

Freire : Informal Education as Protest

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What can be learned in a social movement protest?

What might be learned during a political protest or in the evolution of a social movement? This paper would be incomplete if some historical facts were not part of the work. Long before Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy, people with disabilities were demanding their rights. A historical march on London was held in the spring of 1920. Two-hundred and fifty people who were blind marched with Lloyd George with concerns about the Blind Persons' Act. This piece of legislation changed the welfare statute in Britain and Ireland. These issues and subsequent protests had been in existence as far back as 1886. In this year a commission was created to research social and charitable provision for the blind. This commission recommended in 1889 that the nation create a system of workshops to offer work for blind persons. This of course “ depended, however, on a number of local factors being in place, not least of which was sufficient charity, wealthy patronage and widespread public interest” (Cathain, 2006, p. 11). The issue that must be understood by political activists is that this is charity by the wealthy; it was the wealthy that held the power to employ the blind, same as it is today. Choules (2006) suggests that at different times, there were initiatives that were directly concerned with the issue of social justice. However, the framing of these initiatives had been done by terms specified by the charity. Choules (2006) writes,

They were ‘sold’ to the powerful by convincing them of the ‘good’ that a more socially just approach would achieve. By appealing to a person’s moral goodness and sense of charity, many injustices were and continue to be abolished. In general terms however, charity alleviates short-term suffering without looking to remedy the underlying cause. Those who become the objects of charity are expected to respond with gratitude, and a dependency on charity will result. The negative social consequences that can result include loss of dignity and powerlessness (Choules, 2006, p. 281).

But historically, as well as today, activists need to recognize that apart from the veterans of war, people with disabilities have not been regarded with the same respect and rights as people without disabilities, even veterans have to struggle for their rights. To offer one small example; as explained by a Vermont court (Evans v. Johnson, 1894), the court could take “from the person the possession and control of his property and even his freedom of person, and commits his property, his person, his liberty to another” (Carey,

2003, p. 415). This passage illustrates the political position people with disabilities were in at the close of the nineteenth century.

But it wasn't just the loss of property and personhood that could be lost. It was also the law that set people with disabilities outside of the public domain. "Shall not expose himself to public view." Section 1009, and the title in the section of the Denver code itself read "Deformed, Diseased or Maimed Persons" in 1898 and (even more bluntly) "Deformed Persons" in 1886 (Schweik, 2009, p. 9). This history is important for today's political activists to appreciate because it offers a view of where this minority has been.

Schweik (2009) presses even further; "Paul Longmore, drawing on the pioneering work of TenBroek and Matson, shows how in fact "poor-relief and welfare policies have always inflicted a parallel moral stigma", just as intensively although sometimes inflicted differently on disabled people. Even though public policies in San Francisco, from 1867 to this day, ostensibly follows the poor-law model of separating the "worthy" from the "unworthy" poor, those policies, Longmore (2003) writes, "have also effectively erased that distinction by marketing people in both categories as unworthy." In the end, one way or another, "All are punished" (p. 240). San Francisco's sorting-out of infirm from unsightly kept the city officials busy by distinguishing which forms of disabilities were and which were not moral transgressions. According to Schweik (2009), the individuals sentenced to the almshouse were indefinite and hard to differentiate. People were lumped together, given the same punishment equally, as they were also hidden and discredited (p. 27).

The appeal of euthanasia was acknowledged for "grasping, pain-racked" bodies of "the mostly misshapen physically and morally" where "cure was out of the question," Warner et. al., argued,

finally against it on these grounds: By accepting the burden of protection we give pledge to our final interests in prevention. "Some talk", they continue, "extending the discussion from illness and disability to poverty more generally, as though extermination would be a remedy for pauperism... Possibly, but it would be a costly remedy biologically; and if we allow our instincts to compel us to forgo the use of it, we shall eventually find something better" (Schweik, 2009, p. 49).

This social movement must empathize with the seriousness of the work, even in historical terms. When extermination is mentioned as an option, the vision of the work must take an urgent turn.

Despite the history just demonstrated, there is a need to convince people that the oppression even exists. As an activist, I begin to understand that the road is much longer, much steeper than even I had imagined. Johnson (2003) writes; “When it came to disabled people, though, liberal’s views were similar to those of the anti’s. They believe disabled people faced essentially private, medical problems rather than problems of discrimination. What a disabled person needed, they felt, was medical intervention- a cure” (p. XIII).

Capitalism was never meant to benefit the masses, if we look at the work of Marta Russell. She writes; (1998) *The Godfather of capitalism, Adam Smith, in An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, recognized that class based policy was not beneficial to the democratic masses. He pointed out two centuries ago that “the vile maxim of the masters “was “all for ourselves’ and nothing for other people. ...Smith advocated for a capitalism that that would advance economic equality - something that has never materialized- and he opposed the concentration of wealth- something the U.S. government defends by protecting the rich against the poor (pg. 57).

Because Smith’s desire for equal advancement in economic advancement has not materialized, greed has consumed individual opportunities to advance, or even the ability to live a proper life. Poverty is an unacceptable circumstance for people to live. The chances only increase when the individual, or family member, has a disability. “According to these data, depending upon the extent of disability, people with disabilities are three times as likely to live in poverty as non-disabled people” (Batavia, 2001, p.142).

Political activism of ADAPT

To demonstrate the effectiveness of educating people during a protest, I offer my personal experience. In the fall of 1998, my husband and I attended and participated in a national protest with ADAPT. ADAPT is a national civil rights organization concerned for the civil rights of

people with disabilities. The focus of the organization at the time was deinstitutionalization. To be specific, our goal was to encourage the Democratic and Republican parties to pass a bill titled HR2020. This bill would have allowed federal funding for nursing homes to be redistributed, allowing some of the funds to go to community living arrangements, like the HUD Section 8 program. At the time of this protest, “Eighty-eight percent of the nursing homes in California are [were] for-profit corporations, they existed to make their shareholders money and they would cut corners of care to be ‘efficient’ money making machines” (Russell, 1998, p. 102).

This protest was just one of many actions organized to convince the representatives to pass HR2020. ADAPT had met twice a year to protest on behalf of this issue. I chose to become a member of this movement because I felt (and still do), that imprisoning one to one and a half million Americans is wrong. Further, the injustice that is typically imposed on these individuals is unconscionable. To look the other way would be wrong.

When we consider the pedagogical potential in political actions, what is of particular interest is the relationship of discourse and other social practices, relationships and structures. How language is used, the psychological and social constructs of the meanings are particularly interesting to the disability rights movement. The reason for this, as I have already stated, is that the movement is largely unrecognized by most people. So, seemingly to be perpetually starting at the beginning, we are very aware of language and how it can be used to our detriment.

The best education is always experience. What I witnessed in this action was an incredible resolve to wage this battle against our government. The methods used to teach were very simple and powerful. First, was the evident use of people with disabilities; any position or task that could be done by an individual with a disability was done. Our leaders were disabled. This was a very powerful statement. Even for me, a longtime activist, but conditioned by the general culture, it took a very conscious effort to listen to and be led by people with disabilities. But once affirmed this situation made so much sense. One instance that comes to mind is the man who directed the procession. An apparent quadriplegic, but unable to speak, he was still capable of telling people in the procession to stay close to the curb. Further, the attitudes of the others spoke

loudly. To not listen to him would have brought on serious social repercussions.

Even more powerful were the attempts of the police to control the situation. They insisted, in their actions, that our leadership were our non-disabled friends. One of their first tactics is to arrest the individuals without disabilities. Once this is accomplished they, I presume, expected the group to disperse. This ideology most assuredly comes from the false notion that people with disabilities are dependent. But once they recognize that not many things changed in the situation. That decisions are still being made, the protest took on a different tone.

Another method of teaching was the use of chants. One chant in particular, comes to mind. “JUST LIKE A NURSING HOME, YA CAN’T GET OUT”! This is a pithy little jingle that resonates in your mind for weeks. To make ourselves as clear as we can, ADAPT’s method is to get into a building and stay there. If access to the interior is not accomplished, then the action will surround the building, blocking the doors. The message is very clear- “JUST LIKE A NURSING HOME, YA CAN’T GET OUT”.

Despite all the arguments, protesters do not move. The only thing that will make a protester move is a word from a leader. The chants are designed to teach many things. Like any other protest, chants are used to echo to the protests and others that we are a group. One important service chanting gives are to support someone who may be in the midst of a struggle. To hear the voices and the ideology that you dedicate so much too helps to keep the individual focused on their work. The importance of this is immeasurable. When caught in a struggle with the police or someone from the other side, emotions run high. What is at risk is the individual’s safety. It is certainly not unheard of that a protester has been beaten by the police. Another item at risk is the reputation of ADAPT. ADAPT is non-violent! To change that reputation, even for a moment, could be disastrous. The danger is obvious. Riots can occur and our physical conditions can never match that of law enforcements. Our brute strength is in our argument. We go head to head with ideologies, and when that is challenged with a baton, we cannot lose our composure.

Another purpose of chanting is to educate others, passersby, the police, and the officials. Again,

the two ideologies are complicated, yet we live in a world of sound bites. This sound bite reiterates the demand for the people in negotiations. It begins the education process for the passersby.

One final method of education that is used by ADAPT is direct action. At one point during this action activists abandoned their wheelchairs and laid their bodies on the drive way in an effort to prevent people from leaving this building. To be very clear, this action took place over a three day period. ADAPT “hit”, or protested at the offices of the Democratic and Republican Party. We also “hit” the Health Education and Welfare (HEW) building. It was here where our, “residents for the day” attempted to use their vehicles, and the underground parking lot to escape. During protests like these, it is common for officials to evacuate the building. We laugh that they need to be protected from ‘those dangerous disabled people’. Our goal is to lock them in their building. We need to show our need for freedom by removing theirs, if only for a short time. Our approach will inspire panic and an evacuation will be attempted. But our only leverage is their temporary lack of freedom. As a result, our technique was to leave our chairs for the cold parking ramp.

What was the point?

The point was to shake up the internalized perceptions of everyone present. Starting with the government personnel and officials, we wanted to hear them say it out loud. People with disabilities are vulnerable, sick, weak, and cannot determine their own lives. The lesson offered to people with disabilities was that, the people showed that the limits of our abilities are not prescribed in a book, or a piece of legislation. Further, the weakness is not in our bodies, but in the minds and the souls of the individuals who dare to lock us up and sell us to the nursing home industry.

This point is reinforced by Evans, Evans and Kennedy, (cited in Choules, 2007) who states that the minority’s experiences are basically contrasted to that of people who are discriminated against. Because these oppressive practices are invisible, the consequences for social change education are typically denied in the United States (Choules p. 164). A good example of experiential education is the protest of people who were blind in 1939. Their goal was to

highlight poor working conditions and demand better working conditions. "... employing campaigning tactics and a militant posture unheard of until that moment and expressed in a language redolent of the modern disability rights movement" (Cathain, 2006, p. 9). It must have been an incredible eye opener to see these individuals being demanding. Insisting that they be heard and their demands be met. This force of power was certainly unexpected from this group of citizens. If the streets can be thought of as a classroom; this can be looked at from a Freirian perspective.

The consequence of this protest was to make visible people who are typically unseen and not heard from. This protest completely changed the public assumption that the minority's experiences typically contrast to that of people who are discriminated against. In this work (the protest), the roles were reversed and so, for a few hours, was the power structure.

Discourse

An important contribution to this discussion is Foley's (1999) the idea of discourse. "Discourse" refers to examples of spoken and written language, and can be analyzed as both a linguistic and a social phenomenon....For the sociologist the interest is in the relationship of discourse to other social practices, relationships and structures (p.15). The sociological discourses in this protest strained and challenged many social practices, relationships and ideologies, how could it not?

An interesting connection has been drawn between universal instructional design and multicultural education. If Barajas, Higbee and Thousands et, al. (cited in Johnson) are read carefully, it will be understood that, of late, scholars in education are beginning to examine the association between UID (universal instructional design) and the principles of multicultural education (Johnson p. 145 2005). One example is Brookfield's and Gramsci's analysis of social acquiesces as quoted by Choules (2007). Brookfield writes that people are beginning to understand how the lack of analytical judgment is used to accept unjust dominant ideologies but are unseen in everyday situations. At a certain point in time, they become aware of how capitalism imposes, covertly, a system of beliefs and assumptions that tend to validate and even support economic and political injustices "...An important element in this tradition is the

thoughts of Antonio Gramsci's (1978) whose concept of hegemony explains the way in which people are convinced to embrace dominant ideologies as always being in their own interests' (Choules 2007, p. 166). It is through these hegemonic idealism and practices that people surrender who they are to embrace a prescribed identity. The answer to this problem is the use of progressive education. "...the starting point of the educative process is the valuable knowledge and experience of oppressed peoples. The practice of education must be participative, radically democratic, and reject all forms of authoritarianism" (Choules 2007, p. 164). The perfect site for such education has to be a political protest.

The motivation for such sacrifices has to be seen in the ideological differences between the two groups. One group being the government, policy makers, police, and people who work beside them; the other group being ADAPT, specifically people with disabilities and those who are trapped by the current system. The ideology of the government and the general public stems, by and large, from two of three models of disability.

The medical model constitutes a frame work of medications, diagnosis and prognosis. Individuals who subscribe to this ideology of disability may be unable to view disability as a social or political frame. This inability or intentional decision turns the individual with a disability into a failed medical case. Since most disabilities are permanent, the individual loses the power possessed by 'a person' and becomes a patient. "For disabled people, the body truly has become a site of power/knowledge under the surveillance of medical experts who use the clinical gaze to identify deviance and disorder and to constitute the subject as a patient" Fox (cited in Reeve 2002). It is the understanding and the full appreciation of this ideology that must be learned and experienced during a political protest.

Reeve's (2002) defines the social model of disability as the public's perception of disability. How the public sees people with disabilities is also an important model. What people know, or think they know about this population is important because it is based on their experiences with disabilities. Problems arise when it is realized that an individual's experiences does not constitute a comprehensive collection of knowledge. "Another criticism of the social model of disability is that the focus has been on the 'public' experiences of oppression such as social barriers, at the

expense of the more 'personal' experiences of oppression which operate at the emotional level" Thomas (cited in Reeve, 2002).

The ideology held by most protesters is to view disability in the general nature of basic humanity. Just like there are a wide variety of skin tones, sexual preferences, there are also a wide variety of abilities. But the approaches to dealing with the disabling aspects are quite vast. The disability rights movement wants to deal with social issues such as unemployment of people with disabilities through social justice means. We know that there are limits to what people with disabilities can do. But these limits should not be determined by general ideology that blankets an entire minority. According to Buechler's (2000) idea on the resources mobilization paradigm, how protesters view the subject at hand, does have an impact on how they see themselves and the political action they are involved in.

The third element involves what McAdam calls cognitive liberation. This subjective factor refers to a change in group consciousness whereby potential protesters see the existing social order not only as illegitimate, but also as subject to change through their own direct efforts. (p. 37).

When teaching during a protest, using the critical pedagogical methods, it is important to remember and to ask the students to reflect on a liberal system of rules and regulations. Strict policies of compliance will only serve to perpetuate the oppression already present in the system. Reflect back again, Shor (1992) who wrote that; "To teach skills and information without relating them to society and to the students' contexts turns education into an authoritarian transfer of official words, a process that severely limits student development as democratic citizens" (p. 18). Students need to relate the world to themselves and their own lives. Elk, (2008) presents the important idea that critical pedagogy demands the realization that the standard curriculum does favor certain forms of knowledge over others. "To reduce the effects of this, it is important to affirm the values of the specific groups of students you are teaching, understanding the impacts of race, class, and gender" (p. 12).

When considering the ideal critiques of ideologies, such critiques will have the same effects on minorities that they do on individual from the dominant culture. Reading Choules (2007)

carefully, this author offers educational philosophies that must be analyzed and accompanied by other methods of simulating knowledge and retaining that knowledge, especially when learning with members from the dominant cultural group. This sensible process of critiquing education will rarely have the same positive affective components for people from the dominant culture (p. 166). Finding methodologies that will serve both groups will be challenging, but worthwhile.

Johnson's work seems extraordinary when balanced with Anderson's (2006); "...there has been limited consideration of disability in critical pedagogy. This omission of people with disabilities is puzzling given critical pedagogy's commitment to disrupt oppressive practices in the classroom and society at large" (p. 374). When balancing the excitement of Johnson's (2005) classroom with the idea that critical pedagogy has omitted this population from their ideology. The necessity to disrupt oppressive practices may not be more pressing than with people with disabilities.

The combination of disabilities and critical pedagogy is powerful, not just for the people it might empower, but the impact disability could make on the practice itself. "Disability is not just another specialty with concerns loosely related to other minorities. The experience of disability is relevant to all marginalized groups-for all groups have people with disabilities in them" (Anderson, p. 367 2006).

The use of critical pedagogy for adults with disabilities is powerful because it offers, not just new information, but also validation. Because it draws on the knowledge they already possess. But people with disabilities have been absent from the practice of critical pedagogy. Thousand et., al. (cited in Johnson), offer a needed starting point for discovering how inclusive pedagogical work can not only give the students what they need to learn, but also an element that lead to essential changes and social justice (Johnson p. 147 2005). The potential of this group and the effects of critical pedagogy are great. The most important part of this educational quest is the encouragement of people to be what they truly desire to be, regardless of the social pressures imposed upon them. Remember that Freire (2004) wrote; of the spirit of the oppressed... "Reality is what it is, and it is useless to fight." On the contrary, they bet on intervening in the world to rectify it, not to maintain it more or less as it is." (p. 39)

My positions as an educator, a woman with a disability and a student of critical pedagogy has brought me to an exciting crossroads. The passion to teach, reflections of social injustice and the promise of empowerment, offer me inspiration for the disability rights movement. If seen in an educational light, the effort to rework the ontological view of disability may be a dominant new beginning. Paulo Freire writes; (1992), “Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneous teacher and students” (p. 73). Freire’s vision was to give the power back to the students. He spoke of the student being, not only children, but also the peasants. People who needed to know that power lies within them. This is the power and the passion that may be gained at a protest.

Assessing critical pedagogy and its ability to improve the lives of people with disabilities, certainly a collective of approaches will bring the practice to an optimal ability. “By combining the perspectives, it is less likely that inclusively will reproduce the relations of inequality it seeks to redress, but instead will provide assets of principles that will assist educators in working for social justice” (Johnson, 2005, p. 146). The educator needs to be aware of the strong potential of reproducing the relations of inequality.

But the road to community unity will not be easy. Kent offered a method of education that thrives on conflict and challenges. Kent writes that problematic moments; “creates space for students and professors to reflect abstractly on discourses generated during intellectual activity” (Kent, 2008, p. 3). Kent (2008) contend that these moment help to destabilizes the subjective and inter-subjective epistemologies; these epistemologies are the processes that allows student to discover the solutions for themselves. This seemingly difficult exercise invites change in both the individual and the group’s understanding (p. 3).

When teaching people with disabilities, or about people with disabilities; in regard to the curriculum, that too must be changed without resentment, but with excitement and compassion. “Our curriculum should take us someplace better—someplace more humane and just; someplace in which the material and discursive practices of exclusion are challenged in our efforts to include” (Johnson 2004, p. 146).

This is the essence of critical pedagogy. Johnson (2004) offers that the critical part of this educational method is the palpable excitement of the instructor to create an environment that hears all voices. The classroom must be an environment where experiences are addressed and respected justly. “The inequalities that exclude bodies and voices marked as “different” will not be transformed” (p. 146). As educators of social justice, we have to be aware that the power of change comes from the willingness to see and accept difference as positive and privilege.

The personal power of protesting

Protesting for a cause you believe in can be very empowering. Empowerment is an essential element for teaching people to demand better than what society has presented to them. By using an educational system that reveals the inequality of various social systems, like the inequality between students and teachers, students learn to question authority, status, and the entire social structure itself. McLaren & Torres (cited in Johnson 2004) wrote about the distinguishing marks of critical pedagogy are its emphasis on student involvement in both the teaching and learning processes. In this process there is a continued push towards challenging unequal relationships of power. It is this idea that will free the participants from their fears and allow them to really challenge the status quo. According to Johnson (2004), this progressive form of education, critical pedagogy, is an intellectual project that is designed to address how relationships of inequality are often (re)produced and transformed within educational institutions (p. 147). To address how relationships are unequal for people with disabilities, the next step is to reveal the inequality in the system. Recalling that Freire (1992) wrote, “... until they struggle—their need to deny the humiliating truth, a truth that humiliates them, precisely because they interject the dominant ideology that sketches them as incompetent and guilty, the authors of their own failures” (p. 45). The work they do during a protest, all of it, will affirm the inequality of the system, as they push up against the ideology that maintains their unworthiness and incompetence.

Considering critical pedagogy and its potential for educating people with disabilities, what has to be considered is the idea of powerlessness. “Although the rights based discourse presents social injustice from the position of the powerless, the position of the powerful remains largely unexplained” (Choules, 2006, p. 282). There are no assurances that the cultural and economic

power sought will be gained or retain if achieved. The mystery of power is its tendency to remain with the wealthy. Romo (2004) describes the “myth of meritocracy” as that which holds on to erroneous ideology of the work ethic that states that all one needs is to pull themselves up by their proverbial bootstraps. But this work ethic cannot explain Romo’s (2004) observation that “the U.S. middle class is diminishing, the upper class remains relatively static and the underclass is growing. About 15% of U.S. children live in poverty and that percentage continues to increase” (Romo, Bradfield, & Serrano, 2004 p. 4).

To counteract the trend, an exceptional idea was cited by Clough (2006) “...while Baudrillard (cited in Clough) has famously argued that consumption has become the new labor of the working class, thus obscuring production as a source of solidarity” (p. 2264). This idea encapsulates essence of what this research wishes to find; a potential method of gaining power over the wealthy. But this critical pedagogical teaching will be pushing up against powerful social influences, the push for consumerism. This force will not be easy to fight, as our society reflects that what we own sets our social status.

So, how can critical pedagogy educate people to battle the forces of consumerism? The answer is to join their forces. If the consumption of people with disabilities can be captured and denied to all, but the disabled economic community, then the power needed to sustain a minority could be theirs. With proper education, based in critical pedagogy, community members would know and respect the consumer. Much like this example by Hilton (2007), “...consumers would come to mean a principled opposition to so many specific abuses within the overall framework of a New Economic Policy (NEP) said to leave so many ordinary workers, citizens and consumers behind” (p. 138). This simple idea has political power over the consumer society. But the idea to compete for consumers and who may participate in the contest is the question. This ceaseless drive for consumers has created a mass market and a “dominance of market based individualism” (p. 127). This is the essence of the economy. This is where the power lies.

Foley (1999), states that what is needed in social movement research is an analytical framework; a method to examine the relationship of economic and political changes in political consciousness and action (p. 9). With regard to the disability rights movement, specifically, the

work of ADAPT, the methods used to examine the consciousness of the people involved-- activist, law enforcement, and the general public alike-- I will look at the body of ideology and discourse possessed by these groups. For Foley ideology "holds a group or society together by creating shared framework of meaning and values. It can also be a means of domination of what Gramsci (1971) called "hegemony". "... Ideology reflects constructs and reproduces the power and interests of dominant groups in society" (p. 14). To restate, it is a body of ideas that hold groups together. These ideologies are encapsulated in their collective vision and particular frame of reference. The danger that exists is that the body of ideas can become so small that the original objectives are lost or forgotten. In the heat of political battles, it is not difficult to lose perspective.

What motivates seven hundred people with disabilities to engage in such a protest? The motivation came simply from the ideology. Speaking for myself only, my personal transformation from a morally wretched person, or a medical case, to an activist was life changing. In order to live the life that I deserve, social change needs to take place. So feeding on the civil rights model with fellow individuals with disabilities only makes sense. During this action I was pushed by a man who worked at the DNC while guarding a concrete stairwell. The danger was very high. I found more courage in that moment than in my entire life. But the idea, the thought that I am as human, as much of an American as any person without a disability, is everything! That's the motivation.

Stigma is a social circumstance that yields the individual as discredited, marked or somehow cased off. "The definition of stigma underpinning the hidden distress model postulated what was called an *ontological deficit*. It is not that people with epilepsy were perceived as or felt culpable for their 'being discredited' or, more often, 'discreditable' status; but rather that they were seen as or felt *imperfect beings*: they were not or did not feel as they should be" (Scambler, 2004 p. 31). While stigma marks the individual before they have even arrived. It is the communal agreement that difference is strange. Once the individual with a disability enters the public realm, the power of a gaze absorbs information that the individual may wish to keep private. However, the social demands and prejudices of the public, demands the information and the power over the individual. "Having an impairment that is immediately visible presents the observer with

privileged information and therefore power about that body. This gaze is influenced by the stereotypes and prejudices about disabled people, and so the power of the gaze is intimately linked and nourished by knowledge from within the social domain” (Reeve, 2002, p. 499).

The other issue is that the medical perspective, the personal dramas have been such a focus for the media and fundraising campaigns, that the general public has come to expect it. Stated again, it is very difficult for people to see disability as a political problem. The reason may be the obscurity around disability, the very human need to know the answers to all the questions, concerns and terrors of our hearts. But again, I prescribe to the cultural principle of keeping to the political side of the issue. The reasoning is very simple; we have long been casualties of voyeuristic curiosity. This desire, which at times seems to approach demand, to know the personal and medical aspects while ignoring the harsh political aspects, reflects our invisibility, our novelty and the general unfamiliarity that the general public has about us. It is this awareness that is needed for any group, any one that that seeks education during a social protest. It is the need for social awareness about how society perceives them, but also the reality of who they truly are.

Progressive education and non-segregated education can be an important for people with disabilities, if the instructor has the correct mind set. Anderson (2006) contends that techniques of pedagogy must be examined. Anderson speculates on people with disabilities and their ‘bodies of possibilities’. The question the author raises is how to transform and even question the educational environment. Andersons (2006) observations offer an interestingly disruptive illustration of how vital the classroom might be. “...People with disabilities call structures into question both with their bodies and their voices. Disabled bodies disrupt ‘normal’ educational settings: enter guide dogs, sign language interpreters, and motorized wheelchairs” (Anderson,2006, p. 369). Changing the physical environment is essential and must not be seen as an imposition. This is true for any learning environment, be it the streets of the classroom.

To illustrate this power, consider the work of McQueen in Reeves, (2002). The power of the gaze, the social view that takes so much from people with disabilities, can be inverted, as can the power. “The style magazine *Dazed and Confused*, featured a group of disabled people modeling

clothes designed by Alexander McQueen...one model was a woman born without limbs modeling nude under colored lights to resemble the Venus de Milo, a Greek sculpture of the perfect female body. The example shows disabled people returning the gaze back to the reader- they refuse to be ashamed of revealing their impaired bodies” (Reeve, p. 502). This is the power of self-knowledge. This can be the powerful push back that can be executed during social protest. I do believe that this power, this immovable defiance is attainable through education that acknowledges social reality, yes, but more importantly the power of the individual when given all necessary information and the personal power and resources to make it happen.

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