

V.21 N.4 (#108) SUMMER 2012 \$15.00

# OUR SCHOOLS

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

# OUR SELVES

REMEMBERING  
BOB DAVIS

CAMPUS STRATEGIES  
FOR NEO-CON YOUTH

FRAMING ANTI-BULLYING  
CAMPAIGNS

# SMASHING THE STEREOTYPES

Challenging race and gender  
in the classroom





~ *Bob Davis* ~

June 1934 - February 2012

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# SMASHING THE STEREOTYPES



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ERIKA SHAKER

## From Typecasting to Role-changing

### Ending the tyranny of stereotypes

I'll admit it. For the past four months I've been consumed by the Quebec student strike.

Because of my work in education policy, and because I did my undergrad degree at McGill I feel a very personal connection to the current debates about tuition fees, public interest, the social returns of higher education, the right to protest, and how we ensure the world we leave behind is better than the one we inherited.

The striking students have raised arguments and concerns that get to the root of the debate about the kind of society we want to build — or the kind of society we are allowing to be dismantled in our name.

But the response to this action has raised another issue: how these students are portrayed by mainstream media. Their nuanced, thoughtful arguments are routinely dismissed as “whining”; in spite of working part-time more than students in other provinces they are labeled lazy; their dedication to the protest is evidence that they have “nothing better to do” because they are — you guessed it — unmotivated; and their insistence that governments have a responsibility to their citizens is another indication of how “entitled” this generation is — a generation that is poised to

inherit a legacy of record high levels of household debt, stagnant wages and climate degradation.

But the stereotype of the lazy student — or, alternatively, the hostile protestor — has been an effective weapon of the mainstream media; all the proof that's considered necessary by those who are content to get their "facts" from those news sources. Even the sight of lawyers marching in support of students, senior citizens and parents standing shoulder to shoulder with young people, or university professors lining up to be arrested in a show of solidarity seems to do little to blunt the vilification of the students, or to broaden the terms of the debate.

The ways in which stereotypes limit debate and how educators are challenging these constraints is a main theme of this issue of *Our Schools/Our Selves*. David Stocker looks at how math can be used to challenge notions of gender and teach about domestic violence; Ozlem Sensoy examines how our understanding of Middle Eastern men has been shaped by popular culture, and to what effect.

Tim McCaskell provides a detailed review of a web document — *Common Cause*—and uses "values framing" analysis to look at how debates around school bullying are being both constructed and used by various parties and organizations. This article has broader resonance, though, as a case study for people anxious to better understand the "reasons for the continuing lack of traction for progressive ideas and popular education, even in the midst of an economic crisis."

Several articles in this issue examine race: Amanda Gebhard and Robin Liu Hopson engage in a dialogue "to begin understanding why and how teacher race matters in our classrooms and schools" in their roles as educators (one white, one Asian), particularly with regard to the issue of teacher diversification for students and for teachers.

Rick Hesch has written a thoughtful and detailed analysis of the highly racialized decision to eliminate the Mexican-American Studies program in Arizona, and the collective response of students, educators, parents and communities in defence of a program that was, without a doubt, hugely successful at encouraging student engagement.

The notion of educational institutions as bastions of anti-government or anti-establishment thought that must be brought "to



heel” is a popular one in right-wing circles. Glenn Burley writes about his experience in attending the 2012 Manning Centre Conference, providing a revealing exposé of neo-con strategy, particularly where youth are concerned.

The irony of the perception of universities as left-wing institutions is underscored by Serdar Erkan and Catherine Neumann-Boxer in their article about the impact of the market model on academic freedom and the commodification of both research and researchers. Johannes Wheeldon also focuses on research at Canadian universities, providing a personal examination of the process through which SSHRC grants are awarded or refused, and ending with a call for a reform to help reinforce procedural fairness and ensure greater transparency.

John Connolly reviews *From Bombs to Books* (David Starr), and Rick Hesch reviews *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into the School Curriculum* (Yatta Kanu) and *First Nations Education Policy in Canada: Progress or Gridlock?* (Jerry Paquette and Gérald Fallon). And Larry Kuehn’s “Education RoundUp” provides us with an overview of a number of education trends that are at turns amusing, puzzling and horrifying.

Finally, longtime readers of *Our Schools/Our Selves* will have heard that Bob Davis — a friend, supporter and guest editor of the magazine, and a remarkable presence in the Canadian education debates — died earlier this year. His friend and colleague George Martell’s eulogy had been reproduced in this issue.

Once again, Dirk Van Stralen came up with a cover illustration that provided the clearest point of entry into this issue of *Our Schools/Our Selves* — the stereotypes that frame and permeate so much of how we engage with the world, and the ways in which they are being dismantled. And Nancy Reid turned her talents to making sure the interior of this magazine was as sensational as the exterior.

I hope this issue of *Our Schools/Our Selves* provides you with hours of enjoyable summer reading, thinking and conversation, and look forward to hearing from you in the fall.

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**ERIKA SHAKER** is Executive Editor of *Our Schools/Our Selves*.