Where do we go from here?

This June 21, the Indianapolis Public School (IPS) selected pro-privatization interim superintendent Alessia Johnson to be the district's leader despite those who questioned her close ties to Teach for America.

Above all, don't forget, we wouldn't even be having a discussion about Superintendent Johnson if it were not for the fact that Stand for Children (SfC) helped buy IPS school board elections in 2012, 2014, 2016--and almost in 2018. This means the very foundation of the IPS corporate reform movement is corrupt.

- Is Stand for Children buying IPS board election?
- Chalkbeat distorts truth about IPS election campaign funding
- What's really going on in Indiana's public schools?

The response of Parent Power, Indy’s Parents Across America affiliate, is to talk less about the superintendent and more about actualizing how we can win back families who are attracted to the charter movement.

**Parent Power’s Plan: 1) De-colonize public education 2) Show charters are anti-democratic**

Educators must take an honest look in the mirror and realize our public schools don’t need fixing; they were never meant to educate all children. We can’t call schools designed to fail broken because public education has succeeded in carrying out its original design.

From the start, the purpose of (public) schools (think Horace Mann's “Common School” idea) was to assimilate (colonize/conform) students into the "melting pot." See: Schooling the world: The white man's last burden.

“Urban students quickly receive the message that they can only be smart when they are not who they are. This in many cases is classroom colonialism.” ~ Prof. Chris Emdin

Teacher Dr. Chris Emdin, after discussing education with Native Americans, saw how similar his urban school was to the Carlisle Indian School where Natives were assimilated to the white norm. Emdin now calls his urban students “neo-indigenous” since their schools also have trouble with their urban clothing, language, and (hip hop) culture. Indeed, many educators, both traditional and charter, participating in education-as-assimilation, are motivated by good intentions, yet are “faux-liberators” (think: Teach for America members) who may be actually damaging students.

Failing to challenge the inherent colonality of public schools means the onus of change is forever on the “colonized.” Success for people of color and poor whites will endlessly revolve around finding ways to conform and succeed on another’s terms, rather than around nurturing their own community’s criteria for achievement.

**Schools are the enemy**

Colonality worked for many who wanted to assimilate, but for those who didn't, school became the enemy --think: The Mis-education of the Negro (1933) by Woodson and The White Architects of Black Education (2001) by Watkins. Also read Too Much School, Too Little Education (1994) by Shujaa.

Traditional public school educators must see how corporate reformers used the long-time distrust of African-Americans towards public education (See above: “Schools are the enemy”) to successfully split them off from their own public schools, and the schools' teachers and unions and consequently making charters/vouchers more attractive. See Dr. Ford's talk, The corporate assault on public education to understand this “split.”

The problem for charters is they are merely a neo-colonial response to our colonial education system. Charters are not anything different from regular schools except for new ways to better enable and perpetuate standardization via the myth of the Achievement Gap and Eugenics-based standardized testing. See The Mind Trust's neo-colonial war on parents. Here, the value of charters will depend upon how they're able to get students of color to assimilate towards the colonial normative dogma of whiteness. Also see: Weilbacher's paper Standardization and whiteness: One and the same?

“To believe in the existence of any sort of achievement gap, some sort of racial hierarchy is actually to believe in a racist idea. The achievement gap between the races with whites and Asians at the top and blacks and
Latino academic Prof. Ibram X. Kendi has identified that standard testing is a ‘racist weapon.’ ‘Standardized tests have become the most effective racist weapons ever devised to objectively degrade Black minds and legally exclude their bodies,’ Kendi said. ‘Standardized tests see how white you are.’

John Harris Loflin, African American academic, argues that charter schools educate for liberation, not merely to escape. He said that ‘the purpose of education for urban students is not to help them get out of poverty, but to get rid of poverty.’

Parent Power Indianapolis (E-CAT) is an Indianapolis-based organization of parents and community members working to change the education landscape. They call for a new conception of community schools and local control of education. As such parents can demand community schools which are transformative, promoting self-reliance and self-determination.

The parent group calls for an end to corporate control and for public schools to be run by parents and communities. They argue that the funding of these schools is influenced by the mandated biased and discriminatory standardized tests that currently are in use. The parent group calls for a move away from the corporate controlled, neo-colonial, and anti-democratic charters.

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