

**The
BLACK
C o M M e n t a t o r**

An independent weekly internet magazine
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,
analysis and investigations on issues affecting
African Americans and the African world.

www.BlackCommentator.com

Oct 25, 2012 - Issue 491

**Privatization: War on Democracy
Represent Our Resistance
By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD
BC Editorial Board**

A system that cannot conceive stopping and dreads a slowdown has developed its cultural complement in a postmodern sensibility that adores novelty, dreads boredom, and far from operating as a 'fetter' on capitalism, encourages its rhythms.

-Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*

[I]ntellectual activity, according to me, is, and must be, disinterested - the truth is a two-edged sword, even to the extreme of dying on it, then all of one's intellectual activity is a masturbatory delusion and a wicked and dangerous fraud.

-James Baldwin, "Take Me to the River"

If the heart to be transplanted in your system is not compatible, you die. "Foreign," nonetheless, the new heart must fit like a glove. Different from the "original," it must serve as the perfect surrogate. Its difference and its newness virtually invisible. For the survival of the system, designed to protect itself from the foreign, deception is a priority: The new heart must act in such a way as to convince the system that change will not spell its end. Intruders are not welcomed.

It usually begins with the seemingly innocuous. An understanding and acceptance of hierarchical configurations of people and subjects, your willingness to "go with the flow" and "look the part," and spend "free" time engaging the "free market." Shopping, while expressing

taste in the exquisite and *most* expensive is a test of your ability to "fit in."

Conferences take you out of the classroom, possibly for as long as a week. So enjoy the travel, the hotel service, the meals, the camaraderie, the exchange of ideas, so long as you know, work on slavery, the working class, liberation, and most importantly, the "political economy," are outdated, a red flag signaling your mental instability. For "ideas" now are catchy if not chic, dazzling and entertaining. Marketable! Everyone should think: How clever! I should have thought of that! Think: Post-modern! Think: Post Racial!

Everyone is Happy!

Design multiple choice exams! Sure, even for literature! Easier for you and the best way to accumulate high scores on student evaluations of you and your course! Easier for the "consumers" in our classrooms, too, whose sophistication is limited...but remember your salary! The "C" is better than the "D" unless the "D" permits the customer to repeat the course again and even maybe a second time, thereby generating more income for the campus and keeping those bodies warming seats for the next batch of freshmen classes.

Learn the rules and you will fit in nicely. Stay "low key," invisible when it comes to the technicalities.

Modus operandi in higher education for the expulsion of the "unruly" is already written and time-tested in the worn, yellow-paged, blood-stained manual passed down generation after generation. Once in the hands of powerful politicians and charismatic civic leaders, it sits in the palms of Robber Barons and corporate CEOs and their minions of hardworking gold diggers. Collectively, they oversee a political economy in which the new and different must not threaten the safety and survival of the system.

The death and transfiguration of democratic hopes, first at the hands of modern and then of postmodern power-formations, is not proof that Marx misunderstood the economy of modern power but rather that he fatally underestimated the anti-democratic tendencies in its requirements. The political world of contemporary capitalism is the bittersweet vindication of his insight into the political primacy of economic formations. Instead of being absorbed into Marx's 'permanent revolution,' capitalism 'incorporates' it and thereby achieves the final stage

of history when the economics fulfills Marx's prophecy of a 'world-creating' power, a universality, a totality. (Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*)

Postmodernism's impact on higher education allows for everyone and every field of study to be incorporated smoothly and without disruption, in order to serve the development of capitalism. As Wolin writes, the vocabulary of postmodernism, at odds with "essentialism, centered discourse, foundationalism, and historical narrative," serves to

disable its theorists from confronting the basic characteristics of contemporary power-formations whose precise characteristics are to be: centralized yet quick to react, essentially economic, founded on corporate capital, global, and best understood in terms of developments over time.

Postcolonial theory yes! But what theorists are permitted to "fit in" if what is to be transplanted is critical of corporate capitalism today?

Posing as "revolt," the "cascade of 'critical theory'" actually "functions as support rather than opposition," Wolin argues. Supposedly "expressions of originality and intellectual freedom," critical theory legitimizes "forms of power that thrive/depend upon producing accelerated rates of change that leave opposition outdated before its case is mustered." In short, this collective of thought, "encourages" the "rhythms" of the system.

The only death admissible is that of democracy!

A few days past the first day of class and, in the hallways, cafeteria, and the classroom, the laughter generated by my dreads has been replaced with turned heads. Among the students, at least, I am invisible. Black colleagues to show off boots or to take me to shops where they purchase rings at \$200 each are absent.

Here, at this art college in Philadelphia on Benjamin Franklin Parkway, real prime land, the very well-dressed, in shiny black suits and chic evening gowns step out of chauffeured-driven limousines, and of course you do not exist, as they enter the campus' front door and pass on their way to a gallery showing. At the end of my day, while I waited for the "guests" to file by so I could leave the campus, I would stand there seeing myself step out in front of them. *I am not one of*

the cafeteria workers or a member of security, but actually a teacher (I think I was one of two or three Black faculty there at the time), proud to have come of age during the Black Power era, and EDUCATE for resistance, and you capitalists! - someone awaiting the death of capitalism!

But I am not suicidal! Accidents can happen when a raving mad Black woman with a cell phone and satchel on Franklin Parkway shouts she awaits the death of capitalism!

The cafeteria has been closed off to students. They have been sent out for lunch on this high-priced Parkway with vouchers, complements of the art college who would like to make a good impression with its guests.

Do you mind, I asked the students once as they filed into the classroom one late afternoon. *Oh, its fine!* At this small, private college where the tuition per year is a worker's salary - it is fine students are asked to vacate the premise. Several students chew on snack food in the minutes before the start of class.

Pick your battles! These students, dressed in the smartest, hippest outfits, vampire attire, heels, tights, skimpy wear, salon-styled hair cuts, and manicured nails, hailing from prep schools in and out of the city, have not asked the question themselves as to why they are sent away from campus - and many of them live on campus. The few Black, Brown, and Yellow students did not see in me, this strange phenomenon thrown at them, any "kinship," for I was not the one who convinced them that a corporate job as graphic or fashion designer would await them if they enrolled at the college, if they worked hard, and won the attention of professors in their fields.

Instead, I was an English professor asking them to read short stories and novels, pointing out "weird" stuff, they photographers and sculptors could barely see and cared even less about, since people "my age" would tend to see what is not there, since people "my age" grew up in a different era. Those days were over! Even the few students of color agreed - emphatically!

How did I qualify to teach them!

It hung in the air above our classroom. Other questions from the students were harder to come by. We usually ask questions of the texts, of what we read, of the ideas within the text.

Questions? To write a paper?

It's college.

One student balks, gathers her things, and walks out of class - before the end of the first week!

The remaining students stare as if envisioning the end of everything they know and have been told. And they have been told the truth by every corporate-engineered communicator, human or machine. Prepping for their delivery to the "host," they have been vetted and groomed for the corporation that will have them!

How did I qualify to teach them!

Of course the subject of Blacklisting in the United States, Blacklisting in academia, was not something the admission at this college or any other would have wanted me to discuss with students. I was available to teach the course, a freshmen-level composition course I had taught for years, as opposed to the higher-level literature courses more aligned with my doctorate, courses I had also taught in the past, until a Midwestern university system, with few "minority" faculty and students, and funded by the corporations and the Pentagon decided that my "perspective" on "race, gender, class," unsettled the students. I was available when I spoke to the *outgoing* chair by phone, and when he called back to say the course was mine to teach, I asked when I could meet him. *You can't! I am packed and ready to go!* He was moving on, it sounded, to a campus in the South. The campus will welcome me.

So I was a surprise for the new, young chair and the dean, I referred to as "Dr. ____" - not to mention the students.

How did I qualify to teach at Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia?

I did not have time to do my own "homework." Classes started just a week or so after the second call from the outgoing chair. Not until a friend in California sent me information on previous professors, seniors, union reps and union faculty - dismissed, including the union itself, did I understand that this college intended to keep its chic galleries, including work by the artistic-minded faculty, on display for

its moneyed guests. No troublemakers shouting "academic freedom" would be permitted to grace its halls.

Did I mention the salary for someone with a doctorate, a specialty, and years of teaching experience forced to teach as an "adjunct"? For one month of work, I was paid \$640.00 - take home!

The dean, hired by the president, was not a "Dr. _____" In other words, she did not possess a doctorate degree, and the president of the college? Just call me "Happy"! Once a candidate for mayor in Philadelphia, now a kind of "CEO" of the college campus, Happy will bring in millions for renovations - millions for corporate builders. A few years before I arrived on campus, this-

Eighty-three percent of the full-time faculty at Moore College of Art and Design voted no confidence in the college's president, Moore Federation of Teachers announced at a news conference today.

Faculty members called on college president Happy Fernandezⁱ to step down, saying she is jeopardizing academic excellence and stifling academic freedom at the only women's art college in the country. (*PRNewswire-USNewswire*)

It was already too late. Professor Steve Sherman, former union president at Moore before Happy Fernandez fired him in 2008:

Our administration has been eliminating or dumbing down courses and course requirements (and portfolio requirements for admission to the college). This accomplishes two things in their way of thinking. They imagine that enrollment will go up if it is easier to get into the college, and that more generalized easier courses mean that particular faculty are not necessary.

The evening when I attempted to introduce the first Black, full-length text in the course - unusual for me and this was late October!, the students became hysterical. *Bone Black* by cultural theorist, bell hooks, and her memoir was just too much.

People didn't wear black so causally in the 50s. Certainly not children! It was generally a color people wore at funerals...

"Johnny Cash wore Black!"

At privatized schools where educational institutions and "education" itself resembles a "prison" under surveillance, the "customers," as opposed to "inmates," have come to believe they are endowed with "freedoms" previous generations could only imagine. The students are "consumers," and in that knowledge *is* freedom! "Electronic technologies," writes Wolin, "(computers, video, Internet) epitomize the combination of the illusion of individual freedom/power with the encapsulation of the individual in a cocoon from which escape seems an incoherent idea."

Why, as "student-consumers," they are "idolized" while other populations of young adults are targeted by the police apparatus, is never questioned because, to use Wolin's words, "self-interest, competitiveness, acceptance of hierarchy, and complicity in imperialism," become accepted elements in the idea of a virtuous citizen." Despite the legacy of Vietnam and, more recently, *the lie* that produced "shock and awe, and the deaths of women and children from U.S. drones, college students still sign up with the armed forces. But history is the past!

The student-consumer pays good money to be always right, and chairs, deans, and presidents want to make the students happy - or the guests do not grace the campus with their presence and donate funds to sustain - the "education" some graphic artist was hired to illustrate on brochures, flyers, and billboards.

We are all one big happy family, pushing our students toward *success!* But I had to go! How could I be considered among the "professional" if *on the campus classroom email site*, mind you, (who is more aware of surveillance?), I communicate to students about their behavior in class!

Teaching "on your toes" - this posture in the year 2012 - after slavery, after legalized segregation, and now during the capitalist revolution, is neither mentally or physically healthy! Truth-telling barely enters the classroom and when it does...

Privatized, corporate-funded education is in need of loyal collaborators, with or without doctorate degrees, happy or unhappy! The criterion is loyalty to the free market! As foot soldiers for the Ministry of Propaganda, salute the flag and then assure students through every classroom task and homework assignment that the big world of corporate Fatherland awaits them! Be gentle if you discover a "lift" here and there from the Internet. There are rules on paper,

but be gentle. Above all, faithfulness, efficiency, and your wiliness to be uncompromising toward a democratic reality qualify you to teach the future

Corporations are extensively engaged in administering penal institutions and operating health-care systems, and they have assumed important roles at every level of public and private education, undertaking to operate primary school systems, establish universities, and collaborate in joint projects with academic researchers. (Appropriately, corporate centers have exchanged the name of 'headquarters,' with military connotations, for 'campus').

Wolin continues,

[i]n the course of these developments public services formerly undertaken for the benefit of recipients are objects of profit. At the same time, the folkways of government emulate corporate ways. Conceptions of management and efficiency, even profitability are adopted. The ideal of two distinct 'spheres,' the public and the private, is scrambled as public functions become privatized and private modes of operation 'publicized.'

Dissent is not a publicized objective! What you are left with is not "education" but a system that selects the best possible cogs and, of course, collaborators for its survival. It is all about profits, controlling dissent, and rejecting the adverse idea of democracy.

This is privatization - so smooth, you hardly notice it is there!

BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member and Columnist, Lenore Jean Daniels, PhD, has a Doctorate in Modern American Literature/Cultural Theory. Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Daniels.

Dr. Happy Fernandez resigned in May, 2012.



Copyright © 2002-2012
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved

i Dr. Happy Fernandez resigned in May, 2012.