

## THE CONVERGENCE OF POLITICS AND EDUCATION REFORM: UNDERLYING NEOLIBERAL THEMES IN NDEA AND ESEA

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Cold War was one of the most turbulent times in America, with public opinion, political aims and increased tensions between two world superpowers changing on a daily basis. When broken down, the Cold War and events within this broader context have come to exemplify the course of America through the present day. One of the ways in which America was impacted due to issues in the 1950's and 1960's was through educational reform under various Presidential administrations. Two of these monumental reforms were the National Defense in Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. On the surface, these reforms uprooted educational practices and aims of the time, replacing outdated goals with contextual priorities. However, when analyzed through the dominant political and economic principles of the time which can be summarized as neoliberal, it is clear these bipartisan reforms were used by the Nixon administration and various dominant parties to achieve far different goals. Throughout this paper, I will connect literature on Cold War events with their subsequent education reforms and then explain through the current literature how these changes reinforced neoliberal policies already in place. I will then bring No Child Left Behind (NCLB) under George W. Bush into the paper by explaining how NCLB is a further development of neoliberal policy in the contemporary time. I will conclude with a brief explanation of where literature needs to explore and issues we are seeing today in other fields that can be described as neoliberal.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the fall of 1957, the Soviet Union made a monumental breakthrough in science and technology that their American counterparts were far behind in. That year, they launched the first orbiting satellite into space, Sputnik, and began the Space Age that dominated science, math and technology for the next decade. Americans were now terrified that the Soviets had the ability to send messages or people to space and drop nuclear bombs from Earth's atmosphere onto unwitting American citizens.<sup>1</sup> America made numerous drastic changes, including the founding of NASA, tripling the National Science Foundation's budget, implementing a Science Advisor to the President, and passing education reform that was to be named NDEA.<sup>2</sup>

### **NATIONAL DEFENSE IN EDUCATION ACT**

The National Defense in Education Act was not solely created as a direct response to Sputnik however as many historians claim. Rather, it had been tabled in Congress for a few years, being rejected three times, and Sputnik simply provided the perfect condition for both parties to accept that monumental change needed to be made.<sup>3</sup> After Sputnik launched, the Education and Labor committee recognized the opportunity in front of them provided by the Soviets and jumped on it. They began to frame NDEA as a defense bill, something all legislators and citizens could get behind, for being against improved defense

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<sup>1</sup> Ron Cowen, "Sputnik 50: Remembering the Dawn of the Space Age," *Science News* 172, no. 14 (2009), 22

<sup>2</sup> Ron Cowen, "Sputnik 50: Remembering the Dawn of the Space Age," *Science News* 172, no. 14 (2009), 17

<sup>3</sup> William J. Reese and Barbara Baksdale Clowse, "Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and National Defense Education Act of 1958," *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 3 (1982), 770

in a trying time would be anti-American. Hidden between layers of defense language and national security ideology were ten titles that increased production in math, science, technology and foreign language as well as provided federal aid to thousands of students who would have otherwise been unable to attend higher education. All of these goals increased the STEM production as it pertained to space and national security but also increased the overall competency of American schools.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, there were alternative motives behind the act that allowed legislators to mask intentions behind boosted educational performance in necessary subject areas for improved defense during the Cold War. Furthermore, as alluded to by Arthur Flemming, NDEA is the rare exception to American federal aid systems that had been in place since the beginning of the Republic. Throughout his article, he explains how NDEA marked a change in education reform and aid in American history. For the large portion of America's past, the federal government stayed out of education because "it was the sovereign rights of the states to administer educational policy, devise curriculum, select textbooks, educate and license teachers and maintain, manage and direct their public education."<sup>5</sup> NDEA was the first time the federal government intervened in public education and marked the change in federal aid going towards state's rights. But why did this change occur at this moment? What was the guiding framework for this type of monumental change? I would argue, and the literature would suggest, one possible theory is the emergence of neoliberalism as the guiding political, economic and foreign relations policy.

### EMERGENCE OF NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberalism can be a very complex theory if it is not familiar or understood in its entirety. Recently, neoliberalism has come under intense focus by historians aiming to connect political and economic policies of past Presidential administrations; namely Obama, the two Bush administrations, Clinton and Reagan. Two in-depth examinations of neoliberalism that help to position this theory within the context of a political and economic framework come from David Harvey and Henry Giroux. As Harvey outlines it, "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets and free trade." He further explains that neoliberal advocates can be found in any domain of life, usually controlling education, media, business and state or national institutions.<sup>6</sup> It becomes clear through this interpretation how leading state and national politicians can come to control the policies that determine the outlook of education, business and free markets throughout the country. Another interpretation is offered by Giroux, who identifies neoliberalism as a "political project", focusing on producing new forms of subjectivity and sanctioning particular modes of conduct for society.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it allows society, namely powerful white males, to blame minorities for their own failures, particularly economic. Giroux's primary focus is looking at how neoliberalism has affected youth populations in America, turning young children and adolescents from students and the future society, towards consumers and disposable minorities of people unable to contribute to the market economy. This concept has dangerous impacts on schools, as students are no longer contributing to the democracy and society, but rather to the pockets of large corporations.

When evaluated through such a context, it becomes clear that legislators had alternative motives for implementing such a widespread educational reform as a direct response to Sputnik. Rather than serve to offer better education with improved STEM opportunities, one could easily argue and tie together the notion that legislators were truly creating a system that produced better employees for space

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<sup>4</sup> William J. Reese and Barbara Baksdale Clowse, "Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and National Defense Education Act of 1958," *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 3 (1982), 771

<sup>5</sup> Arthur S. Flemming, "The Philosophy and Objectives of The National Defense Education Act," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 327, no. 1 (1960), 135

<sup>6</sup> David Harvey, *A brief history of neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005),

<sup>7</sup> Henry A. Giroux, *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability?* (2010), *Popular Educational Classics*, 7

exploration, engineering, foreign language in order to communicate with the many nations the US was in conflict with, and most importantly a more diverse soldier to fight the battles of the Cold War.

Another crucial underpinning of neoliberal studies of contemporary times is that all of the work currently been done looks at the economic or political aspects of neoliberalism while ignoring the other fields it impacts, such as education. As Bonal explains in his article exploring the Neoliberal Educational Agenda and the Legitimation Crisis, hegemonic structures and globalization that expanded tenfold during the Cold War forced many sovereign nation-states around the world to accept neoliberalism as the dominant education framework.<sup>8</sup> However, it is clear that education has a direct and immediate impact on the economic success of a country as education policies can create more efficient, competent and advanced labor forces as the generation enters the workforce. Therefore, the role of education within a capitalist, neoliberal state such as America is responsible for producing and ensuring the cyclical nature of the capitalist free-market that is centered around neoliberal rugged individualism, open markets and citizen participation in the free markets that provide for a high quality of life.<sup>9</sup> Naturally of course, the only way for minorities and underprivileged citizens to assure participation in free markets is to rise up the socio-economic scale, largely reliant upon educational opportunities at the secondary and higher education levels. However, capitalism and competitive free-markets also rely upon the exploitation of low-skill labor, something that the education reform must also account for.<sup>10</sup> During the Cold War, specifically the 1950's and 1960's America found itself in a theoretical battle with the Soviet Union who was trumpeting a socialist state where all individuals were given equality whereas America was promoting a Capitalist nation that allowed any individual access to limitless consumer goods through hard work and the American dream. It is in this context that NDEA was created and implemented and served to promote national security, improve education to create a more efficient, higher functioning work force, yet also create low-skilled workers who could be exploited by the capitalist state to increase the quality of life over that of the Soviet Union. However, NDEA went unchecked for nearly a decade due to the increased National Security it offered during an uncertain time in American history where nuclear bombs could decimate America at any time from above.

#### **ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT**

By 1965, when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed into legislation under the Johnson Administration who called for a "War on Poverty," a lot had changed in America, including an intensification of the Space Race as we aimed to send men to the moon, an increase in ICMB's around the world, the Cuban Missile Crisis which for many marked the end of the Cold War entirely as America and the USSR recognized they would never go to war, the assassination of President Kennedy and most importantly the Civil Rights Act of 1964 under Johnson. In this act, Johnson aimed to end discrimination based on race, religion, color, sex or gender as well as end racial segregation in schools and public spaces. Part of this end to racial segregation was that many schools would have to meet racial quotas in order to receive federal aid as mandated by ESEA in the following year.<sup>11</sup> President Johnson was very outspoken about his dislike for NDEA and the advantages it offered to certain races, classes and schools, claiming black and Latinos were disadvantaged in the public school system and even called them "culturally deprived students" or "socially impoverished students".<sup>12</sup> It is within this framework that ESEA comes

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<sup>8</sup> Xavier Bonal, "The Neoliberal Educational Agenda and the Legitimation Crisis: Old and New State Strategies," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24, no. 2 (2003), 162

<sup>9</sup> Xavier Bonal, "The Neoliberal Educational Agenda and the Legitimation Crisis: Old and New State Strategies," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24, no. 2 (2003), 168

<sup>10</sup> Xavier Bonal, "The Neoliberal Educational Agenda and the Legitimation Crisis: Old and New State Strategies," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 24, no. 2 (2003), 165

<sup>11</sup> Erica Frankenberg and Kendra Taylor, "ESEA and the Civil Rights Act: An Interbranch Approach to Furthering Desegregation," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015), 35

<sup>12</sup> Erica Frankenberg and Kendra Taylor, "ESEA and the Civil Rights Act: An Interbranch Approach to Furthering Desegregation," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015), 41

into existence with a broader goal to improve the education of minority students that had been oppressed by neoliberal aims of NDEA during the previous decade.

Harvey Kantor makes the argument that pushes this idea further, laying out the idea that educational reform in the 1960's, ESEA was created mainly because of widely held assumptions of poverty and the relationship of public education to the economy.<sup>13</sup> Kantor further explains that through these economic assumptions during the 1960's, education became a focal point of the Great Society and the center of federal intervention to create more equal opportunities for impoverished Americans. The article traces back the idea of education being the lens through which economic inequality could be attacked dating back to the Kennedy administration through Walter Heller the chairman to the Council of Economic Advisors. He is on record of saying "education is at the core of any successful sustained campaign against poverty," and "Equality of opportunity is the American Dream, and universal education our noblest pledge to realize it. But for children of the poor education is a handicap race... any many communities lengthen the handicap by providing the worst schooling for those who need it most."<sup>14</sup> That these messages come from an economic advisor to the President represents how strong of a connection education plays into the creation of a neoliberal economic country, guided by the free-market Keynesian principles of capitalism. Also, it appears that Kantor may recognize the neoliberal policies that NDEA created in his quotes to the President. He spells out how certain districts were creating further handicaps for poor students who already had less economic opportunity by decreasing the funding going to the schools themselves. It is this socio-economic context that ESEA was born out of.

ESEA was created as a means for children of color, girls and other minority students within schools to have equal opportunities to succeed in school and receive equal education with other majority students. The most debated aspect would be Title I of the bill that provided federal aid and grants to low-income districts, first through the state and then into local districts before reaching the schools themselves.<sup>15</sup> Johnson's reasoning for this Title was to close the reading, writing and math gap between suburban and urban schools, as numerous studies had been done to prove how poverty and school achievement had an inverse relationship, with increased poverty bringing lower school achievement. Other titles provided funds for libraries and materials, created supplementary education centers, provided increased professional development for teachers, and grants to bolster individual state's education departments. Many of these provisions were similar to those of NDEA, with more concentration to low-income places as opposed to specific interest in STEM as NDEA displayed.

However, despite the flashy grants and increased funding to low-income schools, students rarely saw marked improvements in their classroom skills. As one article ten years later states, ESEA rarely helped students increase their reading ability, with most students increasing their reading by 1 month ahead of schedule over the course of their schooling experience.<sup>16</sup> Part of the reason for this was because "the federal government was not terribly focused on how schools and school districts taught students, only that poor students were receiving additional inputs under the new federal law."<sup>17</sup>

Another issue with ESEA was the overarching neoliberal themes of the time that shaped the opinion of many people. Through the early 1960's, many middle-class Americans believed that poor children and people living in poverty only needed to apply themselves in order to climb the socio-economic ladder that guided American life. Further, it was their own fault for bringing poverty on

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<sup>13</sup> Harvey Kantor, "Education, Social Reform, and the State: ESEA and Federal Education Policy in the 1960s," *American Journal of Education* 100, no. 1 (1991), 51

<sup>14</sup> Harvey Kantor, "Education, Social Reform, and the State: ESEA and Federal Education Policy in the 1960s," *American Journal of Education* 100, no. 1 (1991), 64

<sup>15</sup> Patrick Mcguinn, "Schooling the State: ESEA and the Evolution of the U.S. Department of Education," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015), 77

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Halperin, "ESEA Ten Years Later," *Educational Researcher* 4, no. 8 (1975), 3

<sup>17</sup> David A. Gamson, Kathryn A. Mcdermott, and Douglas S. Reed, "The Elementary and Secondary Education Act at Fifty: Aspirations, Effects, and Limitations," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015), 6

themselves by not applying themselves at a younger age or striving for success throughout their lives.<sup>18</sup> This idea of self-inflicted poverty, rugged individualism and “picking yourself up by your bootstraps” are all central themes of neoliberalism. Around the time of ESEA therefore we can see the neoliberal economic and political ideologies harvesting in the leadup to the implementation of a second massive educational reform. When seen through this lens it can therefore be understood that ESEA was a way for policymakers to stress the importance of individualism and that by providing an educational leg up, students would have the means necessary to climb the socio-economic ladder that had oppressed them for so long.

Another issue with ESEA was what the language surrounding low-income students became, especially towards immigrant students. One of the large populations of students that were to be aided by the new legislation was immigrant and English as a Second Language (ESL) students. However, the framework in which these students were aided was deficit-thinking as opposed to asset boosted education. A perfect example of this is the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) which was added to ESEA in 1968 and was implemented to boost the performance and desegregate ESL students at a time when it was assumed the federal government was the only party able to do so as proven by NDEA and ESEA.<sup>19</sup> However, the passing of BEA was one of the monumental challenges to ESEA because of the ineffectiveness and cloudiness it brought about. For example, the BEA only provided aid to bilingual students whose household income was \$3,000 or lower and the household had to speak another primary language besides English as well. Therefore, if ESL students were to be assisted, they had to exist in really poor districts, and would be segregated from the segregated communities they already existed in, further pushing them to the wayside of what Henry Giroux called “disposable minorities”.<sup>20</sup> Once again, despite appearing to be for minority students and poverty stricken communities, the federal legislation really resulted in the furthering of segregation and creating large portions of growing students who would not be able to participate in the free markets of capitalism and neoliberalism. Rather, these communities of students would fill the need of exploitable low-skill labor that Keynesian economies needed to produce the consumer goods that boosted the quality of life for middle and upper-class citizens and created the dichotomy of opposition to the socialist Soviet Union.

### **BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION REFORM**

The idea of an interwoven neoliberal economic and political process and education reform can easily be seen through the lenses of NDEA and ESEA and subsequent amendments. Minorities and poverty-stricken students were always marginalized by the school system and remained oppressed despite bipartisan educational reform throughout the 1950's and 1960's. However, one question still remained unanswered for me. Why was there bipartisan support for such large federal aid grants during this time when Republicans often viewed federal intervention with such a negative connotation? Also, how did Nixon and his administration that broke so harshly with Johnson shape the education reform of the previous decades?

First, the literature offered a few great sources as to explaining the switch in Conservative thinking in supporting educational reform during the time period. As Gareth Davies explains in his article dealing with this exact topic, it appears puzzling to imagine a situation where seven out of ten Presidents from 1968-2004 would be Republican yet federal aid to education would increase more than

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<sup>18</sup> David A. Gamson, Kathryn A. Mcdermott, and Douglas S. Reed, "The Elementary and Secondary Education Act at Fifty: Aspirations, Effects, and Limitations," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015), 10

<sup>19</sup> Patricia Gándara, "Charting the Relationship of English Learners and the ESEA: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences* 1, no. 3 (2015), 105

<sup>20</sup> Henry A. Giroux, *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability?* (2010), *Popular Educational Classics*, 3

tenfold.<sup>21</sup> In his exploration of this issue, Davies pays particular attention to the late 1960's and early 1970's to explain this phenomenon.

Republicans were often concerned and scared leading up to ESEA in 1965 to support increased federal aid to education, which was a state's explicit right, unless it was in the direct name of national security, such as through NDEA. Prior to ESEA, and despite the large increased NDEA called for, federal spending on education made up just 4% of all spending on schools.<sup>22</sup> Hence, despite increased support for STEM programs under NDEA, low-income districts struggled to support the growing population of their schools due to the baby boom and struggled even more to hire and keep qualified teachers on good salaries. In the context of the Cold War then, conservatives had majority control over education spending by the government, with such opponents to increased aid in the highest positions of the land, such as President Dwight Eisenhower who was also the President of Colombia University.

As Davies then points out, something changed in the mid to late 1960's, around the time of ESEA, to create bipartisan support for increased federal aid, billions of dollars in the end, for education reform. He offers numerous explanations, beginning with the crushing victory of Lyndon Johnson in the 1964 election that decimated the conservatives in the Capitol. Therefore, although Republicans were still strongly against education reform (75% voted against ESEA and a majority of Southern Democrats as well) their voice was so small that ESEA still easily passed in the House of Representatives.<sup>23</sup> Over the following years, these opponents quickly joined their liberal peers in support for education reform, as with every renewal passed with more and more ease, starting in 1966 and increasing to 95% support by all members by the mid 1970's. As I have explained above, the increase in support over the following decade did not originate from the booming successes of ESEA in its achieved goal to improve the educational equalities for all students, as "education research published after 1965 cast doubt on the efficacy of ESEA and Head Start, and on the capacity of schools more generally to compensate for societal disadvantage."<sup>24</sup> He continues that sources from the time also allude to significantly lower SAT scores, lower support for property tax with California even capping property tax by 1978 which is the strongest determinant of money to a school, as well as many newspapers writing about Conservative issues such as banning prayer in school, increased sexual education classes, and teacher militancy in schools.<sup>25</sup> Why then did Republicans and the far right so strongly support education reform moving into the 1970's when there appeared to be no proof of increased intelligence by students but rather decreases, lack of support for higher taxes to increase school funding and many new programs went against everything Conservatives wanted? Simply put, American politics are much more complicated than following Conservative vs Liberal themes, and what might go against conservative virtues under one President might be championed by conservatives just a few years later.

Davies spells out three examples within ESEA that provide reason for strong Conservative support for education reform. First, he says, the biggest aspect of ESEA, Title 1 that increased funding for low-income districts, offered money to almost every district in the country and many of the districts got used to the extra money the federal government was giving them. Without this money from the federal government, school districts, whether low-income or upper-class, would have had to make cuts to their

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<sup>21</sup> Gareth Davies, "Towards Big-government Conservatism: Conservatives and Federal Aid to Education in the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008), 622

<sup>22</sup> Gareth Davies, "Towards Big-government Conservatism: Conservatives and Federal Aid to Education in the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008), 626

<sup>23</sup> Gareth Davies, "Towards Big-government Conservatism: Conservatives and Federal Aid to Education in the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008), 631

<sup>24</sup> Gareth Davies, "Towards Big-government Conservatism: Conservatives and Federal Aid to Education in the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008), 634

<sup>25</sup> Gareth Davies, "Towards Big-government Conservatism: Conservatives and Federal Aid to Education in the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008), 628

schools or increase taxes, both of which firmly go against Republican beliefs.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, although the money was allocated for disadvantaged students and creating equal educational opportunities, little federal oversight of how the money was spent meant many districts often spent the money on general expenditures, such as audio equipment or swimming pools. The use of the money on all students created situations for Republican educators to benefit all of their students, reproducing the neoliberal conditions they believed the free market was predicated on. Lastly, ESEA was a very widespread reform, coming to incorporate seven different titles, including handicapped and bilingual students. Therefore, although spending on schools expanded to 9% of federal aid, it was spread out over many aspects of education and administration, meaning very small portions ever made their way to disadvantaged students; yet another example of neoliberal policies hidden by educational reform for all.

Another massive reason for Republican support of ESEA in the following years was the theoretical framework in which new Titles to the bill were positioned. For example, two amendments that came following the original passing of the bill were the Bilingual Act and IDEA which was originally called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. As a Republican candidate or politician, it was very difficult to be against educational opportunities for handicapped or language minority students and still have support for other measures they aimed to have passed:

Conservatives who had hitherto resisted expansive social programs on federalism grounds became increasingly reluctant to use that argument. And without that hallowed rationale, how could any but the most unflinching or impregnable conservative oppose help for federal aid to poor kids, or civil rights for the handicapped and the elderly? These were what political scientists call 'valence issues': that is, questions of public policy where voters pick candidates on the basis of which one most fully exemplifies, by slogans and experience, the sentiment that most voters have.<sup>27</sup>

Clearly, Republicans and conservatives were placed in a situation where they were forced into accepting liberal educational reform yet quickly morphed the reform to fit their neoliberal agendas after just a few years of renewals.

### **NIXON OPPOSES EDUCATION REFORM**

Moving through the 1970's and under Nixon, education reform entered a new phase as Nixon's neoconservative agenda took hold. In his speech to Congress on Education Reform, Nixon made certain to point out his dissatisfaction with the current policies. "We must stop imagining that the Federal government had a cohesive education policy" and "We must stop letting wishes color our judgements about the educational effectiveness of many special compensatory programs."<sup>28</sup> Clearly, he was referencing ESEA and NDEA with those statements and aimed to implement his own "long-range provisions" that would shape the educational landscape for decades to come. As the Nixon administration argued, educational policy under Johnson was centered on aspirations that could not be filled by society, whereas Nixon would focus on career education that could be filled by individual success and motivation with a focus on higher education and, following the neoliberal policies before him, the labor force.<sup>29</sup> Eventually, the funds ran out for Nixon's goals as the public became concerned

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<sup>26</sup> Gareth Davies, "Towards Big-government Conservatism: Conservatives and Federal Aid to Education in the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008), 632

<sup>27</sup> Gareth Davies, "Towards Big-government Conservatism: Conservatives and Federal Aid to Education in the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 43, no. 4 (2008), 635

<sup>28</sup> Richard M. Nixon, "Nixon Speech to Congress on Education Reform" (speech).

<sup>29</sup> "JITE V39n1 - The 1970s," ALAN V37n3 - "The Best of Both Worlds": Rethinking the Literary Merit of Graphic Novels, , accessed May 09, 2018, <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JITE/v39n1/1970.html>.

with the groups remarginalized by Nixon's plan, creating strong dissent for Nixon's education reforms. Nixon also struggled in his path to desegregate schools, with some historians claiming he added to de facto segregation whereas some argue he put an end to de jure segregation in schools, mixing his legacy in the eyes of historians.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, many historians point the finger at Nixon for claiming ESEA to be the first instantiation of affirmative action in schools, giving minorities favorable circumstances to succeed over those who make up the majority of the school population.<sup>31</sup> Rather than promote equality, Nixon aimed to remove all legislation that Johnson and his proponents worked to pass into law. Also, Nixon was at the forefront of the color-blind society we find ourselves living in today. Even back in the 1960's and 1970's Nixon approached legal rhetoric to racism through the guise of color blindness we see today, calling on African-Americans to use the legal system to their advantage in order to create equal circumstances. He also recognized the need for low-skilled labor under capitalism and implemented laws and regulations through legal boundaries to offer minorities and those discriminated against unobtainable ways to seek legal refuge, forcing minorities to accept their socio-economic status in America.

### CONCLUSION

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As explored through NDEA and then into ESEA and the Nixon Administration of the 1970's, the literature and work done by historians alludes to and indicates a strong connection between neoliberalism and educational policy through American history. As the decades progressed and Presidential administrations turned over, neoliberal policy morphed and changed and began to take on new faces for new people. Reagan and his policies in terms of the rest of the world were clearly neoliberal, as he believed in forcing the rest of the world, mainly undeveloped nations in the global south, to rise up themselves and become self-sustaining countries. Of course, none of these nations had the economic or political power to do so and were trapped by globalism and hegemonic structures of the global north that oppressed their ability to grow from within. In the early 2000's under George W. Bush, neoliberal educational policy came back to the mainstage, with the creation and implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This was a renewal of ESEA forty years earlier and was in response to another world event, 9/11. Following these terror attacks, America's national security was once again put on alert, forcing political and educational policies to converge to create new reform that would target minority populations while also promoting national security at home. As expressed through these examples, it is clear that the neoliberal policies of the early Cold War can easily be traced to today.

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<sup>30</sup> Lawrence J. McAndrews, "The Politics of Principle: Richard Nixon and School Desegregation," *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 3 (1998), 194

<sup>31</sup> David G. Holmes, "Affirmative Reaction: Kennedy, Nixon, King, and the Evolution of Color-Blind Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Review* 26, no. 1 (2007), 29