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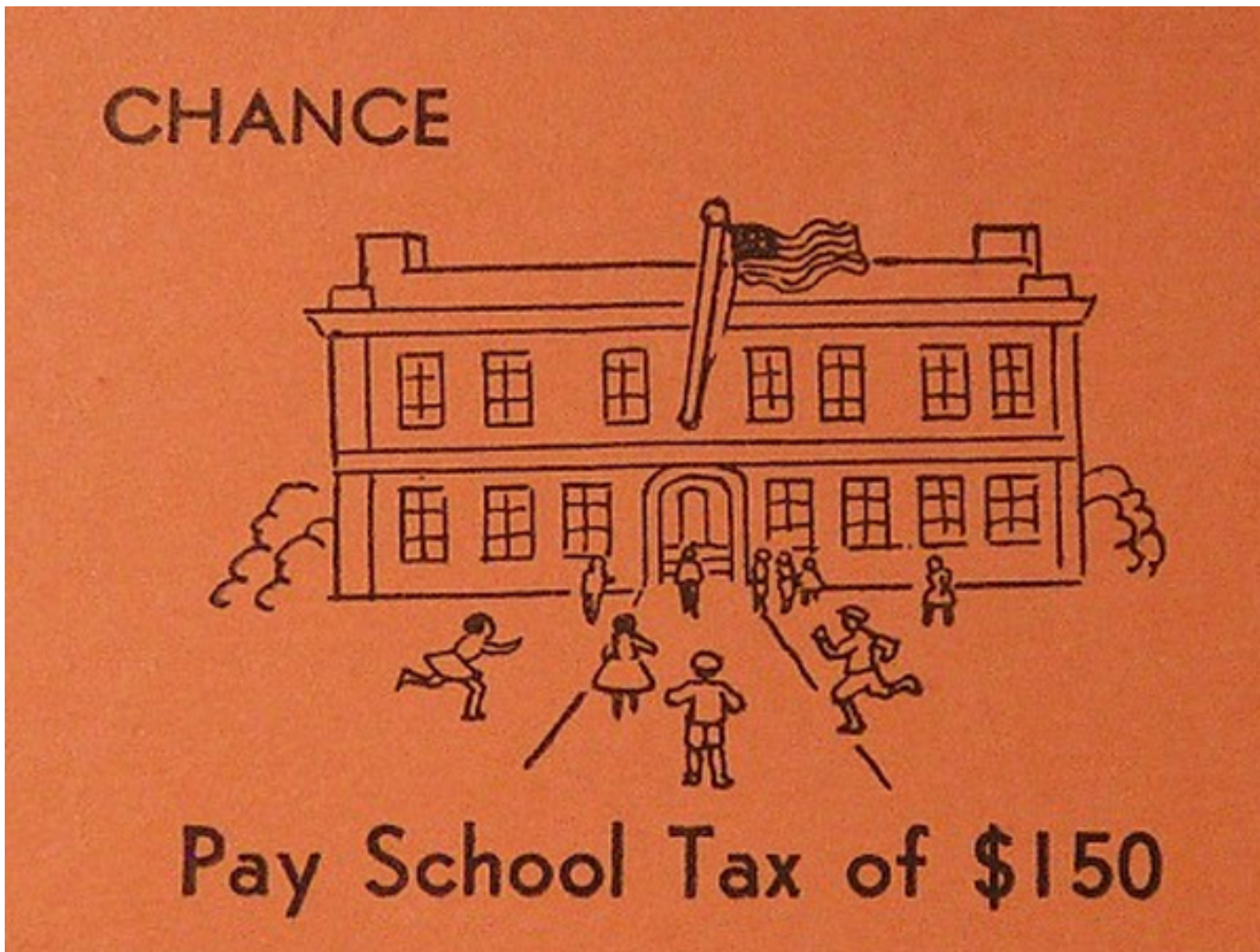
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Attytood

# Wealthy young: Tax us to pay for Philly schools!

0 COMMENTS



Will Bunch

POSTED: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2013, 1:31 PM

I guess people actually read this thing after all...who knew? A few weeks back, [I wrote a post about philanthropy](#) and the role that billionaires with a checkbook were playing in the debate over the future of Philadelphia public schools. I'd love to take credit for the whole concept, but truthfully I was just putting some local spin on [a remarkable New York Times op-ed by the philanthropist, filmmaker and billionaire's son Peter Buffett](#). Well, the piece caused a big stir, perhaps because of the notion that I was "criticizing charity," which --

### About This Blog

Will Bunch, a senior writer at the Philadelphia Daily News, blogs about his obsessions, including national and local politics and world affairs, the media, pop music, the Philadelphia Phillies, soccer and other sports, not necessarily in that order.

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#### Will Bunch

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when you say it that way -- sounds a bit like "criticizing puppies." (The reaction was [like this.](#))

To be crystal clear, I wasn't "criticizing charities" (or puppies!); to the contrary, I urge everyone reading to this to be as generous with their time and money, to help those who are less fortunate, as is humanly possible. But, yes, I was criticizing something: A system rigged to create a few billionaires who have more money than they can spend and so when they're not taking over international yachting they give back through philanthropies. A system that then imposes their often narrow vision on entities like public education in Philadelphia that should be run democratically and for the good of all people -- solutions that do things like [close neighborhood schools in neighborhoods 3,000 miles where the philanthropist lives.](#)

And I'm pleased to report that some folks get it. I'd like you to meet the folks of [Resource Generation](#), young people who grew up wealthy and want to give something back. [They published a letter this week](#) that agrees with the premise of my post: That fixing the problems of public education requires publicly funded, democratic solutions. Here's an excerpt:

*What our city needs from wealthy people now is for us to advocate for and participate in structural change that will ultimately improve the resourcing of our schools. Require us to opt in to the public sphere, not choose to pay to set our lives apart:*

- *Tax us more! Pennsylvania has one of the most regressive tax systems in the United States. Wealthy individuals and corporations are not paying our fair share of taxes.*
- *Eliminate tax havens and loopholes that allow wealthy people to accumulate and hold onto wealth. Wealth disparity in the US today is at the highest level it has reached since the 1930s. Only reformed tax policies can effectively redistribute wealth.*

- *Make policies that require businesses to respect people over profit. Until wealthy people's means of making money are just, no amount of charitable philanthropy will cancel out the exploitation that initially created the wealth.*

- *Fund organizing efforts by teachers, parents, students and community members that are focused on creating wellfunded, locally controlled public schools. These efforts develop leaders, strengthen democracy and lead to change that is desired by those most directly affected.*

I hope they follow through on this letter. Just closing the state's notorious corporate tax loopholes -- an estimated 74 percent of corporations don't pay any taxes at all, [costing the state as much as \\$5.2 billion annually](#) -- would raise enough money to solve Philadelphia's current school budget gap as

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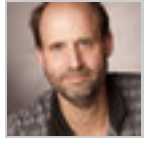
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well as persistent funding problems in other poor districts from Chester-Upland to the Mon Valley. As I noted in my earlier post, it's not horrible that some (but not all) of the billionaires created with the help of our inequitable politics want to give something back, but it would be much, much better just to have equitable politics. The young people of Resource Generation get that. I applaud them.



**Will Bunch**

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