

By Henry A. Giroux

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The warfare state is built not only on the militarization of the economy but also on what my colleague Brad Evans calls “armed ignorance.” Such ignorance represents more than a paucity of ethical and social responsibility, it is also symptomatic of an educational and spiritual crisis in the United States.

A culture of fear, hate and bigotry has transformed American politics into a pathology. Lawlessness extends from the highest reaches of government and big corporations to the paramilitarization of our schools and police forces. Unarmed Blacks are being killed by the police almost weekly while more and more members of the population are considered excess, disposable, and redundant and subject to the bigotry of escalating right-wing groups, neo-Nazis and a presidential candidate. With the world on the brink of war, ecological extinction, and an accelerating refugee crisis, and a growing culture saturated in violence, the public is persuaded that the burning issue of the day is the breakup of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie or the unexamined spectacle of hate that functions as a theatrical performance each day leading up to the coming elections.

Moral and political hysteria is in fashion and has undermined the public spheres that promote self-reflection, dialogue, and informed judgment. Informed exchanges and arguments that rely on evidence have been displaced by a culture of shouting, emotion, and thuggery. War comes in many forms and is as powerful as a form of ideology and identification as it is in the service of multiple forms of violence. Once we recognize this as both a crisis of politics and education, we can mobilize against both its ideological and material relations of power. But time is running out.

America is now at war with itself given the savagery of a neoliberal political and economic system willing to destroy the planet, while relentlessly dismantling those institutions that make a democracy possible. Not only are public spheres that serve the common good under siege, such as public and higher education, but American society is now conducting warfare against its own ideals, the social contract, public servants such as teachers, minority youth, Muslims, immigrants, and all of those populations considered disposable. The war culture that saturates American society provides the breeding ground for a new mode of authoritarianism that

threatens to engulf the whole of American society.

War is no longer simply an instrument to be used by political powers, but a form of rule, a general condition of the social order itself— a permanent social relation and coordinating principle that affects all aspects of society. One consequence is that the U.S. has moved from a welfare state in the last forty years to a warfare state with war becoming the organizing principle for a politics wedded to a war on terror, the expansion of the punishing state, and the militarizing of the wider culture—as for instance the celebration of the military at more and more sports events—all paid for by the Pentagon. Politics has become an extension of a comprehensive war machine and culture of cruelty that embraces the dark elements of authoritarianism while waging a war on democracy.

Evidence of such a militarized culture and culture of cruelty is widespread. Look no further than the war against women, especially around reproductive rights with the closing down of abortion clinics and the growing attempts by various right-wing controlled state governments to refuse federal Medicaid payments. There is also an ongoing war on youth, especially minority youth who are under siege in their schools, which are modeled increasingly after prisons and too often have more security forces and police in them than teachers. War is also being waged against poor minorities of class, color, and sexual orientation whose everyday behavior is being criminalized as they are subject the harsh reality of criminalization and the expansion of the incarceration state, with the latter being one of the largest in the world imprisoning over 2.3 million adults, most of whom are low-income African-Americans. There is also the widespread use of language in the service of violence, especially racist violence. The harsh and bigoted language used by Donald Trump against Muslims, Mexican immigrants, and refugees echoes the vocabulary of armed, right-wing militia groups, whose messages he proudly retweets.

Weapons from the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan are now given to police departments increasing the possibility of their use on poor minority communities whose neighborhoods are converted into what resembles battlefields. The police are now expected unjustifiably to solve every problem created by an unjust social order broken by a system marked by massive death-dealing inequities in wealth, income, and power that exclusively serve the financial elite. Hence, it should not be surprising that the war on poverty has become a war on the poor waged by corporate policies that deprive the economically disadvantaged, especially children, of public provisions such as food stamps, health care and decent jobs.

The rising culture of violence, repression, and surveillance in the United States points to the dangerous transformation of American politics into a war machine, reflected in many acts of state sanctioned violence that plague society and extend from the lead poisoning of millions of

children and the militarization of public schools to the use of violence to address social problems. Everyone is now treated as a criminal or a threat to the social order, all the while the violence of poverty, rising inequality, foreclosed homes, unemployment, and other injustices breed conditions in which guns become the staple of choice in mediating everyday life. One sign of the violence that defines the age of precarity is evident in the 500 children, adults, and innocent bystanders shot in Chicago in the first nine months of 2016 and the relentless killing of unarmed black men by the police. At the same time, war culture shapes elements of daily life that are barely visible because they do not rise to the level of the spectacle. Evidence of the structured silence of such battlefields can be found in the debtors' prisons for children, the modeling of schools after prison culture, the burdensome debts killing the future of young people, the transformation of education into Wal-Mart training centers, the rise of the mass incarceration state, and the turning of cities of the underprivileged into war zones.

Any attempt to resist the emergence of a war culture and militarized social order in the United States might begin with recognizing that democracy withers when war, combat, and militarization embody a country's highest ideals, reinforced by a warrior ethic that celebrates unchecked competition, hyper-masculinity, and the notion that violence is the primary organizing principle of society. As Hannah Arendt has observed, war culture is part of a species of thoughtlessness that legitimates desires, values, and identities that makes people insensitive to the violence they see all around them. You can't have a democracy that organizes itself around war because it is the language of injustice, extreme violence, and the pedagogy of barbarism.