates “social justice” education. Michael Klonsky, another Obama supporter, co-founded the leftist group Students for a Democratic Society with William Ayers, and founded the Maoist organization that became the still-active “Communist Party (Marxist Leninist).”

After becoming one of the first Americans invited to visit Communist China, Klonsky maintained close ties to the Communist leadership until China began experimenting with free market ideas in the

1980s. (“Yes, Klonsky is apparently more committed to Communism than China’s own Communist Party,” quips McCarthy.)

In 1991, Klonsky co-founded, again with Ayers, the Small Schools Workshop. The Small Schools Workshop explicitly aimed to bring radical leftist teaching into classrooms where it could most powerfully influence young Americans to believe, for example, that capitalism is inherently oppressive and unjust.

Barack Obama helped two boards he sat on to direct nearly \$2 million to the Klonsky/Ayers Small Schools Workshop. But his support for Klonsky’s ideas has not merely expressed itself in financial patronage. Obama’s official campaign website provided Klonsky a special platform, as a blogger on what Klonsky called “education politics and teaching for social justice.” In June, after blogger Steve Diamond called attention to this radical blog, all traces of Klonsky suddenly disappeared from the campaign website.

McCarthy points out that Obama’s fundamental agreement with Ayers and Klonsky, not his association with them, matters most as the United States enters the Obama presidency. “Get ready for Klonsky’s ‘social justice,’” McCarthy warns. “It’s what Barack Obama calls ‘change.’” (National Review Online, 10-22-08)

Not everyone means what Klonsky, Ayers, and Obama mean by “social justice.” The group Christians for Social Justice advocates for the rights of the unborn, a far cry from what Obama has in mind. Catholic “social justice” teaching asks what concerned citizens can do for the poor, without advocating Communism or the end of economic freedom.

Young Americans exposed to radically left-wing ideas like those of Ayers and Klonsky generally have little background information at hand to help them evaluate the ideas. The Intercollegiate Study Institute found that seniors at American colleges earned a failing grade of 50.5% on questions testing basic factual knowledge of the market economy. Too many young Americans suffer from similar ignorance of other aspects of their nation’s history, institutions and ideals. If public schools focused on teaching basic history, civics, and literacy — with as little partisan bias as possible — they would better enable the next generation to make well-informed decisions about politics, economics, and justice.

Student Database (Continued from page 1)

agents of postsecondary institutions; and individuals applying to the Department’s Office of Federal Student Aid for a personal identification number.”

The eight associations protesting the database say that OIG’s plan would “allow massive amounts of irrelevant, unnecessary, and erroneous information about U.S. citizens to be secretly compiled” in a central location. “We do not believe that the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, was ever intended by Congress to allow the creation of a Big Brother-like surveillance system by any IG, to permit any IG to set itself up as a data mart of information on U.S. citizens for domestic and foreign law enforcement agencies, or to authorize any IG to provide background checks and degree verification on U.S. citizens to private entities, with or without their

permission,” write the associations.

“It’s troublesome enough that they are seeking to collect this extraordinary amount of information to use for themselves,” said Barmak Nassirian, associate executive director of one of the associations. “But then they take this enormous leap from having the right to access such for themselves to having the right to disclose data on a very loosey-goosey basis, to virtually every Tom, Dick and Harry that strikes their fancy.”

The college groups made it clear that they oppose fraud and abuse of federal programs, and that they support the OIG in its mission to prevent and punish such abuses, even though they oppose the creation of ever-larger databases of private information. (*Inside Higher Ed*, 11-19-08)

Gender Gap (Continued from page 3)

America’s Future

In short, the education gender gap that starts in kindergarten is leading to a nation of undereducated men who are contributing less and less to the economy and the family structure. This will adversely impact our nation’s productivity, prosperity, and culture.

It’s in the interest of women as well as men to turn this situation around. It’s already too late to make up for the gener-

ations of boys whose educational attainment did not live up to its potential. However, it’s not too late to help the current generation of boys.

They deserve better. So do their mothers and future wives.

Bill Costello, training director of Making Minds Matter, teaches parents and teachers the best strategies for educating boys. He can be reached at www.makingmindsmatter.com or trainer@makingmindsmatter.com.

Obama (Continued from page 1)

platform affirmed, “we need stronger international institutions.”

With Barack Obama poised to become president, the United States may be headed toward unprecedented levels of international involvement and foreign aid. As a new senator, Obama sponsored legislation to align the United States with the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals. The Democratic platform for 2008 promised to “double our annual investment in meeting these challenges to \$50 billion by 2012.”

Some commentators have speculated that these promises may be the first to go overboard, however, as Obama takes office in the midst of a serious economic

downturn. The Democratic platform also made lavish promises to children at home — or rather, to their parents who may want help paying for day care. “We will make quality, affordable early childhood care and education available to every American child from the day he or she is born,” the platform declared.

The platform stated, “we will provide all our children a world-class education, from early childhood through college.” Obama’s plan for college affordability involves a \$4,000 tuition tax credit for almost all Americans entering college, in exchange for public service of some sort. In all, Obama’s education proposals would cost an additional \$18 billion a year.