

CLEO – Saturday January 15th 11:00 am – 1:30 pm

A Three-Part Political Education Series inspired by LRNA Oakland E/B Assessment

Session Two Debt as a Weapon of Social & Political Control

Part 1: Introduction, Reading and Discussion 11:05 – 12:30 p.m.

Access to public education expanded to the formally enslaved and poor white farmers during the Reconstruction period. During the early decades of the U.S. Industrial period the capitalist structure needed workers, and the public education system was funded to help serve the needs of industry by training generations of workers. Now, in the age of automation and digital technology funding education for the new advances of production is too expensive when cheaper labor overseas is available already with these skills.

The entire world is undergoing a leap from one economic base — production with human labor — to another without human labor. New tools introduced in the last stage of electromechanical industry have created a break from the past development of the economy. New tools, new forms of automation using no human labor, have begun to replace the old. A new epoch of human history is upon us, brought by the microchip, computer, and robot.—RC

The struggle over public education is a defining battle of this stage that working people find themselves. Quality schools, with adequately compensated teachers, modern facilities and universal access to families is imperative for the health of communities. Public schools, foundational to communities provide many services in addition to being centers of education, as they serve as meeting spaces, access to social/neighborhood services, and safe spaces for our kids. When neighborhood schools are consolidated, or closed it has a foundational impact on communities particularly communities of color. Just as working people need quality local community schools, corporate interest has identified public schools as a means to have unfettered access to public resources as a means to make and secure profit. Local government is paving the way for corporate interest to control and take over this critical public resource. **This is corporate dictatorship and is the core of fascism.**

A new class of workers is being created as successive waves of work go out of existence. It is being pushed out of the economy, as it cannot work for wages needed to buy the necessities of life. This creates a problem for the ruling class. The new class must fight for access to food, homes, and water, even though it has no money to secure those things. It is compelled to transform society into public ownership of the new tools of production.

The ruling class is reorganizing the government to attempt to stabilize the situation and protect their interests by merging the state, and all its financial, political, and military power, with the corporations. That objective base of fascism allows the corporations to shift the burden of the crisis onto the backs of the workers. These are the economics of fascism. As the burden becomes intolerable and the people begin to resist, the state will clamp down, destroying what little democracy exists and attempting to prevent any struggle of the people. This is the social face of fascism.--RC

Veiled by the use of terms “privatization”, “parent choice” control over public schools equates to control over public land, power to control access to housing and the ability to reshape a community socially and politically. The battle over public schools in Oakland and the greater East Bay is not only a fight to preserve access to education, but a fight against the reorganizing of society for corporate interest. How is this being accomplished in OUSD?

The Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) told Oakland Unified School District officials that they must cut the budget by \$90 million and threatened – if the district does not take sufficient steps by the end of January – to withhold the salaries of the school board and Superintendent Kyla Johnson-Trammell and place the district under direct control of the state’s Bakersfield-based nonprofit agency, the Fiscal Crisis Management and Assistance Team (FCMAT), according to a November 8 letter to the district from ACOE Supt. L. Karen Monroe.

Under state guidance, the district has closed about 20 schools, mostly in Black and Latinx flatland schools, with the direct encouragement of FCMAT, even though FCMAT has recognized that closing schools does not save money.

Under the leadership of FCMAT and the county since 2003, the district has faced almost continual budget cuts, has stayed in debt and has relied on a revolving door of privatizing administrators and consultants, many who appear to pass through Oakland as a career steppingstone. –Oakland Post

Working class warriors are engaged at all levels of this fight, including elected school board officials, teachers and community activist. There is a great need for all - parents, students and communities at large - to understand how this fight intersects with their collective struggle for housing, health care and safe communities.

Discussion Question: What are we facing? Why does corporate interest have to close schools?

Part II: Video, Discussion & Ideas – What is needed for our class to fight and win? 12:30-1:30

Video: Your Debt is Someone Else's Asset <https://youtu.be/Bhn3jsBHKg4>

Debt as a means of control

22 years ago, back in 2000, Californians passed Prop. 39, which forced public school districts to let charter schools use more of their facilities at a time when the state was pulling back on its support for public education. By 2003 OUSD had a \$35 million budget deficit that forced a state takeover of the district. Elected and appointed state officials negotiated a \$100 million state loan — far more than the deficit of \$37 million — which forced the district to repay the state \$6 million a year until 2026, further cutting the budget that could be spent on educating children in the public schools. Meanwhile the number of charter schools in the district doubled, cutting state revenues to public education even more. Now the state is prohibiting OUSD from using legally authorized COVID funds to fully pay its debt, requiring 90 million in cuts, and threatening another takeover if the district doesn't close 23 lower attendance schools in the lower income flatlands area. How is this using debt as a weapon of social and political control? Oakland City Council member Carroll Fife says Oakland's flatland elementary schools — the schools that educate most of our working-class kids — are victims of "disaster capitalism." What did she mean by that? She wrote that "Private interests want to own our schools, and there is no shortage of high-paid, bureaucratic leaders who would hand the schools to them. they salivate over the money to be taken from OUSD, and people in administrative positions have helped manufacture the problems that would allow takeover. We have to tell them, "HELL NO!"

Eli Broad created two Fortune 500 companies, Kaufmann-Broad Homes and Sun America Bank. With an estimated net worth of \$6.7 billion Eli Broad ranks as Forbes Magazine's 78th wealthiest man in the United States. But like many billionaires who create mechanisms to increase their wealth, Broad created a "non-profit" academy as his entre' into the private education market . . . The Broad Superintendent Academy attracts applicants who willingly pay exorbitant tuition fees for the chance to get placed in a top management public education position. . . The Broad academy only indoctrinates and commits its students to the privatization of public education and the generation of revenues for private corporations. . . When Broad placed his academy graduates in management positions at Oakland Unified School District, they left a trail of fiscal mismanagement, budget overruns and demoralized staff, students and teachers. Operating unethically and illegally Broad managers used their training to cripple and plunder Oakland's schools. – Privatizing Oakland Schools Eugene Stovall Feb 2020

Discussion Question: Why does capitalism need use debt to function?

In 1998, Eli Broad recruited Jerry Brown, the former Governor of California and a former presidential contender to become Mayor of Oakland. Broad needed someone with Brown's political clout with the Democratic Party to implement his plans to privatize Oakland's schools. Broad had been a close personal friend of Jerry Brown's father Pat Brown and had financed all of Jerry Brown's political campaigns. Now Broad realized California's top Democrat and his control over the statewide Democratic Party machine gave him a unique opportunity to make money from private education. - Privatizing Oakland Schools, Eugene Stovall Feb 2020

Discussion Question: How does the ruling class control us without being obvious about it?

Today the corporations use the State apparatus to guarantee their interests and their profits, whatever it takes. The relationship between capitalist and worker, that is the basis of capitalism, is being destroyed. But the class representing those who own and run the corporations as private property intends to guarantee that they retain their power, wealth, and privilege, under whatever new form the economic system takes. The State continues to grant corporations, which extract wealth from society for the owning class, unlimited rights, and powers.

The role of the state apparatus in society today is the same as the slave-owning class of the U.S.: as historian Kenneth Stampp put it, "To Make Them Stand in Fear." Force is the leading aspect of control of the new fascist reorganization of the State.

You can find examples of this throughout history, but you can also find many changes taking place today to develop a "new" fascism. The fascism needed today is to control a growing mass of people who are marginalized and cast aside as unnecessary and "useless" in a fully electronic, digital, AI-oriented economy. Today the ruling class is making the changes needed to use a highly aggressive, militarized fascist state to control a population fighting just to survive.

A thorough discussion and a good understanding of the development of the State and the fascism of the 21st century will help us in our daily practical work.

The ruling class works to consolidate a new fascist society, aiming its fire at all who no longer add to their profit. Our new class has a leading role in transforming society. Today, there is the ability to have an abundance of food and housing and have quality education and health care, to live a cultured life. We can fight forward with the understanding that robotic, digital production can be publicly owned, and the abundance it creates can be distributed to all without money. **RC**

Please see links to full articles referenced:

Understanding New Forms of Fascism in America: <https://rallycomrades.org/2021/11/understanding-new-forms-of-fascism-in-america/>

Privatizing Oakland Public Schools: <https://blackagenda.com/privatizing-oakland-schools>

School District Faces Hostile Takeover by State Overseers: <https://www.postnewsgroup.com/school-district-faces-hostile-takeover-by-state-overseers/>