

RACISM AND EDUCATION IN THE U.K. AND THE U.S.

MARXISM AND EDUCATION

This series assumes the ongoing relevance of Marx's contributions to critical social analysis and aims to encourage continuation of the development of the legacy of Marxist traditions in and for education. The remit for the substantive focus of scholarship and analysis appearing in the series extends from the global to the local in relation to dynamics of capitalism and encompasses historical and contemporary developments in political economy of education as well as forms of critique and resistances to capitalist social relations. The series announces a new beginning and proceeds in a spirit of openness and dialogue within and between Marxism and education, and between Marxism and its various critics. The essential feature of the work of the series is that Marxism and Marxist frameworks are to be taken seriously, not as formulaic knowledge and unassailable methodology but critically as inspirational resources for renewal of research and understanding, and as support for action in and upon structures and processes of education and their relations to society. The series is dedicated to the realization of positive human potentialities as education and thus, with Marx, to our education as educators.

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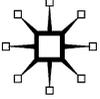
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**Racism and Education in the
U.K. and the U.S.**

Towards a Socialist Alternative

Mike Cole

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Series Editor's Preface

So far as “race,” racism and *racialized* education in the U.K. and the U.S. are concerned, this book by Mike Cole provides a very well-informed introduction, with incisive Marxist analysis while offering a broad overview and critical review of emergent circumstances of struggle for social justice and socialist democracy. As a contribution to necessary debates for action, this could not be more timely for supporting the cause of democratic socialism in and through education. Nor could the bold strategy of offering this analysis with comparative exemplification and profiling current developments in the Venezuelan, Bolivarian revolution would be more appropriate—as Latin American continues to inspire critical modelling for left challenges to neo-liberal and conservative forms. Indeed, more widely, it articulates with voices expressing the need and possibility for establishing a long-awaited Fifth International. Not least, the book provides encouragement and support to the development of social movements through extra-parliamentary progressive forces on either side of the Atlantic. This is a provocative intervention in debates designed for action and implementation of strategies in the broadest senses *in and for education* . . . all in the spirit of *educating the educators* . . . *ourselves in struggles*. Counter-hegemony on a broad scale is the active educative thrust, while more specifically, Mike Cole’s focus leads to a proposed new analytical elaboration on the theme of *institutional racism*. Importantly, it is also part of the book’s pedagogic and educative function to develop the Marxist vocabulary as it unfolds.

The analysis works with a well-established distinction between *education* and *schooling*. Thus, he mobilizes the generative assumption that *education cannot be separated from society*, and does so by countering and providing alternatives to the repressive and reifying mechanisms of *schooling* which separate and differentiate *within* society. At the heart of the analysis is a neo-Marxist concept of *racialization* (elaborating creatively on Robert Miles’ work) embedded within a critique of the capitalist mode of production. Its methodology is educative. The procedure involves recognizing the social and political need for detailed, delicate and multifaceted cultural analysis so far as stereotyping and othering of ethnicity is concerned, for instance, along with articulating some of the key points where resistive action is required. All of this provides materials for feeding back for further critical analysis and

reflection and devising practical knowledge; and thus generating really useful collective understanding that can emerge to guide the potential for further radical action and organization building on what is collectively learned in both form and content *as and for transformative education*. Thus, the critical thrust is that *schooling* signifies the institutional drags on educative progress, working through dominant structures in capitalist economic, cultural and organizational terms and generally having the consequences of the ongoing support of the *myth of social progress through merit*. Schooling policy perpetuates (intentionally or otherwise) selective repression through symbolic and more direct forms of, for instance, institutionally racialized marginalization and incorporation. The analysis thus aims at resistance to social relational forces which are limiting conceptions of horizons of progressive imagination to the immediacy of fatalist acquiescence which serve to embed and consolidate divisive class forms. In these analyses Mike Cole also draws creatively on Gramsci and Althusser who inspire activist challenges to settling for what "they," the dominating voices in the social system of economic relations, can provide and looks to resources in Marxist educational democratic common sense, the good senses which undermine current hegemonies. The targets are commodified and commodifying opportunity structures and state apparatuses, to be attacked through building on such critical good senses opposing possessive individualism and market forms.

Mike Cole's analysis runs counter to developments in the U.K. and the U.S. that instantiate neo-liberal ideological narratives and renewal of oppressive policy initiatives. Such dominant class elite's analyses articulate the trans-Atlantic policy borrowing merry-go-round associated with defaulting *diversity and choice* whereby market models continue to do their class work, consolidating corporate economic, cultural and political class powers from above while appearing to produce support for the narrative of liberating initiatives from below, the pristine individual and romanticized community. Such emergent material and ideological structures are, for instance, arguably reversing social and educational desegregation, in the U.S. In the U.K. the (now late) New Labour regime left most, if not all, the politically and socially significant aspects of the previous Thatcher education policy apparatus intact and developed them further in several respects, notably with policy for institutional differentiation through specialist schools, trust schools and their subsequent academies program presented as bringing support to poor areas; through business focused workforce and human capital development policy and higher education funding to tuition fees policy. In combination, these served to effectively undermine still further the not so far implemented principles of systemic comprehensive education. Thus, New Labour's positive programs on child poverty were unlikely to prove to be significant counter-vailing forces in the larger social picture of both overt and covert selection in education which has continued largely unchallenged. The small but materially and symbolically very significant private sector continues to reinforce deep social divisions. And selective grammar schools have continued to perform their socially divisive capitalizing roles aided and partly articulated by

the housing market for attaining proximity for access to “good” state schools and underpinned by the complex apparatuses of social capitalization.

In the U.S., a penal model of *schooling* through high stakes testing associated with NCLB (No Child Left Behind) is currently going largely unchallenged in material reality by the Obama regime and being re-worked in the U.K. by the current coalition Con-Dem government in the name of “standards.” The latter has proceeded to institute an even more reactionary model of New Labour’s socially flawed “academies” initiatives concentrating now more overtly on well-performing schools. The Con-Dems are moving to capitalize not so much by stealth, in both welfare and education policy, but boldly reinforcing market forms and corporate interests with the hypocritical front of promoting so-called *free* schools in the inclusive *big* society. The key to such policy is its repressive cuts agenda to further undermine the possibilities of democratic state forms, while maintaining firm control of education funding enabling central government approval of project initiatives. As with New Labour, the Teflon effect is through providing spurious empowerment and responsibility to professionals at the local and point-of-delivery levels.

This book is a part of the fight back against what has become decades of corporate, globalizing neoliberal hegemony, culminating in the latest of the cycles of capital’s boom/bust configurations in which the poor and the least well placed will be paying through taxation, interest rates increases, inflation and unemployment to prevent the collapse of wider confidence in finance capital, thereby propping up the divisive system of *socialism for the well off* and *capitalism for the rest*. Mike Cole’s work here reinforces the themes that while education cannot compensate for society, and alone is not *sufficient* as terrain, topic and resources in progressive and emancipator struggles, nevertheless, education at all levels and dimensions continues to be *necessary* to and in any of the contexts of these progressive struggles.

ANTHONY GREEN

Preface

This book can be read cover to cover—for example, as individual or collective reading—or it can be used on courses that cover all the themes dealt with in the book. Chapters can also be freestanding. Thus those with a primary interest in the origins of socialism, and in Marxism and neo-Marxism, can read chapter 1; while for twenty-first century socialism there is chapter 5. Similarly for those whose focus is racism in the United Kingdom and/or the United States, chapters 2 and 3 are the ones to look at. Chapter 4 relates racism in these countries to schooling and education. Finally those with a main interest in suggestions as to what to do to promote multicultural anti-racist socialist practice in educational institutions can go straight to chapter 6. It is my hope that for those who start with specific chapters, rather than reading the book from start to finish, there will be a desire to read other chapters, since all the chapters are interrelated, and hopefully the book represents a coherent whole. The Introduction sets out some basic concepts used in the book and gives an outline of each of the chapters.