

Treating schools like "pop up" stores and kids like bubble gum trading cards

December 1, 2012

You have to really give these guys who are carrying out the destruction of public education credit, though I'm not sure what award we should give them. Is it for worst effects of social engineering? They can't win that - yet. The competition is too stiff - just consider all the brutal dictatorships in the past four decades. Am I being too strident? Too tough on these neoliberals who are making students "come first" by treating schools like "pop up" stores? Fixing schools by closing them down? Even the charter schools they created just a few years ago, the schools that were going to save the world of education, are on the chopping block. They shuffle poor kids of color around like they are the baseball trading cards that used to come in bubble gum (do they still?). New Orleans is a stunning example of their disgraceful project, which they masquerade as a success. They are now doing to whole states what they did in New Orleans, coming after poor black kids in the cities, fast. Black folks are talking about this - and not just Glen Ford. Readers of "Ebony" are seeing that this is an attack on the gains of the civil rights movement, a return to "Jim Crow" and worse. White folks too, but not enough. Take Dana Goldstein, education reporter at The Nation. She's dozing when compared to information and analyses the Chicago Teachers Union and Pauline Lipman put forward. When a film reviewer at the New Yorker asks the right questions and The Nation doesn't, that says a lot about the abusive relationship liberals have with Obama, as Ellen Willis described in a great NP article. The Obama administration has just named as a finalist in coveted federal funding for schools (Race to the Top) a private educational authority in Michigan with no track record of school improvement. A coalition of education activists is protesting the possibility of allowing a virtually unproven entity to run the lowest performing schools in the state. Why do this? I have so much to say I could write a book or two about that. (Ok, that's a shameless plug.) Please, enough of the argument that Obama means well and is just misguided. The best we can say is that he's captive of his own ideology, as have been so many of the "best and the brightest" who have done great harm because they are certain that they know what's best for everyone else. They're really doing what transnational corporations and the elites that run them think is best - for us.