

Reimagining Freirean Pedagogy: Sendero for Teacher Education

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Abstract

Corporatization of the Academy ensures teacher education is less about the preparation of teachers and more about the reproduction of minimally skilled labor and the neoliberal global capitalist status quo. Colleagues from across the US recount in conversation at conferences and in the field the decline of the quality of teacher preparation programs. It is our position as is the position of other Critical educators, Paula Allman, Lilia I. Bartolomé, Antonia Darder, Henry Giroux, Donaldo Macedo and Peter McLaren to name a few, teacher preparation programs may and do benefit from work with colleagues, professors, administrators and other students, who practice a Freirean critical pedagogy. What we mean is their personal pedagogical praxis must be more than talked about in University methods or curricular courses it must be lived by the very professors, administrators and students of critical pedagogy who would prepare the next generation of teachers.

Introduction

Colleges of teacher education in the USA operate as industrial training camps: they process mid-level workers; classroom managers practicing skills-based education. The teachers, produced by industrial model preparation programs, are trained to follow instructions explicitly: in the United States newly minted teachers “do” the curriculum, currently mandated by the federal government, the state, the school district or the school. An outside source determines for the classroom teacher the curriculum and the appropriate methods of instruction. The teacher is in the classroom to manage delivery of course material.

Since their preparation is one of focus on material and delivery methods the result is a detachment from the human beings teachers encounter in the classroom. The student, as Freire said, must sit quietly as the teacher delivers on a promise to society: students taught how to become productive members (1970). That is, they will learn the necessary skills needed to join with their peers; siblings and social groups in meeting out the expectations of the capitalist class: they live out their lives according to the skill set they acquire: stamping out car parts in a factory, cutting hair in a strip mall, or sitting at a computer screen using a tele-headset to ensure credit card companies process the needs of a requisite number of customers.

It is critical then teacher educators engage in reflexivity where we consider our actions in our lessons as we mentor our student teachers. A Professor, teacher, or tutor is an agent of history. A cultural worker, that as Freire recognized engages a student beyond subject matter in acquiring a critical consciousness of the world in which they live. Furthermore as Freire, Marx and Allman might say, teachers are social activists, cultural workers engaging the social conditions encountered in society, whether working to transform human suffering or working to replicate the economic

conditions that enslave. In the following Paula Allman recounts the role of a social activist, a critical lens by which we can consider the role of a teacher: “Marx urged that struggles for reform within capitalism should involve the collective self-education of activists, consciously attempting to transform themselves and their social relations in preparation for the socio-economic transformations they would undertake in the future (Marx, 1853: 1979, pp. 402-3).” (p. 53).

In this essay Matthew and I consider Paulo Freire's critical *praxis*, as a basis for crafting a personal pedagogical framework: a humanist undergraduate teacher preparation. Using Freirean critical pedagogy as a framework for teacher preparation we take a departure from the notion that students are vessels to be filled (Freire, 1998). Our practice every day is meaningful, our interactions, with all involved in teacher preparation, impact the quality of teachers students encounter in the classrooms and as a consequence, through their teaching, the human beings we encounter in society.

Matthew's Experience

If we accept naming the current educational climate one of “skill-delivery is quality teaching”, we must interrogate the losses caused by this ideological posture. The fundamental loss (read most negative consequence) of the failure to provide a space for dialogue between students and teachers (as well as between student-teachers and mentoring teachers) is the denial of a place to question, a place to pose problems, co-create authentic solutions and a place to disrupt an oppressive status quo.

As a young undergraduate interested in becoming a teacher, I investigated several different routes of gaining the necessary training, experience, and credentials. I worked for one semester as a substitute teacher and was hired as a high school Social Studies teacher after I completed my B.A. As I began my first year of teaching I concurrently entered an online Teacher Education program at the Southwestern Community College (SWCC). Their program operated on the semester-system, yet the courses were both brief and superficial. The method of instruction was typical: everyone in the class was to read some online link or a chapter from a book, post onto WEBCT an answer to the teacher's essential question and then make at least two comments on other students' postings. The readings were usually not stimulating and the discussions were insincere. *One of the key issues here was that many students of this program lacked recent experience in /exposure to schools and thus began to revert to the methods of instruction through which they had been socialized.* For one particular assignment, students needed to design the “ideal” classroom. While many students spoke of the need for natural lighting, many books and computers for everyone, overwhelmingly, the physical layout of the classroom involved traditional desks placed in rows that were facing the teacher-- a set-up for the banking method of education (Freire, 1970); in fact, many student-teachers began to beg for the “all-knowing” patriarchy of the teacher. Teacher presence was essential, but we were influenced by little more than passing comments.

We saw then the acknowledgement on the part of the education students for alternate arrangements and spaces in education; we lacked certain elements to put our ideas into practice. Most absent was the voice of the teacher trainer, the person whose responsibility it was to guide our discussions and introduce us to a pedagogy of humanity. Rather than seize this opportunity to humanize our experience and shape our moral and ethical posture our “trainers” left the social moment to the devices of the institution, we were the blind leading the blind.

In January 2009, I undertook a new experience; mentoring a student-teacher. Jane arrived on time and had strong enthusiasm mixed with apprehension, low confidence in herself, and a constant belief that “she wasn’t ready.” I asked Jane to participate in several lessons and encouraged her to create dialogue with the students regarding the subject matter. When the issue of observations came up (as I was required to formally observe her teach two lessons) I asked her about the extent of her knowledge about writing lesson plans. Jane shook her head and what she stated next both gave me pause and a sense of urgency:

They (teacher preparation) don’t really teach us how to write lesson plans. We are shown how to transition from one pre-written lesson to another. We are given methods of stretching out the lessons so that they can fill the time. Like, if I have a 60-minute class and two 20-minute lessons, I learn how to stretch the two into filling the time.

Teacher-educators, or mentoring/cooperating teachers, find themselves in positions to impact future generations of students. Among the responsibilities is to facilitate the student-teacher’s bridging of theory and practice. Ed McLuskie, a noted Professor of Communications at Boise State University described his experiences as an undergraduate majoring in music (choir) while taking education classes:

The pedagogy of the day was one of behavior control. The method we were learning in teacher-training was called ‘sociometrics’. Basically, sociometrics consisted of observing which students in a class were friends, were talkative, and were disruptive. The technique for managing student behavior was simply to move the most talkative so as to maintain a consistently quiet environment. For me though, I was trying to organize a choir! If I wasn’t able to sit the two altos next to each other, how was I supposed to effectively organize the choir? It wouldn’t happen unless I got lucky....This was when I began to learn that there was a Grand Canyon between theory and practice. (Personal communication, 2008)

Dr. McLuskie’s point is well taken: how much of current educational “research” is driven by people who are so far removed from realities in public school classrooms that they are blind to the negative consequences of factory designed curricula? Such uninformed policies leave student-teachers with false empowerment and poor preparation. The consequence of this reductionist form of teacher preparation; our students suffer the indignity of trying to understand what if anything they might learn from us. Our position, indeed our role in teacher-teaching is to explore humanizing education. By this I refer not only to the necessary literature but also to what we become with each other, our constant introspection.

As before, classroom management cannot be mere geography, (Rodriguez, 2008), or an organizational tool. How do we work with entering student-teachers, many of whom are totally unprepared to work with all students? Do we encourage the socio-metric method of control? Shall we introduce our student-teachers to management tools, such as official referrals, thus resulting in our pupils being entered into “the system” as behaviorally problematic?

And, shall we facilitate the blurring of pop culture and fashion with gang association and thus add students to criminal logs? Using Critical Theory as a lens through which we look at the increase in police presence in public schools aids us in seeing; as more and more schools have police officers and sheriff’s deputies assigned

to them, “resource officers,” our students are not *treated as criminals*, but rather *actually criminalized* for behavior previously dealt with in a more effective way (parent conferences focused on resolving conflict rather than logging students into the records of local law enforcement agencies). History and experience have shown us that this course of action is the opposite of what is necessary to re-humanize the experiences of our student-teachers and profoundly affect the experiences of their students to come.

Our first pedagogical obligation to our student-teachers is to ascertain their reasons for desiring to be teachers. In Teachers as Cultural Workers Freire describes situations in which many young women in Recife entered Normal schools to do something productive until they established families. Clearly, this demonstrates obliviousness to the political nature of teaching. As Freire stated, “I am a vagabond of the obvious. I am a vagabond because I travel around saying obvious things like ‘teaching is not a neutral act’” (Jeria, 1984). If applying Freire’s theories, the politics of teaching are difficult, seems inappropriate for such a profession, then one must call into question his or her original view of teaching. Is teaching done for purposes of controlling the natural inclinations of human beings and meting out the expectations of society? Or is it an active course where we engage each other in our humanization? Are our children to become consumers or authors of history? Furthermore what will our student-teachers do to support this? In preparing teachers are we guiding our student-teachers toward the practice of teaching the whole child, valuing and engaging their funds of knowledge (Moll, 2008), or are we easing them into stupidification (Macedo, 2006)?

An approach to humanizing the educational experiences of student-teachers and pupils is to engage in problem posing problem solving education. Problem posing problem solving education (Freire, 1970, 1973) consists of three distinct stages in which the students and teachers take part. Smith-Maddox & Solórzano (2002) describe the three stages of problem posing problem solving as, “(a) identify and name the social problem, (b) analyze the causes of the social problem, and (c) find solutions to the social problem” (p. 69). The implications of problem posing problem solving education can affect how student-teachers view the *raison d’être* of education.

Consider the role of white, middle-class student-teachers. Many such students will enter the profession with the intention of preparing students of color and lower social classes for social mobility in a competitive job market. These intentions typically do not have any validation from either the students or the communities, but rather are validated by the student-teachers’ “missionary” efforts. Frequently there is little interrogation of issues of social capital, alternate perspectives of society or history, or the practice of historical authorship. Rarely is subjugated or suppressed knowledge accessed. By employing Freire’s problem posing problem solving education (1970, 1973), teacher-mentors are able to help student-teachers “de-knowledge-ize” (Freire, 1985) their own prior knowledge of their pupils’ cultures. Problem posing problem solving education also presents student-teachers with a conceptual antithesis to the traditional methods of instruction through which they (as in Matthew’s experience) had been socialized. This is not to suggest engaging in the impossible task of deleting one’s history from memory, but rather recognizing the banking method of education is a tool of oppression not liberation (Freire, 1970). The practical aspect is for student-teachers to recognize that alternatives to damaging pedagogical methods have been and can be created. The student-teachers’ learning (and un-learning) of their pupils’ worlds brings the social, the political, and the economic realities to the forefront.

Living our pedagogy, we must to co-create with our student-teachers opportunities and situations from which they may organize and develop solid theoretical and practical approaches. How can our student bridge critical theory with classroom teaching? If pedagogues rely on student-teachers to organically acquire a critical lens, we ultimately assist pressures that reproduce No Child Left Behind's (NCLB) status quo: deskilled technicist teachers, repressed and silent students, the officialization of (anglo) academic English, bourgeois Eurocentric-supportive historical notions, base and costly scripted programs, standardized exams that cost millions, copious amounts of time expended, and (more importantly) declining student confidence.

The crucial point here is that student-teachers from privileged positions must interrogate their own histories and roles in oppression before engaging in the co-liberation of others; in not doing so they risk what is often the case, social and cultural dissonance too great to reconcile. It is more than possible to problematize the issue of class and the blind and false charity that many white, middle-class educators carry with them into their classrooms. In the Afterward of Antonia Darder's Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy of Love (2002), (it is worth quoting at length) McLaren writes,

Pedagogy of the oppressed helped me as a young man to begin to unlearn my privilege as a white, Anglo male, and to 'decolonize' my own perspective as an educator teaching in the industrialized West...Freire's theories helped me to unlearn the influences of my liberal heritage that positions so many white teachers as 'missionaries' among the disenfranchised (p. 252).

McLaren's experience with un-learning white oppression was not a phenomenon whose temporal occurrence is akin to Haley's Comet; that is, there have been many white, middle-class educators who have had to face their oppressive pedagogies and choose another legacy: a humanizing pedagogy. Matthew's experience as a first-year teacher in a religious secondary school in Albuquerque, New Mexico, inadvertently lead to the oppression of some of the Native American Pueblo students in his classroom. Still, Mathew's transformation became possible, not through a prepackaged teacher preparation program but through critical interrogation and mentorship. A friendship and constant dialogue in the areas of teaching and learning with, helped Matthew to understand a personal critical pedagogical posture: to overcome his received oppressive culture.

Matthew's personal critical pedagogical program occurred thus: Arturo introduced Matthew to critical pedagogical writings. The two engaged in intense discussions. Arturo and Matthew consciously choose to continue to engage in more humanizing pedagogies.

Arturo's Experience

What is the role of a Professor who would engage Freirean critical pedagogy while supervising student teachers? In January of 2007 I was hired by Boise State University (BSU) to be an Assistant Professor of Bilingual Education, as part of my duties I was to supervise a cohort of student teachers through their initial field placement. The experiences I took with me to BSU were different from what may be the norm in teacher education. My then Department Chairperson, did not hand me a script, or a fixed curriculum I would use to work with my student teachers. Instead we went to the field together, she introduced me to the school Principals, mentor teachers

and some members of the school communities. The work of supervising a student teacher in the field for our department, she informed me, is to help them understand the critical engagement between the theories we share during coursework at the University and the teaching conditions they encounter in the schools.

It is essential student teachers possess a sound theoretical foundation before they are sent out to the schools, but our mentorship, that of the intern supervisor, must be to guide them through their initial placement since the reality they encounter in the schools may prove ideologically opposed to the teachings they acquired in their University course of study. I was fortunate then to have my chairperson share her knowledge of the field without imposing how I would carry out the supervision. From then on, my supervising teachers would be a combination of my experience grounded in my study of Education.

Lessons from the Field

I came by my career in education by accident. I had not considered teaching until by chance someone asked if I knew how to teach Spanish. Like Freire, my interest was to begin a career in Law or the Clergy to apply my understandings of the world and a deep understanding of Law and political issues to the betterment of humanity, the missionary ethos Matthew describes above. Unlike Matthew I did not receive my formal training in curriculum and instruction at the undergraduate level. I studied curriculum and pedagogy after having spent eight years teaching in secondary schools in Texas, California and New York.

What I learned of teaching I acquired over time; part intuition, observation and analysis of my on the job training. My practice began with my interview, in which my new administrators seemed more impressed with work I had been doing, coaching, and my B.A. focus of study, English and Spanish Literature. To the administrators I filled a need, there was a vacancy and I met the requisite description of who they wanted to fill the position. Thereafter the actual teaching began to further shape my understanding of the role of a classroom teacher.

In the first weeks of practice I experienced what many new teachers have related thinking and feeling: I was overwhelmed, felt I was underprepared for such a monumental task. I soon learned teaching was not only making students reproduce pre-scripted words, phrases or ideas. Teaching and learning involved all aspects of the human social condition.

Since I was not the product of a teacher preparation program, I initially relied on the textbook and workbook I had been given by the department chairperson. The guidance I received from the department chairperson included: have a lesson plan, read the textbook and keep the classroom in order. The Chairperson's mentoring did not drive beyond these few phrases uttered in passing. Constructing the classroom climate was left to me. A product of the United States system of public education I remembered teachers that were definitely keen on teaching. They were well prepared, loved the subjects they taught, and acted compassionately toward their students.

On the other hand I also remembered the teachers that seemed to choose a teaching career simply to draw a salary. To my younger self they did not communicate joy for what they were teaching and did not impart a sense of relatedness, one we students could feel for the school community. What learning occurred was the responsibility of the students. In such instances popular culture understands education; it is akin to a free-for-all where anything goes in the classroom. When teachers do not fully enact the art of teaching with their students, either through subject matter or their interpersonal understandings, teaching and learning is chaotic.

For teaching and learning to be an effective means of sharing culture, acquiring knowledge, or a celebration of humanity, students and teachers must find some intrinsic value to classroom learning. Students and teachers then work together in education to form a new consciousness, a co-reading of the world, one that incorporates the students' needs actualized in the larger society. Freire's cogent but vast description of the adult literacy process is applicable here. Freire (p. 22, 2000) posits, "The adult literacy process as an act of knowing implies the existence of two interrelated contexts. One is the context of authentic dialogue between learners and educators as equally knowing subjects. This is what schools should be – the theoretical context of dialogue. The second is the real, concrete context of facts, the social reality in which men exist."

Essential to teaching and learning then is the development of strong social bonds, friendly relationships among the students and similar friendly relationships with their teachers. In our US American society we view teachers that relate to their students and students who relate to their teachers as somehow unnatural in their relationships. Yet how can we share in the day-to-day interactions of the classroom experience and not be affected by our students?

That students and teachers develop caring relationships is natural and essential for the students' and the teacher's well-being. It was my experience at teaching High School, it is so in the Academy, only through close relationships is one able to grasp the lived social reality of the other. The teaching relationship must originate in the students' ontology, prior knowledge, further developed by the new epistemologies they encounter in our classrooms. We live classroom experiences where we associate subject matter and its application in the world. It is access to the ways we think and know the world that further supports our perceptions of learning and indeed teaching (Freire, 1998). If we dare to guide our students critically then our guidance must begin accepting teaching is a social bond in which pedagogical exchanges are fraught with emotion.

Among the exchanges with students I experienced, fear, anxiety, anger, and love. Of these emotions only love has the potential to bring about the actualization of the human spirit (Freire, 1970). Consider the words of Erich Fromm. In The Art of Loving (50th Anniversary ed.) he explains that in brotherly love: "there is the experience of union with all men (and women), of human solidarity, of human atonement. . . . The differences in talents, intelligence, knowledge are negligible in comparison with the identity of the human core common to all men (and women)" (2006, p. 44). Mentor-teachers and classroom teachers, and to engage with our student-teachers and pupils, it is necessary to discard notions of anonymity. Similarly, Amos Elon (2006) provides us with Hannah Arendt's position on love, as expounded in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Elon writes, "In *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. . . [Arendt] insisted that only good had any depth. Good can be radical; evil can never be radical, it can only be extreme, for it possesses neither depth nor any demonic dimension yet – and this is its horror! – it can spread like a fungus over the surface of the earth and lay waste the entire world. Evil comes from a failure to think. It defies thought for as soon as thought tries to engage itself with evil and examine the premises and principles from which it originates, it is frustrated because it finds nothing there. That is the banality of evil." (p. xiii-xiv)

In student teacher supervision we must ensure we possess with our student teachers, again, a solid theoretical foundation. However, this foundation is not fixed upon our graduating a degree program or accumulating recognition from our particular fields of study. The foundation of a critical humanist, an activist working

with student teachers, is to be conscious of our constant becoming. In the following Paula Allman (2004) elaborates this idea:

‘Being’, depending on whether one is a teacher/leader or a student/activist, is, therefore, a state of either transmitting content/process or acquiring the required knowledge, while ‘becoming’ is an additive process of accumulation, of increasing one’s repertoire of transmission skills or of adding more knowledge.” (p. 60).

Being then is to merely assume the role of Teacher, student or mentor. Becoming is as Freire relates in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a state of consciousness where we accept our own incompleteness.

When I initially greet my student teachers I ask them, “What would you like to do?” Often I am met with their quizzical stare. Is this a political game where they must “figure out” what I “really” want? Instead they find we begin to relate in cultural transformation: asking them what they want to do engages them in rethinking how education is conducted; they are then challenged to form a new consciousness about teaching and learning. Freire (1985) writes,

“For me, when you confront a situation like this most of the people you are dealing with are conditioned by the traditional way of teaching. Nevertheless, part of them accepts something new. The other part of them does not accept it for different reasons, sometimes the pressure to get a ‘better’ life for themselves” (p. 12).

Five years since I began mentoring student teachers at BSU I yet have students give me an initial incredulous look, “you mean you aren’t going to ‘tell’ me what to do”. Often I have teachers expecting me to instruct them in the latest and greatest methods of teaching. There have been many instances where they share an affinity for being able to reproduce a lesson plan, complete a student teaching portfolio or do whatever I or their classroom mentor require. Most startling is how quickly their reticence vanishes once they begin to accept we will co-create their student teaching experience.

From this point of engagement the internship and student teaching is easy to complete. The student teachers continue to develop the foundation they take with them to the field while acquiring a new set of skills and knowledge in “becoming” a teacher. Their fear at being ill prepared dissipates, as they grow through their teaching in the classroom. They begin to realize the skills they actually need are those they shape as they learn to teach with their students. As the semester comes to a close they begin to understand; lesson plans, grading rubrics, classroom technology all might be necessary for their students to acquire a maximum benefit from the learning experience. But their idea of the difference between a good teacher and an excellent teacher changes: in being a good teacher you can design lesson plans or grading rubrics, but in becoming an excellent teacher you are able to communicate dialogically the how of building a classroom epistemology while also supporting your students’ ontological clarity, the why of becoming human.

Freirean Critical Pedagogy in Teacher Education

We understand Critical Education to be the act of teaching with students, the substitution of community or corporate needs with the desires or passions of individuals, this is not moral relativism, instead it is the refusal to enforce the “rules”

of the society that oppress distinct groups or cultures. Consider the following situation as it relates to enforcing school rules:

An inner-city school has decided to deal with its street gang issues by imposing a strict dress code for all students. All students must wear T-Shirts of blue, grey, or white color that bear the school emblem, purchased from the school itself for \$5.00 each. Long pants (khakis) must be worn at all times by students. Sweaters, coats, and jackets must match the school colors (blue, grey, and white) and cost \$18.00 each; hats are not permitted on campus. This same public school receives little aid from its district for facility maintenance; thus, in the winter the heaters are predictably out of commission and the temperatures in classrooms drop to 55°F, sometimes lower. Students begin arriving to school in black Nike jackets, knit caps, and mismatched gloves they have received from local clothing distribution centers. The vice principal of this school announces in a staff meeting that teachers must strictly enforce dress code rules, so as to keep the gang issue down. How would a critical educator deal with this issue?

Such a situation, not an uncommon experience for teachers in the United States, compels the problematization of rules. Does the imposition of a dress code attend to the complex nature of urban gangs? What is ignored by a school administration when it sells the “official” clothing? The way in which critical humanist educators approach issues such as this, impacts their work with students and teachers. In discussing situations like this with a student or teacher, we make a problem of accepted school norms. In this we discuss social class, schooling conditions, and the collision between street culture and a socialization focused on reproducing working-class ends. This situation, a reality in some schools, could be presented to the student-teacher as a hypothetical question, a generative theme (Freire, 1973).

As we approach the topic of learning, we ask: How do we know they learn what we intend and what the student desires? This requires open educators; they understand who their students are and where they will be as an outcome of our experience together. As a generative tool, a professor of Bilingual Education at BSU Roberto Bahruth uses a metaphorical image of this concept: René Magritte’s famous painting, *La Clairvoyance*, 1936. In this painting, Magritte sits and observes an egg while painting on his canvas a bird, wings outstretched. The connection here for mentor-teachers is to understand where (not ‘who’) the student-teacher will be at the conclusion of our time together. We thus teach becoming as Paula Allman describes above, conscious of our incompleteness; we negotiate the educational terrain to ensure our students continue to grow after they have left the classroom. Inherent then there is the understanding knowledge gained in classrooms is a single unit of something greater a world community. Our students’ participation in the world must not be reproduction of social norms, but a solution for the world’s misery.

Freirean/Marxist humanist pedagogy presents us with possibilities for safer societies and education that is not driven by corporate needs. Freirean pedagogy must be both lived at the point of collision (or) interface between the oppressor and the oppressed and (at the risk of sounding repetitive) relived. By relived we mean Freirean pedagogy demands reinvention in every situation, every problem and every solution. Indeed, Freire himself implored people to reinvent his philosophy and pedagogy. If people guide themselves by the mantra “what would Freire do?” or “what has Freire created?” they subtract from the ownership of their actions. The challenge for us becomes one of humility, honesty, praxis, and personal growth: how

we grow through every situation in which we denounce an oppressive act or announce a better world.

We should not ask ourselves, “What would Paulo do if he were here?” This will not help us or our students for Paulo will not be in our current predicament (whatever it may be). Rather we must consider what we have experienced, individually and collectively. This is the uniqueness of human experience, though we will never see the same situation twice, the trials, tribulations, readings, conversations, debates, joys and sorrows we have gone through enable and inform our criticism when we are confronted with dehumanizing situations. Freirean intellectualism and pedagogy introduce us to a vocabulary with which to name, problematize, denounce, and announce.

In Learning to Question, (1989) Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez essentially live the book’s title in a discussion on the importance of asking questions. Freire states that the beginning of learning is based on a person’s curiosity, their ability to articulate their curiosity into questions that generate critical discussions. Faundez reminds Freire that “we are in agreement that everything begins, as Plato said, with curiosity, and linked with curiosity, with asking questions...the first thing which anyone who teaches should learn is how to ask questions.” (1989: p. 37). Where, in any prescribed reading program, do we teachers find the space for original questions? Indeed, the development of our human capacity for questioning is tantamount to any literacy strategy or skill. In Amusing Ourselves to Death, Neil Postman (1985) stated that a reading comprehension exam would have been useless in the mid-nineteenth century, for what other purpose was reading but for comprehension? Postman’s writing eloquently challenges the technicist view that “literacy is acquired through the consumption of skills” by stating that the purpose of reading has always been intended for comprehension.

Conclusion

In *Life in Schools* (5th ed.) Peter McLaren (2007) presents us with a possibility for both bridging oppressive schools with collegiate education and why the need for humanizing the teacher education programs is essential to humanizing the educational experiences of many public school students. McLaren writes, “...teachers need to acquire some kind of critical education themselves, something not always available-or only offered in a limited sense-in graduate programs in education” (32). We therefore must offer our student-teachers opportunities and situations from which they may organize and develop a solid theoretical and practical posture. How will our students bridge critical theory with elementary and secondary classroom teaching? A critical humanism is necessary when attempts are made to de-skill us through pre-packaged lesson plans or dim professional development. These de-value us *vis a vis* public stone-casting, or de-humanize our work as critical pedagogues when we engage in the critical conscientization of student-teachers.

Our moral obligation, to teaching, compels us toward pedagogy of collaboration with our students. Many teachers will begin teaching their pupils in the same manner in which they were socialized. However by creating a space in which to problem pose and hopefully problem solve social injustice, undergraduates and student teachers begin to view the social dynamics of learning as processes of interaction, growth, and yes joy. They will not be socialized to deliver pre-written skills-based lessons. Rather the classes will foster a spirit of collaboration for knowledge production toward social transformation instead of skills acquisition toward the final causes of labor and consumption.

We understand genocide like automobiles are produced by people who were once children; students in someone's classroom. The content of their day-to-day classroom interactions we cannot know, but the dehumanizing results of their actions indicate that their education failed humanity. This is not to say that their teachers are culpable for the ends, but rather that a humanizing education inclines one toward a path of understanding the consequences of one's actions. Teachers who socialize their students toward hateful binges, oppressive tendencies, and dehumanizing movements ultimately challenge what is at the heart of critical humanist teaching. The current unrest of societies worldwide brings the utmost urgency to what is written here. The status quo of Darfur, *docentes* in Oaxaca, Mexico, and slave-mining camps throughout Asia, South America and Africa is what will be maintained if teachers continue to engage traditional teaching.

The philosopher known as Paulo Freire began his teaching career following his graduation from law school, as well as advanced study in philosophy (phenomenology) and philosophy of language. Having been raised and come of age in impoverished conditions, Freire understood early the acute connections between lived experience and education. In his career, a critical scholar, he engaged in transformative culture circles that brought those who participated into a critical consciousness; to deepen ones knowledge of the world beyond the face value of its systems or symbols of meaning. For Freire the education of a teacher is thus a process of recognizing one's role in a dehumanized society and working toward social change. Our position continues to be to engage critical pedagogies that link students' lived experiences to oppressive conditions in hope they ultimately problematize and then seek to overcome them.

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