

Education and Today's Political Context

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What do we know about today's political context?

- Neoliberal ideology has prevailed for the past 30 years
 - Emphasizes different role for the state from the welfare state of the post WWII period
 - Harkens back to radical laissez faire days of the late 18th century and at various points in the 19th century
 - Based on radical individualism and
 - Limited involvement in the economy (except insofar as it benefits the capitalist ruling class)
 - Ideology that makes “government the problem” – “anti-big government
 - Peddles deregulation of the economy
 - Opposes unionized labor
 - Limits support for the Public Good and leaves individuals to fend for themselves
 - Promotes class war on the middle and working classes and increases racial dynamics

How successful has Neoliberalism been in realizing its aims?

- Quite successful!
 - Promoted the market order as the panacea for all societal ills (and promises individual freedom)
 - Diminished the revenue stream to government to limit spending on social programs, including education
 - Accomplished through anti-tax efforts (“starve the beast strategy”)
 - Generated waves of budget shortfalls
 - Promoted deregulation of the economy and privatization of services
 - Diminished social programs and practically eliminated the social safety net

Has Neoliberalism Improved Society?

- Not really; has actually diminished the social and productive achievements of the Keynesian Era
- Created budgetary shortfalls through tax reductions, especially to corporations and the wealthy
- Created the Great Recession of 2007 (impacted Latinos and other minorities the most)
- Limited the maintenance and improvement of infrastructure
- Increased poverty to levels not seen since before the Great Depression
- Scapegoated immigrants

What would a scorecard show?

- Ideology trumps reason and rationality (even denies the existence of global warming)
- Increased corruption in the economy (housing mortgages, banking, and privatization of services)
- Diminished economic productivity in the U.S. and moved it abroad
- Promoted anarchism as a legitimate ideology (Libertarianism and Tea Party); diminished American Democracy
- Produced an anti-Latino climate

What does this mean for the education of Latinos?

- Limited support for programs that are student centered such as bilingual education – promotes unabashed notions of assimilation
- Less interest in multicultural education, which is seen negatively through the neoliberal lens
 - Denies structural inequality and leaves it to the individual to succeed
 - Attacks Ethnic Studies as Un-American
- Continued attacks on voting rights and representative democracy – and its future

School Contexts for Latino Children

- Segregated communities
- Under-resourced schools
 - Federal funds channeled to other areas and functions (enhancement is removed)
- High proportion of teachers teaching out of field
- Low expectations by teachers
- Punitive policy contexts
 - Produce a school-to-prison pipeline
- At risk of producing the largest underclass in the nation's history

Starting Points

- Parents are potentially the most powerful stakeholders
 - They pay the taxes that support the school districts
 - It is their children who are put at risk by hostile school environments
- The future of the nation is bound up with the future of Latinos – they are tightly knit together
 - The population may change, but the future of democracy need not fade – base is an educated citizenry

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