

September 1978

Dear Mr. Kozol,

You may not remember me, but I met you at CIDOC in Cuernavaca in the summer of '69 after having been fired from a school in the San Joaquin Valley (the California rural slums). I worked for Cesar Chavez and in other educational programs....and then I got involved with the program at Peoples Temple. An Agricultural Mission was set up by them and here we are, in the middle of the jungle in Guyana. We're free from the pointless, irrelevant public education there and into a practical, relevant process here. Seniors share their experiences under the slavery they have known with the kids who will never know those heartaches. The whole community shares the news that's posted daily gotten from the international news agencies. Our pre-school takes the youngsters into a "freedom within structure" program of activity choices. It's an open type situation where they gain an awareness of life around them by visiting our different community services and job sites (i.e. sawmill, laundry, brick, soap and toy factories, shoe repair, medical department, out-door kitchen, etc.) They share the usual large and small group activities (parachute, sand and water play, movement exploration, etc.) and work through a motor-perceptual program. Our elementary school staff is highly motivated and is sharing methods of team teaching, learning centers, individualizing, diagnostic and prescriptive ideas, and problem-solving techniques. Our textbooks have been re-written to take out the racist, colonialist, and sexist biases.and then there's our jungle-a place that promotes all kinds of learning and pure enjoyment. A 15 minute walk takes you into a world of quiet, cool, teeming with life waiting to be discovered. ...a rich, rich environment for learning for us all. Our High School is an apprenticeship program tightly linked with the community. Their academics are directly related to their on-the-job training and while going to school are an integral, productive facet of the community.

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The government as a credited our school and we have an opportunity to mold the kinds of programs we think are necessary. Our kids came out of the straight jacket of US public education and our teachers are folks who really like them. Most of the teachers have not had any formal training (probably a fortunate fact) and a few of us have managed to learn how to teach in spite of our training. We really want to do the right thing by our kids and I know you and some others in the states have that same feeling. In the '60's I went to the first conference on Alternative Education somewhere in the hills near San Luis Obispo. John Holt was there and folks from all over the states. We'd like to hook up with you, Holt and any other folks with ideas to feed us, perhaps mailing us creative ideas that are being or have been compiled, or maybe even giving us a visit and doing some teacher-training.

Enclosed is a sample of what's inside some of our kids. Anxiously awaiting your reply,

PAT GRUNNET

P.O. Box 893

GEORGETOWN, GUYANA