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[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

[Click Here](#)

[Home](#)

**First It was a Cell Behind Prison Walls -
Now It's a Seat Behind the Walls of a Military Academy:
Arne Duncan Doesn't Care About Black and Brown Children! Why Should He?
Represent Our Resistance
By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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The significance of the hegemonic domain of power lies in its ability to shape consciousness via the manipulation of ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies.

-Patricia Hill Collins, [*Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*](#)

I would never have imagined that history was connected to art, that philosophy was connected to science, and so on. The usual way that people are taught to think in amerika is that each subject is in a little compartment and has no relation to any other subject. For the most part, we receive fragments of unrelated knowledge, and our education follows no logical format or pattern. It is exactly this kind of education that produces people who don't have the ability to think for themselves and who are easily manipulated.

-Assata Shakur, [*Assata: An Autobiography*](#)

What would the coming dawn bring and what would we build after the storm?

-Robin D.G. Kelley, [*Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*](#)

It is not enough that Black and Brown children are subjected to the school-to-prison

"programs" called "education in America. We have Arne Duncan, Education Chief, who specializes in establishing military schools for Black and Brown children.

From white liberals we hear this question: how do we (the city, the state, the nation) provide schooling for children growing up in *urban* America? The question should be, how do we (Black, Brown parents, citizens, intellectuals, teachers, activists, and students) provide schooling for our children growing up in *capitalist* America?

In "The Duncan Doctrine: The Military-Corporate Legacy of the New Secretary of Education," independent journalist Andy Kroll looked at Arne Duncan's performance as Superintendent of Public Schools in Chicago. He turned to the military! According to Kroll, Duncan's solution for "educating" Black and Brown children in Chicago included the establishment of military academies in low income areas or areas with a dense population of single parents. It was no surprise that Duncan's military school solution to achieving *equitable* education for all American children didn't target suburban children.

No, the military school solution will teach obedience. But obedience to what end? What is the product if not docile citizens who won't resist and who will accept their place as commodities and consumers? Who benefits from surrounding Black and Brown children in the walls of a military academy? What will these children learn? To remember and honor their ancestors? Or will they learn to love a country and an economic system that refuses to even engage a dialogue on reparations? Will they learn to love a country and an economic system that has little regard for Black and Brown life? What does Duncan care about our *ancestors*?

But, it will provide structure in the lives of these children! All Black and Brown children are without structure in their lives? For even those without familial structure, the question should be what in this nation's ideology of the "American Dream" destroyed the "structure" in these children's lives?

Kroll added that the Chicago military academies, if not explicitly a military recruitment tool, certainly offer deals to graduates, encouraging their entrance into the military.

Under Duncan's "education" solution, children come to associate education with monetary reward. Students receive money for high grades. The higher the grade the more money! Education is also associated with "getting the job." In corporate America that means becoming a content cog in the machinery. Education means money and a job that makes you "worthy!" Being "worthy" in the eyes of others depends on how much money you have in your bank account, if you can trust the banks to keep your account.

Love capitalism; hate yourself!

Kroll writes that Duncan's Chicago legacy emphasized "a business-mined, market-driven model for education. If he is a 'reformer,' his style of management is distinctly top-down, corporate, and privatizing." Teachers are "expendable," unions are "unnecessary," and students are "customers." But since Arne Duncan plays basketball and his managerial style mirrors President Obama, his friend, he finds himself in Washington D.C., rewarded for his "good job" in Chicago.

Kroll continues:

"Without a doubt, teaching students about discipline and leadership is an important aspect of being an educator. But is the full-scale uniformed culture of the military actually necessary to impart these values?"

Yes, comrade, the whole system equates *urban children, Black and Brown children*, with what is *naturally* criminal and in need of *reform*. As Robin D.G. Kelley knows, "exploitation and repressive policies create poverty, not bad behavior." But Duncan can't hear this voice among the few and fewer who don't see dollar signs and career opportunities in the business of providing additional "educational" programs for the "bad behavior" of Black and Brown children. Americans are taught to focus their gaze on the individual Black youth or whole urban community while they are unable to see the criminality of corporate media, corporate education, CEOs and market capitalists on Wall Street. Black and Brown children need to learn who is still Master! Top down means top down - from Master to the slaves!

A student who learns to play the cello, who studies how to read music, will learn discipline too, without a military-themed learning environment. But what use are Black and Brown cello players within a market-driven, corporate-militaristic government?

Encouraging students to be critical thinkers, to question accepted beliefs and norms, remains key to a teacher's role at any grade level.

And? Black and Brown *critical* thinkers would *question* the status quo of a U.S. corporate-lead government, and such people would certainly come to "question" capitalism itself? Do we remember Malcolm and King? Thinkers are not welcomed now and they certainly won't be welcome within Duncan's "educational" scheme!

Sheep are easier to control and manipulate. Sheep look to the leadership of an oligarchy. Sheep obey orders. They chew on the dribble from corporate media without understanding the difference between their interests as "sheep" and the interests of the leadership.

The military's culture of uniformity and discipline, important as it may be for an army, hardly aligns with these pedagogical values.

Values, again, Kroll! Duncan and company could care less about "pedagogical values." The ranks of the military, the cells of rural prisons, and the malls in urban areas with shoppers are not filled with people taught at public educational institutions where the pedagogy of values is the "pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation," Paulo Freire.

You think Duncan doesn't see military academies in every urban area across the country? And in this "economic crisis," you think he sees the necessary military recruitment for escalating the war in Afghanistan? The U.S. is always engaged in war or in "conflicts." In an urban setting or in a foreign country, "conflict" is good for capitalism, and Duncan's friend, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, still sees a future for the corpse that is capitalism.

I remember the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam. The "Cold War", as J.M. Coetzee's narrator in

[*Diary of a Bad Year*](#) notes, had its "hot wars" between "two rival economic systems," capitalism and socialism where millions on the Left "were imprisoned and tortured and executed" because their "political beliefs" differed from that of the U.S., where war was "waged in cellars and prison cells and interrogation rooms around the world." Are we to continue to allow our Black and Brown children to be used as free labor for a prison industrial complex or as fodder for imperialist wars? Are our sons to aspire to being a corporate lawyer and defend the oppression of a corporation like United Fruit Company against the fight of the banana growers in Columbia? So our daughters stand by the side of a president who lied in order to engage in the slaughter of Iraqi citizens? Do we want to produce another attorney general who "can't remember" the many times he okayed his Master's order to authorize the "disappearance" of habeas corpus? Will we, as parents, teachers, community activists and organizers, continue to lie to Black and Brown children and point to this *violence* as a means to obtaining *success*?

Who would expect Arne Duncan to love our Black and Brown children? Duncan loves "success" and success in a capitalist America means producing capital and producing more and more capital means more and more inequities will abound. More and more inequities justifies resistance. Deliver the "uncontrollable" to the prison industrial complex and "controllable" to the military industrial complex.

Capitalism hates the Black and the Brown. Capitalist reflect an image of blackness before a mirror in which we have stood imitating the reflection of hatred for blackness. Capitalism has damaged the Black community. It has stolen the minds and bodies of Black youths to be used and destroyed. From head to toe, our children and young people serve as walking billboards for corporations that enslave them to the capitalist notion of "successful" living. Black and Brown children under 18 years old know more about corporate brand products and the latest gadgets than they do about their heritage of resistance.

Black children, drowning in expensive hair straightening chemicals, fashionable tight jeans and skirts, and designer shoes and accessories, can't read or write at grade level; they can't tell you where the U.S. is located on the map; and they believe (because this has been *drilled* into their heads) that the "era" of racism was something that ended *after* Martin Luther King died (whenever that was)! Under siege from the corporate world's hatred of Blackness, Black children are left with few examples of Black anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-war warriors. Such warriors are not "successful" and, therefore, as these children learn, are unworthy of their attention.

When the capitalist speaks, Black and Brown children listen! And they act accordingly - like sheep. These children can't feel the pain some of us experience as we (and our ancestors) witness their enslavement to the capitalist monster. Black children's gleeful acceptance of the post-racial mainstream" is capitalism having the last laugh at the Black community. Capitalism, supported by white supremacists in their various shades, has its army of state security and educational institutions enforcing the compliance, the complicity, and the collaboration of masses of Black and Brown children.

And President Obama said it's a time for the U.S. to prepare *better* workers? Better workers - or more *uniformed* workers?

The public educational system in the U.S. from K-12, along with colleges and

universities, should be overhauled! Trashed. Dumped. Parents, teachers, and students need to say it's over. Enough!

It is noble (human) to know yourself/ourselves!

If the larger interest of society is to maintain its hegemony over those it deems *less* than human, less that worthy, then what is it that the less than human learn at educational institutions operated by the larger society? Does what is learned advantage the *oppressor*?

It is the advantage of these educational institutions and their leaders, "liberal" or otherwise, to teach what will keep Black and brown "enslaved." What is learned? What is the subject? If the answer is "the Self" - then whose "the Self"?

I won't tell you to write letters to the Czar of Education, Duncan. He won't hear you. According to Pauline Lipman, *Educational Policy* (2007) cited in Kroll's "the Duncan Doctrine," he didn't hear the opposition of "unions, teachers, students, school reformers, community leaders and organizations, parents in African American South and West Side communities and some Latino community activists and teachers" in Chicago, during his 7-year tenure. "Mounting neighborhood opposition had little effect," said Pauline Lipman. The "people are uniformly opposed to these policies, and uniformly feel that they have no voice."

Arne Duncan, writes Kroll, embraced the "logic of the free market and privatization." Of course! Duncan and his cohorts are operating from within the narrative of white supremacy. And that narrative has a sub-narrative that speaks to the inferiority of Blackness and the evil of Blackness. As long as the mega-narrative exists, the latter will remain. The latter sub-narrative of "Blackness," "evil," "inferiority" is the foundation for the narrative of the superiority of whiteness.

Your / our *collaboration* with white supremacy arises when we readily accept these narratives of whiteness and Blackness *without questioning the origins and motivates of the creators*. When we collaborate, we forget ourselves as the *oppressed* and our goal of acquiring *freedom*. Our desire to *know* Self and the community, to recognize our condition, is of necessity for the hegemony submerged. *Freedom* is no longer a *primary* activity of self or community.

In its many modern-day disguises (liberal and otherwise), white supremacy looks to have our best interests at heart. It does not and it cannot, ever! The educational institutions in the U.S. will always KILL the interests of our children. "Freedom" now represents Nike sneakers and B.A. degrees for a son or daughter who can't read, can't think beyond the drivel of corporate babble learned at school.

More than ever, we need to embrace the logic of freedom, freedom from the racism and corruption of capitalism. More than ever, Black and Brown children need Freedom Schools! Our children need our labor and love directed at working for their interests. If you are not familiar with the Freedom Schools, I suggest you go to the library or to an independent bookstore and begin researching "Freedom Schools." Begin with the Black Freedom Movement in Mississippi, 1964.

In the meantime, ask yourself:

Why do we need (parents, teachers and students) freedom schools?

What is the freedom Movement?

What alternative does the freedom Movement offer us?

What does the majority culture have that we want?

What does the majority culture have that we don't want?

What do we have that we want to keep?

We want to keep our idea of *freedom*! We want to think on what is it, consider what it might look like, ask how will this idea of freedom provides us the potential to create, from within our communities, our own leadership to ultimately bring about real change in the U.S.?

We need Freedom Schools - not military academies! We need to become the leaders we are looking for and reject the leadership of Arne Duncan.

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
BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board member, Lenore Jean Daniels, PhD, has been a writer, for over thirty years of commentary, resistance criticism and cultural theory, and short stories with a Marxist sensibility to the impact of cultural narrative violence and its antithesis, resistance narratives. With entrenched dedication to justice and equality, she has served as a coordinator of student and community resistance projects that encourage the Black Feminist idea of an equalitarian community and facilitator of student-teacher communities behind the walls of academia for the last twenty years. Dr. Daniels holds a PhD in Modern American Literatures, with a specialty in Cultural Theory (race, gender, class narratives) from Loyola University, Chicago. Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Daniels.

[Contents of Issue Menu](#)

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