

How Shall We Live as Lambs Among Wolves?

Reason–Passion–Power and Organization

What to Do?

By Rich Gibson

I wrote the paragraph below for an essay in *Cultural Logic*, published on September 6th, 2001:

From time to time in the St. Clair River, which runs rapidly along the eastern coast of Michigan connecting Lake Huron with Lake St. Clair, a combination of high winds and atmospheric pressure causes the river to split apart, leaving a wet marsh between an onrushing tide of water headed south, and a trailing wave of great power. The locals call this a seiche, and the long moments that pass as the broken water surges to connect with itself, usually accompanied by dark purple skies, they call the seiche time. Perhaps this is the seiche time, the murky purple space between powerful waves, moments of great upheaval and crisis, the time when what is most sensibly linked appears to be forever disconnected: people from their work and the products they make, their love, and from one another; theory from practice, language from life, the parts from the whole, and social justice from equality, democracy, care, and inclusion. (<http://eserver.org/clogic/4-1/introduction.html>)

The consummate leader cultivates the moral law (Sun Tzu)

The seiche time ended with the whirlwind five days later, the terrorist billionaire's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the empire's response invading Afghanistan, then Iraq, the bi-partisan suspension of civil liberties, expansion of surveillance and force, and, finally, the economic collapse linked not merely to the dislocation of finance and productive capital, what Lady Astor called, "running off higgledy-piggledy," from industry, but also the bloated costs of war itself (NY Times, 100 Candles for a Darling of Society, 30 March 2002).

In US schools, a long seiche of slow preparation to regain full control of those who prepare the next generation of workers, teachers, following the war in Vietnam swept into hyper-speed with the No Child Left Behind Act, regimenting the curricula, replacing the minds of school workers with the minds of profiteers, enforcing with racist anti-working class high-stakes exams, invading the schools with divisions of militarists preaching witless nationalism.

Today, the empire stands exposed, or so it should be, as morally bankrupt, driven by greed alone, fully corrupt at every level, unwilling and unable to meet fundamental human needs—jobs to

health care to education and all in between. The USA has been fought to a standstill in Iraq by an enemy with no long history of resistance, no internal defense industry of note, no definable external supply lines, no clear chain of command or central leadership. The US military is losing in Afghanistan, as did 300,000 Soviets before them. The best the US could hope for would be a somewhat tamed Taliban rule, giving in to the madmen, and fully isolating the Al Qaeda terrorists. Then, in 2008, Russia invaded Georgia, a key US ally, and the US did nothing. Next, a joint Israeli/US force attacked the imprisoned people of Gaza, killing hundreds, a horror the entire world recognized, laying waste to whatever post-Katrina and Iraq US reputation existed.

A nation of people who went shopping on the urging of President Bush, as trade-off for perpetual war, sees its rising expectations crushed with a foreclosure crisis, national and personal debt crises, while banksters at CitiGroup try to buy \$50 million jets with federal bailout money. Inequality booms. 2.7 million people lost jobs in 2008 in the US. 600,000 lost jobs in December 2008 alone. 45,000 people lost jobs on January 26, 2009. Those jobs were in every key sector of the economy demonstrating the acceleration and breadth of unemployment. The public sector threatens layoffs, payment in script, speed up, demands for concessions, and tax hikes while services, libraries to garbage pickup to health care and pensions, are eradicated. It's a world-wide collapse of the giant Ponzi scheme that operated in the international company store of capitalism. In some countries like Mexico, only drug money and remissions hold the economy together.

Elites are insulated, isolated. Their political campaigns are advertising campaigns, winners fixed by who spent most (Obama outspent McCain three to one on tv ads; despite the wreckage of the Bush administration, the election was no landslide though turnout was the highest in 40 years; race remained key. 55% of white people voted McCain).

The REAL vote went on in regard to the bank bailouts; overwhelming public opposition despite a full scale media assault to portray the bailout as a rescue. But the government, nothing but an executive committee of the rich, and their armed weapon, is going to bail itself-the united banksters and their pols, on the grounds that we are all in this together when we are not at all in this together. That today's voters do not recognize the nature of the government, yet they overwhelmingly oppose this transparent robbery, is indicative of the problem we face in pedagogy and practice---a gap that needs to be crossed.

City politicians and governors from New York to California que up for jail cells, facing corruption and morals charges--hookers and toe-tappers. The last moral compass for the country is TV's Judge Judy, the second richest woman in the US. And, clearly enough, this is all the work of people, not Nature, nor gods. It is class war, an international war of the rich on the poor.

These are the ingredients for social upheaval, revolution (Johnson 1982). But there is no rise of revolutionary analysis, action, or even talk in the US. To the contrary, the population, fickle and hysterical, having turned on the once beloved George Bush to the favors of a father figure and demagogue, Obama, is at a loss about what is up, why things are as wrong as they are, what to do, why, and what would replace our multiple dilemmas. The election built nationalism, not reason.

All morons hate it when you call them a moron (Holden Caulfield).

And why is that? There is no left. Following the largest world wide anti-war demonstrations in history, what claims to be the US left squandered potential and set about developing tactics in the absence of strategy, dodged the responsibility of making a clear moral and ideological stand that all could hear, failed to teach people that we are responsible for our own histories (if not our birthrights), and today lies split between factions (The Communist Party USA's front, United for Peace and Justice, ANSWER, the National Assembly, etc.) all ducking terms like capitalism, imperialism, class struggle, and above all, revolution. The left has no analysis, no strategy, no tactics, no profound moral call for equality and freedom, and no succinct, easily grasped, ideology.

We are lambs among wolves. We do not have to live as lambs among wolves.

It would be easy to blame the post-modernists. Postmodernism, religion with an angry cloak, raised every narrow identity, every neurosis, every standpoint of what was really a tiny capital, to a central issue beyond critique, worthy of worship (Breisach 2003). Finally and predictably, it became ego over solidarity. Academic post-modernists became priests of a whine from the ivory tower, at base a whine about the vanishing of professorial protections and privileges.

Postmodernism atomized academia even further than its usual state--minds crouched in little individual warrens hoping for a hint of notice, and it influenced the left, forming a kind of reincarnated right-wing Menshevism. But the very real promise of perpetual war is clearly upending the lofty dream of "changing the discourse," and, I hope, will have the hidden benefit of killing postmodernism which tried to disconnect past, present, and future; deservedly giving this Versace-clothed corpse a secret burial where it can never be found again—maybe in one of those mystical "spaces" or "interventions," it enjoyed so much.

Still, there is no left.

I blame the Bolsheviks, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and the Communist Parties of the world who never understood Marx and his undying belief that people could be creative, passionate, caring, more or less free by living equitably in matters of production, reproduction, and decision making. Marx investigated not merely the capitalist system, but recognized the possibility that people could be whole, human, by demolishing it, retaining what was useful about it, and moving to a higher level, going beyond capital; becoming whole, transcending alienated life, in revolution. This sets up Marx's ethic of equality and mutual care that was quickly forgotten by Bolshevism and socialism in general, sacrificed on the altar of speeding production.

Nor did the Bolsheviks grasp Marx's maxim, "criticize everything." Behind a veil of internal discipline, they recreated the slavish belief: Do what you're told. Bolshevism lost interest in forging a mass base of class conscious people. The historical critique of tyranny, rule through deceit, custom, hierarchy, and assassination—and voluntary servitude-- going back to the first slave and, in writing, back beyond the Greeks, vanished under Bolshevism (La Boetie et al. 1997).

The failures of Bolshevism (and its inheritor, Stalin) set up the failures of the last century, now spilling into both of today's anti-war movements and the educational justice movements, repeating the grotesque Bolshevik errors (mechanical materialism; re-establishing the values and production practices of the bourgeoisie; supporting bogus national movements that the Bolsheviks opportunistically pegged "the new subject," and thus inherently revolutionary when

they were just nationalists; abolishing the idea of class struggle; propping up “good” bosses while they claimed to fight “bad” ones; claiming that truth lay within the central committee when truth is always slightly beyond us; in promoting the idea that Bolshevism would have to create abundance in order to share it out and that abundance could only be fashioned by capitalism so socialism became capitalism with a party promising future benevolence which would never happen; personality cults; transforming inner party debate to invective and murder to the point it was impossible for the party to self-correct; in abolishing the negation of the negation in philosophy and thus negating the idea of revolution, in betraying what they said they said they set out to do and becoming what they claimed to oppose). And all that was repeated in school social movements like the sixties’ Students for a Democratic society and it is repeated today by the very same people, some—the self-proclaimed Weathermen like the infamous opportunist Billy Ayers-- once liberals with bombs, now reformers who say they can do school reform without engaging fundamental social change, or people who think they can reason and write their way out of capitalism. Now the anti-war movement, whose face is the Communist Party’s United For Peace and Justice, is a funnel for the Democratic Party, and the education reform movement still thinks it can teach its beyond the social relations required by capitalism.

First, those who agree with me that the greatest possibility in the US and much of the world is the emergence of a mass, popular, fascist movement with millions of people marching to its tune, will have to forgive me for saying that I am not going to write about what would need to be done. Political conditions inside the fading US capitalist democracy and the Patriot Act today make that unwise. Like everyone who ever faced a true historical crisis, as we do today with economic collapse interacting with growing realities of endless war (economic collapse that may well be only resolved by endless war, popularized by a war-means-work mentality) what peers back at us from the future is something entirely new. Perhaps it is overblown or a recognition of my own limits to say I know of no historical precedent for our predicament. Hence, on the darker side of guessing that we may be surrounded by a hostile population for some time, I suggest studying the early days of the Vietnamese revolution, Michael Collins, and Chinese perseverance in the Long March.

However, I bet against my better judgement and write here with greater hope on the chance we might help derail that ugly prospect with a four legged project: **Reason, Passion, Power, and Organization**, in the context of saying, again, we are lambs among wolves. We face a real crisis in which our opposition, which I propose is mainly the US ruling class, which exists, has a determined central command, weapons, two centuries of experience with exclusion and deception, the habits and traditions of everyday life on their side, and has demonstrated repeatedly that they are prepared to spill rivers of blood. They also stand naked as strategically incompetent, tactically inept—which may mean they are in the long term, weak, but in the short term, desperate and scary.

Even so, educators have phenomenal potential power. We are tasked to investigate ideas, we occupy key positions in society, connecting multiple communities, and we can quickly understand that a good part of social change is pedagogical, linking reason to power.

On the matter of **reason**, I want to apply Marx’s maxim, “criticize everything”, to capitalist democracy and the failure to follow Marx’ path by nearly every reform group, and Bolshevik remnant, in the world. I also hope to apply reason to social analysis and the development of

strategies and tactics. So, I will investigate abstract democracy, capitalist democracy, and the fetish the left has made of democracy in the US.

Expanding on Che Guevara, who, when he witnessed the US sponsored violent overthrow of the democratically elected Arbenz regime in Guatemala, said, "It was then I left the path of reason," I say we must see more paths than reason alone.

On matters of **Passion**, I want to investigate what it is that the left has failed to demonstrate to people about Marx' view about being whole, equitable, creative, caring, even friendly--and how we desperately need to build that into our organizations now, before the vision is lost in the thousand forms of selfishness that make class rule possible. I will suggest that one impact of the dramatic expansion of finance capital, dominating productive industrial capital, and the parallel de-industrialization, has been the acceleration of the collapse of the family, once central to inhibition against change, and, thus, the acceleration of the ruling class call to educators to fashion, not just fear of the outer cop, but to instill the inner cop, the inner priest, via the regimentation of the curriculum and high stakes exams (Schneider 1975).

Reason must be connected to **passion** if we are to change peoples minds, carry out any pedagogical project, but especially the one at hand that connects the struggle in education to society.

On organization and power, or organized action, I want to quickly review where the Rouge Forum--which I assert is the core of the left in the US-- is and where I think we need to be.

Let us begin with Abstract Democracy, and quickly toss away the abstract pretense of democracy standing by itself.

Here are three telling quotes about Democracy:

Democracy is the name we give the people whenever we need them. Marquis de Flers Robert and Arman de Caillavet (<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/856.html>)

The whole dream of democracy is to raise the proletariat to the level of stupidity attained by the bourgeois. **Gustave Flaubert (1821 - 1880)**

Under democracy one party always devotes its chief energies to trying to prove that the other party is unfit to rule - and both commonly succeed, and are right. **H. L. Mencken (1880 - 1956)**

(<http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/856.html>)

We can see how US democracy deals with popular Hamas, crushes democratically elected regimes it does not like as in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Chile, seeks to murder popular leaders like Castro, creates bogus democratic movements in accompaniment with the CIA as in Kosovo or Poland, promotes democracy in the USSR and calls the KGB leadership "democracy advocates," restores drug gang warlords in Afghanistan and calls that democracy, invades and Balkanizes Iraq, for oil and regional control while waiving the democratic flag, and props up tyrants like the Saudis all over the world. Democracy is less than meaningless, actually inverted, in the outer reaches of the empire. The US uses the National Endowment for *Democracy* as a

front for the CIA all over the world, and inside the US as well, to destroy indigenous movements that fight for equality.

Internally, US democracy, often with liberals in the lead, fashions the theft of the public treasury in maneuvers like Enron or the trillion dollar bankster bailouts which involved every sector of government, demolishes the environment and gets the citizens to pay for the superfund sites, cheats at the ballot box, as in 2000, how the rich use the sheer power of their money to deceive and exclude people in national elections which now measure, not so much vote counts, but who spends the most. Obama betrayed his own promise to rely on public funds.

Democracy relies on a tax system that forgives the rich their riches and punishes workers for having to work. Greek democracy and US democracy were stacked on slavery. US democracy is a untrustworthy privilege won through the plunders of vicious imperial violence, part of the buy off of the population of the empire's citizens, just as the nationalist loyalty of top union leaders is purchased by the CIA. US abstract democracy sits on the false idea that we are all in this nation together, when we writhe in the midst of class warfare, our side losing for now (Moore 1957).

The one place we might expect to see some kind of abstract democracy operating, in the unions, we witness the most grotesque perversions of abstract democracy, as in the American Federation of Teachers or the United Auto Workers unions, both functioning with a caucus system that locks out nearly any dissent whatsoever, a system upheld by the democratic Supreme Court. Union democracy is a myth. The unions, decidedly a part of the system of capital, are reduced to capital's motive: chase the dues money (Gibson, 2006).

Governors, whoremongers and corrupt, line up for prison cells, from New York to Illinois. Every big city in the US is polluted with political corruption, from Mayor Kilpatrick's disgrace in Detroit to Mayor Murphy's disgrace in San Diego, just as the cities were utterly corrupt 100 years ago, as Lincoln Steffens demonstrated in Shame of the Cities, but Steffens was never able to connect incidents of corruption and the necessary tie of a system of exploitation and buy-offs, so he treated each city's rot as a fluke, just as Jonathon Kozol continues to do with education reform today, calling for "democracy."

When US anti-war activists in the Vietnam era wanted to organize a vote against the war, they arrogantly forgot about the Vietnamese vote taking place on the battlefield.

Plunkett of Tammany Hall begat Randy "Duke" Cunningham. The 2008 election spectacle is cost more than one billion dollars, for TV ads alone. The offer was with the Clinton versus Obama dog fight, two demagogues declaring they can out-superstition the other and one war criminal, McCain. Such is abstract democracy in the US, serving at best as something of a warning signal to the ruling class (Szymanski 1978).

In philosophy, abstract democracy is religion, dialectics without materialism, the dead end of critique, a source of class rule. You suspend your critical thought, agree to one Imaginary Friend or another, enter an arena run by self appointed translators for the IF, pay them, accept the hierarchies they created before you arrived, take direction and adopt the rules of the translators for the IF, and since your IF has to expand or collapse, and since there is no way to resolve religious disputes, no way to offer proofs, others become enemies. Rivers of blood.

I do not want to hear about abstract rule of the people. Rather than vote in this system, the best move might be to turn the tables and, instead of buying a politician, get some pals and collectively sell your votes. I dismiss the abstraction of democracy.

I do want to address **capitalist democracy** which Marx described as the best fit for the social system when under expansion. To grasp the relation of capital and democracy we must understand that they are not piled, one on the other, but fully imbued with each other. They developed together in history. It is like a mathematical fraction in which the numerator exists as a full partner with the denominator. But it, capitalism and democracy, is a zipped up relationship that is ignored or denied in civics classes, and which can ebb and flow depending on power relations between classes. We know US democracy can vanish, fast, as in Detroit in 1967 when all laws were suspended and the military invaded the city. The same is true of Canada, with the War Measures Act enforced in 1970.

“Capital is the all-dominating power of bourgeois society” (Marx 2008)

What, then, is capitalism? It is, first, a **system of exploitation**, a giant sucking pump of surplus labor, a relentless quest for profits in which those who do not expand, die, as with the US auto industry. Capitalism is born in inequality and violence. Those who own, stole, and the rest, who must work to live, work under an unjust condition that claims to give us a fair day's pay, when in fact that day's pay begins with the violence of being dispossessed and ends with our being paid but a portion of what our labor creates—the source of profit. Over time, production becomes increasingly social, yet the value of that production is looted by those few who hold power and capital. Still, at least in theory, the revolutionary system of capital which demolished feudalism (then gave it new life in the Taliban) creates a world in which all people could live fairly well, if they shared.

So, capitalism is a system of exploitation in which those who must work to live must vie with each other for jobs, while nation based owners vie with each other for cheap labor, raw materials, and markets, often using militaries made up of workers who are sent off to fight the enemies of their real enemies: the rich at home.

Capitalism is a system rooted in **Alienation and Exploitation**: People who must sell their labor to live; that is, the vast majority of people, are drawn together in systems of production which, over time, are more and more socialized (bigger plants, more interconnected forms of exchange, technology, and communication, etc).

However, the people who must work, who form a social class, are set apart from each other in competition for jobs and do not control the process or the product of their work. We see that as school layoffs prompt educators to point at one another, suggesting someone else should go first, while the curriculum and teaching methods are imposed from the top down. Kids really need more educators, not less, and corporate profits and CEO pay still boom.

While we have more control over our time as educators than most workers, we do not determine how the work will be done, nor do we choose what will be done with the product and don't own the profits gained (whether it is a Pinto of child or a chocolate). The more they engage in this form of exploited work, the greater the difference between them and their employers grows. At the same time, the more workers labor, the more they enrich their rulers, and wreck themselves.

Alienation is a loss of self, indifference to others and a surrender to passivity. Each group forms, in essence, a competing social class, hence Marx says, "history is the history of class struggle." Alienated individuals, though, become increasingly isolated while, simultaneously, they are driven together in ever more distinct, separated, classes. At the end of the day, the alienated person is split from him/herself; self-destructive.

Alienation and exploitation lead to Commodity Fetishism: Capitalism is propelled, in part, by the sale of commodities, for a profit (as in surplus value). Over time, both workers and the employer class relate more to things than they do to other people, indeed people begin to measure their worth by commodities, especially the chief commodity, money, which in many instances becomes an item of worship. Businesses no longer focus on making, say, steel for use, but on making money, for profits. Education becomes, not leading out, as from the Greek, but for domination and test scores become the fetish.

Finance capital begins to dominate industrial investment, or such is the path in the US. People who must sell their labor become commodities themselves, and often view themselves and their own children that way. How much you make determines who you are, who you meet, who you marry, where you travel. You are not what you are, but what you have.

People then begin to see what are really relations between people, as relations between things (every human relationship mainly an economic one), which leads to the **connection of commodity fetishism and reification**. In discussing the stock market, most economists treat it as if it had a wisdom and life of its own (remember the religion metaphor). In schools, children have been routinely commodified, sold to companies like McGraw-Hill (textbooks) and Coca Cola-and most teachers would agree that this process has accelerated in the last decade. Commodification means that people become things, less human, less connected so Marx argued, "the more you have, the less you are."

Test scores remain a good example. No Child Left Behind sets up an appearance of equality, just like the myth of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. The myth is that children enter the testing room as equals, the harder they prepped, the better they will do. The reality is that the more their parents earn, the higher the scores. The more you are concerned about test scores, the less you are learning anything important; the more you are learning, for example, subservience. In school the battle for profits meets the battle for social control.

As with capital, the more you concentrate on test scores, the more stupidified you become. But, the politicians ask, "how else can we measure learning?" while masses of people forget we could just ask the kid. Or, if we are truly so concerned about testing and scores, why not give the kids the test on the first day of school and keep giving it, with reflective instruction, until all pass?

War, on one hand, and unconcern, on the other, are results of commodity fetishism. Greed, domination and fear are the underlying ethics, underpinned by indifference, the opposition of love.

Combined these three processes, exploitation, alienation, and commodity fetishism forge **reification**: All reification is a form of forgetting (Horkheimer and Adorno 2001). The relations of people, disguised as the relations between things, become so habitual that it seems natural. Things people produce govern peoples' lives. Commodity production and exchange are equated

with forces of nature. "Natural laws," really inventions of people, replace real analytical abilities (as in seeing supply and demand, or scarcity and choice, as the centerpieces of economics, rather than seeing economics as the story of the social relations people create over time in their struggle with nature to produce and reproduce knowledge, freedom, and life--or in political science, discussing democracy as if it had nothing to do with social inequality).

Reified history is abolished, capitalism assumed to be the highest attainable stage of human development. Nothing changes. Normalcy in some capitalist countries is really store-bought assent to exploitation--masked as freedom. Test scores are good examples of reification in school. Measuring little but parental income and race, test scores are worshiped uncritically, influencing peoples' lives far beyond their real value. Real estate salespeople love test scores, churn the market.

Reification hides the system of compulsion and disenfranchisement, a push-pull from the powerful, that mystifies a social system of exploitation so thoroughly that it is able to seriously call itself a centripetal point of freedom, producing a mass neurosis so powerful that it encourages its subjects to steep in two decades of consumerist euphoria while their social superstructure, like schools, their social safety net, like welfare or health services, evaporated underneath them.

Their industrial base vanished as well—a hangover from euphoria, the Golden Calf becoming the Trojan Horse--not wise for a nation promising to wage meat grinder perpetual wars on the world to have the steel industry owned by outsiders from India, Germany and Japan. One has to worry about what happens when this population cannot use its play stations or get to the mall. They may be the most dangerous people in the history of the world.

These processes of capital give those who own an enormous machine for lying and deceiving, a massive propaganda machine extending from all forms of media into schools, throughout the military, etc.

This background sets up our look at **capitalist democracy** as the best system for capital as it expands. The capitalist state is an executive committee of the rich, not an autonomous neutral, but their debate forum where they iron out their differences, then allow the vast majority of people to choose which of them will oppress best. The capitalist democracy is also an armed weapon in service to property rights. As the ruled far outnumber the rulers, and since coercion and force alone cannot sustain capitalist production, to pacify areas people must be turned into instruments of their own oppression.

We can see now how the one-person-one vote mythology would appeal both to rulers who seek to divide and conquer, and to individuals isolated by the system of alienation, fooled by the atomizing deception apparatus that promotes individualism--voting promotes the lowest forms of opportunism, boils down to "what about me?" --- and the false notion that a vote can bring fundamental social change. The vote count serves as a warning signal to ruling classes.

People hide from one another in voting booths wrongly thinking they are making real public decisions when they really have no control over the processes and products of the system--and most cynically know politicians always lie--yet they vote thinking they are exercising their only public or social power, when in fact they are just setting themselves off from others and the

reality is that their real power lies in unity with other workers—at work, their ability to build solidarity to fight to control the value they create. The crux of capitalist democracy is revealed in the fact that nearly no one expects to have a vote on anything significant at work, unless they own the workplace.

Others, excluded, (by Jim Crow laws or chicanery) might be disgruntled, while those who don't vote can be attacked for being responsible for the bad choices voters make.

Fundamentally powerless student councils are practice areas for future political leaders, councils where all concerned pretend they have influence, when they are mere performers reading blank scripts. Student councils are sandboxes. When university presidents see the kiddies inching outside the sandbox, the presidents (or principals) abolish the vote and push the kids back in.

The rule of law, which appears to be natural law, law suspended above and apart from class struggle, is a form of reification. On the face of it, justice, but at base it is class rule and, moreover, the rule of law is key to commerce—mutual trust is hardly enough, indeed, laughable.

The masses of people are told this is the law, which is alienated law, “the will of the ruling class exalted into statutes,” (Marx 1995), a sandbox of property laws overseen by millionaire judges that only incidentally considers people. The mythological rule of law is sheer class rule that shifts as class struggle and largess or bankruptcy meet one another.

Within this law, as in religion, people deepen their alienation, choose, and pay, others to think and act for them, others who operate behind the habits of hierarchy and the force of arms. When serious differences, collisions of interests, appear between the capitalists of a given nation, they conduct civil war. The base for capitalist law is the same as the capitalist ethic: Profits are good, losses are bad, keep a careful count. Capitalist law is the law of property, ownership, not humanity.

The religion metaphor works well with schooling in the industrialized world. In the abstract, as with abstract democracy, public schools are there for the common good. But they are capitalist schools, above all, while, granted, opposition exists in some ways like it does in a factory. Educators in capitalist schools are somewhat like missionaries for capitalism. Look at the hierarchies: men run the administration (Bishops), and women (Nuns) do the front line work. School workers, who have more freedom than other workers, have a clear choice, be a missionary for the system of capital—or not.

No one ever voted themselves out of what is, at base, a Master/Slave relationship. The Masters will never adopt the ethics of the slaves. The singular path of reason alone will not overcome the system of capital, though reason must be our light and beacon. Our choice today is between community or barbarism.

Marx was correct in seeing that capitalism is a giant worldwide company store, an international war of the rich on the poor, and most importantly that the dispossessed of the world, probably all of us, have a real interest in overcoming that system and, not replacing it with another form of dictatorship, but with an ethic and reality of reasonable equality.

The people's insurrection is against tyranny (Babeuf 1794)

The logic of the analysis of capitalist democracy leads directly to revolution. There is no other way out. While we should abhor violence, we should not reify it, treat it as if abstract violence stands on a plane similar to abstract democracy, beyond history, social conditions, or the legitimate arts of resistance. We should not celebrate hatred, no shy away from it. The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference.

The logic of revolution against capital is true especially now when finance capital in the US, now in free fall yet continuing to expand, is challenged by capital in other nations, like China which has a well motivated, not exhausted, military and needs that oil just as much as the US. Oil moves the military, which in turn is absolutely key to any empire's ability to flourish, which is why saving gas will do little or nothing about the perpetual oil wars. US finance capital is hit by the crises we are familiar with: the mortgage, personal debt, and national debt crises the ghastly rise in food and transportation costs, and so on. Harsh times came fast following the collapse of Lehman Bank and we witnessed the merger of finance and government with the series of bailouts, welfare to the rich, as the usual privatization of profits melded with the socialization of losses.

It follows that capitalist democracy in the US is not expanding with the Obama election, but rapidly contracting, and fascism emerges. As class antagonism grows, state power becomes an ever more national power over labor and reforms with capital only increase the power of its state.. There are no more labor laws of any worth, no civil rights laws, habeas corpus, rights of privacy, free speech (remember, "watch what you say") are gone, through bi-partisan legislative action as well as the courts.

The fight-back to transform the system of capital needs to look carefully at the rise of fascism (merger of the corporate and political elites, suspension of common laws, racism, nationalism, a culture writhing in violence in search of a strong leader—all moving at hyper speed within the national election now). Saying "emergence of fascism," does not mean fascism is arrived, but it does mean that fascism exists for some people in the US now, say a young black man in Detroit or Compton, while it is appearing before the eyes of others—volunteers drafted by the economy in Iraq.

The recent election should not only be studied as how to choose who will best oppress the majority of the people from the executive committee of the rich, the government. It should be studied, more importantly, as how an element of capitalist democracy, the preposterous election, has speeded the emergence of fascism, that is,

- *the corporate state, the rule of the rich,

- *the suspension of civil liberties,

- *the attacks on whatever press there is,

- *the rise of racism and segregation (in every way, but especially the immigration policies),

- *the promotion of the fear of sexuality as a question of pleasure (key to creating the inner slave), and the sharpened commodification of women (Sarah Palin to pole dancers),

- *the governmental/corporate attacks on working peoples' wages and benefits (tax bailouts to merit pay),

- *intensification of imperialist war (sharpening the war in Afghanistan sharpens war on Pakistan which provokes war on Russia, etc, and the US is NOT going to leave Iraq's oil),

- *the promotion of nationalism (all class unity) by, especially, the union bosses),

*teaching people the lie that someone else should interpret reality and act for us, when no one is going to save us but us,
*trivializing what is supposed to be the popular will to vile gossip, thus building cynicism--- especially the idea that we cannot grasp and change the world, but also debasing whatever may have been left of a national moral sense,
*increased mysticism (is it better to vote for a real religious fanatic or people who fake being religious fanatics?) and,
*incessant attacks on radicals (Bill Ayers is not a radical; he is a foundation-sucking liberal now, once he was a liberal with a bomb, but people see him as the epitome of a radical and he IS connected to Obama).

That is a litany of the acceleration of fascism (Gibson 2000).

Al Szymanski outlined the basic functions of the capitalist state three decades ago. This is a reminder:

1. To guarantee the accumulation of capital and profit maximization and make it legitimate.
2. Preserve capitalist class rule.
3. Raise money to fund the state.
4. Form and preserve capitalist class rule (Szymanski 1978, 212).

But the left of the US anti-war movement, and the education reform movement, abandoned the critique of capitalist democracy, meaning they have no basis for analysis, no ability to develop strategies and tactics across a nation or even in unique communities—because they do not grasp how power works or why it is that the power of people who work lies, not in the voting booth—where odds are the voting machines are owned by their enemies—but at work where they can collectively win control of the processes and products of their work, in communities, or in the military where the working classes are already organized and armed.

At the same time, **the left has made a fetish of Abstract Democracy**, following the postmodernist coalitions where the notion of class struggle or the word, capitalism, is banished and people are urged to go off in narrow race/nation/sex/language , “autonomous,” grouplets taking up their constricted issues, as did the 10,000 people meeting in Atlanta in 2007 at the World Social Forum, thinking this will somehow lead to real resistance to a ruthless enemy with a long history of rule and a centralized command. The WSF created no strategy at all. To quote America’s last remaining moral compass, Judge Judy, “it doesn’t make sense and it is just not true.” It won’t work. Judge Judy is a perfect example of the appearance of judiciousness, when it is really the application of the values of the bourgeoisie, and the sale of judiciousness, as the filler between commercials.

Inside the trap of Abstract Democracy, a tyranny with a thousand hierarchies and forms of selfishness each uniting the individuals with the whole of capital, the left has shown it is unable to get its ideas to leap ahead of daily social practice, and absolute necessity if we are to envision a better world and set about creating it.

In order to make a fight, people must trust one another. That means they must meet with each other in integrated groups that recognize that class remains the key issue at hand, of course mediated by questions of race, language, sex, gender, nation.

That, coupled with its unremitting captivation with nationalism, is the main reason the US left has had no impact whatsoever on the last seven years of imperialist war, even though a million and more people hit the streets in the first week of the Iraq invasion. They evaporated into their semi-autonomous worlds and have not exercised their potential power since. A somewhat similar thing happened to the school reform movement which, other than parts of the Rouge Forum, simply refuses to address the connections of the system of capital, imperialism, war, the regimentation of school life and the curriculum, oversight through high stakes exams, militarization, and privatization as well.

It is fair to say, I think, that the dominant elements of public life in the US are opportunism, racism, nationalism, ignorance, and fear (surely that is true of the professorate) though we have to recognize that the sheer persistence of continuing to work, in our case on behalf of kids, has considerable courage built into it.

Anyone interested in confronting our conditions today must follow Hegel's dictum: The truth is in the whole." The whole is capitalism. Some live in capitalist democracies, and most do not, but it is the whole that must always be addressed, like keeping the front sight aligned with the rear sight. Even reforms will not be won without both sights on the target. The failure to create a mass base of class conscious people, which is our life and death high stakes test, remains the Achilles Heel of nearly every social movement. It follows we need to openly talk about what capitalism is, why class struggle takes place, what can be done, and what a better future might be. We need to answer the question: What do we want people to know, and how do we want them to come to know it?—inside every action we take.

Let us soar on to **passion**. A great part of the school reform movement, of the anti-war movement, of the Marxist project, is pedagogical. Do people learn through reason alone? They do not.

The entire system of capitalist democracy is a system of deceit, misrepresentation, and although it may seem as if anyone can see what is up, few do. What constructs mistaken consciousness, what underpins the indifference, the "whatever," that keeps the system going, or, what reveals the Man Behind the Screen, or, what causes some people to acquiesce while others resist, even knowing they won't soon win? Engels said there is no simple connection between being, the system of capitalist social relations, and consciousness, or class consciousness (Schneider 1975, 24).

Consider the impact of capitalist democracy on capitalist schooling, it's purportedly public system which is, in fact, several segregated systems conducting education mostly along the lines of the race and class, a pre-prison program in Detroit, a pre-Walmart program in National City, a pre-social worker program in LaMesa, a pre-law system in Lajolla, and a private system in Bloomfield Hills where the rich send their kids like Mitt Romney and George Bush. In Romney's school, youth learn the view, "this is our world and we will discover how we might make it act," while elsewhere, depending on the rung of the segregated ladder, kids learn, "tell me what to do and I will do it."

Capitalist schooling in the US, since the multidimensional decay ushered in by the Vietnam war, has taken the place of the family in the social breaking in of the future work force through marching kids inside a system of inhibition, suppression, prohibition, in which society seizes control of childhood, and I think significantly, tries at once to make kids asexual, fearful of sexual pleasure, and thus their own bodies, while the outside world introduces them, ceaselessly, to spectacles of exploitative sexuality. Aids on the one hand, Brittany Spears on the other. Is it any wonder that 1/4 of our teens have std's?

Capitalist schooling imbues kids with the idea that it is natural to have to sell yourself, your labor, and then, through high-stakes exams for example, teaches kids the thousand forms of selfishness that make class rule possible (Schneider 1975, 22). As Wilhelm Reich said, the inner cop is the Trojan Horse of any society rooted in domination (Reich 1970). And Marx was clear that capitalism reduces love and passion to cash—Elliot Spitzer, Randy Cunningham, etc. But money is not an early childhood wish. Human connection is. But the connection is broken in a broken world.

It is illegal in US capitalist schools to teach the central issues of life: Labor (involving the communist movement), rational knowledge (opposing the many Imaginary Friends that people think are in charge), love (tied to pleasure, sensuality, aesthetics, as well as reproduction), and freedom (which does not exist in school life).

With Bob Apter and Susan Harman, I traveled California last fall, meeting with teachers, parents, kids, and community people all over the state, the northern border to the Mexican border. The main thing we learned: Fear is the primary lesson being learned by everyone connected to schools. Lessons learned in fear teach, for the most part, abuse and more fear. We know the abused commonly turn around and abuse. Empathy linked to passion may transform that, or not.

The idea that we are responsible for our own histories, if not our birthrights (inheritance seen as natural), is banned in most capitalist schooling, as is the viewpoint, true, that we can comprehend and change the world. To the contrary, children are taught lies (nationalism for example) using methods so obscure that kids learn to not like to learn, a dubious achievement of capitalist schooling.

We know the education-by-commands-and-fear NCLB's child victims can be restored to life to some extent by good, persevering, teaching, but it is a terrible burden to overcome. For the most part, NCLB works teaching obedience, servility, and nationalism, eradicating history to the point that Chalmers Johnson claims people in the US, "have no framework to link cause and effect." (Johnson 1982, 2)

The NCLB sets up the three processes driving school today: (1) the regimentation of the curricula and methods of instruction, (2) surveillance through racist, anti-working class exams using a pretense of science to sort children, and (3) militarism, a veritable invasion of the schools in poor and working class areas while all are taught the normalcy of endless warfare.

In this context, how do we connect reason to passion? I think we do that, in part, by addressing the fact that freedom is insight into unfreedom, that we must sacrifice our narrower interests in order to participate collectively, but beyond that we must build passion, friendship, caring,

empathy, aesthetics, and as much freedom as possible into a resistance group addressing the whole of the problems of the system of capital.

That does not mean we need to take on Abstract Democracy. It means we must find ways to make collective decisions about serious actions for the common good. It does not mean lowest common denominator consensus building, nor the isolation of voting. It means a resistance group based on reason, friendship, and figuring out how to make the best decisions possible.

Opportunists have no principles, ethics, and lots of friends who know nearly nothing important.

Sectarians have rigid principles and no friends; generals without armies. Marxists have lots of friends yet keep their principles, ethics, intact, and seek to teach others—combining ethics, action, and empathy for those who must live in fear—as many educators do.

We need to find ways to allow people to be as fully human, celebratory, as possible, connected, each demonstrating their creativity and connectedness with unfreedom as a commonly understood problem to be solved, because we are lambs among wolves.

It is this condition that can allow us to connect passion to the willingness to sacrifice that fundamental change, or any important social change now, will require to create and sustain. This is not going to be easy. This path beyond reason demands that people sacrifice treasure, sleep, sometimes jobs, certainly time and promotions, maybe jail or life, for the common good. Without that sacrifice, which can be achieved with collective joy, nothing.

We must not promise ourselves a future of material abundance. That will not happen. The ruling classes will destroy their own factories, hospitals, and even the water supply. What can transport us to a world where people can share is the idea that we might have to share misery for awhile because, per Marx, ideas can be a material force—and have been.

This brings us to **organization, power and action**. Surely we can see that justice demands organization. The Rouge Forum changed the discussion in the education reform movement. Our insistence on the role of capital, on class struggle is best illustrated by Wayne Ross' immortal comment interrupting a particularly boring executive committee meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies: "Hey, this is a lot of nonsense. We Need To Read Marx and Make Class War!"

We have had a dramatic impact on academic historians, whole language specialists, the critical pedagogy crowd, and the k12 world as well. The conversation always has to, at worst, worry about us saying, "Now wait a minute." We ruptured the habits of daily academic life that only reproduces the system of capital, diminishing all it touches.

The Rouge Forum brought together people throughout the US, Canada, Mexico, South Africa, Great Britain, and India within an organization that has grasped, for eleven years, that it is possible to have an organization, be friends, and be both critical and self-critical. We united parents, kids, school workers, and community organizers.

We predicted both these wars, what became the NCLB as early as 1997, the economic collapse, and published much of the initial research on the real impact of NCLB in academic and popular journals. We were among the first to plan ways to fight it. We traveled the US and other nations

pointing out the centripetal power of educators in de-industrialized nations, among the last workers who have health benefits or predictable wages.

We organized and led direct actions in workplaces and communities like the high-stakes test boycotts in Michigan, Florida, New York, and California. We did not just breach discourse and habits, we disrupted the unjust social relations in schools, shutting them down and, in very limited ways, offered youth freedom schooling. We marched on Mayday before the massive immigrant Mayday marches of 2006, and happily joined those huge outpourings of the working class when they took place. Now, with Calcare and others, we participate in a mass opt-out campaign, hoping to lead test boycotts to cut the school to war pipelines. We are building a base of thinking activists inside and outside the unions to reject the coming demands for school worker concessions, teaching people how to strike in solidarity—and to supply the Freedom Schools that can show how the future might be.

We reminded everyone that the key to understanding the 20th century is understanding revolution.

We have operated loosely. It worked for about ten years, with about 4600 people steady on our email lists, our yearly conferences, our publications, our joint work with Substance News, Calcare, the Whole Language Umbrella, and Susan Ohanian.

What we do counts now more than ever. Events move even more quickly than my comment at the Rouge Forum conference in 2008 that the sky is falling. We need to take that purposefully and plan the resistance with care.

We are lambs among wolves. Kindness, reason, organization, must prepare to meet those willing to spill—rivers of blood.

We can win.

To quote the classic labor song, Solidarity Forever:

“In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold;

Greater than the might of armies, magnified a thousand-fold.

We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.”

Down the banks and Up the rebels! And don't forget to smash the state.

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