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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews —

GHETTO SCHOOLING: A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF URBAN EDUCATIONAL REFORM
by Jean Anyon, New York: Teacher's College Press, 1997, 217 pages

Reviewed by Frank Goodfellow-Jones¹

Jean Anyon's *GHETTO SCHOOLING* exposes a trail of tears which stretches from the stresses of mass European immigration in the 1860's to the depleted urban neighborhoods of the 1990's. This is not a tale for the faint hearted. It is told by a warrior of the intellect — carefully. It is heavily armored with citations and first hand observations. With Anyon's field notes alone we could mount a moral indictment of a political culture too self-absorbed and too niggardly to nourish the children its constitutional mandates reasonably require. Combat MASH units under assault, practicing triage, have been more capable of humane care than the NJ legislature has even in the most affluent periods of history.

Anyon's technique is engaging. She takes us to one K-8 school — Marcy, in one city — Newark, in one state — New Jersey, in one nation, etc. She lets us see, hear and smell the place by way of getting us into feeling — something. I suggest outrage.

Having stirred us she proceeds to present a five chapter delineation of the historic context for Marcy's distress. Her chapter on the court legal battles over financial support for public education is, by itself, worth the price of admission. It details the shabby saga of more than a few (as in majority) foot dragging artful dodgers. One needn't wonder why New Jersey has been referred to as the Old South up North.

Anyon is, fortunately, not satisfied with an indictment; she has prepared a scheme in (Part III — Learning From the Past), well designed and laid out in detail. It is an antidote to heal the chronically malnourished schools and to maintain a healthy socio-economic context for their proper nourishment in the future.

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As a former library cataloger, I was impressed with the book's indexing and bibliography. As a former freight brakeman in Newark's Waverly Yard and Camden's Pavonia Yard, I appreciated the gritty portrait of the city. As an urban educator I am grateful for this courageous and useful document. I intend to purchase several copies for beleaguered friends, who will be stirred by, and warmed, at the fire in the heart of Jean Anyon's work.