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This Fist Called My Heart

Public Pedagogy in the Belly of the Beast

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The White House is a burnished castle in the distance
where fountains thunder, but no one drinks,
where the word *torture* has been abolished.
From a high window someone peers,
a servant or the head of state, and curses in English.

—Martín Espada (*A Cigarette's Iris in the Eye of a Candle*, 2000, p. 65)

Scratch critical pedagogy hard enough, and under its dry, leathery skin you'll find an antechamber filled with biographies. In the mid-1970s, after a brief stint as a \$50-a-week copy boy at a national news service, I took a job as an elementary school teacher in a district that contains Canada's largest public housing complex. An orphan of the sixties (Timothy Leary wrote me a diploma that said, "You Are Now Free" after an acid trip in San Francisco in 1968), I briefly studied to become a sculptor, and later switched to Elizabethan drama. I was filled with the revolutionary writings of Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Jean Paul Sartre, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Amílcar Cabral, Ernesto Che Guevara, Stokely Carmichael, the Beat Poets, and those of pretty much every leftist author whose books I could get my hands on. After five years of teaching what came to be known as "Canada's toughest kids," I entered graduate school, having published a controversial best-selling book on my teaching experiences.

While a graduate student, I worked as an educational journalist, writing a regular column called "Inner-City Insight" for the teacher's union newspaper. My intellectual life became dominated by modernist writers and artists—liberation theologians, the Frankfurt School theorists, existential phenomenologists, surrealists, symbolic interactionists, Freudian and Jungian psychologists, Freirean educators, Zen Buddhists, performance theorists, ethnographers, ethnomethodologists, Gnostics, theosophists, Hegelians, historical materialists, comparative symbolologists, Nietzsche, Lefebvre, Jean Genet, Charles Baudelaire, Franz Kafka, Leon Trotsky, Karl Marx, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov), José Carlos Mariátegui, and members of the Situationist International. Although swamped by a messy eclecticism that debarred me from understanding the forest in my persecution of the trees, many of these disciplines, languages, and thinkers taught me to face uncomfortable truths about the human condition,

and to recognize and appreciate the power which can be unleashed in collective struggles to transform it.

After auditing (with great trepidation) a summer course taught by Michel Foucault (I had Foucault in the morning and Umberto Eco in the afternoon—in those days it couldn't get much better), and writing a doctoral thesis that was driven by the comparative symbology of Victor Turner, I took a job as a senior lecturer at Brock University's College of Education, filled with a poststructuralist zeal to put the world under erasure (that was over a decade before I would begin writing as a Marxist humanist). Some conservative students, provoked by my radical politics, launched a petition to have my contract terminated at the end of the year. A larger group of students, who supported my classes, occupied the office of an administrator until the dean agreed to renew my contract. The students graduated at the end of the academic year and, predictably, the dean terminated my contract as if he were casually dabbing some Anusol ointment on an inflamed hemorrhoid.

After agreeing to write the Preface to the publication of my doctoral dissertation, radical educator Henry Giroux (who himself had been fired by Boston University's reactionary president, John Silber), set the conditions in motion for me to leave Canada and work with him at Miami University of Ohio. He considered himself in virtual exile there, but it was a place that gave him the latitude to create a Center for Education and Cultural Studies within the Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions. It was in Henry's sage company that I began to deepen my engagement with the field of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy's once-subversive refusal to reproduce dominant ideologies and practices inherent in capitalist schooling and instead to embrace the possibility of resisting and transforming them has been tempered—domesticated, in fact—by the *soi-dissant* politics of postmodernism. Postmodernists have become the fitting progeny of transnational capital. Rather than becoming preoccupied with the discursive ruptures, discontinuities, and arbitrary subjectivism of the postmodernists, I prefer to emphasize the continuity of capitalist relations of exploitation, maintaining that the struggle for social justice, and for socialism, can be grounded in non-arbitrary conditions. I believe academics must take a principled and non-negotiable stance against exploitation and oppression of all living creatures, one that strives for social justice and dignity for all human beings. And if this means inflicting a blow on history, then we are obliged to participate with all the force of Thor's Mjolnir.

The struggle for emancipation mandates that we look beyond various regulatory or redistributive proposals that leave the basic structures of capitalism intact; that we support the subjectivity of the struggles of women, racial minorities, indigenous peoples, and those extending the terrain of political and ecological democracy; and that we develop a protagonistic philosophy of praxis based on the abolition of capital and value production.

Many of my academic colleagues, looking for some final vantage point from which to interpret social life, remain politically paralyzed, their studied inaction resulting from a stubborn belief that if they wait long enough, they surely will be able to apprise themselves of a major, messianic, supra-historical discourse that will resolve everything. Presumably this *ne plus ultra* discourse will arrive on the exhausted wings of the Angel of History! There seems to be some naïve belief that a contemporary codex will eventually be announced (no doubt by a panjandrum at an ivy league university), which will explain the quixotic mysteries and political arcana of everyday life. At this moment intellectuals will have the Rosetta Stone of contemporary politics in their possession, enabling them to know how to act decisively under any and all circumstances. Establishment academics under the thrall of technocratic rationality (usually in the form of rational choice theory) act as if the future might one day produce a model capitalist utopia in the

form of an orrery of brass and oiled mahogany whose inset spheres and gear wheels, humming and whirring like some ancient clavichord melody, will reveal without a hint of dissimulation the concepts and practices necessary to keep the world of politics synchronized in an irenic harmony. All that would be necessary would be to keep the wheelworks in motion (presumably fueled by surplus value).

One thing is clear: the trajectory of history is non-linear. It is not mechanical. In the stretching and tearing, folding and collapsing of time there is only the now of our struggle, of the embattled toilers of the world. Daniel Bensaid (2002) writes that the key political task is to anticipate the present in the dialectical conception of historical time. The present is strategic, it is a suspended present, not a transition. It is a place where the past, present, and future are non-temporal. It is a fork in the road. It is the crossroads where you will find Exú residing, waiting for us to choose a path. It is the domain of the psychopomp. Zé Pelintra rules the neighborhood here with his white suit and top hat. It is the place where commitments turn to praxis. Where struggle takes on a life of its own. A life outside of labor's value form. It is a time for teaching, a time for pedagogy, for the teachable revolutionary moment, for the development of critical pedagogy—revolutionary critical pedagogy. Here we do not counterpose systematic dialectics and historical dialectics but rather integrate them!

The processual character of the struggle for a critical pedagogy is perhaps best animated by the poetry of Antonio Machado (1962): *Caminante no hay camino, se hace el camino al andar* (*Traveler, there is no road. The road is made as one walks*). There is no predetermined path, but we can look to the past, the future, and the present to see possible directions that our struggle can take. We don't struggle in some absolute elsewhere, lamenting having missed the rendezvous with truth. Our struggle is warm-blooded, and it will end where its gestation began: in the fertile soil of class struggle. We know where we are going because it is the only destination where we can divest our human condition of its many disguises, and even then, we need to realize that we can only contest the ideological production of the capitalist class and not abolish it unless the social relations of production generating it cease to exist. Which is why the era of value production must come to an end and along with it the pre-history of the human race.

The path to socialism, while continually created anew, is not a solitary one. Others before us have kicked up a lot of dust along the trail. Some of that dust is mixed with blood, and we need to tread carefully, yet not lose the determination in our step. And while workers may drop to the ground like spent cartridges in their conditioned effort to overthrow the regime of capital, their struggles exit the chambers of necessity with such an explosive force, that history lurches out of its slumber in abstract, monumental time into the liminal present where the past is no longer and the future is not yet. Such a journey demands a critical pedagogy for the 21st century.

Critical pedagogy needs to be renewed. It can no longer remain as a bundle of classroom methodologies removed from a larger politics of socialist struggle nor a compendium of gnostic maxims bominating about the brains of hardscrabble youth, such as "yes we can!" It needs to be rhetorical, yes, but not merely rhetorical. This time around it has to be concerned with the problem of reasserting human action, what we call praxis. The depredations of the postmodern pedagogues often subordinated praxis to the realm of ideas, nostrums of discursivity, and the regime of the episteme. But critical pedagogy needs not only to disambiguate the otiose claims of the postmodernists and reject their cult of fashionable apostasy but begin with public political action, what has been called "public pedagogy."

Paulo Freire's (1973, 1998) work can certainly assist us in this endeavor. Freire has helped us to fathom the complex and variegated dimensions of our everyday life as educators. He has helped us, in other words, not to believe everything we think! As critical pedagogy's conscience-in-exile, Freire sought, through the pedagogical encounter, to foist off the tyranny of authori-

tarianism and oppression and bring about an all-embracing and diverse fellowship of global citizens profoundly endowed with a fully claimed humanity. Yet instead of heeding a Freirean call for a multi-vocal public and international dialogue on our responsibility as the world's sole superpower, we have permitted the political guardians of the corporate state to convince us that dialogue is weakness and an obstacle to peace, and that univocal assertion is a strength. We must reverse this trend.

All critical educational praxis is directive and political; it betrays a preference, a disposition. Freire (1994) argues that we find authoritarianism on both the right and the left of the political spectrum. It is true that both groups can be reactionary in an "identical way" if they "judge themselves the proprietors of knowledge, the former, of revolutionary knowledge, the latter, of conservative knowledge" (p. 66). Both forms of authoritarianism are elitist. Teaching should never, under any circumstances, be a form of imposition. When we teach critically, we often fear that we might be manipulating our students in ways that escape our observations. But the alternative is not to teach, not to act, to remain pedagogically motionless. Teaching critically is always a leap across a dialectical divide that is necessary for any act of knowing to occur. Knowing is a type of dance, a movement, but a self-conscious one. Criticality is not a line stretching into eternity, but rather it is a circle. In other words, knowing can be the object of our knowing, it can be self-reflective, and it is something we can employ to make an intervention into the social relations of domination and exploitation constitutive of capital.

We are universalists because we struggle for universal human rights, for economic justice worldwide, but we begin from somewhere, from concrete spaces and places where subjectivities are forged and commodified (and we hope de-commodified), and where critical agency is developed in particular and distinct ways. And when Freire speaks of struggling to build a utopia, he is speaking of a concrete as opposed to an abstract utopia, a utopia grounded in the present, always operating "from the tension between the *denunciation* of a present becoming more and more intolerable, and the '*annunciation*,' announcement, of a future to be created, built—politically, esthetically, and ethically—by us women and men" (1994, p. 77, emphasis in original). Utopias are always in motion, they are never pre-given, they never exist as blueprints that would only ensure the "mechanical repetition of the present" but rather they exist within the movement of history itself, as opportunity and not as determinism. They are never guaranteed.

Revolutionary critical pedagogy operates from an understanding that the basis of education is political and that spaces need to be created where students can imagine a different world outside of capitalism's law of value (i.e., social form of labor), where alternatives to capitalism and capitalist institutions can be discussed and debated, and where dialogue can occur about why so many revolutions in past history turned into their opposite.

We are constantly reminded of Che's storied admonition that you can't build a socialist society without at the same time creating a new human being. Echoing the question raised by Marx in his Theses to Feuerbach ("who will educate the educators?"), Che wrote in a speech in 1960:

The first recipe for educating the people is to bring them into the revolution. Never assume that by educating the people they will learn, by education alone, with a despotic government on their backs, how to conquer their rights. Teach them, first and foremost, to conquer their rights and when they are represented in government they will effortlessly learn whatever is taught to them and much more. (cited in Löwy, 1997, ¶ 12)

Those of us who work in the field of education must subject the social relations of everyday life to a different social logic—transforming them in terms of criteria that are not already steeped in the logic of commodification. Students can—and should—become resolute and intransigent

adversaries of the values that lie at the heart of commodity capitalism. This implies a new social culture, control of work by the associated producers and also the very transformation of the nature of work itself (McLaren, 2007).

We need to transform the very social relations of production, including those extra-territorial economic powers that exceed the control of nation states. And we don't need a social state as much as a socialist one. We need to do more than to counter the damage wreaked by capitalism, we need to create a society outside of capital's value form where corporate lobbyists can't make policy and politicians can't fleece the public.

To make my work more cogent and consistent with my struggle for social and economic justice, I've learned not to define what I do in the academy as being part of an academic career. I prefer to see myself as engaged in a political project, one that is inextricably concerned with co-creating antagonistic and participatory democracy with my students, pedagogical spaces where students can learn and can learn from their learning.

For years, right wing groups of all stripes have targeted me for my work with the late Paulo Freire, my writings on Che Guevara, my Marxist humanist analysis of capitalist society, and for the fact that I connect critical pedagogy with the struggle for socialism. My work in Caracas at the Bolivarian University, my educational projects in Mexico, and my affiliation with Centro Internacional Miranda, one of Venezuela's leftist think tanks, has earned me the odium of some U.S. neoconservatives who are prone to sniffing out "left wing bias" in the recent debates over the direction and purpose of U.S. education. Of course, I am not alone. In fact, compared to some other left educationalists, I have endured the life in the academy relatively unscathed. I consider myself fortunate.

Even so, I was surprised by the appearance of a ragtag group of scandal-mongering journalists pounding their yellow fists at my office door late in January of 2006. I had been preparing some speeches for the World Social Forum and the World Educational Forum in Caracas, Venezuela. Suddenly a pack of impatient hyenas were waiting outside my office, microphones in hand, spinning their corporate branded agendas for their big-network employers, demanding to know my reaction to being listed as number one on the Bruin Alumni Organization's (BAA) "Dirty Thirty" list of UCLA's most dangerous professors. Treating me as if I had been placed on the FBI's most wanted list, I was followed as I fled out my office door and down the path to the faculty center. I wondered if I had been catapulted into a time warp into a scene from the Gilded Age of William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal*.

I had been informed previously of some of the attacks by the BAA. They were unique in that they betrayed an infantile obsession with my physical appearance—my tattoos, my hair, glasses, and clothes. Because of this, I dismissed this group as simply laughable although I was concerned that they had offered students \$100 to secretly audiotape classes of left wing professors and \$50 for providing their lecture notes (we are not dealing here, after all, with mendicant friars). As frivolous as their maledicta and corporate infotainment initially appears, these groups can't be taken too lightly. Despite the fact that much of the thinking of their members is, for the most part, conceptually flatlined and disinclined to a critical engagement with the word and the world, these groups have the uncanny ability to garner attention when they are able to lock interests with the corporate media, who always love a witch-hunt. The malevolent attacks on the critics of the capitalist state reflect an ideal expression of the dominant material relations grasped as ideas, and they continue to do their work of demonizing social reform (consider the more recent attempts in the healthcare debate to sabotage the public-option plan by CRC Public Relations, the group that masterminded the infamous 2004 "Swiftboat" attacks).

Creating spaces for critical learning is difficult, since building reciprocal feelings of trust is paramount. Many students in university settings are reluctant to stay in classrooms where they feel they

are going to be the objects of attack and derision. The goal, of course, is to challenge the experiences of students without taking away their voice. You don't want to affirm a racist or sexist or homophobic voice, but how is such a challenge accomplished without removing the student's voice entirely? Understanding that question is part of the art of critical pedagogy. I try to learn from my own experiences working with university groups that define themselves as progressive or radical. Recently I accepted an invitation to speak at a university on the East Coast, and my visit followed a public lecture and an exhausting seminar at another nearby campus. After my speech, I attended a dinner with several university administrators, one self-described Marxist geographer and a half a dozen of his graduate students. As soon as the administrators left the room, the professor asked me in a tone if not pontifical, then at least parsonical, why I only "pretended to think" during my lecture. This was followed by some unctuous remarks about the importance of going beyond words. He and his graduate students (with the exception of one student with whom I had had a previous discussion) then began a saturnine commentary on my lecture as worthless, claiming they learned absolutely nothing from me and that attending my talk was a waste of their time. I was merely a fainéant rhetorician, an unavailing performer mired in the aesthetics of my delivery, collapsing critique into a chandelier of words, fit to be perched on Liberace's piano perhaps but not deserving of a lecture hall where an unvarnished Marxist riposte against the machinations of capital was expected. Their glib and scabrous comments could have been as easily delivered by Daddy Warbucks as by the well-nigh flawless thinkers with whom I was sharing sacred space. I am used to being inordinately criticized, and relish a productive debate, but criticism as a politics of affective "play" is another matter. Not once was I asked to clarify my position on any issue, to unscroll the message hidden beneath the sumptuously impenetrable artifice of my talk, nor was I asked to extend my analysis. The jejune smirks of the professor and students made it evident to me that this was a form of sport—who can best target the visiting guest and strike home with the most debilitating remark, delivered in the most repugnant manner. In this lugubrious smackdown display of unenlightened false consciousness, there was no larger project involved pertaining to co-constructing knowledge as a group. There was no attempt to engage me beyond the realm of throwing insults. What concerns me is not a question of politeness. It is a question of pedagogical engagement and alliance-building among those who profess to want to build a post-capitalist world. The experience reminded me very much of listening to the hectoring of the Bruin Alumni Association, only this time tinted red. Clearly, more professors and graduate students need to become familiar with the teachings of Paulo Freire.

Organizations like the BAA want to bring about a New American Century in tandem with the goals of new authoritarian populist governments driven by neoliberal ideology. They are fearful of the critical pedagogies employed in classrooms because they fear the power of critique and of dissent. Like a virus they would like to infiltrate those remaining social bodies, such as universities and public schools, where some possibilities still exist for questioning dominant ideologies and practices.

In all of our engagements with others, not only do we need to speak truth to power but to reach for freedom. The other of freedom is not oppression (inequality) but class. Freedom is the struggle not to be dependent on selling your labor power for a wage. To reach for freedom is not an act of transcending reality but of actively reshaping it (Lebowitz, 2006, 2007). Such a reshaping is not an isolated gesture but an act of solidarity. It is not a search for truth as an account of what is, but of locating the politics of truth in what needs to happen in order to bring a collective voice to the overcoming of necessity, to the surmounting of antagonisms of labor and capital as read against the larger sociohistorical totality.

Public pedagogy is not about engaging in specific modes of criticism but about the practice—and praxis—of critique. This is not to gainsay the importance of modes of critique and

distinguishing between various and sundry systems of intelligibility, but when critical public intellectuals invoke the category of critique, it means exercising critique in order to comprehend the process of reflection itself in a specific historical conjuncture while engaging in committed, protagonistic action. It involves the analysis and evaluation of the total context of the pedagogical encounter (the "act" of knowing) itself. In this case, the paradigms and frameworks of cognition and the affective dimensions of learning (or "structures of feeling") are interrogated by historically situating the living body of the thinker and her thought processes within the larger social totality of global capitalist relations. This historicizing self-reflection locates ideas, institutions, and social systems in the transition from one historical stage of production to another, establishing the limits and potential of modes of thought in the wider project of liberating humanity from capitalist exploitation (McLaren, 2007). Not only does critique liberate humanity from instrumentalist reification of the type unpacked by the Frankfurt school, but it also attempts to free humanity from racist, sexist, gender, and religious alienation linked to alienated production relations through the protagonistic history-making that accompanies reading the word and the world dialectically. Here, class is not considered prior to race, but co-constitutive of race in the formation of sociopolitical constructions of racial hierarchies through the racialization of class antagonisms and contemporary wage slavery subtended by a wider crisis of capitalism worldwide (understanding, of course, that race cannot be reduced to class and class cannot be subsumed by race). Here, "progressive" multiculturalism hails the citizen-subject of the liberal nation state as the bearer of universal and universalizing virtue yoked to the value-producing needs of the New World Order but at the same time appropriates the subject into the cultural logic of transnational, global capitalism, through what Marcuse (1964) referred to as "repressive desublimation" (San Juan, 2009). Here, multiculturalism serves to help establish the boundaries of the nation state and naturalize its "fictive ethnicity" that excludes and exteriorizes "others" such as undocumented "aliens" (San Juan). Since racism "springs from the reification of physical attributes (skin color, eye shape) to validate the differential privileges in a bourgeois system," it is imperative that conditions which require the racial privileging of certain groups be abolished, such as doing away with labor-power as a commodity (San Juan, ¶ 47). And since market relations hide unequal power relations and racial formation in a capitalist country is an aspect of class formation, we must be aware of how commodity fetishism enables the ideology of racism to register its effects in everyday thought (San Juan) in a class-divided society. This requires the practice of critique.

Like a Sebastião Salgado photograph, public pedagogy is an attempt at revealing the effects of capital on the lived experiences of the oppressed (including racialized and gendered experiences), but also for making interventions. Here we look not only to feminist pedagogies for leadership on challenging patriarchy (Jaramillo & McLaren, 2009), but on ecopedagogies for examining critically the causes of the converging economic, social, and environmental crisis that comprise the sustainability crisis as a whole (Evans, 2009; Kahn, forthcoming a, forthcoming b). For Gramsci (1971), and also for Paulo Freire (1994), political pedagogical actions are not an exclusive function of having the right knowledge but also of faithfulness to the event, in other words, of being in the right place at the right time. And developing a commitment to struggle. The committed intellectual is sometimes critically self-conscious and actively engaged but at other times might be unaware of his or her limitations or capacities to be an active proponent of social change. Or as Paulo Freire (1973) has noted, conscientization is not the root of commitment but rather a product of commitment. Freire does not believe that an individual has to be critically self-conscious in order to struggle. It is in the act of struggling that individuals become conscious/aware.

As Freire (1994) came to recognize, a deep understanding of the complex processes of oppres-

sion and domination is not enough to guarantee personal or collective praxis. What must serve as the genesis of such an understanding is an unwavering commitment to the struggle against injustice (Fischman & McLaren, 2005).

Here, public educators can work towards a counter-hegemonic coalition of social formations comprising committed intellectuals whose political bonds are interconnected and articulated through the unification of demands in heterogeneous, multifaceted, yet focalized anti-capitalist struggles (Fischman & McLaren, 2005). Public scholarship should be about achieving for humanity freedom from necessity. History, for the critical public scholar, can become a more steady vehicle for pedagogical initiatives able to frame present action in a critical fashion, incorporating as part of the process both the logic of the old and the logic of the new—as necessary expressions of the class struggle. Historical consciousness cannot be grasped through contemplation or critical self-reflexivity alone—activity confined to the zodiac of our imaginations. Even if wielded with vehemence against the capitalist class, these discourses of critique are insufficient for the kind of social and economic transformation necessary to defeat the turpitude of capital and its forces of exploitation. All of these pedagogical features—the employment of critique, consciousness-raising, and class struggle—conspire timelessly in the process of Karl Marx’s “revolutionary praxis,” as part of an effort to bring about a socialist alternative to capitalism. Revolutionary praxis, stressed Marx, is not some arche-strategy of political performance undertaken by academic mountebanks in the semiotics seminar room but instead is about “the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change” (Marx, cited in Lebowitz, 2007, ¶ 4). It is through our own activities that we develop our capacities and capabilities. An imbroglio over the seemingly arcane notion of revolutionary praxis has confused the debates surrounding critical pedagogy. Praxis is not theory translated into practice. It is not becoming critically conscious of some theoretical point and then exercising that point in the concrete context of social life. Put simply, it refers to changing society by changing ourselves and changing ourselves in our struggle to change society—there is a dialectical simultaneity and mutual determination to this process. But it is fundamentally an act of change. The act of knowing is always a knowing act. It troubles and disturbs the universe of objects and beings. It can’t exist outside of them; it is interactive, dialogical. We learn about reality not by reflecting on it but by changing it. Paying attention to the simultaneous change in circumstances and self-change and creating a new integrated worldview founded upon a new social matrix is the hallmark of the public scholar and educator. Public scholarship is about understanding objective class relations in the context of historical processes and social practices that are independent of our volition or will and comprehending how our subjectivities are created in relation to the production of surplus value produced by social labor. A public scholar is a critical pedagogue who creates opportunities for explaining the constitutive impossibility of capitalism producing equality because capitalism is structured around the private ownership of the means of production (“the congealed labor of the other”) of the social surplus; equality under capitalism means the equal exploitation of human labor (Ebert & Zavarzadeh, 2007). Many public scholars have been debarred from critique by the conditions of bourgeois property relations. It is difficult for them to comprehend how freedom is not simply a product of juggling discourses but of transforming social relations. The mutually determining relation between the active subject and the object of contemplation stipulates that we need to critique the social matrix out of which we have become determined since our human agency always bears the impress of material and historical reality. The public scholar is devoted to creating the conditions for critical consciousness, which in essence is political consciousness (which in turn is designed to illuminate the political unconscious that regulates the social totality) produced by ideological forces as well as the social relations of production and other attributes of the economic infrastructure historically in place. And critical consciousness, to become

revolutionary, must lead to an intervention into the workings of imperialism and the forces of colonization (Fanon, 1963, 1967).

The politics of participation with others (how we view and conduct ourselves as co-producers of knowledge) very much affects the ways in which we choose to construct our revolutionary praxis—including our pedagogical politics. Here we can invite students to recollect the past; to situate the present socially, politically, and economically; and to challenge ascribed methods of producing knowledge vertically so that the future no longer becomes a reinitiation and recapitulation of the bourgeois social relations of power and privilege found in the present. In this way, professors can help students in producing knowledge reciprocally and dialogically, challenging the brute particularities of their subjective existence in relation to the larger socio-cultural and economic frameworks that give them meaning, thereby contesting the calcification and erasure of their cultural and subjective formations while at the same time dialectically and protagonistically refashioning their self and social formations in their struggle to become the subject rather than the object of history. History's osteoporetic spine can be crushed under the weight of the burden we place on it to find its own way. We can help it lurch in the direction of freedom only if we apprise ourselves of the pedagogical dimension of the political and re-member the political by living it pedagogically. And this means creating pedagogical spaces for self and social transformation, and for coming to understand that both are co-constitutive of building socialism for the 21st century—a revolutionary praxis for the present in the process of creating a permanent revolution for our times.

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