

On Education, Barack Obama is the President of Privatization

Can We Stop Him? Will We?

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By the time his term is over, President Obama and his Race To The Top program will have forced the closure and privatization of thousands of inner-city schools, a feat no white Republican or Democrat could have accomplished. But he'll only be president 4 more years. If we can stop this now, his successors won't be able to do this again. Can we? Will we?

Last year we asked why the announcement that the city of Philadelphia planned to close 40 more public schools over the next few months wasn't national news. This year, we could ask the same about Chicago, where officials have announced plans to close more than a hundred schools, or about Los Angeles, New York, Cleveland, Atlanta and dozens of other cities.

The national wave of school closings not national news because our nation's elite, from Wall Street and the hedge fund guys to the chambers of commerce and the business establishment, from corporate media and all the elite politicians of both parties from the president down to local mayors and state legislators are working diligently to privatize public education as quickly as possible. They're not stupid. They've done the polling and the focus groups. They know with dead certainty that the p-word is massively unpopular, and that parents, teachers, students and communities aren't clamoring to hand schools over to greedy profiteers.



On every level, the advocates of educational privatization strive to avoid using the p-word.

They deliberately mislabel charter schools, just as unaccountable as every other private business in the land as “public charter schools,” because after all, they use public money. So do Boeing, Lockheed, General Dynamics, Bank of America and Goldman Sachs, but nobody calls these “public aerospace companies,” “public military contractors,” or “public banks.” For the same reason, corporate media refuse to cover the extent of the school closing epidemic, or local opposition to it, for fear of feeding the development of a popular movement against privatization, and Race To The Top, the Obama administration’s signature public education initiative, and the sharp edge of the privatizers, literally driving the wave of school closings, teacher firings, and the adoption of “run-the-school-like-a-business” methods everywhere.

The privatizers know the clock is ticking. They know that no white Republican or Democrat could have successfully closed thousands of schools, mainly in the inner city and low-income neighborhoods without a tidal wave of noisy opposition. No white Republican or Democrat could have fired or replaced tens of thousands of experienced, mostly black qualified, experienced classroom teachers with younger, whiter, cheaper “graduates” of 5 week “teacher training” programs like Teach For America.

President Obama’s black face, and the connivance of the black political class of which he is the reigning exemplar enables the implementation of right wing policies in the areas of war and peace, in growing the police and prison states, in shrinking the parts of the state that protect economic and civil rights, in guaranteeing Big Oil, Wall Street and other corporate malefactors continued immunity and impunity, in privatizing the Postal Service and of course public education. That’s the bad news.

The good news is that Barack Obama will only be president less than four more years. If a noisy, contentious, civilly disobedient popular movement to protect public education can be brought into existence in the next year this president and our turncoat black political class can be stopped. The clock is ticking for us too.

The privatizers know that this is their chance to succeed. We must this is our best chance to stop them.

What can we do? What can you do?

If you live in one of the hundreds of jurisdictions that elect school board members in November 2013, now is the time to call your neighbors together and choose which one of you will be a candidate. School board elections are low impact, low budget, low attention and low turnout affairs, the most favorable electoral terrain for amateur and grassroots activists. In Georgia the Green Party will be calling together search and support committees to seek and support school board candidates who oppose privatization. So if you live in Georgia you can email me. My email is at the end of this article.

Join or start an organization of parents, teachers, students or all three in your neighborhood to halt the privatizations. Next week Black Agenda Report will have a resource page for school activists, from which you can read and download materials that will help you educate and inform your neighbors and co-workers on the issue of school privatization.

You can join the parents, students and teachers who are coming to DC the first week of April to Occupy the Department of Education. We’ll have more information here at Black Agenda Report on that too.

The clock is ticking. Once we lose the public schools we won't get them back. And if we can stop the black President of Privatization from doing this to us, it should be easy to prevent the next white one from continuing this evil and destructive policy.

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