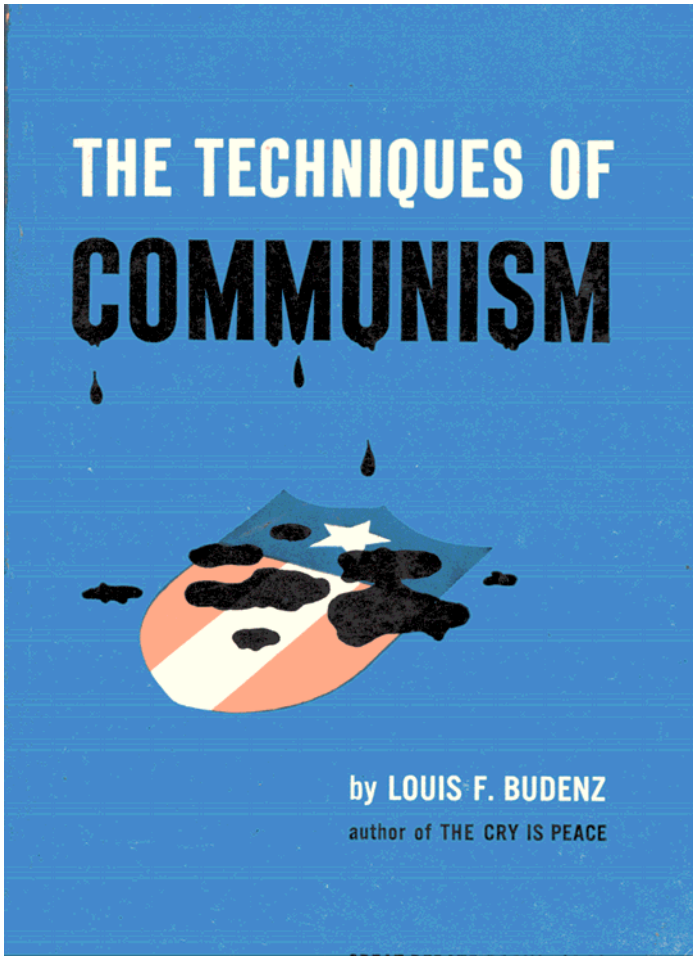
The Extreme Make-Over of William Ayers: How a Communist Terrorist Became a "Distinguished" Professor of Education

By Mary Grabar



Professor Ayers uses the same techniques described by Communist Party defector Louis F. Budenz.

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Introduction

By Cliff Kincaid, President, America's Survival, Inc.

Everyone should know by now that William "Bill" Ayers, who served on the board of an educational foundation with Barack Obama, was a communist terrorist whose organization, the Weather Underground, targeted government facilities, especially police stations, with bombs. The Weather Underground was the outcome of the Weatherman and the SDS, groups which disrupted educational activities on many college campuses in the name of fighting U.S. "imperialism."

This expert analysis by Mary Grabar, a Professor of English, makes it plain that Ayers is still a communist and that his goals are the same. What has changed is his method of operation. Instead of planting bombs in government buildings, he is now planting bombs in students' minds. These bombs are designed to destroy any understanding or appreciation of America's history as a constitutional republic based on the Judeo-Christian tradition that limits the size of government in the name of safeguarding individual liberty. These bombs are designed to destroy the history of America as a nation that has not only freed its own citizens but has freed other peoples and nations.

Grabar provides the evidence that parents and concerned citizens will need, not only to challenge the notion that Bill Ayers deserves to be in any position to "educate" students, but to challenge the growing influence he is having through various academic associations.

For the first time, in a comprehensive fashion, Grabar systematically examines the Ayers approach, based on what he has himself written and said. She goes through his books, writings and statements, concluding that he is, in effect, attempting to carry out a communist revolution through educational channels. But in order to grasp the insidious nature of this process, one must understand that the Ayers notion of education is quite different than our own. He does not intend for students to learn anything in the traditional sense, and does not believe that teachers should impart any real knowledge. In fact, he seems opposed to learning anything of real value about the American system or even the global economy that could help students get actual jobs. Instead, he wants them to undergo a transformation that will make them into revolutionary activists like he was and is.

In a sense, this is not a surprise, since Ayers has made it clear over the years that his basic ideology has not changed. Grabar offers the proof to student parents, as well as administrators, that Ayers is a direct threat to academic standards and discipline. A college or university education is predicated on the notion that students will graduate with critical thinking ability and marketable

skills. This may be the traditional purpose of “higher education,” but it’s not Ayers’ purpose.

It is no coincidence that Ayers and wife Bernardine Dohrn are on the board of the Movement for a Democratic Society, which has been guiding the creation of a “new SDS” of student activists on college campuses. We saw this “new SDS” in operation at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where they drove former Congressman Tom Tancredo off campus when he attempted to give a speech on the problem of illegal immigration. Members of this “new SDS” unfurled a banner, “No one is illegal,” in front of Tancredo, and then broke a window in the classroom in which he was speaking, forcing the abrupt cancellation of the event when campus police arrived.

Those who value our nation and its institutions should take heed and take action. It is a flat-out disgrace that Bill Ayers has become a “Distinguished Professor of Education and Senior University Scholar,” when so much of what he says and does in the classroom, judging by any objective measure, is so lacking in serious educational quality and merit. Simply put, his educational approach can only be described as one of Marxist brainwashing. As he told an educational forum in Marxist Venezuela, education is the “motor-force of revolution.” And Ayers emphasized that he shared that view with his Venezuelan hosts. Ayers, a child of privilege, as Grabar points out, must be laughing all the way to the bank, knowing that hard-pressed taxpayers are underwriting his communist campaign to remake America by seizing the minds of the younger generation.

This campaign has an international dimension. In addition to his travels abroad to socialist Venezuela, one of our Freedom of Information Act requests to the University of Illinois at Chicago has disclosed evidence of Ayers making trips to the University of Konstanz, Germany, and the Free University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, for the purpose of “writing and lecturing for [the] next book.” The material includes receipts for airplane tickets, taxis and currency transactions, authorized through the “University Scholars Account.” The information also shows a visit to Taiwan to have “lunch with some leaders of grass-roots educational organizations” and discussions on “Teacher Lore” and “Qualitative Inquiry.” No other details are provided. However, twice this year Ayers has been denied entry into Canada to attend “educational” events.

This response to our Freedom of Information Act request, “for documents related to Williams Ayers’ trips abroad,” produced 19 pages, none of which concerned the trips to Venezuela. One has to conclude that information about the trips to Venezuela has either been held back or else that the university had no role in sponsoring or paying for them. And if the university did not pay for them, who did? Ayers? Or the Venezuelan government?

Incredibly, America’s Survival, Inc., initially had limited success in even getting descriptions of the materials he is actually presenting to students in class.

Our Freedom of Information request to the University of Illinois at Chicago for this information was denied. Incredibly, we were told that "course materials and research materials used by faculty members" were exempt from disclosure under the law. We had simply requested "the outlines and summaries of topics, and books required or recommended, in courses taught by William Ayers**,** Professor, Curriculum & Instruction, in the College of Education, for the last three academic years – 2008-2009, 2007-2008, and 2006-2007, and any courses during the summer of these years that he taught."

In an appeal of this decision to President B. Joseph White, we said, "Are you [saying] that a prospective student, or student parent, or member of the public, cannot get access to the requested copies of syllabi – that is, the outlines and summaries of topics, and books required or recommended, in courses taught by William Ayers?...How can basic course materials, of the kind that should be publicly listed in a college or university catalog, or provided to students, be concealed?...It won't look good for a publicly supported university to be denying the public access to information about what is being taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago."

President White responded in a May 20 letter that we will be "provided with access to the request course syllabi" and the request was sent back to the public records officer for further handling. Grabar has analyzed these additional syllabi in a follow-up report.

For the purposes of this report, Grabar did find an Ayers syllabus online, and she analyzes it and other published material.

We submitted another request about how Ayers received tenure at the University of Illinois and whether any complaints have been received about his teaching methods. No information of substance was provided by the University of Illinois. Grabar explains this in her follow-up report, "Did Bill Ayers Get His Teaching Job 'the Chicago Way?'"

An important part of the Grabar analysis demonstrates that the Ayers approach is actually an old one, and that it was described by Communist Party defector Louis F. Budenz. The purpose is to use the educational process to break down traditional notions of American morality, creating chaos and confusion in the classroom and the society at large. "In undermining a nation such as the United States, the infiltration of the educational process is of prime importance," Budenz wrote.

Another good source of information about the Ayers approach can be found in the 1954 classic, *School of Darkness* by Bella V. Dodd, another communist defector who had been a college teacher and leader of the New York Teachers Union. Dodd describes how the communist ideology stripped away her traditional belief system (she was raised a Christian) in the name of pursuing

“social justice” and a heaven on earth. It was an effort, she said, to “despiritualize” man. The solution, she said, is for mothers and fathers to study the “school problem,” in order to prevent the educational system from “contributing to the training of a fifth column for the enemy,” and to give their children a firm grounding in spiritual values and religious training.

Understanding the warnings of Budenz and Dodd are absolutely essential to saving the U.S. Mary Grabar brings their insights up to date in the case of Bill Ayers.

Whittaker Chambers, perhaps the most famous Communist defector, wrote the classic book, *Witness,* warning that the nation’s only hope of surviving was in maintaining its spiritual foundation and commitment to freedom.

Mary Grabar’s analysis provides what we need to know to understand the serious nature of the current problem and the threat we face.

Biography

Mary Grabar was born in Slovenia and escaped communist Yugoslavia as a two-year-old with her parents. She grew up in Rochester, New York, and moved to Atlanta in the 1980s. She earned her Ph.D. in English from the University of Georgia in 2002, and now teaches part-time on two campuses in and near Atlanta.

She writes for such publications as *The Weekly Standard*, Pajamas Media, CNS News, *The American Spectator*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and Townhall.

Her poetry and fiction have been published in *Saint Ann's Review*, *The Pedestal, Ballyhoo Stories*, and other journals. She is a contributing editor to the *Chattahoochee Review* and has completed two novel manuscripts, one a satire about the sexual revolution and higher education, and another, a semiautobiographical literary mystery involving immigrants from communist countries.

Executive Summary

By Mary Grabar

Despite his Ed.D. degree and title as Distinguished Professor of Education, and despite being heralded variously an "education reformer" and "a member of Chicago's intellectual establishment," William Ayers' scholarship provides little evidence of advancement since his first job as a twenty-year-old self-described "peace activist," when as puts it in his memoir *Fugitive Days*, "I walked out of jail and into my first teaching job."

Ayers' publications provide scant evidence of the sort of scholarship expected of a professor of curriculum and instruction. Although he has been elected vice president of the curriculum studies division of the largest scholarly organization for professors at U.S. education schools, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), he shuns the very notion of curriculum as too confining. He rejects traditional standards of measurement like tests and grades, and evaluates his own college students by how well they ask "authentic questions" in the "collective dialogue" of classroom discussion. He also asks them to write much, but not with any standards for content or correctness. His references to sources go no further than extensive quotations of favorite passages of leftist poets and writers. He provides no evidence of successful outcomes other than his unverified anecdotes about his success with his "experiential" and "student-centered" teaching methods; he embraces the chaotic atmosphere they produce in the classroom and asks future teachers to do the same. His main success seems to lie in the unquantifiable ability to "inspire" students.

In fact, Professor Ayers rejects the notion of knowledge itself. In this he goes beyond the constructivist school of educational theory that claims that children should be able to discover and "construct" their own knowledge.

Ayers' rejections of standards, measurement, and knowledge emanate from an animus toward "linear" thought, which in his and like-minded leftists' estimation is a defining characteristic of Western, and therefore necessarily imperialist, thinking. "Linear thought" is another term for logic, objectivity, and fairness—attributes that have defined the advances of the Western world in terms of government, jurisprudence, science, and ethics.

His accounts of his chaotic classrooms, however, should not be unexpected from an SDS member who cofounded the violent Weatherman and Weather Underground factions. In his 2001 memoir, Ayers admits to fantasizing about the "red army" coming in to take over during the rioting he helped instigate.

But although he never says it, Ayers' teaching methodology, philosophy, and goals, are neither revolutionary in a sense of being original, nor are they innovative. In fact, they continue the Stalinist approach of infiltrating and undermining cultural and educational institutions, as described by communist defector Louis Budenz in his 1954 book, *The Techniques of Communism*. One of the primary means is "progressive education":

> an attempt to get away from formal methods of teaching, and to depend on "spontaneous" activities brought about by group discussions. The child is to be freed of discipline, and the program is to be initiated by the student rather than the teacher. Competition and rewards are to be eliminated, and the character of the pupil's work is not to be a major consideration. The theory is that in this manner the child's abilities will be released.

The outcome is the same as the one Ayers celebrates in his work: chaos and confusion.

Another point of similarity to the communist techniques described by Budenz is the use and abuse of minorities. Ayers, in his extensive discussions of classroom experiences, is careful to note the race and ethnicity of the students he "nurtures" and helps along. He provides no evidence, however, of gains in test scores, grades, or writing ability that might ensure a place for these downtrodden in college or the workforce.

Indeed, from his descriptions of work with students one senses an emotional manipulator, one who cheats the student of the knowledge and skills his schooling should provide him, while pumping up his ego. His constant focus on race and social injustice likely induces a feeling of victimization and resentment--and certainly radicalization.

Indeed, it is Ayers' and wife Bernardine Dohrn's goal, from a reading of their latest book, *Race Course Against White Supremacy*, to indict capitalism as inherently racist. In their opinion, a capitalist is ipso facto racist. It follows then that to overcome racism, capitalism must be destroyed. Again, true to form, they present a narrative of themselves as outside of the white racist paradigm, with vignettes about their racial sensitivity and virtues, which no capitalists can share. In fomenting feelings of racial resentment against the capitalist "system" they share the tactics of the communists described by Budenz. Race was used for creating divisions between American blacks and whites—a division that the communists nurtured as they undermined democratic efforts already underway toward equality and civil rights for blacks. The effect was to show that communists—and *only* communists—were not racist.

Ayers' teaching leads students to the same conclusion under the cover of "social awareness," and to which students are led to believe they have come to on their own. But Ayers' citations and recommended reading material show no

serious consideration of a worldview outside of the subversive one to which he subscribes. Furthermore, his emphasis on the teacher's role as primarily provider of emotional succor and encouragement suggests emotional manipulation at play. He cheats future teachers of the skills and knowledge they need to truly help their charges.

By diverting future teachers to a constant questioning of beliefs and assumptions, and by using his position as authority figure to push radical authors who seek to undermine Western values and civilization, Ayers uses his position in the field of education to advance his original revolutionary goals. It is a method proving to be more effective than the bombs he and his radical colleagues planted. The picture of Ayers that emerges is that of a manipulative ideologue masquerading as an "educator." By all accounts, his goals remain what they were as a so-called "peace activist" involved in domestic terrorism: to bring about a communist revolution.

By Mary Grabar

William Ayers, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Chicago, has built an impressively long curriculum vitae. The sheer heft of it—at over 40 pages—would cause the layman to ponder the professor's erudition.

The number of Ayers' publications and speaking engagements is especially impressive given the fact that Ayers did not enter graduate school until the age of 40 in 1984 and earned his Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at Columbia University in 1987. That was because before 1980 he was hiding from the law for his role in planting bombs in government buildings around the country, including the Pentagon and Capitol, with Bernardine Dohrn, now his wife (Stern). Ayers got off; FBI officials were actually prosecuted and convicted for going after Ayers and his comrades, and Ayers declared that he was "Guilty as Hell" but "Free as a bird."

However, even while Ayers and Dohrn travel around the country hawking their latest book, *Race Course Against White Supremacy,* an investigation into a 1970 police station bombing blamed on the terror couple is still under way. Former FBI informant Larry Grahwohl has consistently testified that Ayers told him that Dohrn had planted the bomb that murdered San Francisco Police Sergeant Brian V. McDonnell. Grathwohl was recently interviewed by San Francisco Inspector and homicide investigator Joseph Engler.

Ayers seemed to be living the quiet, comfortable life of a tenured professor until he came back into the news during the presidential election in 2008. His statement to the *New York Times* in an article related to the release of his memoir, published on September 11, 2001, that he did not "regret" setting bombs, was used against then-presidential candidate Barack Obama. Their association goes back to the 1990s when Ayers hosted a party for Obama's first political run and sat with Ayers on the board of the Annenberg Challenge, an education foundation. The September 11 article was related to the publication of Ayers' memoir *Fugitive Days*, which was rereleased in 2009 with a new afterword where Ayers explains that the *Times*' account, "captured in its headline, 'No regrets for a love of explosives,'" is "neither my narrative nor my sentiment." Ayers charges that "the idea was seized upon by the neocon media machine. . . ." (311).

He continues, "I'm nowadays quoted as saying, 'I don't regret setting bombs, I wish we'd set more bombs. I don't think we did enough.' I never actually said that I 'set bombs,' nor that I wished there were 'more bombs.'" Among the things he does admit regretting are "the turn to dogmatism," "macho posturing and destructive male-supremacist practices that passed for leadership," and "the deaths of our beloved comrades" (311).

The memoir drew charges from some reviewers of revisionist history, but although Ayers remained out of the spotlight during the presidential campaign, he has since then gone on the public lecture circuit at high schools, colleges, and civic organizations. He publicly defended University of Colorado colleague "ethnic studies" professor Ward Churchill in fighting his dismissal. The jury found that Churchill had been wrongfully fired for expressing his views in a September 2001 article calling the 9/11 victims "little Eichmanns," among other things. While Boston College had to cancel Ayers' March 30 speech, on April 24, he did speak at Brandeis University. Ayers was featured speaker at the Human Rights Festival on May 2, 2009, in the college town of Athens, Georgia. He addressed the Kiwanis Club in Elgin, Illinois, on May 12, 2009 (Krosel). This came after the cancellation of Ayers' talk at nearby Naperville North High School and then at Anderson's Bookshop in Naperville, Illinois, due to outcry from the community (Hitzeman). The Kiwanis does not pay for speakers, but Ayers is usually "offered" $7,500 plus expenses by universities for his speeches, according to his booking agency, Evil Twin.

But security costs have made his visits prohibitive. That was the reason given by Georgia Southern University for the cancellation of Ayers' speech in March. Like students at other campuses, some students protested the use of their student fees to pay for the founder of the SDS splinter group, the Weatherman, that committed acts of terrorism.

Georgia Southern senior Lance Sullivan's statement to the student newspaper *The George-Anne Daily* expresses a commonly held assumption: "'Ayers may be a respected professor and author to some people now, but that doesn't excuse the horrible acts he has committed in the past'" (Oshinubi). Reporters, too, take at face value Ayers' advanced degrees as evidence of his academic legitimacy. Ayers is referred to as a "low-key academic" (Aued), "education professor" (Nierstadt), or "education reformer" (Repka). He was recently elected vice president of the curriculum studies division in the top scholarly organization for professors at U.S. education schools, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), which claims 25,000 members. According to Charlotte Allen of *The Weekly Standard*, Ayers served on "no fewer than seven panels and events" for the 14,000 members gathered at the annual meeting in April 2009. Although his public speaking engagement at Georgia Southern was cancelled, in the past, Ayers has traveled from the Midwest to this Georgia campus as a guest speaker in the College of Education and to serve on doctoral committees. Ayers does the speaking circuit for conferences like the Council for American Studies Education, where he is touted as a "leader in the educational reform movements for over forty years" ("Get to Know"). When he was about to address future teachers and education professionals at Pennsylvania's Millersville University on March 19, the news report referred to him as "a member of Chicago's intellectual establishment" ("Students Divided"). The commonplace gets repeated on cable news programs. In October,

Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman told Greta van Susteren that Ayers had been invited by the college of education for his expertise on urban education.

An Expert on What?

Ayers' "expertise" is not questioned very often, although it is available for scrutiny in a daunting list of books and articles. But his column in the January 3, 2009, Huffington Post, on the proposed new education secretary provides a good overview of his teaching philosophy. After offering his own choice for Secretary of Education (Linda Darling-Hammond), as well as other cabinet members (Secretary of State: Noam Chomsky, Attorney General: Bernardine Dohrn), Ayers encourages readers to make the best of the choice of nominee Arne Duncan by getting "active." His encouragement comes by reminding readers of the difference between education in a "democracy" and in a "dictatorship or a monarchy." Leaping between the similarities between "fascist Germany," "communist Albania," and "medieval Saudi Arabia" with the fact that in each regime school leaders all agreed "that students should behave well, stay away from drugs and crime, do their homework, study hard and master the subject matters," he goes on to describe the distinctiveness of an "education in a democracy": "a commitment to a particularly precious and fragile ideal, and that is a belief that the fullest development of all is the necessary condition for the full development of each; conversely, the fullest development of each is necessary for the full development of all."

One would expect then an explanation of what this "full development" would entail. But instead, we get the following passage:

> Democracy, after all, is geared toward participation and engagement, and it's based on a common faith: every human being is of infinite and incalculable value, each a unique intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual, and creative force. Every human being is born free and equal in dignity and rights, each is endowed with reason and conscience, and deserves, then, a sense of solidarity, brotherhood and sisterhood, recognition and respect.

One expects specifics after such pronouncements, perhaps a discussion of the foundations behind the idea of being born free and "equal in dignity and rights." Perhaps Professor Ayers is thinking of the Declaration of Independence? That each is endowed with "reason and conscience" stirs up ideas about natural law, the ancient Greeks, the church fathers, and the American founding fathers. The word "solidarity," though, invokes ideas about socialism, or perhaps, the anti-socialist movement of communist Poland.

But Professor Ayers says no more about this point and leaps to the next proclamation: "We want our students to be able to think for themselves, to make judgments based on evidence and argument, to develop minds of their own."

Indeed, all well and good, says this teacher to herself. Too much emphasis is placed on emotion rather than "evidence," and our schools no longer teach enough argumentation, logic, and the importance of reasoned debate supported with "evidence."

An Esoteric Approach

But as in Ayers' oeuvre, here in this essay, one will not see a promotion of teaching such old-fashioned subjects. Instead, what follows in Ayers' recitation is: "We want [students] to ask fundamental questions—Who in the world am I? How did I get here and where am I going? What in the world are my choices? How in the world shall I proceed?---and to pursue answers wherever they might take them."

Such questions might be posed in a graduate seminar on existential philosophy, but this education professor advocates such open-ended questions for the first-grader. And he does so over and over in his books and articles.

And in spite of his bone thrown to the idea of subject matter, Ayers virtually never deals with the knowledge and skills students should obtain through their educations. Rather, there is this faith that, left to their own devices, children will gravitate toward the right sources of knowledge and absorb them. Ayers says nothing about the teaching of such subjects as history, math, or English. If there is any direction for students it is towards open-ended personal or social questions.

Even his own education courses, by description in his books and one syllabus found online (a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain other syllabi was denied), the subject matter is open-ended, and a distrust of testing for education majors displayed by a demonstration of feeling through classroom conversation and informal writing of impressions. In fact, Ayers distrusts syllabi and opts instead for stories. In his 2004 book, *Teaching toward Freedom*, he cites Toni Morrison among a pantheon of leftist writers as inspiration for the aspiring teacher. (He fills pages and pages with passages from his favorite writers.) He retells a folktale Morrison related in her 1993 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, about children mocking a blind old woman presumed to be clairvoyant. In response to their question to her about whether a bird they hold in their hand is dead or alive, the old woman replies that she knows that it is in their hands (52-53) and thus becomes the model teacher:

> Her students are mocking her limits, but she turns the provocation around. She tells the young people that their lives are in their own hands, and that they have the power to shape or destroy beyond anything she can or will do. . . . she will not pontificate or posture or pretend an authority she does not want or need, and indeed, does not have. Her patient witnessing eventually calls out their own voices, for she knows something that they

> must learn—there is no master narrative that settles things once and for all. There is no lesson or syllabus or course that contains the answers. Rather there are voyages, and always more fundamental questions to pursue. (53-54)

In fact, in one of the rare moments that Ayers takes to discuss specific curricula, he chooses to focus on former Secretary of Education and head of the National Endowment for the Humanities Bill Bennett. Ayers condemns the virtues Bennett lists in his *Book of Virtues:* "self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, faith" for their "ideological cast in Bennett's embrace." He faults Bennett for his failure to embrace instead the virtues of "solidarity . . . thoughtfulness, integrity, passion, generosity, curiosity, humor, social commitment." Ayers also faults him for failing to include authors like Marx, Herman Melville, B. Traven, or Charles Dickens in his recommended list (*Teaching* 22). Presumably there is no "ideological cast" in Ayers' recitation of his own objectives such as promoting "social commitment" and "Marx."

Students Become Teachers

But such points of difference in curriculums and stated goals form a tiny part of Ayers' writing on pedagogy. What Ayers objects to is that for Bennett, and traditionalists like him, "youngsters remain passive recipients rather than active co-constructors of values" (*Teaching* 23). Although Ayers repeatedly claims to have developed his theories from "experience" in the classroom, descriptions of such "experiences" revolve around the anecdotal account of Ayers himself drawing out and inspiring a disadvantaged child.

Such open-endedness leaves little in terms of a paper trail. Technically, Ayers cannot be pinned down as promoting Marx. The virtues he promotes -- like integrity and curiosity -- likely appeal to today's parents who probably would like to have their youngsters develop into creative and caring individuals. Ayers taps into the zeitgeist of contemporary child-rearing and educational theory.

Still, one would expect that he would offer some direction for future teachers, and the syllabus that was found online, for a Spring 2006 course called "Curriculum Instruction & Evaluation: Advanced Studies in Qualitative Research Methods" by its name would seem to promise rigorous study. But at 14 pages, it gives precious little information on specific knowledge to be learned about "qualitative research methods."

Ayers begins by reprinting a poem to Gwendolyn Brooks written by one of her students. Ayers' own analysis follows on its heels: "There's a dissent in this poem that mirrors the life and work of Gwendolyn Brooks—a refusal of received wisdom, a challenge to the policing proclivities of research and the social sciences, and an invitation to a possible way forward" (2). Indeed, this course on

"research methods" will not only "challenge" but reject factual research and methodology for its ominous "policing proclivities."

Unlike traditional syllabi that provide a schedule for readings, homework, due dates for papers, and test dates, Ayers' syllabus contains a page with general reading assignments, the first of which is to read by the second week two of Ayers' books, *The Good Preschool Teacher* and *A Kind and Just Parent*. Students are advised to be prepared to ask in class such questions as "What are the purposes of research?" "What is the nature of knowledge?" "Is research neutral?" "Who does research serve?" "Can it be linked to advocacy?" "Should it be?" The remaining six reading assignments have gradually fewer specific details assigned to them.

There is no mention of exams or research papers with specified page lengths. But much journal-type writing is required. Grades are determined in the following way:

> If you attend class, read and write every week, and ask authentic questions you will receive a splendid grade. You don't have to write brilliantly but you have to write. Your presence in class every week is REQUIRED—missing class destroys the collective dialogue and weakens the learning community. (8)

Students seem to be evaluated on the very subjective criterion of "authenticity." This leaves evaluation entirely in the hands of the professor who asks such questions: Does the student have the right attitudes? How well does she participate in the "collective dialogue" in the "learning community"?

Quoting Himself

Within the syllabus, Ayers' homilies to students echo the themes of his books and provide guideposts to "authenticity." "Doing qualitative research," Ayers tells his student, "is in the first place an act of intelligence and creativity. . . That makes doing qualitative research risky, intimidating, and awesome as well" (6). What qualitative research is *not* is evidence of traditional "'scientific curiosity,'" which in Ayers' estimation were attributes of "conquerors" and "masters" of the West. "This class," he says, "will ask you to use your intelligence and creativity, your critical mind and ethical heart" and ignore "procedure," "technique" and "set of techniques that are orderly, efficient, and pretested that will allow you to distance yourself from the phenomenon under study or from the process of inquiry itself" (6).

Qualitative research *is,* however,

> interpretive in several senses—its substantive focus is on meaning for actors in their own lifeworlds (the interpretations of informants)--it is

> conducted by someone who must struggle to render the meanings of others for an audience (the interpretation of the researcher); it is received by an audience trying to understand the researcher's interpretations of the participants' interpretations of a given social or cultural world (the interpretation of the reader). (6)

Perhaps sensing that the education major is overwhelmed at this point, Ayers goes on encouragingly, giving support for the challenge: "Keeping this straight is itself a challenge, but the point is that qualitative research is *shamelessly* interpretive. And its substantive core is this: *meaning for human beings in situations.*" All this is said straight-faced and repeated straight-faced, one imagines, in front of a classroom of young, idealistic future teachers.

But Ayers' encouragement in the "challenge" and "struggle" reflects the narrative he writes for himself both as a teacher in his several books on teaching and in his memoir *Fugitive Days.* There he presents himself as the prescient middle child of a middle-class family (downplaying his family's wealth) who can see beyond the "niceness" and normalcy of the 1950s and straight into the heart of darkness and conformity. His boyhood love of firecrackers foreshadows his desire to end the imperialistic Vietnam War by bombing "the bombers," like the Pentagon (*Fugitive Days* 152). But whether it's in the description of protesting, setting bombs, or drawing out the creativity of minority children in the classroom, the undertaking is a "journey" or "exploration" or "struggle."

Another memoir, *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher*, a bestseller among education textbooks, is scheduled to be made into a graphic novel (Reid). *To Teach* opens:

> Much of what I know of teaching is tentative, contingent, and uncertain. I learned it by living it, by doing it, and so what I know is necessarily ragged and rough and unfinished. As with any journey, it can seem neat and certain, even painless, looking backward. On the road, looking forward, there is nothing easy or obvious about it. It is hard, grinding, difficult work. (xi)

Again, Ayers sees the enterprise as "collective." A "conversation" with students and families "allows me to glimpse something of the depth of this enterprise, to unearth the intellectual and ethical implications beneath the surface" (xi).

It is an enterprise and journey, however, without any markers of grades or advancement, just as there is no curriculum. But no curriculum, it is implied, could ever chart or capture the magnitude of the enterprise. Instead, Ayers gives the impression that he goes by his intuition, through his own natural genius for connecting and nurturing. The animus toward objective measurements like

grades and standards—and, indeed, objectivity itself—is displayed in this book and others.

To Teach repeats the premise of Ayers' latest book back to his first book: that American culture is imperialist and racist. The role of the teacher then necessarily must involve fighting the "system." The searcher must provide the inspiration, support, and succor to help children, especially those of color, who are victims, to overcome the "system." But the advice is exhortatory and not strategic: "Teaching is instructing, advising, counseling, organizing, assessing, guiding, goading, showing, managing, modeling, coaching, disciplining, prodding, preaching, persuading, proselytizing, listening, interacting, nursing, and inspiring" (4-5) and "[Teaching] requires more judgement and energy and intensity than, on some days, seems humanly possible. Teaching is spectacularly unlimited" (5). To Ayers, "becoming an outstanding teacher is an heroic quest: One must navigate turbulent and troubled waters, overcome a seemingly endless sea of obstacle, and face danger and challenge (often alone), on the way toward an uncertain reward. Teaching is not for the weak or the faint-hearted; courage and imagination are needed. . . ." (10).

It is this goal "to shape and touch the future" (5 *To Teach*) that makes the sacrifice worthwhile. This is what inspired the twenty-year-old from a comfortable Chicago family to go into teaching in 1965. Ayers' career began at an alternative, Children's Community school in Ann Arbor, Michigan, "a small school with large purposes: a school that, we hoped, would change the world" (7).

In his memoir, this event comes after a gestalt moment of certainty about the Vietnam War: "I had only glimpsed the terrible wrongdoings and crimes in Viet Nam, the things we needed to stop. I knew the history in fragments, mostly from the Fact Sheet [from a teach-in], but some things were certain. Everyone could see that the American war was being fought in a peasant nation 10,000 miles away. . . . The U.S. bombed North Viet Nam from the air, but North Vietnam would never bomb the U.S." He describes it as an injustice on the order of seeing the rape of an old foreign woman (*Fugitive Days* 64-65). His time in jail is filled with lessons learned from cellmates (often of color and disadvantaged) and described with the confidence of one who knows that bond will soon be met, for the daring enterprise far from his parents' "nice" suburban home. By the time he was twenty, Ayers was a "full-time peace activist, and soon a full-time freedom school teacher as well." He then began his career in education: "I walked out of jail and into my first teaching job" (78).

Ayers, who is forthcoming about his sexual exploits of those days ("smashing monogamy" with his comrades), describes the three mothers who had founded the Children's Community in "a shabby church basement" in Ann Arbor. They shared his alarm at the segregation and regimentation of the public schools (78), and "each was wrapped in a sweet settled beauty and carried a kind of sexual confidence I'd rarely seen before. They flirted easily, joked often,

and touched freely" (79). School days are filled with hands-on activities and field trips "everywhere and anywhere: the bakery, the farmers' market, the Ford assembly line, Motown Records, the apple orchard" (80). Trips, including one to visit a child's uncle in jail, "became a big-letter statement about the centrality of firsthand experience as adventure and investigation and learning" (80). They "wanted the kids to think, to be bold and adventurous" (80).

The atmosphere of the school that he walked into and would shortly direct was most days "pockets of calm, eclectic projects and fleeting efforts in every corner, laughter and tears and a current of wildness that could ignite in a heartbeat, sending a rollicking handful of roughnecks harum-scarum around the room" (79). The peace activist feels at home in this environment that rejects the "Calvinism" of traditional schools and follows the philosophy of Rousseau, that "kids are naturally good and will blossom beautifully if raised in freedom" (79-80). As for the "wildest kids in their fullest eruptions," "I mostly held on until the storm passed. I figure that love itself would make it all turn out OK in the end" (80).

Same Old, Same Old

The philosophy of 1965 informs the Ayers pedagogy today. He still emphasizes "experience-based education" in his books. He still views each school as "a potent model of freedom and racial integration" that would impact "all of society" (*To Teach* 7). "We thought of ourselves as an insurgent, experimental counter-institution; one part of a larger movement for social change," Ayers reflects (7) in the book for future teachers.

The task is huge, of course, and requires great sacrifice on the part of teachers. They are asked to make huge financial and personal sacrifices in Ayers' estimation: "Teachers are asked hundreds, perhaps thousands of times why they choose teaching. The question often means: 'Why teach, when you could do something more profitable? [sic] 'Why teach, since teaching is beneath your skill and intelligence?'" (5). The future teacher who is likely to be at the bottom half of her graduating class (according to statistics) feels herself inspired and on a quest.

Ayers has a particular talent for filling up pages with repetitions of such sentences, and he continues on in this inspirational manner, and gives a recitation of the practical disadvantages of teaching with salaries less than a number of other professions, low status (associated with sexism), and difficult situations (6). Again, no statistics are given. If they were, they would contradict his heroic thesis, and would include facts like relative high pay in proportion to education and abilities, almost unparalleled job security through tenure and unionization, and "difficult situations" brought on precisely by the lax disciplinary techniques promoted by Ayers and like-minded educators who dominate the field.

Where's the Beef?

Although Ayers does not provide evidence about the outcomes of his teaching approach in any of his books (preempting them with the rejection of quantification), he nonetheless feels confident about exploding what he sees as ten "myths" about teaching. These myths "are available in every film about teaching, in all the popular literature, and in the common sense passed across the generations" (*To Teach* 11).

The first piece of advice to explode is Myth #1: "Good Classroom Management is an Essential First Step Toward Becoming a Good Teacher [*sic*]." Ayers advises future teachers to give up order in the classroom. Ayers clearly advocates group work—the not quite original, but currently fashionable, pedagogical approach where the teacher plays the "guide on the side" and the not the old "sage on the stage"—but offers no specific means for doing so. Instead he offers a critique that is aimed at a larger set of values. Good classroom management is a myth, Ayers claims, because of "(1) its linearity—the assumption that classroom management precedes teaching in time and (2) its insularity—the notion that classroom management can sensibly be understood as an event separated from the whole of teaching" (*To Teach* 11). One must assume then that the teacher faced with a roomful of loud and restless children can rely on her intuition and empathy in order to direct them towards groups that will magically learn something. But both of Ayers' points are nonsensical, obviously. Point 1 rests on the assumption that children can learn in unmanaged classrooms, and vaguely and wrongly indicts and attacks "linearity." We can imagine the undergraduate skimming over point 2 that makes no sense but impressed nonetheless by its diction that suggests a holistic approach. Ayers further indicts the myth of classroom management as representing "the triumph of narrow behaviorism and manipulation over teaching as a moral craft" (11).

Indeed, teaching is elevated to a moral mission, on the level, as we have seen, of transforming society. It follows then that the idea that "Teachers Learn to Teach in Colleges of Education" would prove to be another myth, number 2. Many would agree that most education classes are of little use, but Ayers' claim of learning on the job (which should eliminate all need for colleges of education, Ayers' bread and butter) is elevated into a moral mission: "reflection should be structured into the teaching day, and should be conducted with peers, and with more experienced people who can act as coaches or guides, and can direct a probingly critical eye at every detail of school life. The complexity of real teaching can then be grasped and the intellectual and ethical heart of teaching can be kept in its center" (12). Apparently, such "complexity" is an existential quality that cannot be further described.

Little is said about Myth 3, "Good Teachers Make Learning Fun." Fun is fine, according to Ayers, but learning is other things as well: it's "engaging, engrossing, amazing, disorienting, involving, and often deeply pleasurable" (13).

Teachers Who Can't or Don't Teach

Myth 4, however, is one of Ayers' most troubling in terms of studies that show outcomes that contradict Ayers' claim. "Good Teachers Always Know the Materials," is a myth, says Ayers. With the prevailing current emphasis on theory and social justice classes in education schools, future teachers are shirked in learning their subject areas. Studies consistently correlate teacher effectiveness with their knowledge of the material. For example, a March 2008 Department of Education report on mathematics teaching stated that studies "overall do confirm the importance of teachers' content knowledge." Conversely, research has "not provided consistent or convincing evidence that students of teachers who are certified in mathematics gain more than those whose teachers are not."

But according to Ayers, although "good teachers are always reading, wondering, exploring—always expanding their interests and their knowledge," they recognize that "knowledge is infinite." Of course, we agree, but according to Ayers, this fact that the teacher cannot know everything means that "trying to stay one step ahead in the text in order to teach the material is ludicrous" (13). Ludicrous? One assumes that being *only* "one step ahead" provides evidence of inadequacy or lack of preparation. Shouldn't the math teacher know more math than the long division she is teaching her fourth-graders? Shouldn't the first-grade reading teacher be able to read above a first-grade level? But for Ayers ignorance demonstrates courage: "Many fine teachers plunge into the unknown alongside their students, simultaneously enacting productive approaches to learning and demonstrating desirable dispositions of mind, like courage and curiosity" (13).

But such a teacher "courageously" displaying her ignorance in front of her charges, should not be provided a curriculum to fall back on, says this professor of curriculum development. Such an idea is another myth, to wit, number 5: "Good Teachers Begin With the Curriculum They Are Given and Find Clever Ways to Enhance It." Questions of "passion" should dominate over practicality, says Ayers. Curriculums are there only to be circled back to if the administration requires it.

That "Good Teachers Are Good Performers" is Myth 6 because it requires the teacher being on "center stage." "That place," says Ayers, "is reserved for students." Tellingly, he says, "This myth of teachers as performers strips teaching of much of its depth and texture and is linked to the idea that teaching is telling, that teaching is delivering lessons or dispensing knowledge" (14).

The myth (number 7) that "Good Teachers Treat all Students Alike" falls back on Ayers' vision of the teacher as a magically empathetic mentor who brings out the genius in each child. Such a teacher intuitively knows how to treat each of her dozens of charges.

That “Students Today Are Different From Ever Before” [*sic*] is in part a myth, Ayers claims. But most educational researchers claim that youngsters, especially those from broken, dysfunctional and poor urban areas, are not as “well-behaved and capable” as children from other areas and children in the past when teachers and administrators did not follow Ayers’ guidance on discipline.

Don’t Test, Don’t Tell

Ayers again displays his animosity towards measurement and evaluation in claiming that the idea that “Good Teaching Can Be Measured by How Well Students Do on Tests” is a myth too, #9, to be specific: “Besides the many problems related to standardized testing, there are also problems that revolve around the connection of teaching to learning” (15). Again, the charge against linearity: “learning is not linear . . . formally and incrementally constructed.” Rather, it is “dynamic and explosive and a lot of it is informal” (15). Indeed, it is, says the parent; learning occurs every day at home and on the playground. But aren’t we sending our children to school to learn the things they can’t at home, to learn in a systematic (i.e., linear) way? Aren’t we expecting them to emerge with a set of skills and a body of knowledge? Isn’t that what we pay teachers to do?

Finally, Ayers offers that “A Good Teacher Knows What’s Going on in the Classroom” is myth 10. But the parent of a child to be taught by a graduate of Ayers’ class should be worried, for Ayers offers no idea of what the classroom should be like and instead wanders into obfuscating proclamations such as “true stories are multitudinous because there are thirty-some true stories” [in the classroom]. Ayers offers no response to the idea that a teacher should know whether her students are following and understanding the material, whether one child is asleep, or another one whacking his classmate over the head. Instead, we get “Classrooms are yeasty places, where an entire group comes together and creates a distinctive and dynamic culture; sometimes things bubble and rise; sometimes they are punched down or killed off” (16).

Ayers then does provide anecdotes of three students who learned to read at different ages and suggests that the good teacher, following his lead, should honor the student’s talents and allow him to proceed at his own pace (16-17). But these examples are given in isolation, without the usual context of a background of studies that they would illustrate. They are offered, one suspects, more to enhance Ayers’ own estimation as the transformative teacher, who has helped everyone from the infant in the daycare center to the juvenile “delinquent” in a residential home to the graduate student. This professor with a terminal degree in education and curriculum development tells teacher education students:

> Over time, a basic understanding about teaching has emerged and become deeply etched in my own consciousness: Good teaching requires most of all a thoughtful, caring teacher committed to the lives of students. .

> . . Like mothering or parenting, good teaching is not a matter of specific techniques or styles, plans or actions. . . . good teaching is not something that can be entirely scripted, preplanned, or pre-specified [*sic*]. . . . Teaching is primarily a matter of love. (18)

Surely, the parent wants the teacher, especially at the lower grade levels, to exude empathy and a genuine concern for children. But one does not expect that the primary function of the teacher, especially one with an advanced degree, is to "love." And the parent certainly does not expect that that essentially would be *all* that the teacher would provide in the classroom. Certainly, it is the parent who should be the primary fount of "love." The simple "discovery" of knowledge the way Ayers describes it can be nurtured without any degree at all.

Education as Revolutionary Activity

Ayers' others books essentially repeat the same theme of fuzzy nurturing. But consider that five years after Ayers' first job teaching children, he as founding member of the Weather Underground planted and set off bombs. Nonetheless, Ayers is the father of two children and the adoptive father of Chesa Boudin, son of Kathy Boudin and David Gilbert, jailed for murder in the 1981 Brinks robbery. During a talk to the World Education Forum before President Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Ayers thanked his adoptive son Chesa Boudin for translating his speech. In it, Ayers said, "teaching invites transformations, it urges revolutions small and large," "capitalism promotes racism and militarism," and "education is the motor-force of revolution" (Ayers "World Education"). Chesa Boudin, who is out with his own book, *Gringo,* is a Rhodes Scholar with degrees from Oxford and Yale universities.

Although Ayers is fuzzy on his specific teaching strategies and open-ended, to say the least, about the content of his curriculum, his vaguely defined goals are understood by his readers and probably are filled in in classroom lectures. The posters of Che Guevera and other Marxists around his office door and his several trips to Venezuela, where he praised Hugo Chavez, certainly reveal his sympathies with communism. Such markers reflect back to Weatherman's reading materials and intellectual influences: "We read Castro and Guevara, Lenin and Mao, Cabral and Nkruma, but on any point of ideology we turned most often to Ho Chi Minh" (*Fugitive* 143). Although representing only 158 members out of a total of 25,000, AERA's Marxist section exists (Allen).

Still, it is considered unwise to openly declare communist allegiance. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in their "Port Huron Statement" distanced themselves from the communism of their parents or parents' generation and called themselves the "*New* Left." For political expediency and in the effort to establish themselves as revolutionary, therefore, those who hold to Ayers' ideology distance themselves from communism per se. More often they label themselves "progressives."

Nevertheless, the schools and curricula they establish follow the strategies of the schools that the Communist Party of the United States established under the direction of the Soviet Union. In the 1967 guidebook for the times, *Conquest With Words,* Roy Colby explains, “In the Communist lingo ‘progressives’ are people who deliberately or unwittingly follow the Communist line.” Colby then quotes George Dimitrov, speaking at the Lenin School of Political Warfare: “’As Soviet power grows, there will be greater aversion to Communist parties everywhere. So we must practice the techniques of withdrawal. Never appear in the foreground; let our friends do the work’” (128-129). The label “progressive” hid the real agenda, a strategy used as early as the early part of the twentieth century.

The left has been successful in getting those who think of themselves as sophisticated to use the label “progressive” and to dismiss charges of communism as part of a paranoid “red scare.” But the charge of McCarthyism is an old smear and goes back to the communist strategies. These were described by ex-communists. What we find is that the tactics of Ayers and comrades, contrary to the “new” left’s claims of originality, are extenuations of the directives from Soviet headquarters to CPUSA.

Old Communist Techniques

A good place to begin is with the American communist defector Louis F. Budenz, who, in his 1954 book *The Techniques of Communism,* devotes a chapter each to two of the primary tactics used by Ayers: education and race. Budenz writes, “In undermining a nation such as the United States, the infiltration of the educational process is of prime importance. The Communists have accordingly made the invasion of schools and colleges one of the major considerations in their psychological warfare. . . .” (208). Budenz cites Stalin’s 1924 directives in a lecture (later published in the influential *Foundations of Leninism*) for the wooing of “’cultural and educational organizations’ as valuable allies in the Communist battle for world dictatorship” (208). The “extensive infiltration” in the schools and colleges of this country began in 1933, after the American recognition of Soviet Russia (208-209).

Budenz points out that many teachers who promoted the tenets of communism did so unsuspectingly. The wording of the message was changed to include ideas of “progressivism.” Budenz notes, “In the classroom, the Communist teacher or professor very rarely, if ever, teaches Marxism-Leninism openly. There are hundreds of indirect ways of reaching the same end” (210). One will not see an overt promotion of communism in Ayers’ books, either. Instead, Ayers attacks the distinguishing aspects of Western civilization: logic, objectivity, the rule of law, fairness, and dismisses them with charges of “linearity” and “conformity.”

Of course, as much as they distanced themselves from the communist party of their parents' generation, the SDS members meeting in Port Huron in 1962 promoted the same ideas and employed the same methods. As David Horowitz describes, the "Port Huron Statement" authors were Marxists who "made a self-conscious attempt to 'speak American.'" Like Horowitz himself, the most important figures were "red diaper babies," children of communists (105). The key concept, "participatory democracy, was a term coined to obscure its radical provenance" and challenge "'bourgeois democracy,'" that did not touch "the basic inequalities of class and power.'" It was called "soviet democracy" in the parlance of the parents and it presumably called for the direct rule by "the people." Like the communist party, they did not work primarily through the electoral and political process, but through institutions and communities. The document describes a kind of community organizing, but the primary institution as conduit was the university, a point that is emphasized by 40-plus-page document's concluding paragraphs: "The bridge to political power . . . will be built through genuine cooperation, locally, nationally, and internationally, between a new left of young people, and an awakening community of allies. In each community we must look within the university and act with confidence that we can be powerful. . . ." Through the university they were ensured (like their communist forebears) of a stamp of intellectual legitimacy and of shaping future generations and the institutions that college graduates would work in: government, the media, law, and schools.

The school that Ayers chose to earn his graduate degrees from, Teachers College at Columbia University, had been the center for "progressive education," (Budenz 215) decades before SDS was even a twinkle in a teenager's eye. Again, the program at Columbia employs philosophies and curricula that promote a communist worldview through John Dewey's pragmatism—a philosophy that "rejects the supernatural and declares there is no absolute good or absolute truth" and thereby provides an opening for the real communist belief: that the absolute truth is Marxism-Leninism (214). Involved in this philosophy is the notion of morality as "growth" and the notion of "growth" as morality (214). The "new" is valued for its own sake, no matter what it may bring (215).

These are certainly ideas promoted by Ayers in his books and they were the ideas of "progressive education," pioneered at Teachers College. Budenz's description of the program at Columbia matches Ayers' pedagogy:

> Progressive education has been an attempt to get away from formal methods of teaching, and to depend on "spontaneous" activities brought about by group discussions. The child is to be freed of discipline, and the program is to be initiated by the student rather than the teacher. Competition and rewards are to be eliminated, and the character of the pupil's work is not to be a major consideration. The theory is that in this manner the child's abilities will be released. (215)

Recall Ayers' almost identical description in *To Teach.*

We can open the page of any of Ayers' other books on education and find a sample representative of this philosophy. To wit, this from the similarly titled volume *To Become a Teacher* in Ayers' introductory essay, "Reinventing Schools":

> Teachers need to reject the role of clerks delivering a set of predetermined curriculum packages to consumers and become instead coaches, guides, and colearners. The first responsibility of teachers, then, will be to see each student in as full and dynamic a way as possible, to discover the experiences, knowledge, preferences, aspirations, and know-how the children themselves bring to school. (125)

And from his essay in *Teaching the Personal and Political*: "The classrooms at CPE are alive with animals, plants, projects, color, and motion. There are no neat rows of desks, no passively quiet youngsters" ("The 'Long Trip'" 97). The teacher Ayers uses as a model, "Bruce," "is not dominating the space, but he is clearly providing leadership to each child and to the whole group. . . . he develops the expectations and the pace—but for him it is the activity of the children that counts as learning" (98). Ayers does admit that the level of noise and activity is "jarring for new visitors." It is true that "children move around a lot and talk with one another at will. And why not? Is every 10-year-old, say, ready to learn the same thing at the same moment? Is quietly receiving bits and pieces of information from a teacher an effective way to learn? " (98).

And this from "Simple Justice: Thinking about Teaching and Learning, Equity, and the Fight for Small Schools" (in *A Simple Justice*): "Education is always and everywhere about opening doors, opening minds, opening possibilities. Education is about opening your eyes and seeing for yourself the world as it really is in all its complexity, and then finding the tools and the strength to participate fully, even to change some of what you find." Foregoing the "unhealthy obsession with classroom management and linear lesson plans," the "educator unleashes the unpredictable" (1) to send graduates out as agents of social change.

The Intended Result

Budenz notes teachers' negative assessments of such classrooms: "the result has been on the whole confusion and chaos" (215). This observation is verified by Ayers' own description of his ideal school. Although the Soviet dictatorship, in contrast, did not permit progressive education in its own schools and instead required "super-military discipline, based on blind acceptance of Marxism-Leninism," its fifth column promoted progressive education in the United States "because of the general confusion, chaos, and breakdown in morale

which it can bring about." Such an undisciplined state is much easier to conquer (216).

Today, it is also no coincidence that such a progressive mode of education is promoted especially in schools with high minority populations and directed specifically *at* minority children. In the examples Ayers provides, of all the children he has helped (one could say saved by his own estimation), Ayers makes sure to mention race and ethnicity. Very often such students are black, Latino, or Native American. Much of the lessons center around their oppression and Ayers is quick to tell future teachers that their own cultural sensitivity (with himself as the model) can aid in the redemption of these children. Consider, for example, Ayers' description of his interaction with "Kelyn, a poor, five-year-old African-American child" while playing "I Spy." Another child then seeing a brown truck pull up, says, "'I spy something brown." When Kelyn eagerly and proudly proclaims, "'Hey! That's me! That's me!'" Ayers attributes the fact that no one "sensed anything peculiar or taboo or funny in Kelyn's response" to his focus as a teacher on "self-respect and affirmation and on exploring differences." On the same opening pages here of *To Teach*, Ayers describes "José La Luz, abused and neglected, a posturing thirteen-year-old wise guy," "a one-man wrecking crew." Ayers' "struggle was to find something of value in José that we might build on." He found it in skateboarding, which José then taught to the other kids (1-3).

Such encounters also describe the second prong of the communist strategy: the use of race as a wedge. This strategy helps explain this "educator's" inordinate emphasis on race. Indeed, Ayers and wife Bernardine Dohrn have dedicated a volume to this topic. Their latest offering, which came out in February 2009, *Race Course Against White Supremacy* makes the claim that American "institutions [are] operating at every level to construct a false concept" of "white supremacy" (181). The theme carries over from the celebration of Ayers himself in *Fugitive Days* as the supremely empathetic "freedom fighter" (74) outraged by abuses inflicted on blacks, fighting a "system that disenfranchises Black people in the South," among other things (61).

In his 1967 book, Roy Colby writes of the scene of riots taking place in the U.S., that "the promoters of revolution," "Americans, black and white, have apparently accepted the faiths and values of Marxism-Leninism and are bent on overthrowing the government of the United States" (122). He continues,

> Communists consider that a revolution is taking shape in this country, the final objective of which is the establishment of a People's Democratic Republic of the United States—a Soviet America. It seems to be spearheaded by the black power movement aimed at utilizing "racial discrimination" as justification for "liberating" us from the "reactionary", "bourgeois" attributes of American civilization, i.e., the free-enterprise

> system, the Judeo-Christian ethic and the concept of the worth of the individual. (122)

In addition to frequent mention of communist intellectual guides in *Fugitive Days*, Ayers mentions a favorite fantasy he entertained whenever he was involved in a violent demonstration: that of the "red army" coming in to take over during the chaos.

Exploiting Minorities

Our discussion of Ayers' focus on race also brings us to chapter 11 of Budenz's 1954 book, "Use and Abuse of Minority Groups." Budenz begins this chapter with the statement, "In the Communist strategy for world conquest, 'minority groups' receive large consideration" (250). Part of the strategy was to appeal to colonial peoples' desire for independence. In the United States, attention was focused on "the Negro problem"—of course, for the Soviet Union's own purposes. Budenz describes the strategy bluntly: "The Negro is just as expendable, his real interests are just as indifferent to the conspiracy, as are the colonial peoples and their welfare. The Negro is to be used, the cry about his rights to be abused on behalf of the Soviet dictatorship" (255).

Many black writers wised up to such exploitation and wrote about their experiences with communism or communists. Notable among these writers are Richard Wright (*The God That Failed*) and Ralph Ellison (*Invisible Man*) (although Ayers and like-minded writers distort Ellison and quote him out of context to support their claims). But in the anthologies that I have been required to use in college composition and literature survey course, editors selectively present pre-defection work that is essentially communist propaganda (like Wright's short story, "Bright and Morning Star") with nary a mention of the author's later repudiation of communism. Similarly, academics like Ayers will never include such communist apostates or conservative black writers in their pantheon of praiseworthy voices of "color."

But the "Negro question," renamed of course, remains with us, thanks to propagandists like Ayers who use the issue of race to promote their own ideology. But here, again, Ayers, for all his claims of radicalism, carries on the traditions of his communist forebears. As such, he reflects the left's continued use of race as a means to advance their own communist/progressive/leftist agenda. The same fears as those described in 1954 stoked by these race agitators remain with us. The Soviet Union cunningly saw the unequal treatment of blacks as the Achilles heel of American culture and cynically used it as the "occasion for creating those 'contradictions' or divisions within this country that would have serious consequences if Communist propaganda were to prevail." To this end, they promoted black separatism in the form of a separate black republic in the South. The idea was resuscitated in the 1960s. As Budenz points

out, such radicalism could greatly harm the legitimate cause for civil rights and serve to inspire a backlash against blacks (255).

Other uses for the exploitation of race include the negative image of the United States conveyed to vulnerable "Asiatic and African peoples." Liberals could be swayed with the accusation that "those who will not go along with the Communists [are] enemies of the Negro people." And "another is the discipline that can be exercised over otherwise recalcitrant members of the conspiracy, by charging them with 'white chauvinism'. . . ." (Budenz 255).

The fact that it is almost a commonplace today that liberals were responsible for the advancement of minorities reveals how successful this propaganda campaign has been. Budenz also points out how communists sabotaged and overtook efforts by conservatives on behalf of civil rights. Such background explains why the left heralds the promotion of leftist minorities and not conservative minorities; for them, such notable figures as Condoleezza Rice and Clarence Thomas do not count. Indeed, they are often castigated as "Uncle Toms"—or worse. Only leftist whites can escape the label "racist."

And promoting such thinking to an extreme are Ayers and his co-conspirator and wife Bernardine Dohrn, especially in their latest book, *Race Course against White Supremacy* (2009). In a chapter titled, "School and Society," Ayers takes even the efforts to advance civil rights as evidence of racism. For example, this is his take on the Supreme Court decision against segregated schools, *Brown v. Board of Education*:

> The decision followed incessant and increasingly intense demands by African Americans that the country live up to the promise of the Fourteenth Amendment. And, importantly, *Brown* coincided with clear white interests that had nothing to do with Black well-being: avoiding a revolution led and defined by subjugated African Americans; transforming the feudal South and integrating it into a repositioned capitalist juggernaut; removing a blatant and embarrassing fact of American life that was being effectively wielded against the U.S. in the escalating Cold War. (180)

All such motives, as Ayers sees them, can be attributed to self-interest: avoidance of revolution, promotion of capitalism, and Cold War strategy. Because of such motives, according to Ayers, the "institution of white supremacy" dominates and denies "full participation in social and political and economic life to Black people" (181). As David Horowitz describes it, the radical left had a vested interest in ensuring that civil rights did *not* become instituted through the American democratic process. If it did, it would have "confirmed the virtue of the hated 'System'" (108). Ayers is still denying that our democratic system was self-correcting.

Among these institutions under Ayers' indictment, though, are schools that promote "obsessions with 'standards' and 'accountability,' test scores and grades, and rigid hierarchies of human value"—evidence of "our system of compulsory education [that] came to life in the cauldron of eugenics and the crucible of white supremacy." Although such things as forced sterilization and race-based marriage laws are a thing of the past, "white supremacy can change its spots while remaining durable and dominant" (186).

The obvious question that comes to mind then is: Since Ayers and Dohrn are white aren't they also part of the "white supremacy"? The answer is no because in their definition a racist is someone who does not want "revolution" or the destruction of capitalism. It seems that Ayers' and Dohrn's goals have not changed since 1968, when, as David Horowitz recalls, they "dissolved SDS into 'Weatherman,' Dohrn's political cult which preached a Marxist version of race war," "when American radicals could atone for their 'white skin privilege' by serving as a fifth column inside the enemy camp" (177).

Under the Ayers-Dohrn worldview, private initiatives to improve schools in minority neighborhoods become suspect. The conspiracy involves the increase of property values and the forcing out of poor minorities, again into neighborhoods with substandard schools. The gentrified Chicago neighborhood that Ayers and Dohrn live in (with neighbor President Barack Obama) could be described as one such neighborhood that has priced out the poor.

Blaming Joe McCarthy

To all such criticisms, the left screams "McCarthyism!" But this strategy is an old one too, taken from the directives from Moscow, as Budenz points out: "real intimidation has been practiced by the concealed Reds for years through smears, whispering, and charges of 'fascism' and now 'McCarthyism'" (138). It's amazing how long those two terms have been in use. In fact, at exclusive Lake Forest Academy, Ayers recalls goading his Spanish teacher, "a maestro of the old school, all direct instruction, call and response, drill and kill in the classroom," about General Franco. Mr. Caballo would retort that "Franco is no dictator. . . . Franco is a great leader, a fine man, a general, and a president. Caballo offered a sputtering, garbled history of modern Spain from his monarchist, fascist perspective" (*Fugitive* 33). So one can see that teaching methods follow political perspective, with knowledge-based "direct instruction," in Ayers' prescient estimation, following the perspective of a fascist. Here, too, Ayers reveals his emerging political sensitivities and insights and budding confrontational style.

Indeed, the picture of Ayers as a tenured professor follows that of himself as a privileged son of middle America. What he teaches and how he teaches it follow from his philosophy as a young agitator, or as he would put it, "freedom fighter." By dint of his empathy and intelligence, Ayers is able to surmount the dull comfortable conformity of his parents' lives, to risk all and raise up the

oppressed. His view of himself this way as he becomes aware of "injustice," as he bonds with jail cellmates, as he shares joints and ideas with fellow radicals, as he plots around the kitchen table to bomb the bombers, is replayed in his role as teacher, as nurturer, inspirer, who ushered light and justice into the lives of the dark-skinned oppressed.

Yet, in the years of hiding, in his account, money never seems to be a problem, outside of making sure that it cannot be traced back to its "source." He and his wife always seem to have comfortable places to live, dope to smoke, and money for dining out. He recalls in *Fugitive Days* dining at the St. Petersburg in San Francisco. But for all his proclaimed empathy, Ayers can see no irony in the description he gives of the restaurant owner, a "cheery old lady whose family had escaped the Bolsheviks and gone to China, only to flee the Maoists en route to Cuba, and then to run from Fidel, landing right here in the U.S." But the U.S. is "where, we hoped, if the pattern held, she was merely awaiting another revolution" (256). In fact, there is a sadistic sort of glee in describing eating the delicious borscht and chicken soup of a refugee who had escaped regimes that killed an estimated 100 million in the twentieth century and probably would have killed her had she not left.

Ayers and company display the cruelty of their intellectual forebears. Like Rousseau and Karl Marx, Ayers sees himself shedding light, transforming the world through his intellect and will. According to a 1982 interview with Larry Grathwohl, the Weather Underground discussed reeducation camps for recalcitrant Americans, after the communist revolution. For those who resisted, estimated at 25 million, death would come. As history has shown, these were the final outcomes of the theories of Rousseau and Marx.

We could say that Ayers shares the attributes of such self-proclaimed "intellectuals," as described by Paul Johnson, in his book about Rousseau, Marx, and others,

> Intellectuals have the arrogance to believe that they can use their brains to tell humanity how to conduct its affairs. In so doing, they turn their backs on natural law, inherited wisdom and the religious background that have traditionally defined the aims of society. . . . they find it hard to admit that there is a higher authority than their own judgment; they have a deep-rooted and tremendously powerful arrogance. (6 "P.S.")

Yet, David Horowitz recalls that when Bernardine Dohrn became SDS president in 1968, she announced that she was "'a revolutionary Communist,' while with calculated and (to me) repellent pride, her vice president, Billy Ayers, declared that he had not read a book in a year" (177). Indeed, both Ayers and Dohrn signed the 1974 Weather Underground statement *Prairie Fire*, which proclaimed, "We are communist women and men. . . ."

Horowitz, who at that time had not yet left the faith of the new left, nonetheless was appalled with the "anti-intellectualism" that had become "a revolutionary badge of honor" (177). In fact, in *Fugitive Days*, Ayers brags that after he obtained his SDS membership cards emblazoned with the opening of the "Port Huron Statement," "We are people of this generation . . . looking uneasily at the world we inherit," he had "only glimpsed the terrible wrongdoings and crimes in Vietnam, the things we needed to stop. I knew history in fragments, mostly from the Fact Sheet" (64-65). Ayers appears to have gotten no perspective since then outside of his group's reading list of Lenin, Mao, and Castro. In this, though, he reflects the prevailing spirit of the times—that "authenticity" is more important than knowledge, reason, and fairness.

Sadly, Ayers's "pedagogy" mirrors the current "cutting-edge" "progressive" pedagogy of our colleges of education. There, future teachers of elementary school children take classes on such subjects as queer theory, postcolonialism, and social justice. Multiculturalism and constructivism dominate education schools, and, of course, then children's classrooms.

But the project that Ayers and Obama worked on, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge with its promotion of Afro-centrism, failed in raising achievement scores, despite spending upwards of $150 million (Kurtz). Such use of pedagogy to enhance "group identity" and "'redistribute power'" widens the gap between racial groups, according to education researcher Sandra Stotsky (xi). Studies by the National Assessment of Education Progress are borne out by observations in the classroom as I and my colleagues in college classrooms can attest. These children come to college classrooms, unable to write error-free sentences, with no or biased knowledge of communism's historical context, of who Plato was, who Adam and Eve were, when the Declaration of Independence was signed, or how to calculate their own grades. Nor are they able to sit and focus on reading material that is longer than a paragraph or two. Nor are they willing to listen attentively or assume they can learn anything from the professor or the past. They rarely take notes and find it more important to send text messages or emails while the professor is lecturing.

Yet by their haughty, and indeed insensitive, demeanors today's students display a confidence in themselves as "capable of controlling and transforming their own lives," to quote Ayers again. Rather than being informed, tolerant, and curious, they are ignorant, intolerant, and closed to ideas outside the parameters that Ayers and like-minded colleagues have drawn. Often they are simply unaware that there is a view other than the left-wing ideological one they have been led to under the cover of "open inquiry." They are furthermore resistant to suggestions when they *are* made that anyone with good motives might have a view outside of the multicultural, agnostic, collectivist, and sexually permissive view they have been catechized in. When they are presented with views that counter those of the teachers with which they have bonded, they often become confrontational and, indeed, intimidating. Consider for example what happens to

David Horowitz when he speaks on campuses about his own past experiences as a Marxist radical. Because he now rejects the tenets that Ayers embraces, he and other like-minded speakers are subjected to shouts and physical attacks from students. Often, the attackers are led by professors and the resurgent SDS.

We have witnessed the success of the primary strategy of disguised communism as described in the "Port Huron Statement." Ayers explains in *To Teach* "The hopes and dreams of youth are in our hands; their goals and aspirations are shaped through their encounters with us" and, tellingly, "teachers are a large presence in the lives of students; we take up a lot of space and we have a powerful impact. This is why I chose teaching: to share my life with young people, to shape and touch the future" (5).

Sandra Stotsky comments about the trend of using the classroom to advance goals of a political nature, "Given the dominating influence of those teacher educators and educational researchers who have been promoting the primacy of social and political goals in the curriculum, there is little one can expect from most of our pedagogical institutions to reverse this anti-intellectual tide" (xviii).

She offers suggestions for parents and citizens, but the detrimental effects of pedagogy arising from 1960s ideology have become exacerbated since the publication of Stotsky's book in 1999. I think that the recent celebrity status of Ayers, and like-minded colleagues like Ward Churchill, the resurgence of SDS, and the cult following of President Barack Obama by young adults provide evidence of the entrenchment of the ideas of Ayers and fellow revolutionaries.

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In ***The Extreme Make-Over of William Ayers: How a Communist Terrorist Became a "Distinguished" Professor of Education,*** Mary Grabar reveals that

- Ayers' education philosophy has remained consistent from his description in *Fugitive Days*, when as a twenty-year-old, "I walked out of jail and into my first teaching job" (78).

- A review of Ayers' "scholarly" books and other writing reveals an unsubstantiated promotion of "experiential" methods, where students are assumed to be constructors of their own knowledge.

- Authorities quoted at length—for the benefit of future teachers—are all of the same radical left-wing bent as Ayers himself.

- As a professor of curriculum, Ayers tells future teachers to eschew curriculum, except as false evidence in the event an administrator should ask for it.

- Ayers tells future teachers that their knowledge of the subject matter they teach is of no consequence. They need not be "one step ahead" of their students, but instead plunge with them into the "unknown."

- Ayers counsels future teachers to rely on emotion; their most important quality is "love."

- In his books, Ayers offers no evidence that his strategy works, and cites no studies, surveys, or the opinion of mainstream scholars.

- Ayers, in fact, disdains evidence, knowledge, standards, or rules of any kind.

- Ayers regards testing and grading of students as evidence of an imperialistic culture, one that needs to be overthrown. That is the aim of the "social change" that he presents as the preeminent function of education.

- The "social change" is aimed towards communism and the techniques that Ayers uses are recycled Stalinist strategies of undermining American culture and education in order to bring about revolution.

- Ayers' techniques and his strategy of fomenting racial discord are the same communist strategies that communist defector Louis F. Budenz outlines in his 1954 book, *The Techniques of Communism.*

- Ayers' speeches in the Marxist-run country of Venezuela are consistent with these other methods of promoting communism.