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
  o Emphasizes different role for the state from the welfare state of the post WWII period
    ▪ Harkens back to radical lassez 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
  o Peddles deregulation of the economy
  o Opposes unionized labor
  o Limits support for the Public Good and leaves individuals to fend for themselves
  o Promotes class war on the middle and working classes and increases racial dynamics
How successful has Neoliberalism been in realizing its aims?

• Quite successful!
  o Promoted the market order as the panacea for all societal ills (and promises individual freedom)
  o 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
  o Promoted deregulation of the economy and privatization of services
  o 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
  o Denies structural inequality and leaves it to the individual to succeed
  o 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
  o They pay the taxes that support the school districts
  o 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
  o The population may change, but the future of democracy need not fade – base is an educated citizenry
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