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Abstract

Across the globe, a new historical conjuncture is emerging in which the attacks on higher education as a democratic institution and on dissident public voices in general – whether journalists, whistleblowers, or academics – are intensifying with sobering consequences. The attempts to punish prominent academics such as Ward Churchill, Steven Salaita, and others are matched by an equally vicious assault on whistleblowers such as Chelsea Manning, Jeremy Hammond, and Edward Snowden and journalists such as James Risen. Under the aegis of what Risen calls the “homeland security-industrial complex,” (Risen 2014, p. 1) it becomes difficult to separate the war on whistleblowers and journalists from the war on higher education—the institutions responsible for safeguarding and sustaining critical theory and engaged citizenship. The hidden notion of politics that fuels this market-driven ideology also informs a more Western-style form of neoliberalism in which the autonomy of democratizing institutions are under assault not only by the state but also by the rich,

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bankers, hedge fund managers, and the corporate elite. In this case, corporate sovereignty has replaced traditional state modes of governance and now it is powerful corporate elites who despise the common good. As the South African Nobel Prize winner in literature, JM Coetzee (2013), points out, the new power elite “reconceive of themselves as managers of national economies” who want to turn universities into training schools equipping young people with the skills required by a modern economy.” Viewed as a private investment rather than a public good, universities are now construed as spaces where students are valued as human capital, courses are determined by consumer demand, and governance is based on the Walmart model of labor relations. For Coetzee, this attack on higher education, which is not only ideological but also increasingly relies on the repressive, militaristic arm of the punishing state, is a response to the democratization of the university that reached a highpoint in the 1960s all across the globe. In the past forty years, the assault on the university as a center of critique and democratization has intensified, just as the reach of this assault has expanded to include intellectuals, campus protesters, an expanding number of minority students, and the critical formative cultures that provide the foundation for a substantive democracy (Coetzee 2014). This chapter will explore the ways to connect the university to the larger society while stressing the educative nature of politics as part of a broader effort to create a formative culture that supports the connection between critique and action. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

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