

Food from the Mouths of Children: Corporate and Individual Wealth and Underfunded Schools in Urban America¹

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Money does matter to school districts. While lots of money may not guarantee that a school district will provide a good education, a district cannot provide a good education without sufficient funds. Books cost money; small class size is expensive; experienced highly qualified teachers command higher salaries; college counselors, reading and math specialists, and special education support personnel are costly; new buildings demand millions of dollars; technology is not cheap. And in low-income urban districts, the students need additional monies to compensate for the health care issues and other ravages of lives lived in poverty.

The United States is the richest country on earth. U.S. based corporations earn billions of dollars in profits every year, and American individuals with high incomes are among the world's wealthiest. Indeed, there are more affluent households in the U.S. than ever before. One out of every 325 households had a net worth of \$10 million or more in 2004, the latest year for which data are available. This figure is more than four times the number of wealthy households counted in 1989 (Wolff, forthcoming).

The funds to pay for education come, of course, from tax dollars. In most places, local school districts still rely on property taxes to finance school budgets, although property taxes are diminishing as the major source of education funding nationwide. States now pay on average more than half (about 56%) of education funding in the U.S. (Hoo, 2006). A critical question addressed in this paper is as follows: Do wealthy corporations and individuals pay their fair share of taxes? "Fairness" here, as is common in discussions of progressive taxation, indicates tax payments commensurate with capacity to pay.

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Corporate Profits and U.S. Taxes

The February 2, 2005, issue of *The Economist* noted that between 2003 and 2005, U.S. corporate profits rose by 60% while wage income rose by only 10%. U.S. corporate profits increased 21.3% in 2006 and, as reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce that year, accounted for the largest share of national income in 40 years (Market Watch, 2006). Yet, despite record-breaking profits and a nominal 35% tax rate, many U.S. corporations paid little or no U.S. tax. Sixty percent of the largest and most profitable corporations paid no federal income tax at all in one or more years between 1996 and 2000 (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2004). According to the well-regarded Citizens for Tax Justice (2002), low audit rates since Ronald Reagan's administration, tax breaks, and "Congressional indifference to abusive offshore corporate tax shelters," cost the U.S. taxpayers over \$170 billion annually. The Citizens for Tax Justice reports several examples of this type of corporate welfare:

- "General Electric, one of the America's most profitable corporations, reported \$50.8 billion in U.S. profits between 1996 and 2000 but paid only 11.5 percent of that in federal income taxes" (p. 1). That low tax rate reflected almost \$12 billion in lost taxes for the U.S. economy. The impact such an amount could have had on public education is huge.
- "IBM reported \$5.7 billion in U.S. profits in 2000 but paid only 3.4 percent of that in federal income taxes. In 1997, IBM reported \$3.1 billion in U.S. profits, and instead of paying taxes, got a tax rebate" (p. 2).
- "Colgate-Palmolive paid no taxes at all between 1999 and 2000, despite \$1.6 billion in reported U.S. profits. Colgate's total tax rate between 1996 and 2000 was *negative* 1.3 percent, due to \$595 million in corporate tax welfare" (p. 2). In a strategized movement to increase corporate revenue, bonuses for executives, and higher dividend checks for shareholders, the company washed its hands of the resources it could have helped provide for public education and other public goods such as healthcare, breakfast programs, and so forth—all of which lost funding in the successive budgets of the George W. Bush presidency.
- "Microsoft enjoyed more than \$12 billion in total tax breaks [between 1996 and 2000]. In fact, Microsoft actually paid no tax at all in 1999, despite \$12.3 billion in reported U.S. profits. Microsoft's tax rate for the past two years was only 1.8 percent on \$21.9 billion in pretax U.S. profits" (p. 1).

Corporate taxes have been falling worldwide. As a share of total taxation, corporate taxes have fallen by 15% and 22% in the United Kingdom and Italy, respectively, since the 1980s. They have fallen by 41% and 43% in Germany and Japan, respectively, since the 1970s; and by 53% in the U.S. since the late 1960s. As a recent report of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions revealed, the amount of money lost to tax havens in developing countries every year is equivalent to “six times the annual cost of achieving universal [worldwide] primary education” (2006, p. 25).

In the U.S., the share of the federal tax burden paid by corporations declined, from 40% in the 1940s, to 26.5% in 1950, to 10.2% in 2000. In 2001, the corporate share of total federal taxes paid by corporations was down to 9.2% (Mishel, Bernstein, & Boushey, 2003). State and local taxes paid by corporations have also declined in the U.S. In 1957, corporations provided 45% of local property tax revenues in the states, but by 1987, their share had plummeted to about 16% (Mishel et al., 2003). By 2002, the corporate share of total state and local taxes paid was only 2.9%.

Research has shown, however, that the decline in the effective state-local corporate income tax rate is due to changes in state tax law, not to shifts in economic activity toward those states with lower tax rates (Fisher, 2002). Indeed, in 15 of the 50 states, corporations pay even less than this 2.9% rate. For example, in New York in 2005, more than 60% of corporations paid only the minimum-mandated tax of \$1,500. In New Jersey, 30 of the state’s 50 largest corporations paid only the minimum tax of \$200 (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 2005).

An analysis of the state taxes paid between 2001 and 2003 by 252 of the largest corporations in the U.S. found that they paid on average only 2.3% of their U.S. profits in state tax payments (Citizens for Tax Justice, 2005; see also Anyon, 2005). Since the average statutory state corporate tax rate is about 6.8%, two-thirds of these companies’ profits escaped state taxes entirely. Some companies like Toys R Us, AT&T, and Merrill Lynch paid no net state income tax over the three-year period studied. The analysis points out that if these 252 corporations had paid the 6.8% average state corporate tax rate on the almost \$1 trillion in U.S. profits that they reported to their shareholders, they would have paid \$67.1 billion in state corporate income taxes over those three years. Instead, they paid only \$25.4 billion. Thus, these 252 companies avoided a total of \$41.7 billion in state corporate income taxes over those three years (Citizens for Tax Justice, 2005; see also Anyon, 2005). A 2.3% tax rate does not rank as a fair share.

Urban school districts across the U.S. are struggling to meet the needs of students, teachers, and decaying school buildings. Yet, states and city governments cry poverty as the reason these districts fall behind. One reason is

that profitable corporations are not paying their fair share of taxes. Another reason is the vastly diminished tax rates of wealthy individuals.

Individual Wealth, Poverty, and U.S. Income Taxes

Do wealthy individuals in the U.S. pay their fair share of taxes? In 1913, the income tax became a permanent feature of U.S. life via the 16th Amendment to the Constitution. By 1918, 55 income brackets had been established with a maximum individual tax rate of 77% and a corporate rate of 12%. Still, only the wealthiest 5% of the population paid income tax.

After World War I, a series of four tax cuts during the 1920s lowered the top (marginal) individual income tax rate from 77% to 25% (Phillips, 2002). During the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress raised the top individual tax brackets, implemented inheritance taxes, and eliminated personal holding companies through which some of the rich had deducted the expenses of their estates, stables, and other items. A number of other taxes were implemented as well, including taxes on capital stock and dividend receipts. The Social Security Act of 1935 imposed a wage tax, half of which was to be paid by employees and half by employers; it also increased the top individual tax rate to 79%.

During World War II, Congress dramatically expanded the reach of the income tax. The number of taxpayers grew from 4 to 43 million between 1939 and 1945. From 1940 to 1944, marginal tax rates increased from 4% to 19% for those Americans in the bottom tax bracket, while the rate for those at the top increased to 88%. During the post-World War II years of broadly shared prosperity in the U.S., income tax on the rich was high. In 1948, the marginal tax rate on the richest 1% of U.S. families was 76.9%. During the 1950s, it was 85.5%.

With regard to taxes, it seems to matter little which political party is in place: the movement toward a centrist position to protect the interests of rich party backers has been in play for decades. In 1963, Democratic President John F. Kennedy reduced tax rates for the rich back to 77%. If that were not enough, the rates for the top 1% of the nation's wealthy families were reduced even further in 1965. During the "Reagan Revolution" years of the 1980s, the top income tax bracket was cut from 70% to 28%. By 1989, the portion of the nation's wealth held by the top 1% of its richest citizens had jumped to 39% — nearly twice the share held during the New Deal and comparable to 1929 levels. Since then, U.S. tax rates for the rich have plummeted further while concentrated wealth and income have climbed.

Beginning with Reagan's administration, the effective tax rate of the median-income U.S. family increased steadily, from 5.3% in 1948 to 24.63% in 1990. Payroll taxes paid by middle-class individuals such as those mandated by FICA (the Federal Insurance Contribution Act for Social Security) and Medicare, for example, have also risen dramatically, from 6.9% in 1950 to 31.1% in 2000 (Phillips, 2002).

Nationwide, middle-income families pay almost 10% of their earnings in state and local taxes, and poor families pay more than 11%. But the richest people effectively pay only 5.2% of their income in state and local taxes. Since 1989, state and local taxes have risen for low- and middle-income taxpayers, but have fallen for the very wealthiest (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 2003). Thus, the burden of paying for public education is placed most heavily upon the shoulders of those who must forfeit the most to pay for it. This becomes especially problematic for school districts as they try to raise operating funds through levies since these are the only kinds of taxes that citizens can effectively vote down in the polls. Though legislators determine income tax levels and decide when to provide stimulus packages or rebates, ordinary voters can say "no" to districts that are forced to come begging for funds on election day.

The working poor also pay taxes. Despite years of tax cutting, poor families in many states still face a substantial burden when they file personal income taxes. In 2001, in almost half of the states that levy income taxes (19 out of 42 states), two-parent families (with two children) with incomes below the federal poverty line, owed income tax. In 17 of those states, single-parent families (with two children) in poverty also paid income taxes. Moreover, about half of the 23 states that do not tax the poor still tax families with incomes just above the poverty line, even though those families typically have great difficulty making ends meet. In some states, families with poverty-level incomes paid income taxes of several hundred dollars (Johnson et al., 2002).

For instance, a two-parent, two-child family in Kentucky with income at the 2001 poverty line (\$18,104 for a family of four) owed \$596 in income tax which represents the highest tax on such a family in the U.S. A single-parent family with two children in Kentucky with income at the poverty level (\$14,129) owed \$361, which is second only to the tax levied on a similar family in Alabama (\$388). These amounts can make a significant difference to a family that is struggling financially. Other states levying income taxes of \$200 or more on families with poverty-level incomes include Arkansas, Hawaii, Indiana, Michigan, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon, Virginia, and West Virginia (Johnson et al., 2002). Federal and some state governments recognize the challenges faced by families with incomes slightly above the poverty line and have set eligibility for some assistance programs such as energy assistance, school lunch subsidies, and health care subsidies at 125% of the poverty line or above. Thirty states, however,

continue to levy income tax on families with incomes at 125% of the poverty line (Johnson et al., 2002).

The Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), enacted by Congress in 1975, is a tax credit available to working families with incomes well below the federal poverty line to double that threshold. At its inception, the credit was relatively small, but several expansions in the late 1980s and early 1990s have changed it into the “largest federal aid program targeted to the working poor” (Berube, 2003, p.2). In 1999, the EITC lifted 4.7 million people, including 2.5 million children, above the official poverty line, making this program the most beneficial of any federal program linked to taxes. Nationally, in 2000, about 15% of all individual income tax filers claimed the EITC. In Baltimore, 26% of income tax filers were EITC; in New Orleans, 36% and many others who were eligible but did not file for the credit (Berube, 2003).

The tax break provided by the EITC is dwarfed, however, by the federal tax breaks provided to middle-class and affluent homeowners. Homeowners are allowed 5 different tax breaks that cost the government billions of dollars each year. The best known of these allows interest paid on mortgages for principal residences and/or vacation homes to be deducted on federal income tax returns. Two-thirds of the benefits go to families with high incomes (i.e., those earning over \$100,000 in 1995). The National Housing Institute calculated that the mortgage interest deduction cost the U.S. Treasury slightly more than \$58 billion in 1995. By comparison, the entire 1995 budget for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development was only \$26 billion (Zepezauer and Naiman, 1996). In 1999, mortgage and interest payment deductions for homeowners totaled \$63 billion or roughly three times HUD’s budget (Dreier, 2000). Other tax advantages of owning a home include tax-free sale provisions, deduction of state and local property taxes on federal income tax forms, and deduction of the interest paid on home equity loans. These advantages alone cost the federal government about \$38.2 billion per year (Zepezauer and Naiman, 1996). In total, the government “gives” mostly wealthy homeowners a little over \$96 billion each year.

In addition to state and local taxes (i.e., sales taxes), the wages of the working poor are taxed through payroll taxes, none of which are refunded or credited. These latter taxes include FICA, Social Security, Medicare, and employer and employee contributions. For example, a single woman with one child who worked at a job paying \$16,000 per year paid \$2,448 in payroll taxes in 2001 (Sawicky & Cherry, 2001). The Social Security payroll tax is also extremely regressive in that poor workers pay proportionally more than do rich workers. Social Security tax is paid on money earned up to a threshold of 6.2% of income or a limit of \$94,200 in 2006. After that amount, income is not taxed for Social

Security. Wealthy earners pay only the 1.45% Medicare portion of the payroll tax on their earnings over that limit.

As federal income tax has been cut, a larger and larger portion of federal revenues has come from payroll taxes. At the end of World War II, payroll taxes provided 2% of federal revenues; in 2002, they provided 37%. Consequently, major tax cuts of the past 25 years have been heavily tilted toward the rich, and federal payroll taxes have been increased to compensate for those lost revenues. The payroll taxes rose substantially in the 1980s. During those same years, however, President Reagan was cutting income taxes for the rich (Reich, 2002). Since the taxes on middle-class families' incomes have risen substantially and the rich have seen a lessening of the monies they must pay in income taxes, the U.S. tax burden has shifted so that it is now heavier for low- and middle-class families.

The wealthy in the U.S. simply do not pay taxes commensurate with what they could, and should, pay; and the wealthy do not pay their fair share because the people who hold positions in government have acquiesced to their demands, in order to guarantee their election to office or their continuation in office. The inadequacy of the rich's contributions to U.S. tax coffers, and of U.S. corporations' share of the national tax burden, leaves state and city coffers miserably low and lacking in the funds needed for urban school districts to function effectively.

The Effects of Corporations Not Paying Fair Taxes

The foregoing discussion of U.S. taxation and tax rates reveals that the effects of past tax legislation have huge consequences for schools and the people who work and learn in them. Poor facilities alone in underfunded urban districts could have benefited significantly from additional resources purchased if their tax revenues had been adequate. If the founders of Microsoft find it beneficial to their corporate interests to bypass paying taxes and, instead, set up a tax-protected foundation; they, in fact, take control of what is taught, who teaches, and who can benefit from the dollars that their company and supporting foundation take in yearly. This is problematic on many levels. It is interesting that a prime component of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's focus, according to co-founder Bill Gates, Sr. (2009), is "to create better high schools." Noting that the foundation has made over \$2 billion in grants since its inception, the elder Gates maintains that its goal is "to give schools extra money over a period of time to make changes in the way [high schools are] organized (including reducing their size), in how the teachers worked, and in the curriculum." This thinking suggests that the Gates Foundation evidently has a better sense of how to fund successful educational programs than do the educators who work within the schools, given

that those programs are supported not with tax dollars but with foundation monies, which are granted to those who know best how to write the type of grant proposal the elite will favor.

Moreover, philanthropic donations do not make up for the dearth of taxes paid by wealthy individuals and businesses. As reported in a *Fortune* magazine study, although Bill Gates and billionaire investor Warren Buffet donate a lot of the money, the wealthy give away only 1.1% of their income on average. One percent, however, is a much, much smaller amount than their statutory tax rate. It is also less than you and I pay in taxes, and less than that paid by the wealthy of Europe.

It would be comforting to be able to say that inequities in funding are the product of one or another political party. However, this is not the case. John F. Kennedy, a sitting Democratic president, as has been said, reduced the taxes paid by the rich. One might ask at this juncture why such actions were taken by a Democratic sitting president; at the same time, one might conjecture that a political party does not matter as much as maintaining and complementing the privileges enjoyed as part of the ruling class.

Funding for Urban Education

The Education Trust, an independent, Washington, D.C.-based group, monitors funding available to city school districts and, in a 2001 study, demonstrated cities' lack of financial resources. That study, titled "The Funding Gap: Low-Income and Minority Students Receive Fewer Dollars," reports that in most states, school districts that educate the largest number of poor and minority students—namely, urban districts—have fewer state and local dollars to spend per student than do the districts with the least number of poor and minority students. The study also points out that the districts that educate the largest number of poor students receive an average of \$966 less per pupil than do low-poverty districts.

These district funding gaps add up to significant gaps per school. For example, in New York, the state with the largest discrepancy, a difference of \$2,152 per student was found between the state and local revenues available to low-poverty districts. For a typical New York elementary school of 400 students, this amounts to a difference of \$860,800 in funding annually. The per-student funding gaps translate into the following schoolwide gaps per year in other states: in Illinois, \$824,000; in Montana, \$614,000; in Pennsylvania, \$499,200; and in Michigan, \$441,200. These schoolwide income gaps confound the effects of family poverty because the students who do not have resources at home are more likely to receive the fewest resources at school. Such disparities are even more disturbing when one realizes that these monies could ensure that students in poor

urban areas receive the resources they need. More equitable funding would pay for the highly qualified teachers who flee poor areas, and for the instructional time and additional resources that research and data conclude are needed for leveling the playing field.

The Education Trust repeated the same study in 2005 with similar results. It found that in 27 of 49 states studied, the highest-poverty school districts still received fewer resources than did the lowest-poverty districts, with a disparity of \$907 per student. In 30 states, high-minority districts received less money per child than did low-minority districts. The 2005 analysis also made a 40% adjustment upward in funds necessary for support services for children growing up in poverty, as do the federal government and many other educational finance analyses. This adjustment means that if a state provides districts with \$5,000 for each non low-income student, equity demands that at least \$7,000 be provided for each low-income student. With this adjustment, the number of states that underfund school districts serving large numbers of poor children grows to 38, and the average gap goes from \$907 to \$1,436 (The Education Trust, 2005).

This underfunding means that little if any money remains to meet the extra needs of children living in poor families. This leads to less-qualified teachers, larger class sizes, fewer materials, fewer curriculum options like advanced courses, fewer computers and college counselors, older and less technologically capable buildings, and several other severe consequences, many of which have been widely documented (Anyon, 1997; Kozol, 1990).

It is tempting to despair that urban children and families will never be provided what they need to get ahead. However, the history of our country demonstrates that people have, on many occasions, risen to the task of changing unfair laws and practices. It is to this issue of community engagement and activism that I now turn.

Reclaiming Public Education through Social Movements

Too often, we believe that a simple change in political parties occupying government seats will make the difference needed to achieve educational and other forms of social equity. This is not the case. The heads of government may change, but the interests of the political and economic elites constantly converge, especially when it comes to the taxes those elites should pay. At the same time, we, the people, have organized and achieved significant changes that have increased equality substantially over time. Such changes have been wrought by social movement organizing. My reading of American history has shown that

although the progressive social movements have not always been successful (as the aborted immigrants' rights movement of the early 21st century attests), throughout U.S. history, social movements from the political left have often had profound results. I include among these the populist movement of the late 1800s, the socialist movement of the early 1900s, the 1930s labor movement, the civil rights movement, both women's rights movements of the 20th century, and the aborted immigrants' rights movement of the early 21st century. Such movements have led to passage of a number of social policies that have increased the rights of working people, women, and minorities and to important policy accommodations on the part of governments and social institutions.

Social movements can sometimes change education. Although in many ways the U.S. education system remains much the same as it was in 1900, progressive changes have been wrought by the concerted protest of Americans involved in social movements. For example, immigrants' struggles for education in the early 1900s yielded adult worker education and Catholic schools for children. The civil rights movement led to national Head Start programs as well as increased recognition and educational opportunities for African Americans and other minorities nationwide. Latino struggles resulted in bilingual education programs. The 1970s women's movement yielded curricular change as well as increased entitlements for girls and women in schools and districts. Organizing around issues facing persons with disabilities prompted federal protections and entitlements for that group of Americans. Low-income parents in urban neighborhoods are organizing today for better schools in their communities and, if their efforts continue and coalesce, they potentially could build a new social movement for educational civil rights.

Throughout U.S. history, social movements have served as catalysts for the implementation of legislation and policies leading to greater social justice and equity as well as progressive court decisions (Anyon, 2005). Yet, how do social movements form, and what catapults them to national attention at certain historical moments? For people to take action against political or social oppression, they must see clearly the systematic causes of their subordination. Community and other grassroots organizers work to transform subordinated or excluded people's fear into anger, moral indignation, and action directed at the system. To develop systemic analyses of subordination, they discuss local issues by connecting personal and neighborhood problems to regional, national, and sometimes global processes aligned with powerful groups (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Community organizers also provide information that demonstrates the ways an existing system, program, or policy contributes to the difficulties individuals or groups may be experiencing.

Moreover, in order for people to take action, they must believe that they have the power to bring about change (Piven & Cloward, 1977). To build this

confidence, movement organizers work to provide fledging groups with small “wins.” To attract members, organizers must demonstrate to community members that participation in social movement organizations will yield some of the deepest pleasures of life—namely, a sense of community, connectedness, and meaning (Jasper, 1997).

An individual’s ability to participate in a movement, however, is facilitated by a variety of personal and social resources including sufficient income and time to attend meetings and protests, available organizations and alliances to join, ties to these networks, and effective leadership (Diani & McAdam, 2003; McAdam, 1982). The prevailing cultural context may also influence participation in movements. If critical public discourses or artistic works such as novels on the topic of concern are available in the media or, if critical scholarship on a topic reaches people in communities, then ideas in support of change may circulate in discussion and facilitate dissent and participation. Additionally, the political environment sometimes affects whether people join movements and may contribute to the form and intensity of collective action taken. For example, electoral instability in a country may encourage dissent and protest. Political opportunities such as the availability of influential allies, the tolerance for protest among elites, and the openness of the political system may also facilitate social movement building (McAdam, 1982; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001). In sum, sympathetic scholarly observers often see the “zeitgeist” as an important factor in determining whether and when movements build and grow.

However, as I argued in a recent book (Anyon, 2005), a typically unacknowledged factor influencing the ascendance of social movements is the decades-long prior preparation by individuals or groups—what civil rights movement activist Ella Baker called “spadework.” For example, Blacks in the American South had been resisting, demonstrating, and confronting the courts for five decades before the movement to end legalized segregation gained national notice in the 1950s. Similarly, the development over the years of activist networks and organizations, and the cumulative impact of sympathetic legal decisions laid the foundation for the success of the nationally catalyzing Montgomery bus boycott in 1955.

Moreover, an open political system or acceptance of protest by political elites is not always necessary for movements to build or erupt. Movements sometimes grow rapidly and come to flower during decades of political conservatism and extreme repression. The decade in which the American civil rights movement burst onto the national scene was one of virulent McCarthyism and conservative dominance in politics. The decades leading up to the Montgomery bus boycott, when community and labor organizers in the South were building that movement, were marked by an exceedingly repressive environment regarding racial rights (see Kelley, 1990).

Of importance to public engagement efforts today may be the realization that the political conservatism and federal attitudes toward dissent in the 1950s were not terribly different from the zeitgeist of the current era. The PATRIOT (Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) and Homeland Security acts and the resulting abrogation of civil liberties to fight a so-called “war on terror” attest to that. There may be reason for optimism, however. The last quarter century of community organizing for school reform may have prepared the ground for substantial change. The year 2000 brought with it 25 years of legal battles at the state level to remove urban educational inequities. Over 70% of these court cases were successful, and many new state mandates subsequently were written by the courts. More than a few await the public political pressure that might force full funding. These cases, and the years of education organizing that preceded them and that continue today, may provide the legitimation and leverage needed for national movement building. With collaboration, a joint vision, and a fortuitous catalyst, public engagement efforts like education, organizing, and alliance-building could develop into a national social movement.

What would facilitate such growth? Education reformers must engage in the public conversations and actions that have emerged in low-income communities around issues that are intimately related to educational achievement, but that have not been part of most education reform efforts to date. These issues include the struggles for living wages, decent jobs, health care and housing, and immigrant rights. If education activists could collaborate with groups already working in these arenas, social movement building and, perhaps, the production of lasting equity might result.

Conclusion

As I have argued, taxes paid by wealthy individuals and corporations are—and have been—unfairly low. The inadequacy of their payments robs the public storehouse of money for public education and other needed services in low-income areas. Still, in 2006, the U.S. government spent \$8 billion a month on the war in Iraq, almost all of which was paid by borrowing from other countries which can now hold this country economically hostage while vastly increasing the federal debt. Even more staggering is the interest that U.S. taxpayers pay to the wealthy individuals and corporations that hold the bonds and other forms of debt incurred in our names as urban children go begging.

Urban children are hungry for a decent education, and their schools cannot nourish them. Fairness and decency demand that we collect taxes from those who can afford to pay, commensurate with their ability to pay, and that we use these monies to “feed” our neediest students and schools. Accomplishing this will

require concerted and sustained social organization and protest; for history has shown us that the rich and powerful give away little without pressure.

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