TEACHING AGAINST GLOBALIZATION AND THE NEW IMPERIALISM: TOWARD A REVOLUTIONARY PEDAGOGY

Peter McLaren
Ramin Farahmandpur
University of California, Los Angeles

The globalization of capitalism has exacerbated the continuing reduction of education to a subsector of the economy. In the process, it has brought untold misery to the lives of millions of people throughout the world. Maintaining that critical pedagogy largely remains in the thrall of postmodern theory and politics, this article sketches out some fundamental perspectives for the development of what the authors refer to as "revolutionary pedagogy." The aim of such a pedagogy is to encourage the development of critical consciousness among students and teachers in the interests of building working-class solidarity and opposition to global capitalism.

> No teacher giving instruction in any school, or on any property belonging to any agencies included in the public school system, shall advocate or teach communism with the intent to indoctrinate or to inculcate in the mind of any pupil a preference for communism.
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> In prohibiting the advocacy or teaching of communism with the intent of indoctrinating or inculcating a preference in the mind of any pupil for such doctrine, the Legislature does not intend to prevent the teaching of the facts about communism. Rather, the Legislature intends to prevent the advocacy of, or inculcation and indoctrination into, communism as is hereinafter defined, for the purpose of undermining patriotism for, and the belief in, the government of the United States and of this state.
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> For the purposes of this section, communism is a political theory that the presently existing form of government of the United States or of this state should be changed, by force, violence, or other unconstitutional means, to a totalitarian dictatorship which is based on the principles of communism as expounded by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin.
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> —California Education Code, Sec. 51530

The purpose of this article is to discuss teacher education reform in the United States from the context of critical pedagogy in general and the globalization of capitalism in particular. Many of the current discussions of globalization and, for that matter, critical pedagogy have themselves become conceptually impoverished and politically domesticated (McLaren, 1998b, 2000; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2000). Hence, we have taken pains to offer for public consumption some counter-propaganda to the pronouncements of the corporate Mullahs, aggravating the debate over critical pedagogy before it can accommodate to their demand. We have secured our analysis within a Marxist problematic that takes seriously the imperative of steering critical pedagogy firmly toward anticapitalist struggle (see McLaren, 2000; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2000). We contend that within critical pedagogy, the issue of class has too often been overlooked. Critical pedagogy has, of late, drifted dangerously toward the cultural terrain of identity politics in which class is reduced to an effect rather than understood as a cause and in which a hierarchy of oppression is (usually unwittingly) constituted as a controlling paradigm that frequently leaves the exploitative power of capitalist social relations largely unaddressed. Understanding exploitation as embodied in forms of racist and patriarchal social practices should constitute a central focus of critical pedagogy. On this point we have no quarrel. However, this objective should not be achieved

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at the grievous expense of understanding how political economy and class struggle operate as the motor force of history and society (Parenti, 1997). With this assertion, we identify the political architecture necessary to contest the enfeeblement and domestication of critical pedagogy and to develop what we call a revolutionary workingclass pedagogy.

FACING GLOBAL CAPITALISM

As we anticipate the ongoing challenges of the new millennium, we bear witness to the unabated mercilessness of global capitalism and the impassable fissure between capital and labor. Today, millions of workers are being exploited by a relatively small yet cunningly powerful global ruling class driven by an unslakable desire for accumulation of profit. Little opposition exists as capitalism runs amok, unhampered and undisturbed by the tectonic upheaval that is occurring in the geopolitical landscape—one that has recently witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the regimes of the Eastern Bloc.

Due to the fast-paced and frenetic changes taking place around us in the wired realms of global technologies and free-trade initiatives, we are hard-pressed to chart out our daily struggles against oppression and exploitation instituted by a growing cabal of techno-crazed global robber barons. As we attempt to flee a culture of endless acquisition, we find ourselves at the mercy of an even more terrifying corporate culture shaping our subjectivities. According to Hayat Imam (1997), "Today . . . 'creation of wealth' has become the fundamental value at the center of global society and analyses of economics are devoid of issues of morality, human needs, and social conscience" (p. 13). Mutagenic forms of greed and social relations that permit such greed to flourish have produced severance packages for corporate bosses that exceed the combined salaries of an army of factory workers.

Immovably entrenched social, political, and economic disparities and antagonisms compel us as educators and cultural workers to create alternatives to the logic of capitalist accumulation. Yet, the creation of alternatives to the logic of capital is a formidable—and what many of our more cynical brothers and sisters in education would deem today an insurmountable—challenge. We are struggling and suffering (some of us more than others) through a time when there exists a dictatorship of the marketplace in a capitalist system whose inequalities are becoming more evident than ever before. This is especially true at this current moment, when the Republican theft of a presidency followed by a continued commitment to Disneyland capitalism: the free marketeers meet the Mouseketeers.

THE POLITICS OF NEOLIBERALISM

Neoliberal free market economics—the purpose of which is to avoid stasis and keep businesses in healthy flux—functions as a type of binding arbitration, legitimizing a host of questionable practices and outcomes: deregulation, unrestricted access to consumer markets, downsizing, outsourcing, flexible arrangements of labor, intensification of competition among transnational corporations, increasing centralization of economic and political power, and finally, widening class polarization. Neoliberalism is currently embarking on ways of "re-imagining" democracy through the importation of the market discourse of parasitic finacial oligarchies into increasingly domesticated democratic practices and through the valorization of capital and the unrestrained economic power of private property (Teeple, 1995).

The close of the second millennium represents at once the incalculably expanded scope of the culture of consumption and the implosion of social relations into a universal signifier—namely capital—that Marx metaphorically referred to as the "universal pimp." Marx likened money to a "visible god" that in the generalized commodity form

> spreads this illusory perception throughout society, dissolving all previous identities and distinctions, and remolding human consciousness in its own image. In the fully developed form of capital, money achieves an active, self-regulating power through which it shapes the lives of concrete individuals. (Hawkes, 1996, pp. 101-102)

For those who believe that uninterrupted accumulation and increasing international concentration of capital is a good thing, that the shift from an international economy to a world economy is a sign of progress, that the feedback mechanisms of the unfettered "free" market are fair, that only democracy will spring forth from its spontaneous order, and that the common good will magically advance from its networked complexity, there is reason to be wildly optimistic about the future. Imagine the possibilities for privatizing public spaces and spreading neoliberal domination over vast exotic populations hitherto unconquered! But for educators who reject the idea that the social system under capitalism is a self-organizing totality and who view the globalization of capital as an irredeemable assault on democracy, the future appears perilous indeed. We refuse to elevate the victimization of the working-class to a regulatory ideal of democracy and decline to treat the economy as a thing or endow it with self-evident democratic agency. After Marx, we view the economy as a social relation and not a self-sustaining natural entity. Capitalism is not powered by a trancendental metaphysic but is a social relation overburdened by exploitation, accumulation, endless growth, and class conflict. It remains predicated on the extraction of surplus value from workers (value produced by workers beyond that which the capitalist must pay out in wages so that the workers can reproduce their labor-power).

Unlike its well-known predecessors—slavery and feudalism—capitalism is predicated on the overaccumulation of capital and the super-exploitation of rank-and-file wage laborers. The irreversible contradictions inherent within capitalist social and economic relations—those between capital and labor—are taking us further away from democratic accountability and steering us closer to what Rosa Luxemburg (1919) referred to as an age of "barbarism." Peery (1997) makes the point that in comparison to the political economy that sustained slavery or feudalism, the social and economic contradictions in the present-day capitalist mode of production are much more virulent and unremitting. This is because the production, distribution, and consumption of commodities are in constant contradiction with labor power and prevents the logic of capital from validating any logic other than its own. Many social and political theorists have studied the phenomenon of globalization extensively and have pronounced it a discomfiting inevitability for some but a powerful, life-enhancing economic tonic for many. Yet, in our opinion, globalization represents an ideological facade that camouflages the manifold operations of imperialism. In fact, the concept of globalization has effectively replaced the term *imperialism* in the lexicon of the privileged class for the purpose of exaggerating the global character of capitalism—as an all-encompassing and indefatigable power that apparently no nation-state has the means to resist or oppose. Furthermore, it deceitfully suggests that capitalism is no longer dependent on the nation-state. This position occludes the fact that a large portion of production in Western European countries takes place within national boundaries. Moreover, the globalization thesis maintains that whereas state power can be used in the interests of the large multinational corporations, it cannot be employed in the interest of the working class.

To call globalization a form of imperialism might seem a rhetorical exaggeration. But we believe that this identification is necessary because the term *globalization* is calculated by bourgeois critics to render any radical politicization of it extreme. The ideology of this move is invisibly to enframe the concept of globalization within a culturalist logic that reduces it to mean a standardization of commodities (i.e., the same designer clothes appearing in shopping plazas throughout the world). By contrast, we see the process as inextricably tied to the politics of neoliberalism, in which violence asserts itself as stability through a recomposition of the capital-labor relationship. Such a recomposition entails the subordination of social reproduction to the reproduction of capital (Dinerstein, 1999), the deregulation of the labor market, the globalization of liquid capital, the outsourcing of production to cheap labor markets, and the transfer of local capital intended for social services into finance capital for global investment.

The new imperialism to which we refer is a combination of old-style military and financial practices as well as recent attempts by developed nations to impose the law of the market on the whole of humanity itself. Having obscured the distinction between the sacred and profane, the global aristocracy's new world order has set out to expand the free market in the interest of quick profits, to increase global production, to raise the level of exports in the manufacturing sector, and to intensify competition among transnational corporations. It has also benefited from part-time and contingent work, reduced the pool of full-time employment, and accelerated immigration from Third World and developing countries to industrial nations (Bonacich & Appelbaum, 2000). In addition to our description of globalization as imperialism we might add the following: imperialist military intervention primarily disguised as humanitarian aid, the submission of international institutions such as the United Nations to the social and economic demands of imperialist conquest, and the instigation of ethnic and nationalistic conflicts to weaken nations refusing to submit to the rule of the market (Azad, 2000).

Contrary to popular opinion, wealth depletion among developing nations is not rescued by capital from advanced capitalist countries. This is because transnational corporations drain the local capital from poor countries rather than bring in new capital. Because their savings are often low, banks in developing countries would rather lend to their own subsidiary corporations (who send their profits back to advanced nations) than to struggling local businesses in developing nations. Faced with low prices for exports, high tariffs on processed goods, and a lack of capital and rising prices, local businesses are locked into entrenched impoverishment because of structural adjustment measures to balance the budget. Such measures are financed through cuts in spending for human development (Imam, 1997). The World Trade Organization does not permit poor countries to prioritize fighting poverty over increasing exports or choosing a development path that will advance the interests of the countries' own populations. By 1996, the resulting concentration of wealth had "the income of the world's richest individuals . . . equal to the income of 52 percent of humanity" (Imam, 1997, p. 13).

THE PRIVATIZATION AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Examining education policies within the context of economic globalization and neoliberalism raises a number of critical questions that include the following: What are some of the effects of globalization on public schools and public education? To what extent is the content of teaching and curriculum under the perilous influence of the shifting social, economic, and political relations within global capitalism? Spring (1998) identifies a key paradox that frames education and economic policies pursued in the United States and other advanced capital societies. First, education under globalization is viewed as a vehicle that assists the growing market economy. For many developing countries, an educated and skilled workforce ostensibly would mean higher levels of productivity and economic development. Second, education is viewed as a tool in solving problems associated with economic globalization such as unemployment and poverty. If, however, the market economy (by means of the capitalist law of value) is itself the cause of social and economic inequality, then it would appear a contradiction in terms to argue that the goal of education should be to assist in the expansion of the market economy (Spring, 1998). Economic globalization has not only failed to provide political stability and social and economic equality for many nations around the world, but it has also led to deepening social and economic polarization. Willie Thompson (1997) notes,

> Marx's insights into the nature of capital's reproduction and accumulation have never been bettered or displaced: his prevision of its future was extraordinarily percipient and impressively fulfilled. He was never a better prophet than when he insisted that capitalism was hastening towards its unavoidable destruction, that its internal forces carried it in a certain identifiable direction, which (*contra* Keynes) cannot be reversed or evaded. What capital produces above all is its own gravediggers. Marx meant the working class, and he was mistaken. What looks

> more likely to be capitalism's executioner is capitalism itself—the problem is that everything else is practically certain to be entombed with it. (p. 224)

As the logic of capital accumulation is shifting toward knowledge-based economies and as new forms of computer technology and biotechnology are being integrated into today's high-tech economy, information itself is fast becoming a high-priced new commodity. Transnational corporations are laboring vigorously to privatize the socially produced knowledge associated with the educational system. Decreased government funding of public education has forced an unholy partnership with private corporations who are seeking to create "high-tech knowledge industries" (Witheford, 1997). Transnational corporations are sponsoring research centers in universities across the United States by donating millions of dollars for the research, development, and production of for-profit technologies. This has resulted in the "high-tech colonization of education," transforming public universities into corporate-operated "techopolises" that have little interest in coexistence with the poor (Witheford, 1997).

Under the command of the market economy, not even universities, colleges, and vocational schools are immune from the economic policies favoring capital accumulation. Niemark (1999) reports that the increasing social policies that support for-profit universities have made higher education an extension of the market economy. She writes that social policies that support privatization have moved in the direction of

> establishing for-profit degree-granting institutions (such as the University of Phoenix); outsourcing curriculum, instruction, counseling, operations, and administration (in such areas as bookstores, food services, libraries, computer operations, plant maintenance, security, printing, and payroll); signing campus-corporate research and development partnership and licensing agreements; and selling exclusive on-campus marketing rights to companies that sell products as varied as soft drinks, fast food, computers, and credit and telephone calling cards. The campus is becoming virtually indistinguishable from the marketplace, and both universities and their faculties are becoming entrepreneurs. (p. 24)

The restructuring of higher education can clearly be seen as reinforcing class inequality and exposing public higher education to social and economic policies governed by the laws of the market economy (i.e., commodification, proletarianization, and capital accumulation). It also visibly functions as an impediment to the education and active participation of citizens in a democratic decision-making process dedicated to coexistence (Niemark, 1999).

The shift toward the privatization and corporatization of public education is best exemplified by the corporate raider Michael Milken, the Wall Street wizard and junk bond king of the mid-1980s who deceptively swindled millions of dollars by luring investors into high-risk investment schemes. Milken has returned to the business world, this time by focusing on the lucrative $800 billion education market and has decided to create for-profit education enterprises with the help of his powerful—yet comparatively obscure—$500 million company known as Knowledge Universe. Milken has invested heavily in several companies producing educational materials. Knowledge Universe owns companies such as Children's Discovery Centers, Bookman Testing Services, Pyramid Imaging Inc., Nobel Education Dynamics, and Leapfrog, which produces educational tools used at learning centers of the Riordan Foundation (Vrana, 1998). In a recent interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Milken calculated that if the net worth of the United States is placed at $120 trillion, roughly $75 trillion consists of human capital. This means that every American is worth $400,000 to $500,000 (Vrana, 1998). In short, Milken has discovered that the knowledge business is a profitable commodity.

Recent attempts by corporations to influence policy and curriculum decisions in urban schools abound. According to Kalle Lasn (1999),

> Corporate advertising (or is it the commercial media?) is the largest psychological project ever undertaken by the human race. Yet for all of that, its impact on us remains unknown and largely ignored. When I think of the media's influence over years, over decades, I think of those brainwashing experiments conducted by Dr. Ewen Cameron in a Montreal psy-

> chiatric hospital in the 1950s. The idea of the CIA-sponsored "depatterning" experiment was to outfit conscious, unconscious or semiconscious subjects with headphones, and flood their brain with thousands of repetitive "driving" messages that would alter their behavior over time. Sound familiar? Advertising aims to do the same thing. Dr. Cameron's guinea pigs emerged from the Montreal trials with serious psychological damage. It was a great scandal. But no one is saying boo about the ongoing experiment of mass media advertising. In fact, new guinea pigs voluntarily come on board every day. (p. 19)

It is not unusual these days to see school buses in certain states covered with advertisements for Burger King and Wendy's fast food chain restaurants. It has become fashionable for elementary school children to carry books wrapped in free book covers plastered with ads for Kellogg's Pop Tarts and Fox TV personalities. School districts have gleefully granted Coca-Cola and Pepsi exclusive contracts to sell their products in schools. In health education classes, students are taught nutrition by the Hershey Corporation in a scheme that includes a discussion of the important place of chocolate in a balanced diet. A classroom business course teaches students to value work by exploring how McDonald's restaurants are operated and what skills are needed to become a successful McDonald's manager and provides instructions on how to apply for a job at McDonald's. Ecological and environmental education now involves students learning ecology from a Life of an Ant poster sponsored by Skittles candy and an environmental curriculum video produced by Shell Oil that concentrates on the virtues of the external combustion engine. Finally, a new company called Zap Me! lures schools into accepting thousands of dollars worth of computer equipment, including a satellite dish, 15 top-level personal computers, a furnished computer lab and high-speed Internet access in return for a constant display of on-screen advertisements in the lower left-hand corner of the screen (see Fischman & McLaren, 2000). Lasn (1999) writes,

> Your kids watch Pepsi and Snickers ads in the classroom (The school has made the devil's bargain of accepting free audiovisual equipment in exchange for airing these ads on "Channel One"). . . . Administrators in a Texas school district announce plans to boost revenues by selling ad space on the roofs of the district's seventeen schools—arresting the attention of the fifty-eight million commercial jet passengers who fly into Dallas each year. Kids tattoo their calves with swooshes. Other kids, at raves, begin wearing actual bar codes that other kids can scan, revealing messages such as "I'd like to sleep with you." . . . A few years ago, marketers began installing ad boards in men's washrooms on college campuses, at eye level above the urinals. From their perspective, it was a brilliant coup: Where else is a guy going to look? But when I first heard this was being done, I was incensed. One of the last private acts was being co-opted. (pp. 19-21)

A math book published by McGraw-Hill is spiked with references to Nike, Gatorade, Disney, McDonald's, Nabisco, Mattel Barbie dolls, Sony play stations, Cocoa Frosted Flakes, Spalding basketballs and Topps baseball cards (Collins & Yeskel, 2000, p. 78). John Borowski, a public school teacher, recently noted in *The New York Times*,

> At least 234 corporations are now flooding the public schools with films, textbooks and computer software under the guise of "instructional material." A lesson in self-esteem sponsored by Revlon includes an investigation of "good and bad hair days." In a history lesson, Tootsie Rolls are touted as a part of soldiers' diets during World War II. Exxon provides a video on the Valdez spill playing down its ecological impact. And Chevron, in a lesson for use in civics science classes, reminds students that they will soon be able to vote and make "important decisions" about global warming, which the company then rebuts as incomplete science. (*The New York Times*, 1999, p. A23)

Another example of corporatism in schools is Channel One, a commercially produced news station that now operates in many American schools. As part of a contractual agreement, teachers agree to broadcast Channel One programs in class for 10 minutes a day in return for a satellite dish, video cassette recorders, and as many television sets as they want. A study of its effects revealed that the students were no better informed than their contemporaries but that the advertisements broadcast on the channel had a significant effect on their consumer tastes (Aitkenhead, cited in Cole, 1998, p. 327).

On one hand, schools do contribute to the ideals of democratic organizations (in terms of providing access to relevant knowledge and equal opportunities). On the other hand, schools operate at the same time in sustaining and reinforcing the logic of capitalism by functioning as a reproductive force that offers different and unequal kinds of knowledge and rewards based on class, gender, and race (McLaren, 1997). Here we see inequality as having to do with how society regulates the distribution of different types of capital. Perrucci and Wysong (1999) describe these as consumption capital (having to do with wages or salary), investment capital (having to do with a surplus of consumption capital that you can invest and on which you can earn interest), skills capital (having to do with specialized knowledge that people accumulate through their work experience, training, or education), and social capital (having to do with the network of social ties that people have to family, friends, and acquaintances, as well as the collectively owned economic and cultural capital of a group). Educators have long made the case that schools traffic in cultural capital (values, attitudes, dress, mannerisms, personal style, etc.) (McLaren, 1997), but they have rarely linked the production of cultural capital to the international division of labor brought about by uneven development.[1]

RACE, CLASS, OR GENDER? BEYOND THE EITHER-OR IMPASSE

Read against the continuing globalization of capital, the concept of class remains a taboo subject within the guarded precincts of academic discourses. Seldom do politicians, intellectuals, or the media openly discuss class inequality in a language that situates it within the larger problematic of global capitalism and relations of exploitation and oppression linked to imperialism. To understand how educational inequalities are reproduced within schools, it is crucial not to leave class in the shade and to analyze the concept of class and class relations in a contextually nuanced way. Michael Parenti (1994) underscores the importance of class relations when he argues,

> Class realities permeate our society, determining much about our lifestyles and life chances, our capacity to make serviceable things happen, our access to power. How the dynamics and crises of capitalism are handled, and how the state is organized, are core questions for political struggle. They also are inescapably class questions. There are class interests involved in how the law is written and enforced, how political leaders pursue issues, how science and social science are studied and funded, how work is done, how a university is ruled, how the news is reported, how mass culture is created and manipulated, how careers are advanced or retarded, how the environment is treated, how racism and sexism are activated and reinforced, and how social reality itself is defined. (p. 64)

The concept of class expresses the relationship that social groups have to the means of production; it refers to those who own the factories, machinery, media, hotels, hospitals, and so on and those who must sell their labor in exchange for wages (Parenti, 1994). Wages that workers receive in the form of money are equivalent to only part of the value they create by their labor. Wealth so construed constitutes accumulated surplus or the unpaid wages of the workers.

Postmodernists—whose work now composes the fountainhead of radical educational critique—frequently overlook the centrality of class warfare as the overarching mechanism that inscribes individuals and groups in the reproduction of social relations of exploitation under capitalism. Although admittedly an individual's subjectivity or identity cannot be reduced to class interests, nevertheless social oppression and economic exploitation are much more than tangentially linked to class background and the social relations of production. In fact, forms of racial and gender oppression can best be understood against the background of class analysis. Marxists maintain that the eradication of poverty, racism, sexism, and patriarchal exploitation requires an understanding of class struggle. There are two reasons for identifying the working class as the central agent of social transformation. First, the working class continues to possess the ability to halt production lines. Second, a revolutionary working-class politics seeks to abolish all forms of social oppression. Postmodernists, on the other hand, seek to create a radical democracy through new social move-

ments that concentrate on ending particular or local forms of oppression. In the words of Dana L. Cloud (1994),

> While a person's subjectivity is not a simple matter of class determination, his or her oppression and exploitation are directly connected to his/her economic status and position in the relations of production. Marxists believe there is more to liberation than the articulation of alternative subjectivities; an end to poverty, hunger, exploitation and abuse are more central, and require a notion of class position, agency and interests. From this perspective there are two good reasons for privileging working-class struggles. First, the working class has the power to stop production and bring the profit-making system down. Second, the working-class, the group of men and women of all races and sexual orientations whose labour produces profits for the few, has an objective . . . interest in overthrowing capitalism, whereas some members of many cross-class, non-socialist groups organized around other antagonisms (women's rights, environmental issues) have vested interests in maintaining the profit system. (p. 242)

According to E. San Juan, Jr. (1992), identity politics frequently and tragically leads to a privatization of political issues that "recuperates an autonomous will, and indigenous Otherness" (p. 107) and in doing so, voids resistance of its historical density. What identity politics fails to address is the fact that diversity and difference are allowed to proliferate and flourish provided that they remain within the prevailing forms of capitalist social arrangements, including hierarchical property arrangements. San Juan argues that there is a "blind spot which identity politics cannot apprehend" (p. 107). He refers here to the fact that

> the contingencies of a hegemonic struggle can generate a variety of subject positions which are neither fixed nor shifting but capable of being articulated in various directions according to the play of political forces and the conjunctural alignment of multi-layered determinants. (p. 107)

Along with San Juan, we worry about the engineered collusion between an identity politics that stresses autonomous lived experience and a neoliberalism that encourages the erasure of the public sphere and the ascendancy of a capitalist triumphalism that synchronizes so-called autonomous agency to the hierarchical imperatives of advanced capitalism. What also disturbs us are the denunciations by some radical educators that anti-capitalist struggles can only operate as a foolish rhetorical device and what is needed is an equal distribution of economic resources. Although we favor economic equality, we find that the anti-Marxist sentiments among some radical educators constitutes an egregious capitulation to the value form of labor (often under the banner of a positive populism) and the iron laws of motions of capital accumulation. It is a position innocent of insight into contemporary social relations of production.

What Boris Kagarlitsky (2000) calls a "strategic hierarchy of goals" grounded in the overthrow of the social hierarchy of capitalist society is a measure that we take seriously. We acknowledge that political struggle for race, class, gender, and sexual equality is a tightly interwoven struggle. But, we understand class politics as the engine of our struggle for proletarian hegemony. As Robert McChesney (1996) asserts,

> Radicals are opposed to all forms of oppression and it is ludicrous to debate which of sexism, racism, "classism," or homophobia is most terrible, as if we were in some zero-sum game. Socialists have traditionally emphasized class—and continue to do so today—because the engine of a capitalist society is profit maximization and class struggle. Moreover, it is only through class politics that human liberation can truly be reached. (pp. 4-5)

In acknowledging this, we do not follow postmodernists in calling for an equivalence among various struggles. Rather, we call for a strategic integration of different yet equally important struggles. Recognizing that the legacy of racism and sexism is far from over, we offer possible ways in which race and gender antagonisms can be addressed and overcome within the larger project of class struggle. As Adolph Reed, Jr. (2000) maintains, "Recent debates that juxtapose identity politics or cultural politics to class politics are miscast. Cultural politics and identity politics *are* class politics" (p. xxii). The ways in which the contradiction between capital and labor is lived at the level of everyday life are almost certainly racialized and gendered. The

modalities in which class exploitation are lived have specific consequences related to race, sexuality, age, and religion, and these must be placed at center stage in the struggle against oppression. We want to make clear that we are not subordinating race, ethnic, and gender struggles to class struggle. We simply are saying that without overcoming capitalist relations of production, other struggles will have little chance of succeeding. Yet, to make such an assertion is to identify a structured silence within many postmodernized versions of critical pedagogy: the disappearance of class struggle.

Overcoming racism and sexism are not sidebar issues but are central to the revolutionary multiculturalism endorsed here. We do not intend to use class relations as a conceptual or political shield for racism or sexism or to make the *jejune* claim that a focus on racial inequality undermines working-class efforts at organizing against the transnational capitalist oligopolies. Nor do we agree with some of our well-meaning White colleagues that an emphasis on class struggle takes away from the efforts of educators of color in their struggle against racism. This criticism fails to acknowledge that many educators of color have been at the forefront of the class struggle. Although strategically our dependent variable remains that of class, independent variables such as gender, race, religion, sexuality, and political ideology are not seen as cursory sites of antagonisms—they factor in our analysis in very central and distinctive ways.

TOWARD A REVOLUTIONARY WORKING-CLASS PEDAGOGY

One centerpiece of a revolutionary working-class pedagogy is engaging in ideology critique in light of understanding the unseen grammar of commodity logic that serves as the regulatory lexicon of everyday life. Such a pedagogy involves struggle over the production of meaning, a struggle that would enable marginalized social groups to name, identify, and take initial steps to transform the sources of their oppression and exploitation (McLaren, 1998a). It would also encourage them to analyze the myriad ways in which asymmetrical relations of power are ideologically concealed by the dominant discourses of equality, difference, and freedom (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). Although students are admittedly more than unconscious bearers of social structures, we are cognizant of the power of objective social structures to engineer complicity among both students and teachers in relations of exploitation and oppression. Consequently, a revolutionary working-class pedagogy stresses the importance of acquiring a critical literacy—where *literacy* is defined as a practice of reflecting, analyzing, and making critical judgments in relation to social, economic, and political issues (see Lankshear & McLaren, 1993; see also Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters, 1996). Furthermore, it invites subordinate groups to represent through classroom interaction and dialogue their lived reality in relation to objective social structures that shape their lives. This is done to solidify their beliefs, values, and experiences and also to challenge their everyday beliefs when they are discovered to be hegemonically advantageous (in the sense that they constitute dispositions that lead to concrete social practices or a complicity with certain social arrangements) to the reproduction of capitalist relations of exploitation (Giroux et al., 1996). In addition, this approach challenges students and workers to analyze the various meanings that underlie commonsensical concepts by drawing on everyday understandings that reflect their own social experiences. Teachers as revolutionary intellectuals contest the manufactured meaning of democracy by calling on students, workers, and intellectuals to critically examine socially constructed concepts such as freedom and democracy, which have been manufactured by neoliberal ideologues in the service of transnational capitalism (Fischman & McLaren, 2000; McLaren & Fischman, 1998). Students are invited to analyze the stories and narratives that animate their lives by setting them against a normative backdrop of heterosexist and Eurocentric assumptions (McLaren, 1998a; Ovando & McLaren, 2000; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995).

Mainstream pedagogy assiduously disregards as crucial a knowledge of how asymmetrical relations of power become embedded in

race, gender, and class antagonisms that are reinforced through the dominant social and ideological apparatuses of the state. In contrast, a revolutionary working-class pedagogy sets as its goal the transformation of existing social and economic relations by encouraging marginalized social groups both to critique and transform capitalist social relations of production. Here the classroom is conceived as a political arena for legitimizing the lived experiences of the oppressed social classes without assuming that such experiences are transparent or absent of racism or sexism (Freire, 1970, 1998; Giroux, 1988; McLaren, 1995, 1997).

ATTRIBUTES OF A REVOLUTIONARY WORKING-CLASS PEDAGOGY

A working-class pedagogy entails struggles over meaning, representation, and identity in relation to a moral and ethical commitment to social justice (Cole, 1998; Cole & Hill, 1995; Cole, Hill, & Rikowski, 1997). Knoblauch and Brannon (1993) argue that citizenship within a capitalist democracy

> includes an allegiance to passive consumerism, rather than active engagement in the construction of social life, and a long-standing hostility to practices of critical inquiry, certainly including liberatory pedagogy but also, historically, the challenges of labor unions, feminists, gays, environmental activists, and anyone else posing a conceivable threat to economic interests and managerial hierarchies that the media help to maintain. (p. 31)

This is in marked contrast to a revolutionary working-class pedagogy that underscores the active participation of students and workers in their own self-education as active citizens linked to the struggle for self-realization and coexistence—a process by which workers gain control over both their intellectual and their physical labor. This also entails promoting among students and workers—especially in countries where subsistence or state coercion dominate everyday life—alternative networks of popular organizing that include revolutionary social movements (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2000).

A revolutionary working-class pedagogy aims at transforming the consciousness of being in alienation by developing a critical consciousness. We should stress that alienation is not rooted in the world of Hegelian abstractions but rather embedded within the social and material relations of production. This raises questions as to whether an alienated consciousness is an inert totality and if it can be transcended. According to Mészáros (1989), alienated activity not only produces an alienated consciousness but also a consciousness of being in alienation. Therefore, it is advisable to create those pedagogical conditions that, for the working class, facilitate the development of a critical consciousness to overcome economic alienation and transform the existing social conditions of production through mass political action. Such action must be capable of creating egalitarian structures that are able to achieve—at an increasing level and in an ever-expanding scope—the institutionalization of popular democracy. Of course, this means aggregating diverse constituencies that might be distrustful of one another. We want to be clear that pedagogically we are not arguing for the teacher to serve as the mediator between imputed and factual consciousness, as someone who compels the student to activate or actualize revolutionary consciousness, who imports socialist insight from her rucksack in the Sierra Maestra to student *foco* groups in the United States. Because this position is tantamount to an externally imposed dictatorship of the teacher that relies on the false opposition of ideal type and factual actualization. Rather, our approach is Freirean in that it argues that revolutionary consciousness is a political act of knowing, an active intervention against the barriers that prevent the students from achieving their role as agents of history.

It is critical to remember that as revolutionary educators, we need to identify alternative subject positions that we might assume or counternarratives and countermemories that we might make available to our students to contest existing regimes of representation and social practice. But, we cannot be content to remain here. We need to identify the historical determinations of domination and oppression as part of the struggle to develop concrete practices of counterrepresentation. The search for external causes of domination and exploitation should

not be forgotten in the fashionable rush on the part of some postmodern educators to encounter and explain *différence* in subjective terms.

Emphasizing freedom as the realization of humanity's purpose, by which labor as a social means fulfills its human needs, is an important characteristic of the revolutionary working- class pedagogy that we are envisioning. It engages teachers as reflexive practitioners in their daily lives. To become critically reflective practitioners requires the ability to engage in complex analyses of social class accompanied by trenchant analyses of other forms of oppression as they are linked to capitalist exploitation—relations linked to race, gender, and sexual orientation. In short, it requires a comprehensive form of political agency that moves beyond the particular struggles of select groups (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2000).

A revolutionary working-class pedagogy seeks to transgress the boundaries that set high culture apart from popular culture and that privilege the former over the latter. Empowering the working-class and marginalized social groups in society means giving them an opportunity to interrogate theoretically (in the sense articulated by both Marx and Lenin) forms of both high culture and popular culture so that they can analyze, articulate, express, and construct meaning from multiple positionalities located in their lived experiences dealing with racism, sexism, and class exploitation. In addition, disenfranchised groups need to control the means of production of their symbolic economies, not to mention their material existence. Because a revolutionary working-class pedagogy also recognizes that the language and the discourses practiced within the classroom setting as well as in the workplace are ideologically tainted with the values, beliefs, and interests of the privileged social classes so as to conceal asymmetrical relations of power, an important step involves the encouragement of critical dialogues among teachers, students, and workers. The central purpose of such dialogues would be to raise class consciousness and help students and workers recognize how their subjectivities and social identities are configured in ways that are structurally advantageous to the status quo. This requires that students are able to see themselves in relation to their role as workers and to be provided with an opportunity to develop class consciousness. This does not mean that class consciousness excludes other aspects of identity. As Reed (2000) points out,

> The claim that being a worker is not the most crucial identity for members of marginalized groups is debatable. To say the least. But even if that claim were true, what it means simply is that people see themselves in many ways simultaneously. We all have our own sets of experiences fashioned by our social position, our family upbringing, our local political culture, and our voluntary associations. Each of these goes into the mix, modifying, cross-cutting, even at times overriding identities based on race or ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. . . . The fact of the existence of a capitalist economic order doesn't automatically tell us how people interpret their positions within it. Class consciousness, no less than other identities, is contingent, the product of political debate and struggle. (p. 137)

It is imperative in our view that the struggles of teachers in schools are linked to the struggles of other workers. A revolutionary working-class pedagogy of labor stresses that the empowerment of workers (i.e., teachers, postal workers, factory workers) can be successfully achieved through organizing labor unions that committed to anticapitalist struggle and a proletarian praxis. Yet, we must also emphasize that the political and economic empowerment of workers will depend on their active participation and self-education. Here we oppose the tradition of "workerism" that is often anti-intellectual and looks on theory with suspicion and often contempt. Instead, we applaud the recent struggles of intellectuals such as Pierre Bourdieu of France to coordinate the efforts of numerous European social movements through his organization, *Raisons d'Agir*. The ability of teachers and prospective teachers to interpret contemporary social relations of production as a set of interconnected social and material practices helps them to understand that success in a capitalist society is not the result of individual capacities but rather is constrained and enabled by asymmetrical relations of power linked to race, class, gender, and sexual economies of privilege. We believe that workers committed to social justice

have the opportunity to become liberatory intellectuals (what Antonio Gramsci, 1971, referred to as "organic" intellectuals) who possess the capacity to make meaningful choices and decisions in their lives (McLaren, Fischman, Serra, & Antelo, 1998). Thus, teachers who are central to the process of raising students' political consciousness must themselves become theoreticians of their own teaching practices. Accordingly, our task as organic and committed intellectuals is to create the conditions for the development of a revolutionary consciousness among the working class in general and teachers and students in particular.

In developing a framework for forging solidarity and collective action among workers and students, we find the three conditions that Weinbaum (1998) proposes to be particularly instructive. First, the central role of critical educators must be directed at facilitating dialogues among workers and students concerning everyday labor practices at the workplace and teaching practices within schools. Second, teachers and workers must be presented with opportunities for transforming those relationships that link their individual interests and issues at the local and community level to broader social and economic relations at a global level. And finally, Weinbaum stresses the active political role that critical educators in labor unions and schools must play both in their communities and in progressive organizations.

We believe that a revolutionary working-class pedagogy that aims at consciousness-raising, political activism, and social empowerment can be a critical tool for self-determination and also for transforming existing social conditions. Yet, we feel it is necessary to stress that working-class pedagogy can be effective only to the degree that marginalized social groups are able to organize into oppositional social and political movements against global capitalism and remain committed to a metanarrative of social justice both inside and outside the classroom. This stipulates that a stress on difference not undercut the possibility of political solidarity. As Reed (2000) notes,

> Insofar as identity politics insists on recognizing difference as the central truth of political life, it undercuts establishing a broad base as a goal of organizing. Its reflex is to define ever more distinct voices and to approach collective action from an attitude more like suspicion than solidarity. (p. xxii)

CONCLUSION: TEACHERS AS ACTIVISTS

Capitalism cannot remain a sustainable social and economic system under the guidance of neoliberal free-market economics without periodic wars and financial crises. Following Marx, we believe that the exploitation powered by capitalist social relations can only be overcome by the redistribution of wealth through class struggle and, finally, by the abolition of private property and capital itself.

A revolutionary working-class pedagogy seeks to reclaim revolutionary ideas from the frozen stasis of their exile since what John Leonard (2000) calls "the 1989 collapse of the nonprofit police states of Eastern Europe" (p. 14). This can be achieved, in part, by forming coalitions among gay and lesbian organizations, ethnic minority groups, indigenous movements, and labor constituencies of various stripes. Here we are not advancing the revolutionary adventurist rhetoric that Lenin warned against; rather, we are criticizing uncommitted intellectuals in academic circles who constrain rather than enable the advancement of a revolutionary praxis. Such intellectuals too often succumb to a paralysis of the political will.

Struggles against social and economic injustice can effectively be organized and articulated among various anti-imperialist groups when they coalesce around mutual and shared interests. Revolutionary movements can succeed on a global basis only when differences over ideological interests and political goals can be resolved or at least temporarily put aside. This is not an argument for a unification of several political parties under the leadership of one party (e.g., the Rainbow Coalition); rather, we are insisting that a successful revolutionary praxis must occur as the culmination of historical processes in which various social movements with

different interests develop an understanding of each others' often conflicting experiences as the victims of societal oppression.

A revolutionary pedagogy requires moving anticapitalist struggles in the direction of a new internationalism that extends beyond the nation-state. Organizing teachers as part of a larger compendium of social movements struggling toward a set of common objective goals (such as the abolition of economic exploitation, sexism, and racism) is necessary for the development of an effective revolutionary politics—one that can effectively and demonstrably create the necessary conditions for marginalized social groups to empower themselves (McLaren, 1998b; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 1999a, 1999b, 2000). This is not a romantic call to don a *bleu de travail* and rush the barricades erected by pro-capitalist ideologues but to understand how the forces of globalization and neoliberalism are not forces in their own right but are connected to a wider system of exploitation that is as old as capitalism itself. This is why the connective tissue that holds the various social movements in place should not be a commitment to counter-hegemonic struggle but a dedication to the achievement of proletarian hegemony.

Revolutionary pedagogy works towards creating a context in which freedom from the enslaving subordination of the individual to the crisis-prone nature of capital accumulation replaces the arid realm of necessity, where the satisfaction of social need replaces the entrapment within the division of labor, where the development of the creative capacities of the individual replaces the laws of capital and landed property, where worker self-rule and the free development of individuals replaces the current entrapment in the bureaucratization and atomization of social life.

Teacher educators as part of a broader revolutionary anticapitalist movement based on the development of a new class politics must be attentive to the diverse social and political interests as well as the needs of different constituencies in the struggle. Furthermore, Marxist revolutionary theory must be flexible enough to reinvent itself in the context of current social, economic, and political restructuring under the economic policies of neoliberalism. Marxist theory is not set forth here as a universal truth but as a weapon of interpretation. No theory can fully anticipate or account for the consequences of its application but remains a living aperture through which specific histories are made visible and intelligible. In this sense, Marxist theory provides the oppressed with the theoretical knowledge for analyzing and challenging capitalist production. It is here that Marxist theory can be used to advance proletarian hegemony through the work of organic intellectuals engaged in revolutionary socialist praxis aimed at the overthrow of the bourgeois state.

The Battle in Seattle can teach educators important lessons (Rikowski, in press). For instance, we recognize that there are times when anticapitalist struggles require an organized revolutionary class that has, in the course of its protracted political activities, gained a significant measure of class consciousness and recognizes itself not only as a class in itself but also as a class for itself. Yet, there are other moments when anticapitalist struggles take the form of what Jim Hightower (cited in Marshall, 2000) refers to as "spontaneous and unauthorized outbreaks of democracy," as in the case of the anti–World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. There are moments, too, when class struggle can consist of isolated individual acts of resistance against corporate colonization and commodification of the life world. A case in point is the French farmer, José Bova, who protested against genetically modified food by driving his tractor into a McDonald's restaurant under construction in the south of France. All of these efforts have their importance. Yet our efforts, in particular, are in the direction of building an organized revolutionary class. Here we struggle against attempts to decenter and rearticulate contingency in which the social basis of exploitation is dissolved beyond class politics. In this regard, the concept of globalization needs to be reformulated so that historical subjects or actors are granted the potential to challenge the hegemony of international capital in the defense of justice, solidarity, and the working class. We must not allow our individual acts of resistance

to lead to reformism or economism or to derail the proletarian movement from its anti-capitalist struggle and its "protracted, all-encompassing assault upon the state and the capitalist class" (Holst, in press).

Finally, we want to emphasize that although social transformation is achieved, in part, by structures put in place by historical necessity, to move beyond these structures requires the exercise of considerable political agency. It is by means of exercising this agency through collective struggle that the limits of social transformation set by existing historical structures can be laid bare and eventually transcended. We are referring to agency as a form of both intellectual labor and concrete social practice—in short, a critical praxis. This requires, in the words of David McNally (1993), "treating human beings as 'both authors and actors of their own drama' " and situating their actions in the context of the development of their productive forces (p. 153).

This article has emphasized how fundamentally important it is for teachers to be politically engaged in revolutionary class struggle both inside and outside the precincts of their classrooms. A revivified and refigured critical pedagogy offers one such framework for the creation of contemporary forms of revolutionary struggle, some foundational aspects of which we have attempted to describe above.

NOTE

1. *Cultural capital*, a term made popular by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, refers to "ways of talking, acting, and socializing, as well as language practices, values, and styles of dress and behavior" (McLaren, 1997, p. 193). According to McLaren:

> Schools systematically devalue the cultural capital of students who occupy subordinate class positions. Cultural capital is reflective of material capital and replaces it as a form of symbolic currency that enters into the exchange system of the school. Cultural capital is therefore symbolic of the social structure's economic force and becomes itself a productive force in the reproduction of social relations under capitalism. (p. 193)

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Peter McLaren *is a professor in the graduate school of education and information studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. He teaches in the urban schooling division. He is the author and editor of more than 35 books on critical pedagogy, critical ethnography, critical literacy, the sociology of education, and Marxist social theory. His most recent book is* Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution *(2000, Rowman & Littlefield). His works have been published in 13 languages.*

Ramin Farahmandpur *is a doctoral student in the University of California, Los Angeles, graduate school of education and information studies, urban schooling division. His current areas of interest include globalization, critical pedagogy, and Marxist social theory.*