

Not content with purging Black voters, Georgia Republicans go after schools, too



By PAI

Not content with oppressing Black Americans' right to vote, the Georgia legislature's Republicans are going after the state's public schools, too. And the state's largest teachers union, the Georgia Association of Educators, is fighting back.

The Republicans' weapon—as in Florida, Virginia, and elsewhere—is to campaign against “Critical Race Theory” and any other discussions of race that might rile their white supremacist base. It calls them “divisive concepts.”

Not coincidentally, Georgia's schools are majority students of color, even more than the rest of the U.S., the latest data from the National Center for Education Statistics show.

But the cost in Georgia is more than just shutting teachers' mouths about racism. Any school district that defies the ruling Republicans and teaches comprehensively about race in the U.S. would lose 10% of its state aid.

And Georgia provided 45%—\$10.58 billion—of the money the state's public schools spent in school year 2020-21. Local property taxes provided 46%.

The Republicans have done all this without, of course, even bothering to talk with the state's teachers, GAE President Lisa Morgan, a primary school teacher from Atlanta, told the city's National Public Radio station.

“History is replete with instances of, and lessons about, oppression,” Morgan said in a statement when right-wing GOP Gov. Brian Kemp first demanded the state school board ban teaching critical race theory, last June. Kemp's ban “will not only impact the teaching of America's complete history, but overall world history,” Morgan added.

“Under this resolution, our teachers' abilities to apply appropriate instructional decisions for their students will be severely limited. Culturally

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responsive pedagogy is now being thrown out the window limiting our teachers' autonomy to teach something other than what is handed to them.”

Now Kemp's fellow Republicans have transformed his anti-Critical Race Theory resolution into 3 pieces of legislation—and the GAE is campaigning against

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them, including at its “Red for Ed” lobby day at the state capitol in Atlanta, scheduled on Feb. 24.

But Georgia is just part of a wider right-wing campaign against U.S. public schools. White supremacists frequently disrupt school boards with their anti-CRT demands. They either send their kids to non-public schools or “home school” them.

A slight majority (54.2%) of U.S. public school students in Fall 2020, the most recent figures available, were students of color. That fall, Georgia’s schools were 37.5% white, 36.5% Black, and 17% Spanish-speaking. The rest were of other races.

The National Education Association, the nation’s largest union and parent union of the GAE, reported in January that University of California at Los Angeles researchers discovered “nearly 900 school districts, enrolling more than 17 million students, or 35% of all K–12 students, have been impacted by local anti-CRT efforts.

The UCLA report, “The Conflict Campaign: Exploring Local Experiences Of The Campaign

To Ban ‘Critical Race Theory’ In Public K–12 Education In The U.S.,” says teachers “felt attacked, intimidated, and threatened from legislation, outside organizations, and local critics,” NEA said.

“Additionally, the researchers found these efforts obstruct white students and students of color from learning together about issues of race and diversity.” NEA has developed a comprehensive curriculum guide for teaching racial issues.

And banning Critical Race Theory, a college-level discussion concept not taught in public elementary and secondary schools, is only the start. Another is teaching the U.S. is “fundamentally racist.” Their bills carefully don’t use the words “white” or “Black.”

“For more than a year now, certain parent groups and legislators nationwide have been showing up to school board meetings and pushing legislation, respectively, to prevent educators from teaching about systemic racism and sexism. Instead, they’re advocating for outdated and inaccurate lessons—and lies—to maintain comfort over truth,” NEA explains.

Paltry donation gets Amazon billionaire Bezos’ name on D.C.’s MLK Library auditorium

By Jamal Rich

On Wednesday, Jan. 26, the D.C. Library Board of Trustees voted to name the auditorium at D.C.’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library for Amazon founder and billionaire Jeff Bezos.

Bezos, whose net worth is close to \$170 billion, donated \$2.7 million to the library’s literacy program for young children to support transitions from pre-K to kindergarten in 2021.

This donation is the latest installment of Bezos’s influence-buying effort in the D.C. region, including the development of Amazon’s second headquarters in Northern Virginia, a \$23 million mansion in Kalorama, as well as a recent \$200 million donation to the Smithsonian Museum.

The decision by library trustees faced swift backlash from the city government and local community leaders. Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen tweeted, “I’m sorry, what? That’s ridiculous.” “Disrespectful on so many levels,” tweeted Zachary Parker, candidate for the council’s Ward 5 position.

Community groups like Harriet’s Wildest Dreams, Empower D.C., D.C. Communist Party USA, Remora House D.C., and more expressed

their disgust with the board’s decision and how it treats the legacy of Dr. King, given that he was a man who fought tirelessly against economic inequality and exploitation of working-class people.

“To name any part of the MLK Library in honor of Jeff Bezos is disrespectful to the legacy of Dr. King and would also cause hurt and harm to D.C.’s Black community,” Harriet’s Wildest Dream, said in a statement. “Bezos is on a world tour to launder his reputation, and the MLK Library should have no part in it.”

This corporate influence on publicly-funded institutions is a dangerous trend toward full privatization of public resources like libraries. Local community leaders are asking D.C. residents to call for “No Bezos Auditorium at MLK!”

To have your voice heard, there is a sample email here that you can send to the Board of Library Trustees along with a sign-up sheet to testify on Feb. 9 at the Library Oversight Committee hearing to fight to get Bezos’s name removed from all public library spaces.

Community groups say the move is an insult to the civil rights leader’s legacy.

U.S. Mail Not for Sale rallies to save USPS and protect elections



By Scott Francis

U.S. Mail Not for Sale rallied supporters in front of the U.S. Postal Service Headquarters here in response to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy's recently announced 10-Year Plan to cut transportation costs from the USPS's budget and reduce post office hours—part of a larger plan to privatize the postal service.

DeJoy was appointed to his position under the Trump administration in 2020, and his plan indicates his shared intentions to make the USPS operate like a private business rather than a public utility. This would severely slow down the postal service and render its use by millions of working-class Americans less affordable.

The rally was held Jan. 12 and attended by members of Shutdown DC, DSA for USPS, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), and the Claudia Jones School for Political Education.

"During the 2020 presidential election, 46% of Americans voted by mail or with an absentee ballot. Slowing down the mail...compromises our entire country's ability to run free and fair elections," the RSVP message for the rally declared.

DeJoy's plan would also harm those who rely on the postal service for medicine (primarily seniors, sick, and disabled people) and union correspondence.

In the wake of decades of privatization of public services through neoliberal policy, at a time when

the extreme right is consolidating its power within the GOP, and in the midst of a devastating pandemic, the erosion of capitalist democracy would make everything worse.

Dennis O'Neal, a retired New York City postal worker, spoke on behalf of the APWU: "The leadership of the [Postal] Board of Governors (PBOG) in the coronavirus crisis has been catastrophic. We have letter carriers who have been working 12-hour days, six or seven days a week for months, and it's getting worse."

Chelsea Redman, a resident of Mt. Rainier, Md., described her experience of the postal crisis: "Most of my community has not gotten mail in three weeks. We're not the only community experiencing this. The postal service is a service, not a business."

The organizers of this rally have four demands for the PBOG:

- Remove corrupt Postmaster DeJoy to protect the vote.
- Stop the implementation of the 10-Year Plan and restore delivery standards.
- Stop the rush election for the new PBOG chair.
- No privatization of the postal service.

Louis DeJoy has a 10-Year Plan to cut the Post Office.

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Ukrainian president dismisses possibility of Russian invasion, accuses West of causing panic

By Steve Sweeney

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged the West to stop creating panic as he downplayed the threat of a Russian invasion of the country last Saturday.

"There are signals even from respected leaders of states, they just say that tomorrow there will be war," he told a press conference in Kiev. But he said such claims are scaremongering and have a negative impact on the Ukrainian economy.

Zelensky said the threat from Russia is no greater now than it was last spring as he accused the press of whipping up a frenzy. The Ukrainian leader was responding to claims of an imminent Russian invasion made by Britain and the U.S., amplified through compliant mainstream media.

President Biden claimed "a distinct possibility" that Moscow would launch an incursion next month. He promised a robust response of invasion with flooding Ukraine with weapons and increasing its troop presence to encircle Russia.

Russia insists that it has no plans for military action and has issued two treaties outlining security guarantees for discussion with NATO and the US. They include agreement to abide by the 2014 U.N.-brokered Minsk Accords which brought a fragile ceasefire to the Donbas region after Lugansk and Donetsk declared independence.

Russia also seeks assurances that the U.S. will not station nuclear weapons in Europe and that agreements over NATO's eastward expansion and Ukrainian membership of the alliance will be adhered to.

Boric de Chile incluye a comunistas en gabinete de mayoría femenina

By Steve Sweeney

Tres comunistas han sido designados para puestos ministeriales en el gabinete del presidente electo de Chile, Gabriel Boric, que también incluye a Maya Fernández Allende, nieta del asesinado expresidente Salvador Allende.

Asumirá el cargo de ministra de defensa, poniéndola a cargo de las fuerzas armadas del país casi 50 años después de que su abuelo muriera en un golpe militar respaldado por Estados Unidos en 1973.

Camila Vallejo del Partido Comunista de Chile es la vocera del gobierno.

Los compañeros del partido Jeanette Jara y Flavio Andrés Salazar fueron designados ministros de bienestar y trabajo y ministro de ciencia y tecnología, respectivamente.

"Los comunistas seguiremos luchando por la dignidad del pueblo de Chile", dijo el partido tras los nombramientos.

Catorce de los 24 nuevos ministros son mujeres, lo que le da a Chile un gabinete de mayoría femenina por primera vez en la historia del país.

La Sra. Vallejo calificó esto como "un salto histórico en la lucha por visibilizar y reivindicar el papel de la mujer en los procesos de transformación social y política.

"Estoy emocionada con este equipo de 14 mujeres diversas y tremendas", dijo. "¡Feminismo y perspectiva de género al poder!"

La Sra. Jara se comprometió a fortalecer los derechos de los trabajadores, dignificar a los jubilados y promover la igualdad de género.

El Sr. Boric describió al nuevo gobierno como "un equipo de personas preparadas con conocimiento, con

experiencia y comprometidas con la agenda de cambios que necesita el país

"La misión del gabinete es sentar las bases de las grandes reformas que hemos propuesto en nuestro programa", agregó.

Prometiéndole abordar las "desigualdades estructurales", el exdirigente estudiantil explicó: "Estamos hablando de un crecimiento sostenible acompañado de una redistribución justa de la riqueza".

El Sr. Boric ganó las elecciones presidenciales del mes pasado luego de un gran descontento social y protestas que recibieron una respuesta violenta de las fuerzas armadas.

Pero su coalición Frente Amplio solo tiene 37 de los 155 escaños en el Congreso, por lo que necesitará el apoyo de otros partidos de izquierda para aprobar la legislación.

El nombramiento de la Sra. Allende es visto por muchos como un momento decisivo. Ella tendrá la tarea de reformar el ejército que expulsó y asesinó a su abuelo.

Agradeció al señor Boric "por confiar en mí para ser parte del gabinete", y agregó: "Ahora nos toca a todos trabajar para que la vida en nuestro país sea cada vez más justa".

Sin embargo, se han levantado las cejas por el nombramiento de la exempleada de la Organización de los Estados Americanos, Antonia Urrejola, como ministra de Relaciones Exteriores.

La legisladora del Partido Socialista ha acusado al presidente de Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, de abusos contra los derechos humanos y ha sido muy crítico con el gobierno venezolano del presidente Nicolás Maduro.

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