H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Nicole Nguyen. ***A Curriculum of Fear: Homeland Security in US Public Schools.*** Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016. 296 pp. $26.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-8166-9828-8.

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Published on H-War (March, 2017)

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Historians of the twentieth-century United States have long been interested in the growing militarization of US society and the impact of this perpetual state of war on the US higher education system.[1] Effectively complementing this research and emphasizing its relevance to the secondary level is Nicole Nguyen's ***A Curriculum of Fear: Homeland Security in U.S. Public Schools*** (2016), a powerful indictment of the effects such a military mind set continues to have in the United States since 9/11. ***A Curriculum of Fear*** is an ethnographic study of a year in the life of one of the growing number of Homeland Security programs in US public schools. Relating her findings to broader trends of privatization-focused neoliberal school reform and the spread of national security perspectives and practices in educational settings, Nguyen argues that the program "contributed to the cultural, ideological, affective, and epistemological retooling of young people that makes going to war possible" (p. 243).

The pseudonymously named Milton High School is a large traditional public school located adjacent to a military base in the Washington, DC, area. As Milton transitioned to a mostly poor and working-class African American student body, district and school administrators launched a Homeland Security program at the "struggling" school in 2008 (p. 6). This school reform initiative sought to enable program participants to graduate and ultimately attain a "steady career" in the region's growing national security sector or the military (p. 117). Milton High School partnered with corporations, government agencies, and area colleges to produce a rich national security and emergency management curriculum that included core Homeland Security classes, career pathways (Geographic Information Systems, criminal justice, or science and engineering), many guest speakers and field trips, additional content in non-program classes, and early exposure at feeder elementary and middle schools. Nguyen recognizes that Milton's Homeland Security program was engaging for students, "impress[ive]" pedagogically (p. 255), and helpful in fostering a sense of community at the high school, but she nevertheless maintains deep reservations about the program's impact on students' psychological states and the effect such attitudes may have on US society.

Following a thought-provoking discussion of the ethics of conducting a school ethnography without making one's anticorporatization and antisecuritization attitudes known, the heart of ***A Curriculum of Fear*** is a sobering and thorough justification of the book's title. As Milton's Homeland Security program instilled in students fear of US vulnerability, mourning over what was lost on 9/11, and love of their country, program partici-

pants "learned to privilege military solutions to issues of national security, adopt a warlike mentality, value aggression over diplomacy, glorify war and war heroes, and valorize militarized masculinities" (p. 157). The hundreds of hours Nguyen spent conducting observations, interviews, and focus groups at Milton High School during the 2012-13 school year provide vivid illustrations of this view. Students began to express fear at being in large crowds and public transportation and to report developing a "homeland security instinct" that made them more vigilant in trying to identify people with a "suspicious look" (pp. 185, 189). One student said, "I feel like the government or the Army would be the only way I would do something ... that's important" (p. 74). A senior military officer speaking to students in the program suggested that promoting the defense of the country was necessary to go from being a "civilian" to a "citizen" (p. 208). Finding that students in his first class were far more interested in military weaponry, a guest speaker from the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission shifted his second presentation away from his earlier, more extended discussion of legal procedure. The host of the program's field trip to the State Police Academy regularly made dismissive comments about the female students and gave them menial roles in the public safety simulations.

Nguyen's observations are certainly troubling, but her narrow focus should produce caution before extending her conclusions to Homeland Security programs more generally. Milton's program may have itself evolved, as her year at the school came before the Edward Snowden disclosures and the Black Lives Matter movement. One also should examine any program in its broader context. For example, Nguyen maintains that Milton's program—despite its "anyone can be a terrorist" emphasis (pp. 192-193)—nevertheless had the effect of reinforcing suspicion of Middle Easterners and prioritizing military solutions to national security problems. But the students she interviewed differed on the degree to which they associated terrorism with Muslims, and their views on the Iraq War are never discussed. Since the vast majority of program participants' course work happened outside of the core curriculum, one could thus better gauge Milton's impact by studying how topics like the teachings of Islam and the justification and results of the Iraq War (and, for this mostly black student body, the widespread presence of African American Muslims) were handled in social studies classes. And, looking further at the broader context of the program, its "anyone can be a terrorist" emphasis may have challenged Islamophobic attitudes students acquired from television, video games, and other nonschool sources. Similarly, it would be worthwhile to understand how Milton's Homeland Security program affected parents; the large majority of Milton students who were not formally enrolled in it; and the feelings, beliefs, and career outlook and decisions of program participants in the years following graduation. A wealthier school in Milton's school district had also launched a Homeland Security program, but one that was specifically targeted at engineering. It would be valuable to compare what effect that program had on its students.

The fact that Milton's district chose different national security emphases for its more and less affluent schools raises important questions of the purposes and value of education. For more than a century, advocates of the social efficiency strand of progressive education have sought to meet students' perceived needs by training them for the workforce; too often, though, this has come through helping students better fill their expected roles rather than by giving them the skills to advance in society.[2] Much of the current school reform effort that focuses on testing, accountability, and choice expresses a similar goal of preparing students for meeting the requirements of college and career. Although one can raise serious doubts as to whether this movement has achieved its goals, it seems unfair for Nguyen to maintain that this school reform approach is "by design" intend-

ed to advance white, middle-class children while harming poor, minority children and that thus Milton "worked across the neoliberal grain to improve the educational opportunities available to all students" (pp. 20, 21). After all, as witnessed in the No Child Left Behind Act's effort to close the achievement gap by insisting that schools show progress in improving test scores among students of all races, many civil rights groups have been important advocates for current school reform efforts.[3] And in fact, though the evidence is "unclear" because Milton had not followed students after graduation (p. 124), it is quite possible that the school's Homeland Security program did increase graduation and college attendance rates and improve future economic outcomes for its poor, minority student participants.

So, if the intentions are noble and the outcomes do appear beneficial to students' economic well-being, are Homeland Security programs in US public schools salvageable? Nguyen would argue in the negative, as her only proffered advice is for "dismantling Homeland Security programs, undoing the corporatized partnerships with the security industry that enable such programs, and valuing classrooms that engage critical pedagogies for all students, regardless of race, gender, ability, and class" (p. 242). But the backing of outside organizations played an important role in the Milton Homeland Security program's success, and one may question Nguyen's assertion that the social justice-oriented pedagogies she endorses could still receive "the support of security companies and federal agencies" (p. 183). Nguyen has carefully detailed the troubling effects Milton's militarized program had on students' psyches and beliefs, but in reading her book, one can just as easily come up with recommendations for improving such programs in ways that lessen students' fears, promote democratic citizenship, and foster critical thinking concerning the origins of and responses to terrorism while still providing students with the skills they would need to succeed inside or outside the national security industry. If preparation for college and career is a legitimate purpose of schooling, then Homeland Security programs may have their place and ***A Curriculum of Fear*** becomes a must-read to address the problems Nguyen so insightfully conveys.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Michael S. Sherry, ***In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s*** (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Andrew D. Grossman, ***Neither Dead Nor Red: Civil Defense and American Political Development during the Early Cold War*** (New York: Routledge, 2001); Rebecca S. Lowen, ***Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford*** (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); and Margaret Pugh O'Mara, ***Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley*** (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). Grossman's book briefly addresses Cold War-era civil defense in US public schools.

[2]. In contrast, John Dewey represented the social democratic strand of progressive education. Recent books useful for understanding progressive education and the history of training students for society include Herbert M. Kliebard, ***Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946*** (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); Diane Ravitch, ***Left Back: A Century of Failed School Reforms*** (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); and Andrew Hartman, ***Education and the Cold War: The Battle for the American School*** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). For a defense of career and technical education, see James R. Stone III and Morgan V. Lewis, ***College and Career Ready in the 21st Century: Making High School Matter*** (New York: Teachers College Press, 2012).

[3]. Jesse H. Rhodes, ***An Education in Politics: The Origins and Evolution of No Child Left Behind*** (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012). For the history leading to NCLB, see also Patrick McGuinn, ***No Child Left Behind and the Transfor-***

mation of Federal Education Policy, 1965-2005 (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006); and Maris A. Vinovskis, *From a Nation at Risk to No Child Left Behind: National Education Goals and the Creation of Federal Education Policy* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009).

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Citation: Steven J. Lipson. Review of Nguyen, Nicole. *A Curriculum of Fear: Homeland Security in US Public Schools.* H-War, H-Net Reviews. March, 2017.

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