

Buffalo Forum



Local Publication of the
U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization

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U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CONTROL MUST END

Democracy Demands International Control and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

In a recent interview with Reuters, Trump said, "I am the first one that would like to see ... nobody have nukes, but we're never going to fall behind any country even if it's a friendly country, we're never going to fall behind on nuclear power." He added, "It would be wonderful, a dream

would be that no country would have nukes, but if countries are going to have nukes, we're going to be at the top of the pack." In December he tweeted that the United States "must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until
International Control of Nuclear Weapons • 3

ORGANIZING AGAINST MILITARISM IN OUR SCHOOLS

Students Need an Anti-War Alternative

The presence of the military in Buffalo schools is most evident in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) programs in the universities and high schools, as well as the use of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test. Both are recruiting tools for the military in a period where the threat of

more wars is increasing.

Currently there are Army JROTC programs at Hutch Tech, McKinley and South Park High Schools, while Riverside and DaVinci have also had programs. There are also ROTC programs at many colleges and universities in the area, including Buffalo State,

Anti-War Alternative • 5

Standing With Asia, Africa and Latin America to Ban Nuclear Weapons

Vincent J. Intondi, Associate Professor of History, Montgomery College, Maryland

With the election of Donald Trump, nuclear weapons are receiving attention they have not seen since the 1980s, and rightfully so. Since the campaign, Trump has repeatedly voiced his disdain for the Iran nuclear deal, asked why we

cannot use nuclear weapons, and made clear his intention to follow through on the \$1 trillion modernization plan and possibly resume nuclear testing. [...] With all that said, is there any hope to avoid nuclear

Ban Nuclear Weapons • 4

Graduation Rates, Institutional Racism, and Refusing the Tests

Buffalo graduation rates remain a serious concern of students, parents and teachers alike. While there was an increase for 2016, to 64 percent, up from about 58 percent in 2015, the rate remains considerably below the state average of about 80 percent. It is also the case that the number of students forced out of school,

in part as a result of unjust suspensions, remained close to 20 percent for both years. Attendance, which is also linked to graduation rates, has also remained low, with close to half of Buffalo students missing 18 days or more, or close to a month of classes. One out of every six students throughout the district missed more than

20 percent of the 2015-16 school year. Among the city's high school students, one-third of the students missed at least 20 percent of the school year.

When looking at these issues, the students themselves are often blamed for the problem, or their parents. But systemic problems of low attendance and low graduation

rates cannot be solved without examining the institutional problems, particularly institutional racism. Buffalo schools are majority minority, with African Americans and Puerto Ricans making up the majority of students. The schools are seriously under-funded, meaning large classes, music

Refusing the Tests • 2

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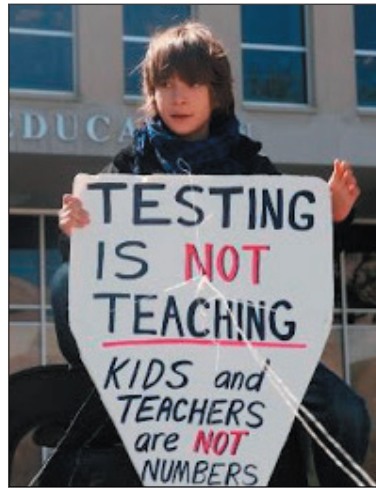
I • REFUSING THE TESTS

programs that are not available to all, physical education and sports programs poor or non-existent. Institutional racism is also reflected in the suspensions, with an estimated 36,000 suspension days in 2016, disproportionately imposed on African Americans and other minorities.

Perhaps more importantly, the Common Core testing and curriculum that goes with it, together with its use of collective punishment, branding students and schools failures based on a single test, also play a significant role in absenteeism.

In surveying students, many say the existing, very outdated curriculum that does not address the urgent social problems youth contend with and want to change, is a main source for absenteeism. The curriculum does not generate enthusiasm or even allow for investigating social problems and working and learning together as collectives to find solutions. It is not geared toward education to change the world and being part of the social movements involved in doing so.

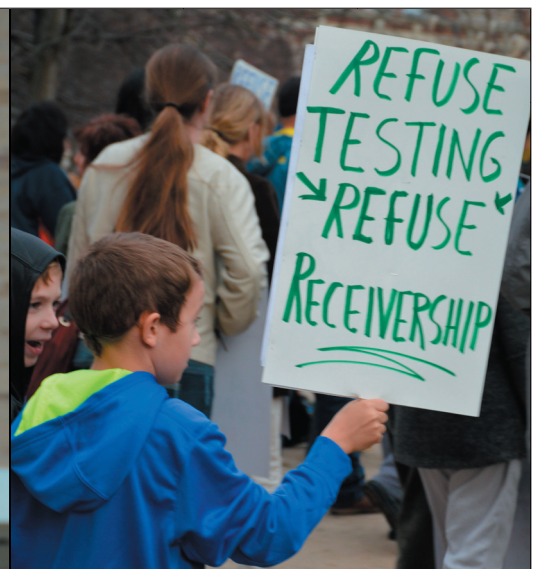
The Common Core exacerbates the situation, by further narrowing the curriculum and, using the testing, essentially militarizing it. All are to submit to an unjust test, to accept being branded as failures, to accept state takeover of our public schools as a result of the testing. Further, all are to accept schools that are more like prisons,



where students have to walk in silence, in single file, have silent lunches, accept collective punishment over and over again. Students and teachers are being treated as things, as numbers, not human beings. They are to submit to humiliation, to policing and being policed. These are not conditions for learning, they are conditions for submission and being good and willing slaves — something the rich very much have in store.

Refusing the Tests is a means to reject submission and stand up for rights, the equal right to education and the right to decide curriculum and all matters of education. It is a means to reject the tests and the curriculum that goes with it and take up discussion on what is needed. Building the new, including new educational institutions is a problem for students, teachers and parents to engage, to debate and deliberate on. Education to change the world is a necessity and one only we together can develop.

Common Core testing begins March 27 with the English Language Arts (ELA) testing for 3-8 graders. Now is the time to join in organizing to Refuse the Tests! All parents and students can choose to refuse and urge others to do so as well. And go a step further and take up discussion on a new curriculum to arm the youth to change the world!



I • INTERNATIONAL CONTROL OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes.” The statements are made in the context of the plan already put in place by Obama to modernize the existing nuclear arsenal, including submarines, bombers, ballistic and land-based missiles, at an estimated cost of \$40 billion a year for the next 30 years. That is more than \$1 trillion on weapons meant to destroy whole nations and their human productive powers.

Current nuclear forces already consist of about 7,000 nuclear warheads, submarines that launch ballistic missiles, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, long-range bomber aircraft, shorter-range tactical aircraft, and the nuclear weapons that those delivery systems carry, according to the Congressional Budget Office. It is not clear what additional expansion Trump has in mind. What is clear is that the world demand of the peoples for the abolition of nuclear weapons is to remain a “wonderful dream.”

Two important issues commonly left out of the discussion on nuclear weapons are 1) the completely undemocratic power of the U.S. president, a single individual, to launch nuclear war and 2) the necessity for international control of all nuclear weapons so as to provide a block to their use and a means to abolish them.

Much is being said about Trump’s temperament and ensuring the U.S. is

at the “top of the pack,” — something all U.S. presidents have called for and made evident in U.S. using nuclear weapons and its massive testing and building program, which continues today. But what is far more significant is the power a U.S. president holds to unilaterally launch nuclear war. When this power was put in place, it eliminated any deliberation, by the peoples here and abroad. And deliberation by the United Nations, with a main mission to secure the peace, and by Congress, with the authority to declare war. It is completely undemocratic for the presidency to hold such power. It also meant the U.S. would have a war government and a war economy to guarantee that it remained at “the top of the pack.”

What is needed today to contribute to peace is elimination of this presidential power, alongside the efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, first and foremost those



of the U.S. It is not possible to talk about advancing and broadening democracy, which requires deliberation on such vital matters as war and peace, without talking about elimination of presidential dictate over use of nuclear weapons.

Secondly, while efforts continue to abolish nuclear weapons, it is important to fight for international control of nuclear weapons. Use of nuclear weapons cannot rest in the hands of the U.S. president or the big powers, but rather must be under international control, that is binding and enforceable. The U.S. has long opposed such control, while much of the rest of the world has supported and continues to do so, as reflected in the recent UN vote by 123 countries “to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.”

While the U.S. is likely to refuse to recognize such a binding instrument, bringing to the fore the need for international control and uniting the world’s countries behind such an effort carries weight in world public opinion.

The demand to end control by the U.S. president of use of nuclear weapons, including first strike as the U.S. has threatened, is an important part of the struggle for democracy and for the much needed anti-war government.



I • BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS

war? In a word, yes.

History was made last October. While most of us were watching video of Trump bragging about sexually abusing women, the United Nations (UN) adopted a landmark resolution to begin negotiations on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons.[1] With the passage of this resolution, talks will be held in March, June, and July to finally negotiate a “legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.”

As most of the nine nuclear-armed nations voted against the resolution in addition to many of their allies, an overwhelming amount of nations in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and the Pacific voted in favor and are likely to be key players at the negotiating conferences. Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) explains that this treaty would “strengthen the global norm against the use and possession of these weapons, closing major loopholes in the existing international legal regime and spurring long-overdue action on disarmament.” While Fihn admits the “treaty won’t eliminate nuclear weapons overnight,” she makes clear “it will establish a powerful new international legal standard, stigmatizing nuclear weapons and compelling nations to take urgent action on disarmament.”

Demand for International Control of Nuclear Weapons

It is no surprise that this current attempt to eliminate nuclear weapons is being led by many nonwhite nations. In 1955, ten years after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, twenty-nine nations of Asia and Africa gathered in Bandung, Indonesia and declared “freedom and peace are interdependent.” The “Bandung Conference” highlighted the need to eliminate European colonialism, its white supremacy, and nuclear weapons. Delegates declared that nuclear weapons



threatened the human race and disarmament was imperative to save mankind from “wholesale destruction.” Nuclear disarmament was “an absolute necessity for the preservation of peace” and it was their “duty” to bring about nuclear disarmament. Delegates requested the UN and all concerned countries prohibit the production, testing, and use of nuclear weapons as well as establish international control to ensure this outcome.

The significance of the first all Asian-African meeting was not lost on African Americans, who since 1945 had consistently fought for nuclear disarmament. Richard Wright and Adam Clayton Powell attended the Bandung Conference. The NAACP sent a message of support to the delegates. Paul Robeson wrote to the group, “Discussion and mutual respect are the first ingredients for the development of peace among nations. If other nations of the world follow the example set by the Asian-African nations, there can be an alternative to the policy of force and an end to the threat of H-Bomb war.”

In 1959, civil rights leader Bayard Rustin led a team in Ghana to stop the French from testing a nuclear weapon in the Sahara. Two years later, Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, joined by African American activists, held the “World Without the Bomb” conference. African leaders remained focused on disarmament throughout the 1960s. [...]

While China, North Korea, Pakistan, and India have produced nuclear weapons, the overall [world trend to push] for nuclear abolition has only grown over time with the passage and ratification of the Tlatelolco Treaty (Treaty for the Prohibition

of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) and the Pelindaba Treaty (African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty).

Of course the recent UN vote on the resolution, much like the history of nuclear weapons, reeks of colonialism. Indeed, the U.S. has called on its NATO allies to join in boycotting the upcoming negotiations...

In addition to those calling for a boycott, there remain those who characterize a nuclear weapons ban as naïve and idealistic, arguing that “arms control,” rather than abolition should be the focus. That said, this summer nations will gather inside the UN to negotiate a ban on nuclear weapons.

From the moment there was even a possibility of a Donald Trump presidency, I along with many others have been calling for a return to the 1980s when over one million people marched at the UN for nuclear disarmament. Now may be that time. There is nothing more important at this moment than eliminating nuclear weapons. We must support those nations fighting to save humanity, raise our collective voices, and demand: “No More Hiroshimas.”

(Professor Intondi, is also Director of the Institute for Race, Justice & Community Engagement at Montgomery College)

Notes

1) The UN process began October 27, when — by a vote of 123 for, 38 against, and 16 abstaining — the First Committee of the UN agreed “to convene in 2017 a United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.” The First Committee deals with nuclear and security issues. Ireland, Mexico, Austria, Brazil, Nigeria, and South Africa helped spearhead the effort to forge a treaty banning nuclear weapons, and scores of other nations joined in. The U.S. voted against and pressured other countries, including Japan to do the same. Japan however has said it will join the negotiations, which begin in March.

I • ANTI-WAR ALTERNATIVE

University at Buffalo, Canisius, Daemen, D'Youville, Medaille and Hilbert.

In the past, such as at Hutch Tech, freshmen were automatically signed up for JROTC, even though it is not supposed to be mandatory. This practice was ended by parents and students demanding not to be part of the military. However, the military imposes at least a 100-student enrollment, so it is possible that students are still being assigned and told they are required to take JROTC. Any student or parent that wants to opt out of JROTC can do so by refusing. And one effective way of eliminating JROTC altogether is a refusal by students to participate, so the 100-student requirement is not met.

The ASVAB is given at different times in different Buffalo high schools. ASVAB is a skills and guidance test that is funded and graded by the military, though dressed up like a career exploration test. According to the Army's School Recruiting Program Handbook, the main function of the test is to "provide the field recruiter with a source of leads of high school seniors and juniors qualified through the ASVAB for enlistments into the Active Army and Army Reserve..."

To contribute to peace and block preparations for war, which recruiting serves, it is best to opt your child out or students can simply refuse the test. Principals and guidance counselors can be informed that by law, the test is not mandatory. At the very least, it is best not to allow the school to forward the relevant student information to the military, as they are known to hound students at a young age and persist until they are recruited.

Further, while many parents and students do not know it, the *No Child Left Behind Act* required schools to provide student information to military recruiters, a requirement still in effect. And the Pentagon has established what is called JAMRS or Joint Advertising Marketing and Research Services. It is a military recruitment database of 16-to-25-year-olds that includes not only names, addresses and phone numbers but, gathering information from facebook and other social media, likes and dislikes,

hobbies, etc.

All these various means of securing information and promoting the military are part of the machinery to control students and recruit them for use in illegal wars. In order to block the military from securing such information it is necessary to opt out by specifically demanding the schools not provide the information. Opting out of JAMRS requires letters directly to the Pentagon, though it is not known to what degree they respect any such demands.

JROTC in Buffalo

The JROTC programs in the high schools are generally presented as a means for students to learn to be "good citizens." The underlying content of a good citizen is clearly one that serves the military, not humanity. And much of the content of courses, though not directly stated, is to promote the U.S. military as a positive and honorable force in the world. It is to hide its quality as an aggressive force committing crimes, unjustly killing and destroying worldwide.

It is also the case that JROTC courses are being used to replace standard classes in government, as well as physical education. For example the Hutch Tech JROTC curriculum, "fully or partially addresses a number of national academic standards – to include Common Core State Standards (CCSS) – includes course work on leadership, civics, geography and global awareness, health, and wellness, language arts, life skills, and U.S. history." McKinley's includes "Conflict resolution and conflict management." Given that the military's means of securing "conflict resolution" is use of force and violence, one can imagine the content of this curriculum

South Park's includes promotion of JROTC values of loyalty, duty and service. Given it is the Army, the content of loyalty and duty is not to justice and serving the interests of the youth as a collective, but



loyalty and duty to the military, to doing as you are told, when you are told, even when it is unjust and criminal.

For an Anti-War Alternative

Buffalo students, like those worldwide, are very much opposed to war and to being forced to kill innocent civilians, destroy schools and hospitals, and all the crimes U.S. wars entail. As well, the Buffalo Code of Conduct calls for use of restorative justice and non-violent resolution of conflict — both directly contrary to the values and actions of the military. At the very least, for all public schools but especially those with JROTC and ROTC programs, an anti-war alternative that promotes justice and peaceful means for resolving conflict, in the schools and in the world, is needed.

Why should the military be paid and provided access to the high school youth, when anti-war forces, including anti-war veterans, are blocked from providing an alternative? Why should any submit to the militarization of our schools and curriculum, when an anti-war alternative — that embodies the drive of humanity for an end to wars and for fraternal relations of mutual respect and benefit — can and must be developed? *Buffalo Forum* urges all concerned to join organizing efforts in the high schools for an anti-war alternative. All interested can call 716-602-8077 or email buffaloforum@usmlo.org.

THE ROLE OF JROTC

The Military Invasion of My High School

Sylvia Mcgauley, Oregon Social Studies Teacher

The sprawling campus of Reynolds High School (RHS), the second largest high school in Oregon, rests atop a ridge at the entrance to the scenic Columbia River Gorge in tiny Troutdale, 17 miles east of downtown Portland. When I first started teaching here 23 years ago, Reynolds was an almost all white, working-class, conservative, sub-rural community, culturally distinct from its larger urban neighbor. As Portland has become more gentrified, lower rents have attracted numerous low-income families — immigrant, African American, Latina/o, and white. Today, the Reynolds School District is a high-poverty, culturally diverse district with two of the poorest elementary schools in the state — perfect prey for military recruiters who win points for filling the coffers of the poverty draft.

During the Vietnam War era, much was written about Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps' (JROTC) role in teaching military training; today JROTC high school (and even middle school) programs incorporate a broader curricular agenda and are expanding rapidly. Yet, within the education community, little has been written about the implications and effects of JROTC in schools.

The potent presence of the military at RHS shines a floodlight on educational inequity. One sees college recruiters walking the halls of affluent Lincoln High School near downtown Portland. At RHS, college recruiters are few and far between, but military recruiters, JROTC commanders, and ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) testers clamor to establish daily contact with potential recruits. [...]

As educators, we must ask critical questions: Whose interests do we ultimately serve by welcoming the military into our poorer schools? Is it really in any of our students' best interests? What are the qualifications of the instructors? What does the JROTC curriculum actually teach our students?

JROTC is Not About Education

The National Defense Act of 1916 established



JROTC to increase the U.S. Army's readiness in the face of World War I. The *ROTC Vitalization Act of 1964* directed the secretaries of each military branch to establish and maintain JROTC units for their respective branches. In the 1990s, the programs began expanding rapidly throughout the country. Today, there are approximately 3,500 Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard JROTC units in schools in the United States and its territories. In 2013, Congress instructed the secretary of defense to expand further and to report on "efforts to increase distribution of units in educationally and economically deprived areas."

JROTC is not about education. But by housing recruiters and JROTC in public schools and offering them carte blanche privileges, we provide them a cloak of legitimacy. Militarism was one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "giant triplets" of societal destruction (along with racism and extreme materialism), yet today it appears as a legitimate component of the educational system — most often at underfunded schools.

At our school, JROTC is an actual school within a school, one that offers four levels of classes for which students earn full credits. It meets state requirements for career training. At RHS and many other schools, it is accepted as a substitute for physical education. Our JROTC instructors have also

given make-up credit for writing and study skills classes, using online programs in the main JROTC classroom. The RHS program is directed by Brian James, a retired colonel from the Oregon Army National Guard, who tells me he looks forward to being able to offer health, history, and government credits as well.

Promoting Gun Culture at School

RHS has embraced school-based initiatives, including a commitment to restorative justice and peer mediation, that teach and encourage students to resolve conflicts nonviolently. JROTC's militarism runs counter to these programs. Schools across the country are employing a variety of methods to curb bullying and violent incidents, create safe learning environments, and teach peaceful means of conflict resolution. JROTC's introduction of weapons training, its partnership with the NRA to sponsor marksmanship matches, and its modeling of authoritarian militaristic solutions to problems contradict the schools' stated opposition to violence.

Critics have been successful in getting JROTC to discontinue the use of live weapons in schools on a national level, but units continue to use air rifles for target practice at RHS and numerous other schools. Organizing makes a difference. In San Diego, for example, the Education Not Arms Coalition, made up of students, teachers, parents, and community groups, successfully removed target practice with air rifles from San Diego JROTC programs in 2009.

One School's JROTC Story

The JROTC contract requires the hiring of a minimum of two retired officers for the first 150 students enrolled as cadets. After 150, another instructor must be hired for each additional increment of 100 cadets. James and other retired military personnel teach courses in military science, called Leadership Education Training (LET), during the school day. Three full-time JROTC instructors lead 13 sections of LET 1, 2,

Military Invasion of My School • 7

6 • MILITARY INVASION OF MY SCHOOL

and 3 to 280 students. [...]

Retired Colonel James adds that they really should have a fourth officer since their “job is bigger than a teacher’s. We teach, mentor, and coach kids, and we take them on excursions. We take them to Florida and other places for rifle competitions.” Every teacher I know teaches, mentors, and coaches students; and if we had the Pentagon’s money, we would take them on many more excursions.

Student loads for most non-JROTC teachers hover between 180 and 220 students (more than twice the load of the JROTC instructors) with class sizes in the 30s and low 40s. JROTC cadets often take LET in place of physical education, and a single PE teacher would normally support 250 or more students. If JROTC were eliminated at RHS, the district would hire fewer than half as many teachers to replace them — although it would be wonderful for our students if we, too, had student loads of 70 to 90. In general, the federal subsidy covers less than half the total salaries and none of the employment taxes or benefits for JROTC instructors. Schools wind up using extra money from their budgets to, in effect, subsidize a high school military training/recruiting program for the Pentagon.

JROTC instructors are not certified in the same way as other school district teachers. In some states they are not required to have more than a GED (although the commander must have at least a BA). Generally, the military decides who is qualified to be a JROTC instructor and then presents them to the school district for hiring. [...]

Teaching Militarism

The Reynolds LET 1 course description apprises students that they will learn “leadership, follower, and citizenship skills.” JROTC is military training. Instead of teaching toward a just and peaceful world, military training emphasizes dominance and nationalism. In fact, once students enlist in the military, they are no longer guided by the United States Constitution. Rather they are governed by

the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

The Pentagon contracts with Pearson to write JROTC curriculum, including social studies, health, and leadership textbooks. The local school district has no control over their content. No process exists for regular certified staff to review JROTC materials for appropriateness, accuracy, or conformity to educational standards.

Teachers focused on social justice are critical of the historical perspectives of many mainstream textbooks. But, because the JROTC curriculum is focused on developing leaders for the U.S. military, there is a specific danger to these texts. For example, Lesson 2 of the LET 3 textbook is titled “Ethical Choices, Decisions, and Consequences.” The authors compare and contrast the Vietnam and Iraq Wars. They state that the sole cause of the Vietnam War was containment of communism: “American military personnel began deploying to Vietnam in 1954 to strengthen the country against communist North Vietnam.” The authors cite then-President Johnson’s 1964 statements that North Vietnam attacked a U.S. destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin as the impetus for the broader war, ignoring overwhelming evidence from declassified documents that there was no such attack.

The narrative continues: “The United States went to war in Iraq as part of its global war on terrorism.” In the same paragraph, the authors introduce Osama bin Laden and explain the creation of al-Qaeda “to dislodge American forces in the Middle East.” The implication is clear — Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden were working in cahoots to attack the United States. To further cement this alleged relationship, which did not exist, they quote George W. Bush: “Iraq could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists. Alliance with terrorists could allow the Iraqi regime to attack America without leaving any fingerprints.” Nowhere in the case study or various historical timelines do the authors indicate that both Hussein and bin Laden were at one time strongly supported by the United States. Describing

the arguments for the second Gulf War, the text notes a “lack of indisputable evidence” (as opposed to the presence of manufactured false evidence) that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

In outlining alternatives to these military invasions, the authors identify the only potential consequences as unacceptably negative. In the case of Vietnam, they cite the “domino theory,” which predicted one country after another becoming communist threats to the United States. In the case of Iraq, they quote then-President Bush without additional commentary: “We cannot wait for the final proof — the smoking gun — that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.”

Lesson 3 is on “Global Citizenship Choices, Decisions, and Consequences.” The authors discuss intelligence as a tool of U.S. foreign policy: “The CIA focuses mostly on countries it thinks might be unfriendly. . . . Sometimes intelligence agencies have helped overturn the government of a country. . . . For example, the CIA took part in overthrowing the government of Salvador Allende. The United States government thought Allende was not favorable to our national interest. Like defense, diplomacy, foreign aid, and trade measures, intelligence is an important tool of foreign policy.” There is no questioning of the U.S.-led coup against the democratically elected president of Chile, nor is there any discussion of the consequences of the decision.

“The greatest purveyor of violence...”

The sole mission of the U.S. military is to prepare for and fight wars. JROTC in middle and high schools, ROTC in colleges, the ASVAB test, military partnerships with schools, research and development programs — all are designed as tools for fulfilling this goal.

JROTC is a component of the U.S. military apparatus, what King called the “greatest purveyor of violence in the world today.” As educators, we need to teach students to question, and to critically analyze the history of U.S. militarism. And we must get JROTC out of our schools.

