

CHAPTER **4**
**Critical Pedagogy in a Time
of Permanent War**

PETER MCLAREN
NATHALIA E. JARAMILLO

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CHAPTER 4
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The Crisis of the Educational Left in the United States

Critical educators today are struggling assiduously to defend the public sphere from its integration into the neoliberal and imperialist practices of the state and the behemoth of globalized capitalism. While no one is seriously talking about seizing the state on behalf of workers struggling against the “petrolarchs” in Washington, D.C., there are promising indications that social movements in the United States will become more active in the days ahead. With administration hawks such as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, Undersecretary of State John Bolton, and Defense Policy Board member, Richard Perle, leading the White House charge for “preventative war,” it is clear that their fanatical allegiance to the imperialist Project for the New American Century is fuelled by U.S. triumphalism, unipolar political consolidation and dominion, and the conquest of new markets. The bacchanalia of patriotism that has overtaken cities and towns throughout the country has blinded U.S. citizens to the thousands of innocent civilians killed in the “liberation” of Iraq. The slogan dripping red and black from anti-war posters that reads “No Blood for Oil” has, if anything, increased in relevance since the U.S. military invasion of Iraq. As it stands, OPEC resides outside the ambit of complete U.S. control. Total U.S. influence over the vast untapped oil reserves would demonstrably change the power equation.

Iraqi opposition to the U.S. “free market” looting of their country was a major factor in the Bush administration’s decision to invade Iraq. The drive to obtain “free markets” and to open up investment for U.S. corporations is now accompanied by the most formidable military presence ever known to humankind, one that is fundamentally unopposed. Iraq is now “liberated” for U.S. corporate investment and control, having been “pacified” as a client state. Judging from recent U.S. history, the future will no doubt require that millions more will die in the oil-rich Middle East and elsewhere around the planet on behalf of the U.S. empire. The Bush junta has serious lessons to learn. You can’t bomb democracy into being. Democracy’s universal egalitarian values require the reciprocal acceptance of mutual perspectives.

In a social universe pockmarked by the ravages of capitalism’s war against the working-class and people of color, there are few places in which to retreat that the global market does not already occupy. Clearly, the United States has not faced up to capitalism’s addiction to injustice, and its politicians have provided little space in educational debates for teachers to question the structurally dependent relationship between the standard of living in developed countries and misery and poverty in the underdeveloped ones. Early in the twentieth century, this country failed to heed the advice of one of its greatest philosophers, John Dewey, who, mindful of “the extended meaning which has been given to the Monroe Doctrine,” warned: “The natural movement of business enterprise, combined with Anglo-American legalistic notions of contracts and their sanctity, and the international custom which obtains as to the duty of a nation to protect the property of its nationals, suffices to bring about imperialistic undertakings.”¹

Employing a politics that counts on the stupefaction of a media-primed electorate, the Bush administration has marshaled the corporate media in the service of its foreign policy such that the environment is literally suffused with its neoliberal agenda, with very little space devoid of its ideological cheerleading. Where classrooms once served as at least potentially one of the few spaces of respite from the ravages of the dominant ideology, they have now been colonized by the corporate logic of privatization and the imperial ideology of the militarized state. Teachers are left suspended across an ideological divide that separates reason and irrationality, consciousness and indoctrination, as they are reminded by their administrators and government officials that to bring “politics” into the classroom is unpatriotic. Consider the case of Bill Nevins, a high school teacher in New Mexico who faced an impromptu paid leave of absence following a student’s reading of “Revolution X,” a poem that lends a critical eye toward the war in Iraq.

If the President is to be believed, it was Jesus who first approved of the current Pentagon plan to expand the U.S. empire into the Middle East, as

Bush *hijo* shamelessly exploits his policy objectives with frequent Biblical references and overtures of solidarity to Christian evangelical fundamentalists. Through direct presidential orders that circumvent congressional debate and bypass public debate, the White House has launched faith-based initiatives which provide millions of dollars in state funds to right-wing Christian groups who run job-training programs requiring a “total surrender to Christ,” or who oversee childcare programs or chemical-dependency recovery programs, or who offer spiritual and moral regeneration to troubled families.

All of this has not gone unnoticed by critical educators. Though they have become used to the academic marginalization that often follows in the wake of attacks by the more churlish and reactionary conservative educationalists among us, proponents and practitioners of critical pedagogy have long feared being cast into the pit of academic hell for being perceived not only as dangerously irrelevant to United States democracy but also as politically treasonous. At this current historical juncture in U.S. history, when fighting a “permanent war” against terrorism, and expanding the American empire while we’re at it, one would think that such a fear is duly warranted. This is partly due to the fact that critical pedagogy earned its early reputation as a fierce critic of U.S. imperialism and capitalist exploitation. However, times have changed. Today critical pedagogy is no longer the dangerous critic of free market liberal education that it once was. Rather, it has become so absorbed by the cosmopolitanized liberalism of the postmodernized left that it no longer serves as a trenchant challenge to capital and U.S. economic and military hegemony.²

Of course, we believe that this can change. There are numerous developments on our campuses related to the anti-war and anti-globalization movements that give us hope that the voices of our youth—and among them, those who will be attending our teacher education programs—will be much more politicized or open to what Freire called “conscientization” than in previous years. No doubt this has been encouraged by the worldwide mobilization against Bush and his de facto military/oil junta. There will be pressure on critical educators (who in the United States are mostly liberal, not revolutionary) to respond to the voices of a new generation of politicized student teachers. But it won’t be a simple case of preaching to the converted. There are now more than 80 right-leaning newspapers and magazines circulating on college and university campuses throughout the country. Clearly, there is a concerted effort by conservative organizations to silence progressive voices. There is a need for teacher educators to bring a more radical discourse into the educational literature as well as directly into their teacher education programs. Even in the field of critical pedagogy these attempts have been disappointing.

Written as a counterpoint to the onslaught of neoliberal globalization and its “civilizing mission” for the oppressed of developed and developing countries alike, this article is both a commentary on the domestication of critical pedagogy, and a challenge for revivifying its political roots and role in the civil sociitarian left. It is meant to initiate a dialogue and conversation among progressive educators. Especially for those of us living in the belly of the beast in *gringolandia*, we are inhabiting a time when citizenship has become marked by a lived historical presence blindingly uncritical of its own self-formation, when residents inhabiting the nation’s multifarious geoscapes are racially marked so as to render them educationally segregated, and when the working-class has become deputized by capital to uphold the neoliberal market ideology of the ruling class against any and all other alternatives—all of which legitimates the subordinate status of the working class within the existing division of labor.

This essay is written at a time of permanent war, which is not only a war against the enemies of the United States (which today seems like just about every other country or dissenting organization/persons) but also a war against the working-class, people of color and women (a war that dates back to the violent founding of the country itself). This is not to say that times haven’t changed. For instance, Bush *hijo*, a beneficiary of the so-called “good breeding” of the “Episcopacy,” made it into Yale in the days when “character” (read as the cultural capital of rich, White, “silver spoon” families) was a singular badge of merit. Today, increasingly egregious forms of “testocracy,” scores from scientifically invalid and unreliable aptitude tests that correlate well with social class, race and linguistic background—serve as the primary route to the academy. The overt racism and class privilege of the ruling elite now enables the bourgeoisie to shirk off the notion of “good breeding” and hide themselves beneath the “objectivity” of high school test scores and university entrance criteria at a time in which meritocracy is presumed to have been secured. This is reflected in Bush *hijo*’s condescending and patronizing attitude towards ethnic populations, both at home and abroad. As William Saletan (2003) has pointed out, President Bush likes to use the term “gifted” when addressing the Iraqi people on their TV screens.³ “You are a good and gifted people,” he conveyed to them while Arabic subtitles appeared below his face during a broadcast that followed in the wake of the destruction of Baghdad. Saletan notes that Bush has used the term “gifted” seven times during his presidency, once to refer to Bill Cosby, once to Martin Luther King Sr., and four times to Iraqis and Palestinians. The other time was when he was reading from a script at an arts award ceremony. He has referred to Iraqis and Latinos as “talented” people. The Chinese have been referred to by Bush as “talented, brilliant, and energetic” while Russians are singled out as possessing “entrepreneurial talent.” Irish Ameri-

cans betray an “industry and talent” while Cubans display “determination and talent.” Saletan correctly notes that such description is tantamount to the obscenely patronizing and condescending discourse that white people often use to refer to “ethnic” people who need to be told that they are capable. Saletan remarks:

If you’re black, Hispanic, or a member of some other group often stereotyped as incompetent, you may be familiar with this kind of condescension. It’s the way polite white people express their surprise that you aren’t stupid. They marvel at how “bright” and “articulate” you are. Instead of treating you the way they’d treat an equally competent white person—say, by ignoring you—they fuss over your every accomplishment.⁴

At this current historical juncture, as the right seizes every chance it gets to replace the social wage with the free market system, as conservative think tanks game out plans for privatizing what remains of the devastated public sphere, thousands of teachers and teacher educators throughout the country look to the left for guidance and leadership. Stunned by the results of a New York Times/CBS News survey that revealed that forty-two percent of the American public believes that Saddam Hussein is directly responsible for the attacks of September 11, and that fifty-five percent of Americans believe Saddam Hussein directly supports Al Qaeda, U.S. educators are feeling powerless against the hegemonizing force of the rightwing corporate media.

Under cover of democracy, Bush’s lingo about saving civilization from the terrorist hordes rings the air. Americans old enough to remember the anti-Communist propaganda of the late 1940s and 1950s are experiencing a political *deja vu*. Millions read books with titles like *Is This Tomorrow: America Under Communism!*, *Blood is the Harvest*, and *Red Nightmare*. In 1948, the Chamber of Commerce of the United States published *A Program for Community Anti-Communism* which contained a phrase eerily reminiscent of a remark that President Bush made weeks after the attacks of September 11: “You know that they hate us and our freedom.” Those too young to remember the McCarthy era get to experience the sequel first hand. Some see this as democracy in practice. Not everybody is fooled.

But even when we are detoxicated of the shadowed obscurity surrounding the current war on terrorism and disabused of the calls for the primitive patriotism of flags and bumper stickers that is part of Bush *hijo*’s petulant crusade for a decent America (i.e., an America devoid of its critics), there still remains a glaring absence within the liberal academy of challenging capital as a social relation. While there exists plenty of talk about income redistribution, surprisingly little is said about setting ourselves against the

deviances and devices of capital's regime of profit-making other than prosecuting the CEOs of the latest round of corporate offenders. The stunted criticism of the Bush administration's fascist assault on democracy is not so much a refusal of political will among liberal educators as much as a realization that if we persist with an internationalized market economy, the introduction of effective social controls to protect the underclass, marginalized and immiserated will create overwhelming comparative disadvantages for the nation state or the economic bloc that seeks to institute such policies. If, as liberal educators (begrudgingly) and conservative educators (demagogically) insist, there effectively is no alternative to working within with institutionalized market economy, then admittedly neoliberal policies that champion free market capitalism and that undermine what is left of the welfare state make sense. And while surely the punishment exacted against the poor can be staggered by parceling out the conditions for mass poverty in more discreet—yet no less lethal—policies and practices, there remains the question of how to cope with the havoc that will eventually be wreaked on the poor and the powerless in the absence of a socialist alternative. It is in this context—of breadlines, overcrowded hospitals, and unemployment lines longer than those at the polling stations—that the question of organization becomes imperative for the left in a search for a socialist alternative.

The Politics of Organization

The thorny question of organization has been a problem that has exercised both the revolutionary left and the progressive left for over a century. Max Elbaum (2002) notes that organisations are crucial in the struggle for social justice. He writes that “[w]ithout collective forms it is impossible to train cadre, debate theory and strategy, spread information and analysis, or engage fully with the urgent struggles of the day. Only through organisations can revolutionaries maximise their contribution to ongoing battles and position themselves to maximally influence events when new mass upheavals and opportunities arise.”²⁵ Yet at the same time, Elbaum warns that we must avoid what he calls “sectarian dead-ends” in our struggle for social justice.

Reflecting on his experiences with the New Communist Movement of the 1970s, he explains that when a movement becomes a “self-contained world” that insists upon group solidarity and discipline, this can often lead to the suppression of internal democracy. The rigid top-down party model is obviously a problem for Elbaum. On the one hand social activists need to engage with and be accountable to a large, active, anti-capitalist social base; on the other hand, there are pressures to put one's revolutionary politics aside in order to make an immediate impact on public policy. There is the

impulse to “retreat into a small but secure niche on the margins of politics and/or confine oneself to revolutionary propaganda.”⁶ Elbaum cites Marx’s dictum that periods of socialist sectarianism obtain when “the time is not yet ripe for an independent historical movement.”⁷

Problems inevitably arise when “purer-than-thou fidelity to old orthodoxies” are employed to maintain membership morale necessary for group cohesion and to compete with other groups. Elbaum reports that the healthiest periods of social movements appear to be when tight knit cadre groups and other forms are able to coexist and interact while at the same time considering themselves part of a common political trend. He writes that “diversity of organizational forms (publishing collectives, research centers, cultural collectives, and broad organising networks, in addition to local and national cadre formations) along with a dynamic interaction between them supplied (at least to a degree) some of the pressures for democracy and realism that in other situations flowed from a socialist-oriented working-class.”⁸ It is important to avoid a uniform approach in all sectors, especially when disparities in consciousness and activity are manifold. Elbaum notes that Leninist centralized leadership worked in the short run but “lacked any substantial social base and were almost by definition hostile to all others on the left; they could never break out of the limits of a sect.” The size of membership has a profound qualitative impact on strategies employed and organizational models adopted. Elbaum warns that attempts to build a small revolutionary party (a party in embryo) “blinded movement activists to Lenin’s view that a revolutionary party must not only be an ‘advanced’ detachment but must also actually represent and be rooted in a substantial, socialist-leaning wing of the working class.” Realistic and complex paths will need to be taken which will clearly be dependent on the state of the working-class movement itself.

It is axiomatic for the ongoing development of critical pedagogy that it be based upon an alternative vision of human sociality, one that operates outside the social universe of capital, a vision that goes beyond the market, but also one that goes beyond the state. It must reject the false opposition between the market and the state. Massimo De Angelis writes that “the historical challenge before us is that the question of alternatives . . . not be separated from the organizational forms that this movement gives itself.”⁹ Given that we are faced globally with the emergent transnational capitalist class and the incursion of capital into the far reaches of the planet, critical educators need a philosophy of organization that sufficiently addresses the dilemma and the challenge of the global proletariat. In discussing alternative manifestations of anti-globalisation struggles, De Angelis itemises some promising characteristics as follows: the production of various counter-summits; Zapatista *Encuentros*; social practices that produce use values

beyond economic calculation and the competitive relation with the other and inspired by practices of social and mutual solidarity; horizontally-linked clusters outside vertical networks in which the market is protected and enforced; social co-operation through grassroots democracy, consensus, dialogue, and the recognition of the other; authority and social co-operation developed in fluid relations and self-constituted through interaction; and a new engagement with the other that transcends locality, job, social condition, gender, age, race, culture, sexual orientation, language, religion and beliefs. All of these characteristics are to be secondary to the constitution of communal relations. He writes:

The global scene for us is the discovery of the “other,” while the local scene is the discovery of the “us,” and by discovering the “us,” we change our relation to the “other.” In a community, commonality is a creative process of discovery, not a presupposition. So we do both, but we do it having the community in mind, the community as a mode of engagement with the other.¹⁰

But what about the national state? According to Ellen Meiksins Wood, “the state is the point at which global capital is most vulnerable, both as a target of opposition in the dominant economies and as a lever of resistance elsewhere. It also means that now more than ever, much depends on the particular class forces embodied in the state, and that now more than ever, there is scope, as well as need, for class struggle.”¹¹ Sam Gindin argues that the state is no longer a relevant site of struggle if by struggle we mean taking over the state and pushing it in another direction. But the state is still a relevant arena for contestation if our purpose is one of transforming the state:

Conventional wisdom has it that the national state, whether we like it or not, is no longer a relevant site of struggle. At one level, this is true. If our notion of the state is that of an institution which left governments can “capture” and push in a different direction, experience suggests this will contribute little to social justice. But if our goal is to transform the state into an instrument for popular mobilization and the development of democratic capacities, to bring our economy under popular control and restructure our relationships to the world economy, then winning state power would manifest the worst nightmares of the corporate world. When we reject strategies based on winning through undercutting others and maintain our fight for dignity and justice nationally, we can inspire others abroad and create new spaces for their own struggles.¹²

John Holloway's premise is similar to that of Gindin. He argues that we must theorize the world negatively as a "moment" of practice as part of the struggle to change the world. But this change cannot come about through transforming the state through the taking of power but rather must occur through the dissolution of power as a means of transforming the state and thus the world. This is because the state renders people powerless by separating them from "doing" (human activity). In our work as critical educators, Holloway's distinction between power-to do (*potentia*) and power-over (*potestas*) is instructive. Power-to is a part of the "social flow of doing," the collective construction of a "we" and the practice of the mutual recognition of dignity. Power-over negates the social flow of doing thereby alienating the collective "we" into mere objects of instruction.¹³

Holloway advocates creating the conditions for the future "doing" of others through a power-to do. In the process, we must not transform power-to into power-over, since power-over only separates the "means of doing" from the actual "doing" which has reached its highest point in capitalism. In fact, those who exercise power-over separate the done from the doing of others and declare it to be theirs. The doers then become detached from the origin of thought and practice, dehumanized to the level of instructed "objects" under the command of those that have assumed power-over. Power-over reduces people to mere owners and non-owners, flattening out relations between people to relations between things. It converts doing into a static condition of being. Whereas doing refers to both "we are" (the present) and "we are not" (the possibility of being something else) being refers only to "we are." To take away the "we are not" tears away possibility from social agency. The rule of power-over is the rule of "this is the way things are" which is the rule of identity. When we are separated from our own doing we create our own subordination. Power-to is not counter-power (which presupposes a symmetry with power) but anti-power.

Holloway reminds us that the separation of doing and done is not an accomplished fact but a process. Separation and alienation is a movement against its own negation, against anti-alienation. That which exists in the form of its negation—or anti-alienation (the mode of "being" denied)—really does exist, in spite of its negation. It is the negation of the process of denial. Capitalism, according to Holloway, is based on the denial of "power-to," of dignity, of humanity, but that does not mean power-to (counter-capitalism) does not exist. Asserting our power-to is simultaneously to assert our resistance against subordination. This may take the form of open rebellion, of struggles to defend control over the labor process, or efforts to control the processes of health and education. Power-over depends upon that which it negates. The history of domination is not only the struggle of

the oppressed against their oppressors but also the struggle of the powerful to liberate themselves from their dependence on the powerless. But there is no way in which power-over can escape from being transformed into power-to because capital's flight from labor depends upon labor (upon its capacity to convert power-to into abstract value-producing labor) in the form of falling rates of profit.

We are beginning to witness new forms of social organization as a part of revolutionary praxis. In addition to the *Zapatistas*, we have the important example of the participatory budget of the Workers Party in Brazil. And in Argentina we are seeing new forms of organized struggle as a result of the recent economic collapse of the country. We are referring here to the examples of the street protests of the *piqueteros* (the unemployed) currently underway and which first emerged about five years ago in the impoverished communities in the provinces. More recently, new neighborhood *asambleas* (assemblies) have arisen out of local street corner protests. Numbering around 300 throughout the country, these assemblies meet once a week to organize *cacerolas* (protests) and to defend those evicted from their homes, or who are having their utilities shut off, etc. The *asambleistas* (assembly members) also coordinate soup kitchens to feed themselves and others. This anti-hierarchical, decentralized, and grassroots movement consisting of both employed and unemployed workers, mostly women, has taken on a new urgency since December 2002, when four governments collapsed in quick succession following Argentina's default on its foreign debt. Canadian activist Naomi Klein captures the spirit surrounding the creation of the *asambleas* when she writes:

In Argentina, many of the young people fighting the neo-liberal policies that have bankrupted this country are children of leftist activists who were "disappeared" during the military dictatorship of 1976–1983. They talk openly about their determination to continue their parents' political fight for socialism but by different means. Rather than attacking military barracks, they squat on abandoned land and build bakeries and homes; rather than planning their actions in secret, they hold open assemblies on street corners; rather than insisting on ideological purity, they value democratic decision-making above all. Plenty of older activists, the lucky ones who survived the terror of the '70s, have joined these movements, speaking enthusiastically of learning from people half their age, of feeling freed of the ideological prisons of their pasts, of having a second chance to get it right.¹⁴

A recent report in *News & Letters* adds to this description:

What is remarkable is how ferociously opposed the *asambleas* are to being controlled, and to any hint of a vertical, top down hierarchy.

They insist on independence, autonomy, self-determination, encouraging all to learn how to voice their opinions and rotating responsibilities. They are explicitly for individual, personal self-development at the same time as they are for fighting the powers that be with everything they've got at their disposal.¹⁵ (2002, p. 6).

The larger *asambleas interbarrales* (mass meetings of the various *asambleas*) elect rotating delegates from the *asambleas* to speak and vote on issues that their local communities generate. In addition, workers have occupied a number of factories and work sites such as Brukman, Zanon, and Panificadora Cinco. Workers have also occupied a mine in Rio Turbio. Clearly, new revolutionary forms of organization are appearing. As Ernesto Herrera notes:

The experiences of the piquetero movement and neighborhood assemblies allow the possibility of the construction of a revolutionary movement, a democratic popular power with a socialist perspective. The “great revolt” has put on the agenda the question of a strategy that links resistance and the struggle for power, representative democracy and/or the principle of revocability, the “saqueos” as acts of self-subsistence in food.¹⁶

Brukman, a garment factory composed of fifty-five female workers, aged 45–50, has proved symbolic in the struggle against the Argentine state. Brukman workers are demanding public ownership of the factory, setting a dangerous precedent for the bourgeoisie. In fact, approximately twenty-five other factories in Argentina are occupied by workers who are also demanding public ownership. Workers in approximately 250 other factories are demanding some kind of state intervention for a type of workers' control (such as forming cooperatives, etc.). They have formed a popular front to resist assault from the state. However, assaults from the state continue.¹⁷

Of course, the *asambleas* confront many problems in that they are composed of members of different class fractions, with their many different political agendas. Yet all of the *asambleas* hold the re-stratification of recently privatized industries as a top priority (even as they reject vanguardist parties). At the same time, in this new rise of popular mobilization, as subjectivities become revolutionized under the assault of capitalism, there needs to occur a programmatic proposal for a political regroupment of the radical and anti-capitalist forces. There must be more options available for organizers of the revolutionary left. Herrera writes:

In Mexico, the Zapatista movement could not translate its capacity of mobilization in the Consultas and Marches into a political alternative of the left. There was no modification of the relationship of forces.

The theory of the “indefinite anti-power” or “changing the world without taking power” has produced neither a process of radical reforms, nor a revolutionary process.¹⁸

We are more optimistic about the possibilities of the Zapatista movement than Herrera, but we do believe that whatever shape the struggle against imperialism and capitalist globalization will take, it will need to be international. We believe in a multiracial, gender-balanced, internationalist anti-imperialist struggle. What appears promising are the rise of the Bolivarian Circles in Caracas, Venezuela, a mass mobilization of working-class Venezuelans on behalf of President Hugo Chavez. The Bolivarian Circles (named after Simon Bolivar) serve as watchdog groups modeled after Cuba’s Committee for the Defense of the Revolution and function as liaisons between the neighborhoods and the government as well as fomenting support for Chavez. They are important in combating business leaders and dissident army generals who, with U.S. support, are trying to overthrow the Chavez government. Members of the Bolivarian Circles bang on hollow electricity poles to warn against mobilizations by the opposition and to rally supporters across the city’s working-class neighborhoods. They are an example of self-determination for sovereignty as evidenced by the Bolivarian declaration “*Nuestra America: una sola patria*” (Our America: one motherhood) which rejects an ideological loyalty to “America” as an America defined by a capitalist laden value system that favors imperialism and exploitation for increased profit margins. According to “*Nuestra America*” the people will not succumb to neoliberal modernity at the expense of becoming “scavengers of the industrial extravagance.”¹⁹ This movement is a clear signal that the present can be rewritten, there is an alternative, and the people can search for their own “America.” In the spirit of this declaration we urge critical educators to pressure the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to open their meetings to the media and to the public and to cancel the full measure of the debt they claim from underdeveloped counties, since such debts were accrued by dictators who used their IMF and World Bank loans to oppress their own people in the service of capital accumulation.

We argue that what needs to be emphasized and struggled for is not only the abolition of private property but also a struggle against alienated labor. The key point here is not to get lost in the state (nationalized capital) versus neoliberalism (privatized capital) debate. As the resident editorial board of *News & Letters* have made clear, the real issue that must not be obscured is the need to abolish the domination of labor by capital. Capital needs to be uprooted through the creation of new human relations that dispense with value production altogether. This does not mean that we stop opposing

neoliberalism or privatization. What it does mean is that we should not stop there.

Critical Pedagogy and the Civil Societarian Left

This brings us to a crucial question: How can critical educators reinvigorate the civil societarian left precisely at a time when we are creating a world where elites are less accountable to civil society than ever before? Takis Fotopoulos writes: “This new world order implies that, at the center, the model that has the greatest chance of being universalized is the Anglo-Saxon model of massive low-paid employment and underemployment, with poverty alleviated by the few security nets that the “40 percent society” will be willing to finance, in exchange for a tolerable degree of social peace which will be mainly secured by the vast security apparatuses being created by the public and private sectors.”²⁰

If we persist with an internationalized market economy, the introduction of effective social controls to protect the underclass and the marginalized will create overwhelming comparative disadvantages for the nation state or the economic bloc that seeks to institute such policies. Additionally, if we accept that there is no alternative to working within the institutionalized market economy, then the neoliberal policies of the ruling class make sense to the elites and under these circumstances there is a logic in rejecting the imposition of social controls by the civil societarian left. The only answer is one from without—we need to make our choice between socialism or barbarism. If we choose the later, then we truly have no alternative than to sleep in the neoliberal bed that we have made for ourselves. If we choose socialism, then we must never abandon a vision for the radical transformation of society. As critical revolutionary educators who seek to transform the existing capitalist state into a socialist alternative, we can begin by revisiting our notions of democracy, by extending the traditional public realm to include the economic, ecological and social realms as well as the political realm. Democracy here is seen as a process of self-institution, where there exists no divinely or objectively defined code of human conduct.

A number of positions illuminated by Takis Fotopoulos on the creation of a revolutionary transition to socialism proves exceedingly instructive here for reconquering the notion of democracy and providing a politically robust concept of social justice.²¹ According to Fotopoulos, we need to develop a deeper conception of political democracy or direct democracy that includes economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological democracy. This falls under the rubric of what Fotopoulos calls “confederal inclusive democracy” and refers to the equal sharing of power among all citizens through the self-institution of society. This means that democracy is grounded in

the choice of its citizens, mandating the dismantling of oligarchic institutionalized processes and eliminating institutionalized political structures embodying unequal power relations. Economic democracy must be institutionalized by eliminating oligarchic processes and giving over macro economic decisions to the citizen body whereas micro decisions at the workplace and household are taken over by the individual production or consumption unit. Here, the focus is on the needs of the community and not growth per se; where satisfaction of community needs does not depend upon the continuous expansion of production to cover the needs that the market creates.

Within this model of deep democracy, unequal economic power relations are structurally eliminated by assuring that the means of production and distribution are collectively owned and controlled by a multiracial citizen body. Democracy in the social realm refers to an equality of social relations in the household and in the social realm in general such as the workplace and the educational establishment. Cultural democracy means the creation of community controlled art and media activity. Democracy must also be ecologically sensitive, developing an expanded level of ecological consciousness which will work to create the institutional preconditions for radical change with respect to society's attitude toward nature, making it less instrumentalist and less likely to see nature as an instrument for growth within a practice of power creation.

In sum, Fotopoulos' notion of inclusive democracy implies a new conception of political citizenship and the return to the classical concept of direct democracy; where economic citizenship involves new economic structures of "demotic" ownership and control of economic resources; where social citizenship involves self-management structures at the workplace, democracy in the household, and new welfare structures; where all basic needs are democratically determined and served by community resources; where cultural citizenship allows every community worker to develop their intellectual and cultural potential. Here Fotopoulos combines democratic and anarchist traditions with radical Green, feminist, and liberation traditions. In our view, such a reworked notion of citizenship is compatible with building independent working-class political action involving teachers and students and other cultural workers. As the basis of the self-organization of the working class, this transitional stage would include the confederation of workplace assemblies as part of a broader democratic movement directly linked to communities.

For critical revolutionary educators, the struggle for inclusive democracy stipulates working with students to build revolutionary consciousness and collective action as a means whereby we can resist our insinuation in

the ugly truth of capital: that it is designed to separate the laborer from her labor. The fetishization and unequal distribution of life chances produced by capitalist social relations of production must be challenged by dialectical praxis. The center-left liberal covenant which enshrines resource distribution as the site of resistance, and seeks to calibrate social transformation according to how easily it can be integrated into a more “compassionate” capitalism with a human face, must be directly challenged by a coherent philosophy of praxis that directly confronts globalized capital with a socialist alternative. It can pitch this challenge within the framework of an intergenerational, multiracial, transnational and anti-imperialist social movement. This will not be an easy task, especially at this current moment of political despair that has infected much of the educational left. It will require radical hope.

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 backward 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. Revolutionary dreams are those in which the dreamers dream until there are no longer 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.

The days ahead will witness furious attempts by the petrolarchs of the Bush administration to justify its political and military occupation. They will say that they are making the world safe for freedom and democracy and providing opportunities for other countries to benefit from “the American Way of Life.” This will be accompanied by attempts by the Bush administration to get a whole new generation of nuclear weapons into production in order to meet their expanded “national security objectives.” And they will have most of the evangelical Christian communities behind these initiatives. It looks as though the American public will be left out of the debate. Why should Bush care about what the American people think? They didn’t vote for him.

Currently the most important front against capitalism is stopping the U.S. from invading more countries, since the administration’s National Security Strategy of the United States of America establishes an irrevocable connection between U.S. global domination and the neoliberal Washington consensus. Callinicos warns that:

If the U.S. is victorious in Iraq, then it is more likely to go on the offensive in Latin America, the zone in the south where resistance to neoliberalism is most advanced. Even if the B-52s and Special Forces aren't directly deployed against Brazilian landless laborers or Argentinean piqueteros, victory for U.S. military power will weaken the struggle against poverty and hunger everywhere.²²

Commenting on imperialistic sentiment of the American people (with specific historical reference to Mexico), John Dewey wrote that "it is only too easy to create a situation after which the cry 'stand by the President,' and then 'stand by the country,' is overwhelming. . . . Public sentiment, to be permanently effective, must do more than protest. It must find expression in a permanent change of our habits."²³ Addressing U.S. imperialism since September 11, 2002, Gilbert Aschar portentously warns: "The real, inescapable question is this: is the US population really ready to endure even more September 11s, as the unavoidable price of a global hegemony that only benefits its ruling class?"²⁴

Perhaps it's time to give consideration to comments coming not from the theater of war but the theater of playwrights and actors. Recently, Peter Ustinov observed: "Terrorism is the war of the poor, and war is the terrorism of the rich."²⁵

We reject the notion, advanced by Foucault and other poststructuralists, that posing a vision of the future only reinforces the tyranny of the present. Similarly, we reject Derrida's insistence that the fetish is not opposable. It is self-defeating in our view to embrace the advice of many postmodernists: that all we can do is engage in an endless critique of the forms of thought defined by commodity fetishism. In contrast, we believe that we can do more than enjoy our symptoms in a world where the subjects of capitalism have been endlessly disappearing into the vortex of history. Such defeatism arises as long as critics believe that value production within capitalism is natural and immutable. We believe that the value form of mediation within capitalism is permeable and that another world outside of the social universe of capital is possible. We are also committed to the idea that revolutionary critical pedagogy can play a role in its realization. The voices and actions of critical educators will become more crucial in the days ahead. Whatever organizational forms their struggles take, they will need to address a global audience who share the radical hope that a new world outside the social universe of capital is possible.

Notes

1. John Dewey, "Imperialism is Easy," *The New Republic* 50 (March 23, 1927). Available online: <http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/ailtexts/dewey.html>
2. See Peter McLaren, "Critical Pedagogy and Class Struggle in the Age of Neoliberal Globalization: Notes from History's Underside," in *Democracy & Nature* 9 (1): 65–90. 5
3. See William Saletan, "The Soft Bigotry of Loose Adulation," *Slate* (April 10, 2003). Available online: <http://slate.msn.com/id/2081213/>
4. Saletan, "The Soft Bigotry of Loose Adulation."
5. Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 335. 10
6. Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 334.
7. Karl Marx, cited in Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 334.
8. Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air*, 335. The next two quotations are also from page 335.
9. Massimo De Angelis, "From Movement to Society," *The Commoner* 4 (May 2002), 5. Available online: <http://www.commoner.org.uk/01-3groundzero.htm> 15
10. De Angelis, "From Movement to Society," 14.
11. Ellen Meiksins Wood, "Contradictions: Only in Capitalism," in *A World of Contradictions: Socialist Register 2002*, ed. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (London: Merlin, 2001), 291.
12. Sam Gindin, "Social Justice and Globalization: Are They Compatible?" *Monthly Review* 54 (June 2002): 1–11, 11. 20
13. See John Holloway, "Twelve Theses On Changing the World Without Taking Power," *The Commoner* 4 (May 2002). Available online: <http://www.commoner.org.uk/04holloway2.pdf>
14. Naomi Klein, "Demonstrated Ideals," *Los Angeles Times* (April 20, 2003). Available online: <http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=15737> 25
15. The Resident Editorial Board, *News & Letters* 47 (July 2002), 6.
16. Ernesto Herrera, "Latin America: The Current Situation and the Task of Revolutionaries," in *Fourth International Press* (July 17, 2002), 10.
17. Over 25,000 people surrounded the Brukman factory in April 2003 to defend workers that had been expelled by the police, leading to numerous injuries and arrests. 30
18. Herrera, "Latin America," 13.
19. See "Nuestra America: una sola patria" (2003), available online: <http://www.unasolapatria.org/documento.html>
20. Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards an Inclusive Democracy: The Crisis of the Growth Economy and the Need for a New Liberatory Project* (London: Cassell, 1997), 358. 35
21. See Fotopoulos, *Towards an Inclusive Democracy*.
22. Alex Callinicos, "War Under Attack," *Socialist Review* 273 (April 2003). Available online: <http://www.swp.org.uk/SR/273/SR2.HTM>
23. Dewey, "Imperialism is Easy."
24. Gilbert Aschar, *The Clash of Barbarisms: September 11 and the Making of the New World Disorder* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), 81. 40
25. Cited in John Berger, "Fear Eats the Soul," *The Nation* 276 (May 12, 2003), 34. 45

