



## Education in the North Country REFORM OR DEFORM

by Douglas Selwyn

**A** forum entitled "Education in the North Country: Reform or Deform" was held in Plattsburgh on March 24th. It was held by the North Country Alliance for Public Education, an organization of parents, educators, and other citizens concerned about the current state of education and about its future. The keynote speaker for this event was Diane Ravitch. Dr. Ravitch is an education historian and a former assistant secretary of education under President George H.W. Bush. She was a strong proponent of the high-stakes testing brought about by No Child Left Behind, hoping that the required high-stakes testing and punishment approach would force schools to pay more attention to all students.

What she found was that No Child Left Behind was actually making things worse; it was widening the gap between the students from well-funded schools and neighborhoods and those students living in poverty and attending underfunded schools. Dr. Ravitch has become an outspoken and powerful opponent to current school policy being carried out under the twin banners of No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top.

During her one-hour talk, Dr. Ravitch had harsh words for Governor Cuomo and his policies, which she labeled dumb and uninformed. She made it clear that he was not a teacher or principal, and had no

idea what it took to educate children. His policies were more designed to make public schools look bad so that there would be pressure to open more charter schools, to privatize public education.

Dr. Ravitch was equally harsh on the Common Core and the high stakes testing that comes along with it. The Common Core was created by non-educators and it is a poorly conceived plan that has not been field-tested, that New York State agreed to follow even before it was finished and before anyone had seen it, and was a necessary step in the application process for Race to the Top moneys that the state desperately needed. The Common Core tests are developmentally inappropriate, poorly constructed, riddled with errors, and of no diagnostic value.

Dr. Ravitch made it clear that they were totally inappropriate as instruments to evaluate children or teachers, and the state was spending millions and millions of dollars that could better be spent on educating children. Dr. Ravitch emphasized that the most important and useful action that parents could take on behalf of their children, their children's teachers, and their schools was to refuse to allow their children to take the tests. This act of civil disobedience would make it impossible for the state to continue on the path they have chosen to attack schools and teachers because a significant number of refusals would make their data invalid. She received a standing ovation following her talk, and then answered questions from audience members.

Dr. Ravitch was followed by a presentation by Anna Shah, a parent activist and a lawyer, who has been volunteering her time in helping the public make sense of the legal issues around public education. Ms. Shah made it clear that parents and families do have a constitutional right to make decisions about whether their children will take the standardized tests, and that their decision to refuse to have their children take tests should result in no harm to the child, to the teacher, or to the school. Families whose children refuse the tests are to be scored a "999", a category that carries no harm. She also said that parental refusals cannot be held against a school as long as the school has made a good-faith effort to offer the tests to all students. She was asked about schools that received a low rating by the state because they had large numbers of student refusals. Ms. Shah responded that the state department of education made it clear that schools could not be penalized for the action of parents that were outside of their control.

There was an overwhelming amount of information in the presentations of Dr. Ravitch and Anna Shah, and the approximately one hundred and thirty members of the audience (and those watching on-line) certainly left better informed, inspired, and aware of the next steps they needed to take.



## HIGH STAKES TESTING The Civil Rights Issue OF OUR TIME

by Margarita Garcia-Notario

**At** a time when our government can't be more divided and, as a consequence, inefficient, one conversation by contrast grows in the United States and attracts bipartisan agreement: it is known as the Common Core. Both sides of the political spectrum criticize the current federal education reform. Even when the criticisms digress between Republicans and Democrats, there is a broad area of agreement: the high-stakes testing imposed on our kids is not just excessive, it is outrageous. And we are together on this because this hurts our children. School has stopped being exciting and has started being the place kids are set up for failure by September-June testing. The school curriculum has narrowed so much that many elementary schools rarely teach science or social studies and, of course, music, art, theater and physical education are practically gone.

The tests are the Rulers. Schools', teachers', and children's evaluations depend on the results of these tests, even though no research validates this practice, and abundant research exposes its flaws. Poverty is not factored in, and special-needs kids have no appropriate testing accommodations. And schools are burdened with extra costs of test administration, since the mandates are underfunded.

The fiasco in the current education reform, or deform, is being referred to as the next civil rights issue of our time. Historically, the Civil Rights Movement refers to efforts towards achieving true equality, including, but not being limited to, race and wealth.

Providing the opportunity to all children to be educated is something that Americans have felt proud of as a people for decades and that has been guaranteed by making the school taxes a required contribution from all citizens. Many Americans have risen from poverty to wealth and many

have been able to break away from their ancestors' welfare status and make a decent living by the opportunities, perspectives and help that public schools have provided. However, any efforts aimed at having everybody succeed at the same level and at the same pace, are unrealistic to say the least. This does not represent the concept of equality pursued by the civil rights' concept: setting the "same expectations" for everybody with respect to school performance excludes not only those children who will never reach them but those who can achieve far better than most and whose development and growth gets trampled.

Those who are protesting are the parents of children who cry because they don't want to go to school or get anxious and sick due to the daily pressures. They are parents who are mocking the purpose of something that sells itself as the tool to make American children "college and career ready". On the one side, there is barely anything yet put together with respect to career readiness within the Common Core standards. And, on the other side, today's school experience lacks any ability to motivate kids towards college: learning equals passing endless and unfair tests. Who would want to follow that road?

A new civil disobedience movement has spread throughout the State of New York and is also known as the State Tests' Refusal movement. Last year 60,000 children refused these exams. Parents have created hundreds of groups through social media and are calling for 150,000 refusals in 2015. They refuse these tests to protect their children, their public schools and their teachers. It is a pro-public education action. It is a brave call to legislators and a warning to all Americans that public education is in danger, and in turn our children's future and the health of our democracy. We must encourage North Country parents and neighbors to stand strong to protect children's right to a rich and well-rounded education.

If you want to learn more about what is happening to public education, please visit: <http://ncape.weebly.com> or email: [garcianotario@icloud.com](mailto:garcianotario@icloud.com).

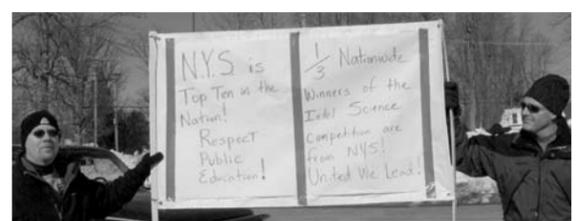
## Public Education Under Attack

by Douglas Selwyn

**Many** North Country citizens believe public education is under attack. On February 28th people from Plattsburgh and across New York State took action and spoke out at rallies as part of what's been described as the "Calling Out Cuomo Bus Tour".

The events were sponsored by NYSUT, the state teachers union. The local Plattsburgh stop on the tour was held in the Plattsburgh High School parking lot and featured speakers from NYSUT, from North Country Alliance for Public Education, a local group of parents and teachers, and from the heads of the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, Randi Weingarten, and Karen Magee, the head of the NY State Teachers Union. The focus of the outdoor rally, which drew approximately 400 people on a cold Saturday morning, was on Governor's Cuomo's attack on teachers and public education in his state-of-the-state address in January; on the increasing emphasis on testing in evaluating schools, teachers, and children; and on the lack of adequate funding for the schools.

After the hour-long Plattsburgh rally, many of the speakers got on a bus and drove to an indoor rally in Massena with more than 1000 people in attendance, then on to Watertown for a rally with several hundred more parents, teachers and concerned citizens.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MONA WHITE

Calling Out Cuomo Rally at Plattsburgh High School.



# The Trans-Pacific Partnership and

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

by Mary-Alice Shemo

### Leaks

about the provisions being negotiated into the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) revealed many frightening things, but a recent leak revealed something truly terrifying.

One of the chapters in this so-called trade deal would open the door to much more human trafficking than is already taking place. Often, these workers are lured to other countries with promises of good jobs that will allow them to send money home to their struggling families. Once there, however, their passports or visas are taken away and they are held virtually prisoners.

One example is the case of Erwiana Sulistyaningsiha, who was murdered by her employer in Hong Kong last year. Her case touched off a campaign by Walk Free to protect domestic workers worldwide.

*Nearly 80 percent of the 21 million people enslaved worldwide are victims of forced labor. Many are in countries that would be party to the TPP.*

Like most of the twenty-four chapters, it would also tie the hands of those trying to abate this ugly practice. It would hugely strengthen “investor-state dispute resolution” provisions of previous free trade agreements, allowing corporations to sue governments for passing laws that block their maximization of profit: “...the hold of our corporate overlords [is] so strong that we believe we have achieved a remarkable victory when the government doesn’t take something away from us.”

This would, instead, be a case of corporations taking government away from us, for national

sovereignty would be severely undermined, if not undone altogether, by those lawsuits.

The national team working against the TPP (of which this writer is part) believes that the key to stopping it, and other damaging deals being negotiated, is to stop Fast Track, a.k.a. Trade Promotion Authority. TPP would surrender authority over trade from Congress to the executive branch, which would be exercised by the U.S. Trade Representative. The agreements would be signed by the heads of state of the countries involved, and only *then* submitted to Congress for a plain up or down vote, with limited review time and no amendments, revisions or modifications of any kind. Hardly democratic!

Concerned readers might help by asking their Congressperson to vote “no” on the Fast Track bill when it comes up. New York’s 21st Congressional District is represented by Elise Stefanik, who can be reached at (202) 225-4611 or at [www.stefanik.house.gov](http://www.stefanik.house.gov)

### If Women Ran The Planet WOULD WARS EXIST?

by Andrew MacDougall

Divisiveness on this burning question continues, with gynocracy advocates as adamant as ever.

Meanwhile, naysayers cite such historic flies in the ointment as Margaret Thatcher, Cleopatra, Elizabeth

I, Catherine the Great, Empress Dowager Cixi and Amina, Warrior Queen of Zaria (now Nigeria), with the current likes of Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland, and even Hillary Clinton thrown in for good measure.

Lost in the sediment of this argumentative impasse is the obscure yet essential voice of filmmaker Robert J. Gurney and his 1958 low-budget oddity, “Cage of Doom”.

Combining vintage (male) feminism and anti-nuke activism cloaked in minimalist sci-fi noir about a time machine’s peek at Earth’s radiation-poisoned future, “Cage of Doom” is a study of Gurney’s passionate concern with our \$20,000 question squashed by pencil-pushing, bean-counting suits dispassionate in the worst way.

Sadly, creative control was snatched from Gurney by studio brass who undermined “Cage of Doom’s” core disappointment with The Manhattan Project’s female participants for “standing idly by” as resident testosterone proceeded with its nuclear madness.

Did Robert J. Gurney care that J. Robert Oppenheimer & Co. would have had any distaff mutineers kicked off the project at the very least, if not prosecuted for treason?

Regardless, it’s both frustrating and relieving to see that scant remains of Gurney’s original vision, warts and all with the best of intentions, survived the system’s suppression of the balance.

To mark Earth Week 2015, catch a double-feature of “Cage of Doom” and 1981’s “The Day After Trinity,” the ultimate documentary about The Manhattan Project whose fallout (pun intended) remains the ultimate threat to dear Mother Earth.

Showing of the 16mm film (not DVD) will take place Saturday, April 25th at 7 p.m. at the Newman Center, 90 Broad St. across from PSU’s Myers Fine Arts. Free, with donations welcome to help defray operation costs. There is more information at [serious\\_61@yahoo.com](mailto:serious_61@yahoo.com)

# The Trafficking of Human Beings

by Susan Kelley

### “Trafficking

is considered a form of modern-day slavery because of the denial of liberty and other basic rights which are denied trafficked persons.

“Human trafficking is the practice of exploiting adults and children for use as commodities in conditions of sexual and labor servitude. It can mirror the dynamics of domestic violence, with traffickers often using the same tactics used by batterers. It is not limited to formal work sectors; it can occur wherever there is work.”<sup>1</sup>

Trafficking involves recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force and other forms of intimidation. Victims are trafficked to make a profit.

Individuals may be exploited in a variety of ways. The most commonly recognized form is sexual exploitation of women and girls. Many people are trafficked for labor exploitation in factories, agriculture, construction, fisheries, textile and mining industries, domestic servitude, and petty street theft. There are no reliable statistics on how many persons are trafficked or exactly how much profit this criminal activity provides. It is known that trafficking is a global issue. Modern slaves produce many products that are consumed daily.

New York State established anti-trafficking legislation in 2007 which criminalized sex and labor trafficking, modified some existing laws to strengthen the response to sex tourism, offered some protection and assistance to victims, and created an Interagency Agency Task Force on human trafficking. This task force consists of a variety of state agencies and departments which have worked to establish victim

services, provide training for law enforcement, and encourage collaboration.

The New York State Response to Human Trafficking Program (RHTP) provides the following resources for victims who are confirmed or certified: case management, shelter, health assessment, medical care, mental health counseling, food, legal services, and other identified service needs. To date the collaborations have established a victim services program, statewide training for law enforcement, prosecutors and service providers, and conducted some statewide awareness-raising activities.

The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act is a federal statute that was passed into law in 2000. It offers some protection for victims of human trafficking who reside in the United States illegally.

Some general indicators that a person may have been trafficked are:

- Belief that they must work against their will
- Be unable to leave their work environment
- Show fear or anxiety
- Be subject to violence or threats of violence to themselves or their loved ones
- Be distrustful of authority
- Be afraid to reveal their immigration status
- Not know their address
- Not have any days off
- Have limited social interaction
- Have no access to medical care
- Be in a situation of dependence
- Have acted on the basis of a false promise
- Travel in groups with persons who are not relatives
- Have no private space

WuDunn and Kristof have documented trafficking for over two decades. Their recently televised PBS special on the subject was based on their book, *A Path Appears: Transforming Lives, Creating Opportunity*. That television special is one of their most recent efforts to educate the public by highlighting programs that help individuals to have a life free from their former trafficker.

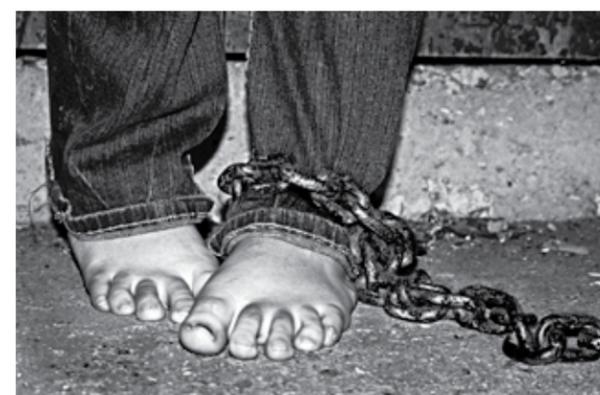
### Strengthening Laws Against Human Trafficking

Whether trafficked into labor or prostitution, women and girls—who constitute the vast majority of victims—are profoundly harmed by these brutal crimes. The New York State Assembly and Senate have bills pending that would offer better protection to survivors of human trafficking, especially minors, by treating survivors as victims, and by increasing the penalties to punish offenders.

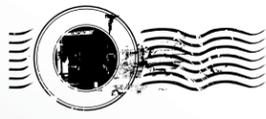
The penalties proposed are: 1) create an affirmative defense to a prostitution charge that the individual was a trafficking victim; 2) increase the penalties across the board for human trafficking and labor trafficking; 3) create new offenses in increasing degrees of aggravated patronizing a minor; and 4) create a civil action for victims of trafficking against their perpetrators.

Notes:

1) Source: “Safe Horizon,” quoted in New York State Office of Employee Relations training manual.



# Friends,



I met with the volunteer editorial committee of *UnderCurrents* recently to plan the next issue—our 8th, for which we are already assigning and collecting articles.

If you had asked me a year ago whether we could produce—i.e., write, edit, print, fold and distribute free—even two issues, I think I might have laughed at the question. But we have.

As a retired publisher, however, I find it ironic that the hardest part of this process has been raising the relatively small number of dollars—about \$350—we have needed to cover our only out-of-pocket expense of each issue, the cost of **printing 2,000 copies**. The writing, editing, proofing, folding, and distribution of those first seven issues of *UnderCurrents* hasn't cost us a cent—because our wonderful unpaid volunteers have pitched in and done all of the upfront work on those issues.

**AND THEN MANY OF THOSE SAME VOLUNTEERS HAVE ALSO TURNED AROUND AND DONATED THE DOLLARS NEEDED TO COVER THE COST OF THE PRINTING!!**

A few of you have seen an issue of *UnderCurrents*, liked what you read, and sent small checks to help with the printing cost. Thank you! We are grateful for those checks!

However, we have reached a point where we need much more help. Some of our volunteers still work and then spend after-hours time on *UnderCurrents*. Others of us are well into retirement age and simply don't have as much energy any longer to do what's needed.

So, I'm asking you to step up and offer to help. I hope in the very near future to announce that *UnderCurrents* will become the communication arm of People for Positive Action (PfPA), the organization that has provided most of the volunteers for *UnderCurrents*. We will welcome you as a volunteer. And we will welcome any financial contribution—large or small—that you can make.

The next meeting of PfPA members will be at 1:00 P.M. on April 11th, in the Library at Lake Forest Retirement Community (8 Lake Forest Drive, Plattsburgh). Come join the most progressive organization in the North Country! **WE NEED YOU! WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**

Bill Cowan, Chair  
People for Positive Action

# Many Thanks

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# A Review of Naomi Klein's Book This Changes Everything: CAPITALISM VS. THE CLIMATE

by Tim Palmer

**The** economic catastrophe of the 1930s reshaped the excesses of the Gilded Age into the more egalitarian era ushered in by The New Deal. The transformation continued after World War II, as enthusiastic voters supported sweeping social programs such as Social Security, subsidized housing, public funding for the arts and, in the rest of the developed world, health care. The global warming and climate change caused by mankind's use of fossil fuels is rapidly developing into a crisis of much greater magnitude, and the thesis of *This Changes Everything* is that successfully adapting to the resulting environmental changes will require a correspondingly, even grander, metamorphosis of human culture.

However, a redesign of the social order that protects humanity from both a savagely unjust economic system and a destabilized climate system is not the only possible outcome.

Ms. Klein understands how corporate interests capitalize on the fear and uncertainty that accompany catastrophe. This provides the perfect climate for instituting policies designed to enrich a small elite, as demonstrated by the U.S. response to 911 and the banking crisis of 2008. Times of turmoil provide opportunities for “lifting regulations, cutting social spending and forcing large-scale privatizations of the public sphere. They have also been the excuse for extreme crackdowns on civil liberties and chilling human rights violations.”

Humanity is failing to respond as the climate crisis rapidly gains momentum. The book explains how this is one symptom of a global economy dominated by deregulated capitalism. Privatization is rapidly dismantling and selling off the public resources needed for massive investment in low carbon infrastructure, such as public transportation. As corporate control metastasizes into all levels of government, it is able to insure that deregulation and reduced taxation continue to subsidize the extraction of coal, oil and gas by the fossil fuel industry. In addition, although enormous losses in corporate tax revenue place a heavier burden on the poor and middle class, continuing growth in government subsidies for business requires additional revenue. This is extracted from the budgets of programs identified by the those on the political Right as remnants of the failed socialist model, such as public school and social services programs. Meanwhile, global trade deals like NAFTA, CAFTA and the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) are insuring a global governance system designed for and assembled by transnational corporate interests.

Klein notes that, unfortunately for mankind, there was an effective corporate grip on world governance and the economy by the time that scientists like James Hansen had determined the importance of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to prevent global warming.

The immediate response of fossil fuel interests was to discredit these findings by following the tobacco industry model of sowing public doubt about the dangers of climate change, a strategy that has successfully blunted any attempt to limit fossil fuel

use for about four decades. As a result, the global atmospheric and oceanic systems responsible for maintaining a viable world are rapidly approaching a point where the human capacity for change will no longer be able to avert a devastating climate catastrophe.

Any serious reader will find this book fascinating, frightening, and informative. Extensive notations and references are found in the back of the book, along with a fine index. These features also make it an excellent general reference for climate-related issues.

Naomi Klein is a new mother who knows that dealing with the coming climate catastrophe and assuring the future for all children requires cooperation on a global scale. Although there is no guarantee of a favorable outcome, she is optimistic about the potential for our success. Her book explains the reasons for this hopeful outlook, including how each of us can best contribute to the likelihood of our common success.

Understanding Ms Klein's optimism may be the best possible motivation for reading the book. Everyone can benefit from understanding how “This Changes Everything.”





# Letter to NYS Legislators

Sent by Douglas Selwyn  
January 24, 2015

## Governor

Cuomo continued his assault on teachers and public education in his state of the state speech. His speech was full of hot rhetoric and strong statements, but woefully short of details or evidence supporting his claims. Thankfully, he does not make the laws, though he does carry a large stick, which he clearly is willing to use. I am hoping that those of you involved in actually making the laws will not be swayed by his rhetoric and will take time to really learn about the issues and about what is happening in our schools. It's not easy to do because most educators, including administrators have been intimidated into silence. They have been warned to say nothing so that they don't lose their jobs, so that their schools are not punished or shut out of potential grants. The relative quiet you are hearing from the public school community is not evidence of agreement, but is the result of fear and intimidation. Good decisions cannot be made when those with the most information on a topic are shut out of the conversation.

I am a university professor who is in the schools on a regular basis as part of my work. Before that I was a classroom teacher for fourteen years. I can assure you that the Governor's characterization of what is happening in schools is way off base, and reflects ideology and anger rather than accuracy. May I humbly offer a few observations that I hope will be useful as you consider these incredibly complex issues about how best to serve and educate our children.

**FIRST**, the single most significant determiner of school success for children is related to family/district wealth and income. Those children who come from homes in wealthy districts score higher on tests. It doesn't mean they are smarter than children from families with lower income, or who attend schools with fewer resources, but they do score higher. A recent study done by the Southern

Education Foundation found that more than half our country's public school children come from low income households, and that they score significantly lower on tests. If we really want to do something about educating our school children we should reduce the inequality in our society; we should reduce poverty. That would address an underlying problem rather than pretend to apply a fix that sounds good in a sound bite but does nothing. David Berliner's research makes this point clearly and convincingly.

**SECOND**, there is virtually no one in the assessment community who would support making high stakes decisions based on a single high stakes test, and that includes the for-profit companies that produce the tests. They caution that their tests should not be used in isolation to make high stakes decisions, though they continue to produce these tests knowing that they will be misused by districts across the state and country. Why do they do this? Money, of course. They are making incredible amounts of money by producing and scoring these tests. They are not in the education business; they are in business to make profits, and Pearson is making incredible profits. This foreign-based for-profit business is turning our public school dollars that should be serving the needs of our students into profits for their investors and upper management.

**THIRD**, there is no such thing as a standardized child. This one-size-fits-all approach, which pretends that there is a particular place in the curriculum that all children in third grade should be on November 18, is ludicrous, and is not supported by any research or evidence. Children do not learn or develop at the same pace, nor should they. If you have more than one child, or grew up with brothers or sisters, or both, you know that there is no one assessment that could adequately assess all of those in your family. You have different strengths, interests, abilities, ways of knowing

and communicating, and speeds at which you learn. We are pretending that standardizing a curriculum or test is possible, and that it is good practice to crack the whip and make everyone move at the same pace. No learning theory would support this. No psychologist would support this. No educator would support this. And no one in the educational community would think that punishing students or teachers for not moving at the exact same pace as others is a good idea, and yet that is what is being done, and the governor wants to ratchet up that practice. What is he basing that on? He is treating education as the equivalent of an assembly line producing widgets, and he is demanding that we quicken the pace of production. You can't do this with children without doing harm. And to pretend that there is anything standardized about children living in Onchiota (a small town in the woods west of Plattsburgh) taking the same test as someone living in the Hamptons, or in Harlem, is absurd. They live completely different lives and bring an entirely different sense of the world with them to whatever they experience. One is not better than another, but they are different, and there is no one assessment instrument that can fully appreciate who all of our children are.

**FOURTH**, putting all our attention into preparing students to take two standardized tests means we are marginalizing or eliminating many subjects and experiences that are of value to our children and to our society. When we think of who we hope our children will turn out to be, most of us want people who have knowledge and who can communicate and work with a range of people; who can problem-solve and deal with the unexpected; who are creative and curious; who understand the world in which they live so that they can contribute to keeping it safe and sustainable; who have empathy and compassion for their neighbors and friends; who are willing to work hard and responsibly; who can contribute to the health and well-being of their communities, and so on. Employers give similar lists when they

talk about whom they are looking for in their new employees. Most of that list is outside the reach of what is tested in schools. Does scoring well on ELA and math tests give you an adequate picture of who that person is? Are those scores worth what it takes to get them, including marginalizing science, social studies, the arts, and recess?

**FIFTH**, we are losing local control. Governor Cuomo is attempting to grab more and more control of what happens in our schools, such that our teachers and administrators, who know the children and the community, have little or nothing to say about what goes on with our own children. Do you in Albany, who are not educators, know enough that you can make decisions about how to educate particular children in particular classrooms better than those who are actually with those children every day?

**SIXTH**, when you think back about those teachers who truly made a difference in your life, was it because they helped you to score high on a test? What was it about them that made learning come alive, that made you excited to be in the world that was becoming increasingly interesting because of what was happening in your classroom? Chances are that those things that made schooling interesting and compelling for you are being squeezed out of the classroom, to make room for test prep, work sheets, and more test prep. Is this what we want for our children?

**SEVENTH**, the state continues to badly underfund education; it continues to refuse to pay back the gap adjustment billions that were taken from education during the recession, while at the same time it keeps demanding more from teachers and schools. You can't keep taking away resources and demanding more if you really want more to happen. Costs continue to rise, especially related to testing; districts continue to

cut personnel and programs that served the needs of children, and the unfunded mandates keep coming. This is an engineered crisis.

**EIGHTH**, there is no educational crisis. Our schools overall are doing just fine. When you factor poverty into the equation, our children are doing as well as any in the world. Where our scores fall is in those places that are underfunded and where children live in poverty. Telling a lie over and over again does not make it true, so when Cuomo says that our schools are failing, he is not telling the truth. Let me hasten to say that there is more we can do; there are improvements and changes that we need to make in our schools, but that does not mean the schools are in crisis, or that they are failing.

**NINTH**, charter schools, which the governor is pushing, are no more effective than public schools, even though they have more control over whom they teach. Several studies make clear that charters do no better than public schools in serving students. There are some charters that are wonderful. There are some public schools that are wonderful. There are some of each that don't do nearly as well as we wish they would; on average there is little difference. Where the difference shows up is in the profits that charters make for those companies and individuals who run them. For-profit companies that own and run charter schools can reap significant financial gain from those schools.

**TENTH**, it is curious that those with virtually no actual experience in either being a student in public schools or actually working in one for any length of time are the ones claiming to have the best knowledge of what will serve those children they have never worked with or spent time with. This is arrogance of the highest order. When teachers and administrators speak about education and their students, they are

dismissed as either whiners or special interests. When politicians and business leaders talk, especially those with large bank accounts and rich friends, they are treated as knowledgeable experts. It is a problem!

I hope that you will consider these points and spend time in schools (more than a walk and wave through). Take the time to listen to teachers and parents and students who would much rather be attending to their lives than attending meetings and rallies and protests; they know what you cannot know, and that is what their experience is in schools.

You... [legislators] ...were voted into your offices to make good decisions for the people in your districts, not to curry favor with the Governor or to make money for corporations and campaign contributors. Please take that charge seriously; it is what makes our democracy a democracy.

## Upcoming Events

(All Free and Public Welcome)

**Sat 4/11 - 12 noon** *Community Opposition to Fast Track & TPP.* Bring signs. Gathering at Rep. Stefanik's Office, 23 Durkee St, Plattsburgh

**Sat 4/11 - 1:15 PM** *People For Positive Action monthly meeting.* Lake Forest Senior Community

**Wed 4/22 - 8-10 pm** *Earth Day Celebration, Students inviting community.* Angell College Center Ballroom

**Sat 4/25 - 10 am** *Plattsburgh Community Garden Group annual meeting.* Plattsburgh Public Library, 2nd floor

**Sat 4/25 - 7 pm** *Earth Week Film Event - Dedicated to victims of Hiroshima & Nagasaki* Newman Center, 90 Broad St

