

education review
a journal of book reviews

Volume 10 Number 11

October 2, 2007

Pedagogy for Social Justice: An Essay Review

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Citation: Cibils, Lilian & Pruyn, Marc. (2007). Pedagogy for social justice: An essay review. *Education Review*, 10(11). Retrieved [date] from <http://edrev.asu.edu/essays/v10n11index.html>

McLaren, Peter & Jaramillo, Nathalia. (2007) *Pedagogy and praxis in the age of empire: Towards a new humanism*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

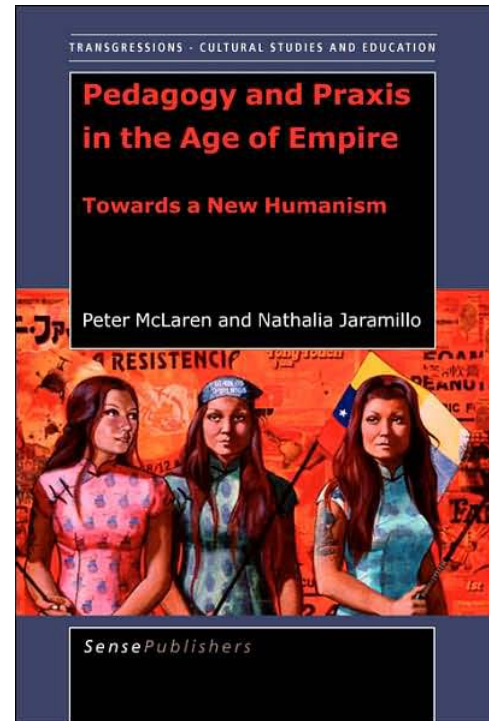
Pp. 220 ISBN 9077874844

[For another review of this book see Samuel Day Fassbinder's review at <http://edrev.asu.edu/essays/v10n12index.html>]

Iraq and Katrina become emblematic of the “crisis of global capitalism” (p. 5). The invasion of Iraq and the indifference of the Bush administration to the devastation left in the wake of Hurricane Katrina serve as backdrop to McLaren and Jaramillo’s bold analysis of the consequences of the ferocious onward march of global capitalism that dominates this era. War is the first common denominator. On the domestic front, Katrina laid bare the deep-seated racism at work at the highest levels as well as “the all out war by conservatives against the poor” (p. 14).

The inhumanity resulting from the federal government’s negligence exhibited both before and after the natural catastrophe was only exacerbated by the blatant racism in the coverage by mainstream media. Far from subtle in their contrasts, news reports

consistently portrayed white victims as “finding provisions,” while black citizens were seen to be “looting”; and, in turn, headlines compared looters to cockroaches (p. 9). Meanwhile, exaggerated stories told in terms of violent felony would pave the way for such comments as “I hope the looters are shot” (p. 11). The hostilities were further intensified by conservative religious leaders, who contributed to a tacit justification of the ineffectual federal response to the suffering of thousands of citizens, by means of apocalyptic interpretations of the hurricane as a punishment from God for the sins and decadence of the South (pp. 13, 19). In sum, Katrina “was an attack on hope,” it “sounded the death-knell of ... a hope born in the crucible of the civil rights movement” (pp. 7-8).



In the international arena, the occupation of Iraq—launched in spite of world-wide massive demonstrations against it, at the time and since—and this country’s perpetration of continuous atrocities there (along with its local and international allies, the “coalition of the willing”; shrinking though it may be) are a window into the depth of cynicism and shamelessness of a militaristic foreign policy staged under the cloak of the patriotic propaganda of freedom and democracy; a policy barely able to disguise its ultimate imperialistic intent, that is, to liberate terrain for the expansion of the insatiable global corporate greed of the oily few (pp. 4, 30,31). With the invasion of Iraq as a “shameful attempt to capitalize on the events of 9/11” and their horrendous fresh memories, the stage is also set for the smothering of dissent through the fear-inducing patriotic propaganda machine at home (pp. 28-29). Although different in numerous ways, most alarming are the close parallels drawn between both scenarios: evangelical fundamentalist harangue, mercenary corporate media propaganda, shady corporate gains in reconstruction and, above all, dehumanization. The glaring commonality lies in “Capitalism’s war against the working-class and people of color”; in other words, “Capitalism’s addiction to injustice” evident both at home and abroad (p. 32).

Education in Gruesome Times: Naming Versus Neutrality

In *Pedagogy and praxis in the age of empire: Towards a new humanism*, McLaren and Jaramillo skillfully guide the reader through the gruesome details of the complex interconnectedness of the characteristic features of marketplace democracy: injustice,

global capitalism, militarism, religious fundamentalism, propagandistic corporate media and neo-liberal policies in education. In their analysis, the authors insist that critical pedagogy is no longer a dangerous critic of US imperialism and capitalist exploitation, and instead, “Has become so absorbed by the cosmopolitanized liberalism of the post-modernized left that it no longer serves as a trenchant challenge to capital and US economic and military hegemony” (pp. 33-34). McLaren and Jaramillo argue that while public schools are responsible for imposing the neo-liberal regime on families and youth, class exploitation is often left out of the debate in schools of education, and that the “Embourgeoisement of critical pedagogy has prevented educators from acknowledging sufficiently the class character of US culture within the vertical structure of capitalist society” (p. 84).

Education policy under the Bush administration is just one more piece, and a central one, in its neo-liberal agenda. As an educational embodiment of this all-encompassing hegemonic and actualized reality, and under the guise of “moral responsibility” in the face of the crisis of the public school system, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) establishes the legislative grounds for increased regulation and control, privatization of education, stress on marketable skills to produce the desirable surplus labor, incursions of the religious right into education and compulsory military recruitment—all disproportionately affecting working class communities and communities of color (pp. 64, 65, 76). In sum, as they note, “The neo-liberal model in education contains as a necessary element for the full marketization of public education, the complete destruction of the quality of public sector education” (p. 78). McLaren and Jaramillo trace the origins of the NCLB act back to business plans of publishers and position papers from corporations who have an unequivocal vested interest in this legislation; as part of the testing industry, on the one hand, and as beneficiaries of the surplus labor to be produced in the long run, on the other (pp. 75, 79).

The advance of the fundamentalist religious right in education, through the government’s support of “faith-based initiatives,” is reflected in the growth undergone by “conservative Christian schools [which] now represent 15.4% of all private school enrolment” (p. 177). The development of fundamentalist evangelical textbooks runs parallel. The examples cited are illuminating. One such textbook is said to define “liberal” as “referring to philosophy not supported by Scripture” and “conservative” as “referring to philosophy not supported by Scripture” (p. 177). In another case—which, in our opinion, would reflect the imperviousness of such curricula to the democratizing ideas of

multicultural education, to say the least— a Christian publisher “describes African beliefs as ‘false’, blames poverty and political chaos in Africa on a lack of Christian faith, condemns Hinduism as ‘pagan’ and ‘evil’, and asserts that Hindus are ‘incapable of writing history’ because of their mental confusion and lack of an intelligent comprehension of events” (p. 177). Lastly, a fascinating example of historical interpretation based on the premise that Catholicism is “a distortion of the Christian faith.”



In this view “Spain and France were never able to colonize the United States” because “God ‘wanted to make America a Christian nation” (p. 177). The underlying ideology of textbooks used by a significant segment of US schools merits serious attention.

McLaren and Jaramillo’s challenge of the agenda behind NCLB joins in the on-going critique among educators—for instance Emery and Ohanian’s (2004) detailed tracing of the corporate interests behind the policy—by setting it within the broader context of global capitalism as a congruous element of the agenda of an administration that has no scruples in calling education an “issue of ‘national security’ and an instrument of ‘economic prosperity’” (p. 79). They persuasively argue that, “Schooling has become another business partnership,” and the long-term foreseeable results will contribute directly to increase the gap between the rich and the poor (p. 85).

A Call to a New Marxist Humanism

In the context of this in-depth critique of the intricacies of the workings of neo-liberalism in the ever-expanding empire of global “marketplace democracy,” McLaren and Jaramillo make a call to a new humanism in critical pedagogy in these terms:

What is painfully clear in the midst of such a daunting scenario is the need for a new critical humanist pedagogy, an approach to reading the word and the world that puts the struggle against capitalism (and the imperialism

inherent in it) at the center of the pedagogical project, a project that is powered by the oxygen of socialism's universal quest for human freedom and social justice. (p. 20)

In other words, teachers are called to, "Reject their role as amanuenses of history, as clerks of testing regimes, as custodians of empire, and assume a role of active shapers of the historical present" (p. 85), to side with the oppressed, with the poor and join in class struggle.

Within the broader humanist Marxist framework, living threads of theory and practice are inextricably woven into patterns of dialectical revolutionary praxis. At the risk of having this intricate tapestry come unraveled—by leaving out some crucial components from the weft or warp—we will outline some of its salient elements. At the center of their theorization of humanist Marxist revolutionary praxis, and in their search for counter-hegemonic social arrangements, the authors borrow the term "revolutionary critical pedagogy" from Paula Allman. This Marxist analysis seeks to critique,

The political economy of capitalist schooling so that teachers and students may begin to reclaim public life from its location within the corporate-academic complex in particular, and the military-industrial complex in general, while acknowledging in both cases their violent insinuation into the social division of labor and capitalism's law of value. (pp. 94-95)

As an insightful tool of analyses and construction of new forms of social organization, McLaren and Jaramillo embrace Holloway's distinction between two forms of power: "power over" (*potestas*) and "power to do" (*potentia*). *Power over* operates by separating the doers from their doing, and denying the formation of the collective "we"; which is constructed on the basis of the power to and "mutual recognition of dignity" (p. 40). By alienating people from the origin of their thoughts and practice, severing the product from the process and calling it their own, those exercising *potestas* contribute to reducing those under their control to objects. This separation from their own doing renders people subordinate and inert, denying agency and any possibility of change. Power over is additionally dehumanizing since it objectifies relations between people, defined as owners or non-owners. As emphasized by the authors, this process has reached its highest point under capitalism. This analysis can be applied to all aspects of social activity, specifically to pedagogy, as students under this model become inert objects of instruction aligned to a neo-liberal regime. However, this is not the whole story, and hope lies in the people who can assert their *power to do*, which, although denied, is still present, through anti-power. However, McLaren and Jaramillo side with the Chavistas against Holloway

when it comes to the nature of the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela and the necessity and importance of taking state power in order to rebuild the state from the bottom up. They state their position clearly in what follows:

We are aware that one of the biggest debates occurring among the educational left at this moment is between the Zapatista position of changing the world without taking power, advocated by John Holloway and others, and the position taken by supporters of Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales in Venezuela and Bolivia respectively. While we have tremendous respect for the work of the Zapatistas, especially in terms of their advocacy of indigenous and women's rights, we do not believe that actions of those, like Chavez, for instance, who have chosen to take state power, are wrong-headed. We still hold out hope that the state can be remade democratically from the bottom up in such a way that it will be able to serve the interests of the poor and the oppressed. We side with the Chavista position on direct and participatory democracy and continue to support the efforts of the Chavistas to build socialism for the twenty-first century. We support the struggle to advance socialism worldwide. (p. 46)

Solidarity, Deep Democracy & Revisiting Raya

Against this model of neo-liberal citizenship, McLaren and Jaramillo offer a politics of hope based on a view of "democracy as a process of self-institution" drawing on Fotopoulous's concept of "deep democracy"; which involves economic, political, cultural, social and ecological elements (p. 53). The persuasiveness of this model lies in its appeal to a broader movement, by bringing into play the perspectives of democratic, anarchist, feminist, radical Green and liberation approaches. Within this "inclusive democracy," the concept of citizenship would be transformed to acquire a new depth in its cultural, political, social and economic dimensions. Some of the characteristics of this deep democracy may be summed up as follows: the new economic structures would stem from the needs of the community and not the market, where ownership and control of the means of production would be collective; ecological consciousness would contribute to a new relationship with the environment, not seen solely as an instrument for growth; citizenship would be based on equality of social relations in every realm, including household, workplace and schools; and, the cultural and intellectual potential of each worker would be developed.

Although dialectical and historical materialism run through all the chapters and provide a backbone for the argument of this work, it is in the sections on "Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy as a Dialectics of Praxis," and "Class Struggle in a Global Context" where

their significance comes to full fruition. The authors revisit the Marxist-Hegelian dialectic through Raya Dunayevskaya's thought. Central to her Marxist humanist perspective is a revision of the concept of "absolute negativity" and a focus on the "negation of the negation" or "second negativity." In this view, to achieve freedom, it is necessary to, "Negate the negation inflicted on the oppressed" by means of a philosophy of history that allows us to work not towards an idealistic utopia, but to struggle for a new beginning within the concreteness of the social reality of everyday existence (p. 115). Dunayevskaya stresses the fact that Marx does not only see praxis as centered in the political and economic, but also in human relations where citizens are agents of transformation and a new society is possible through the negation of the present one. In this search for a new social humanity through class struggle, argue McLaren and Jaramillo, "We need to work toward becoming associate producers, working under conditions that will advance human nature, where the measure of wealth is not labor time but solidarity, creativity and the full development of human capacities" (p. 111).

Finally, within the overarching project of a class-struggle that addresses economic exploitation, as well as racism and patriarchy, McLaren and Jaramillo present the need for a theory of counter-hegemony to map-out the strategies by which critical revolutionary pedagogy would become "a powerful catalyst in the on-going struggle for a socialist democracy" (p. 115). A contour for this theorization is afforded by Robinson's four fundamental requirements for an effective counter-hegemony, which would be met as follows: first, by building a broader political force linking social movements and diverse oppositional forces; second, by designing a socioeconomic alternative to global capitalism; third, by transnationalizing the struggle of popular masses; and, fourth, by the subordination of organic intellectuals' work to the service of popular struggles (pp. 114-5). The far-reaching implications of Marxist humanism for critical pedagogy are clearly spelled out in this lengthy but illuminating passage:

A true renewal of thinking about educational and social reform must pass through a regeneration of Marxist theory if the great and fertile meaning of human rights and equality is to reverberate in the hopes of aggrieved populations of the world. A philosophically-driven revolutionary critical pedagogy, one that aspires toward a coherent philosophy of praxis, can help teachers and students grasp the specificity of the concrete within the totality of the universal—for instance, the laws of motion of capital as they operate out-of-sight of our everyday lives and thus escape our commonsense understanding. Revolutionary critical pedagogy can assist us in understanding history as a process in which human beings make their own society, although in conditions most often not of their own choosing, and therefore influenced by the intentions of others. Furthermore, the

practice of double negation can help us understand the movement of both thought and action by means of praxis, or what Dunayevskaya called the “philosophy of history” (p. 111).

Los Que Lo Están Tratando: Examples From Revolutionary Practice

In this work, the concept of radical hope rests on the underlying belief that another world is possible through the development of “a multiracial, gender-balanced, anti-imperialist and internationalist popular front” (p. 48). Every chapter resounds with a sense of urgency and an extensive call to social movements who share a common enemy—imperialism and the transnational capitalist class (p. 47). We commend McLaren and Jaramillo’s recognition of “the need for international cooperation to save the planet from the global marketplace” (p. 19). With a view to offering examples of alternative forms of social organization, they turn to various popular movements developed in Latin America in recent years: the *asambleas*, *piqueteros*, and the takeover of factories by workers in Argentina; the participatory budget in the workers movement in Brazil; and, most significantly, the Zapatista and the Chavista revolutions (pp. 41-46). From this latter grouping, two main positions are identified in an on-going debate as to how revolution is envisioned. On one hand, are the positions held by the Zapatistas, who seek social change without taking power. On the other, are the positions of the Chavistas in Venezuela, and supporters of Evo Morales in Bolivia, who favor taking state power and establishing direct and participatory democracy. While the authors manifest their deep respect for the Zapatista movement, specifically in their role as advocates for indigenous and women’s rights, they express their support of the Chavista approach to building a socialist society through a transformation of the state (p. 43).

In the context of the Chavista revolution in Venezuela, McLaren and Jaramillo offer concrete examples of a “humanizing critical pedagogy” in the Bolivarian missions, which they support through their work as part of an international think tank based in Venezuela. These are broad-based educational programs with anti-poverty and social welfare objectives, which address the needs of millions of Venezuelans within the larger project of emancipation. Some salient aspects of these programs include: basic adult literacy, which respects the people’s identity by offering reading and writing both in Spanish and in the students’ indigenous languages; a secondary remedial school for high school dropouts, with an emphasis on the development of solutions to community problems; training for unemployed graduates with a view to be incorporated into the formal economy; and, scholarship programs for higher education for the poor (p. 107).

Of special interest to us, as critical educators, is the focus on specific grassroots education efforts brought to light in this volume that offer hope in illustrating the possibilities

arising from dialogue and collective decision-making to resist and search for alternatives to curriculum and policies which serve corporate interests. These examples are plentiful in McLaren and Jaramillo's text. One is the example of over 90,000 unionized educators in South Korea who struggled to incorporate supplementary teaching materials to the social studies curriculum. Specifically, by introducing materials on the Iraq war they opened up spaces for reflection and questioning. Another example is that of the Center for Education and Justice (CEJ) based in Los Angeles and made up of parents, teachers and students who effected the Los Angeles Unified Schools Board's opposition to high stakes testing (p. 81).

Using Humanist Marxism to Understand the Everyday In Our Communities, Schools & Beyond

As educators living and working on the Borderlands where New Mexico, Texas and Chihuahua come together (the *maquiladora* capital of the world), we endorse the critique of the, "Cruel and violent pedagogy of dehumanization" enacted in the school system through policies which are closely linked to the expansion of capital (p. 104). The phrase, "Politics of erasure" eloquently defines the overarching xenophobic trend in policy-making, including English-only, anti-immigrant initiatives and the No Child Left Behind act. McLaren & Jaramillo reiterate and redouble the critique expounded by scholars in education who have denounced the increased inequity created by the emphasis on high stakes testing and " 'Texas-style' accountability", and how Latina/o students whose first language is not English have proved to be one of the groups who are paradoxically being left behind by such policies that served as model for those established by federal legislation, allegedly to reduce the racialized achievement gap (Darder, 2005; Valenzuela, 2005; Valencia & Villareal, 2005; McNeil, 2005; Padilla, 2005). The figures cited by the authors speak for themselves: "Across ethnic groups, Latina/o have the highest high school dropout rate, nearly 28%, and for newly arrived immigrants, the dropout rate stands at 40 %" (p. 104).

McLaren and Jaramillo's contribution to this discussion, however, goes beyond the micro analysis and specifics of standardization and its dire academic, social and human (or dehumanizing) outcomes. Their view of these measures and their consequences from a Marxist humanist perspective allows us to perceive education policy in the Bush era within the broader historical context of imperialism and global capitalism; a perspective which is often overlooked. We are reminded of the way schools are linked to the expansion of capital, since in this model they are, "Commodity-producing (human labor power) institutions" as well as, "Vehicles of profit maximization" by reinforcing the social division of labor (p. 103).

Especially relevant to us as bilingual/multicultural educators in the Borderlands is the denunciation of the neo-colonialism of the official discourse of federal policies. Drawing this into sharp focus is McLaren and Jaramillo's critique of the administration's neo-liberal education reform within the global capitalist model; specifically, Bush's policies attempting even to eliminate the term "bilingual" from their script (p. 105); truly Orwellian. As the authors note, "National policies reflect the larger capitalist ideology that dehumanizes those who do not conform, that disqualifies certain segments of the human race from full participation as citizens and instantiates a rhetoric of depersonalization" (p. 99). Within this model, in which schools are to fulfill the needs of capital, and so are to produce the desired labor, pedagogies and programs that are designed to homogenize a diverse population (p. 103). Therefore, the assimilationist tide of English-only is part of the so-called, "Investment in school improvement." This, from the neo-liberal positing, is a necessary solution to what is diagnosed by the government and its associates as the "crisis associated with the Latinization of the United States" (p. 103).

Colonialism, and its inherent violence, find expression not only in such assimilationist education policies, but its ideological reverberations are propagated in racist and xenophobic comments by prominent public figures—in political, academic and journalistic circles—who feed nationalistic fears with an "us versus them" discourse, in defense of cultural and linguistic homogeneity of US society (pp. 99-101). Schools have become instruments of a neo-colonialism that maintains and reinforces the subordination of groups through a "pedagogy of dehumanization" (p. 104). In this context of alienation and political "anti-immigrant hysteria," McLaren and Jaramillo denounce the hegemony of English and recognize the plight of immigrants from Latin America and other parts of the world, who are displaced by economic and social conditions. They propose that we, "Articulate a humanizing critical pedagogy that is rooted in the cultural, spiritual and linguistic dimensions of everyday life; but a humanizing pedagogy [that] is also grounded in a critique of the material social relations and practices associated with contemporary capitalist formations" (p. 106). A critical humanizing pedagogy holds as central a deep respect for students' languages and identities. They continue:

To challenge the erasure of students' cultural and subjective formations, a humanizing critical pedagogy refashions dialectically our self and social formation by challenging normative notions of citizenship and by underscoring what it means to be the subject rather than the object of history. (p. 108)

Naming, Denouncing & Announcing

The incisiveness of the analysis of the workings of neo-liberalism on the local, national and international scenes is enhanced by the poetic and nuanced use of language by McLaren and Jaramillo, which reaches its peak when evoking universally powerful images in their critique of the Bush administration. We will devote some space to this aspect of the work, since it seems to captivate the depths of the complicity between the various sectors of the ruling classes. The central phrase “Bush and his de facto military/oil *junta*” (p. 34), for instance, with its allusion to the horrors of Latin American dictatorships proves more than adequate. To those of us who grew up and were educated in a country governed by *juntas*, in a world dominated by the same tactics of the politics of fear and the oppression of complicit silence, or to all who can relate through mere common humanity, the critique cannot go unheard. (One of the reviewers, Cibils, grew up in Argentina.) The historical parallels are traced further back through an astounding detailed list of analogies established between the current administration and Nazi Germany. Of particular note is their analysis of Bush’s discourse of being an agent of God’s will, and the far-reaching inhumanity most notoriously exposed in the use of torture as a means of interrogating prisoners during his administration—even the euphemistic phrase “enhanced interrogation techniques” is borrowed from the Nazi repertoire (p. 144). In this de facto theocracy, Bush rationalizes his policy decisions through religion.

In its religious allies, and through the endorsement of a Manichean worldview of Christian fundamentalism, this administration finds the needed rationalization—although utterly irrational—for expanding “free-market democracy” (at the end of an interrogator’s cattle prod or through the use of a waterboard) abroad by means of “pre-emptive” attacks on oil-rich countries (pp. 131-132). And it does so unimpeded by any scruples as to the means used to secure these markets, nor as to the massive loss of civilian lives — described in terms of “collateral damage”— and everyday life disrupted (p. 147). The details of tortures in US controlled prisons—such as the infamous Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay prison camps—serve to stress the adequacy of the appellative of Bush *junta* for this administration, by reminding us, among other atrocities, of the *Nunca Más* report in Argentina on the crimes committed during decades of military dictatorship, which came to symbolize the commitment of the people of the world not to allow such horrors to happen again. The religious fascist discourse built on the myth of, “America as God’s chosen nation,” of civilization versus chaos and good against evil, creates a climate of renewed McCarthyism where it becomes increasingly natural, before an unfazed public, for ultra-conservative organizations to draw-up black lists in an effort to silence dissent at home—such as the case of “The Dirty Thirty” list, of dangerous professors, which includes one of the authors, Peter McLaren himself. The historical parallels are, again, chill-inducing.

Significantly, to show the underlying consistencies of an inhumane system, McLaren and Jaramillo stress the fact that the cases that came to light at the torture camps were no aberrations, “But rather, a continuation of the legacy of the treatment of prisoners throughout the United States, the most brutal of which occurred under George W’s watch in Texas” (p. 192). In the same vein, Angela Y. Davis (2005) expands on the consistency of treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib with that of US prisons, and raises the question of what the implications are on the type of democracy which is, indeed, supposedly being exported to Iraq. She notes:

These abusive practices cannot be dismissed as anomalies. They emanate from techniques of punishment deeply embedded in the history of the institution of prison. While I know it may be difficult for many people to accept the fact that similar forms of repression can be discovered inside US domestic prisons, it is important not to fixate on these tortures as freakish irregularities. How do we pose questions about the violence associated with the importation of US-style democracy to Iraq? What kind of democracy is willing to treat human beings as refuse? (pp. 49-50)

Along the same lines as McLaren and Jaramillo’s denunciation of the underlying racism in the imperialistic, “War against terror,” Davis goes on to analyze the blatant racism inherent in the excuses offered by those carrying out the torture—with the consent of Bush administration—of the use of techniques which would violate detainees’ cultural and religious values, since it rests upon an assumption of cultural superiority and on a misunderstanding of “culture” as static. Furthermore, Davis’ analysis of the prison system and proposal for the abolition of prisons shares with the authors’ the critique of global capitalism and of the way it affects the lives of the disenfranchised by reinforcing structures founded upon racism and oppression of the masses.

McLaren and Jaramillo’s analysis of corporate and military incursions into the realm of education is heightened vis-à-vis Davis’ unraveling of the interconnectedness of the social structures which serve to reinforce inequity. Davis denounces the *prison-industrial-complex* as a system which not only parallels, but also has a symbiotic relation with, the *military-industrial-complex*. Davis stresses the structural similarities by considering, “The extent to which both complexes earn profit while producing the means to maim and kill human beings and devour social resources” (p. 39). As an eloquent illustration of the relation between these complexes, and of the prison as a source of cheap labor, Davis summons the picture of, “Prisoners building weaponry that aids the government in its quest for global dominance” (p. 39). In her call for solidarity to struggle against structural racism and class elitism, Davis joins McLaren and Jaramillo:

“Our job today is to promote cross-racial communities of struggle that arise out of common—and hopefully radical—political aspirations (Davis, 2005, p. 33).

From Empire & Torture to Schools & Classrooms

But what does this have to do with education? Everything, although it may not seem apparent at first. The pattern of the, “Politics of erasure,” alluded to by McLaren and Jaramillo in the context of education policy, would apply consistently to more than one institutional organization, and to our globalized societal structure as a whole; the logic of the ruling class is reflected on the education system as well as the legal system. For instance, the gap between the haves and the have-nots is accentuated by complex interconnectedness of corporate interests in the prison business, and prison as “the punitive solution to a whole range of social problems that are not being addressed by those social institutions that might help people lead better, more satisfying lives” (Davis, 2005, p. 40). Again, Davis’ analysis comes to bear on the links of social problems which are often decontextualized instead of being addressed as the dehumanizing effects of the global regime of capitalism on society. She notes:

Instead of building housing, throw the homeless in prison. Instead of developing the educational system, throw the illiterate in prison. Throw people in prison who lose jobs as the result of de-industrialization, globalization of capital, and the dismantling of the welfare state. Get rid of all of them. Remove these dispensable populations from society. According to this logic, the prison becomes a way of disappearing people in the false hope of disappearing the underlying social problems they represent. (p. 41)

As seen from the analysis of the forces at play in every facet of a society in a global capitalist system, the current policies of education are consistent and fit into the larger project. McLaren and Jaramillo refer to this as yet a third “complex,” the *corporate-academic complex*, to name the forces of neo-liberal capital and the ideological hegemony at work in the school system.

McLaren and Jaramillo build their persuasive argument on the need for a new post-capitalist form of society, that is, socialism: “A society based not on value, but on the fulfillment of human need,” in which, “The measure of wealth is not labor time but solidarity, creativity and the full development of human capacities” (pp. 110-111). In their Marxist analysis, the authors recognize in class struggle the larger project within a philosophically-driven revolutionary critical pedagogy, which also fights against racism and patriarchy. The authors, “Conceptualize class antagonism or struggle as one in a

series of social antagonisms (race, class, gender, etc.),” and argue that, “Class most often sustains the conditions that produce and reproduce the other antagonisms” (p. 102). We share this focus, and especially celebrate McLaren and Jaramillo’s call “to engage in finding ways of recognizing points of commonality, of mutual interest, where our own struggle for liberation intersects with the struggle of others, where we can begin to transcend the limitations of what is, in the struggle of what could be” (p. 199). We strongly believe, in accordance with the authors’ tone, that given the current dismal scenario so eloquently presented, there is a need to join forces against the common enemy of imperialism. And in this need lies another, which may require leaving aside the zealous defense of a purity of discourse which might interfere with the common cause of the struggle for the humanization of society. This call, we consider, may be followed by an acknowledgement of points of agreement with critical and radical thinkers, even with those whose discourse may slightly differ in emphasis.

Further, given the current situation, when there are at least two countries in the Americas—Mexico and Argentina—where in recent months there have been massive teacher demonstrations in the streets, followed by official repression, we cannot dismiss the need for this call to translate into solidarity with movements of educators struggling for enhanced economic situations all over the world. We cannot disregard the fact that teachers are part of the working class, more so in underdeveloped (or, in the authors’ words, overexploited) countries; so this must be included in a global class struggle. In the case of school teachers, the gendered aspect of the struggle must also be considered as part of a larger problem of the feminization of poverty, and gender-based economic disparities within the patriarchal structures of capitalism. Similarly, the voices of mothers on the streets of Juárez, against the impunity of murders of women on the Borderlands, and of demonstrators in Buenos Aires, against human trafficking, of which young women and girls are victims, remind us that there sometimes is a need to name the gendered crimes, and act and speak in solidarity—some of these issues have been, admittedly, addressed by McLaren (2005) in earlier writings. The feminization of poverty around the world, as well as the racialization of our society, evident in the prison-system, in our re-segregation of neighborhoods and schools, and in the privilege of whiteness, still need to be named in solidarity, as a step towards this broader movement.

The argument for the urgency to build a path to a socialist alternative is supported by the figures of the growing disparities which have reached, globally, extremes so that “the richest 1 % of the world population now receive as much as the poorest 57%” (p. 72). This leads to the recognition of the challenge to be not only local or regional as radicals and activists, but transnational, since the imperialistic model will continue to produce greater disparities between poor and rich countries. As critical pedagogues, we cannot remain impervious to the fact that, in today’s world, 250 million children work, and half

of them have never been in a classroom (p. 75). Nor can we remain oblivious to the narrow-mindedness, apart from the obvious racism and xenophobia, surrounding the debate on immigration policies, in what the media would like to make us believe is a security issue, and can be discussed in a vacuum; without even mentioning links to any economic initiatives such as NAFTA and their effects on the working poor. Here the notion of the true “Axis of Evil”—as proposed by Katsiaficas and cited by McLaren and Jaramillo, i.e. the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—is quite fitting (p. 148). The figures again are compelling; the percentage of people who are displaced in the world today is increasing at a higher rate than world population. According to the IOM (2005) report, “In 2005, there were 175 million international migrants in the world, that is, one out of every 35 persons in the world was an international migrant”; while, according to trends in the past, in early 2005, their number is estimated to have reached between 185 million and 192 million (p. 379). This international context concerns us as critical bilingual/multicultural educators on the Borderlands, since to us these are not just numbers, but names of students whose families have stories of struggle and survival.

Pedagogy and Praxis in the Age of Empire: Towards a new humanism is an actualization and a reminder for critical educators of Gramsci’s pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will (p. 198). McLaren and Jaramillo propose that critical pedagogy must not only, “Plot the oscillations of the labor/capital dialectic, but also reconstruct the objective context of class struggle to include school sites” (p. 49). This treatise of contemporary socio-political analysis does not look away from the horror scenes of Katrina, rampant with social injustice, or the details of the horrendous pain and suffering of the people of Iraq, as well as of working-class US families who send their loved ones to war (p. 148). In the authors’ own words, this work reminds us that, “Critical discourse does not function as a medium for universal harmony, but cuts like a sword into the entrails of the social rendering and interpretation of the real in such a way as to invite rejoinder and dialogue” (p. 198). Alongside the sharp denunciation of socio-political injustice inherent in imperialism and global capitalism, and the theoretical explorations of strategies for a counter-hegemonic socialist alternative, shine passages compelling in their poetic elegance as well as for their conceptual profundity, commitment and conviction. Such is the case with this call for a radical hope, which we choose to embrace in closing:

Hope is the freeing of possibility, with possibility serving as the dialectical partner of necessity. When hope is strong enough, it can bend the future backwards towards the past, where, trapped between the two, the present can escape its orbit of inevitability and break the force of history’s hubris, so that what is struggled for no longer remains an inert idea frozen in the

hinterland of “what is,” but becomes a reality carved out of “what could be.” Hope is the oxygen of dreams, and provides the stamina for revolutionary struggle. Hope refers to the rejection of subjective idealism in favor of a materialist reading of social life in its totality. Hope mediates between the universal and the particular in grasping the concrete forms of our objective existence under capital. Hope is the medium of dialectical praxis. Revolutionary dreams are those in which the dreamers dream until there are no longer the dreamers but only the dreams themselves, shaping our everyday lives from moment to moment, and opening the causeways of possibility where abilities are nourished not for the reaping of profit, but for the satisfaction of needs and the full development of human potential. (p. 55)

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