



Educational Justice: Teaching and Organizing Against the Corporate Juggernaut

Ryan, Howard
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Book Review

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Reviewed by: Carmichael Crutchfield, *Memphis Theological Seminary*

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Educational Justice: Teaching and Organizing against the Corporate Juggernaut addresses what the authors call the corporate assault on public education. The book provides detailed stories concentrated in the Chicago and Los Angeles public systems that outline struggles and successes in regard to public schools.

This collaborative book was written by Howard Ryan with Debra Goodman, Joel Jordan, and Joseph Zecola. Ryan describes school reform as corporate: “a package of public policies, private investments, and informal processes through which corporate and private actors are seizing control of education”(23). Ryan names teacher unions that partner with billionaires as part of the corporate juggernaut that places control of education in the hands of those who do not promote the best intentions of public education and leads to privatization of the school system.

Ryan provides an elaborate and involved example of organization and resistance to privatization by Kelvyn Park High School in Chicago. He details the movements by parents, children, and teachers that lead to victory in keeping this one school from being privatized. Joel Jordan describes in detail how teacher unions fought back against the corporate movement and frames a strategic approach to the fight against school reform.

In addition to providing an outline and methods for organizing to fight corporate school reform, the authors demonstrate school transformation through organization.

Debra Goodman focuses on critical literacy, democratic schools, and the whole language

movement. Goodman draws upon insights from progressive education, particularly whole language instruction, and progressive educators like John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, and Paulo Freire to build a theoretical framework. She contrasts theories of literacy and teaching to further develop her thesis.

Ryan provides a transformational organizational method as he describes the practices of Soto Street Elementary School in Los Angeles. He argues against scripted reading programs and supports solidarity among teachers - accomplished through family writing workshops, advocacy for literacy, and the addition of books available to students. Using the same rationale and promotion of transformation of reading, Ryan and Zecola present ideas on a curriculum model using Crenshaw High School in Los Angeles. It is promoted through an extended learning cultural model, extended learning time for teachers, collaborative units of study, and collaborative mapping and history. Additionally, they outline the need for extending learning into the community through internships and learning opportunities for parents.

This book and the work of the authors might be difficult for those in public education outside of larger urban areas to relate to. The book addresses a critical issue facing public education but is limited by only looking at schools in urban settings. The book is valuable because it addresses public schools and social justice in a way that is challenging. The authors raise consciousness about how easy it is to take money from corporate sponsors and then be lured into an educational system dictated by those whose knowledge of how education actually takes place is limited.

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