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The War on Youth: An Essay Review

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Like the canary in the coal mine who alerted miners to poisonous air, Henry Giroux's new book serves as a bellwether warning its readers that we ignore the plight of youth at our own peril. Giroux proposes a dramatic and hopeful shift in how we think about youth and schooling and places them in political and ideological perspectives.

In his latest contribution, *Youth in Suspect Society*, scholar, educator, and cultural critic, Henry Giroux engages in a passionate

take-down of the practices associated with a negative form of globalization (Giroux, 2006), including biopolitics and neoliberalism, by exposing their punishing effects on today's youth and the poor. Here, Giroux critically analyzes the deployment of, as well as, the real and symbolic effects of neoliberalism on youth. Recognizing this new type of imperialism as a more powerful, pernicious and perilous state, Giroux makes explicit the importance of a renewed cultural dynamics and the need to make pedagogy

and hope central to any viable form of politics engaged in the process of creating alternative public spheres and forms of collective resistance.

Neoliberalism has become the "planetary vulgate" of modern capitalism, one that relies upon and resides in the socialization of uncritical citizens (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 541). Further, its dominant framework of individualism, and self-responsibility, and symbolic violence often leads people to (unjustly) blame individuals for their own suffering while simultaneously obscuring the role of society. Within the current radical free-market culture, Giroux elegantly elaborates that, "the conditions produced by the financial crisis have resulted in not only the foreclosure of millions of family homes but also the foreclosure of the future of our young people as the prospects of the unborn are mortgaged off in the interests of corporate power and profits" (p. x).

Likewise, such neoliberal policies of economic deregulation and social-welfare retrenchment have contributed to the generalized increase of carceral populations and the growing reliance upon the penal system to serve as an instrument for managing social insecurity by containing the social disorders created at the bottom of the class structure. Responding to the rapid rise of neoliberal ideologies that are decimating the economic state, dismantling the social state, and strengthening the penal state, Giroux emphatically highlights their negative impact on young people by adding that at this time, "hope is precariously bound to commodities and a corrupt financial

system, [where] young people are no longer at risk they are the risk" (2009, p. x).

Giroux caution us that the world is blindly marching towards a dark political and economic future with the intensification of neoliberalism, and the influence of an ideological fundamentalism that both seizes absolute control of fundamental resources, and that destitutes everyone it excludes (Monbiot, 2000). Here, Giroux mirrors Zizek (2007), reaffirming that the world is entering an age of totalitarian capitalism that renders the state moribund, thus decimating the dynamics of hope and possibility by targeting the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society. Giroux (2009) adds that, "the havoc wreaked by neoliberal economic policies can be seen in the hard currency of human suffering such policies have imposed on children, readily evident in some astounding statistics that suggest a profound, moral and political contradiction at the heart of one of the richest democracies in the world" (p.3). Symptomatic of this fundamental collapse in society, argues Giroux (2009), is the impending subjugation of humanity's progeny that demonizes the young through a "war on youth."

Giroux's deeply researched indictment demonstrates how the "war on youth" has gained currency within a wide array of neoliberal institutional and cultural practices and has been energized through lethal alliances with religious fundamentalism. Neoliberalism is, quite literally a crusade against youth, one Giroux aptly theorizes as a "politics of disposability," and is largely the result of how biopolitical formations of

self-regulation (the organized practices, mentalities, rationalities, and techniques through which market conform subjects are governed), have become the essential normalizing function in strengthening the current a neoliberal global hegemonic. In this “biological century” neoliberal biopolitics feeds on proliferating fears, anxieties, and hopes at a time when such basic concepts as scientific truth, race and gender identity, and the human being itself are destabilized in the public eye and in public practices (De Costa & Philip, 2010, p.1). Further, neoliberal states have withdrawn from their democratic roles as guarantors of minimal social and economic protections, safety nets, and abdicated its responsibility to its citizens and youth.

Perhaps most disturbing about the relationship between neoliberal biopolitics and the current global crisis which the world faces is that neoliberalism and biopolitics has become both its own ends as well as the means to its ends. It is, quite literally, the totalizing regime of truth in the 21st century, as it has captured the discourse/ knowledge/ power dialectic so productively for its own purposes that not only does it destabilize democratic institutions, it also effectively masks itself behind a mask of democracy.

The five major sections of the book serve as windows into the construction of a global social order that increasingly demonizes, dehumanizes, and criminalizes youth and the poor. Giroux’s comprehensive empirical record enhances our critical understanding of how the pathologization, victimization, and infantilization of young people has developed into essential components of

neoliberal market logic invested in new forms of biopolitical (re)production. The book’s analysis of neoliberal politics and the key role education plays in realizing its policies is situated politically and ideologically with in the current historical moment which is precisely the thread that connects Giroux’s work dating back to the late 1970s.

Neoliberal Biopolitics

Giroux foregrounds his argument by exposing the crude disciplinary forms of control exercised upon today’s youth under the biopolitics of neoliberalism, and he illustrates how the conditions that have been created yield little moral responsibility and a politics that no longer advocates for compassion, social justice or the fundamental provisions necessary for a decent life (p.11). Today, unwitting young people have inherited a world marred by uncertainty, instability, volatility, and war (Searls-Giroux, 2008). Youth now represents the greatest challenge to adult society because “they have become disposable in a neoliberal world and a militarized state in which instrumental reason, finance capital, market rationality, instant gratification, deregulation and a contempt for all things public, including public values, have reigned supreme for the last thirty years” (Giroux, 2009, p.17).

What's more, he argues, these representations disregard the reality that,

the lives, experiences and environments of young people are entirely different from that of the previous generations and that underlying these differences

are various political, cultural, and social forces in which young people are considered unworthy of care, targeted and relegated to a biopolitics of neoliberalism that privatizes reason, and exhibits a disdain for all collective undertakings, especially those that address social responsibility and solidarity. (p. 17)

Such dehumanization has become possible not just because of the privatization of reason, goods, and democratic participation. It has become possible because those who support neoliberalism have also been able to effectively reshape the historical narrative regarding the power of the market as a democratic institution.

Neoliberal policies and practices of privatization and deregulation have acted to reconstitute both the public and the private sphere, and de-politicize and de-ideologicalize the way in which we think and understand societal issues, social justice, equality, democracy, freedom, and education, thus diminishing power and compromising democratic agency. As a result, the world is witnessing a historical world-transition into a new phase of capitalism, with new forms of power, resistance, and a globalization that shifts societies' center of gravity away from politics towards corporate (Robinson, 2004).

This waning of power within the public sphere diminishes the influence citizens have in deciding and controlling the conditions of their own lives, and therefore minimizes the changes that can be envisioned or enacted to work towards

equality, access, deliberation, participation, just distribution, and especially the rights of our youth (Giroux, 2009, p. 35).

Giroux's discussion of biopolitics builds upon a foundation of theory across multiple disciplines. Michel Foucault (1979) first introduced the concept of biopolitics to describe how neoliberal governments engaged in a transformation wherein the body-politic—society in its social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions, as well as, the physical biomass of the society's constituents—becomes the primary object of intervention. In this way, biopolitics becomes a form of governmentality that is “premised on the active consent and subjugation of subjects, rather than their oppression, domination or external control” (Clegg *et al.* 2002, p.320). Thus, “neoliberal forms of government feature not only direct intervention by means of empowered and specialized state apparatuses, but also characteristically develop indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals without at the same time being responsible for them” (Lemke 2001, p. 201). Taken as a whole, Giroux's body of work is a genealogical analysis of the inner workers of power and the challenge to democratic practices over the last three decades, and *Youth in a Suspect Society* adds to this body by engaging the reader in considering the impact of neoliberalism on those who will have the future in their hands.

Giroux explicates the amplification of neoliberal biopolitics as it affects the world's youth, which in turn works well within Bauman's equation of glocalization:

the “globalization for some/localization for others’ or that ‘some inhabit the globe/others are chained to place.” At the core of Bauman’s (1989, 1998) approaches to glocalization is a worldwide re-ordering of society and the collapse of the public sphere. Along with this re-ordering of society, we are witnessing the removal of the public sphere from social consideration. Further, notions of the public good are replaced by an utterly privatized model of citizenship, the collapse of public imagination, and a vibrant political culture that is celebrated by neoliberal warriors rather than perceived as a dangerous state of affairs that all Americans should be both contemptuous of and ashamed to support (Giroux, 2001, p.3). According to Bauman (1989) the “public” has been emptied of its own separate contents; it has been left with no agenda of its own—it is now but an agglomeration of private troubles, worries and problems (p. 65). Complicating this is the threat that under the control of a neoliberal ideology, the state is increasingly transformed into a repressive apparatus aimed at those individuals and groups who get caught in its ever-expanding policing interventions (Giroux, 2001, p. 56). For Giroux, the ultimate victims of the newly conceptualized state apparatus are not simply those who turn to government for assistance. Anyone who cannot contribute to the economic state is a drain on society, and are therefore are victims of their own making.

Youth and Democracy at Risk

In the present global moment, neoliberalism has entered a New Gilded Age in the United

States, which *Youth in a Suspect Society* describes as even more savage and anti-democratic than its predecessor. This current form of market fundamentalism demands new critical approaches that use, construct, and edify different conceptual and analytical tools that not only frame neoliberalism through an economic optic, but also through cultural projects such as modes of rationality, governmentality, and critical public pedagogy. This book further develops the biopolitics of neoliberalism by exploring how it uses market values as a template for realigning corporate power and the state, in which the state paves the way for the market, while simultaneously producing modes of consent that are vital to the construction of a neoliberal subject and a more ruthless politics of disposability (Giroux, 2008). Within this new form of neoliberal rationality and biopolitics—a political system actively involved in the management of the politics of life and death—new modes of individual and collective suffering emerge around the modalities and intersections of race, class, and gender (p.1). Biopolitics, as Giroux helps us understand, deals with conflicts and intricate social articulations and re-articulations that frame and determine human life as well as its political implications. At the same time, such social articulations and re-articulations, as Bauman (2008) claims, are determined by a liquid dynamics that forces and pushes critical theorists to advance their own analyses in order to deconstruct reality as a social construction (Berger and Luckman, 1976). By winning the battle over common sense, neoliberalism has been able to extend a set

of policies and practices (i.e., NCLB) that not only the push youth into a risk category, but also puts the whole democratic architecture into jeopardy.

Youth and the Pedagogy of Commodification

Giroux describes how today's youth have become "market conformed subjects" groomed as consumers and caught between a dialectic of consumption and commodification within neoliberal biopolitics. By reducing citizens to pale commodities, and consequently students to clients, negative globalism has been able to produce a generation that is entirely at odds with the notable pillars of a true democratic society and citizenship. For this generation, concepts such as freedom, solidarity, and equality are totally twisted or non-existent. As odd as it might seem, young people today are actually facing modern problems without modern solutions (Sousa Santos, 2007), neoliberalism has provided a liquid political template that de-ideologicalizes rationality. In doing so, it pushes values, morals and social relations toward a neutral path, that is anything but neutral, that threatens any possibility for young people's social existence outside of this path, thus making it almost impossible to imagine a more democratic and just global world.

Furthermore, Giroux (2002) conceives neoliberalism as the most dangerous ideology in the present historical moment. He argued that within such a corporate culture, citizenship is portrayed as an utterly privatized affair that produces self-interested individuals. For him, "corporate culture

ignores social injustices by overriding the democratic impulses and practices of civil society through an emphasis put on the unbridled workings of market relations" (pp. 425-464). Giroux added that these trends favor social Darwinism; that is,

They value one's ability to compete and win, and these values, ideologies, social relations and practices of commerce mark a hazardous turn in U.S. society, one that also threatens our basic understanding of democracy. So within this cult of corporatization and individualism, it becomes difficult for young people to imagine a future in which the self becomes more than a self-promoting commodity and a symbol of commodification. (p.17)

One cannot ignore the role that schooling and teachers play in such strategies and how Giroux (2009) describes consumption beyond the pedagogy of commodification. Despite the fact that commodification can be seen as a form of cultural genocide, or as Giroux (2009) argues, that it represents a form of social death, youth who are marginalized by virtue of their race, gender, and class bear the burdens of not only the implacable impositions of a de-humanized market-driven culture but also the harsh experiences of disposability that make them disposable and redundant populations (p.24). Today, social and daily life has been so de-politicized that people do not even realize that they are engaged in a politics of consumption. This dynamic equation of

consumption and commodification demonstrates how neoliberalism can sustain and evolve in the form of an empire and ultimately results in the complete withering of civil society (Hardt and Negri, 2000).

The neoliberal ethos of consumption has penetrated every sphere of our lives. As a result, culture, leisure, sex, politics, and even death turn into commodities, and consumption increasingly constructs the way we see the world (Crawford, 1992). Giroux (2009) argues that in order to challenge this market mentality and neoliberal sovereignty, we need to recognize the need for a new politics in which matters of education, power, and governance are mutually determined and that such a challenge rests on a politics that seeks to understand how governmentality and the pedagogy of commodification are produced and circulated through new modes of market sovereignty (p. 65).

What must be emphasized in a democracy, Giroux argues, is that there is no room for a politics animated by a rationality of maximizing profit and constructing a society free from the burden of mutual responsibility—that is a society whose essence is captured in the faces of children facing the terror of a future with no hope of survival (p. 67).

Education and the Youth Crime Complex

In the next section, Giroux makes visible the harshest elements of the punishing neoliberal state and exposes the egregious policies it enacts, reinforcing a set of

oppressive and coercive policies to dehumanize poor, disposable, and politically powerless youth. Here, Giroux shifts beyond the dialectic of “consumption versus commodification” and posits how the sovereignty of the market impacts differently on poor youth of color who have been systematically excluded from participation in its diverse pleasures and seductions, and who as a result are defined through the registers of disposability and social death (Giroux, 2004, 2009). In fact Giroux’s analysis allows the reader to see how disposability is not a consequence of a capitalist system. It is precisely its tonic.

That is, those who enact neoliberalism have figured out how to make balances out of the imbalances (Jessop, 2002). This imbalance of disposability and social death is made possible by totalitarian capitalism’s continued disequilibrium.

Giroux’s (2009) term the “politics of disposability” is a fitting descriptor for the attacks on poor young people and the powerless; at the same time, it graphically describes the daily lives of a huge majority of the population around the globe. He describes it as a politics in which the unproductive (the poor, weak and racially marginalized) are considered useless and therefore expendable. It is a politics in which entire populations are considered disposable, unnecessary burdens on state coffers, and consigned to fend for themselves (Ibid, 2006). These policies and practices re-highlight the Freirean dialogic of the oppressor and the oppressed (Freire, 1999), as binary frameworks in the service of domination, and they are used to

distinguish the privileged from the dispossessed and the powerful from the powerless.

No longer a dream of Chicago economists, neoliberalism has become a commonsense of the times (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). It has maintained control not through violence and political and economic coercion, but ideologically, through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie become the 'common sense' values of all. Gramsci (Hall, 1986) described a type of 'common sense' that emerges from a hegemonic culture that promotes the values of the bourgeoisie. The creation of this 'common sense' helps to maintain the status quo, often to the detriment of the poor and working class (Ives, 2007). Similarly, as Giroux has documented, the current neoliberal hegemonic has been able to naturalize and domesticate, through the politics of common sense, a set of crucial concepts that pull them from the social and political sphere into a reductive economic equation that trivializes them. In so doing, concepts such as poverty, democracy, social justice, freedom, and education are seen as individual currencies totally detached from a collective engagement. This has lethal implications within identity politics and practices. Not only is it appropriate to blame the victims, for example, poor people who are abandoned by society's institutions are later described as abandoning themselves who just won't work harder, it is also acceptable that there are winners and losers in the global marketplace.

This neoliberal hegemony that Callewaert (2006, p.127) recently characterized as "the tragedy of our time, [includes among other reconfigurations] the radical change from education by educationalists to education by neo-liberal management" and has affected living and working conditions globally for all, including educators in schools or universities, through acts of surveillance, the introduction of different forms of privatizations, intensification of all types of educational work, and the general demand to follow market practices.

In other words, those who have the least are expected to take most of the blame and should receive no assistance as they attempt to put their lives back together. Giroux writes elegantly about this lynch pins of neoliberal policy, eliminating the concept of the "public good" of community and the "public sphere" and replacing them with a demand for "individual responsibility." It pressures the poorest people in a society to find their own solutions to the lack of health care, education and social security by themselves—then blaming them, if they fail, for being "lazy." Although many mainstream and liberal scholars have neglected the politics of blaming the victim, it remains fully ideological. The very strategy to de-ideologize the "politics of disposability" is, by definition, inherently ideological, something that Giroux's work overtly demonstrates.

Under the fully established negative globalization, we find neoliberalism in the eye of the hurricane, where it has been engaged in a kind of welfare-a-cide that has

been responsible for the dismantling of the working and middle classes and the war on youth. More and more youth have been defined and understood within a war on terror that provides an expansive antidemocratic framework for referencing how they are represented, talked about and inserted within a growing network of disciplinary relations that responds to the problems they face by criminalizing their behaviors and subjecting them to punitive modes of conduct (Giroux, 2009).

Giroux writes that youth in America (and arguably in the rest of the Western society) have increasingly been criminalized and dehumanized to the point of invisibility while being blindly robbed of a future.

Their crippled lives are mortgaged to a hobbled future that is largely invisible in terms of their own needs. As the social state is reconfigured as a punishing state, youth become the enemy. Young people have been forced into assuming a different subjective position - that of a burden to society which is much different from being the promise of the future of society. Giroux (2009) accurately claims that youth embody an ethical referent that should (italic in original text) require adults to question the prevailing economic Darwinism and the future it emphatically denies in favor of an eternal present subject only to the market-driven laws of capital accumulation (p. 72). It is undeniable that global neoliberalism has been capable of transforming youth into characters of a story that they do not want to be part of and they should not have been subjected to.

Accordingly, Giroux (2009) writes, the language of democracy is divested of concern for the future, adult obligations, and social responsibility in general; complex and productive representations of young people have gradually disappeared from public discourse only to reappear within the demonizing and punishing rhetoric of fear and crime (p. 72). Giroux adds, "Youth are no longer inscribed in the metaphors of hope, especially those marginalized by race and class and gender -have now been cast into an ever growing circle of groups targeted through the rhetoric of war and terrorism. In reality, youth now occupy the status of what Bill Owens the former conservative governor of Colorado referred to as a virus...let loose upon society." (p.xx) In fact, the criminalization of youth needs to be seen as political and ideological strategy among other issues to justify a set of policies that are claiming the needlessness of public education, and consequently the reinforcement of the privatized penal system, because today's youth are not seen as part of the solution to tomorrow's problems. They are the problem. To paraphrase Mark Twain, when you open a school you close the doors of a prison. Here, however, the reverse is true today. When you close a school you will need to open a prison. And if you open a prison, there is profit to be made.

Here Giroux explores the logic of disposability as the underside of commodification, the fate of those considered flawed consumers, unworthy of social protections because they are considered a liability and utterly disposable

in a market driven world whose anthem is the survival of the fittest. In fact, this Darwinian equation reveals a much darker side by subjecting poor youth and youth of color to the harshest elements, values, and dictates of neoliberal ideology. White wealthy young people may labor under the narrow dictates of a commodity culture, but they are not incarcerated in record numbers, placed in schools that merely serve to warehouse the refuse of global capitalism, or subjected to a life of misery and impoverishment. Many actually benefit in the long run, under a market-driven society, from the transfer of public funds into private hands. For those disposable populations of young people who are poor especially black and Latino youth, neoliberal politics governs them through an analytic of punishment, surveillance and control. As mentioned above, we are in the face of a Panopticon, (Foucault, 1977), that actually puts the oppressed in the position of creating and sustaining their own oppression (Freire, 2006). In fact one cannot fully understand the politics and practices of disposability if one denies the need to understand how such policies clash between oppressed and oppressor dynamics in which the oppressor will always be oppressed as long as he/she refuses to engage radically in transforming his/her subject position. As Hannah Arendt has shown us making human beings superfluous is not a trivial pursuit, it is an illustration of Democracy and the antidote in urgent need of being reclaimed. For that reason, Giroux urges us to confront the “biopolitics of disposability” and to recognize these dark and dangerous times in

which we live in today and he offer up a vision of hope and possibility.

Locked Out: Youth and Academic Unfreedom

Next Giroux considers the role that academics and institutions of higher education may take in addressing the crisis of youth and its relationship to politics and critical education. Here Giroux analyzes the multifaceted attacks conducted by various conservative groups against youth and those who are most likely to support them by undermining academic freedom and the conditions that make critical teaching and learning possible. At issue is how the role of the university might be defined as a democratic, if not defiant, public sphere even as it is subjected both to a ruthless corporate logic that confuses training and patriotic correctness with education and to a right wing attack on any vestige of critical thought (p.25). Giroux takes up this right wing assault on higher education and points to an ominous future of critically engaged intellectuals and academics. The influences of the religious right along with conservative and corporate minded policies are suppressing academic freedom, silencing political views, and reducing the professoriate to that of detached professionals and their teaching to vocational exercises (p. 111). Just as a powerful cadre of conservative interests are coming together to redefine and shape political discourse through the deployment of massive amounts of money, they are using the same tactics to limit the scope of

academic research to meet their political ends.

At a time when young people are increasingly constructed as disposable, redundant, and expendable, Giroux calls for the universities to step up and play a significant role in the future of youth so that they may become active and critically minded citizens. Higher education has become part of a neoliberal market driven logic as it imposes upon academics and students alike - new modes of discipline that eliminate spaces to think critically while undermining substantive dialogue and restricting students from thinking outside of established expectations. Giroux rightly argues that as higher education becomes more corporatized, addressing only the needs of the privileged few, we will see insurmountable chasms in educational and personal wealth, and the future of the working class and poor youth will indeed be grim with little or no chances for higher education. The result is that those in higher education have, wittingly or not, become parts of the web of commodification and dehumanization that will eventually solidify the redundancy and expendability of young people (p.110).

Students also face a variety of challenges to their civil liberties, through such mechanisms as censorship, thought and behavior codes, private and arbitrary disciplinary procedures, and the release of records to governmental authorities, the military and corporations (Weisman, 2002). Giroux's predictions about the disposability of youth presage future happenings as he

warns us that if we do not protect the rights of youth that there will be dire consequences.

Just months after the book was published, the FBI charged one of Philadelphia's wealthiest suburban school districts with spying on their high-school students in their own homes, in their own bedrooms with the video cameras attached to the laptops that the school district provided their students. The school district said that they activated the spy-ware unbeknownst to the students in an effort to prevent theft and to retrieve stolen laptops. However, the school administrators are now in a legal battle defending numerous videos and pictures of students in their bedrooms whom they suggested were engaged in problem behaviors. This panopticonic abuse power, invasion of privacy, and victimization of youth is a clear example of the biopolitics of disposability. In fact, this is far more complex than a category of lost privacy by being surveilled, but rather the destruction of identity or the mutilation of agency, a reality that Giroux helps us understand.

This type of policing mechanism against young people again brings to mind Foucault's interpretations of British philosopher, Jeremy Bentham's (1748-1832) panopticon, which demonstrates the transformative and disciplinary potential of surveillance as a means of extracting knowledge. It is the power inherent in such acts of information collection and analysis that is acquired through the towering spectre of Orwell's Big Brother.

This continued chipping away of the civil liberties of youth and the poor has been made possible through the policies and practices inherent in biopolitical neoliberalism where one is presumed guilty. One example is the recent Arizona Immigration Bill SB 1070, which Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law, which (1) bans the state's schools from teaching ethnic studies classes, (2) builds barriers to keep people out, (3) dismantles schools of education (see Arizona State University), (4) institutes current neoliberal school reform efforts (i.e., vouchers, charter schools, high-stakes, standardized testing, and tuition tax credits) and (5) systematically discriminates against minorities in U.S. schools that are more segregated today than before *Brown v. Board of Education*. The absurdity of Arizona's "Paper Please" law is that it makes it a state misdemeanor for a foreigner to be on Arizona's territory without carrying "acceptable" legal documents, and cracks down on all those who might shelter immigrants.

Clearly, the world and the United States, in particular, has entered a period in which the war against youth and the poor offers no apologies because it is too arrogant and ruthless to imagine any resistance, according to Giroux (2009). He adds that in order to confront this biopolitics of disposability and the war against young people, we need to create conditions for multiple collective and global struggles that refuse to use politics as an act of war and markets as a measure of democracy (p.142). Giroux urges us to take

the challenge of reimagining both civic engagement and social transformation.

In the Shadow of the Gilded Age: Biopolitics in the Age of Disposability

In this final section, Giroux provides a broader theoretical analysis of what he calls the biopolitics of neoliberalism. He examines it not just as an economic discourse but also as an educational, cultural and political discourse that has gutted the notion of the social state and produced a set of policies which lay the groundwork for a politics of disposability with dire consequences for society at large, and especially for young people. He adds that only by understanding the pervasive and all-embracing reach of neoliberalism and its new mode of bio-politics does it become possible to grasp the contours this new historical period in which a war is being waged against youth (p. 142). Conversely, by drawing attention to the particular effects of neoliberalism on the lives of young people, Giroux puts a face on the ravaged victims of a morally bankrupt and pernicious neoliberal doctrine that is spreading like a pestilence and infecting democracy in the United States and around the globe (p.25). As a result, the victims are no longer abstract "others." They are our brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters.

Most crucial, Giroux writes, is the gap in the various theories, discourses, and critiques that try to counter the impact of current financial and economic crisis upon young people, labor, and others who are marginalized because they are poor, old,

sick, brown, black, or simply left on their own to deal with the savagery of the free-market fall-out (p. 25). He suggests that while there is a great deal of discussion among progressives about inequality generated by economic institutions, finance capital and the legacy of historical imbalances in resources, power, and wealth, there is very little talk about creating the conditions for individual and collective agency as a fundamental basis for building social movements (p. 141). That is, Giroux argues that we must imagine the ways and means that make it possible for people to believe that their participation in political life matters, that they have voices that count, that they can make history. He adds that the task of a reinvigorated Left is in large part to foreground consistently and imaginatively the question of justice in ways that translate private issues into public concerns, break open common sense in the interests of critical and reflective sense, and struggle to bring into being the conditions that enable people to use their power responsibly to control and shape the basic forces that shape their lives. Giroux is adamant in declaring that this is not merely a theoretical issue but rather this is a preeminently educational issue that is at the heart of any viable notion of politics and central to addressing the related crisis of youth and democracy (p. 25).

Giroux punctures the complacency of these times when he turns the tables and applies the label of “politics of disposability” to the idea of biopolitical neoliberal progress. This idea of progress is, in Giroux’s approach, umbilically connected with a radical

transformative disposition. This is not a minor issue in an era fashioned by the “fetish belief that there is a technological fix for each and every problem (Harvey, 2005, p. 68). *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability* highlights the reemergence of the “Gilded Age” mentality that viscerally challenges us to confront the neglect and abuse of youth in our society. This book steers the reader to unfamiliar places—such as a restricted prison cell—to allow individual contemplation and the hopeful possibility of a collective conversation about the underlying politics of a justice system that boasts the world’s largest penal system with over two million prisoners.

In order to confront the biopolitics of disposability, Giroux (2006) says we need to recognize these dark times in which we live and offer up a vision of hope. We need to work to create the conditions for collective and global struggles that refuse to use war as an act of politics and markets as the measure of democracy. Giroux (1994) argues that we need a public pedagogy to confront history as more than simulacrum, and to view ethics as something other than the casualty of incommensurable language games. Postmodern educators need to take a stand without standing still, to engage their own politics as public intellectuals without essentializing the ethical referents to address human suffering.

A law of liberty such as civil and equal rights is firmly woven into the fabric of our democratic ideals, but making human beings superfluous is the essence of totalitarianism.

Therefore, people's democracy is the antidote in urgent need of being reclaimed (p.2), and 'Youth in a Suspect Society' makes a laudable claim for a re-democratized democracy. It is also a crucial analysis for and of the left. As one gathers from Giroux's approach the left political praxis cannot surrender to the theoretical cynicism visible in many academic corridors but rather one in need of a new vocabulary new coherent phraseology, one that is deeply political. Giroux diligently argues that the social and economic policies of this new millennium have worked to destroy the bedrock of our future, by punishing and blaming our youth as a 'risk' to be reckoned and selling the public on the idea that policing and punishment are the solution to all social-economic problems. Giroux helps us to become witnesses as critical spectators, to experience the primeval tragedy. He asks us to respond the tragedy reiterated in the title of his new work, and that reverberates between the pages, but also extend beyond its confines to alert the public to the plight of youth worldwide.

Conclusion

This book asserts that with the continued and aggressive rise of market fundamentalism and its subsequent economic and financial disasters, young people are facing a crisis unlike that of any other generation. Exacerbated by the collapse of the welfare state, youth are no longer seen as a social investment but as troubled and, in some cases, disposable, especially poor minority youth. Caught between the discourses of consumerism and

a powerful crime-control-complex, young people are increasingly either viewed as commodities or subjected to the dictates of an ever expanding criminal justice system.

Giroux's critical enterprise is predicated on Edward Said's (1994) prescription of the public intellectual as an oppositional figure who revels in transgressing the official lines of power, as someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do (p.23). As a public intellectual, Giroux continues to present us with clear, deeply researched analytical and literary accounts of the political and social injustices and alerts us to the oppressive walls rising around us that are beginning to look impregnable. But before we can decide how they might best be demolished, we must first recognize that the 'disposability of youth' is yet another brick in the wall that the neoliberal regime has built.

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