

Becoming Through Revolutionary Pedagogy: An Interview with Curry Malott and Derek R. Ford

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Abstract

*In this interview, Curry Malott and Derek R. Ford discuss their new book, *Marx, Capital, and Education: Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Becoming*. The interview begins with a general inquiry into their intellectual backgrounds as scholar-activists and, importantly, comrades. The authors then discuss the process of collaborating together on the book itself and its content. In writing the book, the authors were “particularly interested in the role of education in revolution” and, thus, the role of comradeship for resisting the reproduction of capitalist social relations. In this regard, the book is an intervention linking Marxist educational theory with critical pedagogy for a revolutionary critical pedagogy of becoming that reclaims the radical roots of critical pedagogy. The authors contextualize revolutionary critical pedagogy with examples from the Ferguson rebellion in the United States. Lastly, Malott and Ford share their current and future research projects.*

Keywords: Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy, Marxism, Communism, Protest Movements

The entire movement of history, as simply communism’s *actual* act of genesis—the birth act of its empirical existence — is, therefore, for its thinking consciousness the *comprehended* and *known* process of its becoming.

—Karl Marx, *Private Property and Communism*, 1844

Introduction

Marxist educational theory and critical pedagogy have gained some traction in the 21st century. While inroads advancing Marxist educational theory from the late-1970s to the 1990s were productive, they were also seen as debilitating for a number of reasons, including what Malott and Ford argue is the field's anti-communist orientation. During the late-1990s, spurred by Glenn Rikowski's (1997) "Scorched Earth," Peter McLaren awoke from his post-1995, postmodern "dogmatic slumber" to interrupt the tide ashore by uniting Marxist-humanist praxis with a critical pedagogy that had been domesticated by postmodern obscurity, where everything is something, something is nothing, and nothing is everything—that is, where knowledge is reduced to and untied for the reproduction of capitalist social relations. Hence, borrowing from Paula Allman, McLaren termed the new inroad "revolutionary critical pedagogy." While revolutionary critical pedagogy has advanced over the years, guided by McLaren and Marx's critique of political economy, McLaren (2015) admits one of the "most pathfinding and important" (p. xi) works for revolutionary critical pedagogy is Curry Malott and Derek Ford's (2015) *Marx, Capital, and Education: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Becoming*.¹

The paper contributes to Marxist educational theory an interview conducted with Malott and Ford, who speak at length about their book, *Marx, Capital, and Education* and its role as a source for pedagogical, revolutionary transformation through the generation of a Marxist critique and imagination. The phenomenological interviewing method provided the guiding structure with three criteria adapted for this paper (Bevan, 2014): (a) contextualizing experiences (i.e., background), (b) apprehending experience (i.e., experience writing the book), and (c) clarifying experience through variation of experiences expressed through the authors' current and forthcoming research projects. The interview was designed as both semi-structured and unstructured, and it was conducted online using Google Docs from 9 August 2015 to 20 October 2015.² The interview is divided into three parts. First, it begins with an inquiry into the authors' intellectual backgrounds as scholar-activists and, more importantly, comrades. Secondly, the authors discuss their book and how they were "particularly interested in the role of education in revolution" and, thus, the role of comrades in resistance. The authors contextualize pedagogical resistance with examples from the Ferguson rebellion in the United States. Lastly, Malott and Ford share their current and future research projects.

The Interview

Background

ZANE WUBBENA (ZW): Let's start with a general inquiry into both of your intellectual backgrounds to give readers who are not familiar with your work an idea of your theoretical and practical identity.

DEREK FORD (DF): That's a good place to start. Theoretical and political identities are really important, and there is a really unfortunate trend today, at least on the left in the U.S., to avoid such identification. Even if one subscribes to several tendencies, and even if these are contradictory, they should be identified. At least if we are trying to engage in a political project. I am a communist, and I was a communist, and a communist organizer, before I became an academic, and even before I became a Marxist. I think that is important for understanding my research and the way that my research and organizing relate.

I am still working through this narrative, and it's getting long in my head. I know we have a lot to cover, so I'll keep it pretty brief. I became a communist when I was really young through the influence of a friend and his family, who hailed from India and had historical connections with the Communist Party there. When I was still in middle school I became involved in activism, first around queer issues in my school and then around police brutality in the city of Syracuse, where I grew up. I have been active since then. In terms of my intellectual development, the next spurt was in my undergraduate studies at Goucher College in Baltimore. I took Marx seriously in school and I was also introduced to radical and communist philosophers like Althusser and Deleuze by Steven DeCaroli. I also studied with Margret Grebowicz, who taught classes in feminist philosophy, queer theory, and Lyotard. She has had a big influence on my thinking. I majored in Peace Studies, and in that program I worked with Elham Atashi, who was the first person to help me critique the language of democracy. Our capstone class was taught by Ailish Hopper, who is an incredible poet, and it was an interesting experiment in anti-hierarchical education. I'm still trying to understand that class, actually, but I'm convinced that this was what first got me interested in educational theory.

During this time I became active in the national movement against the war on Iraq. I joined the ANSWER Coalition, which is the left-wing of the anti-war movement in the U.S., and the most active anti-imperialist and anti-war group in the country. Through my involvement in the war movement I was introduced to the Party for Socialism and Liberation. I had already identified as a Communist and I was open to the idea of joining a party. I quickly realized that the comrades who were doing all of the work organizing in this movement were members of the PSL, and I knew that I wanted to be part of a Party of action, not just thought. That's when my ideological training as a Leninist began. I grew up reading a good Marxist-Leninist newspaper, which I got a free subscription to in seventh grade, and they never stopped sending to my house, and that newspaper predisposed me to the Leninist outlook. But organizing with the PSL has probably been the most intellectually stimulating experience, because through this work I get to experience the taut relationship between theory and practice.

After some years working, I entered my graduate program, Cultural Foundations of Education at Syracuse University, with Marxist-Leninist commitments and also with leanings toward radical contemporary theories, like those of Judith Butler, Giorgio Agamben, and Michael Hardt and

Antonio Negri. There is a certain tension in my thinking here, and I hope that it's a productive one; it has certainly been present in my works since my very first articles. Obviously, a lot happened during my graduate studies, but one of the most important events was my encounter with the brilliant Marxist geographer Don Mitchell, who introduced me to the spatiality of the reproduction of and resistance to capitalism through the work of people like Henri Lefebvre and Neil Smith (in addition to his own). The relationship between pedagogy, critical geography, and revolution—and that between materiality and ideology—was the focus of my dissertation, and something that I am still exploring.

CURRY MALOTT (CM): Great place to start, many thanks Zane. Since our book takes an uncompromising communist position, I will briefly outline my own *coming to communism*. My own coming to communism and identifying as a communist is a much more recent one as compared to Derek. Where Derek came to communism before Marx, as he discussed above, I came to Marx before communism. As a result of a number of classes I was taking at Miami of Ohio as an undergrad in the early 1990s that focused on the colonization and subjugation of Native North America, anti-Black white supremacy, and inequality more generally, out of curiosity, I sought out Marx on my own in the library and have been a supporter ever since. However, this short engagement with Marx in no way situated me as a Marxist. My relationship with Marx would not begin again until after completing a Master's degree in sociology even though it was the same classes that led me to Marx that led me to sociology. That is, a year after leaving Miami of Ohio I was accepted into a Master's program in sociology at New Mexico State University (NMSU).

In that program at NMSU I had the opportunity to take many classes, such as a course on environmentalism that took a political economy perspective, which would contribute to my own intellectual and theoretical development priming me for an eventual full engagement with Marx. I also took several Women's Studies classes that led to a minor and a short engagement with socialist feminism further preparing me for Marx. However, I also took a class on social movements, which, consistent with the state of the Left at the time, emphasized new social movements, postmodernism, and the notion of horizontalism. That class really influenced me and my cohort, and helped lead us to enacting what we had learned in class. That is, it led me personally to a study of protest music focusing on punk rock, the scene I grew up in. My literature review included a history of protest music that traced its development in North America from the Wobblies protest songs agitating for the industrial workers of the world to seize the means of production and the revolutionary overthrow of society at the turn of the twentieth century, to the protest music associated with the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s focusing specifically on the history of the American Indian Movement and the Black Panther Party, to punk rock and hip hop situated in the context of a post-revolutionary, conservative era characterized by Reaganomics and heightened militarization and globalization. In the process of conducting my literature review I also came across and incorporated aspects of

critical pedagogy into my work. Giroux's work on resistance was the link for. That is, I was looking for a theory of resistance since, at the time, I was conceptualizing protest music as a form of resistance. At the time I did not home in on the fact that Giroux's theory of resistance, and critical pedagogy more generally, was part of the postmodern break from Marx and communism.

After completing a Master's in sociology and taking a year off to teach and organize, I entered the PhD program in Curriculum & Instruction at NMSU because of its focus on critical pedagogy, which played such a central role in my work on punk rock and new social movements. During my time in that program (2000-2004), I was introduced to the Marxist revolutionary pedagogy of Peter McLaren, which was the influence that finally catapulted me into a deep and sustained engagement with Marx. However, there is a deep anti-socialist socialism that runs through the North American left working as a ruthless cancer sapping its revolutionary potential.

It was not until I came into contact with the Party for Socialism and Liberation that I began the process of actually becoming not just a Marxist without communism, but a communist with Marx. This was not an easy nor a fast process for me. I began the process of joining the PSL in 2012, but still have not become a full member. What finally pushed me into communism was the process of writing with Derek. He challenged a position I was, at the time, reproducing in my work. That is, the position that the Soviet Union was never really socialist, but rather a form of state capitalism. For communists this position represents a betrayal of the proletarian camp of the global class war. It also represents a departure from Marx's revised Hegelian conception of dialectics and historical change. That is, it ignores the larger imperialist context of the state terrorism directed toward the proletarian class camp subverting actually existing socialism as well as revolutionary movements within imperialist states. Relatedly, the bourgeois critique against the Soviet Union and other workers' states is based on an unrealistic utopianism that assumes worker states should emerge already perfectly worked out. Marx was not ambiguous in his insistence that communism will not emerge magically separate from capitalism, but can only ever develop out of capitalism, which can only ever happen developmentally. Again, this conception of historical change is the basis for the concept of becoming informing *Marx, Capital, and Education*.

ZW: And, how did your encounters with each other eventually result in *Marx, Capital, and Education*?

DF: The process of writing the book happened really organically. Curry and I met through a mutual comrade, and we saw each other once in 2013 and again in 2014 at the Critical Theories in the 21st Century conference at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. We had spoken about collaborating at various times, then in September 2014 Curry sent me a message over Facebook asking if I wanted to join him in a piece he was writing on Marx's *Critique of the Gotha*

Programme. That was the first time that we had thought collectively together, and we clicked. We finished the article in a few weeks, and the process was easy and productive. With each draft we sent to the other we clarified our analysis and came to a collective position. Working with Curry on this project forced me to go back to Marx again and read him educationally, and to take his whole corpus into account. Before this I was a bit of an Althusserian when it came to Marx's early work, and I've come around a bit on that since writing this book with Curry.

We kept on writing together and one day in December we realized that we had almost written a book, and we decided to finish that book. We sent the draft off to Peter McLaren, who had previously read some of the chapters, because we wanted to put it in the Peter Lang series that he co-edits with Michael Peters. McLaren was really enthusiastic about it and offered to write the foreword, which he did after the manuscript went through the review process. While that was happening, I asked an artist that I know, Sarah Pfohl, who teaches at Central Michigan University, to do the cover art. She agreed and after a few rounds of sketches, photographs, and collages, we settled on the current cover, which we think not only illustrates the trajectory of the book but also adds to that trajectory.

CM: Yes, I think Derek summarizes our engagement nicely, and situates the reference I made above about moving toward communism, in the larger context of our collaboration. The debate me and Derek had about actually existing communism informed the development of the book fundamentally.

Before inviting Derek to co-author the essay focused on Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, I had written an essay focused on Marx's correction of Hegelian dialectics as articulated in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. It was in that essay that I began to take up McLaren's call for a Marxist humanism of becoming by grounding it in a systematic analysis of Marx. This Marxist conception of becoming, focused on the process of becoming communist, came to inform the critical pedagogy of becoming we have developed in *Marx, Capital, and Education*.

ZW: What's interesting, in regard to your comment Curry, that there is a "deep anti-socialist socialism that runs through the North American left working as a ruthless cancer sapping its revolutionary potential" is how the Russian Revolution of 1917 coincided with the first official propaganda office in the United States, the Committee on Public Information (CPI), or more commonly referred to as the Creel Commission. I believe it started in April of 1917 and was led by people like George Creel, Walter Lippmann, Edward Bernays. This US propaganda office certainly has played an intergenerational role in your observation, so much so that it becomes quite interesting to probe this ingrained anti-socialist sentiment, which is so rhetorical and isn't really grounded (especially concerning the historical progression, the feudalism status of Russia,

rather than advanced capitalism). I think, in fact, this speaks to the first tenet of the critical pedagogy you both have outlined in your book: reject and reframe anti-communist sentiment.

The Book: *Marx, Capital, and Education*

ZW: This is a great place to pivot into the text of the book. I know we have limited space, so I'll try to be selective in my questioning. Could you provide a brief synopsis to tell readers about your book (in order to provide them with some context)?

DF: We take as a starting point that revolution is once again on the agenda, around the world and in the U.S., and as educators, educational scholars, and organizers, we are particularly interested in the role of education in revolution. We see education as having a dual role, one epistemological and another ontological, one about the ways in which we understand and see ourselves, others, and the world, and the other about the ways in which we are with ourselves, others, and the world.

The book is primarily an intervention in “critical education” or “critical pedagogy,” but it is also an intervention in the left in general. Regarding ontological transformation, we have found that the educational left has been shoddy at best—and silent at worst—about how this type of change actually takes place. In general we would argue that this type of educational work has been reduced to work in curriculum, talking about what we should teach, and so on. While this is definitely important, there is more to it than content. This is why we concern ourselves with becoming. We insist on the role of negation in the process of becoming, and this allows us to make an argument for immanence. The future, we hold, is always *only* immanent in the present. This is not to say that nothing truly new can take place, for we insist that revolution is precisely a radical rupture in the current order of things, a rupture such that a return to the previous era can never take place. It is rather to insist that no new developments arise out of thin air. Actually, that's an incorrect statement, but one that confirms our argument: thin air *exists*, and so when something comes out of thin air was already immanent in that very air!

This is all a matter of understanding and comprehension, of course, and so we work in the book to present an understanding of contemporary operations of exploitation and oppression. This is necessary because we currently have a limited and limiting understanding of these operations, and nowhere is this more evident than in our current obsession with “neoliberalism.” Aside from the fact that neoliberalism is rarely defined in any satisfactory way, neoliberalism is just one part of a broader global class strategy, which Curry hinted to above. Neoliberalism was an attack on workers in imperialist states—like the U.S. and Britain—but it was part of a general wave of counterrevolution against all workers and oppressed people worldwide. On the flipside, the gains that workers made in imperialist states to which neoliberalism was a response were part of a wave of global revolutionary offensive. We are calling here for a real internationalism, and we

believe that in the U.S. we have a lot of work to do in generating such a program of solidarity. There is a deep-seated national chauvinism in the U.S. working class, especially amongst white workers. It's really evident on the left, and we see it most clearly in the left's participation in imperialist war hysteria.

Just take a look at how many U.S. left groups lined up behind the Pentagon's campaign against Libya. Not just the usual suspects like the left-liberals, but many so-called "peace" and "socialist" groups, like the International Socialist Organization and United for Peace and Justice, supported this Western war against a sovereign African nation. Even that darling of the U.S. left, Noam Chomsky, supported the bombing! They bought wholesale the Pentagon's line that Gaddafi was going to commit a genocide in Benghazi. Something had to be done! It was as if they completely forgot how, in every U.S. imperialist war, they always come up with some justification about freedom, democracy, protecting innocent civilians, and so on. The script is the same over and over again. And why should the imperialists change it? It works! Every "Free Tibet" and "Save Darfur" bumper sticker attests to this success.

We see this book, and our project as a whole, as countering this type of national chauvinism, which is intimately connected with anti-communism. Only by grasping the contours of our current moment can we adequately formulate and enact resistance. One area where we make this connection between epistemology and ontology is in our chapter on Ferguson.

CM: Indeed, our chapter on Ferguson deals explicitly with the ontology or the nature of reality within the social universe of capital by situating the police killings of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and countless others, within the terrorist energy of capital itself. That is, the state-sanctioned murder of Black lives is best understood within the tendency of capital to work labour to death unless regulated or slowed down by proletarian resistance. Marx's detailed study of capital's general law of accumulation allows the communist pedagogue to create the knowledge needed to enact a revolutionary practice. The critical pedagogue, especially the more privileged white critical pedagogue is an ally of the super-oppressed, the excluded, and the gentrified. The ally assumes the more privileged worker represents the height of possibility. The communist pedagogue, on the other hand, understands their place within the nature of capitalist reality as a comrade.

The notion of a comrade is important to a communist pedagogy because a comrade cannot exist outside of organized resistance—resistance against capitalism and its ideological apparatuses such as white supremacy. The comrade and the communist party from which her and his existence depends, is an ontological necessity of the communist pedagogy of becoming advanced throughout our book.

It is Marx's critique of political economy that allows us to understand the role of white supremacy, and its consequence of creating monumental differences in the life experiences and expectations of white versus Black workers, as central to capital's ability to continue to function as such—as the exploiter of labour power. Marx, in other words, is fundamental for developing a thorough understanding of capital's cynical recklessness and the routine murder of Black lives. Our pedagogy of becoming draws on Marx providing us with a way out. That is, a way to see a communist future immanent within the contradictions of the capitalist present.

DF: The move from ally to comrade is an important one for us. A comrade is a co-conspirator, one who organizes and shares in the same fate as others while understanding their particular subject position within the totality and acting from that particular position. But comradeship doesn't glorify difference over unity, which often results in inaction and provides all sorts of excuses for not getting involved in the work of organizing and agitating. Now, it's absolutely crucial that we be conscious of our social positionality and that we take this into consideration in theorizing and acting. For example, both Curry and I are white, and that is relevant in the work that we do in relationship to movements against police brutality, which are always racialized. It's not our role to be in the leadership of those movements, but as critical educators we can offer contributions to the movement. Importantly, however, those contributions are made through our consultation with that movement, which is mediated through the multi-national and mule-national Party. Our thinking here comes from Harry Haywood, and if you haven't read his autobiography, *Black Bolshevik*, you should definitely check it out.

ZW: I think that last point is an important point—that the glorifying of difference over unity can become quite stagnating for praxis, for reflection and action, especially in relation to the cultural or discursive. It reminds me of an early 1990s BBC documentary, “Los Angeles: City of the Future?” Edward Soja provides a descriptive-analysis of the Bonaventure Hotel located in downtown Los Angeles, where the internal architecture is that of a postmodern space. At both an ontological and epistemological level, the postmodern glorifying of difference usually takes the form of a claim to multiple realities, multiply knowledge without consideration for the consequences, as if multiple absolves consequence. But, by drawing on Fredric Jameson's labour, Soja critiques this space of glorified difference, in that, in difference there is no direction with the consequences becoming quite pointed—we end up submitting ourselves to authority, even if no authority can be located. In this sense, and I think this is, for example, the problem with fields like multicultural education and diversity studies, is that they end up submitting themselves to authority, the internal logic of capital made observable by its effects, its consequences.

This takes me to another point you both mention, and I'll ask my question here. Derek you mentioned that “we currently have a limited and limiting understanding” of how capitalism operates, and this point was followed up with something you said, Curry, that “Marx's detailed

study of capital's general law of accumulation allows the communist pedagogue to create the knowledge needed to enact a revolutionary practice." What do you think is the most important thing to understand about Marx's critique of political economy—that is, at its most basic level, the law of accumulation, or how capitalism actually works, or functions, according to its internal logic?

DF: I like how you framed it as Marx's critique of political economy, because in my understanding that is what births Marx's thought, including—if I may use Althusser's distinction—the philosophy of dialectical materialism and the science of historical materialism. For me, it is always a question of what is the most glaring or heightened contradiction of a moment; what contradiction can we harness and organize around and against right now? So the question of what is most important to understand depends on historical conditions. I would say that right now the contradiction of the realization of value.

Surplus value, as we all know, results from the worker producing more value than represented by their wage, which generally corresponds to socially-necessary labour. Yet this is only the production of surplus value. And if the worker is paid less than the amount they produce, how can all of the products that they produce be realized? Of course, capitalists, landlords, and other classes help realize some of this. But if capitalists realized all of their surplus value, then they would stop accumulating surplus value, and they would cease to be capitalists. This is one of the main contradictions that has given shape to our world, and it occupied the thought of Rosa Luxemburg, Nikolai Bukharin, and V.I. Lenin—the great theorists of imperialism. In the *Grunrisse* notebooks Marx wrote how the world market is given in the very concept of capital itself, and this is an expression of that tendency. The need for markets to realize surpluses drove processes of colonialism and imperialism. Today imperialism is still salivating over certain territories. Because today the global order is dominated by capital—as opposed to much of the 20th century when there was a strong socialist alternative—imperialist countries like the U.S. are trying to pry open not only socialist states but independent states as well.

And even within the U.S. we can see this contradiction heightening social antagonism. With wages depressed and depressing further, the precarisation of work, and so on, there is a serious gap between wages available and values that need to be realized. This gap is one of the things that Keynesianism, or social democracy, sought to address, and it is an important way to understand the contemporary economic and social crisis within the United States and how that relates to U.S. imperial projects.

CM: Toward these ends we spend a great deal of energy unpacking many of the intricacies and counter-intuitive tendencies of how surplus value is accumulated as not a static system, but is an ever-evolving and extending process marked by cyclical crisis and constant disruptions. The tendency toward proletarian immiseration and degradation, of course, is both propelled and

justified by xenophobia, racialization and sexist discrimination. In this context the insights of ethnic studies are invaluable, the Black Radical Tradition, for example, represents a tradition of militancy no serious communist party could fathom ignoring or discounting. The theoretical work of Huey P. Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party established in 1966, for example, offers key insights building on the Soviet Union's conceptions of national oppression and the ways capitalist states not only colonize external states, but how they engage in a colonialist relationship with internal oppressed nations, such as the Black Nation. The Black Panther Party could therefore be conceptualized as a communist party engaged in an anti-colonialist struggle against the occupying state (i.e. the United States). The uprisings and rebellions within Black working class communities in the present era, from Ferguson to Baltimore, can therefore be conceptualized as spontaneous anti-colonialist beginnings of a potentially anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist revolution. Rather than viewing them as happening in Black neighbourhoods, a more communist pedagogical approach would be to say these spontaneous riots are emerging within an internally oppressed nation.

Future Research Projects/Areas of Study

ZW: What are both of your current and future research projects that we can look forward to, whether together or individually?

DF: Well, at the same time that we were writing this first book I was writing my dissertation—which I just defended—and that focused on developing a revolutionary critical pedagogy for space. That work ended up being framed around the Baltimore Rebellion, and I am doing a study on that uprising and the movement that it birthed. I have been building with comrades and allies in Baltimore over the past few months, interviewing activists and organizers there and participating in actions and demonstrations. I am interested in studying the pedagogy of the rebellion, and in generalizing lessons for the revolutionary movement, because I think what happened in Baltimore was many ways the most advanced rebellion that the U.S. has seen in years.

I am currently working on a book for Lexington Books that is tentatively titled, *Political economy and alterity in education: Pedagogy, materialism, and subjectivity*. This book examines forms of subjectivity and relationality that are immanent in contemporary relations of production and association, and investigates how we can pedagogically animate these forms in struggles against capitalism. This project is bringing me back to the work of Lyotard, whose work hasn't been really thought of educationally (other than *The postmodern condition* and *The different*). I think that this project will be an expression of that tension I was speaking to at the beginning of the interview; it exists somewhere between Lenin, Lyotard, and Leila Khaled. I'm about halfway through that book (I think), and so far the most prominent themes are incommunicability (what Lyotard calls "the secret"), use/use-value, and study. But then I've also got a chapter planned on

the 1956 uprising in Hungary, which was a fascist counter-revolutionary attempt, one that prompted intervention from the USSR. Unfortunately, and quite incredibly, this intervention caused several academic Marxists to leave the Party and the communist movement (including Lyotard). I'll have to see where the book ends up, of course. I never know what I am going to write when I write—and that's really why I write.

And Curry and I have been busy thinking and writing together. Since I moved down to Philadelphia we have been organizing together, too, and that has really propelled our collaboration. While we stuck fairly close to Marx in our first book—because we don't see Marx actually being deeply engaged on his own terms in education—we are currently examining other communist and third world revolutionaries and theorists, like Khaled, Alexandra Kollantai, and Blanca Canales.

Pretty much as soon as we got this book off to the press we started thinking about our next book. Initially we were thinking of a trilogy. This first book focused heavily on production, and we were thinking that the next book would focus on the role of education in the circulation of capital. This would follow the first two volumes of capital. And the third book would focus on pedagogy, on ways of teaching and educating. But that plan has changed a bit. We are still studying together, but we aren't in such a rush to actualize that studying just yet. Some of the ideas that will be in the next book though, we have been developing. I have an article coming out in *Critical Education* soon that looks at the Party-form, for example, and Curry is doing an important book on the history of education and the global class war, but I'll let him talk about that.

See, about our recent thinking: This book was framed as a revolutionary critical pedagogy, and we were seeking to reclaim the radical roots of critical pedagogy. But that particular aspect—the dialogue with critical pedagogy—wasn't a huge point in the book, which was mostly about Marx and communism. So we wanted to take that notion more seriously, and we started revisiting early critical pedagogy to find these radical roots.

CM: That's right Derek. The time we have spent thinking and organizing together has moved us into a more confrontational position with critical pedagogy. As Marxist-Leninist communist-activists, we quickly found that the emergence of critical pedagogy in North America began based on a rejection of Marxism and actually existing socialism. We have both mentioned bits and pieces of this critique in a few essays we have written separately from each other, but are currently engaging a more systematic critique. We expect this analysis to be received as highly controversial. In this context, we are working on developing a much more communist pedagogy focusing on the indispensability of the party form. The circuit of capital as a whole offers a larger global context from which the system is situated as well as offering a more complete or systematic understanding of the separate but inseparable components or stages in production.

With Pierre Orelus, I have been working on developing a fairly new approach to the history of education drawing on Part I of Marx and Engels' *German Ideology*. We outline a materialist approach from which we use to analyse and compare history of education texts. The result of this work is a Marxist history of the history of education. This work points to larger insights concerning Marxist history in education that, unlike previous work, it takes a systematic approach of Marx and Engel's whole system of thought. This approach offers unique insights and approaches to the field.

Currently, I am developing an analysis of the current attack on public sector unions conceptualized as part of capital's counter to the tendency to the falling rate of profit. However, unlike current trends in educational critiques of neoliberalism, I argue that the attack on unions are part of capital's war against the global proletarian class camp from China, Korea, Cuba, to the Black Nation within the U.S. to the independent nations of Syria, Iraq, Palestine, etc. Drawing on Marx to understand these trends within the laws of capitalist accumulation, I also use them to situate Lenin's critique of trade unions as too often diluted by bourgeois compromises and barriers to the working class engaging in more serious attacks against capitalism. This work advocates for the radicalization of trades unions by rank and file activists, such as teachers, using work actions as opportunities to raise consciousness and move members toward the communist party form. Lenin's conception of the strike as workers' school of war begin to lay the foundation for outlining a Leninist communist pedagogy. Within this discussion Marx's scientific analysis of the basic laws and tendencies of capital, as outlined in *Marx, Capital, and Education*, remain fundamental.

Finally, I am bringing these new developments together in a new book, *History and Education: Engaging the Global Class War*, which will be published in the same Peter Lang series (i.e. McLaren and Peters' Struggle and Education series) as *Marx, Capital and Education*. This new book takes Sam Marcy's concept of the global class war, developed in the 1950s, as the larger context to better understand the global development of capitalism and the role of education in both advancing bourgeois society and subverting it. The book therefore calls for a communist pedagogy. A significant development in this book is a conscious break from the tradition of "critical pedagogy," which was first used by Henry Giroux in the early 1980s as a conscious break from not only Marxism and the idea of communism, but from actually existing communism as well. Critical pedagogy was created as a break from the Marxism of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Bowles and Gintis' *Schooling in Capitalist America*. Even though it is true that critical pedagogy has become increasingly domesticated and watered down, it's birth was an act of counterrevolution itself. The shift to the idea of a communist pedagogy in name is therefore considered here an advancement.

The global class war framework adopted in the book is coupled with Harry Haywood's conception of national oppression, which he adopted from the Soviet Union during his time at

the Comintern in Moscow in the 1920s. Haywood reworked the concept to understand the Black Belt in the American South as an oppressed nation with a right to self-determination and armed struggle.

Adding another layer of analysis here I then bring in the notion of the settler state from Indigenous studies, which allows the book to situate the Communist Horizon within the context of the reluctance to adopt a Marxist analysis that many Indigenous activists and scholars continue to argue stems from their experience with white (i.e. settler) Marxists and communists who believe that the worlds' Indigenous peoples must give up their tribal ways and identities to be able to advance past the capitalist present and into a communist future.

History and Education, however, argues that communism, with its notion of oppressed nations still intact, provides the surest path for settler states, and other imperialist nations, to be transformed into workers' states where all oppressed nations have a right to self-determination, independence, and their national territory. This framework is then employed to offer a corrected history of workers' states, beginning with the Soviet Union, and the more recent attack on independent states. Following Jodi Dean and Michael Parenti the book therefore offers counter-arguments to the anti-communist propaganda that has saturated the West and infested its Left since 1917.

Conclusion

In this paper, Malott and Ford discussed their book, *Marx, Capital, and Education*. The authors provided phenomenological insight that not only contextualized the book and their experiences, but also situated the role of revolutionary critical pedagogy within the larger project for social transformation, a transformation where an alternative future begins within the present moment through praxis. This moment is where comrades join together in revolutionary critical pedagogy to resist the capitalist mode of production and subsequent reproduction of capitalist social relations. While informed by revolutionary critical pedagogy, resistance to the re/production of capitalism provides for critical scholar-activists to engage with critical educational theory and practice on Marx's own terms, rooted in his critique of political economy. With an anchor in the critique of capital, revolutionary critical pedagogy is more relevant and timely today than ever before, as Ford notes, "today the global order is dominated by capital—as opposed to much of the 20th century when there was a strong socialist alternative." In liberal democracies like the United States, the notion of democracy is subsumed within and made synonymous with capitalism, allowing for a pervasive, nationalistic rhetoric *for* capitalism to be appropriated as democratic and, thus, mask the totalitarian roots of capitalism. These totalitarian roots are expressed in corporate structures and, more importantly, the hierarchical orderings of policies and arrangement of social relations that pass as common sense in, for example, the organizational structure of public schools and national voting processes, mediated by the

Electoral College, in the United States. Thus, as McLaren (2015) writes, “Malott and Ford mince no words about the importance of a communist destination for humanity” (p. XII).

Revolutionary critical pedagogy can unmask the totalitarian roots of capitalism and its internal logic related to oppression and exploitation. Comradeship, thus, plays an important role for social transformation through a steadfast commitment to both scholarly research and activist organizing for a more human, communist future.

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Notes

1. Malott and Ford (2015), use “revolutionary critical pedagogy” and its variants, “critical revolutionary pedagogy”, “critical pedagogy”, “critical pedagogy of becoming”, “pedagogy of becoming”, “Marxist-Humanist revolutionary pedagogy”, “Marxist pedagogy of becoming”, “Marxist critical pedagogy”, “Marxist pedagogy”, “Marxist-informed critical pedagogy”, “socialist pedagogy”, and “anti-capitalist pedagogy” as interchangeable. They note the interchangeable use of “critical pedagogy of becoming” and “Marxist pedagogy of becoming” in their book (p. 11). However, the terms I’ve included here are based on my review of how “pedagogy” was signified in their book. The interchangeable use of revolutionary critical pedagogy is important, but it is not exclusive. Critical pedagogy may also signify “pedagogy” underpinned by postmodern obscurity. This postmodern variant of critical pedagogy lends itself to difference subsumed within and made to perpetuate the capitalist mode of production through the reproduction of capitalist social relations. This point is important, especially when considering critical disability studies, where ability and disability do not signify a binary, but rather the presumed binary represents a point of demarcation, where the exclusion of differences the point at which disabled people (and their potential for exchange-value) are considered unproductive and, therefore, hinder capital accumulation.

2. Computer-mediated communication was used as the data collection technique (Davis, Bolding, Hard, Sherr, & Elford, 2004; Kazmer & Xie, 2008). The instrument for data collection was Google Docs: “A free, web-based word processor, spreadsheet, form, and data storage service that allows users to collaborate online by creating and editing shared documents” (Chu & Kennedy, 2011, p. 8). By utilizing an internet-based instrument, the interviewer and interviewees were able to forgo the practical constraints of space, being geographically positioned almost 2000 miles away (Austin, TX and Philadelphia, PA), and time. This time, or temporal mediation, allowed for increased “reflexivity by providing both the time and space for academics to construct, reflect upon and learn from their stories of experience” (James, 2007, p. 964). In addition, the online format helped to minimize interviewer bias from social presence while precluding the consequences of body language as a form of nonverbal communication (Murray & Sixsmith, 1998). While I (nor do the interviewees) endorse Google Docs, its use brings attention to the need to develop an alternative open source platform. Because, as critical political economy of social media and audience labour theory tells us, “surplus value can enter into the capital accumulation process and be commodified primarily by media companies” (i.e., Google Inc.; Fisher, 2010, 2015).

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