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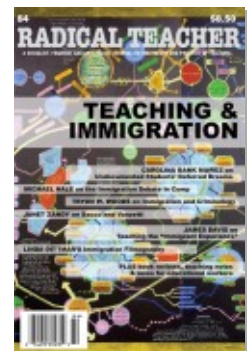
*The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions:
Stories for Resistance* (review)

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Book Reviews

The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and their Unions: Stories for Resistance

**Edited by Mary Compton and Lois Weiner
(New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2008)**

Reviewed by Kathleen F. Malu

This edited volume should be required reading for everyone interested in public education. In a series of powerfully written chapters, the editors make an irrefutable case for their argument that teachers' unions have a critically important role to play in shaping the future of public education. Moreover, they show how this future is currently under attack across the globe from big business and conservative politicians including neoliberals and social conservatives.

In my field (literacy and language development), it is clear that global economic competition is driving the rush for literacy development and this book illustrates how this competition extends out into the entire field of education. Within the last ten years, prosperous nations, typically those in the global north, have changed the meaning and goals of public education. Education no longer focuses on "serving the public good." Education is "big business" and organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in collaboration with universities in the global north have begun to impose educational "quality control" requirements on countries in the global south as the price they must pay whenever they borrow funds.

If you work in teacher preparation at

the undergraduate and graduate levels, *The Global Assault on Teaching* should be a required text throughout the program. Teacher preparation programs typically focus on a narrow curriculum that examines educational issues at the local, state, and national levels. This text expands and extends our understanding of education. Education is no longer simply about our locale; it is influenced and controlled by global political forces.

Throughout the book there are provocative and challenging chunks of in-text boxes. Consider the first one, which argues that the new education mindset "views families as customers, schools as 'retail outlets' where educational services are received, and the school board as a customer service department that hears and addresses parental concerns" (from the Merrill Lynch Report, 1999, April 9). Future teachers who can frequently be heard stating that they want to become teachers because "they like little children" need to wrestle with this concept of education as business. They should understand the influence of the Clinton-era policies such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on this education-as-business policy and the role that No Child Left Behind plays in pushing this notion into every aspect of public education today. This information is not found in the typical foundations course textbooks. Compton and Weiner's text fills this gap.

Although every chapter offers insights into the global assault on teaching, there are a few chapters that are particularly useful and informative, particularly for those who may find these ideas new. Compton and Weiner's introductory chapter helps raise our consciousness and understanding about the nature of the global assault

on teaching, including the use of business quality control notions about production, training, and profits. This chapter also outlines the goal for this text: "To illuminate the neglected role of teacher trade unions [and] to analyze their potential power to win an alternative type of education" (to read this first chapter for free go to www.newpol.org).

Chapters in Part II present the troubling experiences of individuals in countries across the globe. Most disturbing is the story from Namibia by John Nyambe, which analyzes what happened when the World Bank sought to cut public expenditure on education and increase class size to 40-50 students or more. These cuts challenge Namibia's efforts to promote learner-centered pedagogy. Stories from Mexico, Denmark, and the West Indies are equally disturbing and present different ways in which public education is under attack. A more heartening story comes from Alvaro Moreira Hypolito in Brazil in his chapter "Educational Restructuring, Democratic Education, and Teachers." Here we learn how a dedicated group of parents and community leaders brought about effective, meaningful changes by taking up their authority and creating a coalition of leftist parties. By joining forces, workers, parents, and community leaders used their influence to ensure that the Escola Plural Program meets the needs and ideals of the local population.

Additional accounts of teacher and community resistance to the global assault on teaching come from Chicago, St. Lucia, Australia, South Africa, Germany, and Israel. These accounts illustrate ways in which the neoliberal and social conservative assaults are framed but also resisted by local community actions. Rob Durbridge's essay, "Challenging Neoliberalism:

Education Unions in Australia" describes how teacher unions work in solidarity with other unions to fight for views that are supported by the general public, even though these views may go beyond the boundaries of union interests per se. One example was the success the unions had in protesting Iraq's 1991 occupation of Kuwait and the 2003 war in Iraq.

By anatomizing the insidious education goals of the neoliberals and giving voice to global stories of resistance against the assault on teaching, Compton and Weiner's collection helps the reader identify and contextualize events in the United States that may otherwise remain camouflaged and muffled in silence. It is this power, hearing from those outside of the United States, that makes this text a "must read" for teachers, teacher educators, future teachers, parents, and anyone concerned about social justice and education for "the public good." For continued updates on teacher struggles around the world visit Compton's website at www.teachersolidarity.com.

***Underground Undergrads:
UCLA Undocumented Immigrant
Students Speak Out***

**Edited by Gabriela Madera, et.al.
(Los Angeles: UCLA Center for Labor
Research and Education. 2008)**

Reviewed by Marissa López

In March 2006 I had just accepted a job as an Assistant Professor of English at UCLA as a specialist in Chicano Literature. From my home in Pennsylvania I watched the televised protests against Representative James Sensenbrenner's (R-WI) draconian immi-