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The Politics of Another Side

Truth-in-Military-Recruiting Advocacy in an Urban School District

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This article provides documentation of the current military presence in U.S. secondary schools and groups that have mobilized to monitor or oppose this presence. This documentation provides the background for a narrative of a multiple-year effort the author engaged in to promote academic freedom for teachers and students and to provide high school students greater balance in the information they receive with regard to opting for military service. This narrative provides insights on the ways advocacy efforts build on previous efforts, the kinds of obstacles advocates encounter when working with school professionals, and strategies for effective activism and policy advocacy with regard to military presence in schools.

Keywords: *militarization; advocacy; social justice; youth; academic freedom*

If there is an elephant in the living room in American high schools, it is the increasing presence of military personnel in schools that primarily serve low-income students. Although increased police presence and the “pipeline to prison” have received much-needed attention, the pipeline to the military has gone largely unnoticed and unstudied by educational researchers. This is because, unlike prison, the military is viewed by many as a way to provide a patriotic service, a legitimate career option, and a venue for “straightening out” wayward and undisciplined students.

Although some believe the military has no place in schools, what alarms even many who may support some military presence in schools as a vocational option is the fact that military recruiters and Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) tend to target lower income students who often have fewer post-high school options or who see it as a way out of depressed rural communities. There is also a growing concern that recruiters, who are under pressure to meet quotas, fail to provide students with truthful information and a balanced view of risks and opportunities. Furthermore, schools have come under more pressure from recruiters, as the Pentagon’s

need for troops has increased since the invasion and occupation of Iraq and, more recently, the escalating war in Afghanistan. In the context of a call for a permanent war against terrorism, these levels are expected to remain high into the foreseeable future.

Opinions about a military presence in public schools vary along a continuum from pacifists' opposition to any presence at all on one extreme to those who support an increase in military presence on the other. The latter seek to encourage greater patriotism, discipline, and character education, as well as to strengthen national security. However, little discussion of a military presence in high school is informed by academic research.

This is because relatively little research has been done on the growing military presence in high schools. Notable exceptions include research that links militarization in schools and universities to larger issues of enforcement and criminalization and the growth of the neoliberal, security state (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998; Giroux, 2007; Lutz, 2002; Robbins, 2008; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003) and a handful of studies (mostly dissertations) on JROTC (Berlowitz & Long, 2003; Lutz & Bartlett, 1995).

There is even less research on a growing advocacy movement that has challenged this military presence, particularly the growing presence of military recruiters. This article has two goals: (a) to pull together a growing but still disperse body of information about the growth and diversification of a military presence in high schools and (b) to provide insights into the politics of advocacy through a personal account by the author of the intersection of two advocacy groups attempting to affect school policies and practices.

In the absence of a formal body of scholarly literature, an exhaustive review of polyvocal sources (Ogawa & Malen, 1985) will provide a description of the current military presence in U.S. secondary schools and groups that have mobilized to monitor or oppose this presence. This review will form the background for a narrative of a multiple-year effort the author engaged in to promote academic freedom for teachers and students and provide high school students greater balance in the information they receive with regard to opting for military service. This narrative will provide insights on the ways advocacy efforts build on previous efforts, the kinds of obstacles advocates encounter around working with school professionals, and strategies for effective activism and policy advocacy with regard to military presence in schools.

As a scholar, who is also an advocate, I am in the unique position to present an insider account of advocacy with the habits of mind of the scholar. Most full-time advocates and organizers lack the time and institutional

incentives to write accounts of their work, and education scholars have only recently begun producing (as outsiders) accounts of political advocacy focused on school reform. Although there is not space here to discuss implications for the validity of insider accounts, there is a strong body of work that I and others have produced that has addressed issues of validity in the production of insider narratives (Anderson & Herr, 1999; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, Herr & Anderson, 2005). I have attempted to follow these guidelines as closely as possible, supplementing my personal notes with extensive triangulation through document analysis and interviews with other activists and school professionals who were involved.

The Growth of a Military Presence in American High Schools

The backdrop for an increased military presence in U.S. public schools is a growing military presence nationally since World War II. Military spending dropped off significantly by 1948 from World War II highs, but as Cold War ideology and a powerful military-industrial complex emerged, military expenditures increased, averaging \$298.5 billion yearly during the decades of the Cold War (1950s through 1980s). If such costs as veterans' benefits, the military share of the interest on the national debt, military aid to other countries, and the military share of the U.S. space program are included, these figures can easily double.

Although military expenditures leveled off slightly after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the so-called war on terror have driven expenditures to new post-World War II highs. By 2007, the Defense Department's budget had increased to \$439.2 billion. This total does not include separate allocations for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan nor non-Defense Department budgets like the veteran's affairs budget of \$33 billion or the military's secret "black budget," estimated at \$40 billion. All military-related expenses in 2007 were \$626.1 billion. Stiglitz and Bilmes (2008) document how the long-term costs of the wars will cost American taxpayers more than \$3 trillion.

The 2005 U.S. military budget was larger than the next 168 biggest spending countries, representing nearly half of all military spending in the world (Global Issues, 2008). As a percent of gross domestic product spent on the military budget however, the U.S. ranks 28th in the world, behind many Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia and Israel (Central Intelligence Agency, 2008).

As late as 2008, with military spending at all-time highs, the Pentagon was asking for increasing the size of the military, concluding “that long battlefield tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with persistent terrorist activity and other threats, have prevented the American military from improving its ability to respond to any new crisis” (p. A8).

In addition to an increase in the military budget, some scholars argue that a “new American militarism” has developed in American culture in recent years. This new militarism involves not only new resources but also a new set of militaristic attitudes about the U.S. role in the world, leading to a serious imbalance of national priorities (Enloe, 2007). Some see this new militarism as largely a result of George W. Bush’s reaction to 9/11 and misguided policies that preceded it (Johnson, 2004); others see it as beginning earlier, with a national overreaction to a perceived weakness and loss of status of the military in the post–Vietnam War years (Bacevich, 2005).

With such a massive growth in military spending and an increasingly militarized society, perhaps it should not be surprising that in recent years the presence of the military in U.S. high schools has grown rapidly. Although some of these will be discussed in more detail below, the following is a partial listing of the ways a military presence and culture has gained legitimacy in public schools:

1. An increased presence of JROTC and the use of JROTC instructors to teach other subjects, such as physical education, and for students to get extra credits for graduation. JROTC instructors also facilitate access to the school and classrooms for military recruiters.
2. An increase in military recruitment in schools.
3. The use of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) as a recruitment tool.
4. The development of programs like “Troops to Teachers” that transfer military personnel to schools as teachers, principals, and superintendents.
5. A view among some school counselors, teachers, and parents that military training is a solution for discipline and structure for youth.
6. Appropriation of the popularity among youth of video games to promote the military and violence in general.
7. The use of “adventure vans” that visit schools and provide students with military games and simulations and other technological motivators to recruit students.
8. An increase in military academies as charter schools.
9. New motivational programs like Planning for Life that provide assemblies for schools and are run by uniformed personnel and funded by the Army.
10. The reinforcement that all of these activities provide for a particular form of hegemonic masculinity and the recruitment of females into this model.

Because the issue of schools providing a balanced view on controversial topics is central to our discussion below, a more nuanced understanding of the military presence on schools will be provided in this section.

JROTC

The JROTC is a school-based program that includes all branches of the armed forces. Although the Army is the largest, the Navy and the Air Force also have significant programs in schools. The first JROTC programs were developed under the National Defense Act of 1916 as a measure to increase U.S. military readiness for World War I, but its presence in schools was strongly contested by several organizations, including the National Education Association (NEA). Under pressure from a well-funded universal military training movement and an atmosphere of red-baiting and war propaganda, the NEA ultimately backed down (Bartlett & Lutz, 1998). Many women's organizations also opposed military training in schools. The American School Peace League, founded by Fannie Fern Andrews in 1908, campaigned against military training in schools in the years leading to World War I (Zeigler, 2003).

For several decades following World War I, the JROTC presence in American high schools was marginal. It was reinvigorated in the 1960s and has steadily grown since then. Between 1990 and 2000, the JROTC budget more than doubled from \$76 million to \$156 million. The 2001 Defense Authorization Bill called for the lifting of all caps on JROTC expansion (Berlowitz & Long, 2003). By 2006, its funding had risen to \$258 million, and 2004-2005 showed that the number of students enrolled in JROTC nationally was 492,708 (Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, n.d.).

Although officially JROTC insists it does not recruit students, a 2000 congressional report of the Chiefs of Staff revealed that between 30% and 50% of students that successfully complete JROTC enlist in the military. Of those, 70% sign up at the lowest rank of private, with only 30% going to college ROTC or service academies (Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, 2008). An Army policy memorandum states that JROTC may

actively assist cadets who want to enlist in the military, and facilitate recruiter access to cadets in JROTC program and to the entire student body . . . [and] work closely with high school guidance counselors to sell the Army story. (United States Army Cadet Command, 1999, p. 4).

Although the defense budget subsidizes some of the costs of JROTC, school districts end up paying a portion of the cost of these programs out of

their own budgets. In many cases, the costs are considerable and lead to the necessity of cutting other programs (Jahnkow, 2004). JROTC curriculum is taught by largely non-teacher-certified retired military personnel and comprises mainly military drill but also dedicates some instructional time to leadership, communication, physical fitness, drug prevention, and military history. Cadets also are involved in school and community activities, such as parades and graduations, where they march in full military dress. Military history textbooks have been studied by Bartlett and Lutz (1998), who found that they present a biased view of American history and an uncritical view of the military.

JROTC is often used by students falling behind to pick up easy credits for graduation and for physical education classes. In 1992, the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) teamed up to develop JROTC Career Academies. These schools-within-schools provide military training and vocational education and target “at risk” students. Although JROTC is typically limited to high schools and focuses primarily on juniors and seniors, since the 1960s, the U.S. Marine Corps has run a program for younger youth called The Young Marines. Operating much like the Boy Scouts, it is not located officially within schools, though it is often publicized through local elementary and middle schools.

JROTC has encountered resistance in some cities. Recently, the San Francisco School District voted to replace JROTC with an alternative non-military leadership program (Tucker, 2007). The primary reason for the elimination of this 90-year program according to a majority of school board members was “its connection with a discriminatory and homophobic military means it has no place in public education” (Tucker, 2007, p. B5). Members of the New York Collective of Radical Educators (2008) have developed a curriculum and resource guide titled *Camouflaged: Investigating How the U.S. Military Affects You and Your Community*. This curriculum was developed to provide teachers with a resource to use in their classrooms to provide an antidote to what they see as a one-sided view provided by JROTC and military recruiters.

A growing phenomenon nationally is the creation of charter military academies. Much like free-standing JROTC programs, they benefit from both public school monies and military personnel and facilities. The Bataan Military Academy in Albuquerque, begun in 2007 and sponsored by the Navy, is typical. Although it too claims not to recruit students into the military, its students are called cadets and the principal is called Commodore: “They will earn rank in the Naval Junior ROTC program, and they will be members of the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps. Their electives include Civil Air Patrol, marksmanship and chess” (Gran, 2007).

As large urban public high schools are broken into small schools and school choice and privatization grow, we may see an increasing move from JROTC programs in large comprehensive high schools to small military charter schools. Aguirre and Johnson (2005), in their qualitative study of a military charter school, argue that this growing phenomenon is related to an increasing neoliberal economy and a new security state in which the military continues to grow as the rest of the public sector is privatized and marketized. Besides JROTC programs and military academies, there are also many handsomely funded DOD schools that serve military families. Lutz (2001), in her ethnographic study of Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, reports that per-pupil spending was \$5,360 in civilian schools and \$7,100 in Ft. Bragg schools.

Military Recruiters Presence in High Schools

Access by military recruiters to schools varies widely from school to school. In some schools, they are limited to job fairs in which employment and/or college recruiters are present. Some schools also allow them to set up tables in the lunchroom on a weekly basis. Some recruiters gain access through connections to JROTC personnel, and in some schools, they are given almost free rein, including office space and permission to remove students from classes.

A study done by the New York Civil Liberties Union (2007) and cosponsored by the office of the Manhattan Borough president and the Students or Soldiers Coalition surveyed nearly 1,000 students in 45 New York City high schools. They found that one in five respondents reported use of class time by military recruiters, two in five did not receive a military recruitment opt out form, one in five did not believe anyone in their school could properly advise them of the risks and benefits of enlisting in the military, and nearly half said they did not know to whom to report misconduct by a military recruiter.

Recruiters in all three branches of the military follow guidelines and handbooks that help them to gain and maintain access to schools. For instance, *The School Recruiting Program Handbook* is published by the United States Army Recruiting Command (2002) and represents the Army's business plan for penetrating the high school "market." The following quote from the handbook illustrates both the intent and language of marketing the military to students:

The objective of the school recruiting program (SRP) is to assist recruiters with programs and services so they can effectively penetrate the school market. The goal is school ownership *that can only lead to a greater number*

of army enlistments. Recruiters must first establish rapport in the schools. This is a basic step in the sales process and a prerequisite to an effective school program. Maintaining this rapport and establishing a good working relationship is next. Once educators are convinced recruiters have their students' best interests in mind the SRP can be effectively implemented. (United States Army Recruiting Command, 2002, p. 2, emphasis added)

Most schools have a military liaison (usually the head guidance counselor) who is the contact person and gatekeeper for school access. Because the stated goal is school ownership, recruiters are encouraged to sidestep counselors as "centers of influence":

Never rely on guidance counselors as the sole center of influence (COI) in the school. Cultivate coaches, librarians, administrative staff and teachers, especially those whose subjects correlate with Army programs. (United States Army Recruiting Command, 2002, p. 2)

The *Handbook* does not encourage recruiters to market the military to students through dishonesty. Recruiters are encouraged to "present clear, accurate, and complete information to students, giving honest answers on both positive and negative aspects of military life, so that students may make informed choices" (p. 4). But wartime enlistment quotas have placed added stress on recruiters. In 2006, in response to reports of a growing number of allegations of incidents of misconduct and abuse by recruiters, Congress called upon the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate. In 2005, the GAO documented 6,600 allegations of recruiter wrongdoing, a 50% increase over the previous year (GAO, 2006). Complaints were so numerous that on May 20, 2005, recruiting was suspended nationally for one day to retrain recruiters in the legalities and ethics of military recruiting.

Even a hard sell has not produced sufficient enlistees, leading the military to waive key enlistment requirements. In October of 2007, 12.3% of recruits needed waivers because of criminal records, including felony convictions. Other waivers were given for being overweight and drug or alcohol abuse. Besides using waivers to increase enlistments, the military has added more recruiters and increased financial incentives. In 2002, an expedited naturalization process for members of the military took effect, causing an increase in recruitment of noncitizens. According to Castro (2006), there are currently about 37,400 noncitizens, approximately one third Latino, in the active duty military.

The Impact of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) on the Military Presence in Schools

The NCLB Act, signed into law in 2002, reauthorized and amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The 670-page act included many items slipped in at the last minute, including two sections that pertain to the presence of the military in schools. Section 9528 was added by a Louisiana congressman who was offended that some high schools chose to protect their students' privacy by not giving out student information to military recruiters. This section directs schools to provide military recruiters with at least the same access to students that all other groups receive. If schools fail to comply, they risk losing federal funding.

Section 9528 also directs schools to provide military recruiters access to high school students' directory information (name address and telephone number) or lose federal funding. Parents and students have to fill out a form if they wish to opt out of this requirement, but schools have only recently begun systematically providing this information to students, largely as a result of litigation. In Albuquerque, the New Mexico American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) settled a suit against Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) for not providing an opt-out form at registration for parents to sign. A condition of the settlement was that APS would comply with the provision of NCLB to give adequate notice of a family's right to opt out.

Although some advocacy groups effectively used this issue and the NCLB-military link as an organizing strategy, the reality is that the military also gets access to school campuses and student information in other ways. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2002 provided for military recruiters to have access to high school campuses and to students' directory information. The U.S. military, as part of a larger tendency toward privatization of services, has contracted with the private firm, Equifax Database Services (formerly BeNow), to create a database with daily updates of 30 million 16- to 25-year-olds. This database is housed in the Pentagon's Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies Department. Several advocacy organizations have come together to protest the existence of this database as a violation of the Privacy Act.¹

Another source of student data is the ASVAB, which is promoted to schools as a career exploration test but is used by military recruiters to target students with specific skills for enlistment. Fourteen thousand schools and Military Entrance Processing Stations give the ASVAB each year. In many schools, the test is mandatory and few students and parents are even aware of how it is used by the military. In fact, few are even aware that it is

a military-designed exam. Recently, privacy rights advocates in many cities have convinced school boards to either drop the test or at least enforce a little known policy called Option 8, which keeps the results off limits to recruiters. As a result of advocacy from several local groups, Los Angeles Unified School District opted in May 2007 to enforce Option 8, informing all of its career counselors of the change.

Therefore, movements to get parents to sign opt out forms may or may not deprive the military of access to student information. However, what has changed since NCLB is that districts that used to protect the privacy of students by refusing to release student information to the military no longer do so. For instance, prior to the NCLB legislation, the Bellevue School District in Washington state did not release directory information to anyone, and the Portland, Oregon, school board went so far as to ban military recruiters from its school campuses (Bach, 2004). Today, few school districts could afford to give up federal funds by keeping such policies in place, and this is doubly true for the low-income districts that receive Title I funds and are the most heavily recruited.

So although most American schools already provided data to the military and allowed recruiters on campuses prior to NCLB, the legal requirement to do so has resulted in greater acquiescence by school districts and a more generalized acceptance of the inherent right of the military to have a strong presence in American schools. What it also did, however, was to galvanize opposition in some communities that rallied to challenge this presence or to insist that schools also present another side to the recruiter's pitch.

Truth-in-Recruitment Advocacy in Schools

Truth-in-recruiting advocacy groups bring together a diverse group of community members with multiple agendas. Pacifists are often following a spiritual path that opposes killing under any circumstance. Veterans for Peace groups are generally not antimilitary but feel that young people are being placed in harms way for unjustified reasons. Antiwar activists are also often not antimilitary but view truth-in-recruiting advocacy as a way to decrease enlistees and thus hasten an end to the war in Iraq. Another Side has chosen to use the term *truth-in-recruiting* rather than *counterrecruiting* because it seems a more positive approach, it is more congruent with our focus on "balance," and if the United States had actually declared war on Iraq, counterrecruiters could theoretically be brought up on charges under the 1918 Sedition Act for seeking to willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States at times of war.

Antiwar activists argue that in the absence of a military draft, which was voted down 402-2 by congress in 2004, one way to stop an unpopular invasion and occupation is to make it less likely that young people will be convinced to enlist. It is also hoped that the Pentagon might begin to protest the administration's handling of the war and their pursuit of preemptive wars. Advocates are aware that the military is itself divided in their views of the wisdom and handling of the Iraq war. Many truth-in-recruiting advocacy groups also provide students with information on employment and postsecondary education and service alternatives to the military, help students fill out Free Application for Federal Student Aid forms for financial aid, and pursue other activities that provide students with alternatives to the military.

A major stumbling block to truth-in-recruiting groups is school access. Many school professionals, particularly in areas with nearby military bases and during periods of increased patriotism, are nervous about appearing to be antimilitary. Perhaps the most important legal precedent for school access was a case in San Diego, California, a politically conservative city with a strong Navy presence.

In 1983, the San Diego Committee Against Registration and the Draft (CARD) filed a suit (*San Diego Committee v. Governing Board of Grossmont Union High School District*, 1986) questioning "whether the school district could legally allow the Selective Service System to place information in student newspapers, and simultaneously prohibit students from accepting CARD's anti-draft registration ads" (Jahnkow, 2006, p. 2). A 1986 9th Circuit Court of appeals decided in CARD's favor, stating

the government's interest in promoting military service is not an economic one; it is essentially political or governmental. . . . It has long been recognized that the subject of military service is controversial and political in nature. There has been opposition to military service, both compulsory and voluntary, throughout our nation's history. (*San Diego Committee v. Governing Board of Grossmont Union High School District*, 1986, as cited in Jahnkow, 2006)

The importance of this decision was that it declared the military presence in schools to be essentially "controversial and political in nature." In the light of most school district policies regarding the teaching of controversial issues, this would require that schools and school districts provide a balanced view of the military. Because clearly the military is not in a position to do so, given its need to meet recruitment quotas, this decision became the backbone of truth in recruiting efforts in California. Even though the case is limited to the California 9th circuit, it is a powerful tool

for truth-in-recruiting advocates across the country.² The decision is explicit on the issue of balance:

The Board cannot allow the presentation of one side of an issue, but prohibit the presentation of the other side. . . . Here, the Board permitted mixed political and commercial speech advocating military service, but attempted to bar the same type of speech opposing such service. The Board has failed to advance a compelling governmental interest justifying its conduct. Accordingly, the board violated the First Amendment when it excluded CARD's advertisements. (*San Diego Committee v. Governing Board of Grossmont Union High School District*, 1986, as cited in Jahnkow, 2006)

As with any form of advocacy, lawsuits were an important dimension in Another Side's truth-in-recruitment organizing. The local chapter of the ACLU was an important ally in winning key cases against the APS along the way.

Prelude to Another Side: The Alliance for Academic Freedom (AAF)

In February and early March 2003, tensions were high across the nation as massive protests were organized in the face of what seemed like an inevitable war with Iraq. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, protests occurred regularly and many houses had yard signs stating occupants' position with regard to the war or the troops. Anti- and prowar signs, posters, bumper stickers, and flyers abounded at many schools. Students at a few high schools had formed peace groups to create forums about the war. In the midst of this tension, six local high school personnel, five teachers, and a counselor were suspended for 3 days without pay for speech or expression related to the war.

The high school counselor had an antiwar sign and a speech by Senator Robert Byrd opposing the war displayed on the wall in his office. The district's Director of Student Services received an anonymous complaint from a parent, and the assistant principal of the school was told to have the counselor remove the sign and the speech. The counselor, a member of the local Quaker meeting, refused and was suspended for insubordination. He pointed out that a large patriotic, prowar display had been placed in the display case in the lobby of the school, a school with a large JROTC and that provided access to military recruiters.

An English teacher at Rio Rancho High School, Bill Nevins, sponsored the high school's Poetry Slam Team. His students had been performing around Rio Rancho and Albuquerque at various venues. A student from the

team read a poem as part of the morning announcements. Such activity was generally noncontroversial, except that this time someone complained to the principal that the poem was an antiwar poem. Bill Nevins was suspended indefinitely. The district claimed it was because he had not filled out a field trip form for an afterschool reading his slam poetry team did at the Barnes and Nobles book store in the local mall. Nevins never got his job back.

Other suspensions were also the result of posting flyers for a school-sanctioned peace group, posting of antiwar (but also prowar) student artwork, and posting of an antiwar sign on a classroom door. Around the city of Albuquerque, many teachers were told to take down any antiwar information and most complied. Teachers reported that many principals instructed their faculty to not discuss the war at all in class, or in one case when challenged, an assistant principal said to discuss it briefly and only once, or as he put it, "just get it over with."

A few principals were reported by teachers to have looked the other way in such cases or even defended teachers' right to self-expression. A key issue for principals seemed to be whether there were parent complaints either to the school or district administration. Principals seemed to break out into three groups: those, like the Rio Rancho principal, who supported the war and promoted patriotic activities; those who may have felt pressured to ask teachers to take down the signs or art work; and finally those who either tolerated the signs or artwork or defended the teachers against criticism. Although each of these positions taken by principals was reported by teachers, it is unclear how large each of these groups was.

A few days after the teacher suspensions, a large number of community members independently converged on the district's school board meeting. I myself felt compelled to attend the meeting and speak about the chilling effect these suspensions would have on teachers, who would think twice about engaging in any behavior that could be interpreted as controversial. Several people lined up to give testimony against the teacher suspensions. It is not uncommon for irate citizens to descend on school boards to take up positions on issues, but school boards and district personnel can usually ride it out. The upset around this issue, however, prompted several teachers to organize a follow-up meeting in solidarity with their suspended colleagues that was attended by 65 teachers, parents, and high school students. This group ultimately resulted in the AAF and the beginning of organized resistance to the suspensions. Its mission statement included the following four goals:

To support teachers who have been stifled in their free speech in teaching about the invasion of Iraq; to develop curricula for teaching about the invasion;

to develop an educators' support group around how best to discuss the invasion with students; and to set up a fund for any educators who are punished for their speech. (The Alliance for Academic Freedom)

The head of the local teachers union took the position that the teachers were insubordinate and that they should have done what they were told and protested after the fact. According to Janice Hart, a co-organizer of the AAF:

At about the time of our first meeting, the president of the local teachers union, the Albuquerque Federation of Teachers (AFT) made a statement to the press that the suspended teachers were "insubordinate" and therefore, the suspensions were justified. We met with her in June 2003, which resulted in a bit of a shouting match. (J. Hart, personal communication, March 10, 2008)

Shortly after the formation of the AAF, a petition drive was organized to amass signatures to demonstrate the depth of support for the suspended teachers. Eight hundred and forty-two signatures were collected—333 educators, 267 parents, and 242 students—and a fundraising effort allowed AAF to buy an ad in the local newspaper with all of the names.

On September 9, 2003, the ACLU won a settlement with APS over the teacher suspensions. Teachers' salaries were restored and letters removed from their files. This settlement did not include Bill Nevins, who was fired by the Rio Rancho School District just outside of Albuquerque. However, Nevins later won a lucrative settlement with the Rio Rancho district. Although these were important victories, the damage the suspensions did to teachers' sense of safety in addressing controversial issues in their classroom could not be undone.

The firing of Nevins, the Rio Rancho High School teacher who directed the slam poetry team, had sent ripples among the area's artistic community and its vibrant slam poetry groups. On September 14, an event took place at the historic downtown Kimo Theater to raise money for a legal defense fund for Bill Nevins, who was not included in the ACLU case against APS. The event was organized to raise funds for Nevins's legal defense and to raise consciousness about the issue locally. The decision by AAF to co-sponsor this high-profile event provided them with wide exposure but also diverted them from other projects and burned out many members. After the event, AAF never regained its former level of activity, although some members still communicated through e-mail to keep abreast of civil rights issues in the classroom.

The Nevins fundraising event, titled "Poetic Justice: Committing Poetry in Times of War," included a "who's who" of local artists who performed poetry and sang songs in support of Nevins and to protest the violation of free speech. An award-winning documentary with the same name was later made about the Kimo event itself and teachers' first amendment rights. The film also documents the extent to which other forms of expression in Albuquerque during this time, such as peaceful marches, were brutally repressed with tear gas, stun guns, pepper spray, helicopters, and hundreds of police to control relatively small marches (*Committing Poetry in Times of War*, 2005).

Origins of Another Side

Throughout 2003, complaints were pouring into AAF from activists and parents complaining that military recruiters were calling their homes at dinner time and that they were not receiving required opt out forms from local schools. They expressed concerns about the privacy rights of students and families. It was later discovered that most APS high schools had given their students' contact information to the military in early summer of 2003, and then, schools gave out the opt out forms during registration in August. This meant that the information of the children of even those parents who received opt out forms had already been provided to the military.

The issue of the availability of opt out forms became a nation-wide issue that advocacy groups began organizing around. The NCLB requirement that all schools provide student data to the military turned out to be a Godsend to advocacy groups in that the dinnertime calls from recruiters and the invasion of student privacy enraged large numbers of parents, who began calling principals and superintendents, writing letters to the editor of local papers, and in some cases organizing opposition. School districts around the country were pressured to begin developing policies for opt out forms and to limit military recruiters' access to students in schools.

In Albuquerque, the local chapter of the ACLU sued APS in May 2005 over their handling of the opt out forms, finally favorably settling their suit in January 2006 and bringing national attention to the issue. The NCLB requirements to force schools to give student information to the Pentagon and to allow military recruiters in schools helped to spawn the organization of Another Side. This new group was coordinated by Maria Santelli, who was a staff member at the Albuquerque Peace and Justice Center, known affectionately by some locals as P&J. This center was founded in 1983 to provide an umbrella for local activist groups, and it provided resources and served as the meeting place for Another Side. Another group associated with

P&J, Veterans for Peace, was involved in various antiwar projects. Maria Santelli of P&J, Janice Hart of the AAF, and, later, members of Veterans for Peace met to start Another Side.³

During early meetings, members of Another Side developed the following mission statement:

Another Side offers youth, military-aged adults, & their families information about, and alternatives to, military service in our country. Through school-based presentations and outreach programs led by military veterans and trained facilitators, we provide factual information and resources on every individual's rights regarding military recruitment. We offer support to those who choose not to join the military or who wish to leave military service. (Democracy for New Mexico, 2005)

The core work of Another Side is visiting schools to provide students with a more balanced view of military life. Because Another Side is part of a coalition with Veterans for Peace, several Iraq war veterans have worked with Another Side over the past several years. These veterans have been mainly Latino, Navajo, and African American. One served 5 years as a medic in the U.S. Army; another had a 24-year career with the U.S. Navy. And yet another had been a military recruiter. All did service in Iraq. A typical school visit included one veteran and an Another Side member, usually Maria. Another Side made presentations to dozens of classes and thousands of New Mexico students in high schools in Albuquerque and other New Mexico communities. Several students who entered the Delayed Entry Program (DEP), after hearing the veteran's stories, have asked Another Side to help them get out of DEP. Another Side, in collaboration with members of the GI Forum, Families Speak Out, Veterans for Peace, and others, also set up a G.I. rights hotline for soldiers who need counseling on how to exit the military.

The impact these Iraq war veterans had on high school students was palpable, and the veterans themselves felt their work was essential to their own mental health and sense of validation. However, for many, each presentation was a reliving of traumatic events, and the constant school visits took their toll. Also, because this work was voluntary, it was not uncommon for these veterans to have to focus on jobs, family, and other obligations. Few veterans were able to work with Another Side for more than a few months. Because of the credibility that Iraqi veterans had, they were hard to replace with other speakers.

Gaining access to schools has been and continues to be a constant battle in spite of the fact that we had convinced the superintendent to send memos to principals to allow Another Side into schools to provide a more balanced

view. Nevertheless, many principals resisted allowing us in. We typically gained access to schools through invitations from individual teachers and students. In those schools, principals knew we were presenting at the school, but they tended to look the other way. Although Another Side would have preferred to have greater access to more schools, we were getting into schools on a regular basis, and our limited capacity could not have realistically provided more sessions.

More recently, in November 2007, an assembly was held at Albuquerque High School, led by uniformed military personnel from Planning For Life, titled "Develop Mind, Bodies, Souls." This event, which was later held at other schools, provoked a public outcry from the community. The principal of one high school received so many calls from irate parents and community members that he contacted Another Side to ask that we call off the campaign. A principal of a local charter took his students to the event, unaware it was a thinly disguised military recruitment event. He later apologized to his student body. The widespread response to this event was in part due to its deceptiveness but was also due to the networks Another Side had developed with other groups and the extent to which military activities in some APS schools were being more closely scrutinized because of the awareness these groups raised locally about the issue.

The success of the mobilization around the Planning for Life event created some tensions around differences in the strategies employed by Another Side with those of another local advocacy group, the South West Organizing Project (SWOP), which in 2007 chose to focus their efforts on counter-recruiting. Some members of Another Side felt that SWOP's more confrontational approach was alienating APS administrators and rolling back whatever rapport they had achieved with the school district. Another member I spoke with felt Another Side was being too patient and that there was little to show for years of effort. Although the school district rhetorically supports Another Side's efforts, going so far as to send a memo to principals to allow Another Side into the schools, most principals kept Another Side at arms' length.

From the beginning, raising local awareness was a more central goal of Another Side than confrontational politics. During the summer of 2005, Another Side organized a well-attended summer conference as a way to increase membership, raise awareness, and provide a venue for military veterans to share their experiences. It also provided training for those who wanted to counsel conscientious objectors to war. Rick Jahnkow, from Project Youth and Non-Military Opportunities (YANO) in San Diego and Nadia McCaffrey, a Gold Star mother who had lost her son in Iraq, keynoted.

A state senator, Gerald Ortiz y Pino, also agreed to carry a memorial before the state legislature in Santa Fe requesting a study on the balance of military recruiters' messages in New Mexico's secondary schools. Although the memorial did not pass in 2007, Another Side received a grant from the New Tudor Foundation to do the study. We currently have received approval from APS and Institutional Review Board approval from New York University. We will be surveying students in representative districts throughout New Mexico about their experience with recruitment practices, documenting the relative exposure New Mexico students have to college, employment, and military recruitment.

Another Side Advocacy and the Struggle Over Common Sense

A major component of social advocacy often involves an attempt to destabilize or delegitimize ways of thinking that have passed into the realm of common sense. Many things that occur in schools are not questioned because they have become part of a taken-for-granted view of schooling. For instance, advocates who challenge the criminalization of youth are fighting to call attention to things like metal detectors, police presence, and surveillance cameras, before they move from controversial to accepted common sense. Once accepted as part of the normal landscape of schools, they become more difficult to question.

Most Americans are already used to seeing JROTC students in military uniforms in high schools. Most teachers, school counselors, and principals are used to seeing military recruiters tabling in lunchrooms and meeting with students around the school. This commonsense notion of a military presence in American high schools was driven home to me recently when I gave a talk in Argentina. Although my talk was about an entirely different topic, I made a minor reference to JROTC students in my description of a high school I had studied. After my talk, someone in the audience asked me what JROTC was, and I described it rather off-handedly. This occasioned a flurry of other questions regarding the ethics and legality of locating military training in schools. The audience was in stunned disbelief that public high school principals would allow the military to recruit and train students in their schools.

This response is partly idiosyncratic to local circumstances. Having been victims of a brutal military dictatorship in which 30,000 Argentinian citizens disappeared between 1976 and 1983, this was a country obsessed with not allowing the military back into power. However, it serves to remind us that because we take so many things for granted in schools, it is very hard

to challenge them. The presence of the military is just one of many practices and structures that make up what Tyack and Cuban (1995) called the “grammar of schooling.”

This “taken for grantedness” is not taken for granted by the military. The business plan cited above is an explicit effort to maintain a presence in schools. In fact, although it may seem obvious that Another Side is an advocacy organization, it may seem less obvious that the U.S. military is also engaging in well-funded advocacy, particularly during a period in which the military is involved in an unpopular war.

Truth-in-recruiting advocacy is unique in the ways it highlights taken-for-granted aspects of school life and attempts to make them appear controversial. It is crucial for such advocates to construct the military presence in schools as controversial to convince school officials that another perspective is needed. As noted earlier, the 9th Circuit Court of California declared the presence of the military in schools as inherently controversial, opening the door for Another Side to claim the right to provide a more balanced view. Initiatives in state legislatures, such as that promoted by Another Side, are another way to challenge the taken-for-grantedness of the military presence.

Sustainability of Advocacy Efforts

It will come as no surprise that effective advocacy requires organizational stability and leadership. In the case of AAF and Another Side, the organizational continuity and infrastructure was provided by the Albuquerque P&J. P&J provided not only infrastructure but also a natural place for networking among various advocacy and activist groups. Typically activists are up against well-organized interests, but in the case of Another Side, they are up against a Pentagon that has a massive budget and, as noted earlier, an explicit goal of “school ownership.”

This raises the issue of whether Another Side might aspire to similar status through institutionalizing itself in some way, much as the military has through JROTC and a recruiter presence. In spite of the problems of gaining access to schools discussed earlier, the possibility of achieving something resembling partnerships with schools and districts is greater if advocacy groups operate out of a respected, local organization. Because P&J is known locally as an umbrella for a wide range of activist groups, some advocating civil disobedience and taking up controversial causes, some early on argued that for this reason it was not a good venue for Another Side. Given school districts’ avoidance of controversy, partnering with an organization in the local P&J is unlikely. On the other hand, there

is increasing evidence (Jahnkow, 2006) that gaining access through formal negotiations with school administration is less effective than being invited into schools by teachers and other sympathetic groups.

One possibility that has not been pursued is to include truth-in-recruiting efforts as part of peace education, a field that has tended to focus more on antiviolence promotion in U.S. schools. Efforts such as conflict mediation and antibullying programs have enjoyed some success and even been institutionalized in school districts in rare cases (Harris, 1996). Surprisingly, the advocates of peace education have not focused heavily on school demilitarization, perhaps out of concerns with losing the legitimacy that their less controversial programs afford them.

Building on Past Victories

During the run up to the war and the teacher suspensions, the AAF was adamant that the climate in schools was skewed in favor of a promilitary and prowar atmosphere. The presence of JROTC and an increased presence of military recruiters were palpable, they argued, and many schools were having patriotic prowar assemblies and displays around the school. In comparison to this militarized climate, they argued, the occasional antiwar poster on a counselor's office wall or classroom door should be placed within the larger context of the school. Although the policy on controversial issues developed by the district called for balance, the AAF felt the district was being disingenuous about how the policy would be implemented. Nevertheless, the policy was distributed to principals by the district administration.

Without the organizational networking and infrastructure that the Albuquerque P&J provided, things might have ended there. However, Janice Hart, one of the co-organizers of the AAF, and Maria Santelli, a program coordinator at P&J, together began working on what was generally called "counterrecruiting" in high schools. Given the lack of balance they saw in schools regarding the military presence, they decided to call the new organization "Another Side: Truth-in-Military-Recruiting Program."

Taking advantage of the current emphasis on balance in the schools, Another Side members (including myself) met with the APS superintendent to ask that she write a memo to principals, calling on them to provide a balance approach to providing information about the military as a career to students and to allow Another Side into the schools. Without AAF's previous effort to educate the district about the imbalance between the overall military presence and the relatively minor antiwar presence in the schools, gaining the cooperation of the superintendent would have been more difficult.

Even though the memo to principals did not magically open doors, the larger point about imbalance had been made, and the district, from the school board on down, was made aware of it.

Political Risk Taking and School Professionals

Project YANO, an organization with years of experience with “truth-in-recruitment” advocacy, has concluded that school and district administrators are a major obstacle to its work. In their recommendations to other groups, they state:

In general, it is unwise to make school administrators your first contact point. Principals, superintendents and school board members are prone to deny us access because of the potential for controversy. Once that happens, other doors we might have been able to enter will slam shut, and much time will have to be spent struggling to overcome administrative barriers. It's better to postpone administrative contacts as long as possible and only resort to them when necessary. (Jahnkow, 2006)

Instead, Project YANO recommends taking an incremental approach by beginning with presentations in the classrooms of friendly teachers, then moving on to counselors and career fairs. By establishing a track record, groups can gain the confidence of school professionals, who may be sympathetic but fear controversy. To be successful, advocacy groups must make sure that members who go into schools are well trained and behave professionally.

Oftentimes, principals are poorly informed about students' first amendment rights and/or are aggressively supportive of a military presence. During the run up to the Iraq war, I received a call from my daughter's cell phone. She was on her way to the principal's office with several JROTC students and some of her classmates with whom she had organized a peace group. She and her classmates had a faculty sponsor and had done the paperwork required to start the club. Apparently, 10 JROTC students had shown up to protest the formation of the peace group, allegedly spurred on by their JROC commander. Because I had taught principalship certification courses, I told her the little I could remember about the Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines*, which was a landmark case on students' (and teachers') first amendment right to free speech.

At first, the principal sided with the JROTC students who wanted him to disallow the formation of the peace group, saying that he didn't want to go back to the subversive 1960s. The teacher, who was the club advisor, was ultimately able to convince the principal that the students had a legal right

to have the club. Not surprisingly, this teacher was one of those suspended shortly thereafter because he had posted student material and was asked to take down fliers, some of which were fliers announcing a meeting of the student-organized peace group.

Many principals and teachers will recognize the politically charged environment that exists in many schools, especially in times of national crisis. The teacher in this case took a risk by sponsoring the peace club; the principal ultimately allowed the students to have the club once he was convinced he had no choice but allegedly retaliated later against the teacher. Many principals during this period were caught between antiwar and prowar parents. My daughter's high school drew on a largely low-income community but also drew from a small liberal, middle-class enclave near the local university. The current principal, who is more even handed in her views, has nevertheless said that she feels the need to honor the presence of military families at the school. This raises an issue that is little studied by researchers of educational administration: political risk taking (Brunner, 1999; Ylimaki, 2005). The study of school administrators will have to focus more seriously on the question of how school administrators might behave less like cautious politicians and more like advocates for children (Anderson, 2009).

Conclusion

Many have argued that as the United States continues to lose economic power around the world, it must increasingly depend on military force and intimidation, requiring the development of a security state and a military culture in the United States. As with many shifts in the United States, be they higher divorce rates, increases in poverty, or a growing gun culture, public schools are the places where such shifts first become visible. The growing militarization of American society is increasingly on display in many local high schools.

Truth-in-recruiting advocacy is part of a larger attempt to not only gain access to schools to provide a more balanced view of military service but also to call attention to the diminishing post-high school options for low-income American youth.

It is increasingly important that school administrators begin to see themselves as advocates for low-income children and their communities rather than implementers of policies that fail to provide youth with more options. In low-income and middle-income high schools today, it is far more common to see police officers and military recruiters than college and business

recruiters. As several studies have documented, by linking to community organizing and advocacy groups, school administrators can often seek legitimacy through alternative power bases and institutional supports, which allow them to push back against top-down mandates that do not benefit the children under their care (Shirley, 1997).

In the current de-industrialized society that fails to provide a living wage for millions of Americans, low-income parents see fewer options for their children. Two options that loom large in poor and working-class communities are the juvenile justice system and the military. Zero tolerance and promilitary policies in schools and society are viewed as getting tough without having to do the difficult work of building relations and trust with youth and their communities. Meanwhile, our prisons house nearly two and a half million Americans, and our military forces grow into the hundreds of thousands. In both institutions, the inmates and soldiers are disproportionately poor and non-White.

Advocacy movements are today growing in number and strength. They represent a civil society movement that can provide a challenge to the top-down policies that seldom benefit low-income youth. Not part of the government, nor military, advocacy movements can often operate outside the military-industrial complex. School professionals may be more willing to join with this movement once they see that it has their students' best interests at heart. But until that happens, many advocacy groups may have to continue to work around the margins of schools.

Notes

1. These organizations include LeaveMyChildAlone.org, Brooklyn Parents for Peace, Coalition Against Militarism in our Schools, and Peace Action.

2. Because the government is currently trying to get this ruling overturned in the U.S. Supreme Court, advocacy groups should consult Project YANO before filing suit under this precedent.

3. Organizations endorsing Another Side included the following: Albuquerque Friends Meeting, Albuquerque Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Albuquerque War Tax Alternative Fund, American GI Forum, Center for Economic Justice, Citizens for Alternatives to Radioactive Dumping, Grey Panthers, La Montanita Coop, La Raza Unida, Mountainview Neighborhood Association, Southwest Organizing Project Youth Organizing, Stop the War Machine, and Veterans for Peace.

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