



Inside: Filmmaking for Social Justice: The Hammer unites the Deaf and Hearing Community

Healing the Isms in Our Bodies, Our Selves, and Our Community

Conversations with Bill Ayers Series

The Cultural Quest for Multiculturalism in Education

Social Justice Today



Social Justice Today is an online, quarterly, not-for-profit journal which seeks to unite academics and other citizens passionate about social issues. We are interested in social, political, pedagogical, and cultural essays which examine issues of civic significance within a social justice framework.

Volume 1, No. 1
Spring 2012

Healing The Isms

Social Justice Today

Co-Founders: Elvia R. Arriola and Sarah Miltz-Frielink

Issue Editor: Sarah Miltz-Frielink

Contributing Authors:

Bill Ayers, Henry A. Giroux, Elvia R. Arriola, Sarah Miltz-Frielink,
Rachael Batchu Mahmood, & Molly Olson

Graphic Designer: Adam Frielink

Copyright @ 2012 Social Justice Today. All Rights Reserved. SJT is an online journal published quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. www.socialjusticetoday.org

Editor's Acknowledgements:

Special thanks to: Dr. Kerry Burch, for continuous editorial support and encouragement—from the conception of Social Justice Today to the launch of the first issue. Thomas Joseph, for editorial advice. Dr. Linda O'Neil for spreading the word at NIU. Dr. Pamela Konkol, Dr. Isabel Nunez, Dr. Greg Michie, Dr. Charles Howell, Dr. Bill McCoy, Sue Halbrader, Susie Hill, Amelia Gould, Jill Davis-Kuzmanich, and Nate Sternberg for moral support. ChristieRose McIntyre, Kenya McIntyre, Kelly Marie, Angie Diaz, Rose Diaz, Jessica Heybach, Josh Miltz, Carl Miltz, Christine Miltz, Richard Frielink, Kristine Frielink, Becky Frielink, and Adam Frielink for love and support—always. Gabriel, Grace, and Hannah Frielink for inspiring the impulse of democracy through your dreams of a more just world. Concordia University Chicago for providing a great teaching position, which has inspired much of this material.

For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be; what is once well done is done for ever.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU¹

I must feel the fire in my soul so my intellectual blues can set others on fire.

CORNEL WEST²

Co-founders



Sarah Miltz-Frielink and Elvia R. Arriola

Our friendship began four years ago in a humbling martial arts class where we kept falling down and standing up back again to fight. We discovered our mutual passion for education in and for social justice and democracy. During our search for “the good,” we have often relied on our martial arts practice as a metaphor for the work we do as agents in our classrooms and in our communities.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Jan Woodhouse.

¹ Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience and Other Essays* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1993).

² Cornel West, *Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud: A Memoir* (Carlsbad: Smiley Books, 2009).

Table of Contents

Volume 1, No. 1

Spring 2012

Healing the Isms

Introduction..... 4
Sarah Miltz-Frielink

Healing the “Isms” in Our Bodies, Our Selves, Our Communities..... 7
Elvia R. Arriola

A Cultural Quest for Multiculturalism in Education.....27
Rachael Batchu Mahmood

Sixty Seconds at a Stoplight: A Reflection on Civic Failure.....34
Sarah Miltz-Frielink

BLAKE.....40
Molly Olson

Filmmaking for Social Justice: “The Hammer” Unites Deaf and Hearing Community46
Sarah Miltz-Frielink with Eben Kostbar

Conversations with Bill Ayers Series: Educating in and for Social Justice and Democracy.....52
Sarah Miltz-Frielink with Bill Ayers

Rejecting Academic Labor as a Subaltern Class: Learning from Paulo Freire and the Politics of
Critical Pedagogy.....62
Henry A. Giroux

Dear Readers,

Social Justice Today has been a labor of love. The hours spent writing and editing seemed endless (at times), yet the message behind the content sustained my mind, body, and spirit through the process. I could not have launched this first issue without the faithful support of my co-founder Professor Elvia Arriola—whose agency, publications, and teaching all point to a more just society—a more peaceful world.

In this launch issue, we focus on healing the isms. We go inward and confront the effects of racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism—in others and ourselves. The feature essay *Healing the “Ism” in Our Bodies, Our Selves, Our Communities* is a riveting account of a law teacher surviving the white supremacist, patriarchal, anti-gay culture that often permeates the walls of the legal academy. Professor Arriola shares how she healed her body, herself, and her community from the isms, and how we as individuals should do the same. Have you started examining the “isms” in yourself and your community? Do you have the courage to start the healing process?

A Cultural Quest for Multiculturalism in Education is a provocative account of a teacher making amends for the injustice she experienced growing up as a student of color in a predominantly White school that excluded her culture from the curriculum. Mahmood provides a visceral description of the obstacles she overcame during her first week teaching as a multicultural educator and the choice she made to continue her quest. If you are a teacher, how do you embed your students’ culture into the curriculum? What are you teaching for? What are you teaching against?

The essay—*Sixty Seconds at a Stoplight: A Reflection on Civic Failure*—details my personal experience meeting a dying homeless man with a disability on the streets of Chicago. I have not exaggerated the portrayal of this man’s goodness, his needs, or my shortcomings. My intention is to rekindle the necessity of connecting our passion for social justice with our daily choices as human beings; life continuously presents us with opportunities to be allies, bystanders, or perpetrators to those experiencing injustice. The man I met was dying because of the existence of ableism in our society, and I chose to be a bystander. The next time you witness an injustice, what will you choose to be?

Based on the real life struggles of a college student, *BLAKE* is a short story about an individual coming out as genderqueer. Olson’s lyrical prose captures the mistreatment from others, the misunderstandings, and the physical discomfort one endures during the transition process. How do you reconcile living in a society that oppresses groups of people perceived as different with your own social conscience?

The cover story with Screenwriter Eben Kostbar captures the challenges he faced getting a true story about a deaf athlete to the silver screen. As a filmmaker for social justice, Kostbar reveals the barriers he had to overcome in himself and the film industry to produce the first open-captioned non-foreign film with a deaf cast. What barriers are you willing to overcome to be a change agent?

The *Conversations with Bill Ayers* series exemplifies Dr. William Ayers’ perspective on educating in and for social justice and democracy. Inspired by his book, *Teaching Toward Freedom: Moral Commitment and Ethical Action in the Classroom*, the conversations dare teachers and citizens to open their eyes, question the world, and recognize the incalculable value of every human being. In that sacred (and often profane) place between heaven and earth where our actions do not always reflect our

principles, how can we transcend apathy and teach toward freedom? Dr. Ayers provides the wisdom needed to reconcile the discrepancies—so we can “make ourselves in this world.”

With that being said, Social Justice Today aims to ask fresh and difficult questions that stir up dialogue and passion for public affairs. While what we write may be provoking, we dare you to keep reading, and have the courage to question your beliefs, assumptions, and political ideologies in response. We believe this is a necessary part of becoming fully human. So we invite you to enter this journey with us—for justice, for democracy, for healing—knowing that there is always a better version of ourselves and our world to move toward.

Sincerely,

Sarah Miltz-Frielink
Co-founder and issue editor
Social Justice Today

Who We Are

Social Justice Today is an online, quarterly, not-for-profit journal which seeks to unite academics and other citizens passionate about social issues. We are interested in social, political, pedagogical, and cultural essays which examine issues of civic significance within a social justice framework. We are seeking essays which explore issues of race, gender, disability, health, social class or sexual orientation and ask challenging questions about the institutional constraints under which we live and work. Equally important, we invite essays that articulate constructive democratic visions that dare to step outside conventional modes of interpretation. Another core aim of Social Justice Today is to revive the lost art of the American essay in the tradition of Emerson, Thoreau, W.E.B. DuBois, and Susan Sontag, to mention a few exemplars of this genre. The hope is that our writers and readers will question their assumptions, prejudices, and personal/political ideologies in the process.

It is the editors' belief that we often overcome trials and experience transcendence as a result of this type of questioning and examination of thought forms. We urge individuals to reflect upon socio-cultural influences which have shaped personal perspectives and how new experiences have the potential to transform pain and prejudice. In today's post-modern American culture, heavily influenced as it is by degraded forms of commercial culture, social media, the blogosphere, and impersonal online interactions (often replacing face-to-face ones), the need for well-written thought-provoking essays is on the rise. Social Justice Today aims to provide a non-doctrinaire forum for publishing essays which ask fresh and difficult questions that provoke dialogue and stir up passion for public affairs.

Writer's Guidelines

A well-written essay written in Chicago Style may range from 8-20 pages in length (double-spaced). An ideal essay may begin with a personal narrative, which propels the writer to critique and ask questions about various oppressive practices. The writer could examine how these practices are shaped by thought paradigms and belief systems and as a result may present a counter narrative or point of view. In addition to American essays, we will consider well-written Q and A dialogue pieces, short stories, and poetry with a social justice theme. Please send completed manuscripts attached in word via email to editor@socialjusticetoday.org for consideration. Please put SJT submission in the subject line. We do not accept simultaneous submissions.

Notification via email regarding the status of your essay will occur approximately two weeks post submission. This is a quarterly publication. Our next writer's deadline is May 10, 2012. A short bio about the writer must accompany the submission.

Due to the fact that this publication is entirely run by volunteers, has no advertisers, and is unfunded, writers will not be paid upon publication. However, writers can use this opportunity to build their portfolios, curriculum vitae, or resumes. It would be paradoxical for this publication to accept any payments for publication due our commitment to social justice and equity issues. This not-for-profit publication will remain run by volunteers as part of our commitment to social change. If you have editorial experience and would like to volunteer to help edit a future issue, please send an email with your experience and interest to sarah@socialjusticetoday.org.

Healing the “Isms” In Our Bodies, Our Selves, Our Communities

By: Elvia R. Arriola

The drums were playing loudly as if we were in a forest dancing in a ritualistic ceremony. But it was a simple room in a mountain health spa and about twenty of us, men and women of all backgrounds were walking around a young Black woman who was dancing. It was a very personal dance. Dressed in a blue sweat suit she walked her own tight circle stomping and fisting to communicate what looked to be rage and silent anger with some internal demons. The drums got louder as did her breathing and she began to fist towards the ceiling with a look reaching to the blue skies outdoors as her feet sent rhythmic energy to the earth below. After a while the young woman, who had just finished her first year in college blurted out, “I’m going to do something I’ve never done before.” She tore off a now sweaty headband as she continued to stomp, make fists and breathe hard wiping an occasional bead of sweat from her face. Her beautiful and inspiring rhythmic dance of rage had turned her into a warrior on a path intent on killing the voices that no doubt affected her self-image. For now she had unleashed a wondrous head of lush and dark curls while she tearfully but smiling yelled out, “THIS...IS ME...NAPPY HAIR AND ALL.”

I had come to the Berkshire Mountains to heal the death of my mother, to nurture a tired body after another year of teaching, and to mourn the death of a personal dream for a career at the school where I’d begun teaching law a few years earlier. Of course, I didn’t realize truly what I’d come to heal when I sent in my check for the program that described itself as offering “insights and tools” for making life’s important transitions—whether it be divorce, death, new homes, new careers, or coping with new life-long illnesses. We were to join maybe up to two dozen other people of all ages making their own changes. Apparently, it was a program often used by professionals for their own development; it sounded good to me. So in the majestic beauty of the Massachusetts

Mountains we’d journal, talk, eat, and play for six days and make personal discoveries. We’d find out how our bodies reflect and hold the “isms” of our culture. Be it alcoholism, workaholism, sexism, racism and so on, we would learn a few ways to cope better with the only guaranteed thing in life—change.

For myself I only knew I was exhausted and needed to regroup after I’d closed up Mom’s apartment, distributed her possessions, and come back to Texas worn out and in grief. I figured the exercises would be harmless, relaxing, and rejuvenating. But as this woman danced and I saw the teardrops of joy stream down her brown cheeks I felt the watery tears in my own eyes and a warmth in my chest. As my vision blurred my mind cleared the path for a strong mental resolve. Instead of following through with the promise I’d made the day we buried Mom, to leave a profession I’d once idealized and now saw as cold and indifferent, I would stay in law teaching. And that’s when I knew I’d done some hard work. I had healed something inside.

Oppression and the Isms

Volumes have been written about the evils of racism and sexism and homophobia and all those other “isms” that separate people from each other. The scholar Charles Lawrence, borrowing from the field of psychology most poignantly wrote about the harms of these isms in an essay that described the effect of unconscious racism not only on America’s social ills but also on the minds, spirit, and self-esteem of African-Americans.¹ However, I’ve not found much written about how or why we might need to heal our bodies, minds, and souls from the impact of these “isms,” which is why I’m writing this essay. To share my own experience in realizing that in fact I’d been harmed (and harmed myself) by that thing we scholars, teachers, and activists call “oppression” and that I needed to heal that injury in order to do my work better. Living in a world so infected by the politics of identity we write about it, but how often do we really work with our own version of what it

¹ Charles R. Lawrence, “The Id, The Ego and Equal Protection: Reckoning with Unconscious Racism,” *Stanford Law Review* 317 (1987): 39.

means to live with an internalized oppressor? My story begins with the early days of my teaching career several years before those weeks in the Berkshires when I thought for sure I just wouldn't go back.

Unless I go back I can't reclaim now the joy and excitement I felt when I was first offered the job to be a law teacher. I'd been a civil rights lawyer and loved that. But too often I'd found myself sharing what I learned and getting the strong feedback that I needed to teach. Because I loved ideas and I loved words and I loved sharing them in class and in writing. But that joy was killed. I'd barely unpacked my bags when I understood that in fact something had really changed. A series of small “welcoming” events put me on a path of misery. Little did I understand that I had any control over staying on that path.

It's hard to know where to begin. Do I go back to the day I arrived on campus and went to my mailbox? Or should I just move on to the core of this essay, the period when I was being reviewed for tenure. I'm not sure the timing really matters. It's the “spirit murder” as coined by Pat Williams² that took place and how I dealt with it (or not) that concerns me. Thank goodness that on some level I did know that I was not totally responsible for what was happening, that I was experiencing the fullest impact of the politics of identity. That my identity, my beliefs, my interests, my very being had become an “issue” among liberals and conservatives of the faculty I'd joined.

I was just weeks into my new job when I bought and began to read the groundbreaking set of essays *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* by Patricia Williams, today a renowned voice for black feminist legal analysis. Oh, what a breath of fresh air her essays were to me and other women of color struggling for recognition in that seemingly brief moment in the early 90s, when the largely white male legal academy embraced us in response to the cry by so many that our law school faculties were “not diverse enough!” I don't know how many times I went back to the chapter where

² Patricia J. Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

she introduced the idea of “Spirit Murder,” a concept that helped me see later on that my creative soul was being strangled by fear and confrontations I’d not invited.

Of course one could say, hey, all untenured professors get the heat from day one. But do all untenured professors create a campus wide furor long before they arrive? Most untenured go quietly to their new offices, having to introduce themselves over and over to remind the staff and faculty, I’m here, the new kid on the block. Not so in my case. But back to “spirit murder.” When did it start? To this day I cannot touch the files that hold the papers taking me back to the time when in a matter of a few months I went from being told I would be an “easy tenure” to being warned that there were serious problems with my tenure candidacy. Before I delve into that part, I need to talk about raw political power. I need to tell you how that is a bloody mix that poisons when mixed with prejudice, conscious or not, with information taken out of context, and with fear. In the short story version of my tale all you will see is what didn’t happen. So, I didn’t get tenure. Well no, not really. I technically resigned from the whole process, but really I had resigned from myself.

Spirit Murder has consequences in the physical realm although one’s first awareness may be in the mind. Intellectually, Williams’ notion helped me disentangle my feelings of shock, hurt, rage, and depression—evoked by a series of acts I encountered when I first came on and traversed through my five years on the tenure-track at a highly ranked university. Or as I came to call it: my walk of trial and humiliation into the jaws of the Great White Shark. Here, however, I’d like to explore the idea that it is not enough to understand the how and the why we may be harmed by the vicious politics of identity found in the legal academy. I’d like to examine the idea of healing from those harms.

The Bites of the Great White Sharks

Trauma No. 1 Opening my new mailbox. I’d driven four days with my girlfriend from New York City. My advance paycheck allowed me to put down a deposit on a big apartment that housed

us, my cat, a futon, and some clothing. My books and files were in my new office. I was told I should pick up mail in the faculty mailroom that it had been accumulating since the news of my official appointment as a new assistant professor. I’m sifting through piles that had been placed in there as of the day of my appointment in January (it was now mid-July) and I soon encounter a magazine with an anonymous yellow sticky note on it. “You should find this interesting.” No name, no signature, no “call me and we can talk.”

So I read. And I froze. I was reading a nasty diatribe against affirmative action in general and against the law school’s decision of having me hired to improve diversity on the law school faculty. The authors were current students in the law school. Later I was told they were protégés of the school’s most openly outspoken critic of affirmative action policies on the faculty, known for such caustic comments that Black and Hispanic students were automatically allowed to petition out of his Con Law class. He had a reputation for making his points tactlessly and with directed injurious phrases about the inherent “low quality” of intelligence of students of color. All this I did not understand in that moment as I stood in front of my mailbox reading.

I took the article back to my office and continued to read: venom, diatribe, and then a comparison of my resume (where did they get it? I asked myself) with that of another guy (a white male) that they thought was *so much better* than me. The article was a coup for one author whom, allegedly in search for stardom in reactionary circles, used this piece to get himself hired as a law clerk to one of the Fifth Circuit’s most conservative judges. What I saw in the article was a tearing apart of my resume, point by point. Their final cutting remark focused on the fact that I’d put “yoga” under “personal interests” and that I intended to teach on what they viewed as spurious subjects, like “feminist” and “women’s rights” or “civil rights” and not more “serious subjects” such as “bankruptcy.”

As I read the lines I could almost hear the heckles of laughter in the faculty lounge. All I could envision was a life-size photo my self with darts in it each labeled with yellow sticky notes pointing to “yoga” “feminist” “lesbian” “Mexican” and “not a Supreme Court clerk.” In that frozen moment as I held the article I felt a burning shame run through me. I wadded the sticky note and buried the article under a pile of paper in a corner of my new office. A good metaphor for where the feelings landed in my body.

A few weeks down the road I understood that the article had been published in the spring and had generated a campus-wide discourse—especially among the faculty’s conservatives who were quite upset that the white male candidate, who had clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas and graduated from Harvard had been rejected for hire because of me. But the point was that in so many people’s eyes I had been presumed “unqualified.” No one cared that I’d already published two major law review articles before setting foot on campus. No one cared what I might bring to the students. What mattered was that in a larger political discourse I couldn’t control, I, as their first woman of color hire for a tenure track position, simply did not fit the bill.

As the facts unfolded I realized that all of this had been happening even as I bid goodbye to New York friends, emptied my Brooklyn apartment, gave away my plants and packed my old Volvo. I had been clueless about the public furor in the spring semester after I’d accepted the offer for employment. Yet as the pieces fell into place I began to understand why there had been a steady stream of students dropping my new office “just checking out” the new professor “everyone had been talking about.” Other new hires were being treated like the hoped for reincarnation of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Meanwhile I felt that my office was like the twenty-five cent booth for the circus freak show.

Such was my entre into academic politics. I’ve often wondered if this ad hoc initiation rite had served as a poisoned apple in the barrel of faculty decision making over my tenure candidacy

four years later. After the hurt I lashed out at the institution for its lack of support and the foot dragging by my elders on the faculty as a kind of institutional hypocrisy. Here I thought I'd been courted for my talent. What a gullible fool I felt when I realized that at this school struggling to climb the Top Ten ladder, I'd been hired more for my personal identity and to quell a political demand. Although a few later said to me, “we wanted you just as you were,” I more often felt that they also wanted a chameleon who would change colors to suit the institutional mood.

What I did to cope was to bury my feelings. Certainly this was an unusual “welcome to your new job” but I couldn't ignore the hurt and I especially couldn't disentangle all of the feelings over what had happened. The most difficult realization I had was how I'd ignored a quieter inner voice. One that had looked at many other interested employers and felt, “maybe not this place for starters, maybe that school that isn't so big, not so caught up in “rankings.” Everything I'd felt or known about the “isms” of politics in that moment could end up on a table at a yard sale. My theories weren't helping me face the utter lack of professionalism that was deemed “just part of the politics” of being hired for a tenure-able slot at a fancy law school.

Trauma No. 2 Fast forward to a few years later. I'd published several articles, and had others in the works. I'd put the first semester and its horrid events behind me—or so I thought—and the nightmarish words of a colleague return who was evaluating my teaching. He never visited my class. He never spoke to me about my class. Instead someone offered him a video of a class taped for absent students. I was sick the day of the taping. Low energy from powerful meds I was taking to shrink a tumor in preparation for a hysterectomy I had a few months later. “She's the worst teacher I've seen in my twenty years of teaching.” Yeah, my teaching style was always different and still is. I downplayed the Socratic Method, I used history and sociology to flesh out points in the law, I had my students collaborate with each other and did my best to be tough while downplaying the power dynamics I'd hated when I'd been a student at Berkeley law school. My teaching style, later claimed

to be “innovative and creative” by academic colleagues in a different, progressive venue, challenged the status quo. So, of course, I was different and in his eyes that made me bad, or “the worst.” For sure I was not doing it like the good ol’ boys. Another colleague claimed that my first article published on the tenure track “confused” and attempted to “destroy” all that he knew and understood about the principle of equality in constitutional law! What a surprise when later two collaborators for a book on “cutting edge writings” solicited that same article for their anthology.

Yet those criticisms haunted me. Or I should say I let them haunt me for years. I can still feel the occasional inner OUCH and the memory of surrounding events can still evoke a chill in my veins. Sometimes those memories would shorten my breath and tighten my limbs like a hunted animal running from the dangers, real and imagined of an attack by the Spirit Murderers. It did not matter that those opinions could be dismissed or even undermined with the weight of counter-evidence about the quality of my work. For a very long time my warrior spirit felt as if it had been shredded across the battlefield. I felt crushed and defeated in my quest to become a law teacher and scholar.

Some people who heard my story about why I resigned from the tenure track would say, “You should’ve sued the bastards.” Or they’d try to comfort me with “you were just too good for them.” Look, I know I’m not one of the most brilliant on any faculty. I’m just as good as any other person who did what they were asked to do, got better with experience, and so on.

The lawyer I consulted when I briefly contemplated a lawsuit pretty much said, “Move on honey. Get another job.” And of course as life is, some things are so much easier said than done. I wasn’t enough of a martyr to follow through with what would have been a ridiculously expensive and worthless litigation experience. Other women known to have fought those ugly battles because of the sexism of their colleagues had paid lawyers’ fees the size of mortgage loans. I had no such resources. But I was just hurt enough and just emotionally sick enough over the deep feelings of

rejection, betrayal, and breaches of trust and confidence to feel somewhat paralyzed. I couldn't move forward and I couldn't move back. My paralysis was the embodiment of both my fear and anger.

Some of it was seething beneath my skin towards the people I worked with. I thought, “You chumps, you fell for the whole drama didn't you?” But you could never admit that what you think of me now (as “not tenure-able”) is but a continuation of the presumed “unworthiness” that was attached to my candidacy from the moment I was hired. But by this time I was too crushed and too vulnerable. I played politics for three weeks: visited a lawyer, resigned from the tenure track with an agreement for secured employment for another three years.

And then I stopped talking to most of my colleagues. I walked down hallways looking at the ground, turning to secretaries or students, and avoiding eye contact with so many colleagues. I was ashamed for myself and angry at them and I wanted them to know it. But I wasn't really dealing with my feelings. No surprise that I didn't see how much I was just turning most of them against myself.

Well other changes in my home life made it even more difficult to just move on. I had many wonderful supportive friends out of the law school who helped me get over it. I was now in a limbo status at school—same course load, different title, and no status. I kept teaching, started attending conferences where I found more support. I got involved in social justice issues on campus over affirmative action and the *Hopwood* case.³ My mother got sick with cancer, so now I really couldn't move because she depended on me financially and emotionally.

As my mother's death drew nearer some part of me understood that I'd deflected my rage and anger into energy for helping her die with dignity. Then one night in her apartment with a bunch of family, before the surgery that we hoped would take the cancer away, I felt a sharp pain

³ *Hopwood v. University of Texas*, 78 F. 3d 932 (5th Cir. 1996) (first successful challenge to use of affirmative action policies in law school admissions). *Hopwood* became unenforceable precedent with the Supreme Court's decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003) (upholding the use of race and gender factors to achieve diverse student bodies).

right over my heart. It didn't feel right. My breathing was tight. I didn't tell anyone—another one of those messages I ignored for the next 11 months.

Do We Really Have to Do Tenure Politics This Way?

Sadly, the side of politics I witnessed for my first tenure candidacy aren't unique. Academia today shows a side of politics that knows no boundaries whatsoever when it comes to privileging individuals to express their political views in limitless fashion, even against their own inner voices of ethical intuition and civility. In my idealism I've found myself in search of tools for being more connected. I tried to find compassion in me to help me understand my “oppressors,” those utterly human people I had worked with day after day in the halls of legal academia.

I concluded that for a few of those guys, maybe they were just emotionally sick. Maybe they were filled with bitterness and rages that I would never be privileged to know or understand. That in their sickness they took it out in politics and on others weaker than themselves. Life's changes had turned them into Tin Men without hearts. That some of that transformation had happened way before I arrived on the scene. So in some sense the comment “get over it, it's not personal” may have been true. They didn't hate me personally; they just hated what I stood for passionately and could not be bothered with seeing my humanity.

Well that helped me reinterpret *some* of the political games but then I'd come back to the very real feelings of hurt and I'd feel all judgmental and alienated all over again. Sure, some people do live life seeing everything through the lenses of “winners and losers.” Or that life is “all a struggle” and somebody has to fend off the mutual greed, fear, and hatred. Because after all if we didn't have these values we wouldn't have a world in which we can reenact every single day the belief that there is only “us” or “them.”

Yet reinterpretation aside, political games can and *do* have devastating consequences in people's lives. Whether it is the political that creates tornadoes of despair and mockery in the world

of government, or the political we all know so well in the struggle for daily existence among our work colleagues. The irony is that in the systems of academia we uphold as “the best” in this nation, there is no real separation at all between the politics of the workplace and the politics of governance and power. Many times these very people are consulted by the powers-that-be for their supposed wisdom on matters affecting the state, the nation and the world. The same people—who often don’t have a clue about how to create a safe place for people to work, live, and thrive in, including themselves. Unfortunately this is not something I learned from the moment I accepted the job.

And that’s why I wanted to write this essay, because I’m still healing. I’m still trying to undo a framework of seeing the world, people, and events as falling into “us” and “them” categories. That’s not a very fun way to live. It’s certainly not a way of thinking that’s going to give us much peace. Look at what’s happening right now in the world as we see the continuing effects of that thinking in war policy post 9-11. Something’s got to change.

At least in the legal academy there are some who know that “tradition” often stifles creativity in legal education. Students naively come to think that the hierarchy and status they see among their professors, such as between tenured and untenured, or lecturers and clinical teachers, truly represents a ranking of wisdom and therefore quality in the education they are paying for. Meanwhile the actors most deeply invested in the vicious political processes of the academy often seem the most committed to maintaining the hypocrisy, even when they themselves might have once loudly complained against it.

I will never forget the faces and words of two students who had a firsthand exposure to Machiavellian tenure politics when they served as non-voting members of a tenure committee. Disillusioned and in obvious emotional pain, one said to me, “I can never again believe anything I was taught about ‘justice’ by any of these professors, who have stunned me in their arrogance and their ability to blatantly lie.” It took many conversations to convince her not to drop out of law

school—her long held dream. The raw power and heartless politics that infuses the legal academy should worry those of us who are seeking to change legal education to meet the needs of a rapidly changing world—one that needs lawyers who have not abandoned their hearts for a place on the treadmill of illusion. For that, don’t they need good role models in their own teachers?

I return then to that young woman’s dance of anger. And I remember that the tiniest example of my fighting back to the article that appeared in my mailbox that first semester appeared in a poem I wrote a few weeks later, after a full night of crying over it, my self-doubt, and my fear that I didn’t have enough guts or money to run back to New York. When the sobbing ended I wrote a few short words about how I deeply felt about the skewed message for the world in the article. I drove to campus in the middle of the night, posted the article and my poem next to it on my office door. In four short lines I wanted them to know that other people didn’t think that such articles did much for the world’s struggles with difference, fear, prejudice, and change. I look at that poem now and then and remember how good it felt to cry, to heal, and to move on enough to get my start in law teaching.

Today I am convinced that social justice minded lawyers and law professors must commit to a healing of the world, but that many of us who have been hurt by the systems of power that have sought to exclude us, must begin the healing with ourselves. I believe it was John Bradshaw who argued in his book on the family that unhealed trauma in an incestuous home generates unhealed sexual abuse in the next generation, not just for families but for society as a whole.⁴

I believe that unhealed trauma in the minds, souls and bodies of those who work for social justice stifles our abilities to bring about the more balanced social order we so passionately desire. I am reminded here of the moving words of Riane Eisler who introduced her book *The Chalice and the Blade* with an inquiry into the woes of modern society, organized principally along masculine traits of

⁴ John Bradshaw, *Bradshaw On: The Family* (Deerfield Beach: HCI, 1990).

aggression and competition. She asks, “Why do we hunt and persecute each other? Why is our world so full of man’s infamous inhumanity to man—and to woman? How can human beings be so brutal to their own kind?”⁵

What allows it is a refusal on our parts to engage in those tools, those inquiries, those practices which encourage the softer, nurturing side of our basic natures, a balancing of our masculine and feminine sides. I speak here of the feminine and the masculine in the universal sense of bipolarity, of positive and negative. Reisler’s nuanced archaeological research documenting times when civilizations existed along non-aggressive values resonates to some ancient memory coded in our cellular structure that says, yes, we are capable of ordering our societies along the values of compassion, nurturance, peace, and equal partnership of the sexes.

The world doesn’t have to be based only on violence, aggression, and competition, themes that infuse the politics of the legal academy. All we have to do is look around us, at our communities, to see the ripple effect of warped values in our mansions of power. These are the kinds of values that are helping us create the tools of our self-destruction.

There must be a coldness of hearts that has wrought the stuff of litigation involving poisonous breast implants, armless babies, toxic drinking water, and claims of environmental racism, harsh descriptions of a world headed by huge corporations whose multi-millionaire managers would just as easily write a check to support the local symphony as they would sign the agreement that exploits child labor in an East Asian country or opens another *maquiladora*⁶ at the U.S.-Mexico border. Such legal, political and amoral social realities don’t exist without the aid of lawyers who have lost their hearts. A lawyer without a heart has forgotten how to feel.

⁵ Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History Our Future* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1988), xiii.

⁶ Foreign-owned companies long known to exploit Mexican female labor in wages, benefits, and toxic working conditions.

People who don't feel their own feelings, their own hurts, can't identify with the hurts of others. They can pretend that “they're just doing their jobs,” for example, as members of tenure committees destroy the careers of bright and talented teachers and scholars everywhere on the basis of ironclad presumptions and onion skin evidence to support them. Or another example, they can do their work as corporate lawyers and pretend that the corporation is a “person,”⁷ a client they must advocate for tooth and nail, but without any thought about the consequences of the actions of “this person” whose only sign of a heart or intuition is that existing in the bodies of its officers, directors, and legal representatives.

The lawyer who forgets this, who in fact does not see it as important to merge “work and soul,”⁸ will draft documents and pleadings that may pass the test of the Code of Legal Ethics but not necessarily human ethics, and enliven a global sized creature empowered to engage in profit making that may destroy the lives of workers, families, consumers, and their communities here and abroad.

If then, we need to heal our hurts and our anger how do we do it? Some of us have to begin small, like just becoming aware of our need to heal our hurts and angers. I remember a conversation one time with a dear colleague who told me of a tenure denial he'd witnessed at another major university. She was a woman, whom in his opinion was the unfortunate victim of the politics of racial identity, a bright person whose qualities and talents had been grossly misunderstood. With a lamenting gaze he said, “She eventually moved on and got tenure elsewhere, but to this day, twelve years later, she still can't talk about it, even with having tenure.”

I understood. The feelings of rejection can be so deep that to remember can trigger deeper feelings of shame centering on the core of who we are—as a woman, or a person of color, or a gay

⁷ Since this essay was written so many years ago, the United States Supreme Court has extended the doctrine of corporate personhood in the controversial decision *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission*, 130 S.Ct. 876 (2010).

⁸ David Whyte, *The Heart Aroused: Poetry and Preservation of the Soul in Corporate America* (New York: Crown Business, 1996).

man, or whatever. For example, as I detail my disappointments within my professional environment, now almost seven years later,⁹ I realize that I can talk or write about it because I have worked through many layers of emotions that resided in my body. I can almost sense the auspiciousness in the number seven, a number historically used to mark the beginning and end of a rite of passage. But in those seven years I had to learn how to talk about it without shame, and to get support so I could continue doing my work and serving my students. I had to find ways to create a community outside of my own institution, one that would embrace my pain, and not judge me as a failure because I had chosen to fight the system in my own way, by resigning from the tenure track, letting my opponents believe they had beat me. Meanwhile I resolved not to hide the shameful acts, in hopes that I could help prevent the harm to another innocent person following in my tracks.

Healing is not something we always do alone. Some people hire counselors. Others write to heal, to find their true selves. Others channel their anger into political advocacy, illustrating Alice Miller’s thesis in her book *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware* that political energy is often the outward manifestation of an unconscious working out of unresolved anger.¹⁰ But anger, in my opinion, has its limits in the process of trying to encourage our world cultures to entertain the possibility of social order founded on non-aggressive values.

In the world of politics anger is too often the only emotion expressed in a kaleidoscope of human emotionality. Yet anger is only one of the many feelings that get buried under the bruises we may get from the kick of the professional boot. There are obviously many paths one can employ today for healing deep traumas. In my opinion, the impact of racism, sexism, homophobia, and so on, in the form of unethical or unprofessional acts which deeply hurt us, have traumatized us such

⁹ I wrote this essay in 2002 and events happened in the nineties, but I never put energy into having it published, uncertain I would find a proper venue.

¹⁰ Alice Miller, *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware* (Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1984).

that “we still can’t talk about it,” and require healing that allows us to return to a whole sense of ourselves.

Why do we want a whole sense of ourselves? One obvious reason is it improves our work as teachers and scholars. How many people have had the delicious pleasure of the student who wrote on his or her evaluation that they loved the class, because the professor was so “enthusiastic” about the material? In my experience, enthusiasm is generated by the flow of creative energy, which is but the privilege of one’s being able to channel the creativity of life itself.

That kind of energy feeds our students’ souls and empowers them to practice integration of their emotional and rational intelligence. But when we, the teachers, are stuck in our negativity, harboring unprocessed feelings of anger, rage, bitterness and hurt, we cannot be whole, we are sapped and our creativity suffers along with it. Here I must draw from the ancient wisdom of yogic theory which for thousands of years has provided tools and meditative insights into achieving wholeness or unity, in body, mind and spirit. Again, why? Because as a teacher I hope that the highest expression of life’s creative force can come through us, those privileged bodies and souls who become teachers—especially those who will be educating the next generation of lawyers who will hold an awesome power to effect our future and that of our children.

This is hard work. Learning to become integrated in healing from Spirit Murder or the impact of any “ism,” whether from a stranger or the neighbor next door, takes courage. I was amazed at the unfolding that happened in my body when I went off to those mountains to rest, I thought, from the months of having been there for Mom as she prepared to die of cancer. And every time I surrendered to the hands of a physical therapist I found not just new physical pains but emotions connected to the places of sensation: anger, rage, hurt. Feelings that at an abstract, intellectual, “mind level” I thought I had already felt and processed with a counselor. I was partly right and wrong.

Healing to Do Better Work

Yogic theory says that which is unexpressed is unhealed. Therefore what is unprocessed in the emotional realm resides in the physical realm, within the body. Another example: as I opened up to the possibility that in fact I was harboring in my body “hurts” and “grief” and “anger” over past losses, including the death of my mother, I realized that symptoms of pain I’d been having in the left side of my chest, arm and shoulder, if left unhealed would produce a heart attack. I knew that the stress of carrying the load of my mother’s financial and emotional needs in the last years of her life had been compounded by the stresses of supporting her through her last year of terminal cancer and then being with her until the moment of her death.

But this level of stress was already sitting on top of *another* source of stress, that effected by the way I had faced the crumbling of my dreams to become a tenured professor at the first institution that hired me as a law teacher. The powerful confrontation with death ripped away my denial that I could ignore the pains in my chest that were growing sharper. The tears in mourning rested against a breaking floodgate. After the funeral and a short leave, every step back on to my campus or every encounter with the face of a colleague my resentful mind labeled either foe, friend, or fence-sitter, forced me to feel the pain radiating over and away from my heart.

Until one day I did hear the small inner voice that said, “Rest.” When I did, I connected theory with practice. In the middle of a long leave I found one day that pressure point in my chest that in resting said, “Cry, deeply, as if your life depended on it. Become a river of tears over the hurt, the pain, the fear, the loss, the grief—that you have harbored so far.”

I cried, like a motherless child, like an exhausted mother who’d cared to the end. Like an angry witness to death brought on by a ravenous disease. And then I cried more, for the entombed losses below of my dreams and hopes for becoming a tenured law professor at the institution where I was still working when mother died. My recent grief was like fresh dirt thrown atop an old burial

site, which held rage, anger and hurts that were settling into the soil of my very body. They branched out into still other feelings—insecurity that I would never be able to replace my job, that I would fail in my search for reclaiming my integrity, regret that I had ever taken the job, guilt over not having removed myself earlier from such a toxic environment for my soul. My wailing into the dark night was like a long awaited thunderstorm.

The last tears were the most surprising as like raindrops flooding the dark recesses of a colorful peony. I cried the tears for the attacks on the multi-hued identity I had struggled to accept—as a Latina/Mexican lesbian from a working-class background who didn’t fit in the old boys’ club. And that was the deepest hurt to access because it felt so at odds with the part of me that said, none of those labels really matter when like everyone else I am just going about living and breathing and witnessing the onwardness of life in a flower, or the wind or a birdsong.

But to heal, I had to let even that tortured feeling rise to the surface of my cry for wholeness. Only then did the muscles surrounding my heart soften, letting the physical pain reside with the tidal wave of feelings. Those tides of emotion returned to their rightful place of serenity and with continuing care encouraged me to believe I had in fact prevented a heart attack. As the thunderstorm left, I felt one more set of feelings—that of love and forgiveness strong enough for myself that I would write and “talk about it.”

As lawyers and law professors we live in a world that legitimates only the processing of anger, consciously and unconsciously. Consciously we teach our students to be adversaries. Some will take that talent and simply merge it with the personality they brought into school—the one that their family and friends told them qualifies them for being lawyers because they only know how to argue. But not all lawyers have the personality of the adversary.

Those who find themselves in conflict to the core of their identity with the models of behavior and professional conduct they learn in slippery analytical techniques or by example,

accommodate to a new identity they feel they must take on. Some simply hide their true selves, using alcohol, drug dependency, or other addictive behavior to numb themselves to their feelings. Or they hope to drown out the small voice inside saying, turn back, return to the real you, the one that had a heart before you sought succor for your insecurity in the false gods of salaries, power, and exclusive, gated-community lifestyles.

Healing is powerful because when people change, the world changes with them. Members of AA have been saying this for decades—as sober alcoholics will tell you that the world got better when they changed their bad habits and their attitudes. Some of the more powerful forms of healing happen in community because of the exponential levels of energy one receives from communal sources of love, exemplary courage and support. Community can be created even in short-term settings between those sharing the purpose and intent to heal. I came to know, understand, and want to support the woman whose dance of rage I described above in the mere space of a weeklong workshop using yogic theory to help people make easier transitions in personal or professional developments. She learned to own her healthy anger over the beliefs, including racist ones—that she had so internalized such that they were preventing her from making necessary life changes that would make her a better partner in a marriage, or colleague in the workplace.

When she found the support she found the strength in the small community of twenty other adults also facing difficult life transitions, to take a good look at all of her qualities and to love them unconditionally, including those that identified her as the black woman she had been taught to hate and be ashamed of by dominant cultural values. When we so heal ourselves, we help heal the world of the wounds effected by the false belief that we can't change this world from one filled with hatred over each other's identities and differences, to one infused with the passion for life and love, for ourselves and each other.

Until social justice minded lawyers, teachers, and scholars seriously make “love” a principle of ethics and practice of the law and teaching, beginning with loving ourselves enough to heal our hurts, we cannot change the world. Those of us who think “love” is a valuable organizing principle need to create community around this notion and commit to the creation of tools for doing this healing work. The healing of the world begins with the healing of ourselves.

Elvia R. Arriola is a civil rights lawyer and full professor at Northern Illinois University College of Law who identifies as a “Latina feminist critical theorist.” She is the daughter of immigrant parents with roots in Southern California and Mexico. As a teacher and scholar she is often encouraged to write and speak on behalf of the voiceless and disempowered. In 2000, Professor Arriola started Women on the Border, Inc. (www.womenontheborder.org), a Texas based educational project with a mission to support the empowerment and training of working women in global factories located at the U.S.-Mexico border. Professor Arriola’s publications range widely on subjects that deal with civil rights, feminist and queer legal theory, gender and human rights and globalization of the economy, publishing in journals such as *Berkeley Women’s Law Journal*, *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, *Columbia Human Rights Journal*, *Iowa Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* and *Harvard Latino Law Review*. She is also a contributor to such books as *The Latino Condition: A Critical Reader*, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, *Latinos and the Law: Cases and Materials* and in the forthcoming book *Presumed Incompetent: Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (2012). She finds solace and centering in yoga, Buddhist meditation, art, and TaeKwonDo.

The Quest for a Cultural Connection

By: Rachael Batchu Mahmood

When I Was a Young Student

My mother is a Russian Jew, and my father an Indian Hindu. So, I tell people that I was born a Hin-Jew, and not surprisingly, I stuck out in the predominantly Caucasian-Christian suburb of Chicago I grew up in. My school years were spent creating Christmas ornaments, painting Easter eggs, reading books about children who didn't look like me, learning about Euro-North American history and attending Girl Scout outings at the local Catholic Church. The most disheartening part of my early education is that I didn't realize that there was anything wrong with the way they were teaching in school. I thought that there was something wrong with me.

Style described curriculum as either being a “window” or a “mirror” to a student's identity. If the curriculum includes a student's culture then it is a “mirror” reflecting and therefore validating his/her self-identity as normal. However, for the minority student, Style illustrates that the curriculum typically serves as a “window” projecting only the views the dominant cultures, thus reinforcing the minority student's distance from the dominant culture and projecting their identity as abnormal.¹

When I was a young student, there was little reflection of my own identity in my classroom environment or curriculum, thus creating a cultural dissonance between the curriculum and my life.² Concurring with Ogbu and Style's observations, it was no surprise that over the years, I became more and more disconnected from what I was learning in school. In middle school, I remember

¹ Emily Style, “Curriculum as Window and Mirror.” *The S.E.E.D. Project on Inclusive Curriculum*. Retrieved October 28, 2008, from <http://www.wcwonline.org/Projects-Extra-Information/seed-curriculum-as-window-a-mirror>

² John Ogbu, “Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning,” *Educational Researcher* 21 (1992): 5-14.

looking forward to social studies in hopes that I would get a glimpse of something Indian or Jewish in the curriculum. Then, I would finally get a chance to share my connection and expertise with the class. That seldom happened. By excluding my culture from the curriculum, I learned another curriculum, defined by Eisner as the null curriculum.³ This null curriculum taught me about the cultures, which are valued, and those cultures, my cultures, which are not.

When I Was in College

When I enrolled in my first education course, I learned about “multicultural education,” where research supported the educational validation, exploration and inclusion of students’ cultures into the curriculum.⁴ I began to wonder why my teachers hadn’t been practicing that philosophy in my schools? I felt so let down by my education. I began to realize why my culture was never a part of the curriculum and that it was not my fault that I felt so disconnected and out of place in my classrooms. It was their fault: the teachers, the educators, the curriculum directors, the librarians, and all those other educators. They had neglected to follow best practice. They had neglected to include my culture in what they teach, so that I too could make the connections that my Caucasian Christian peers could make. They neglected to include me in my education.

Four years later, when I became a teacher, I vowed to never do to my minority students what my teachers did to me. I would not exclude their identities from their curriculum. I would follow the great leaders in multicultural education, such as James Banks, Christina Sleeter, Sonia Nieto, and Geneva Gay. Based on the research of Brown and Banks, I vowed to recognize and learn about my students’ cultures and to actively find ways to embed their cultures into our curriculum; ways to make those students feel connected to the learning; ways that were proven to help them

³ Elliot W. Eisner, *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs* (New York: Macmillan, 1985).

⁴ Joseph A. Banks, "The Canon Debate, Knowledge Construction, and Multicultural Education," *Educational Researcher*, 22 (1993): 4-14.

succeed in school.⁵ I vowed to learn about the students in order to build the curriculum from the students up. No, I would not neglect the curriculum, but more importantly, I would not neglect the children.

My First Day as a Teacher

In elementary school, the theme can be everything when setting up your classroom. When I got my first job, I was so excited about decorating my classroom. I left the teacher store with a whole fascinating set of multicultural posters, bulletin-board borders, and other pictures that would complete my theme: a multicultural theme and a theme where every student is included. After all, students connect to their classrooms and learn more effectively when they see their identities represented in their classroom resources.⁶

Every school year starts with a meet and greet, where students and parents enter the classroom to drop off school supplies and meet their teacher for the first time. Bright red, yellow, orange and blue colors woven into African patterns decorated the bulletin boards. Posters teaching about tolerance, inclusion, and respect dotted the walls. Borders that illustrated historic and natural wonders of the world skirted the chalkboards. Pictures of students from every color of the racial rainbow were draped around the room. On the door, hung a poster that said “hello” in 30 different languages, and in the classroom library another that said, “I love reading” in 10 additional languages. Artifacts from around the world were displayed on the shelves and a large sign, which was taped over the door, read “To a World of Adventures in Our Classroom.”

As the families poured in through the door, I “metted and greeted” them all. My dress was pressed, my students were adorable, and their parents were courteous. Children and parents dotted

⁵ Monica Brown, “Educating all Students: Creating Culturally Responsive, Teachers, Classrooms, and Schools,” *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 43 (2007): 57-62.

⁶ Christine Sleeter, “Un-standardizing the Curriculum: Multicultural Teaching in a Standards Based Curriculum,” in *Multicultural Education Series*, ed. J. Banks (New York: Teacher College Press, 2005).

around the room exploring the nooks and crannies, the pictures, books and artifacts. As the families left, with their children's supplies tucked away into their desks, I breathed a sigh of relief. I made it through my first unofficial day as being a teacher.

I felt a sense of pride. I had created a beautiful, integrated, cultural room for my first class of students. As I was sitting there soaking up the accomplishment of the first day, I began to ponder questions: What will my class be like? Will I be a good teacher? Will I be accepted here as a teacher? Will I be respected as a teacher? Will my team accept me? How did the families perceive me?

"Ms. M, can you please come down to my office?" the public announcement blared into my classroom, disrupting the flow of questions emptying from my consciousness. As I rose to go down to the principal's office, new feelings began to rush into my mind.

It is the first day of school, why is the principal calling me to her office? My questioning quickly turned from foreshadowing the future to analyzing the past hours' events searching for any signs of a mistake. Am I in trouble? What does she have to say to me? Did I already mess up? Did I already disappoint someone? A first year teacher's mind is already filled with so much insecurity, so many questions, so much to learn, so much to experience. Each and every experience is so fragile, it makes and breaks the type of teacher that you are and will become.

My feet floated across the hall, down the stairs and into the office. I sat down into the chair facing my principal, held my breath and turned to face her. "A parent called to complain about you today," she began. My head began to whirl, my sight blurred and I felt a shortness of breath. "The parent said that your room was too multicultural, and that her fear is that you will be too focused on multiculturalism and that you will not teach the appropriate curriculum." She stopped and turned to me waiting for it to soak in or waiting for some kind of response. I was frozen.

It was my first day of school as a teacher, and I had already upset parents. How would I progress through the rest of the year? How will I face the parents again? I didn't even know which

parent made the complaint. I came into teaching believing that I was going to make a difference. I came into teaching believing that my multicultural approach would be welcomed, would be accepted and even appreciated. But that didn't happen. If my room décor upset the parents now, then how would parents receive my inclusive curriculum decisions? Will I still be able to connect with the student's cultural backgrounds?

I apologized to my principal for unknowingly offending a parent, assured her that I would teach the curriculum with integrity, and quickly excused my-self. As I floated out of the room, up the stairs, and back down the hall to my safety nest, I had to make some real decisions about the type of teacher that I wanted to be. I was upset. I was sad. I was discouraged. I was confused.

Reflecting on the Past: To Create a Brighter Future

Being a teacher is a political job.⁷ Being a teacher is also a passionate job.⁸ When a teacher feels passionate about a topic, that passion carries over into their curriculum. When teachers feel passionate about pedagogy, which is best practice, then students will benefit. Culturally responsive teaching is best practice and boy did I feel passionate about it. So the question came down to, will I abandon my quest to make cultural connections to my students or will I continue on my quest? Yes, I had hit a road bump on my first day on the job, and it did feel painful. Looking back now, I realize that I came to a point on my first day, where I had to make a real decision about the type of teacher that I would become. Thankfully, I decided that I would move forward with my passion and continue with the quest. The students' cultures would creep back into the curriculum that I promised to teach. I promised myself to not let speed bumps divert me from my passion to connect to students.

⁷ Michael W. Apple, *Official knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁸ Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

For the last five years, I have surveyed my students' cultures. I have taken the time to get to know their backgrounds, religions, ethnicities, languages and interests. The students in my classes have had chances to connect to the main character in the read aloud books. I have encouraged students to read books that resemble their backgrounds and validate their identities in positive ways. We have discussed students' experiences, languages, religions, families, and profiles in our classroom in ongoing dialogue that included their lives into our learning.

Many parents have thanked me for the work that I have done in my classes over the years. Students of varied backgrounds have clung to me as a role model and an advocate for their culture. Diverse parents have sought me out to advocate for their needs and to request help in developing a voice or confronting a dominant order. My new principal and other colleagues view me as a resource when cultural issues arise.

I cannot say that it has been a perfect quest for cultural curricular equity. Students have been connected to the classroom, but at times there have been bumps and detours in the road. At times, parents have pushed back because they thought that discussing culture in the classroom was singling out their culture. Other times, parents have objected to multicultural education because they thought that I was pushing my culture or other cultures onto their students. Some parents have even assumed that talking about race makes you a racist, and that exploring other cultures in your classroom means that you are advocating for a single culture or excluding another.

However, it is from these experiences, that my belief in the need for a culturally responsive education is confirmed and reconfirmed. Students must learn a curriculum that validates their identity in order to make connections, and actually learn the material.⁹ Because minority students are disconnected from the educational process and covertly discriminated against in curriculum and even sometimes during instruction, I have come to adopt a culture in my classroom that teaches

⁹ Sonia Nieto, *Affirming diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education* (White Plains: Longman, 1996).

students how to confront the dominant order.¹⁰ Currently, in my classroom, students regularly discuss the economic inequalities in the world, the misrepresentation of minority cultures in history books, the hardships immigrants face, and the inequities of races throughout history. Our classroom is a place where students learn about cultures in the context of the expected curriculum. Students learn district goals, side by side, with social justice and global goals.

Being an advocate for cultural education, I have heard many different opinions from various stakeholders in education. Some of those opinions have been positive and others negative. As a more seasoned teacher, I now know, “that’s okay.” I now understand people having varying opinions and feelings about cultural education. As an EdD student, who has done extensive research in the area of multicultural education, I know the benefits of including students’ cultures in curricular decisions and classroom environments.¹¹ I will continue on the quest for cultural connections in the classroom for the rest of my career as a teacher. I will turn away from the detours. I will hop over the bumps in the road. I will run down the roadblocks. Whatever I must do, I will continue on this quest.

Rachael Batchu Mahmood is a 4th grade elementary school teacher in a suburb of Chicago. She trains teachers in her school district in how to meet the needs of the diverse student population and presents at local colleges in multicultural education. She is the vice-chairman of her district equity council and a doctoral candidate at Northern Illinois University.

¹⁰ Mark A. Windshittl and Pamela Bolotin Joseph, “Confronting the Dominant Order,” in *Cultures of Curriculum*, ed. Pamela Bolotin Joseph, et al. (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 137-160.

¹¹ Banks, “*The Canon Debate*,” 4-14. Brown, “*Educating all Students*,” 57-62. Ogbu, “*Understanding Cultural Diversity and Learning*,” 5-14. Sleeter, “*Un-standardizing the Curriculum*.” Style, “*Curriculum as Window and Mirror*.”

Sixty Seconds at a Stoplight: A Reflection on Civic Failure

By: Sarah Miltz-Frielink

On my way to work one humid afternoon in June, I spotted a man who was physically disabled and maimed. He could barely walk upright as his apparent cerebral palsy limited his gait and caused spasms in his limbs. One hand was missing fingers. His head was shaved and immediately I recognized a shunt to release fluid on his brain and from the looks of it, I guessed he needed a new one. He held up a sign that read: sick, homeless, in need of medicine. Having a background in special education (nearly 20 years) working with adults and children with disabilities has helped me understand my privilege of being an able-bodied citizen. The environments I worked in generally shared the same aim for individuals with physical disabilities—to improve their quality of life. In this case, however, the man I saw from afar had little to no quality of life.¹

Mentally, I began trouble shooting the services this homeless man needed and why he didn't appear to be receiving any. To see a human being of such great need, struggling to walk to my passenger window as I waited on a red light, really moved me. I wanted to do something, but I couldn't wrap my mind around the logistics of it all. So I rolled down my window.

The man drew closer. "Help... me," he begged. His speech rate was slow probably due to the untreated encephalitis. "I have cerebral palsy and encephalitis," he confirmed in a sincere tone. His eyes were desperate, kind, and through them radiated a genuine authenticity. "God bless you angel. Anything you can give would be greatly appreciated," he said. There was a purity I sensed in his presence. One I have rarely encountered.

¹ I believe this man was homeless and suffering due to the existence of ableism in our society—a discrimination against individuals who have disabilities or different abilities.

I paused for a moment. I thought I might be encountering Jesus Christ. Suddenly, I understood what Mother Teresa meant when she said she saw Christ in the poorest of the poor.² I fumbled through my purse anxiously knowing in the back of my head that I never carry cash, but I try anyway. Nothing. (I use debit/visa wherever I go.)

"I am so sorry," I mumbled. "I never carry cash."

"Angel, God bless you. The doctor said I have 16 months to live; I am out of my medicine, do you have any change? The man's body writhed in spasms that only those with cerebral palsy experience. He had no shirt; his body was grossly malnourished. "Please, please help me."

My fingers clumsily combed through my cup holder where I keep coins in the car: six quarters, some dimes, nickels. I snatch them all up and gingerly placed them in the man's hand, which is trembling.

I shudder. "I am so sorry. I am so sorry." if only I could say something more compassionate, promise to come back after work with cash, help him find services, but my heart hasn't caught up with my mind yet. The logistics of my wallet and the anger I have toward myself for not carrying cash in a time of great need is all I can process.

And the man's response magnifies my self-imposed indignation. As great as his needs are his gratitude seems to surpass all of them. The minute seems like an eternity, and during it, he thanks me till the end of the earth, blessing me, calling me angel again and again. As if the \$2 in change I gave him will make a difference in his current condition, but that is not why he thanks me.

He is coming from a divine space: and what philosophers call the good, what religions call a higher power. "I am sorry." I repeat numbly. I am filled with self-loathing as my limitations consume me. The disparity of the man's needs and amount of change I gave him paralyzes me. If only I had a \$100 bill, a \$500 bill, or more. I desperately wanted to show the man I care because I

² Teresa and José Luis González-Balad, *Mother Teresa: In my own Words* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1997).

only have a minute to do so. But words seem too difficult to find. My throat swells with disdain. Sorry is all I can muster. My sunglasses hide the tears, which I leave on hiding the only hint of compassion. I am devastated, a dying man needs my help, and \$2 in change coupled with a muffled sorry is all I can do.

His gratitude continues so selflessly, illuminates all that I think I know about the human condition. Each labored word coming from this man's parched mouth is a gift, and still I have nothing, nothing for this man in return. He tremors with kindness and beauty—the beauty of a great soul. And I hide what's going on inside. If only he knew: my heart, my intentions, if only I could find better words, but I don't. And he doesn't know these things. Instead, the light turns green; I drive away as deep sobs pulse through my body.

Ironically, I am driving to teach a class in higher education which happens to cover social justice in schools and society. I challenge teachers to question hegemonic policies which oppress people in schools and society. I challenge them to engage in critical self-reflection, so they can become agents for social change. I invoke the eloquent words of Martin Luther King Jr., one of my intellectual allies, and ask my students his question, “What are you doing for others?”³

And this is the class I am going to teach in Chicago; in the face what feels like the worst social injustice of the hour, the horror of my hypocrisy consumes me. The tears continue, and I ruminate about my lack of social action. I fail; I fail to do right by this man—this is a civic kind of failure. Civic failure is when a trembling hand in need is dismissed with ambivalence or apathy. When a friend's partner dies and all her best friend can do is summon a perfunctory platitude. “Let me know if there is anything I can do,” while full knowing that it is a gesture with no intention of producing action. Civic failure is when a veteran loses his home and his neighbors can barely muster

³ Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King, *The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1987), 17.

an apology while they watch him pack up and move to a homeless shelter. Civic failure is really a disconnect between the heart and the mind because fear seems to overwhelm all that we as humans can do in that moment.

In the fleeting moments I had to show compassion, to do more than hand over leftover change, I let fear consume me. The philosophical question arises, “What should social action look like?” I know beyond a doubt that that change I gave this man was not a social action.

In one breath I curse myself for not showing genuine concern, in the next I pray for a miracle for this man's predicament. I pray for medical care, the needed pharmaceuticals, and monetary resources to find this man immediately.

I think about my life and all the contradictions of the human condition. The classes I teach; the theory I fail to put into practice. The times when the smiles and encouragement I give my own children seem to dwindle when my patience runs out; when I am afraid for my son who has Asperger's syndrome and asthma. The times when he wheezes and I freeze for a moment worrying about his next breath.

Fumbling around for his inhaler the same way I fumbled around for change in the car. Fortunately, my son's daily asthma medicine keeps his medical condition under control most of the time. However, there are all the times I failed my son because I was afraid and all I could do was yell, "Where is your inhaler?" These are the things I wrestle with as I reflect and examine the contradictions.

So I go back to the intersection after class and a trip to an ATM, hoping to find the dying man who needed so much more than I was willing to give in that moment. I hope to make it right. I drive around for an hour, but I cannot find him. Or maybe I just give up after an hour consoling myself with this notion that I will return tomorrow—hoping someone else was generous and that the man is now safe and cared for by some compassionate human beings.

But the reality makes me shudder at the thought of the man's whereabouts. I wonder where he sleeps, what he eats when he eats, what he will do tomorrow, and for the rest of his days. I think about the fragility of life and the limits of the human condition. What we say; what we don't say; what we give; what we hold onto too tightly; the times when we fail those we love; the times when we betray; how we live; and how we die. I am filled with moral outrage as I ponder the limitations.

Yet, I take solace in knowing that something of value is coming from this experience. As I continue to reflect, I am reminded of something Theodor Adorno wrote about educating for social justice. He posits: “The only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection.”⁴ So in a small way, my reflection on civic failure has a purpose—one that compels me to take action, to let go of fear, one that also reminds me to be vulnerable in my classroom and critically reflect about this incident with my students.

In my mind’s eye, I comfort myself. I visualize the man smiling and receiving the medical care he needs in a good hospital. I see him surrounded by people who are generous, compassionate and unwilling to let him die alone.

I also see myself in a Zen-like state filled with limitless patience for my son, free of worry over his health. This is all I can do to fight the apathy, the disdain, and the moral outrage regarding how far we as human beings are willing to go for another, how many uncomfortable conversations we are willing to have, how many times we admit our fear and surrender to the good—for others and for ourselves.

And then, there is the fact that there will be a next time—another individual in need of a kind heart and generous hand. So I stick a \$100 bill and some bus passes in my purse, hoping, waiting for the universe to give me a second chance to do right by a human being.

⁴ Theodor Adorno, “Education After Auschwitz,” in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 193.

Sarah Miltz-Frielink is an adjunct instructor who teaches research and foundations of education classes at Concordia University Chicago. The focus of her teaching and research include critical theory, classical philosophy, American Pragmatism, and multiculturalism. Her academic writing has appeared in *Thresholds in Education* and *Critical Questions in Education*. She is a doctoral candidate at Northern Illinois University. Currently, Mrs. Miltz-Frielink, her partner, Adam, and three kids—Gabriel, Grace and Hannah—are a foster family for Northern Illinois Pug Rescue & Adoption. They also do volunteer respite care for children with different abilities.

BIAKE

By: Molly Olson

I twisted my body so that the showerhead would angle the water just right. The trick was getting it to only spray on the back of my head, because if it dripped down my face there would be trouble. When I made the mistake of dipping my head forward, the water dripped down my body like acid, and of course, found the wounds. I bit my wrist to muffle my scream, tears streaming down my face. When I tried to lower my head so I wouldn't pass out, I bashed it on the shower handle. Fuck.

Handsome. Is. Painful.

When we pulled up to the circular drive we kissed goodnight and I wished them^{*1} a safe travel home. As I closed the car door I smiled and sauntered back to my room on some magnificent high that couldn't be caused by narcotics. After I climbed the four flights of stairs, occasionally skipping steps, I took off my sweatshirt as I opened the door quietly. I threw my guitar on the ground and immediately started tugging off my black t-shirt. I stood in front of the mirror shirtless. I looked down—nothing except a patch of zebra print duct tape across my chest. Most of it was still in place. I knew no matter where I started it wouldn't be good, so I reached for a patch on my left breast.

To my horror, no matter how slowly I went, most of the skin I had on my breast was slowly and painfully being removed. I felt faint. The world was spinning, and there was absolutely no way

¹ Any use of “they/them/their” pronouns with an asterisk signifies use of a typically plural pronoun in a singular context, to refer to a person who identifies as genderqueer.

out. There was no way out of this. I looked at the results of my homemade dysphoria cure, and clenched my jaw.

I stood in front of the mirror in my socks and briefs, sobbing, staring at my stupidity; my silver-dollar-sized welts in the shape of self-pity. I climbed into bed and decided to take a shower in the morning.

.....

.....

I stepped on a crack on the sidewalk.

It was dark outside.

Windy.

I was alone.

I could hear their voices whispering loudly behind me.

“What is a tranny?” she whispered.

“So like, would that be one?” he asked.

I clenched my jaw.

My feet were lead anchors.

I stopped and turned around.

.....

.....

I adjusted my tie. I wore a blue and white button down and a leather jacket. I had shown up in that town I always go to. As Dylan performed their* poetry, Tim nudged me and commented on Dylan’s chest. They* had it naturally. They* didn’t even have to try. I felt sick with nausea. I wish I

could wrap all the parts I didn't like about myself in an ace bandage to make them disappear, including my jealousy.

Because, Tim didn't see that I had six feet of stretchy elastic wrapped around me so tight that I almost hyperventilated over each sentence.

He didn't see me sitting awkwardly in the car, as to not put too much pressure on my ribcage, because that was a major problem. Everyone told me.

He didn't see all the Band-Aids, and that the bandage was sticking to my wounds and bruises.

He didn't see the light leave my face and the air leave my lungs.

After we left I felt my lunch in my stomach, a side effect of the trauma I put myself through. I ran into the cold and unwrapped in the middle of the parking lot. The embarrassment was unbearable. Tim was nice. We sat in silence until we got to Steak 'N Shake.

I threw up in the bathroom. When I was finished, I sat and chatted with Tim and his boyfriend about the music on the radio.

I didn't like the taste in my mouth.

.....
.....

"Have you ever had your hair cut short before?" she asked.

"This is the shortest it has ever been." I replied dully.

"So this is going to be quite the change then?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes." I replied dully.

I looked down and cracked a smile. Hayfield strands fell to the floor.

Finally.

.....

.....

“Good golly miss Molly!”

Kindly fuck off.

.....

.....

I went to the first stall, as I always do. It’s kind of a routine of mine, but this was a different bathroom, one I had never been in before: one in a locked all girls dorm. The stall walls were green. They matched my flannel shirt. After, I finished I zipped my pants up and tightened my belt. I always take time to check my clothing out, while I am still in the stall. My flannel covered a navy blue t-shirt, and I had worn my loosest pair of dark wash jeans. Decent enough.

After I had finished my routine, I walked to the sinks. I chose the first one, naturally. There was a girl washing something, or holding something, I can’t remember. She was four sinks down. She gave me an odd look, but I ignored her. This was the art dorm after all. I went back to scrubbing my hands, and another girl walked to the sinks, she chose one in between me and the odd girl. Instead of washing her hands, she chose to stare. I was a mythological creature with horns sticking out of my head. How dare I invade her dorm bathroom? Stare.

I turned my head down, watching her through my peripheral vision. She locked gazes with the other girl in the bathroom and quickly tilted her head in my direction to get her friend to look at me. Stare. Stare. Stare. I wondered; am I a nymph or a sphinx? Stare. She finally got her friend to look at me by means of excessive head nodding and making sounds like, “Um!” It was then that I

realized what their issue was. I dried my hands on my pant legs, walked out of the bathroom, and instantly started laughing.

I guess I should have used the men's room.

.....

.....

I sat awkwardly on the cheap office chair. Shoulders forward. Arms folded across my chest. Breathing constricted. Ribs hurting. Legs more than shoulder width apart. My mother's persistent nagging throughout the years rang in my ears, "Sit like a lady!" My palms were sweating. I wiped them on my pant legs. So painfully awkward. Without looking, I pulled my loose t-shirt away from myself: away from my boobs, my chest, my pecs. Days like this made my skin itch. Deep breaths, clear your head. Breathe, Molly. That name sounded so foreign in my mouth. I swallowed and looked up.

He looked at me and spat, "So?" I hesitated. Why did confrontation suddenly make me feel like I was standing on a battlefield naked? I had been carefully formulating my answer in my head even before he asked. I practiced it in the mirror so it would sound like it had just rolled off my tongue.

I stuttered, "You... you could just tell them, tell them I'm a boy..." as I sat up, shoulders still slumped. I expected him to take it like a joke, to pat me on the shoulder like the father of a child that had just suggested going swimming outside in January. That would have been easier to stomach than his real reaction:

"Molly, you will always be a girl in my eyes, unless you get surgery, but even then you would probably still be a girl to me."

My stomach fell to the floor. Sometimes, when people say things like this, I feel like I am in an airtight box, laying in the fetal position. The person who made the comment is laughing hysterically and squeezing the sides in on me.

I knew he wouldn't understand.

.....
.....

Frat parties can be a dangerous place for people like me.

“Whose your friend?” he asked Connor, while looking at me.

Connor asked, “Who?”

“The blonde dude.” He replied as he pointed.

Connor looked at me. He responded, "Oh...Um... I'll tell you later..."

Frat parties can be a safe place for me.

We walked away.

Molly Olson is a freshman at Northern Illinois University who is majoring in visual communications.

Filmmaking for Social Justice: “The Hammer” Unites Deaf and Hearing Community

By: Sarah Miltz-Frielink with Eben Kostbar

When I first met Eben Kostbar in 2005, he was a struggling actor working on an independent TV pilot, *Wrigleyville* in Chicago. He was a joy to be around; he always exuded positive energy. He was encouraging, open, and accepting to everyone he encountered on the set. While Eben had dreams of writing scripts, making films, and pursuing a career as a producer, I don’t think he quite envisioned the impact his motivational drive would have on society. During his early career, Eben wrote, directed, and produced a short film, *Karma Café*, which won 10 awards while touring film festivals. He also appeared in films such as *Shackles*, and *Dog Lovers Symphony*. However, his greatest contribution to filmmaking came about when Kostbar turned his attention to UFC fighter Matt Hamill. Kostbar and his writing partner Joseph McKelheer started writing a script about Hamill’s coming age and career as a deaf athlete in 2006. Originally titled “Hamill,” the story caught national attention in film festivals, and catapulted into the first non-foreign, open-captioned film to unite both the deaf and hearing community in theatres. As luck would have it, I had an opportunity to catch up with Eben over the phone when he was traveling during the film promotion. Here are the highlights from our conversation.

SF: *Can you speak to the evolution of being a struggling independent filmmaker and actor to being a screenwriter and producer for a film that made it to the silver screen?*

EK: This film *The Hammer*, originally titled Hamill, has been a six- year journey from the conception of the idea to writing it, to actually the fundraising part, and filmmaking: production and post-

production. It has been a long process, especially because I co-wrote it too with my writing partner Joseph McKelheer. We went through maybe 75 rewrites. I wanted to be 100% happy with the final product. I didn't want to put something out there that I wouldn't respect later on; so I'm feel very grateful that the film is getting out to the public. I just hope that people will continue to enjoy it, and people will watch it, and that it grows from there.

SF: What kept you going during the arduous revisions and all the barriers you had to overcome to get to where you are now? Do you have any advice for aspiring screenwriters and filmmakers?

EK: I think the most important thing is to make a film, write a film, or act in a film that you are passionate about; obviously there is a lot of stuff out there—especially if you are writing. If you are not into the subject matter, it will not turn out well. For example, I love sports drama films. That's my preferred genre. I grew up playing sports. I fell in love with [Matt's] story. That really got me through the revisions. I think the most important thing is really believing in the story and being passionate about getting it out there. That will help you through the tough times of writing something and tearing it up. Rewriting it again, and tearing it up. At the end of the day when the film is finally out there, you sell the film, or whatever your end goal is, you will be really proud of it.

SF: This is really inspiring, especially since you are reaching both the deaf and hearing audience. Having a background in special education, I have worked with students who are hearing impaired. I have a lot of love, respect, and passion for building awareness about individuals with different abilities, and the gifts that they have to share with the world. What drew you to Matt Hamill, and his talents as a fighter?

EK: Matt is an incredible athlete, who just happens to be deaf. I thought wow, there’s this guy out here who has achieved incredible things in his life. First deaf person to ever win a college national championship in wrestling three times in a row. Then he ends up going in the UFC, which is arguably the most challenging sport out there, and excels in that too. I thought this is pretty incredible to see anybody do something like that, let alone someone who is deaf. He never wanted you to use the fact that he is deaf as a roadblock, and it is just part of him, and he keeps moving forward.

SF: *How did you first conceive of the idea to make his life into a movie?*

EK: I saw Matt on an ultimate fighter reality show, which was about fighting. I was inspired by his story. I spoke to my writing partner Joseph McKelheer. We were working on another film, and I wasn’t really into it. Instantly I knew, kind of like love at first sight, that this is something that I wanted to do. I convinced my partner who didn’t know anything about wrestling or the UFC. At first, he was reluctant to work on the idea, and then I explained it was so much more than just sports film. This can be the Rocky or Rudy for MMA (mixed martial arts).

SF: *What was your first meeting with Matt Hamill like?*

EK: We met Matt at the school for the deaf in California. It was my first experience being surrounded by a lot of deaf people. I have to admit I was really uneducated and ignorant about the deaf community. That weekend opened my eyes to such a wonderful community. Then Joseph and I had a wow moment. Matt’s story is incredible, but what’s probably more incredible is the people

who haven't been portrayed on the silver screen. We thought if we could just add that as a subplot of the film, I think it would be something not only for deaf people out there, but also for the hearing people. Also to help the hearing public become more educated about the deaf community and to really open up opportunities for deaf people. They are often labeled as handicapped or disabled, which are totally off-base labels. Deaf people are just like anybody. They can achieve anything; they just use a different language—American Sign Language. There are all these nuances about their culture. I think a lot of people are going to enjoy that aspect of our film.

SF: Absolutely! The thing about educating for awareness is that being deaf does not mean you have disability; it is like having different abilities. As you said earlier, it is using a different language. My first experience with the deaf community was in college when I was involved with habitat for humanity. They taught me the beautiful language of ASL, and we built houses together. When you first showed me the script about five years ago, I was so honored to know that you and Joe were in the process of building awareness about the deaf community. So I just want to thank you for that. Is there anything you want to add about what you both did?

EK: Joe and I are just a part of all the wonderful people who made the film. We definitely do not want to take all the credit solely for the film. Obviously, it's entertainment and there is a business aspect of it, but I think we really see this film as a mission to do something bigger, like you said educating the public about deaf issues and their culture. And that is opening opportunities for more deaf actors and crew members, and creating more opportunities for deaf people in general. We heard that we are the first open-captioned mainstream film that is not a foreign language film. That way deaf people and hearing people can go to the theatre together and enjoy a film together. It's not

just the deaf community, but also the hard-of-hearing community that needs the open captioning. We are trying to get films and online content to be open-captioned, so deaf people and hard-of-hearing people can watch them. It’s really a shame that it is almost 2012, and there is not equal access for everybody. Movies are such an enjoyable entertaining experience, but they are also a great educational tool. Unfortunately deaf people can’t enjoy films right now—unless they are at a specific time and day when they will show an open-captioned film. Hopefully, our film will make a change in that specific regard as well.

SF: So your film serves as an agent for social change and social justice for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. You are also opening up a whole avenue for individuals with speech and language issues—such as auditory processing difficulties. So individuals who need to see captions to process the auditory information can now enjoy the film as well.

EK: I totally agree. The Cleveland Speech and Hearing Center said they think our film is kind of a teaching tool and an example to help that whole group of people as well. In addition, all the roles in *The Hammer* are being played by deaf actors. Deaf actors are playing hearing roles. We thought, why can’t a deaf person play a hearing role? Some deaf people were raised ‘oral’ and can talk; let’s open up the floodgates and think outside the box; let’s make this something bigger.

SF: I especially enjoyed the acting in the film: Russell Harvard and Shoshannah Stern were magnificent. I hope other filmmakers follow in your footsteps. Thank you so much for taking time to do an article with Social Justice Today. We are honored to highlight the work of change agents like you.

EK: I appreciate your time and thank you for supporting filmmakers who are trying to make movies that inspire, entertain, and ‘hopefully’ make a difference in people’s lives.

The Hammer, which hit theatres in October, is now available on DVD or VOD via Blockbuster, Netflix, DirecTV, Comcast, BestBuy, Amazon, and other retail outlets. More information can be found on www.TheHammerFilm.com

Educating in and for Social Justice and Democracy: Conversations with Bill Ayers Series

By: Sarah Miltz-Frielink with Bill Ayers

SF: In your book Teaching Toward Freedom (2004), you discuss how schooling involves ushering the young into some social order or other, into an entire universe. You ask powerful questions about how we as educators warrant, defend or justify the world as it is. For example: What is it that we want to oppose or resist? What alternatives are possible? In light of these and related questions, I was wondering how teachers might attempt to transcend the limitations of their school culture, which, is all too often marked by racism, homophobia, classism and increasingly—by the omission of a humanities curriculum. In your opinion, how can teachers act on their commitment to social justice given these “limit-situations”? And what advice would you give aspiring teachers in this regard—those who are fortunate enough to find a teaching position?

BA: A lot of people are inclined to think of “social justice in education” as something separate and apart—for some, a precious extension of good schooling, for others a distraction at best, and perhaps even a stalking horse for a radical political agenda, but in either case, an add-on to the curriculum, and an extra piece of work beyond the ordinary functioning of a school. But when I speak of social justice in schools I want to note at the outset that social justice is foundational to democracy, and that “teaching for social justice” is simply another way of saying “teaching in and for democracy.”

All societies engage in an educational enterprise, most create an educational system, and every society—for better and for worse—indoctrinates or socializes the young into an existing social order. Schools are both window and mirror: in an agrarian society the young are taught animal husbandry and agriculture; in a theocracy, piety; in a kingdom, fealty; and in any kind of authoritarian regime, whether fascist Germany or statist Albania or apartheid South Africa or medieval Saudi Arabia, the young are taught fundamental lessons in obedience and conformity—

obedience to the social order, submission to the regime, compliance and conformity to the demands of power.

What I've thought and worried and wondered about is this: in a democracy there must be something that sets schools off, something distinct that goes beyond, being well-behaved and on time, staying away from drugs and alcohol, learning the subject matters and passing the tests. What is the distinct quality that characterizes learning and growing in a robust democracy as opposed, say, to an authoritarian society, what is the ideal, even if we posit democracy as flawed or partial, unfinished or merely aspirational? My answer is that education in and for democracy is education that honors a precious but fragile ideal: every human being is of immense and incalculable value. We recognize then that the full development of each is the condition for the fullest development of all, and, conversely, the fullest development of all of us is the condition for the full development of each.

If you take that ideal to heart—every human being is of incalculable value, each, the one and only who will ever trod the earth—then a first requirement is to challenge the vast amount of time and resources squandered on trying to quantify our differences. When I say equal, I don't mean that we are all the same exactly; in fact, I mean something quite different. The Founding Fathers of this country, certainly the Enlightenment intellectuals and political actors of that time, didn't believe that human beings were all the same, and yet they advocated for equality. They recognized an interesting paradox which is that we are all the same in the sense that we are all human, but we are all the same in such a way that we're each entirely distinct—that we are in fact both a part of the whole, and simultaneously separate and discrete beings. That's a really interesting and profound contradiction to try to swim through and live in.

Healthcare offers an interesting example, in a couple of directions. First, we can see in a classroom that each child's health is a matter of specific concern, and yet when the flu sweeps through it calls for a collective response. Second, the current healthcare debates illustrate the power of framing an issue toward a predictable response. If I asked everybody here, "Don't you feel a personal responsibility for the health of you and your family members?" they would all likely say "Yes, of course" But if I said five minutes later, "Someone was just hit by a car on the street, should we help her?" Most of us would rush to help. Why is that? Because in one framing, we're saying healthcare is an individual challenge, while in the other we're saying we are each a part of a larger community, and if one of us is hurt, we are all hurt; so let's go help.

Teaching for social justice embraces an underlying principle that should not be seen as an add-on, should not be seen as precious, should not be seen as something beyond the capacity of ordinary people to understand or enact. Teaching for social justice is enhanced with the recognition of a contradiction: personal responsibility and social accountability. We are the same and we are each distinct. Democracy lives within that tension.

In teaching, teachers begin at the heart of the matter; ask people, why are you becoming a teacher? What do you hope to accomplish? Very few people will tell you, "Well since the age of 8, I've had this classroom management scheme I've just been wanting to implement." Nobody says that. Nobody says "I want to become a teacher so I can discipline the little bastards." Nobody says, "I've been just dying to grow up so I can sort people into winners and losers." Nobody says, "I thought teaching was an easy way to get rich."

What people say instead is “I felt that I could help people” or “I felt that I was good with kids” or “I felt that I could change the world one person at a time.” Tapping into that basic impulse toward humanism and democracy, toward mutual recognition and ethical action is critical. Without much fanfare, teaching for social justice is front and center.

It’s also why teachers should read things like *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* because what you see so clearly in a book like that is the perspective of this kid, not you looking at this kid, but this kid looking at you. That kind of fundamental shift is something that all teachers have to experience. They have to understand that the drama in the classroom is not about them on the stage performing; the drama is the other 30 people in the room who are interpreting and making sense of everything that’s going on.

So the questions—Why are you becoming a teacher? What is it you hope to accomplish? Who do you see yourself being? What is teaching a metaphor for in your life?—opens up this world of wanting to connect to these very fundamental principles.

SF: *I am very interested in these last questions you pose, could you elaborate a bit on the issue of how teachers might think more deeply or democratically about their vocational identity as teachers?*

BA: So we have to overcome a lot in the culture in order for people to be able to enact these ideals. But the first step is the recognition that it matters. And the reason the book *Teaching toward Freedom* is framed around *moral commitments* is precisely because that’s a solid way for teachers to self-consciously go into classrooms and schools with a set of principles that they are going to try to live up to. They may never fully live up to them, but they set out with standards they will reach for. The first moral commitment in my thinking is: I am committed to, recognizing the full humanity of

everyone who comes before me—whether that kid is in a wheelchair, whether that kid has Asperger’s, whether that kid misbehaves or acts like an angel—my commitment is to the humanity of that kid. My task and my challenge is to see every human being as a three-dimensional creature, much like myself, and to decide here and now that I will never objectify or harm people, and then I go into classrooms and I fail every day; I fail to fully live up to that principle.

So you’ve put up your mirror, “Commitment #1: I will treat all my students as three-dimensional beings with hearts and minds and spirits that have to be engaged.” And then you go into school and immediately violate that principle. You could do one of two things when that happens: you could say that was just idealistic nonsense that I believed when I was a kid, let me forget about that and become a cynic; or you could say the whole point about having principles is that they are difficult to live up to, that it’s not normal life, that it’s a struggle. So to me that’s the reason to think through and name core values and basic principles—they’re hard to do.

I wouldn’t dictate to everybody what the values and commitments ought to be, but certainly living in an aspirational, flawed, in some cases failed democracy, I hope that teachers in particular embrace as one principle this notion of the full recognition of the humanity of every person.

That brings me to another point. The whole notion of social justice when it’s reduced to equity and access is too small. I want social justice to include the profound recognition of the full humanity of every human being, and that means that it’s not just a matter of letting a kid have access. It means seeing her as a valuable person, unfinished and in-motion, moving, growing, dynamic and idiosyncratic. Every morning I get irritated listening to NPR hearing that the program is “brought to you by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which believes that every child should have a chance

to live a decent and healthy life.” A chance! And a diminishing one at that. I want to shout my response into radio land: Every human being has a right to a decent and healthful and productive life—every human being. That doesn’t mean that we reduce that notion of what it means to be successful to college graduation or being the CEO of General Motors. Your father lived a life that was fulfilling for him in many ways, and the fact that he did the work that he did, that work has to be done. We could dignify that work, rather than say in effect to the kids that we work with on the West Side of Chicago, if you don’t go to college you are a failure¹.

I was telling you earlier about my friend who spent 22 years in prison and is now a social worker and a social work professor. She started a project called the *College Bound Project*, and it was big-hearted and well-meaning and the participants were wonderful. They took a group of children of incarcerated parents, and they worked with them after school and on the weekends to get them oriented and prepared to go to college. In the course of several years, only one kid actually went to college. So why call it the college bound project? Is that the only way one can be a success? And what about these kids’ parents, they didn’t go to college, are they failures, are they idiots? I know college in our kind of political environment is a metaphor for opening possibilities, Why not call it the *open roads program*? Why not call it *I am going to make a wonderful life for myself program*? Because you can after all make a life for yourself on a lot of dimensions, and college may be one of them, and work is one of them, but these are not the only ones. There are many other ways to be a decent and caring person, and a thoughtful and participatory citizen.

¹ The interviewer’s father dedicated his life to individuals residing in government housing through his service both living and working as the building custodian. He worked to ensure the building was safe, clean, and welcoming to the residents. He would answer knocks on the door in the middle of the night to help residents who needed assistance in their apartment for plumping, electrical, or health reasons. He was a public servant without a college degree who did noble work in this world. We should dignify this type of work in society.

You asked how we can encourage people to have the wisdom and courage to speak up against the injustices they see. I think that is one aspect of what it means to be a teacher who is teaching for social justice, but I would go in a slightly different direction. I don't think that the fundamental problem, or fundamental issue that we face is confronting prejudice, confronting bigotry, or confronting stupidity. What I mean is that, while it is there, those prejudices and personal biases are by-products of something much, much deeper. What I want teachers, and really all of us to be able to do as citizens, as activists, as moral actors, is to be able to open our eyes and to see the world more deeply and more honestly. That's not something you do once and then ride along for a lifetime. Rather, opening our eyes is a daily struggle, for in an infinite and expanding universe we are each small and finite beings, so what we know and see, and what we're able to access and utilize is a tiny, tiny, fraction of what's out there. So opening your eyes has to be a habit and a practice that you're willing to engage again and again and again. You open your eyes, you allow yourself to be astonished at everything you see—both the joy and ecstasy of the world, and also the pain and misery, the undeserved suffering and unnecessary hurt. And then you must act.

SF: *So when you asked earlier: “what is teaching a metaphor for in your life?” It would seem that one of your guiding metaphors is to remain alert to always “opening our eyes.” Bill, could you say a few words about other guiding metaphors in your pedagogy?*

BA: I want teachers to learn that rhythm: open your eyes, be astonished, act, and then doubt. Doubt whether what you saw and did meant all that. I want teachers who are engaged in this democratic project to see themselves self-consciously, to see themselves as part of the future society, to live as it were with one foot in the mud and muck of the real world as it is, and one foot striving toward a better world, and the basic pedagogical gesture of that kind of teaching is to ask the next question. It's always to ask the next question with the recognition that you don't know everything. So the trick isn't to teach people to interrupt bigotry, for example, even though that's a good thing I

suppose. The real trick—the powerful practice—is to say: Why is the world the way it is? So I know we are all celebrating *Brown v. Board of Education*; it's 58 years old, hurray, hurray for us. But why are so many schools in the city today virtually all Black? Why are other schools overwhelmingly White? Why are poor kids and kids of privilege virtually unknown to one another? That was the simplest demand of the civil rights movement—to integrate the schools. Look at Chicago, and tell me did we win? It's an outrage.

So, I would say that “asking the next question” is another useful principle. My partner for 40 years, my wife, is a lawyer and a law professor. I've always thought of the courtroom as an inadequate site for deep human understanding. There are always two narratives competing against each other, one has to beat the other one. The newsroom is another place where the narrative has to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Classrooms don't suffer these constraints; if you allow yourself the space you can always ask the next question. I could give you a thousand examples, some profound and some stupid, but we could name anything and do it. For example, in Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee lost a lot of weight quite publicly and became a champion against childhood obesity. The state in its wisdom decided to list the body mass index (BMI) of students on their report cards. So a kid could go home with an A in English, a B in Math, a C in Science and a further note: You're Fat!

Now, I'm sure that was well-intentioned, but everybody who thinks about it for a minute is horrified. So here's what a great teacher for democracy, a teacher for social justice might do. She begins by saying, “So we have to put your BMI on the report cards. What's the history of those types of interventions in changing behavior?” I don't know the answer to that, but that's a good question I think. “What's the state of our physical education program? What's the state of our parks? What's the state of the food deserts in our neighborhoods?” And on and on and on.

In other words I don't need to know the answer to any of those questions in order to ask them. There's always a next question. No matter what I find from those questions, there are always more. "Who owns the franchise to the lunch room? How did they get it? Why do they have it? What are the chemicals and additives in the food and why? What's the history of that?"

I sometimes worry that when we talk about social justice we are talking about something rarified and elite—either barricaded in its certainty or distant in its ability to be carried out—it's actually very simple and a very commonsense kind of thing if you frame it in a certain way. So to me the bigger question then—interrupting bigotry—is to say to people, why do the schools look the way they do? Is it the way they ought to look? How else might they look? In other words good teachers, in any subject and in various settings are always trying to ask the questions: "What does the world look like, as such? What could it look like and what should it look like?" Because standing right next to the world *as such* is a world that could be or should be. If you can't search out or imagine an alternative world, then it's all but impossible to be a moral actor. And that's a very simple thing to say, yet very hard to understand. If you can't see an alternative, you can't be a moral person and that's because everything that we see around is just the given world. And although it looks stable and finished, its defining characteristic is its dynamic incompleteness.

SF: *Certainly you broaden the boundaries here regarding what it means to educate for social justice. I want to thank you for your insights, your time, and for your many contributions to democratic education. Is there anything else you would like to add, by way of conclusion?*

BA: Yes, perhaps one more word for now. The most profound lesson we want to teach our children is that you don't need anyone's permission to interrogate the world. You don't need anyone's warrant to ask the next questions. You were born into a going world, a world already underway, charging forward, and it's still going, still and forever unfinished. You have a

responsibility as a work-in-progress, a human being connected to all others and to the great force of life, to dive into the wreckage, plunge into this going world, invent and reinvent yourself, make yourself up and have your blooming in the noise of the whirlwind.

Dr. William Ayers is a Distinguished Professor of Education and Senior University Scholar at the University of Illinois at Chicago (retired). Currently he is the vice-president of the curriculum studies division of the American Educational Research Association. He founded both the Small Schools Workshop and the Center for Youth and Society. Ayers' articles have appeared in many journals including the *Harvard Educational Review*, the *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Teachers College Record*, *Rethinking Schools*, *The Nation*, *Educational Leadership*, the *New York Times* and the *Cambridge Journal of Education*. Ayers has written and edited numerous books. Some of his book titles include *To Teach: The Journey in Comics* with Ryan Alexander-Tanner, *Race Course: Against White Supremacy* with Bernardine Dohrn, *Teaching Toward Freedom: Moral Commitment and Ethical Action in the Classroom*, *A Kind and Just Parent: The Children of Juvenile Court*, *Fugitive Days: A Memoir*, *On the Side of the Child: Summerhill Revisited*, *Teaching the Personal and the Political: Essays on Hope and Justice*, *The Good Preschool Teacher: Six Teachers Reflect on Their Lives*, and *To Teach: The Journey of a Teacher*. For more information on Ayers' speaking, writing, and teaching, log-on to billayers.org.

Rejecting Academic Labor as a Subaltern Class: Learning from Paulo Freire and the Politics of Critical Pedagogy

By: Henry A. Giroux

*Editor's note: This article from 2011 was originally published in *Fast Capitalism*, issue 8.2. Reprinted with permission from author and journal.*

While liberals, progressives, and left-oriented educators have increasingly opposed the right-wing assault on higher education, they have not done enough either theoretically or politically in connecting the issues of academic freedom, the proliferation of non-tenured and part-time faculty, and the state of critical pedagogy in the university. Although concern has been expressed about the shameless exploitation of non-tenured and part-time faculty in the United States (actually, an under-the-radar parallel alternative to the traditional tenure system), such concerns have not been linked to a full-spirited critique of the anti-democratic forces now affecting higher education through the relentless expansion of a growing managerialism and a neoliberal approach to university governance.¹

The current labor crisis facing higher education should be addressed as part of a much broader assault on society by corporations, the military, right-wing foundations, and conservative religious groups. Higher education is a dangerous site because it offers the potential both for fostering critical thought and for shaping oppositional subject positions, identities, and social relations that could challenge the current neoliberal regime of ideology, politics, and economics. At the same time, it offers a space and modes of pedagogy that often unsettle many of the dominant orthodoxies and fundamentalisms that now dominate American culture. I believe that one way to challenge this military-industrial-academic complex is to make the question of pedagogy central to a

¹ For an excellent analysis of contingent academic labor as part of the process of the subordination of higher education to the demands of capital and corporate power, see Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

reformulated politics that reclaims the university as a democratic public sphere. Pedagogy plays an important role in linking politics to matters of critical agency and social transformation. In this instance, pedagogy is integral to any discourse about academic freedom; but, more important, it might very well be the most crucial referent we have for understanding politics and defending the university as one of the few remaining democratic public spheres in North America today. As Ian Angus rightly argues, “The justification for academic freedom lies in the activity of critical thinking,”² and protecting critical thought must involve safeguarding the pedagogical and political conditions that make it possible.

I believe that too many notions of academic freedom are defined through a privatized or individualized notion of freedom and are largely removed from the issue of democratic governance that is the primary foundation enabling academic freedom to become a reality in the first place. Right-wing notions of teaching and learning that seek to standardize curricula, impose an audit culture, and prioritize quantitative measures constitute a kind of anti-pedagogy, substituting conformity for dialogue and ideological inflexibility for critical engagement. Such attacks on critical thought should be named for what they are—an affirmation of thoughtlessness and an antidote to the difficult process of self- and social criticism.³ In spite of what conservatives claim, right-wing pedagogy confuses training for education and enshrines a poisonous anti-intellectualism that produces a flight from thinking, the self, society, and the obligations of social responsibility. The outcome of this bare pedagogy of conformity—emptied of critical dialogue, critique, and ethical considerations—is not a student who feels a responsibility to others, but one who feels the presence

² Ian Angus, “Academic Freedom in the Corporate University”, ed. Mark Cote, Richard J. F. Day, and Greig de Peuter, eds. *Utopian Pedagogy: Radical Experiments against Neoliberal Globalization*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 67–68.

³ These themes in Arendt’s work are explored in detail in Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Why Arendt Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

of difference and troubling knowledge as an unbearable burden to be contained or expelled. In this way, it becomes apparent that the current right-wing assault on higher education is directed not only against the conditions that make critical pedagogy possible but also against the possibility of raising questions about the real problems facing higher education and society today, such as the increasing role of part-time labor, the instrumentalization of knowledge, the rise of an expanding national security state, the hijacking of public spheres by corporate and militarized interests, and the increasing attempts by right-wing extremists to turn education into job training and public pedagogy into an extended exercise in patriotic xenophobia. All of these efforts undermine the idea of the university as central to a functioning democracy in which people are encouraged to think, to engage knowledge critically, to make judgments, to assume responsibility for what it means to know something, and to understand the consequences of such knowledge for the world at large.

The rise of part-time labor in higher education is about both the increasing corporatization of the university and an insidious neoliberal ideology in which many groups, including students and faculty, are increasingly defined as either redundant, superfluous, or entirely disposable. As the university becomes subject to the growing politics of corporatization, the forces of privatization and contract labor have impacted on higher education in ways that suggest not only a shift in the governing structures of the university, now re-envisioned from the perspective of a new market-driven form of managerial-ism, but also a new formulation of faculty as a kind of subaltern class, unworthy of a voice in shaping the conditions of work or in governing the overall structure of the university. Even as the formative culture of a market-driven casino capitalism is denounced in the larger society because of the Katrina-like financial crisis it produced, higher education still defines itself largely as a corporation whose central mission is to reproduce the values and power relations of corporate culture. Many institutions of higher education, modeling themselves on the institutions and values at the heart of neoliberal power, have been ruthless in deeply undercutting the autonomy

of faculty and graduate students while simultaneously engaging in one of the most invisible and unscrupulous examples of downsizing that has ever affected higher education. As William Pannacker points out in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, “According to the AAUP, between 1975 and 2007, the percentage of full-time tenure and tenure track faculty declined from 56.8 percent to 31.2 percent, while the number of part-time and non-tenure track faculty rose from 43.2 percent to 68.8 percent.”⁴ Adjunct faculty are paid poverty level wages, often have no benefits, and are viewed as merely disposable labor. And yet, while the conditions under which they work and the role of the university in promoting them has to be subject to analysis, the larger understanding of both what the university should stand for and the importance of faculty in promoting a formative culture capable of sustaining democratic values and traditions must be part of any argument to improve the status of academic labor in the university. At stake here is convincing students, administrators, the larger public, and others that the fate of higher education as well as the fate of academic labor is about not just wages, power, and rights, it is also about the importance of modes of pedagogy, learning, and possibility that are central to sustaining and engaging a formative culture that can do much more than simply create job opportunities when it provides a crucial foundation for nurturing generations of students who are capable of expanding and deepening the structures, ideologies, and practices of an aspiring democracy. One crucial place to turn in order to understand the significance of critical pedagogy is to the work of the Brazilian radical educator, Paulo Freire.

Freire is one of the most important critical educators of the twentieth century.⁵ Not only is he considered one of the founders of critical pedagogy, but he also played a crucial role in

⁴ William Pannacker, “The MLA and Academic Labor: From Marginality to Leadership,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 30, 2009). Online: <http://chronicle.com/blogPost/The-MALAcademic-Labor-/19479>.

⁵ One of the best sources on the life and work of Paulo Freire is Peter Mayo, *Liberating Praxis: Freire’s Legacy for Radical Education and Politics* (New York: Praeger, 2004). Two of the best translators of Freire’s work to the U.S. context are Donaldo Macedo, *Literacies of Power* (Boulder: Westview, 1994) and Ira Shor, *Freire for the Classroom* (Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1987).

developing a highly successful literacy campaign in Brazil before the onslaught of the junta in 1964. Once the military took over the government, Freire was imprisoned for a short time for his efforts. He eventually was released and went into exile, primarily in Chile and later in Geneva, Switzerland for a number of years. Once a semblance of democracy returned to Brazil, he went back to his country in 1980 and played a significant role in shaping its educational policies until his untimely death in 1997. His book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is considered one of the classic texts of critical pedagogy and has sold over a million copies, influencing generations of teachers and intellectuals both in the United States and abroad. Since the 1980s there has been no intellectual on the North American educational scene who has matched either his theoretical rigor or his moral courage. Most colleges are now dominated by conservative ideologies, hooked on methods, slavishly wedded to instrumentalized accountability measures, and run by administrators who lack either a broader vision or a critical understanding of education as a force for strengthening the imagination and expanding democratic public life. Slavishly tied to a set of market values that have been devalued because of the current financial crisis, colleges largely define themselves in instrumentalized market terms—credentials and training now replace any vestige of critical education, and increasingly those disciplines, subjects, and elements of the university that are not defined in market terms are viewed as unviable and are either downsized or eliminated.

As the market-driven logic of neoliberal capitalism continues to devalue all aspects of the public interest, one consequence is that the educational concern with excellence has been removed from matters of equity while higher education, once conceptualized as a public good, has been reduced to a private good. Universities are now largely defined through the corporate demand that they provide the skills, knowledge, and credentials to build a workforce that will enable the United States to compete and maintain its role as the major global economic and military power.

Consequently, there is little interest in understanding the pedagogical foundation of higher education as a deeply civic, political, and moral practice—that is, pedagogy as a practice for freedom. As schooling is increasingly subordinated to a corporate order, any vestige of critical education is replaced by training and the promise of economic security. Similarly, as pedagogy is now subordinated to corporate and military interests, academic labor is increasingly excluded from the process of governance, removed from tenure track lines, and treated as a disposable body of temporary workers. What this means is that academics are reduced to the status of technicians and deskilled as they are denied any control over their classrooms or power within school governance structures. Overworked and under-represented politically, an increasing number of higher education faculty are reduced to part-time positions, constituting a new subaltern class of academic labor.

But there is more at stake here than a crisis of authority, the exploitation of faculty labor, and the repression of critical thought. Too many classrooms at all levels of schooling now resemble a “dead zone” where any vestige of critical thinking, self-reflection, and imagination quickly migrate to sites outside of the school only to be corrupted by a corporate-driven media culture. Higher education furthers this logic by reducing its public vision to the interests of capital and redefining itself largely as a credentializing factory for students and a petri dish for downsizing academic labor. Under such circumstances educators rarely ask questions about how schools can prepare students to be informed citizens, nurture a civic imagination, or be self-reflective about public issues and the world in which they live. As Stanley Aronowitz puts it,

Few of even the so-called educators ask the question: What matters beyond the reading, writing, and numeracy that are presumably taught in the elementary and secondary grades? The old question of what a kid needs to become an informed ‘citizen’ capable of participating in making the large and small public decisions that affect the larger world as well as everyday life receives

honorable mention but not serious consideration. These unasked questions are symptoms of a new regime of educational expectations that privileges job readiness above any other educational values.⁶

Unless the attack on academic labor is understood within the larger disciplinary measures at work in the university—measures that aim to eliminate any social formation that can potentially engage in critical pedagogy, challenge authority, and collectively assume power—the issue of contract labor will appear incidental to the larger transformations and politics now plaguing higher education. Put differently, higher education needs to be defended as a crucial public sphere, and faculty autonomy and student empowerment should be regarded as central and powerful components of that vision.

Against this regime of stripped down labor and “bare pedagogy” cleansed of all critical elements of teaching and learning, Paulo Freire believed that all education in the broadest sense was part of a project of freedom, and eminently political because it offered students the conditions for self-reflection, a self-managed life, and particular notions of critical agency. As Aronowitz puts it in his analysis of Freire’s work on literacy and critical pedagogy:

Thus, for Freire literacy was not a means to prepare students for the world of subordinated labor or “careers,” but a preparation for a self-managed life. And self-management could only occur when people have fulfilled three goals of education: self-reflection, that is, realizing the famous poetic phrase, “know thyself,” which is an understanding of the world in which they live, in its economic, political and, equally important, its psychological dimensions. Specifically “critical” pedagogy helps the learner become aware of the forces that have hitherto ruled their lives and especially shaped their consciousness. The third goal is to help set the conditions for producing a new life, a new set of arrangements where power has been, at least in tendency, transferred to those who literally make the social world by transforming nature and themselves.⁷

⁶ Stanley Aronowitz, *Against Schooling: For an Education That Matters* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), xii.

⁷ Stanley Aronowitz, “Forward,” in *Critical Pedagogy in Uncertain Times: Hope and Possibilities*, ed. Sheila L. Macrine (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), ix.

What Paulo made clear in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, his most influential work, is that pedagogy at its best is about neither training, teaching methods, nor political indoctrination. For Freire, pedagogy is not a method or an *a priori* technique to be imposed on all students but a political and moral practice that provides the knowledge, skills, and social relations that enable students to explore the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens while expanding and deepening their participation in the promise of a substantive democracy. Critical thinking for Freire was not an object lesson in test-taking, but a tool for self-determination and civic engagement. For Freire, critical thinking was not about the task of simply reproducing the past and understanding the present. To the contrary, it was about offering a way of thinking beyond the present, soaring beyond the immediate confines of one's experiences, entering into a critical dialogue with history, and imagining a future that would not merely reproduce the present. Theodor Adorno captures the spirit of Freire's notion of critical thinking by insisting that "Thinking is not the intellectual reproduction of what already exists anyway. As long as it doesn't break off, thinking has a secure hold on possibility. Its insatiable aspect, its aversion to being quickly and easily satisfied, refuses the foolish wisdom of resignation. ...Open thinking points beyond itself."⁸

Freire rejected those regimes of educational degradation organized around the demands of the market, instrumentalized knowledge, and the priority of training over the pursuit of the imagination, critical thinking, and the teaching of freedom and social responsibility. Rather than assume the mantle of a false impartiality, Freire believed that critical pedagogy must acknowledge that human life is conditioned—not determined—and recognize the crucial necessity of not only reading the world critically but also intervening in the larger social order as part of the responsibility of an informed citizenry. According to Freire, the political and moral demands of pedagogy should

⁸ Theodor Adorno, "Education after Auschwitz," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 291–292.

amount to more than the school and classroom being mere instruments of official power or assuming the role of apologists for the existing order—and they should amount to much more than the Obama administration seems to believe, given its willingness to give Bush’s reactionary educational policies a new name and a new lease on life. Freire rejected those modes of pedagogy that supported economic models and modes of agency in which freedom is reduced to consumerism and economic activity is released from any value criterion except profitability and the neglect of a rapidly expanding mass of wasted humans. Critical pedagogy attempts to understand how power works through the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within particular institutional contexts and seeks to constitute students as informed subjects and social agents. In this instance, the issue of how identities, values, and desires are shaped in the classroom becomes the very grounds of politics. Critical pedagogy is invested in both the practice of self-criticism about the values that inform teaching and a critical self-consciousness regarding what it means to equip students with analytical skills to be self-reflective about the knowledge and values they confront in classrooms. Moreover, such a pedagogy attempts not only to provide the conditions for students to understand texts and different modes of intelligibility, but also to open up new avenues for them to make better moral judgments that will enable them to assume some sense of responsibility toward the other in light of those judgments.

Freire was acutely aware that what makes critical pedagogy so dangerous to ideological fundamentalists, the ruling elites, religious extremists, and right-wing nationalists all over the world is that central to its very definition is the task of educating students to become critical agents who actively question and negotiate the relationships between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change. Critical pedagogy opens up a space where students should be able to come to terms with their own power as critically engaged citizens; it provides a sphere where the unconditional freedom to question and assert is made central to the purpose

higher education, if not democracy itself. And as a political and moral practice, way of knowing, and literate engagement, critical pedagogy attempts to “make evident the multiplicity and complexity of history.”⁹ History in this sense is engaged as a narrative open to critical dialogue rather than predefined text to be memorized and accepted unquestioningly. Pedagogy in this instance provides the conditions to cultivate in students a healthy skepticism about power, a “willingness to temper any reverence for authority with a sense of critical awareness.”¹⁰ As a performative practice, pedagogy takes as one of its goals the opportunity for students to be able to reflectively frame their own relationship to the ongoing project of an unfinished democracy. It is precisely this relationship between democracy and pedagogy that is so threatening to so many of our educational leaders and spokespersons today, and it is also the reason why Freire’s work on critical pedagogy and literacy is more relevant today than when it was first published. Clearly, such a pedagogy demands not just a critical understanding of the relations between knowledge and power, learning and experience, and education and social change, but also a willingness to fight for the labor conditions that both promote academic freedom and struggle against academic repression. At the heart of any vestige of critical pedagogy is both the project of relating education to the creation of informed citizens and the labor conditions that give faculty the opportunity to engage in the pedagogies that make such a project possible. This is not merely a dispute over who should control the classroom, but a struggle over how power is shared, used, and institutionalized so as to create the structural and ideological conditions for experiencing the university as a democratic public sphere.

According to Freire, all forms of pedagogy represent a particular way of understanding society and a specific commitment to the future. Critical pedagogy, unlike dominant modes of

⁹ Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 141.

¹⁰ Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 501.

teaching, insists that one of the fundamental tasks of educators is to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which the discourses of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to alter, as part of a broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived. Such a future cannot be built on the backs of a subaltern class of academics who are powerless, overworked, denied basic benefits, and removed from shaping policy. Nor is the problem solved by simply calling for a limit to the pool of potential faculty. This is a political issue that is about power, the meaning of education, and what role faculty, students, and administrators are going to play in shaping a future much different than the present. This is hardly a prescription for political indoctrination in the classroom; rather, it is a project that gives critical education its most valued purpose and meaning, which is “to encourage human agency, not mold it in the manner of Pygmalion.”¹¹ It is a position that also threatens right-wing private advocacy groups, neoconservative politicians, and conservative extremists. Such individuals and groups are keenly aware that critical pedagogy with its emphasis on the hard work of critical analysis, moral judgments, and social responsibility goes to the very heart of what it means to address real inequalities of power among faculty and administrators, or among others across society, and to conceive of education as a project for freedom while at the same time foregrounding a series of important and often ignored questions such as: What is the role of teachers and academics as public intellectuals? Whose interests does public and higher education serve? How might it be possible to understand and engage the diverse contexts in which education takes place? What is the role of education as a public good? How do we make knowledge meaningful in order to make it critical and transformative? How do we democratize governance? Against the right-wing view that equates any suggestion of politics with indoctrination, critical pedagogy is concerned with offering

¹¹ Stanley Aronowitz, “Introduction,” in Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom* (Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 10–11.

students new ways to think critically and act with authority as independent political agents in the classroom and in larger society; in other words, it is concerned with providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to expand their capacities first to question the deep-seated assumptions and myths that legitimate the archaic and disempowering social practices structuring every aspect of society and then to take responsibility for intervening in the world they inhabit.

Education cannot be neutral. It is always directive in its attempt to teach students to inhabit a particular mode of agency, enable them to understand the larger world and one's role in it in a specific way, define their relationship, if not responsibility, to diverse others, and experience in the classroom some sort of understanding of a more just, imaginative, and democratic life. Pedagogy is by definition directive, but that does not mean it is merely a form of indoctrination. On the contrary, as Freire argued, education as a practice for freedom must expand the capacities necessary for human agency, and hence the possibilities for how academic labor should be configured to ensure such a project that is integral to democracy itself. Surely, this suggests that even within the privileged precincts of higher education, educators should nourish those pedagogical practices that promote "a concern with keeping the forever unexhausted and unfulfilled human potential open, fighting back all attempts to foreclose and pre-empt the further unravelling of human possibilities, prodding human society to go on questioning itself and preventing that questioning from ever stalling or being declared finished."¹² In other words, critical pedagogy forges an expanded notion of politics and agency through a language of skepticism and possibility, and a culture of openness, debate, and engagement—all those elements now at risk because of the current and most dangerous attacks on higher education. This was Paulo's legacy, one that invokes dangerous memories and is increasingly absent from any conservative discourse about current educational problems. Unfortunately, it is also absent from much of the discussion on the current status of academic labor.

¹² Zygmunt Bauman and Keith Tester, *Conversations with Zygmunt Bauman* (Malden: Polity Press, 2001), 4.

For Freire, intellectuals must match their call for making the pedagogical more political with an ongoing effort to build those coalitions, affiliations, and social movements capable of mobilizing real power and promoting substantive social change both within and outside of the university. The struggle for better working conditions for faculty must be matched by the call for the university to fulfill its role as a democratic public sphere. In doing so, the call for faculty rights and power becomes connected and energized by a broader public discourse aimed at improving the unjust conditions that increasingly affect not only faculty but society in general.

Some of these demands are current being made by the Occupy Movement. Young people no longer recognize themselves in terms preferred by the market and they no longer believe in an education that ignores critical thinking, dialogue, and those values that engage matters of social responsibility and civic engagement. Nor do they believe in an education that treats them as disposable labor, a subaltern class of third rate workers. But students have more to offer than a serious critique of the university and its complicity with a number of anti-democratic forces now shaping the larger society, they are also modeling for faculty and others interested in education new modes of participatory democracy, and exhibiting forms of pedagogy and education that connect learning with social change and knowledge with more democratic modes of self-development and social empowerment--not unlike what Paulo Friere called for in his own pedagogy. Clearly, as faculty we have a lot to learn from both the ways in which students are changing the conversation about education, important social issues, democracy, and what it might mean to imagine a new understanding of politics and a different future. The questions students are raising are important for faculty to rethink those modes of professionalism, specialism, and social relations that have cut them off from addressing important social issues and the larger society. The Occupy protesters are right in arguing that higher education is a vital public sphere that should be at the forefront in addressing these issues. Moreover, faculty and administrators need to develop new modes of governance that

both include student participation and voices and do what they can to offer up a new model of pedagogy, one that combines scholarly rigor and knowledge in an effort to help young people bridge the gap between the university and everyday life. Higher education should not be used to benefit corporate interests or the warfare state, but to nurture and inspire existing and future generations of young people to take up the challenge of determining whether education will play a pivotal in enabling a future in which the claim on democracy will be fulfilled.

Dr. Henry A. Giroux has written over 50 books and 300 articles. He was named as one of one of the top 50 educational thinkers by Routledge in 2002. He currently serves as Global Network TV Chair in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. In addition, he has held positions at Boston University, Miami University, and Penn State University. His writings cover a wide-range of academic disciplines from youth, media, and cultural studies to critical pedagogy. Some of his latest books include *Twilight of the Social: Resurgent Publics in the Age of Disposability* and *Education and the Crisis of Public Values*. For more information, visit www.henrygiroux.com.