



International Women's Day : 1-3

**CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S
DAY, MARCH 8**

Women — Take the Lead in the Fight for Empowerment!

International Woman's Day is celebrated worldwide as a time to reaffirm the rights of women and their contributions on every front to the struggle for progress. It is a time to affirm that the

emancipation of humanity requires the emancipation of women. This is a first-rate task of all to join in bringing forward that new world where the rights of women, and the

International Women's Day • 3

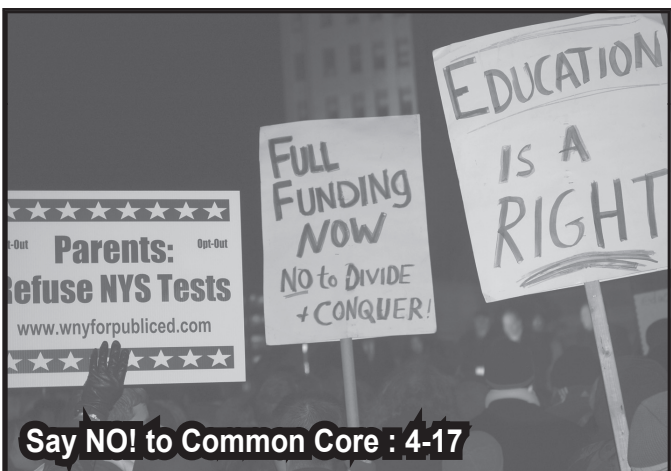
JOIN EFFORTS TO REFUSE THE STATE TESTS

Students, Parents, Teachers, Staff Uniting to Say NO! to Common Core

Numerous efforts by parents, students, teachers and staff are going forward across the country to say *NO!* to the Common Core and its harmful testing and teacher assessment regime. Together people are

standing to *Refuse the Tests!* and refuse the widespread anxiety and humiliation imposed on students and teachers alike by these tests. The next round of testing occurs

Say NO! to Common Core • 4



Say NO! to Common Core : 4-17

Hands Off Venezuela!

The U.S. is once again interfering in the internal affairs of Venezuela, striving again to topple the government. This occurred repeatedly while Hugo Chavez was president and included backing a military coup — which the people of Venezuela defeated. Now the U.S. is fomenting violence inside the country in an effort to overthrow the elected government of President Nicolás

Maduro. Since February 12, U.S.-instigated violence has continued along with U.S. disinformation and efforts to criminalize the Venezuelan government for acting to safeguard the country. *Voice of Revolution* vigorously denounces this U.S. interference and demands, *Hands Off Venezuela!* We support the people and government of

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March edition of ***Voice of Revolution***

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I • International Women's Day

rights of all are affirmed.

The U.S. is a modern, socialized society where there is great possibility for the rights of women to be met. Yet even President Obama was forced to admit recently what he called the shame of women still earning only 70 cents for every dollar a man earns in the U.S. Perhaps more importantly, women, while being half of the labor force, make up two thirds of all minimum wage workers. This means they and their families are living \$4000 *below* the official poverty line. And now both food stamps and unemployment benefits are being cut, again targeting women and children first and foremost. Poverty is one of the worst forms of violence, against women, children and all of society. Affirming the rights of women necessarily mean rejecting that poverty should exist for even a minute longer in a country as wealthy as the U.S. And it means recognizing that the time for an alternative is now — a new direction for the economy and political affairs is needed.

The U.S. is currently engaged in wars and in fomenting more anarchy and chaos, not only in the Middle East but in Latin America, Africa and Asia. It is contending with other big imperialist powers for control of Europe and Asia, using drone warfare and interference of all kinds. The U.S. crimes of war and interference, be it in Haiti, Venezuela, Syria, Iraq, Ukraine or elsewhere, stand directly against affirming the rights of women as its consequences fall most heavily on women and children. The war economy and politics of violence and impunity also bring

to the fore that the time is now for a new direction.

In celebrating International Women's Day *Voice of Revolution* urges all the women fighting — against war and for rights, to education, housing, healthcare and all that is required to meet our needs — to take the lead in the fight for political empowerment. On the many fronts of struggle today, such as the anti-war movement, the immigrant rights movement, the fight for the right to education, one can see women in the forefront. They have taken up the work to build the fighting unity of the people for rights. And as these battles go forward, what repeatedly comes to the fore is the issue of *Who Decides?* Who decides that women are to remain impoverished and fair game? Who decides that they are to be blocked from full participation in society? Who decides that their sons and daughters are to be sent off to fight in unjust and criminal wars of aggression? It is clear that those now deciding, the U.S. rulers are no longer fit to rule!

Now is the time for women to take the lead in strengthening the conscious fight to be decision makers on all these fronts of battle, including in the organizations being developed for these battles. Now is the time to bring to the fore that women are central to the success of the fight for empowerment and stand second to none in saying *NO* to the old and yes to the new, to a new direction, to new arrangements of empowerment!

A salute to women everywhere, fighting for rights!

*A call to women to take the lead
in the fight for empowerment!*



Visit our website: usmlo.org

I • Say NO! Common Core

in April and everywhere, people are saying *No! We Refuse!* In doing so people are affirming their right to say no and also demanding that governments at all levels end the attacks and instead meet their duty to guarantee the right to education equally for all.

Voice of Revolution urges all to join in the work to *Refuse the Tests!* This is an effort that enables all concerned to keep matters in our hands — it is a fight that can and is being organized independent of actions by federal and state officials. It is a fight that puts the interests of the public and society as a whole at the forefront and says *No!* to the brutal attacks on public education taking place nationwide and *Yes* to quality education for all! Continuing to find ways to affirm this *No!* is vital as we together fight to strengthen the fight for the right to education.

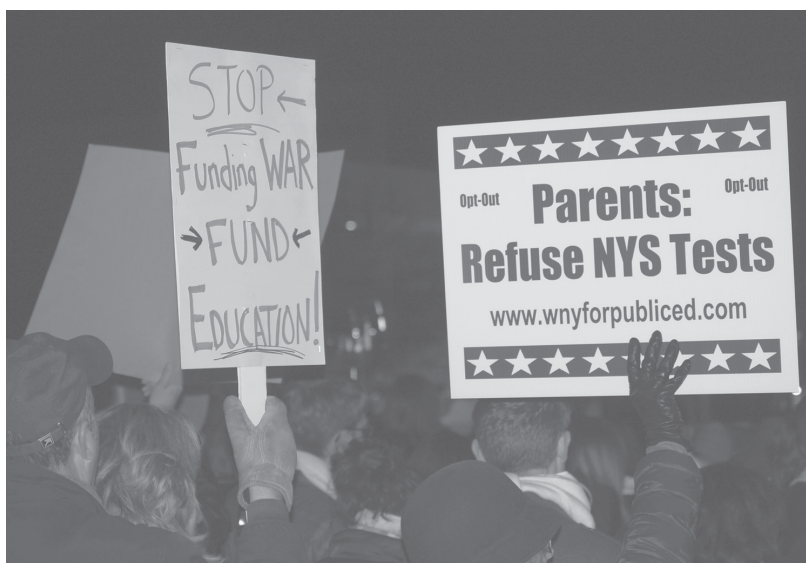
Students, parents, teachers and staff in New York and Illinois, with Chicago and New York City among the largest school districts nationwide, are among those in the forefront of this struggle. Students are refusing the tests by telling their teacher they refuse and then not marking the test in any way — no name, no mark of any kind on the test. Many are urging their friends to do the same. Parents are doing so by informing the principal that their child is refusing the tests and by informing and urging other parents to do the same. Lawn signs are going up to generate a broad presence and spirit of refusal. Sample letters for refusing and other *Refuse the Tests* resources can be found at numerous webpages developed as part of this struggle, such as Western New Yorkers for Public Education (wnyforpublicd.weebly.com) and More Than a Score, Chicago (morethanascorchicago.org).

Teachers are taking their stand, as parents and as teachers. Many teachers at recent public meetings have been expressing their opposition and elaborating on the harm the Common Core and its testing regime is imposing. Teachers' unions in both New York and Illinois, recognizing the strength of the growing opposition have stated their readiness to defend any teacher targeted for refusing the tests and organizing others to do so.

Meetings, rallies and actions of various kinds are increasing, as are webpages, blogs and facebook pages, all to better inform all concerned, oppose the false threats by school officials and further mobilize the resistance. Responding to the united stand of parents and teachers for rights, officials at the state and federal

level are trying to divert the stand being taken to *Refuse!* the Common Core as anti-education and anti-democracy. New York Governor Cuomo, for example, has established a "Common Core Implementation Panel" to ensure the Common Core goes forward and to present the problem as one of implementation, not one of the Core itself and who decided its content and consequences.

Bill Gates and Microsoft, Pearson, Achieve Inc. and other monopolies are working to take over the public schools and ensure that public funds and schools narrowly serve their private interests. Federal and state governments are facilitating this instead of defending the public and its right to high quality public schools. The monopolies and government officials want to focus on how Common Core is being implemented, and not the reality that it is a mechanism to block students, teachers and parents from having a say. It is a mechanism of control, serving these private interests and removing the public from decisions concerning public education. It is a means to wreck public education when the clear demand across the country is to raise its quality and guarantee the



highest quality education for all.

Part of the fight on the Common Core involves insisting that it is the public, the people themselves that should decide all matters of public education. It is not the private interests, it is not the Governors, it is not federal officials. *Democracy Means We Decide!*

Voice of Revolution urges all concerned to go all out to strengthen the work to *Refuse the Tests!* Let us together step up efforts to organize public meetings and rallies and provide information on the Common Core and the agenda of the rich. This is an agenda to take over the public schools and public funds to serve the narrow private interests of the monopolies. It is an agenda that says students are products, and teachers are to produce them with guaranteed specifications as decreed by the Common Core standards.

We reject this agenda. Students are human beings with rights! That is why our agenda also includes discussing critical issues like poverty, racism and full funding for public education now. It includes the demand to *Stop Funding War and Fund Education!* It centers on the issue of who decides and firmly declares, *Who Decides? We Decide!*

Chicago Parents and Teachers United Against Testing Regime

More than 1000 students and their parents, from at least 74 Chicago elementary schools refused the state test. Teachers at two schools, Saucedo Scholastic Academy and Drummond, standing with parents, refused to administer the test. These stands in Chicago reflect the accomplishment of a broad and growing movement nationwide to defend the right to education and demand that public schools provide high quality education for all. Parents, teachers and students together are rejecting the testing regimes being imposed as harmful and anti-education. They are unjust, unfair, and broadly discourage investigation, discovery, creativity and working together to look into and work to solve social problems.

In Chicago, like elsewhere, organizing efforts have been going on for some time, using various means. These included having parents go to schools during drop-off and pick-up times to inform fellow parents about the testing and mobilize them to join the work to refuse. Chicago still has many neighborhood schools so parents still gather at schools on a regular basis. There was also an on-line petition, serving to inform and organize parents.

Most recently, in just a few weeks, more than 40,000 leaflets encouraging parents to refuse (“opt out”) have been distributed mainly by teachers from the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE). Some teachers were told they would be arrested for distributing leaflets on the public sidewalks outside public schools — but they stood their ground and defended their right to speak and organize. Parents also organized to make copies of the material and distribute it. On this basis information about the upcoming testing and its negative consequences on teaching and learning, and mobilization for refusing, took place broadly across the city.

A rally of hundreds also was organized at Saucedo Scholastic Academy, defending the stand of teachers there to refuse to give the tests. Additionally, a rally organized by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) is planned for March 10, called “Let Us Teach! Rally and Day of Action.” The rally is being organized in the Pilsen area, where many of the students are Spanish speakers and

are especially negatively impacted by the testing. The rally will show support for the teachers and staff at Saucedo and Drummond and more generally demand: *Let us teach! No retaliation against teachers! Stop bullying parents and children!*

At Saucedo, on March 4 when testing began, the CPS sent 20 CPS security guards and officials in an effort to intimidate teachers, parents and students, but they stood their ground and did

not administer the test. Boycotting teachers were able to teach engaging lessons, such as Rosa Parks’ act of civil disobedience and non-violent protest. Students were not tormented with the anxiety of testing. Parents were happy to see their children leave school with smiles on their faces. As one teacher reports, “Today, we took back our classrooms, our schools and our students’ education. CPS, this is just the beginning.”

Parents at other schools where testing took place report that students who refused the test were punished in various ways. At one school students demanding to refuse were forced to take the test, with the administrator claiming their parents letters opting

their children out were not legitimate, as supposedly the students had forged the signatures! Another student was made to sit in the classroom during the test, denied a bathroom break, and watched their classmates eat treats that were given to the tested children but not those refusing. Another parent reported, “My daughter’s class is being given an ice cream party at the end of testing but my daughter and the other opting out students are not invited because they didn’t take the test. All over the school they have anti-bullying posters on the walls, but I feel as if my family is being bullied because of the tests.” These efforts to force parents and students alike to go against their conscience and their right to refuse are indicative that the testing regime is not only anti-education, it is anti-people. The firm stand of parents, students and teachers in Chicago and elsewhere indicate that refusing the tests is contributing to a broader movement that is demanding that the right to education — with the highest quality for all — be met and these brutal attacks on public education be stopped.



Parents Support Saucedo and Drummond Teachers' Test Boycott

Parents United for Responsible Education and More Than a Score, Chicago February 28, 2014

Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE) and the parent group More Than a Score (MTAS) strongly support the teachers at Chicago's Saucedo, Drummond, and any other Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and Illinois teachers who are refusing to administer the Illinois Standards Achievement Test to their students beginning on Monday, March 3.

The hundreds of parents represented by PURE and MTAS oppose the misuse and overuse of standardized tests. We believe that Chicago schools are administering far too many tests and wasting too much precious learning time on testing and test preparation. Some tests are given just to predict how students will do on future tests. Others are unfairly and improperly used to make life-changing decisions about children, which even test makers say is wrong.

Parents are increasingly fed up with excessive testing and test prep which we believe has replaced many of the important aspects of education including the arts, science, history, civics, and spoken communication. This is why hundreds of parents at scores of Chicago schools are opting their children out of the ISAT this year. This test is being phased out this year and has no

particular purpose. Unfortunately, CPS officials have responded to parents' concerns with threats and misinformation. They claim that schools may lose federal funds or even their accreditation if students don't take the test.

And for teachers like those at Saucedo, who support the parents, who want to teach and not incessantly test, and who have announced their intention not to administer the ISAT this year, the attempts at intimidation are worse: CPS has threatened to fire them and revoke their teaching licenses.

We stand in solidarity with these courageous teachers who are standing up for our children and their education. Nationwide, a growing number of parents and teachers are rising up and saying "Enough!" Chicago is emerging as a national leader in this healthy movement away from excessive testing and towards a richer, more meaningful learning experience for our children.

PURE and MTAS ask CPS to respect the decisions of parents to protect our children from test misuse by opting them out, and to honor the teachers who are refusing to give the tests as a matter of conscience and from a sincere desire to provide children with a real education, not just more test prep.

Chicago Teachers Union Supports Teacher Boycott of ISAT

Chicago Teachers Union

The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) supports the teachers and parents at Thomas Drummond Montessori School who announced their intent to boycott the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). The union was notified by a group of teachers at Drummond who will not administer ISAT [in March].

Some teachers at Drummond will join Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy as the second school this week with educators taking action against this "low-stakes" standardized test. Saucedo teachers also announced their intent to boycott the ISAT.

"This second [school with boycotting teachers] is evidence that more and more educators continue to take a principled stand against harmful tests and in support of their parents and students," said CTU VP Jesse Sharkey. "The CTU supports these teachers and calls on the district to stop making threats to parents and educators who are trying to restore some sanity to the education system."

The CTU supports teachers and parents at Maria Saucedo Scholastic Academy who announced their intent to boycott the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT). Teachers have collected more than 300 opt-out letters and the student council voted to encourage all students to opt out of the exam. Should these courageous educators face disciplinary charges by the district, CTU vowed to mount a strong defense of this collective action.

Saucedo's action stance against the ISAT could spark a teacher and parent-led movement to "opt-out" throughout the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) system.

"The Saucedo educators have taken a bold step in refusing to administer a test that is of no use to students and will be junked by the district next year," said CTU Vice President Jesse Sharkey. "CPS CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett has already said the ISAT will not be used for selective enrollment, and therefore this serves no purpose other than to give students another standardized test. We know that parents all over the city are opting their children out of this unnecessary test, and we commend them for doing what is in the best interests of their children."

The 'low stakes' test is expected to be administered over the course of eight days in all elementary schools starting March 3. The district recently issued a memorandum to teachers stressing the value of "rigorous, high-quality assessments," in measuring student progress. The ISAT, however, is not aligned to any CPS curriculum, and in Chicago, it is no longer used to measure student progress, school performance, promotion, or for any other purpose.

For the last decade, since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, the ISAT test has been the primary lever used by CPS for its destructive, destabilizing policies of closures and

turnarounds. System-wide, the ISAT has infected the vigor and breadth of curriculum as teachers and students became stymied by the requirements of a narrow test-based approach to learn-

ing. *NCLB* has now been panned as a broad failure, but with the transition into more new tests, CPS threatens to double-down on the failed policy of standardized-test based accountability.

Parents Refusing the Tests Counter Threats from Administrators

School administrators and principals across the country are among those opposing the Common Core and its testing regime. In New York, for example, close to 3,500 principals have signed a letter opposing Common Core's testing and teacher evaluation regime. Other school administrators, especially at the school board level, are being used to threaten teachers and parents so as to block the broad and growing stand of parents and teachers alike to *Refuse the Tests!* Teachers in Chicago taking the stand to refuse to give the tests are being threatened with firing and loss of their certification. Parents are told they are not "allowed" to refuse and that their schools will lose funding, which is not true. At the same time, what is true is that most school districts are already losing funds in order to implement the Common Core and its testing regime. As well, federal and state governments are using the testing regime to intervene to close schools and increase private Charter schools funded with public dollars — that is schools are actually losing funds because of the Common Core regime, not the refusal! The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for example, an arbitrary rating based on the testing, is one of the ways schools are first branded as failures, and then closed.

We reprint below an example of the disinformation and threats being made, in this case by a school official in Chicago, and rejection of them by a parent active in organizing to defend the right to education by refusing the tests. The administrator is Director of Assessment, Office of Accountability, Chicago Public Schools. The content is taken from an email she sent to a parent organizer. The test being referred to is the Illinois Standard Achievement Test (ISAT).

* * *

Administrator: I wanted to reach out on the opt out issue because I'm concerned that there are repercussions from the State that teachers and parents may not be aware of. We've just sent something to principals and I want to make sure you guys are clear too.

What we've heard from ISBE (Illinois State Board of Education) is that because ISAT is required by both federal (No Child Left Behind, *NCLB*) and state law (Illinois School Code), it is possible that schools could lose federal funding with low testing percentages. We're still trying to nail down with ISBE exactly how this will be determined, but this is something that would be reviewed by the federal Department of Education.

Parent responds: There is no evidence that the federal government will limit Title I funding due to testing opt outs. If ISBE or U.S. Ed has evidence of this ever happening anywhere or under consideration, please have them produce it. We have reviewed

the U.S. Code and the Consolidated Financial Report (CFR) and found no references to automatic funding cuts for failure to make AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). Below 95 percent participation averaged over three years would trigger an AYP failure, but the district has not made AYP since at least 2005, and only 64 CPS schools made AYP last year. If there were any cuts, they happened already.



Administrator: In addition, there are possible repercussions for teachers from ISBE, again since this is a required test. Depending on the circumstance, teacher actions could be reviewed by the State Certification Board with potential impact on their licensing. There would of course also be CPS-specific consequences since test administration and a maintaining secure testing environment are considered basic job functions of CPS employees.

Parent responds: The Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) is fully prepared to defend teachers who refuse to administer this test. Teachers who have chosen not to administer the test understand that there may be repercussions for their jobs. Please provide a citation for the impact of test boycotts on licensure.

Administrator: Finally, the state has also indicated that this could trigger a review of school recognition status (i.e. accreditation).

Parent responds: If past failure to make AYP did not already trigger this, why would presently missing it, as nearly all schools will do with the 100 percent "meets and exceeds" required, trigger heretofore unknown sanctions?

Administrator: And as for the messaging around this, I think

there are also a few things that need to be cleared up.

Time spent testing: I think it is misleading to say that ISAT takes up 2 weeks of instructional time. The total test time is 3 hours each for reading and math and 2 for science (4 and 7 grades only)...There is a 2 week window to allow maximum flexibility in scheduling. Students who are absent typically take make-up tests in the second week, but this does not disrupt instruction of other students as it is done in another setting. The 6 or 8 hours on the test is less than 1 percent of a student's time spent in school.

Parent responds: Disruption is far more than the 6-8 hours of testing. Even students not in 3-8th grade have disrupted schedules during the testing window; most specials are cancelled etc. At least one school is being dismissed early (before 12) for the three days of testing. Special education students can take many more than 6-8 hours to test, and their teachers are lost to administering the test for weeks. This does not even begin to cover the hours and dollars devoted to ISAT prep time.

Administrator: CPS does not pay for ISAT. I saw a flyer that quoted us as spending 3.5 million on it. I have no idea where this came from...this is a state exam.

Parent responds: This claim is not coming from us; nonetheless, the ISAT will cost the state \$18 million; \$3.5 million of that is for the test within CPS.

Administrator: Because Illinois requires ISAT, schools are expected to present all students with the test. Students can refuse to test, but must remain quiet and not disrupt testing for other students.

Parent responds: Barbara Byrd-Bennett [CEO of CPS] sent a letter to parents stating that they have the right to opt their children out of all tests. We are instructing parents to tell schools they are refusing on behalf of their legally minor children and that the school should code their student as having refused the test. It is unethical to pressure children, some as young as eight years old, to participate in activities against their parent/guardian's wishes. [...]

(Reprinted from *More Than a Score*, which is a group of parents, students, teachers, and community members "who are frustrated with the scale, expense and consequences of the testing regime in CPS." The organizations participating include: Parents 4 Teachers, Parents United for Responsible Education (PURE), Raise Your Hand, and Chicago Teachers Union.)

NEW YORK

The Defiant Parents: Testing's Discontents

Rebecca Mead, The New Yorker

Anna Allanbrook, the principal of the Brooklyn New School, a public elementary school in Carroll Gardens, has long considered the period of standardized testing that arrives every spring to be a necessary, if unwelcome, phase of the school year. Teachers and kids would spend limited time preparing for the tests. Children would gain familiarity with "bubbling in," a skill not stressed in the school's progressive, project-based curriculum. They would become accustomed to sitting quietly and working alone — a practice quite distinct from the collaboration that is typically encouraged in the school's classrooms, where learners of differing abilities and strengths work side by side. (My son is a third grader at the school.) Come the test days, kids and teachers would get through them, and then, once the tests were over, they would get on with the real work of education.

Last spring's state tests were an entirely different experience, for children and for teachers. Teachers invigilating the exams were shocked by ambiguous test questions, based, as they saw it, on false premises and wrongheaded educational principles. (One B.N.S. teacher, Katherine Sorel, eloquently details her objections; see p.9). Others were dismayed to see that children were demoralized by the relentlessness of the testing process, which took seventy minutes a day for six days, with more time allowed for children with learning disabilities.

One teacher remarked that, if a tester needs three days to tell if a child can read, "you are either incompetent or cruel. I feel angry and

compromised for going along with this." Another teacher said that during each day of testing, at least one of her children was reduced to tears. A paraprofessional — a classroom aide who works with children with special needs — called the process "state-sanctioned child abuse." One child with a learning disability, after the second hour of the third day, had had enough. "He only had two questions left, but he couldn't keep going," a teacher reported. "He banged his head on the desk so hard that everyone in the room jumped."

As a result, Allanbrook has changed her approach to testing. This year, while tests will still be administered at B.N.S., and children in the third and fourth grades will have as much practice taking them as they ever have, the school is actively and vocally preparing to support families who decide to opt children out of the testing. Alternative activities will be provided on those days, as will alternative ways of measuring children's progress. (Among other methods, kids who opt out of state tests will be given alternative tests produced by the Department of Education, one in English language arts and one in math, each lasting just forty-five minutes.)

Allanbrook says that her decision to speak out was motivated in part by thinking about the fifth-grade social-justice curriculum at the school, in which children who are about to graduate are asked to consider the question "What are we willing to stand up for?" "As parents and educators, this is the very question that we could be asking ourselves," Allanbrook wrote in a letter to parents this week.

The dismay felt in the corridors of B.N.S. has not been a singular response. Throughout the city and beyond, there is a burgeoning opt-out movement, with parents, teachers, and administrators questioning the efficacy of the tests as they are currently administered, in measuring both the performance of teachers and the progress of students. More than five hundred New York State principals have signed a letter of protest, which cites the encroachment of test prep on teaching time, and the expense of test materials, which come out of stretched school budgets. Educators are also questioning the methodology of the tests, which are graded on a bell curve, with the results closely associated with socioeconomic status. Only three per cent of English-language learners in New York State passed the state tests last year, and only five per cent of students with disabilities did so. Among African-American and Hispanic students, fewer than twenty per cent passed. [...]

Private Interests Deciding

The regime of testing has expanded in recent years, in the wake of [federal law] *No Child Left Behind*, *Race to the Top* [Obama's program providing federal funding if the Common Core testing regime is adopted—BF ed. note], and a belief that what goes on in a classroom can most accurately be divined by data. Defenders of the Common Core curriculum, which seeks to insure that students nationwide are being taught according to the same standards and are meeting federally defined expectations, argue that testing is an effective means of determining whether standards have been reached, thus protecting the interests of children most at risk of being failed by the educational system.

Among the interests that standardized testing certainly does appear to be serving are corporate interests. Pearson, the largest educational publishing company in the United States, not only provides the standardized tests but also sells curricular materials for teachers to use in tailoring their teaching to the tests, test-prep materials for children to study in advance of taking those tests, and remedial materials for children to use after they have failed them. (It also inserts so-called field tests — questions for possible use in future tests — into its exams, turning public-school children into unwitting guinea pigs for procedures to be administered to other children.) In 2012, the most recent year for which it has made data available, Pearson reported that its educational-publishing revenues for North America were up two per cent, compared with an industry decline of ten per cent.

There is questionable wisdom in entrusting a for-profit corporation with measuring how well kids learn to read, write, compute, and think, the last of which is especially unlikely to be accurately gauged by industrial-scale metrics. The skepticism about Pearson was reinforced last month, when the company's charitable arm, the Pearson Foundation, was obliged to pay \$7.7 million to settle accusations that it had funded the development of educational software to be used by its for-profit parent, in violation of the law. That came after the revelation, last spring, that Pearson had flunked its own scoring of the city's gifted-and-talented tests. Almost five thousand children were given the wrong score and were initially denied places in schools for which they were eligible.

Broad Resistance Developing

In pockets of the city and of the region, principals and teachers and parents are refusing to go along with the program. [...] In one high-profile act of defiance, the Castle Bridge elementary school, in Washington Heights opted out en masse of tests for kindergartners that were what educators call developmentally inappropriate and parents call completely insane. Groups like Change the Stakes and Teachers Talk Testing are agitating for reform

through the holding of town meetings, the gathering of petitions, and the making of video protests featuring despondent children and frustrated parents.

In a recent poll of New York City voters, twenty per cent said that education should be the top priority of Mayor Bill de Blasio — a higher proportion than for any other single issue. [...]

Parents who complain about testing — particularly affluent, educated ones — are easily derided, as they were by Arne Duncan, President Obama's Education Secretary, a few months ago, when he described critics of the Common Core as “white suburban moms who — all of a sudden — [find] their child isn't as brilliant as they thought they were, and their school isn't quite as good as they thought they were.” But parents who challenge the status quo on testing are not motivated by a deluded pride in their children's unrecognized accomplishments, or by a fear that their property values will diminish if their schools' scores' drop. They are, in many cases, driven by a conviction that a child's performance on a standardized test is an inadequate, unreliable measure of that child's knowledge, intelligence, aptitude, diligence, and character — and a still more unreliable measure of his teachers' effort, skill, perseverance, competence, and kindness.

They are also motivated by the belief that those parents who are least equipped to speak out are the mothers and fathers of the children who are most vulnerable — the most likely to have their educations diminished by months of repetitive test prep, most likely to find themselves reduced to the statistical data at the wrong end of the bell curve. Parents in this year's opt-out movement are standing up for something larger than their own child's test-day happiness: the conviction that all children have better things to do with their days than fill in bubbles on a multiple-choice sheet, and that all children have better things to do with their heads than bang them against a table in despair.



NOTE TO TEST DESIGNERS:

Bad Questions Are Not the Same as Hard Questions

Katherine Sorel, Brooklyn Teacher, WNYC's SchoolBook blog

We have been hearing recently about how “hard” the recent state tests were. We are told that they had to be “hard” because we have to raise the standards in order to make sure all our students are college-ready.

Having proctored the fifth-grade tests in spring 2013, I have to wonder where the folks at testing company Pearson went to college [Pearson is a private monopoly that writes the Common Core tests, demands they be kept secret and controls results of the tests, informing teachers and parents only whether their child is a 1, 2, 3, or 4, with 1 being the lowest — *BF* ed note].

From my vantage point, the tests suggested that the designers have had little direct experience with literature, history, or math. The tests were hard in the sense that they were hard to do well on. But they were hard to do well on because they were poorly designed, with little connection to the work that students should be doing in school, at the fifth grade or at college.

Here are some key problems I encountered with the latest state tests:

Problem #1: There is not one right answer in literature

When I teach fiction, I emphasize that different interpretations and opinions are fine, as long as students can support their ideas with evidence from the text. Yet for three days in April, fifth graders were asked to read poems and stories and identify the one and only one theme of the selection. Not a main idea — I believe it is possible to pinpoint one main idea in reading selection — but one theme, as if a story cannot be about both friendship and trying new things.

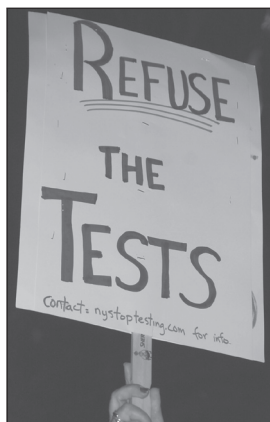
This could be fair if three of the four choices provided were clearly wrong, yet they were not. As a savvy test-taker, I could usually identify which choice Pearson considered right. But as I watched students make their “wrong” choices, I could see how they could make a beautiful argument with evidence from the text to support their answer. And sometimes I could not choose. One question had two choices that were different ways of saying the exact same thing and another had two choices that seemed equally possible, no matter how many times I reread the poem in question.

As a teacher, I know how to prepare students for college and I know how to assess their reading; this test did not do either.

Problem #2:

Expository texts require visuals

Reading expository texts is challenging for many students at any



level, including college. Good texts are filled with maps, graphs, photos, charts, etc. to help the reader visualize and organize new information. In fact, good teaching involves teaching students how to read all those visuals and integrate the information provided with what is in the text, and we should be assessing whether students can do that. Yet Pearson expected fifth graders to comprehend an article about Jefferson’s vision for westward exploration that ultimately led to the Lewis and Clark expedition while providing no visuals.

There was no map to help students understand that “The United States” was just a tiny sliver of the land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, or what “The Louisiana Purchase” referred to. There was no timeline to help students grasp the time span covered in a few short paragraphs or to keep track of the different generations of Clarks. This was not an example of challenging text; this was an example of poor text, making it a poor assessment.

Problem #3: Math should make sense

We hear a lot about students who can perform the basic operations in math but cannot apply them. Presumably the new test would ask students to apply their math skills to real-life situations. Instead, Pearson’s goal seemed to be to come up with situations that would never happen in real life to test students’ stamina and ability to complete nonsensical operations.

A person has change in her pocket. She spends varying amounts at various places. In the end she has $\frac{1}{45}$ left; how much money does she have. $\frac{1}{45}$? When in college or life does anyone have occasion to work with forty-fifths? In another question we learn how long it takes kids to do something a certain number of times, and the question is how long does it take them to do it one time. The answer, which all the fifth graders I was with could figure out, was four minutes. The problem? Pearson wanted the answer in hours, and since it was not multiple choice, it was anyone’s guess what answer they were looking for. I hoped that the kids that wrote “ $\frac{1}{15}$ hour” got it right.

Question after question, either the scenario described made no sense or the math required made no sense. I like math. I think it can be fun and I know it is useful. But this test was like math through the looking glass because there was no point to any of it, least of all to assess students’ math skills.

If Pearson stood by their tests, they would release them to the public and let the public be the judge. And I would challenge any adults that think these tests reveal something about children’s learning to take the tests themselves. I would love to see those scores.

Failed Implementation, or Failed Governance? On the Possibility of a Common Core Moratorium

Dr. Mark Garrison, markgarrison.net

Many are now discussing the possibility of a moratorium on the Common Core in New York State. This possibility poses significant questions that should be pursued.

The key question to start with is, how should such a proposal be evaluated? How are members of the public and professional educators to determine whether or not the moratorium is a Trojan horse or if it is a space to broaden the discussion about what education policy is required in New York State, enabling the public to have a say?

How might parents, teachers and community members influence a moratorium so that it serves the public good?

Will a moratorium serve to expand the space for the public to operate, to develop and exercise its authority over the purpose of public schools? Will it serve to strengthen the work and standing of professional educators? Will it bring parents, educators and their communities closer together, working in concert to develop and together realize a vision of the common good through education work?

Will it allow for communities to put the real, serious and growing problems of poverty, school funding and racism on the agenda?

While Governor Cuomo's Common Core review panel has already been exposed as a fraud, the move in the state Senate and Assembly to enact a moratorium on the implementation of the Common Core warrants careful consideration.

To that end, I offer the following observations.

I like to begin with definitions. They discipline and calm the analysis. So, what does "moratorium" mean? Derived from the Latin for delay, a moratorium is, "a temporary prohibition of an activity," with my dictionary offering this example: "an indefinite moratorium on the use of drift nets." In law, it refers to "a legal authorization to debtors to postpone payment."

And what about implementation? Much of the focus in the media and among some educators has been with respect to the implementation of the Core regime. It is defined as "the process of putting a decision or plan into effect; execution: she was responsible for the implementation of the plan."

The notion of moratorium thus contains the idea that, in the end, the thing now being delayed will eventually be resumed. That is to say, to propose a moratorium on implementation of the Core regime is to assume that it should continue, but only at some future point. I don't think such a conclusion reflects existing public opinion. I think people want an honest and thorough evaluation of the regime's elements, with the understanding that such a review might lead to the conclusion that the Core regime be rejected in its entirety.



The notion of implementation is even more significant. By focusing on implementation, the question of who decides is ignored. Focus is turned instead to those directed to follow orders. Directing all of one's energy at the Commissioner or even the Regents might lead us to miss other key elements of the "reform" agenda, including an examination of who is driving the actions of King and the Regents. It must be understood that their actions are the result of a much larger movement. Replacing them will likely not be enough to stem the tide of "reform".

For example, it is widely known that there are other, larger forces acting in concert, such as the secret and not publicly accountable Regents' Fellows, and beyond that, the huge foundations controlled by the likes of Bill Gates and Eli Broad, not to mention Achieve,

Inc, and Pearson, and many more corporate interests. It is well known that absent such forces, and absent Race to the Top money, there would be no King, or Regents Fellows; and there would be no test-based teacher evaluation, no Core standards or Core tests.

Thus, a focus on implementation assumes that the decision making processes are not to be evaluated as part of a moratorium on the Common Core. In so doing, the public is being redirected to focus only on the implementation of decisions already made, largely in secret. The public is being directed to instead focus narrowly on those doing the implementing. Here, it is important to understand that this even includes the New York State Department of Education, in addition to superintendents, school boards, and union contract negotiators.

Maybe the problem does not originate as a problem of "poor implementation." If the observable situation points to flawed implementation all down the line and at nearly every step of the way, with no shortage of evidence from across the state, one has to pause and consider the possibility that extensive problems related to implementation signify that the policy itself is fundamentally flawed. You can't do a wrong thing more right. If its killing all the patients, its probably not doctor error.

And what appears to be at the center of the current "wrong thing" is the manner in which the governance of education has been centralized and privatized, with public schools transformed into the play thing of the super-rich. The public should not be shocked that decisions aimed narrowly at maximizing profits and labor control, decisions made by non-educator hedge-fund managers and corporate CEOs in far-away corporate headquarters, cause trouble when implemented.

Thus, I offer this thesis: systematic failure of implementation

suggests that the problem is not only with the policy itself, but with the way in which the education system is now governed. What if the difficulties we now find ourselves facing are really a result of the decision making process itself, and who is involved, and who is excluded? What if what we're experiencing is not a failure of implementation, but a failure of governance?

I propose that any government body, committee, panel or Blue Ribbon Commission, be directed to address public concerns about the Core regime by answering, in detail, the following questions:

How did existing authorities in Albany and NYSED come to make decisions for the public that have so systematically caused it harm?

How are those responsible to lead education in New York State currently selected — The Regents, the Commissioner — and how can that process be changed to better reflect the public will?

What mechanisms are in place to check the power of and hold accountable private foundations and corporate interests involved in educational decision-making in New York State, including the Regents' Fellows; what oversight of private foundation influence currently exists, and how does it operate?

Did New York State legislators or state officials evaluate the legality of the federal Race to the Top (RttT) and USDOE wavier programs prior to signing on to state applications for RttT grants and NCLB waivers? What was the nature and scope of any review

and to whom was it reported?

What action should be taken should it be found that such policies violate state or federal law, especially with respect to violations of the legal standing of Local Educational Authorities in New York State?

What resources will be provided by the state to communities to empower them to broaden the public discussion about public education and what mechanisms will be developed to further involve parents, -educators and members of the local community in ensuring that they are no longer excluded from decision making about their public schools.

If parents, educators and their communities were involved from the beginning in determining what was needed for public schools, would we be in the current situation? Would we see developmentally inappropriate standards, narrow, unreliable and invalid tests for students and teachers, violations of privacy rights and the overall cheapening of public education? I doubt it.

The point is this: its not about the standards, its about who controls them, who makes them, who enforces them. Fights over standards are really fights over who decides. That is the question any moratorium worthy of the public interest must consider. Because if the Core is defeated, yet the public remains excluded, you can bet Bill Gate's tax exceptions another hair brained reform will soon follow in its wake.

PRIVATE INTERESTS AIMING TO IMPOSE CORE

Cuomo's Common Core Panel Forced to Acknowledge Public's Opposition

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo's appointed body to examine the Common Core, known as the Common Core Implementation Panel, held its first meeting February 19. It was forced to acknowledge that to succeed in moving forward with the Common Core, it was necessary to gain the support of parents and the public in general, who have repeatedly expressed firm opposition. Panel members and the "experts" giving testimony also made clear that concerns expressed by many about the panel — that it is a means by the state and private interests to further promote the Common Core and convince the public of its validity, rather than address the main problems raised by the public — are valid. Panel members and the "experts" generally said the Common Core was positive and what was needed was to improve "communication" with parents and teachers.

The chair of Cuomo's panel, Stanley Litow, is an IBM executive and former deputy chancellor of New York City schools. He led the meeting. Litow, expressing the effort by private interests like IBM to take over public institutions, emphasized that the state education department (NYSED) should work with other government leaders as well as the private sector to improve communication.

"There are things that public systems do well, and sometimes they need help from outsiders," Litow said. He said NYSED needs "help from others —from government, from the private sector, from civic groups. I think everybody needs to get behind"

Common Core.

Michael Cohen, president of Achieve Inc., was one of the "experts" who spoke to the panel. Achieve is a "non-profit" backed by the monopolies, including Alcoa Foundation, AT&T Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the GE Foundation, Boeing, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Chevron, DuPont, IBM, JP Morgan Chase, Microsoft and Prudential. It was directly involved in writing the Common Core. Speaking to the problem of public opposition and referring to efforts in other states, he too said it was necessary not to "rely simply on the state education department." He added, "In Arizona, there is a group ... that's organized by the governor that actually meets on a regular basis to figure out how to get positive messages out to people on the Common Core."

Timothy Kremer, executive director of the New York State School Boards Association, echoed the view that the problem is supposedly with parents, not the Common Core. He said it was "refreshing" to participate in a positive discussion about the Common Core standards. He added, "I believe personally that many of the people who live in these communities have been misled." He admitted that those opposing the Common Core "have won the battle in the court of public opinion." Instead of submitting to the stand of the public that the Common Core is harmful, anti-education and anti-democratic, the panel is proceeding with trying to find ways to dismiss this verdict.

Cuomo's panel includes 11 members and is known to be stacked in support of the Common Core by people backed by the monopolies. In addition to Litow, for example, there is Linda Darling-Hammond of Stanford University's Graduate School of Education. She is part of the "Governing Body" of the "Alliance for Excellent Education." Like Achieve, it is backed by the AT&T Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, GE Foundation, Intel Foundation, MetLife Foundation and others. She also was part of Common Core's Validation Committee, which served to endorse and promote Common Core.

There is Dan Weisberg, Executive Vice-President & General Counsel, The New Teacher Project, which received \$7,000,000 from the Gates Foundation in 2009 (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/How-We-Work/Quick-Links/Grants-Database/Grants/2009/07/OPPCR053>).

Charles Russo, Superintendent, East Moriches UFSD (Long Island) is one of the few Superintendents statewide on record in favor of Common Core (<http://bit.ly/1ea6wHP>). He was rightly booed by parents and teachers at a public forum (<http://bit.ly/1ea6wHP>). Anne Kress is President of Monroe Community College. It has received funding from and is part of the "Gateway to College Network." The program is in part funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Gates Foundation has spent more than \$1.5 billion to get the Common Core imposed and to put in place the infrastructure necessary for this. Cuomo's panel is designed to ensure the effort by the private monopolies to take over public institutions, and their public dollars, goes forward.

Bill Gates Wants You to Believe His Lies About Common Core

Jason Endacott, EduSanity Blog, February 18, 2014

The other day one of my colleagues gave me a hard time about referring to Bill Gates as a "shyster." Fortunately, only a couple of days after I wrote that post, Mr. Gates has presented me with a perfect opportunity to demonstrate why I believe he deserves the "shyster" label. Gates recently wrote an op-ed piece for *USA Today* in which he "dispels" three common myths about the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Here I take a look at Gates' arguments and explain why they are lies of omission. [Statements by Gates in quotes]

Gates Myth #1: "Common Core was created without involving parents, teachers or state and local governments."

"In fact, the standards were sponsored by organizations made up of governors and school officials. The major teacher unions and 48 states sent teams, including teachers, to participate. The Gates Foundation helped fund this process because we believe that stronger standards will help more students live up to their potential. More than 10,000 members of the general public commented on the standards during drafting. Each of the 45 states that have adopted them used the same process used to adopt previous standards."

What Gates Conveniently Left Out:

While the initiative originated with the National Governors Association, a ridiculous amount of private money was used to create and influence the adoption of CCSS, especially funds originating from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Gates Foundation granted millions of dollars to the American Federation of Teachers and the national Parent Teacher Association, two groups that would have been the most likely opponents of national standards. The largest recipients of Gates' money were the organizations primarily involved in the creation of the CCSS, including Achieve, Inc., The Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. Simply put, these monies amount to little more than bribes for buying into the new standards.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration's education policies for *Race to the Top* (RTTT) monies and *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB)

waivers left states without a REAL choice when it came to adopting CCSS. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and the federal government limited eligibility for RTTT awards and NCLB waivers to states that adopted a common set of "college and career ready standards." In other words, if states wanted to avoid the penalties of NCLB and keep the federal pipeline of education dollars flowing they had no choice but to adopt the CCSS or create their own "college and career ready" standards.

What Mr. Gates won't tell you about the process of creating the CCSS is that the two primary writing teams for the standards included only 25 members, a pathetically small number of people for a task of this magnitude. Even worse, membership in the working groups included six test-makers from the College Board, five from test publisher ACT, and four from Achieve Inc., but did not include any classroom teachers. Teachers were allowed to "provide feedback" on the draft of the standards. 10,000 responses did indeed flow in, and the CCSS authors somehow managed to read and give thorough attention to all of them in the TWO MONTHS between draft and final copy. Right.

The CCSS did not undergo extensive field-testing or validation, and in some cases the CCSS are actually inferior to the existing state standards they replaced. In fact some state education officials were actually urged to adopt the CCSS before they had even been written.

That's not exactly "the same process used to adopt previous standards."

Gates Myth #2: "Common Core State Standards means students will have to take even more high-stakes tests."

"Common Core won't necessarily add to the number of annual state tests students take. States will introduce new math and language arts tests based on the standards to replace tests they give now. Most states are taking a cautious approach to implementing the new tests, giving teachers and students time to adapt before scores lead to serious consequences. What's more, unlike some of today's tests, the new tests will help teachers and students improve by providing

an ongoing diagnosis of whether students are mastering what they need to know for success after graduation.”

What Mr. Gates Conveniently Left Out:

The PARCC and Smarter Balance tests do not actually exist yet. They are being created and tested on kids while states continue to have students take the existing state tests. Heaven forbid we have a year without a standardized test.

There may not be an increase in the number of federally mandated standardized tests students take, but there is no question that the overall number of tests students take is increasing at a dizzying pace. In order to prepare students for the tests that don't exist, schools have been ramping up their test preparation with – you guessed it – more tests. The same testing companies that benefit from the creation of the CCSS are selling school districts any number of CCSS “pre-tests” designed to give these anxious school officials an idea of how their students will perform on the “test to be created later.” As if that is not enough, school districts are also creating an avalanche of new “benchmark exams” that they give across the school district – sometimes on a weekly basis. If you doubt it, call or email your child's teacher today and ask them about “benchmark” tests.

As for Mr. Gates' claim that these new tests will prepare students for what they “need to know for success after graduation” – you have to keep in mind that this magical body of knowledge is only what Gates and his corporate cronies BELIEVE students should be able to know after graduation. In fact, the CCSS do not actually place any premium on knowledge at all. The CCSS are a skill/aptitude set of standards, and it is entirely possible to master tasks under the CCSS without learning a bit of knowledge. [...] The bottom line is that the CCSS and its tests are only based on the “knowledge students need for the world after graduation” because rich white guys tell you they are. Of course, they have pretty much been running things for a while, so maybe they are right.

Gates Myth #3: “Common Core standards will limit teachers' creativity and flexibility.

“These are standards, just like the ones schools have always had; they are not a curriculum. They are a blueprint of what students need to know, but they have nothing to say about how teachers teach that information. It's still up to local educators to select the curriculum.

“In fact, the standards will give teachers more choices. When every state had its own standards, innovators making new educational software or cutting-edge lesson plans had to make many versions to reach all students. Now, consistent standards will allow more competition and innovation to help teachers do their best work.”

What Mr. Gates Conveniently Left Out:

This one is almost laughable. I will not bore you with the

details of the differences between standards and curriculum, but here Gates is either lying or is just plain ignorant. In this case, it really could be the latter. Even if the CCSS were not intended to be a written curriculum for schools that is exactly what is happening in classrooms all across the country. It is really simple to understand. The tests I mentioned earlier will be the measure by which the government hands out “serious consequences” (Bill's words, not mine) for failure. Schools and teachers will be judged primarily on the basis of their success or failure on these tests. The tests are based directly on the Common Core State Standards.

So, the rational individual says to themselves, “Well if that is the case, and if I want to feed my family next year, then I better make sure that my teaching prepares students to take these tests.” And that is exactly what is happening. Teachers read the standards and make lesson plans directly from them. In other places, school districts get together to create lessons from the standards and force every teacher in the district to teach them verbatim. When these things happen then the national standards are very much a national curriculum.

As to the innovation Mr. Gates is talking about? Please. With a proverbial gun at their heads to have high test scores no matter what, schools and teachers are not looking for innovation, they are looking for safety. Nothing is safer in a climate of high stakes accountability than doing EXACTLY what somebody in power tells you. Lessons are being scripted for teachers all across the country by companies selling packaged CCSS units and some school administrators are actually punishing teachers for deviating from scripted lessons. This is hardly “innovation.”

As one teacher who took part in our recent research study put it, “I feel as though I am simply a placeholder. My individual worth and creativity has no value in this climate of ‘teach-by-numbers.’”

Think about it for a minute. It makes sense. If somebody tells you that your job is on the line, you are going to make sure that you do exactly what you are supposed to do in order to survive. If you are in competition with your peers (such as being compared to other schools and teachers) then why would you actually want to HELP them? If anything, this atmosphere stifles innovation. The irony is that you would think that Gates would know this since his former empire Microsoft actually abandoned his system of accountability because it inhibited innovation and teamwork. [...]

Bill Gates may be a lying shyster, or maybe he is just ignorant. Either way, he's hardly qualified to tell you or me anything about teaching and learning.

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Common Core: Same Exclusion, Different Century

Wayne Au, Cloaking Inequity

For well over 100 years educational leaders in the field of curriculum have gathered to try and figure out what children in the U.S. ought to be learning. In 1893, for instance, the Committee of Ten published its report on the organization of secondary education in the U.S. In 1895 the Committee of Fifteen was similarly formed to organize the elementary level curriculum. There was also the 1913-1918 Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, as well as the 1931 Committee on the Relation of School and College, the 1934 Commission on the Social Studies in the Schools, and the 1945 Commission on the English Curriculum. Indeed, readers might recall the National Commission on Excellence in Education and their 1983 report, *A Nation At Risk*, which kicked off the modern era of high-stakes, standardized testing. The United States simply has a long history of relatively small groups of people influencing the direction and tenor of education policy and curriculum nationally.

Over the last few years my friend and colleague Anthony Brown (University of Texas, Austin) and I have been looking at who was included and who was excluded in the early history of curriculum development in the United States. In surveying the decades around the turn of the 20th century we saw a clear pattern: There were numerous “official” conversations about the curriculum in the United States, but the only conversations that were being heard, discussed, and acknowledged in education policy circles consisted mainly of white men hailing from universities and other official educational institutions like the National Education Association or governmental agencies, with the occasional mention of Jane Addams, Carter G. Woodson, or W.E.B. DuBois included for token diversity.

As scholars of color who teach and research about curriculum studies as well as educational history and policy, Anthony and I (who are African American and Asian American, respectively) were particularly struck by the absences within this master historical narrative of curriculum development in the United States. Where was the African American Community in these conversations about what to teach children in the United States during this time? What were Asian American immigrants saying about the education of their children? How come the explicit and purposeful role of curriculum and boarding schools to colonize and Christianize Native Americans during this era was rarely mentioned? How were Mexican Americans struggling against the educational racism and advocating for a meaningful education for their children?

Historically speaking, communities of color, all of whom have been affected greatly by curriculum policy in the United States, were ignored and even colonized by these selective curriculum committees. Communities of color simply were not allowed to participate by these very undemocratic, highly exclusionary, select groups of curriculum developers.

So when I look at the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and how they came to be, I can only see them within this historical context. The original CCSS workgroups on the Mathematics and

English-Language Arts standards consisted of 24 people who worked through a secret process to develop the standards, and who were the final and only decision-makers for the standards. On the surface this looks to me like a Committee of Twenty-Four similar to those formed over the last 100-plus years, especially when we consider who was included and who was excluded from the final decision making body of the CCSS. Outside of two professors, the CCSS Committee of Twenty Four consisted almost entirely of employees and

consultants connected to educational corporations Achieve, Inc., ACT Inc., The College Board, Student Achievement Partners, and America’s Choice (a Pearson affiliate).

Noticeably absent from the CCSS Committee of Twenty Four are practicing, in-the-classroom, professionally educated teachers. Also absent from the committee are individuals formally representing organizations of parents, students, and communities (you know, the actual stakeholders). Even if we generously consider the larger list of 142 people either developing or giving feedback on the CCSS, there were only a handful of practicing teachers and a retired teacher, with the rest consisting mainly of district level administrators, more corporate consultants and employees, and more university professors. Regardless of how we look at it, no practicing teachers held decision-making power, and there still was no formal and purposeful engagement with parents and communities.

Further, while I will not attempt to guess the racial identity of the CCSS Committee of Twenty-Four (or the larger list of 142), the lack of community engagement in this process coupled with the fact of the CCSS being a top-down reform effort, tells me that communities of color were systematically excluded as well. The CCSS Committee of Twenty-Four looks to me like just another in the long history of small committees gathering together to develop recommendations about the shape, structure, and content of curriculum in the United States. And, like those committees that came before, it seems that communities of color specifically, along with teachers, parents, and students generally, still do not really matter when it comes to official decisions about what our children should know and be able to do in this world.



COMMON CORE AND INBLOOM DATA COLLECTION

It is a Question of Control

As the movement against the Common Core has developed, many people are recognizing the role being played by private interests, like Bill Gates and Microsoft and Pearson. There is money to be made by grabbing up public funds. This in part explains why Gates has pumped more than \$1.5 billion into getting Common Core adopted across the country. Pearson is the main monopoly controlling the tests themselves, including keeping the tests and their results secret while securing multi-million dollar contracts for schools to use them. Rupert Murdoch, CEO of News Corp., which owns Wireless Generation, which is involved in profiting from the testing and data collection said “When it comes to K-12 education we see a \$500 billion sector in the U.S. alone.” Chicago Public Schools is one of their contracts. Increasingly, the “business model” of education, where public funds are seen as a source of profits is being recognized. The numerous comments and examples from parents and teachers are also showing that this business model — that turns students into products to be utilized by the private interests and the tests serve to see if the teachers, as product managers, meet the specifications demanded — is being rightly being rejected.

Why the crazy test questions?

What is perhaps not as well recognized is the role of the Common Core as a mechanism of the rich for humiliation and control of students, parents, teachers and staff alike. It is this aim of control by the monopolies that explains a number of things that otherwise appear nonsensical. Test questions concerning math, for example, are being widely questioned. In one, a person has change in her pocket. She spends varying amounts at various places. The student is then asked, “In the end she has 1/45 left; how much money does she have?” Who calculates change in 45ths?! It is a question designed to confuse and humiliate. Indeed, two mathematicians who were asked to validate the Common Core math standards refused, calling them harmful and anti-mathematical.

Why the Atmosphere of Punishment?

Similarly, parents in many areas are contending with efforts to punish those resisting by forcing the children refusing the tests to “sit and stare” for hours during the entire test or portions of it. In general, in order to be counted as refusing the tests, it is necessary for students to go to school that day and sit down in class and then refuse the test. The “sit and stare” policy is thus a means to take revenge on those who refuse and discourage parents and students, especially those of elementary age, from doing so. This widespread effort to punish actions that should be applauded — standing up for rights — is another feature of the character of the Common Core as a mechanism of control. It is part of forcing people on a mass scale to engage in activity they know is wrong and that they oppose. It is a means to force people to compromise their conscience, a very anti-human thing to do — and thus to humiliate and weaken the resolve to fight back. In a situation where rights are broadly

under attack and the rich have no alternatives but increased war and repression, this ability to control is a necessity for them. It also makes the resistance that much more significant and necessary.

Governance that Excludes the Public

Consistent with its content to control is the governing mechanisms being put in place, as school boards and other local governance is removed. The Common Core is primarily being imposed by executives at the federal and state levels, the president, governors, education secretaries, etc. The new governing mechanisms, like PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers), are not public governing bodies. They are not elected and are not accountable to the public. They also involve a number of states acting in concert, which means individual state-level public governance of education is also being eliminated. Every effort is being made to remove the public from their legitimate role in public education and put all control in the hands of the monopolies and non-elected bodies they directly control, like PARCC.

Data Collection Part of Infrastructure for Control

In addition, the massive data collection being demanded by inBloom is part of the infrastructure necessary to force the youth, especially, to submit to these reactionary efforts to wreck public education and turn schools into factories producing docile and largely uneducated workers and soldiers for aggressive U.S. wars. This infrastructure is far more than an attack on privacy. It is a major effort to put a huge databank into the hands of the most powerful monopolies to utilize to serve their private interests.

InBloom involves a database of 400 distinct pieces of data for each student (called data points), with tracking planned from pre-K through graduate school (P-20). In addition to grades, test scores, race, religion and health, including any disabilities, it also includes such things as disciplinary records, absenteeism, tardiness, interests, such as politics, or music or sports, and so forth. All of it is being done without parental consent. Local school districts are being required to put the infrastructure in place for collection of the information and then turn it over to the state, which in turn gives it to inBloom. At present New York State is the only one handing over the information but the plan is an integral part of Common Core and thus is expected to be put in place over time.

Given the punishments given to the students who refuse the tests — no doubt something also included — one can certainly imagine that this infrastructure will be utilized to track people for school, jobs, the military and prisons. The broad movement developing to reject the Common Core and its testing and teacher assessment regime is thus a critical part of the fight today to block these backward, anti-human plans of the monopolies and advance instead the demand for a new direction for education and for political affairs more broadly. It is to advance the alternative for a society with a modern democracy, where rights are at the center and the people themselves decide.

Buffalo Teachers Federation Opposes Data Collection by inBloom

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) currently has a contract with inBloom, which is controlled by private monopolies like Microsoft. The contract requires local school districts, without the consent of those involved, to hand over private information of students and teachers to NYSED, which in turn hands it over to inBloom. This Big Data collection and mining is part of the infrastructure being put in place to control students and give private monopolies greater decision-making power over the content and character of public education. Taking their stand against this attack the Buffalo Teachers Federation (BTF) Council of Delegates February 13 meeting unanimously passed the following resolution calling for termination of the contract with inBloom.

* * *

Buffalo Teachers Federation Resolution on inBloom

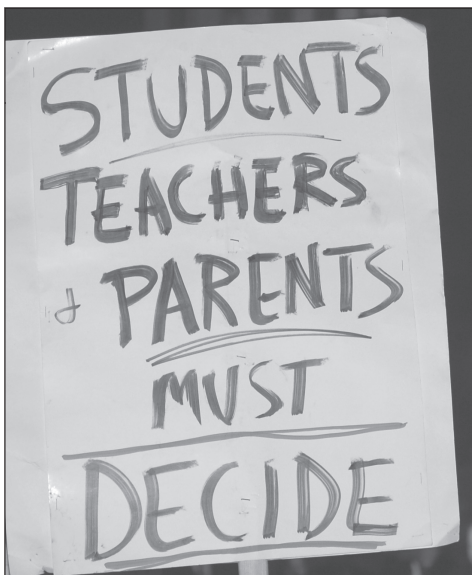
WHEREAS: Public Schools need to be stewards and guardians of our children's personal information and protect the privacy rights of the educators who work in public schools; and

WHEREAS: New York's Race to the Top application committed the state to use a longitudinal data ("Big Data") system which would, according to their proposal, eventually become a P-20 database — tracking students from pre-K well into and beyond their college years. Educational records would be linked to workforce data, all to be held by inBloom in a cloud and;

WHEREAS: A March 3, 2013 a Reuters news article revealed that for-profit education technology companies with access to the inBloom database will use the data to "identify struggling teachers and pinpoint which concepts their students are failing to master," and;

WHEREAS: The inBloom project is based on the idea of "learner analytics" (or the application of "business analytics to education") which utilizes "Big Data" (such as that to be stored by inBloom) to create "learning profiles" of students, where computer algorithms — and not professional educators — use the profiles to make decisions for both teachers and students (e.g., homework assignments, the proper rate of instruction, computerized assessments, including of essays, frames goals for students, discerns student interests), and;

WHEREAS: On, August 25, 2011, New York Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli rejected a no bid contract (to build a longitudinal database) with Wireless Generation because of significant ongoing investigations regarding data compromises involving Wireless Generation's parent company News Corporation and;



WHEREAS: December 13, 2011, the New York Board of Regents approved a NYSED plan to construct a longitudinal database and share student data with the Shared Learning Collaborative, LLC (later to become inBloom) with an operating system built by Wireless Generation — a contract that bypassed the State Comptroller because no funds initially changed hands and;

WHEREAS: The details of NYSED's contract with inBloom have never been made public and;

WHEREAS: As is the case with the Common Core Standards, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has financed the creation of inBloom, with \$100,000,000 and;

WHEREAS: There are real questions as to who will pay for inBloom after its "free trial" expires in 2015 when inBloom will begin charging financially strapped local districts three to five dollars per student to access the very same data that schools sent to NYSED; and now that New York is the only state involved, the economy of scale is lost and likely to increase costs for local cash strapped districts, and

WHEREAS: inBloom aims to collect 400 different kinds of individually identifiable data points about students, including a child's religious affiliation, eye color, address of residence, disciplinary records, whether a child walks or rides a bus to school, his or her ELL (English Language Learner) status, if they have a disability, and if so, what kind, any disciplinary records, psychological characteristics, along with test scores, just to name a few, all to be stored in a cloud controlled by Amazon, and;

WHEREAS: Teacher effectiveness ratings, often based on invalid exams administered to students without proper resources aligned to the Common Core, can be included as longitudinal data and;

WHEREAS: By aggregating massive amounts of data and storing it in a Cloud, inBloom could be an attractive target for hackers. Target, Yahoo, Living Social are just a few high profile companies whose recent data breaches have harmed millions and;

WHEREAS: Educationally relevant data has been collected and used on the local level for decades. We recognize the value of and support reasonable and educationally sound data collection and use. But data collection and use should be transparent, remain locally administered, and respect the privacy rights of students and families, and;

WHEREAS: Groups such as the Partnership for Smarter Schools, Class Size Matters, Alliance for Quality Education, New York Disability Alliance, The Coalition for Educational Justice, New York State Allies for Public Education (NYSAPe), United

Federation of Teachers (UFT), along with Superintendents, and Boards of Education from across the Empire State have all questioned the need for and pointed to the inherent risks of a mass storage of sensitive personally identifiable student information in a Cloud controlled by Amazon and;

WHEREAS: More than 160 School Districts, roughly one fourth of the original 700 New York Districts to accept Race to the Top (RttT) funds, have pulled out of the RttT initiative hoping that doing so will allow them to protect student privacy from inBloom and yet NYSED is still turning over these districts' student data to inBloom and;

WHEREAS: Nine states (Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Louisiana and New York) had originally partnered with inBloom two years ago. As of today, all of these states except New York have since withdrawn, placed plans on hold or made participation optional and;

WHEREAS: On December 19, 2013 New York Assembly leader Sheldon Silver and Education Committee Chair Catherine Nolan wrote the following to Commissioner John King, "Until we are confident that this information can remain protected, the plan to share student data with inBloom must be put on hold." And;

WHEREAS: Earlier this week, the New York Supreme Court dismissed a lawsuit filed by twelve New York City parents and guardians to prevent the city's education department from using inBloom to store student data.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED IN UNITY: That the Buffalo teachers Federation (BTF) call for, and support other groups calling for, the State to not just delay — but to terminate its Contract with inBloom and call for data collection to be returned to the local level and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the BTF will continue fighting for laws, namely A.6059A, passed unanimously by the Assembly last session and now introduced in Senate S.5932, that would put strict limits on the state's ability to share any personal information with third parties, and would prohibit any vendor from re-disclosing such information to third parties without parental consent and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the BTF requests our state and national affiliates to support the termination of NYSED's contract with inBloom by sending a copy of this resolution to their respective offices, and to the news media, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That copies of this resolution be sent to Buffalo Teachers via e-mail.

Hands Off Venezuela from p.1

Venezuela as they strive to decide their own affairs. It is their right to decide and the U.S. must end all interference. The people of the U.S. want relations of mutual respect and benefit, not those of militarism and empire.

We support the recent measures taken by the government of Venezuela to maintain the peace, including the expulsion of three U.S. diplomats for their role in fomenting the violence. President Obama, speaking at the recent North American Leaders' Summit in Mexico, responded to this just action by saying, "Venezuela, rather than trying to distract from its own failings by making up false accusations against diplomats from the United States, the government ought to focus on addressing the legitimate grievances of the Venezuelan people."

In a statement, Venezuelan President Maduro stressed that what sovereign governments worldwide are expecting from Obama is an explanation of why the White House finances, encourages and defends opposition forces that promote violence in Venezuela. He added that U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary Alex Lee has no right to condition or threaten the Venezuelan government because of its decision to prosecute those responsible for the recent violent acts. Maduro condemned Obama's statements, made in Mexico, saying the fact that Obama keeps attacking a free and sovereign country in Latin America is an offence to the heroic land of the Aztecs, Villa and Zapata, and the noble Mexican people.

He added that the Venezuelan government will continue to monitor and take all necessary actions to prevent U.S. agents from spreading violence and destabilization, and keep the world informed of President Obama's interventionist policy against Venezuela.

The U.S., with its spying and drone warfare, has shown that it will continue its brutal aggression and interference. The peoples of the region know this interference well, as they have opposed the many coups attempts and military intervention of various kinds. This includes the U.S. imposing brutal dictators like Pinochet in Chile and U.S. funding and fomenting of drug wars in Colombia and Mexico so as to justify sending in U.S. troops and police agencies like the FBI and DEA.

The continued efforts today are aimed at achieving U.S. world empire and integrating all of the Americas into the U.S. war machine. Targeting Venezuela is also specifically aimed at undermining the efforts of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to develop their own united regional bodies that defend their interests, like the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA, for its Spanish name, Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América), and UNASUR (Union of South American Nations). The U.S. seeks to maintain control of the natural resources and territory of the region and to ensure that the peoples are not able to affirm their right to decide the direction of their societies free from coercion, blackmail, *coup d'états* and state terror.

Voice of Revolution denounces all these attempts to destabilize Venezuela and to block the peoples of all the Americas, those of the U.S. included, from developing friendly and fraternal relations of mutual respect and benefit. We stand with the peoples in demanding that the U.S. end all interference and bring all troops and police agencies home. We salute the efforts of the people and government of Venezuela in pursuing their own path and contributing to the unity and progress of the peoples of the Americas.

One No, Many Yeses in Venezuela

Rebel Diaz, February 21, 2014

We've read with concern the vaguely humanitarian and dangerously 'impartial' opinion pieces by the likes of prominent musicians who, although honest in their emotional responses, fail to accurately assess the social and geopolitical realities happening today in Venezuela.

We all can agree that U.S. foreign policy towards Venezuela since 1999 has been economic sabotage and attempts at regime change in order to protect vested oil interests. We also can agree that the corporate media distorts the reality on the ground in Venezuela to manipulate public opinion towards the interests of US multinationals and their cronies in the Venezuelan oligarch. Facts only.

From here we can begin to understand the nature of the protests in Venezuela.

We recently returned from Chile, where a student protest movement eight years strong has raised important questions about the fundamental human right of high quality, accessible public education. So imagine our surprise when we read about these 'student' protests occurring in Venezuela, a country where the constitution enshrines the right to free K-College public education. So, if not the question of access to education, what are their concerns exactly?

We've heard of the shortages in toothpaste and toilet paper but this is hardly the Toiletry Revolution. There is also the supposed concern about public safety but it seems counterintuitive to organize violent flash mob protests for safer streets. CNN and Univision paint the picture that there is massive opposition to the Bolivarian Revolution, despite the fact that it has won over 16 internationally-recognized local and national elections since 1999. Moreover, despite the claims of silenced dissent, the majority of press in Venezuela is in the hands of private media companies that operate with open hostilities and lies to destabilize the social fabric. So who is this 'opposition' really and why have they mobilized all of their disinformation channels now?

The protests began surfacing on February 12th of this year. On February 10th, The Law for the Control of Fare Costs, Prices, and Profits went into regulation. This law puts a cap on grotesque profit margins to ensure companies doing business in Venezuela are not simply pimping the resources of the national economy at the expense of its people. It seeks to address the economic warfare being waged by multinational corporations, who are hoarding goods to create artificial shortages, raise consumer prices, and foment social unrest. The law seeks to avoid what occurred in Chile during the presidency of Salvador Allende, where the CIA, and

the US/Chilean oligarchy initially attempted to instigate a 'soft coup' by hoarding warehouses full of everyday necessities like rice, cooking oil, and flour in order to fabricate popular discontent. We need only to look back at this history and other imperial US interventions in Latin America to know that when the power of the global elite is threatened, as is happening in Venezuela today,



the empire will respond with unmitigated violence, manipulation, and deceit in order to protect their profits.

Since receiving Hugo Chavez here in the South Bronx in 2005, we have been inspired to create safe, liberated cultural spaces for young people in the poorest congressional district of the United States through the RDACBX. Recently, we held a concert to commemorate the 20 years of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, where the indigenous community has waged a 3 decades-long struggle to protect their land and culture from the same tentacles of predatory multinational 'development' companies that threaten Venezuela today; the same entities that spur gentrification and racist police brutality here in the South Bronx. Although different in context and process, our struggle for survival in the Bronx, the Zapatista uprising, and the Bolivarian Revolution face the same foe; a violently imposed socioeconomic model that threatens our very existence as a human race; a system that values profits over people and the planet. Perhaps we can all take a cue from the ancient wisdom of the Zapatista struggle; that of Leading by Following; For Everyone, Everything and for us, Nothing; and most importantly, One No, Many Yeses. A defiant, unequivocal, unified NO to imperial domination, and diverse, inclusive, participatory, creative, multiple YESES to the wants and needs of the people — to be determined by, and only by, the people.

Abajo el imperio!

No a la violencia y los golpistas!

Que viva el pueblo Venezolano!

G1 of Rebel Diaz

RDACBX

South Bronx 02/21/14

Venezuela Warns Against Attempts to Incite Foreign Intervention

Radio Havana Cuba, March 7, 2014

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro warned Thursday against attempts to incite foreign intervention in Venezuela, and pledged to solve the country's political unrest within the regional framework. Maduro said in a statement that Panamanian Foreign Minister Francisco Alvarez de Soto, and Panama's ambassador to the United States, Mario E. Jaramillo, were conspiring to bring about foreign intervention in Venezuela. And he accused Panama's right-wing government of lobbying for U.S. interference. His warning came a day after he announced Venezuela was breaking off diplomatic and trade ties with Panama, following Panama's request for an urgent meeting on Venezuela by the Organization of American States (OAS), a U.S.-dominated regional bloc.

Rebuking the Panamanian government as a "lackey" government, Maduro said earlier Wednesday the moves by the U.S. and Panama created the conditions for the Organization of American States (OAS) and other bodies to move towards intervention.

Maintaining that the right-wing protests were being fueled by the U.S. in an attempt to topple the socialist government, Maduro said he would respond forcefully to any attempted

intervention.

During a meeting Thursday with his counterpart from Suriname, Desire Bouterse, Maduro also pledged to solve the political unrest within the regional framework of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), which groups 12 South American nations.

A special high-level UNASUR meeting will be held in the coming days to analyze the situation, Maduro and Bouterse jointly announced.

The special meeting aims "to lay out the circumstances and violent attacks by small groups that have tried to infringe on society and impose a political crisis in Venezuela," according to the joint statement. According to reports, the leaders of UNASUR member countries were discussing the exact date of the meeting.

[The current UNASUR countries include: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela. Mexico and Panama have observer status — *VOR* ed. note]

Venezuelans March Against Violence and Fascism

Caracas, February 15, 2014

On February 15, Venezuelans held a march in the capital Caracas to reject the recent wave of violence and destabilization attempts against the constitutional government by certain sections of the political opposition.

Announcing the action on February 14, President Nicolas Maduro said, "This Saturday, all the people of Caracas will mobilize against fascism, violence and destabilization. We'll take to the streets to demonstrate that what we want is peace, coexistence, democracy and socialism." President Maduro urged Venezuelans to be attentive to the Plan for Peace and Coexistence launched that day as part of efforts to make Venezuela a peaceful territory.

"We are facing a developing *coup d'etat* in Venezuela and the

Bolivarian Revolution is going to triumph through the constitution, its laws and there will be peace in Venezuela," Maduro said on February 13.

Opposition Leader Arrested

On February 18, opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez was arrested on murder and terrorism charges linked to the February 12 protests that resulted in the deaths of three people. Lopez is accused of sowing violence to try to clear the path for a coup similar to the one 12 years ago that briefly ousted late Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez. Lopez was amongst those involved in the 2002 coup against Chávez.

Venezuela Repudiates U.S. Interference

Since the beginning of the opposition's attempts to stage a coup, backed and funded by the U.S., Venezuela has pointed out the U.S. role in fomenting the unrest and violence. On February 20 the Venezuelan government reiterated this position in response to U.S. President Barack Obama's declarations on the political turmoil, rejecting his remarks as "offensive interference" in its domestic affairs.

Obama, in Mexico at the North American Leaders' Summit on February 19, addressed the ongoing violent anti-government demonstrations in Venezuela, accusing the government of using the protests as a "distraction" from the country's economic situation.

The Venezuelan government "emphatically repudiates the declarations made on Wednesday, February 19, by the president



Workers from the state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela march against violence and show their support for the government of President Nicolás Maduro, Caracas, Venezuela, February 2014.

of the United States, Barack Obama, to the extent that they constitute a new and offensive interference in the internal affairs of our country,” said a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Those declarations were additionally “based on false information and baseless contentions,” the statement added.

The U.S. government should also clarify “by what right Deputy Assistant Secretary [of State] Alex Lee relayed a message from his government, in which it tries to condition and threaten the Venezuelan government for its decision to prosecute those responsible for acts of violence in recent days,” it said.

“The Venezuelan government reaffirms it will continue to monitor and take the steps necessary to impede U.S. agents seeking to sow violence and instability, and to inform the world about the nature of the interventionist policy of the Obama administration in our country,” said the statement.

Earlier last week, on February 17, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elías Jaua ratified the expulsion of three U.S. officials for their interference in Venezuela’s internal affairs in relation to the recent attempt to instigate a coup.

The government declared Vice Consuls Mary Machusquer and Elsen Gordon, and the Second Secretary of the U.S. Embassy Clark Christopher Lee persona non grata and gave them 48 hours to leave the country, Jaua told a press conference at the Foreign Ministry headquarters.

Jaua said these officials took an active part in the organization of the groups trying to generate violence and instability in Venezuela. He added that the State has the responsibility to guarantee the safety of the population and the government has the right to take this type of decision.

Jaua described U.S. actions as a classic scheme to justify intervention: violence is used, the State is forced to act and then comes criminalization, specially by the U.S. government, which supports and funds these fascist groups.

The Foreign Minister expressed his appreciation for the expressions of solidarity from 20 nations, 156 political parties

and social movements, and the bodies of regional integration the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR).

In related news, on February 21, Venezuela revoked the accreditation of CNN’s Caracas-based reporter, Osmar Hernández, and those of two other CNN journalists sent to Venezuela based on what it deemed hostile coverage. “I won’t accept war propaganda against Venezuela. If they don’t rectify themselves, out of Venezuela,” said President Maduro earlier in the week. CNN, amongst others, has been circulating fake photos of the protests, said to be from Venezuela, but in reality from protests elsewhere in the world.

Later that day, President Maduro invited President Obama to take part in talks, on equal terms, to resolve the problems between the two countries.

Plots Against Oil Sector Denounced

On February 21, Venezuelan authorities warned plans aimed at attacking the national energy sector. Rafael Ramírez, urged the people to be on alert because “there is information that fascist gangs plan to attack oil service and transport stations.” He said, “The fascist gangs, in their frantic violence, do not care about affecting citizens. We will take all measures to preserve peace.”

The state-run oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) is on alert, while the National Bolivarian Guard (GNB) are on duty, said Ramírez, who added that it is prepared to cut off oil and gas supplies in areas under fascist siege should public safety be endangered.

On February 18, thousands of PDVSA workers marched in support of the Bolivarian Revolution, President Maduro and the Constitution. This show of support is important as wealth from Venezuela’s oil production supports the country’s many social programs. Previous opposition attempts to undermine the government involved instigating work slowdowns and sabotage in the oil sector.

210TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION

Salute the Haitian People and Their History Making Victory for Human Rights

January 1, 2014 marked the 210th anniversary of the Haitian Revolution. The Haitian Revolution was an earth-shattering development in the struggle for the emancipation of labor all over the world. It was the first to establish rights on a modern basis, namely that they belong to people by virtue of their being human, members of a body politic. The victory of the Haitian revolution in 1804 occurred at a time when slavery still existed in the U.S. and it deeply shook the U.S. rulers. From then until now, the U.S. has never forgiven the Haitians for rising up and affirming their rights as human beings. Great efforts have been made by the U.S. and France, a former colonial power, to block the realization of the aspirations of those courageous human beings who freed themselves from their condition of slavery and bondage.

Beginning in 1791, Haitians began to rise up and eventually overthrew both slavery and colonial rule. Haitian revolutionaries, led by Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, were able to fight off successive European powers, the French, Spanish and British, eventually establishing an independent republic in 1804. In an effort to crush this newly independent state, the French demanded that Haiti pay it reparations for its "losses." Haiti, which is the one due reparations for the crimes of slavery and colonization by the French, was instead forced to pay them, greatly harming its development as a nation.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, it is the U.S. that has acted to re-enslave Haiti. This included putting in place U.S. puppets that carried out the brutal repression and killings the U.S. demanded. These included the Duvaliers, both Papa Doc and Baby Doc as they

were known. Both were notorious for their brutality.

More recently the U.S. has been responsible for coups against the democratically elected government in Haiti. This February marks the 10-year anniversary of the 2004 coup against the President of Haiti Jean-Bertrand Aristide. This coup was orchestrated mainly by the U.S., together with France and Canada. It set the stage for the "death-squad democracy" that followed, used to carry out assassinations and other means to try and suppress the progressive forces in Haiti.

The consequences of this coup are evident in the present government of Michel Martelly, a consort of the much-hated Duvalier dictatorship. Martelly was chosen by the U.S. to be their point man for U.S. sweatshops and cruise ships and opening up Haiti for plunder by foreign monopolies. The crime of U.S. interference includes blocking the ability of the Haitian people to recover from the horrific devastation of the 2010 earthquake that flattened much of the housing and major buildings in the cities.

Voice of Revolution salutes the great accomplishments of the Haitian people on the occasion of the anniversary of their revolution. We salute the continued resistance by Haitians under very difficult circumstances and condemn all U.S. interference. The horrendous conditions imposed on Haiti by the U.S. and its puppets, and the crimes of attacking democratic advances made, such as with the coup against Aristide, show the racism and inhumanity of the U.S. state. We stand with the Haitian people in demanding *End All U.S. Interference Now!* We demand that the U.S. pay Haiti reparations and join with the Haitians in the fight to settle scores with U.S. imperialism once and for all!

TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF U.S. COUP AGAINST ARISTIDE

Government of Aristide An Important Achievement

The government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide represented an important achievement for the Haitian people. It was a government that had come to power through the mass movement of the people to exercise control over the country. As such, this government represented the aspirations of the Haitian people to put an end to corruption, impunity and violence, and the theft of Haiti's wealth by the country's ruling elite and foreign monopolies, especially the U.S., that brutally exploited the people.

In 2004, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was in his second term as president. His first term from 1991-1996 had been interrupted by a coup in 1991. He was returned to power in 1994 following massive protests of Haitians at home and abroad. However the Clinton administration demanded that he implement the neo-liberal economic program of the U.S.-backed candidate Aristide had defeated in 1990. Despite this concession, Aristide and the Haitian people's

aspiration for sovereign control over their affairs were still seen as a threat by the governments of the U.S. and France.

France, for its part as the former colonial power, had some particular interests it sought to protect through the coup. After the people of Saint Domingue heroically fought for and won their independence and became the nation of Haiti in 1804, France used gunboat diplomacy to force the young nation to pay for the loss of its slave labor and property. In order to comply with this blackmail, Haiti had to take out massive loans from none other than France and the U.S., a crushing debt that has impoverished the country to the present day.

In 2003, however, Haiti became the first former colony in the world to demand reparations from a former colonial power, demanding debt restitution. As journalist Kim Ives, in a May 10, 2013 item for *Haiti Liberté*, explains, "Then President Jean-Ber-

trand Aristide's government conservatively calculated the value of the restitution due at some \$21.7 billion. Although the French parliament had unanimously approved a law recognizing the slave trade as a crime against humanity in 2001, just two years later France responded to Haiti's petition with fury. It angrily rejected the lawsuit and joined with Washington in brazenly fomenting a coup d'état against Aristide, who was ousted on February 29,

2004." The U.S. forced Aristide onto a U.S. military plane and sent him into exile.

The Haitian people have continued their fight against imperialist interference from both the U.S. and France and are struggling under difficult conditions to rid their country of foreign oppression and further advance their fight for democracy. It is the Haitians who can lay claim to the banner of democracy and rights, not the U.S.

On the Significance of the Haitian Revolution in the Words of a Haitian American Writer

"The Haitian Revolution did in fact shake to the core many of the dearly held assumptions of the 18th century in regard to the universal applicability of the ideals of freedom, equality, and aspirations of all men, notwithstanding their racial differences. The French and American revolutions, and even the Church (just as it accommodated itself later to worldwide anti-semitism, segregation of blacks in the U.S. and apartheid policies in Rhodesia and South Africa) never dedicated themselves to the goals of eradicating slavery and promoting a universal set of human rights, with the necessary emphasis on the word 'universal.' The Haitian Revolution was the first movement of its kind to boldly challenge all assumptions of racial inferiority and buttress this challenge with sweeping military victories over the armies of the most powerful European nations of that time.

"This created a tremendous amount of fear in the U.S. and other parts of the world that Haiti's example would replicate and bring a swift end to their highly profitable plantation systems. From that fear grew the need to suppress Haiti from the news and from gatherings of the civilized world. Powerful economic interests, in concert with the prevailing racial ideology, dictated at that time that the independence of Haiti should not be recognized.

"Today, we recognize not that Haitians have been able to live independently for 200 years, as they have not, but that 200 years ago, our forefathers firmly established the ideals under which we should live and eventually die for. Today, Haitians are still engaged in the fight to make those dreams come true, not just for a small subset of privileged individuals, but for all Haitians — and by extension, all people in the world who are still denied their basic human rights. Should we not mark this date and celebrate those ideals, we would simply deny ourselves one of the exceptional opportunities that our concept of time provides to regroup and gather our strengths to continue the struggle on many fronts. For the Haitian peasant family which is still illiterate, malnourished and often in danger of starvation and untreated life-threatening illnesses, for the Haitian laborer working without adequate identity, citizenship, rights, and legal protection, we must celebrate the ideals of the Haitian Revolution and be mindful of the fact that 1804 has yet to concretize to their eyes in any meaningful way. Hence, 2004 is not an end in itself... it's only a renewal. [...]

"Countless freedom fighters and nationalist leaders have acknowledged that they were inspired by the Haitian Revolution, from the liberation wars of Latin America, to civil rights advocacy in the United States, and the anti-colonialist and anti-apartheid

struggles on the African continent. So in many lands, the Haitian Revolution became synonymous with freedom of the oppressed. Indeed many of those struggles were successful in their execution, as many new nations emerged, following the examples of Haiti and one should add, the United States. That the United States was a white nation that prospered and that Haiti was a black nation on the road to total impoverishment is also a fact that has not been lost on the world. The aftermath of the Revolution can be murky to the indiscriminating eye. What's the big deal, might one say. Hence the struggle continues to have the Haitian Revolution come true for every single Haitian. It is associated today to the struggle for economic rights and political freedom, literacy and health, education and democracy. Any ordinary citizen or government leader, who would exalt the virtues of the Haitian Revolution and not dedicate himself or herself to the concretization of its revolutionary ideals in today's Haiti and for the Haitian poor, is simply mouthing words without a good appreciation of their meaning. [...]

"I think that there are greater forces aligned today against the political freedom and economic rights of the Haitian people than there were even at the time of Toussaint Louverture and Dessalines. Those forces yesterday were naked in their exercise of strength and oppressive ideology. True, at that time, they were also married to a program of Christianization of slaves imported from Africa. But, all in all, it was easy for a slave to tell his friends from his enemies. Today, all internal and external enemies of the Haitian people like to present themselves as its great friends. They act in the name of Haitians, but not for their benefit. They create economic initiatives to rob the people further of their last possessions, while pontificating about the fiscal benefits of one set of economic policies as opposed to another. They sow discord and hate to keep the people divided. They promise everything to those who do not have, while in practice they only deliver more to those who have already. They champion democracy in words, while they marginalize the masses and deprive them of their right to vote and participate in decisions that will greatly affect their future. [...]

*Long Live the Haitian Revolution!
The people of Haiti have just begun to fight
for their place in the sun.*

(Haitian-American writer Guy S. Antoine, writing for the website Windows on Haiti, www.windowsonhaiti.com, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Haitian revolution in 2004.)

CRIMES IN THE NAME OF DEMOCRACY

No to U.S. Interference in Ukraine

Events in Ukraine continue to rapidly unfold, as a result of the direct and overt interference of the United States in the internal affairs of the Ukrainian people, along with that of the European Union (EU). The U.S. both instigated the *coup d'état* that took place February 21, moving to install their choice for president. The U.S. and is militarily, economically and politically now backing those it put in power — all in the name of democracy. It is colluding and contending with the EU for control, with the contention a main reason for the U.S. taking unilateral actions that are escalating the confrontation with Russia. This includes sending six more F-15 fighter jets to patrol the skies over Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, which all border Russia, north of Ukraine. This action more than doubles the presence of U.S. warplanes right on Russia's borders. Additional "training" flights with the Polish military — another means to put yet more U.S. planes in the area — were also scheduled. Warships are also in the area.

In addition, the U.S. is unilaterally imposing sanctions on Russia, which has moved troops into the Crimea region, where the Russian Naval base is located in Sevastopol. Russia has an agreement with Ukraine for having up to 25,000 troops in the area.

On March 6, Obama issued executive orders to block Russian officials from the U.S. and impose sanctions. In a statement, the White House said Obama is "pursuing and reviewing a wide range of options." Obama signed an executive order authorizing sanctions "on individuals and entities responsible for activities undermining democratic processes or institutions in Ukraine; threatening the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity of Ukraine; contributing to the misappropriation of state assets of Ukraine; or purporting to assert governmental authority over any part of Ukraine without authorization from the Ukrainian government in Kiev."

The White House called the order a "flexible tool" that would allow it to sanction those who are most directly involved in destabilizing Ukraine, including the military intervention in Crimea, "and does not preclude further steps should the situation deteriorate."

In this manner the U.S. is instigating civil war and its reckless arrogance could give rise to world war. It is giving itself the right to decide what does and does not threaten "the peace, security, stability, sovereignty, or territorial integrity of Ukraine," and what does and does not undermine "democratic processes." U.S. interference, warplanes, sanctions, all of which could give rise to world war, supposedly does not threaten the peace. A coup instigated by foreign powers against an elected government is called "democratic."

Further, the forces the U.S. is backing are known racists and fascists. This is evident in the platform of, for example, the openly neo-Nazi Svoboda party, which holds 50 seats in Ukraine's parliament and a main force the U.S. backs. It is also seen in the fact that Nazi swastika's, Confederate flags, KKK symbols, are all being used by these forces, including hanging such flags in the Kiev city hall.

The acts of violence by these myriad factions who the U.S. and monopoly media call "peaceful protestors," include kidnappings,



Confederate flags and fascist symbols go up in Kiev City Hall

torture and attacks on soldiers. The Ukraine health ministry has reported close to 100 deaths, with hundreds more injured.

While the U.S. has positioned its person in power, the situation is far from resolved. The Ukraine has been destabilized, with racist and fascists forces unleashed against the people. The U.S. and EU are now fomenting civil war and the elimination of the state of Ukraine in its present form, as was done against Yugoslavia. The U.S. is continuing to escalate the situation with Russia, something which also undermines security and stability in the region and worldwide.

As analyst Alexander Boytsov brought out, "American geostrategists want Ukraine to be destabilized. Their real intention is not to drag the country into the association with the European Union, but rather to prevent any kind of integration with the Eurasian Union. Americans are sure that in case they succeed all of Moscow's efforts aimed at integration in the post-Soviet space will automatically become doomed. There is no doubt that in playing the geopolitical games of such scope Washington's hawks will not be stopped by any death toll that may result from sparking a civil war in Ukraine."

U.S. interference is directly against the interests of the people of the Ukraine, who are perfectly capable of sorting out their own problems without foreign interference. It does not solve any problem but rather worsens conditions for the people, as U.S. interference in Iraq, Libya and Syria, for example, have shown. Anarchy, chaos and war are the results, not peace and stability.

Supporting racists and fascists can hardly be considered support for democracy — but it is completely consistent with the racist U.S. state, known for its brutality, mass incarceration and genocide against African Americans. That the U.S. is now again promoting KKK and Nazi forces only further reveals its own thoroughly racist and fascist nature. There is nothing democratic about it.

Voice of Revolution condemns U.S. interference and urges all to reject the U.S. crimes being carried out in the name of democracy. Standing with the people of the Ukraine means standing against all U.S. interference and demanding *All U.S. Troops Home Now!*

US Hands Off Ukraine and Venezuela

United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC), March 6, 2014

The United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC) demands *U.S. Hands off Ukraine and Venezuela*. The United States government is the main instigator of the present crises in both countries.

The hypocrisy of Secretary of State John Kerry's statement on Face the Nation, "You just don't in the 21st century behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped up pretext," is beyond belief. What about the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, or regime change in Libya, or the threats to bomb Syria and attack Iran?

The U.S. has waged a massive propaganda campaign of misinformation, distortion, and outright lies and the national media has taken the State Department's "facts" and disseminated them without question or challenge. News about the US/European Union (EU) role in creating the current crisis is buried.

The U.S. is the only country that has its troops throughout the world in over 120 countries. It sends drones and special operations forces to kill anyone, anywhere it chooses and uses its vast economic power to undercut any government that will not submit to its policies. Although there is lip service to concerns about democracy and sovereignty, the reality is that the U.S. acts in the interests of preserving its imperialist power and wealth.

Ukraine and Venezuela are not exceptions to this rule of imperialist intervention. For 20 years, \$5 billion was invested in Ukraine to support the opposition and to create tens of thousands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to move the country more towards the U.S. and EU and their policies. In an intercepted phone call between Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, she discusses who the U.S. wants to be the head of the new illegitimate government, and lo and behold, the U.S. pick, Arseniy Yatseniuk, is named as the interim Ukrainian leader. This is clearly outside intervention in the affairs of a sovereign country that would not be tolerated if directed at the U.S. or its allies.

What are the real objectives and why is Russia so alarmed? Could it be the U.S.-NATO campaign to militarily surround Russia and bring neighboring countries into the western military and financial orbit? Might it be that the largest supply of natural gas in the world is in Russia and the pipelines go through Ukraine, or that global warming is opening the Arctic to oil drilling and Russia borders the Arctic? It is clear that Russia will not passively sit by while the Western-backed coup, led by violent fascist

forces and local billionaires, overthrows a democratically elected government and installs a puppet regime on its border.

By treaty, Russia can have 25,000 troops in Crimea. To protect its military base there and to protect the people in the Eastern and Southern parts of the country, where the coup is not supported, Russia has moved some troops to the Ukrainian border and into the Crimean peninsula. Many in the east and south are fearful of the new coup government and the neo-Nazi and nationalist forces that led the street demonstrations.

The escalating threats of military and economic aggression towards Russia should not be taken lightly. Washington's recklessness and disregard for humanity have resurrected the worst vestiges of cold war politics. They have created a dangerous situation that can generate a real war with an adversary with a powerful military of its own.

The U.S. is similarly intervening in Venezuela. There, the U.S. government wants a return to policies which brought the benefits of that nation's oil wealth to a privileged few. The Bolivarian Revolution has been supported by a majority of Venezuelans in election after election. Yet the United States per-

sists in violating the sovereignty and self-determination of the Venezuelan people. In 2002, the U.S. supported a coup against the late Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez. During this coup, Chavez was forced onto a U.S. military plane to be taken out of the country. The Venezuelan people and military were able to rescue Chavez and defeat the coup. However, the US has continued to intervene in Venezuela causing the government of Nicolas Maduro to expel three U.S. officials for trying to organize students for anti-government protests.

As long as the United States is committed to aggression, the whole world is endangered, just as Ukraine and Venezuela are. Libya fell, Syria is under attack, there is a "pivot to Asia," and AfriCom controls the military in almost every African nation. We must demand that our government stop its policy of imperialist domination which generates conflict throughout the world.

No to US Wars, Threats, Attacks, Sanctions, and Covert Operations in Ukraine, Russia, Venezuela, and All Other Sovereign Countries!

Money For Jobs, Education, Healthcare And Meeting Social Needs, Not War And Aggression To Benefit The Rich!



Dirty Hand of U.S. Imperialism Comes to Light

The dirty hand of U.S. imperialism is operating to ensure that “their man” is imposed in a position of power in Ukraine over the choice of the European Union. It reveals the sharpness of the inter-imperialist contradictions over control of Ukraine as well as the crimes being carried out by the U.S. and big powers of Europe against the Ukrainian people.

The following is a transcript of an apparently bugged phone conversation between U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland and the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt. The phone conversation is said to have taken place on Thursday February 6, 2014. The U.S. accuses Russia of making the recording and despite the content of the conversation claims that the U.S. remains an impartial mediator in Ukraine.

The conversation, and situation now imposed in Ukraine more generally, reveals the dangerous state of anarchy and chaos which exists internationally and which the U.S. is fomenting using their security agencies, fifth columns in the guise of “pro-democracy” elements, and certain United Nations’ officials. The U.S. is organizing to secure control while keeping the EU at bay, meaning it both colludes and contends. The conversation shows the U.S. is acting to decide who goes into government and who does not, criminal interference in the name of democracy. The transcript reads as follows:

Nuland: What do you think?

Pyatt: I think we’re in play. The Klitschko [Vitaly Klitschko, one of three main opposition leaders] piece is obviously the complicated electron here. Especially the announcement of him as deputy prime minister and you’ve seen some of my notes on the troubles in the marriage right now so we’re trying to get a read really fast on where he is on this stuff. But I think your argument to him, which you’ll need to make, I think that’s the next phone call you want to set up, is exactly the one you made to Yats [Arseniy Yatseniuk, another opposition leader]. And I’m glad you sort of put him on the spot on where he fits in this scenario. And I’m very glad that he said what he said in response.

Nuland: Good. I don’t think Klitsch should go into the government. I don’t think it’s necessary, I don’t think it’s a good idea.

Pyatt: Yeah. I guess... in terms of him not going into the government, just let him stay out and do his political homework and stuff. I’m just thinking in terms of sort of the process moving ahead we want to keep the moderate democrats together. The problem is going to be Tyahnybok [Oleh Tyahnybok, the other opposition leader] and his guys and I’m sure that’s part of what [President Viktor] Yanukovych is calculating on all this.

Nuland: [Breaks in] I think Yats is the guy who’s got the economic experience, the governing experience. He’s the... what he needs is Klitsch and Tyahnybok on the outside. He needs to be talking to them four times a week, you know. I just think Klitsch going in... he’s going to be at that level working

for Yatseniuk, it’s just not going to work.

Pyatt: Yeah, no, I think that’s right. OK. Good. Do you want us to set up a call with him as the next step?

Nuland: My understanding from that call -- but you tell me -- was that the big three were going into their own meeting and that Yats was going to offer in that context a... three-plus-one conversation or three-plus-two with you. Is that not how you understood it?

Pyatt: No. I think... I mean that’s what he proposed but I think, just knowing the dynamic that’s been with them where Klitschko has been the top dog, he’s going to take a while to show up for whatever meeting they’ve got and he’s probably talking to his guys at this point, so I think you reaching out directly to him helps with the personality management among the three and it gives you also a chance to move fast on all this stuff and put us behind it before they all sit down and he explains why he doesn’t like it.

Nuland: OK, good. I’m happy. Why don’t you reach out to him and see if he wants to talk before or after.

Pyatt: OK, will do. Thanks.

Nuland: OK... one more wrinkle for you Geoff. [A click can be heard] I can’t remember if I told you this, or if I only told Washington this, that when I talked to Jeff Feltman [United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs] this morning, he had a new name for the UN guy Robert Serry did I write you that this morning?

Pyatt: Yeah I saw that.

Nuland: OK. He’s now gotten both Serry and [UN Secretary General] Ban Ki-moon to agree that Serry could come in Monday or Tuesday. So that would be great, I think, to help glue this thing and to have the UN help glue it and, you know, F--- the EU.

Pyatt: No, exactly. And I think we’ve got to do something to make it stick together because you can be pretty sure that if it does start to gain altitude, that the Russians will be working behind the scenes to try to torpedo it. And again the fact that this is out there right now, I’m still trying to figure out in my mind why Yanukovych (garbled) that. In the meantime there’s a Party of Regions faction meeting going on right now and I’m sure there’s a lively argument going on in that group at this point. But anyway we could land jelly side up on this one if we move fast. So let me work on Klitschko and if you can just keep... we want to try to get somebody with an international personality to come out here and help to midwife this thing. The other issue is some kind of outreach to Yanukovych but we probably regroup on that tomorrow as we see how things start to fall into place.

Nuland: So on that piece Geoff, when I wrote the note [US vice-president’s national security adviser Jake] Sullivan’s come back to me VFR [direct to me], saying you need [US Vice-President Joe] Biden and I said probably tomorrow for an atta-boy and to get the deets [details] to stick. So Biden’s willing.

Pyatt: OK. Great. Thanks.