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Teachers Presenting the 'United Front' is Violence, Pure and Simple

Nerd Teacher

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Whenever a new teacher enters a school, regardless if they've never taught before or have had a decade or more of experience in the classroom, one of the first things that the whole system tries to impress upon them is that they need to present a 'united front' with their colleagues.

This is absolute fucking garbage.

The 'united front' is the belief that teachers should be required to enforce the exact same rules regardless of their opinions on those policies. They have had precisely *zero* input in the rules. When provided with a supposedly "democratic" (majority rules) scenario to "change" rules, everyone seems to *magically* agree that they should remain the same. Especially when the person who is placed "in charge" of everything is *also* part of that conversation.

Because *they* don't want to upset the balance and give up any part of *their* power. They have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, and everyone else knows that *that* per-

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son has power over their continued ability to have a job (and in some of our cases, a residence permit).

This structure is a way to both perpetuate violence on everyone in the school, particularly children, and to indoctrinate everyone into a “correct” way of behaving. It *forces* teachers to be complicit in

It doesn’t matter how you *feel* about the policies, but it matters that you *enforce* them even if you don’t want to.

This violence starts when a teacher enters the school. During the orientation (or whatever is serving as an orientation), you are given a list of expectations: late policies that punish students for not meeting deadlines, enforcing a multiply bigoted dress code or uniform policy (on both the children and yourself), and running classes in a manner that is deemed “acceptable” regardless of whether or not learning is taking place.

These structures and policies are designed to ensure that we either abide by them willingly (while perpetually under the threat that we may lose our job and thus any semblance of temporary security we have) or that we make it easier to weed ourselves out (willingly or by force). The first step of a school is to *break the teachers down*, to silence the thoughts and concerns in *their* heads so that the school can persist.

It’s a microcosm of how the State functions. Whether or not you’re working in a public or private school doesn’t matter because they often follow *someone else’s* requirements in the form of curriculum, and those requirements are developed through a connection to the State, either to the *local* variant (national curriculum) or to an *imperial* master (the IB or many curriculum connected to the Anglophone world).

As a way to obscure the truth, the school *claims* to be a “community.” These policies and structures ensure that it never will be. It can only be a community in the most superficial of ways, trapping people within its walls as it perpetually reinforces structures that deny our very humanity and push many of us into uncertainty year after year.

Healthy communities are not built on the constant fear of retribution or loss.

If you're someone who is more acutely aware of how school systems are structured, something *always* and *immediately* feels off about how everything is done. This happens every time you enter a new school, and you find yourself back at the beginning and trying to figure out how to navigate around those problems. Often, you find a lot of the rules in place to be archaic, and it's hard to ignore that you're being *required* to enforce something that you (and likely many of the kids in your care) don't actually agree with or even care about.

Does it show less respect if students wear hats in class? Do kids really respect teachers less if they wear jeans every day? Does it even matter if they get all the work done or that they turn things in late?

In all honesty, none of these things matter. Not even the schoolwork.

Yet, every teacher is expected to feign insult when anything "wrong" happens, acting as if we're all a 'united front' and denying our own humanity. When students come to us with complaints about our colleagues, we're expected to shut it down because it will "harm their authority."

We're not allowed to give them the space they need to voice frustrations because it's "inappropriate." We're pushed, for the sake of a false unity, to gaslight our students and automatically tell them they're "misunderstanding" or "misrepresenting" the situation.

It doesn't matter that we have the same opinions as our students about our colleagues, that we have had similar experiences with the same people, that we've felt the same discomforts. It doesn't matter that their complaints are about how sexist their teacher is, something we've also experienced. It doesn't matter that they're complaining about how queerphobic that person is, even if we're being forced to silently endure it, too, for the sake of our survival.

We're supposed to ignore *all* of that. We're supposed to invalidate the students' feelings. We're supposed to back each other up so someone else can "maintain authority," and we can show that we "all agree" and "are united" in how things happen.

We're *expected* to perpetuate violence so that we can maintain "order."

And it's something that I will continue to refuse, regardless of how many jobs it costs me.