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RADICAL EDUCATION IN THE CRITICAL MOMENT

Envisioning a Revolutionary Praxis of Language, Teaching and Race in a Time of War

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The United States finds itself in the middle of an imperial war over Middle Eastern oil and a domestic dispute over the role documented and undocumented immigrants will play in American economic and social life. At the current political moment, the United States has occupied Iraq for more than four years. With nearly 4,000 American soldiers' deaths and more than 600,000 Iraqi civilians already killed, parallels to the U.S. invasion of Vietnam have become increasingly visible. Billions of dollars of government contracts and control of Iraqis' most lucrative resources have been granted to primary U.S.-based multinational corporations. The initial "Shock-and-Awe" tactics of this invasion were eerily redolent of the carpet bombings of Dresden, Hamburg, Tokyo, and Vietnam. Within this context we find conservative pundits not only challenging positions critical of U.S. imperialism, but labeling such viewpoints as "un-American," or in support of terrorism.

Within this moment it is vital to recognize that revolutionary social activists and leftist scholars are not distinct from one another. The activist who does not critically consider the broader context of his or her actions often manifests the most malignant and destructive social elements; likewise the scholar without a radical praxis provides little service to revolutionary movements. In attempting to make pedagogical practice relevant to the reality and context of radical social movements, the life and works of Peter McLaren provide an example of a scholar who will not allow his work to be divorced from the current political crisis. McLaren's work is unapologetically grounded in contemporary political struggles.

In reading McLaren's life and prolific body of work, we find a thinker and activist who has constantly sought to revise, refine, and clarify his thinking. Thus, through McLaren's incisive and poignant words we find important critique, but we equally find his work changing radically over the decades. Nonetheless, the constant within McLaren's writings and teaching is his fundamental commitment to the elimination of oppression domestically and worldwide through his uncompromising commitment to humanity. McLaren's writings remind us that as concepts such as "social justice" and "community engagement" come in and out of popular discourse, we must remember that the needs of each human being take preeminence over capitalist fantasies. Although we can take discrete lessons from individual texts and specific critiques of the global economy from a page, McLaren's fundamental contribution to critical education, social theory, and revolutionary movements lies not in a specific piece of writing, but rather in what McLaren has stood for and whom he has stood with over his lifetime. Through this chapter, I do not take up McLaren's work at different stages of its development or ask questions of his texts. Rather, this chapter is written to address some of the concerns that McLaren raises in his writings and through his scholarship. Within this chapter, I explore how language is constructed to further an imperial ideology of domination and normalize oppressive power relationships within society. Through developing a critique of language and a language of critique critical educators can help foster an educative process directed toward attacking social and economic inequalities. In exploring the formalized learning space of the schoolhouse, I attempt to investigate how the same ideologies of imperialism constructing language use undergird the schooling process. Through positing these questions about language, critical citizenship, and the construction of schools, I attempt to locate alternatives within a radical teaching and learning process. I contend such a process requires an authentic return to a Freirean pedagogy that cannot ignore the contemporary political context in which students find themselves. Thus, critical teaching must not only focus on building relationships, but must also facilitate students' ability to question critically society. Fundamentally, a return to Freirean pedagogy requires a commitment to Freire's concept of

revolutionary love for humanity. Finally, I explore what a radical pedagogy means specifically within the context of teaching and working with youth in the United States who are currently facing the xenophobic and racist manifestations resulting from U.S. imperialist incursions in the Middle East.

"CULTURAL WARS": LANGUAGE AS A TOOL OF HEGEMONY

Moving beyond simple political debate, these contestations reflect a struggle over the meaning of the current physical war upon the Middle East. Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci defined such contestations as "cultural wars." Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony undergirds this concept. Cultural hegemony exists as part of the capitalist ideological apparatus. The state utilizes any and all cultural, social, and political means to make pervasive the goals and interests of the dominant social group (Gramsci, 1971). Anti-capitalists who challenge the dominant ideology within these cultural locations, according to Gramsci, are engaging in cultural wars. Within the context of an ideological debate, differing positions move beyond the contestation of viewpoints and a battle over language to serve as a tool of reinforcing the dominant ideology (Dorian, 1998). Normalizing ideology through public discourse represents a form of physical power and symbolic capital "that is a constitutive part of political economy, convertible to economic and social capital" (Gal, 1989, p. 353). Linguistic ideological production thus provides the tools to access and consider issues of hegemony, power, and isolation and allows for the exploration of how dominant groups are able to normalize specific canons of knowledge. Judith Irvine (1989) noted "the cultural and political effectiveness of ideologies of language derives from the iconic, synecdochic, and highly reductive ways that they are linked to discursive practices" (p. 16). In reducing imperialism to anti-terrorism, corporate globalization to progress and murder to "spreading democracy," political ideologues legitimize and reinforce "status-quo capitalism" (San Juan, 2002). In providing the tools to systematically examine these issues, an analysis of linguistic ideologies provide the framework to examine language as a tool of oppression.

Through the accumulation of various forms of capital, power enables individuals and groups to define what is acceptable and not acceptable within public discourse. Briggs (1998) noted that individuals in positions of political power can rebuke criticism through simply labeling a contending viewpoint as "bad speech," or in our political moment, "unpatriotic." Power has the ability to constrain or enable what is within and outside "acceptable" speech and behavior. Thus, although one may simply relegate these cultural

wars over language and ideology to academic debates, Gal (1989) noted a deep structural connection between the state's political apparatus and the ideological construction of language: "The deeply held conceptions that mediate between identity and speech deserve attention not only as cultural constructions, but also as part of political struggles" (p. 359).

LOCATING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Critical educators have long recognized the location of public education within the United States. Schools do not simply exist in a vacuum, divorced from the social, political, and economic context of the community they are located (Freire, 2003). Because formal schooling is a product and manifestation of the state ideological apparatus, schools do not simply teach children, but rather teach young people in a particular ideological fashion (Apple, 1990; Darder, 1991; Giroux, 2001). In choosing to teach a specific historic narrative of Manifest Destiny, European "expansionism" or European Christian Crusades, teachers and schools ideologically construct the world in specific ways for students. Reducing the North American genocide of Native peoples' and the transatlantic slave trade to glitches in American democracy teaches students that the lives of non-Whites can be sacrificed for capital accumulation (Churchill, 2004). Challenging such narratives becomes increasingly important as world leaders wage wars to ensure access to global oil resources. Furthermore, schools teach through omission. By ignoring particular historical narratives, schools teach students what should not be valued. Most often, the history ignored is that of the poor, women, and people of color. By ignoring the history of these people, who represent an increasing majority of students, schools send the implicit message that the only history truly important in American society is that of the ruling elite (Grande, 2004). Thus, the process of historical erasure reinforces the notion that nondominant students, their families, and their communities have little or nothing to offer American society.

Moving beyond the curricula in schools, Freire (1999) noted that the process of teaching itself can serve to further reinforce the ideology of domination. In explicating the notion of "banking" education, Freire stated that the teacher "deposits" static information into the student. Within this construction, the student has no agency and is the object, not the subject, of education: "The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness" (Freire, 1999, p. 55).

Beyond classroom narratives, schools can also be understood as functioning within the political economy, and thus must be examined as part of the broader state apparatus of which they are a part. Critical theorists ask questions about how schooling is ideologically, physically, and culturally

structured to normalize particular social, cultural, and ideological dispositions (Greene, 1986).

California has one of the most "progressive" plans for postsecondary education within the United States (Joint Committee, 1989). Nonetheless, within this program there is a clear delineation of who should have access to publicly supported higher education. The state's system of public higher education through community colleges—California state universities and the University of California—is limited to, at most, 50% of all high school graduates (Master Plan Survey Team, 1960). Although one may contend that higher education is a scarce resource without the necessary funding to support all California high school graduates, one must question why it is mandated that 50% of students will not have access to any form of higher education within the state. Educators must question what the state teaches its citizens about academic success. As much as an individual school can work to increase access to higher education for its students, the overall college matriculation rate cannot change drastically within the state. Individual action on a single high school campus may alter local realities, but structural barriers such as economic relationships prevent radical alterations.

Locating Public Education: Current Schooling Debates

Public schools throughout the nation have been moving toward the Gates-inspired model of small schools. Although such a project comes with high hopes of increased teacher control, of interaction between teachers, students, and parents, and of a stronger campus community, schools are going toward "small" without fundamentally addressing the nature of school relationships. Many Gates educators tout small as the key to create community engagement without the aim of truly facilitating an organized community to create radical social change.

A fundamental problem with small school educators is that their aim is to create more well-adjusted young people. Teaching marginalized youth to participate in mainstream society in a more coherent manner is not simply to be discounted, but must be facilitated in a more nuanced fashion. In helping youth develop the skills to sustain themselves within the political economy, educators must locate their efforts within a broader context of understanding the nature, structure, and manifestations of a society based on the exploitation of individuals, labor, and the earth through a disregard of anything but the highest profit margin (LaDuke, 2005).

It is not enough to simply personalize schooling within the contemporary political economy. Public high schools are now mandated not only to allow U.S. military recruiters on their campuses, but to provide the military with the names, home addresses, and phone numbers of all students via Section 9528 of the Elementary and Secondary School Act (NCLB, 2001)

Public schools have moved from an implicit to explicit role in sponsoring U.S. imperialism. If schools are not giving youth the tools to think critically about their own life choices, students may easily be lured into an increasingly present military currently serving to liberate the U.S. oil supply and fuel the growth of American corporate capital in newly "freed" markets. Personalization within this context may help young people find solace within the current political economy, but one must question the interests served in giving youth the tools to participate within the capitalist economy without the tools to adequately critique the same system. To teach youth to be more well adjusted within a culture that devalues their world and creates the context for blind Americanism, undercuts fundamental notions of democracy and self-determination.

McLaren's ethnographic texts, *Life in Schools (2003)* and *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* (1999) were some of the earliest and continue to be some of the most important texts in exploring the role of schools in economic and social reproduction within capitalist society. Beyond simply identifying the problems with contemporary schooling, McLaren has looked for and found more humanizing definitions, purposes, and visions for education. McLaren forces us to examine the pedagogy of the broader state apparatus and neoliberal political economy in order to understand not only how our schools teach but to fundamentally question capitalist and class relations as well as the problematic of Empire.

In following McLaren's footsteps through this chapter, I do not simply identify problems in mass schooling and society, but I attempt to explore how learning spaces can be reconstructed in order to serve as a tool of true democracy for our youth.

Radical Alternatives: Reconstructing Schooling

Reconstructing the notion of schools is vital. Schools cannot be a place where students go to get expert knowledge or to "practice democracy" decontexualized from who they are and from the way in which they are located historically within the wider social division of labor. Schools must become places of community relationships.

Schools must respond to a corporate culture that is producing an increasingly predatory climate focused on creating and exploiting the insecurities of youth (Giroux, 2001). Schooling must provide students with the ability to ask questions critically about culture and society. A critically educative process cannot simply focus on macro-economic and social relations, but must return to the community to address local needs as part of a broader social struggle. In an effort to truly support youth while recognizing the super-structural barriers to their personal and academic achieve-

ments, educators must base their actions within a context of love for the students whom they serve. This definition, however, cannot be divorced from the social context or the necessary tools that students need within their current sociopolitical condition. The concept of "dumbing down" curriculum and simply not teaching students of color the "language of power," only serves to perpetuate racism and further disadvantages the student and the broader community. "In Freirean terms, revolutionary love is always pointed in the direction of commitment and fidelity to a global project of emancipation" (McLaren, 2000, p. 171). Love for students must be located within helping them develop the tools to read the texts of society for themselves. Education can be a vehicle for students to become better suited to deal with their current life situations and to make positive changes in the world in which they live, changes that go beyond economic and material success. Freirean pedagogy transcends simple dichotomies of producing a language of opposition within a culture of hegemony; rather, it is a commitment to humanity. Thus, true love expressed for students comes from engaging in practices that will help them develop their own abilities and not rest on simply depositing information within the student.

McLaren reframes the project of education as critical scholarship for social action. By reminding us of the dangers of educational policy in the service of empire, McLaren forces educators to look at our economic, political and social pedagogy as reflective of the social mythologies propagated within the classroom. McLaren's scholarly contributions remind us that the work of the scholar cannot be divorced from the social and political world. McLaren's contributions do not end at his prolific body of academic texts. In reality, this represents only a small part of his work in service of an anti-imperialist agenda. For the past several years McLaren has been working with the *Centro Internacional Miranda*, an international think-tank in Caracas, Venezuela exploring the historic and contemporary issues of the Bolivarian Revolution. Such work underscores McLaren's sincere dedication to serving the most fundamental needs of a global working class. Inspired by McLaren's work, educators and activists in Northern Mexico created *La Fundación McLaren de Pedagogía Crítica*—a foundation dedicated toward teaching, disseminating, and promoting the ideals of a revolutionary critical pedagogy.

A Freirean (1999) model of education is based within a dialectical process in which educational "discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis" (p. 47). The experience of the student serves as the starting point of the educational process in an effort to ground the pedagogical project in concrete lived reality. Such a practice challenges students to find meaning in their education as a way of promoting further inquiry. Such a pedagogical process must be located in community-

based projects. Within this process, students, community members, and educators can seek to understand the pertinent local and global issues that arise in a continual process of social critique. In providing a narrative of education based on true democratic principles, educators can facilitate a process in which "people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world, with which, and in which they find themselves" (Freire, 1999, p. 64).

Radical Alternatives: Radical Teaching

As the colonization of Iraq moves forward through the diction of liberation and the verbiage of peace in unmistakable 18th-century colonial fashion, the need to engage students via a *Pedagogy of Indignation* is not only helpful, but a vital requirement. To refuse such an engagement is to relinquish control of our lives and youth to the state authority and the architects of global consumer capital. A refusal to teach the language of critique in a world defined by the "hegemony of imperial ideology" (Said, 1994, p. 12) is to teach our youth to accept the state as the sole purveyor of truth and the only valid voice in discourse. Similarly, Paulo Freire (2004) called for an educative process that focuses on "the needed transformation of society that should result in overcoming dehumanizing injustice" (p. 35). Freire stressed that a critical reading of the world did not always imply a commitment to transforming the world. To know the world can be otherwise does not always mean a commitment to make it so. This commitment must be born in the struggle against exploitation and alienation.

The term *Freirean* and the manifestations of pedagogy with this moniker have become vogue within schools of education throughout the United States. Nonetheless, much of what is taught as Freirean only nominally reflects Freire's teaching practices and philosophy. With the tightening of a repressive state through the Bush Administration, there has been an increase in "liberals" and "progressives" falling upon a Freirean model that is specifically and intentionally depoliticized and decontextualized from the material conditions of the students whom it purports to serve. Such pedagogy manifests itself at best through facilitating critical thinking, language acquisition, and student engagement.

Critical educators often provide the tools to critique society and schools, but do not provide practical tools to construct a praxis of education deterring the maintenance of dehumanizing social relations while still providing students with the necessary "academic" skills to be self-sufficient within the current system of capitalist social relations.

McLaren's most recent work, co-authored with Jaramillo does just this—*Pedagogy and Praxis in the Age of Empire: Towards a New Humanism*

(2007)—helps us consider the pedagogy of war. In this text McLaren and Jaramillo help push the work and agenda of critical pedagogy into that of truly challenging imperialist projects and neoliberal capitalism. The pedagogy that McLaren and Jaramillo speak of is not one of simple classroom discourse, but rather a critical humanism in which we are encouraged to approach the world through both thought and action. This book does not simply serve as a theoretical text, but rather, it serves "to make the pedagogical more politically informed and the political more pedagogically critical" (McLaren & Jaramillo, 2007, p. 6).

Radical Pedagogies With Critical Populations

Refining learning within this paradigm, educators must look at the contemporary political moment both domestically and internationally to reconstruct how education can serve as an emancipatory project of liberation. The destruction of the World Trade Center towers profoundly affected the U.S. political economy, culture, and society and in the ensuing days and years, the rest of the world. The wars upon Afghanistan and Iraq that followed not only decimated these nations but also had profound domestic ramifications on the sociopolitical and cultural identities of South Asian and Arab-American Muslims in the United States. Beyond simple nativism, these communities face the grim reality of a war being waged by the nation they live in upon countries that they consider their familial homeland. Thus, struggles with racism do not simply focus on discrimination or access to resources, but rather place individuals within the community as "live domestic targets" of an international war (Maira, 2004).

Racism against Arabs and South Asians within the United States did not begin in 2001. Rather, racist portrayals of Arabs have a history that spans more than a century (Said, 1978; Shaheen, 2003). Shaheen's (2003) survey of Hollywood's historic depiction of Arabs show that more than 90% of the depictions of Arabs in popular films are dehumanizing and racist, and portray the Arab as a hate-mongering other. In one of the few studies of the experience of racism among Arab-American youth post-9/11, Ahmed (2007) stated that Arab-American youth report an equal number or higher experiences of racism than their African-American counterparts in the metropolitan Detroit area.

Radical educators must understand the community, context, and challenges that the immigrant Muslim community faces in order to begin to consider some of the most pressing issues that schools must face to engage this community in a meaningful way. I explore the development of a racial pedagogy in responding to this situation.

Radical Pedagogies: Redefining "Americaness" in Schools and Classrooms

Within hegemonic cultural definitions, *Americaness* often means that youth adopt social values of individualist corporate capitalism (Giroux, 2003). Within an increasingly diverse United States, schools must respond to the changing context by encouraging multiple forms of pedagogian engagement, and multiple narratives of Americaness within a single community or school. Marginalized groups have historically defined their experience within the United States through nonhegemonic narratives. Schools should begin to recognize and embrace this reality. Thus, schools must first begin to value the experience and stories of historically marginalized communities. Deloria (1997) noted that colonized people's experiences, voices, and accounts are not given credence through Western institutions. In addition, he offered multiple examples of non-European accounts of history that have never been sanctioned by authorities of knowledge production and valuation. "Information becomes valid only when offered by a white scholar recognized by the academic establishment; in effect, the color of skin guarantees scientific objectivity" (p. 35). Honoring the cultural identities of students does not simply involve valuing food and clothing, but rather, respecting the voices and forms of knowledge within these communities as valid and valued. Such pedagogical processes will not only help students feel more engaged with the school, but will foster a more robust learning environment in which students will have multiple vantage points to understand any particular issue.

Beyond simply valuing other locations of knowledge as a tool for supporting diverse communities, students should learn that different types of knowledges are important and practical in different settings. Harding (1998) noted that different "local knowledge systems" not only privilege different types of knowledge, but they also produce "a delineation of distinctive characteristics" of the particular culture they are found in. Fundamentally, students should develop an understanding that knowledge is not a single characteristic that can be owned or monopolized by a single group. Knowledge, rather, is that which is useful within one's own context.

Radical Pedagogies: Teaching American History

Teaching students American history has been an essential part of the Americanization process in public schools (Spring, 2001). The prevailing narrative suggests that by teaching students a single, unified history of the

United States, they will acquire the necessary discourses and discursive strategies to forge a common American culture. This singular narrative has ignored the stories and experiences of non-Western, non-White peoples (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). As stated in the previous section, schools should validate multiple historical narratives in order to recognize the legitimacy of diverse vantage points. Americaness cannot be fostered through teaching students a singular history of American "progress" that fails to question historic atrocities as part of the "democratic learning experience." In ignoring the experience of the victims of American progress, schooling only reinforces the narrative of exclusion. In constructing a pedagogical process in which victims of America are the focal point of analysis, students can develop a more nuanced historical perspective. An Americaness that fosters critical dialogue and debate about the practice and context of U.S. power can provide students with the ability to ask critical questions not only about what has happened in the world, but also more importantly, about how they believe the world should and could look.

If students learn that, for the majority of U.S. history, women and people of color have not been granted access to educational, social, and cultural institutions that provide mainstream opportunities for economic gain, they may begin to understand some of the historic underpinnings of inequality in this country. For example, in an earlier era, students and faculty at Harvard Medical School utilized various arguments to support the notion that women and Blacks were either intellectually feeble or emotionally too weak to engage in the highest level of medical training. Apart from simply protecting White male privilege through the exclusion of people of color and women from academic, political, and economic opportunity, Takaki (1993) depicted how science was used to justify the exclusion of Blacks through eugenics research. In providing students with an education about the social construction of science and the normalizing function of racist ideology, students may be able to question how similar practices occur in contemporary society.

Radical Pedagogies: Teaching Race

Racism, discrimination, and social alienation do not begin in schools. Within schools these issues manifest themselves as reflections of broader social institutions and cultural practices (Spring, 2001). Schools cannot honestly be expected to alter existing social and political relations without a fundamental shift in broader social, cultural, and economic relations. Nonetheless, schools still have a vital and important responsibility to produce the spaces for teachers and students to model interactions that more clearly reflect social ideals. Addressing overt forms of racial discrimination is only the first

step schools must take in addressing racism. Teachers and students should struggle with fundamental questions regarding the relationship of race, schooling, and capital. Educators can and should work harder in addressing the foundations of societal discrimination and racism within schools.

Considering the ongoing racism against Arab and South Asian Muslim youths, schools should not simply address this community in isolation from a broader discussion of race. In isolating the context of racism for a particular community, schools run the risk of further alienating these students. Furthermore, a specific community's experience with racism cannot adequately be explored if it is not contextualized within the overarching construction of race within the United States. Through exploring the various manifestations and targets of racism, schools have the opportunity to undermine and actively dismantle oppressive notions of race. In addressing race, schools must recognize that American social life has historically been and continues to be constructed along racial lines. Placing race within a broader paradigm, alongside capitalism, puts us in a better position to understand race and racism as a lived reality (Darder & Torres, 1999). As Lawrence reminds us,

> Americans share a common historical and cultural heritage in which racism has played and still plays a dominant role. Because of this shared experience, we also inevitably share many ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that attach significance to an individual's race . . . we are all racists. At the same time, most of us are unaware of our racism. (Lawrence, 1987, p. 317)

The meanings and practice of race are constantly contested (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000). Nonetheless, within the United States, race is considered a static marker. The concept is seen as singular, permanent, and never changing (Joshi, 2006). Through teaching students about the social construction of race, schools can help students recognize that racial discrimination has a political and social objective that it fulfills. In this regard, students can develop an historical understanding of how various races were "reclassified" throughout their history in the Untied States (Lipsitz, 1998). In recognizing the realities of racial discrimination and racism while understanding how notions of race are liminal, students can begin to understand that "race is neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions" (Lopez, 2000, p. 165). Thus, race can bee seen as flexible, but central to contemporary and historic lived realities, particularly in the United States. In developing a more nuanced conception of race, students can begin to understand the malignancy of racist practices.

Moving beyond racist actions, students must also be taught about structural racism through barring certain group members' access to public resources because of their skin color. Furthermore, students should be taught how race can play "a central rather than a marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences" (Solórzano, 1997, p. 6). Thus, schools can foster teaching multiple narratives through helping students understand that the same social occurrence can be lived in two radically different ways depending on one's racial experience in the United States. In this regard, schools can begin to help students recognize that racism does not always manifest itself through wearing white hoods and robes or verbalizing racial slurs. On the other hand, students exploring racism should be made aware that race and racism take shape through conscious and unconscious actions, occurring both on the micro- and macro- levels (Solórzano, Cesa, & Yosso, 2000). Providing students of color with the language to name racial microaggressions through socially benign speech or action is vital to developing a school culture where students are better able to understand their own lived realities in a more coherent manner. Furthermore, encouraging all students to understand this process is vital in helping them create a learning environment that is nurturing and supportive of all members of the school community. Just as Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, (2000) noted that racially microaggressive interactions effect the individual and the group, both in their singular instances and in their cumulative effect, creating an environment where students act in ways to dismantle their own acts of racism can produce a transformative change within the school. Only through teaching about the lived practices of racism can schools effectively help young people eliminate racist practices in their own lives.

TEACHING FOR CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP

In the era of Bush's rule and Wolfowitz's tenure as the chief conspirator of global imperialism via the World Bank's economic policies, a new mode of transnational imperialism via military enforcement of economic policies (i.e., Iraq, Afghanistan) requires educators to call on the legacy of Paulo Freire. This pedagogy is vital for those who believe radical social transformation will take more work than increasing classroom dialogue. In our current age of the neo-conservative imperative through a might-is-right discourse of cluster bombs, indefinite imprisonment, and domestic disappearances, a discussion of a liberating pedagogy is not only important, but vital in recreating what Agnes Heller has referred to as civic courage: "one should think and act as if one were in a real democracy. The fundamental bravery of this way of life is not military heroism, but civic courage"

(Giroux, 2001, p. 202). Such an educative process is not ideologically neutral, but a

> moral choice put in front of educators and citizens, a choice that American philosopher John Dewey suggested is the distinction between education as a function of society and society as a function of education. We need to examine that choice: do we want schools to create a passive, risk-free citizenry, or a politicized citizenry capable of fighting for various forms of public life and informed by a concern for equality and social justice. . . . Do we want to create spaces of freedom in our classrooms and invite students to become agents of transformation and hope? (McLaren, 2003, p.184)

Critical citizenship requires that contemporary youth develop the ability to ask critical questions about the structure of social organizations. Teaching for critical citizenship requires a critical pedagogy that is not domesticated through solely focusing on dialogue, but rather aims to develop a commitment toward true social change and justice (Grande, 2004). A critical pedagogy is not enacted simply to teach students another view of society and history; rather it is to engage the material world by altering existing social inequalities. The goals of such an educative process are to attack social inequalities and help the most oppressed members of society develop the tools to eliminate existing injustice (Darder, 2002). A critical educational pedagogy should help provide students the tools to examine how oppression is experienced, not only through physical violence, but by the psychological violence experienced everyday living within a consumer capitalist society (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Thus, teaching for critical citizenship moves beyond studying forms of oppression, with the foci shifting toward providing the tools to understand, deconstruct, then work toward dismantling existing forms of oppression within the material world.

Such efforts cannot simply come from community activists, classroom teachers, media educators, or any other specific activity. Rather, in creating an educational pedagogy that is truly libratory, all of us must become critical pedagogues in our daily lives. In McLaren, we find an intellectual who has oriented his private and work life toward doing just this. Through his prolific body of work, McLaren has repeatedly helped us recognize the sheer absurdity and destructive nature of our society and economy. Fundamentally, McLaren has pushed us to envision a world in which human need is placed above the accumulation of capital. Although a relatively clear agenda, it is only through the works of thinkers such as McLaren that we are able to begin to develop the necessary understanding of the contemporary political context to be able to imagine and work toward a future that pushes us toward a realization of this agenda.

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