

Association of Raza Educators (A.R.E.)  
Special Conference Bulletin No. 3  
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## **NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION**

**INTRODUCTION:** On April 12, 2008, hundreds of Raza Educators concerned with the question of education and how it relates to social justice will convene in San Diego, CA. The conference, organized by the Association of Raza Educators (A.R.E.), will have as its theme “Social Justice in Education”, and will be held at a historically African American school, Lincoln High School. Lincoln High is located in one of the most multi-racial and culturally diverse communities in the United States, a community with a large population of African, Mexican, Asian, and Pacific Islanders. The conference will consist of speakers, workshops, dialogue, and culture. Confirmed speakers include: Antonia Darder (Professor and writer of Critical Education, University of Illinois), Jeff Duncan Andrade (Activist Scholar, Professor at San Francisco State University), Chente Jimenez (Youth Organizer and member of Somos Raza/Unión del Barrio, Los Angeles), Kobina Bantushango (Chairperson of the African International Student Organization, member of the African Peoples Socialist Party, Florida)

### **Education and Colonization**

In the last two bulletins, we summed up the general objectives of the conference and defined what A.R.E. saw as the difference between “Schooling” and “Education.” In this bulletin, we explain that the foundations of the present forms of education, as it relates to the Raza community, and how it is being carried out within the context of colonialism and class oppression. Therefore, we put forth that only pedagogy based on national and class liberation will permit Raza students to achieve their full intellectual and cognitive potential.

History explains to us that schooling in the United States, as we know it today, came to our children in the form of a brutal colonial domination of our communities. It was a direct result of United States wars of aggression, conquest, and occupation of Mexico (Tejas 1836-38 and Northern Mexico 1846-48). Hence, since the occupation of our lands, Mexicans and other indigenous peoples have been victims of a colonialist education.

We define a “colonialist education” as one that is imposed upon a people, either directly or indirectly, or by people who represent very different interests, and cultural identity (See, Education As Cultural Imperialism, by Martin Carnoy). Colonial education was (and is) organized in a fashion that enables the colonizer to maintain economic and political power over the colonized population. In the United States, colonialist education manifests itself as a schooling that upholds the superiority of Euro-centric culture, history, and social structure. It serves to maintain the power of the white ruling elite and the powerlessness of Raza, African Americans, and other oppressed peoples.

If we agree that schools socialize youth to function and believe in the system in which they exist, transfer the culture and values of those forces who dominate society, and guide students into various social roles required by society then we can conclude that Raza students have been schooled to accept the capitalist-colonial power relationships that currently exist in the United States. Thus, it would be illogical to think that those in power would encourage the development of an education that would empower those found in the bottom of the capitalist social hierarchy with the intellectual capacity to put an end to their supremacy.

### **Education Is No More Equal, Than The Society It Represents**

The curriculum, language, instruction, and in most cases, the “nationality” of teachers, utilized in U.S. today, are, generally speaking, components of a colonialist education that has been imposed upon the Raza communities. It forms part of a colonial schooling which effectively works to convince or reinforce to students the idea that the system is fair, equitable, and that the roles in society prescribed to them are proper or unchangeable. Schooling, thus, becomes a major force by which the capitalist-colonialist system (control by a small rich white ruling class) cleverly conceals its political, social, and economic inequalities. It hides the fact that without a redistribution of economic wealth and political power, there cannot exist true justice or peace.

Social science teaches us that education is no more equal than the society it represents. Therefore, by recognizing the colonial and capitalist nature of schooling, and its tremendous inequalities and contradictions, we come to understand why the education process has so negatively impacted Raza and has failed our students so miserably. The connection between the economic and social basis of U.S. schooling and the minds of Raza children, must be taken into account as we struggle to find solutions to the de-education of our communities: the incredibly high “school push out rate” of Raza students, its irrelevancy to Raza realities, and the marginalization and humiliation of so many of our students.

Those who uphold “schooling” as a means of social, political, or economic progress for the masses of our people (Raza as well as other oppressed nationalities), are either consciously perpetuating a myth that supports the existing social structure (colonialism/capitalism) or they themselves have been so colonized that they have become blind to the injustices and brutality inflicted upon the great majority of our communities. It is here, within the “colonial question and education” where we find the cause for the opposition to diversity, multiculturalism, and critical pedagogy in the classroom, an opposition that has established itself as the policy of most school districts in the U.S.

### **Towards A Redefinition Of What It Means To Be Free**

Those of us involved in the struggle for social change and liberation, must be conscious of the fact that colonialism awards those who are most agreeable to capitalistic institutions and principles, and it punishes those who oppose or are unwilling to accept its social inequalities and oppressive nature. Students, teachers, and workers, who rebel, quickly find themselves targets of retribution; this is a reality we must all face.

It is precisely this dialectic, “colonialist schooling versus a liberation education (decolonization)”, that those who believe in social change must address. Decolonization and liberation demands personal sacrifice and societal struggles, it requires redevelopment of humanness and self-esteem, and a redefinition of what it means to be free. Resolving these contradictions will be the challenge that must be taken on by all who attend the National Conference On Social Justice In Education.

### **LEARNING, SHARING, AND BUILDING RESISTANCE**

If you want to be part of this historic gathering of learning, sharing, and building resistance through the educational process please make your intentions known and register ASAP, as attendance will be limited to the size of facilities.

For more information contact:

#### **Association of Raza Educators**

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