

# Critical Pedagogy Manifesto

*Teachers of the World Unite*

Peter McLaren

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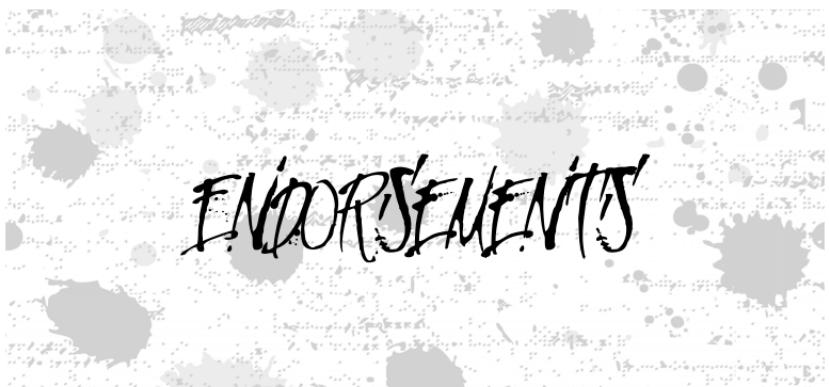


**This manifesto is dedicated to Carl Boggs, scholar-activist, revolutionary, adventurer, friend**



The crisis of capitalism, the ascendancy of a post-truth politics, the expansive reach of an increasingly militarized surveillance state and the rampant consolidation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution characterized by a fusion of technologies have blurred the lines between the physical, digital, ideological and biological spheres. The historically generated social relations that have legitimized racism, homophobia, misogyny, misanthropy and misology have spawned a new generation of white supremacist, neo-Nazi militias and have led to a murderous assault on Black men by police and a generalized assault on people of color. The information ecosphere and the current infodemic which is promulgating the conspiracy theories that are both prolonging and intensifying the damage done by the pandemic and climate change by suggesting that the pandemic and climate change are not real, that they were created by the deep state solely for the purpose of providing cover for a further consolidation and intensification of the surveillance state, has led to a massive attack on progressive and critical educators. Bills are being created to ban the teaching of “divisive concepts” in public schools such as those related to race and gender. The teaching of the history of slavery is deemed an act of racism against white people. QAnon mythology that fabricates lies about a stolen 2020 election, and that Satan-worshipping pedophiles are in control of the government, media and financial institutions, is fast becoming normalized within the U.S. Republican Party and spreading to other countries. The world’s masses are increasingly being transformed into 21st century compliant and self-censoring human beings who appear defenseless in the face of nationalist calls for military solutions to global problems, of white supremacist chauvinistic attacks on people of color and of narratives championing nationalism, isolationism, and fascism. For four decades Peter McLaren has been writing about these world-historical developments and urging educators to seek a socialist alternative. In the performative style that has been the signature of McLaren’s work, *The Critical Pedagogy Manifesto* is meant to remind readers what is at stake in these precarious and dangerous times and to offer armed hope in the struggle ahead.





# ENDORSEMENTS

As the leading founder of a revolutionary critical pedagogy, Peter McLaren is simply brilliant in his wordsmithery that creatively incorporates satire to underscore how the growing blob of white supremacy, gun culture, the delegitimization of science, unbridled capitalism, and an obscene political climate—ought to put us all on notice. The time to act is now.

**James D. Kirylo** -- University of South Carolina

Peter McLaren's new work... captures the zeitgeist of the second decade of the 21st century, specifically the impact of the Trump years, ... an urgent call for citizens to read widely beyond the lies and to develop a critical media literacy to analyze the propaganda of mainstream and right-wing media.

**William M. Reynolds** -- Georgia Southern University

Peter McLaren's work challenges a perfect storm in the contemporary U.S. psyche seeking to do battle and to win, at all costs, the status quo and white elitism. In the politics of change, to work in

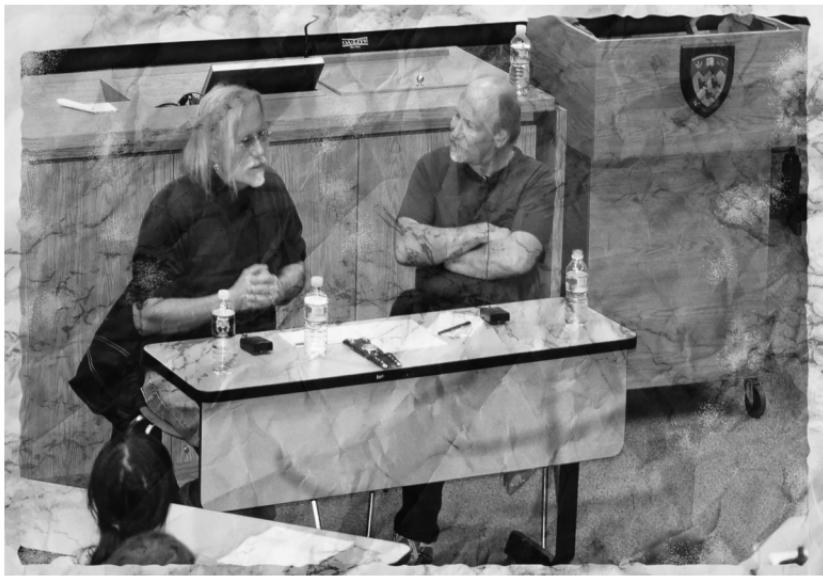
social solidarity means to radically dream together, to seek and find a better version of ourselves for a pluralist democracy and a just global world for all. McLaren's work pricks our conscience and asks us to step up and be the change we want in the world.

**Dr. Geraldine Mooney Simmie** is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Education at the University of Limerick.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	1
Part One	7
Part Two	15
Part Three	31
References	37





Peter McLaren and Joe Kincheloe,  
brothers-in-arms, Montreal, Quebec





## PREFACE TO THE MANIFESTO

Roger Griffin defines fascism as follows:

Fascism is a revolutionary species of political modernism originating in the early twentieth century whose mission is to combat the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history (decadence) by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality (a “new order” and a “new era”) based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation. Fascists conceive the nation as an organism shaped by historical, cultural, and in some cases, ethnic and hereditary factors, a mythic construct incompatible with liberal, conservative, and communist theories of society. The health of the organism they see undermined as much by the principles of institutional and cultural pluralism, individualism, and globalized consumerism promoted by liberalism as by the global regime of social justice and human equality identified by socialism in theory as the ultimate goal of history, or by the conservative defense of ‘tradition’ (p.181, 2007)

The particular iteration of fascism that has emerged in the United States today is underscored by a virulent authoritarian populism and an attempt to reverse or erase historical memory when it involves criticisms of the ruling regime. Any criticism of American history or culture that can be superficially linked to Marxist or anarchist or feminist critique is rejected outright as unpatriotic, anti-American and even seditious. American

fascism resurrects Cold War enemies such as Russia and China as a means of diverting attention from the crisis of capitalism and fascism's dark thrills of chaos and mob rule. American fascism uses public humiliation as a means of both shaming and threatening dissenters. For instance, if you maintain that there exists systemic racism throughout the United States then you are deemed a racist. Conspiracy theories are often involved such as the “great replacement theory” that argues that the immigration policies of the Democratic Party are designed to recruit non-white immigrants who, when granted citizenship, are more likely to vote Democratic, and thus relegate the white population into a “demographic winter” or minority group status. American fascism has a strong affinity with evangelical/charismatic Christianity that takes strong anti-LGBTQ and anti-abortion positions and often supports their political positions using Biblical scripture. Myth also plays an important role. For instance, President Trump was turned into a mythic figure, someone chosen by God to regenerate the country by giving pride of place to Christianity, the military, unfettered capitalism, and conservative values.

We risk at our peril the underestimation of the growth of fascism in the United States under Donald Trump. Waldon Bello (2021) writes: “It would be superfluous to be reminded now of Trump’s almost successful effort to prevent a peaceful transfer of power in the United States by systematically spreading the lie that he lost the elections and instigating a violent insurrection.” Abuses of power under the Trump presidency were unprecedented and eviscerated the imperatives of democracy while legitimizing ethno-nationalism and white supremacy. But the United States is not alone. Bello points out that “[t]he United States, India, Brazil, and the Philippines were four of the seven biggest democracies in the world just nine years ago. Today, three of them are led by fascists who are determined to complete their transformation into non-liberal democratic systems. The other barely survived a fascist’s determined effort to hold on to power.”

Victor Orban's Fidesz Party in Hungary, Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist project, Jair Bolsonaro's Alliance for Brazil movement, and the death squad reign of Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines have made a mockery of democratic rule. And Western and Central Europe are not immune to similar developments. As Bello (2021) notes: "From having no radical right-wing regime in the 2000s, except occasionally and briefly as junior partners in unstable governing coalitions as in Austria, the region now has two solidly in power — one in Hungary, the Orban government, and one in Poland, the Peace and Justice Party. The region has four more countries where a party of the far right is the main opposition party. And it has seven where the far right has become a major presence both in parliament and in the streets."

Bello makes three important points with regards to fascism. First, that the features of fascism do not follow any prescribed model, they are often unique in the way that they manifest themselves. Second, fascism's key features are not always immediately visible, but show themselves in a protracted way over time. And third, the more powerful the fascists become, the more they feel the need to appear to respect democratic processes and values. Bello points out that one of the fascism's biggest successes in the West has been the creation of historical amnesia surrounding the Holocaust. He cites the example of Germany where Anti-Semitism is on the rise. Bello writes: "Especially alarming for people in the West who think liberal democratic beliefs are too solidly entrenched in their polities to be eroded should be the fact that holocaust denial is now more widespread in Europe than three decades ago, and that in the United States, surveys suggest broad ignorance about the Holocaust among millennial and Gen-Z respondents. These inroads in eroding the collective memory of 20th century fascism's most diabolical crime must surely count as one of 21st century fascism's biggest successes."

A new rooting of humanity is taking place in the fonts of

civilization that is grounded in the diametrical inversion of truth. In this necro-economy, divisiveness has overtaken conviviality, such that it affects the axiological character of being, producing forms of authoritarianism and domination invested with special malice, creating, in effect, the anti-culture of fascism. The contempt for facts as evident and inconcealable as a tornado has become routine media reporting. The more misleading and ill-concealed the facts, the more confidence is used in repeating them. The peremptory mandates of capitalism have failed to be challenged by Democrats for fear that they will be perceived as sympathetic towards socialism. Leftists have been culpably absent in calling out fascism in our midst while the unscrupulous rightwing media have remained relentless in their attempts to abominate liberal political correctness as a pretext for anticomunist persecution. The unrestricted and often frenzied fidelity to Trump exercised by the most supine Republicans and their indignant rejection of social equality and uncritical support of capitalism has unleashed a sickness throughout the country and poses insuperable difficulties for the re-establishment of United States democracy. We are seeking to transcend the inertia of our subjectivity while refusing to privilege exhortation over action and rhetoric over rational argumentation. We posit the means for the formation of the new human being for which the establishment of new social structures are indispensable. We need structures that reject the historical prolongation of blaming the victims. These structures we call socialist. Yet the undercurrent in today's propaganda industries is the fixed idea that capitalist is an indisputable given. Alongside the implacable condemnation of the ill-gotten profits of capitalism, the normative intention of critical pedagogy is similar to that of liberation theology—to posit a preferential option for the poor and immiserated classes amidst a world of systematic injustice and spoilation. There is no way in which differentiating wealth (some people are rich while others are poor) is legitimate in a democracy yet it is the founding principle of democracies

world over—control of the social and economic wealth is in the hands of a small percentage of the population.

Broken-winged romantics, placard hoisting dissenters, liberals touting moral tracts—these cannot defeat those who arrogate to themselves doctrinal immortality in the name of God and country. We have enough evidence that Trumpism is a form of fascism, which no pedantry will manage to escape. If the human community wishes to survive, it needs to look beyond a political cult devoted to one percent of the population who control the vast majority of the world's wealth. Capitalism is at variance with democracy, and to sugarcoat this reality is to discourage the struggle against injustice. To slay the reprobate cult of Trump and strengthen democracy will require prodigious manifestations of protagonistic agency that can both disambiguate the conditions of bourgeois morality and build the foundations of a socialist alternative to capitalism. This does not refer to creating an alternative morality—a leftist morality—but refers to pressuring capitalism to realize its truth in practice, which it cannot do. It cannot bring about genuine equality. A socialist alternative, grounded in creating schools and places of employment as sites of worker-cooperatives is a first step in building a social universe beyond the perils and hollow promises of austerity capitalism. A manifesto is only a first step, the rest is up to all of us.

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It is no flippancy to say that hagiographers of American life surely will describe the first decade of the twenty-first century as a decade of disaster piled upon disaster. The shattered parameters of our lives have become a hallucinatory, reconstructed junkyard, a horrifically compelling lamentation for the misery of everyday life in capitalist society, with the material certainty of our finite existence coming for many in the form of a pink slip or a home foreclosure notice. As critical educators, we search for a reprieve in the distance of the imagination but we find only its vanishing point. We perch ourselves on film noir skyscrapers like angelic gargoyles, peering meditatively over a city of human mystery like the holy watchmen in Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*. But in these vain attempts we realize that we are the tattered and banished wreckage of humanity. Lashed with wire to rust-splotched iron girders, spread-eagled and pierced by rivets, we have become the ultimate expression of human bondage, the detritus of value production, twisting in the blood red sun like a dancing messiah, peering down upon the charred refugees of hope below who prowl through the ruins of humanity like the gaunt and spindly stick figures sculpted by Giacometti. As contemporaries, we have all observed epic moments of despair that we have attempted to graph with solemn regularity onto great arcs of history, but we know from the alienation and suffering that has afflicted humanity for centuries that history can never be trusted to bend

one particular way or another. Unlike Cassandra, our purpose as revolutionary educators has never been to trust history, or whatever prophetic insights we believe we have pertaining to the future of humankind, but to understand history's movement and give it direction and momentum in the interests of social justice. Viewed from any point within the social-historical panorama of despair that now confronts us, such a task seems more daunting than ever. Besotted by ideological belligerence, capitalism relies to a greater extent today than ever before on ideological rationalizations and obfuscation to defuse and deflect criticism of its recent developments. Today during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, we know that corporations are reaping huge profits but they are not spending their profits to hire workers or build factors but to enhance their own share prices.

In contrast to this reality, we all live with a certain image that is constantly being embellished: that we live in a meritocracy where we are rewarded fairly for our hard work and perseverance. When we look around us at the age in which we live, we see a ruling class with an unimaginably dense accumulation of wealth undertaking innumerable efforts to establish new organizations to reproduce the same social practices. We rarely see future-oriented efforts, planting seeds in a clod of earth. We live in a constant state of resignation watching our lives move lockstep into a mighty, super-sensible ensemble of social relations. Clearly in this enmeshment, those who control capital control the government, forcing governments to become part of a corporate superstructure, overseeing capital's base. And there has been an accompanying corporate colonization of civil society as well, effectively stifling any ameliorative function that might be offered by many new educational movements, those very pragmatic organizations that have become a more capital-friendly substitute for revolutionary manifestos of groups bent on overthrowing the regime of capital. While those of us who have to sell our labor-power for a wage

remain ensepulchered by the realities of the global economic meltdown and the militarization of the country, the haughty denizens of the American financial demimonde appear more in keeping with the characters in the Kienholz installation Five Car Stud or the film *Bride of Chucky* than with the white-haired titans of industry that we once pictured in full length cashmere coats strolling past stately oaks draped with Spanish moss and repairing to the smoking room of Pittsburg's Duquesne Club to enjoy a Havana cigar and a single-malt Scotch, or as red-faced politicians in velvet smoking jackets meandering through the giant redwoods of the Bohemian Grove. The dark underbelly of Daddy Warbucks now permeates the structural unconscious of the financial world and the poor are left to face the organized burden of being American in the paradise created by the rich and for the rich. The attempt by the Right to exorcise the insinuation of too much diversity into the U.S. Anglosphere, and the mass media's long-imposed separation between dialectical thought and everyday life have united to bring about a terrifying calcification of the public mind that has turned politics into a circus of pantomime, and has helped to secure both political parties as organs of interest for the corporations, which have become the servo-mechanisms of the corporate state. It is the daily taunt of many on the right that socialism leads to mindless conformity. But what could be gloomier than the politics that has arisen out of the ashes of bourgeois capitalist democracy? The word socialism is slurred in the United States, and rather than socialism being an unsettled question, it is used as an unsettling noun, intended to frighten and to create panic among the popular majorities. The left has yet to overcome this obstacle. The cataclysmic social and political changes of this present historical moment has unleashed its most unholy aspirations among the modern Manicheans of the Christian right. The Tea Party, the prehensile tail of libertarianism, has made a ver-tiginous descent into the bowels of the American Armageddon psyche, resurrecting itself in the gratuitous

sepulchral cant of Christian dominionism and reconstruction-ism. Armed with a message that is an eerie amalgam of generalized resentment, a nympholespsy of self-hatred, and nativism sutured together by theocratic aspirations, these activists are clawing their way towards the New Jerusalem with their rabble-rousing war-cry of dismantling the federal government. Television personality and Republican necromancer, Glenn Beck, makes a messianic overture to millions of Tea Party supporters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, while at the same time immolating the historical memory of the civil rights movement by claiming Martin Luther King as his forebear. In an atmosphere of a big tent religious revivalism dripping with a fascist miasma of national rebirth, a furor of white backlash zealotry, political demagoguery, fear-engendering and resentment-mongering, he grandly asserts that the civil rights movement was not really about black people but rather white conservatives under assault from evil liberals. As advocates of revolutionary critical pedagogy, we stand at the turning point in this process. Critical pedagogy is an approach that we have chosen as a necessary (albeit insufficient) vehicle for transforming the world. The work that we do has been adapted from the pathfinding contributions of the late Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, whose development of pedagogies of the oppressed helped to lay the foundations for approaches (feminist, post-structuralist, Marxist) to teaching and learning that utilizes the life experiences of students in and outside of traditional classrooms to build spaces of dialogue and dialectical thinking. We have renamed our critical pedagogy, revolutionary critical pedagogy. We have done so because we believe that dialogical approaches to teaching can help to create a critical citizenry capable of analyzing and transforming capitalist societies worldwide. In doing so, we denounce the domesticated versions of critical pedagogy that are insufficiently critical of capitalism and even hostile to a socialist alternative.

Critical pedagogy has been discredited by the right as administering propaganda for a communist insurrection, or it has been domesticated by the left who do not want to directly challenge capital and state power. But critical pedagogy as a revolutionary praxis has never been extinguished. Like a burning ember hiding under a dung-heap, it can be stamped out by the jackboots of fascism, as is happening today, or rekindled to serve as the funeral pyre for the colonialist regime we are bound to serve as citizens of capital. We are so reverentially preoccupied with what others have to say about the struggle for socialism that we fear to trust our own understanding and consequently we have no eyesight left to look upon these historical events themselves. Marx's writings that tell us untraditional truths about the social and economic order tap a world-weary longing that stretches back through the centuries. Here, the term "world-weary longing" is not meant to refer to the existential despair often experienced by intellectuals as fathomless as the abyssms of the earth. We are talking about the anguish that accompanies what have been for the majority of humanity the failures of attempting to overcome necessity. Current struggles against oppression anchored by liberal appeals to fairness and equity and built upon the crusted over sediments of past choices—even those made with considerable autonomy—are no longer relevant to the present day. Critical pedagogy teaches us that we have the collective power to overcome the inimical forces of capital. The promised land is not a glimpse of a lush fragrance of a dream, the sun shining on the window soffit. Nor is it only to be found in the verdant fields of the imagination. It is very much where we happen to be standing as we attempt to transform the world of capital into a world free of necessity. The promised land can therefore only promise to be a place of struggle, springing up in the dark, silent underground crypts and caves where revolutionary futures incubate and where hope is conjugated with the movement of the people towards an anti-capitalist future. We are all merely seeds in the moist soil of the

counter-world. It is up to decide what that world is to look like and how to get there. We need to extend the ambit of critical pedagogy from persons with ‘authority’ to whom by convention and precept education has hitherto largely been confined, to those who are ‘least’ among us, not in numbers, surely, but in social legitimacy—the poor and the dispossessed. We are not talking about the dispossessed as dispossessed but as a revolutionary force for socialism. They are carrying a much larger freight than their single selves. It is in their name that we begin to unravel what which we have been formed to be and begin the arduous and painful process of remaking ourselves in a deliberately new way that often takes us on a collision course with the systems of intelligibility, ways of knowing, and received terms that we have inherited to create habitual and resigned agents. The fact is, surely, that we are faced with two choices of how to live our humanity—the liberal model of pleading with the corporations to temper their cruelty and greed, or the reactionary model that has declared war on social and economic equality. And on the evidence that each of these models is fiercely and hopelessly entangled in each other’s conflictual embrace, we can accept neither. Critical pedagogy is more than throaty bursts of teacherly impropriety, more than enumerating in ironic detail the problems faced by the youth of today, more than hurling invective at government policies, but a sustained march towards a revolutionary consciousness and praxis. We must become more like the unknown sailor who tried to smash the statue of Napoleon’s head with a brick during the days of the Paris Commune, or like the Iraqi journalist who threw his shoe at the head of President George W. Bush while Bush was standing tall before the cameras of the transnational corporate media like a Texas version of the Vendome Column wrapped in a jock strap. Revolutionary critical pedagogy questions the official, hegemonic view of ahistorical educational change, isolated from the capitalist social and production relations. As critical revolutionary educators, we need to understand how the dynamics

of the capitalist system-its movement from global capitalism to transnational capital, for instance-has guided the meaning and purpose of educational reform and has impacted institutions and approaches with respect to what counts as educational change. We follow Che's dialectical conception of education which is formed internally through analyzing the continuous contractions of external influences on the life of individuals. We agree with Paulo Freire that dialogical pedagogy can achieve the kind of class consciousness necessary for a powerful social transformation. It also suggests that as we participate in an analysis of the objective social totality that we simultaneously struggle for a social universe outside of the value form of labor. If we are to educate at all, we must educate for this! Statist socialism has collapsed and weighs heavier on the minds of the living with its inevitable decay into the oblivion of historical time. Libertarian politics as well lies rotting on its deathbed, as capitalism continues to wreak its revenge, despite its present state of unprecedented crisis. Antisystemic movements of all shapes and stripes are still around but have, for the most part, become domesticated into reformist shadows of their previous revolutionary selves, forming enfeebled and enfeebling popular fronts that fall like spent cartridges on the heels of any real challenge to capitalism. Critical educators must take a stand, working for a political or direct democracy, for the direct control of the political process by citizens, for economic democracy, for the ownership and direct control of economic resources by the citizen body, for democracy in the social realm by means of self-management of educational institutions and workplaces, and for the ecological justice that will enable us to reintegrate society into nature. The struggle for a new historic bloc built up by the working class will not be easy. If critical educational studies is to avoid being corralled into accepting the dominant ideology, or annexed to pro-capitalist forces among the left, or transformed into a recruiting ground for liberal reform efforts, or even worse, turned into an outpost for reactionary populism, it will largely

be due to our efforts as revolutionary critical educators. We need to awaken from our dream into another dream, but one dreamt with open eyes, a collective dream that will take us out of the homogeneous, monumental and chronological time of capital and beyond the consolatory pretensions of the bourgeoisie to create the “time of the now” discussed so poignantly by Walter Benjamin—the time of the revolutionary. We need to capture the revolutionary fervor of the communards, whose battle-tested hearts managed, if only for a brief time, to pump into the sewers of history the muck of ages lining the drainpipes of a lost revolution. It is precisely the socialist partisanship of critical pedagogy—not to the point of dogmatism or inflexibility—that reveals its power of critique. We need to reclaim the power of critique as the sword arm of social justice and not relinquish it. For in doing so we reclaim our humanity and the world.



We are here, right now at this very precipitous moment, living in the fetid Aftermath of the anti-Kingdom of Trumpland. We are armed with the counter-knowledge of the subaltern in our texts of counterinsurgency, languishing in some alternative rhetorical site where we are preoccupied with our catechrestic labeling of this or that aspect of imperial epistemic violence, preconstituted by the limits of the ivory tower that has become our prison. So let's not be so smug. We cannot abstain from representation because they are also coming for us. Can't you hear the jackboots? So let's start at the end, as a series of beginnings. And so, to the final question, yes, the final question: where should critical pedagogy take us and where should we take critical pedagogy? We can only answer this with a response from our guts. To the plaintive and indignant voices of our establishment critics, we say this: We are inadaptable! We are maladaptable! We answer your charges of sedition with a burst of laughter. We will not be treated as overactive children with behavioral disorders. We will not swallow your pills. We do not live in treehouses but underground, in the sewers of Bogota, in the slums of Calcutta, in the Lacondan jungle of Chiapas, in las calles de Los Angeles, in casas de carton in the favelas of Rocinha, in Rio's South Zone, in classrooms without books, in restrooms without toilets, in board rooms without CEOs, in prisons without guards! We speak Chontal, Ch'ol, Tzltal, Tzotzil, Tojolab'al, Chicomuceltec, Mocho', and Akatek. We are the children of

1968 and of hip-hop, we will not accept bribes, we will not accept financial compensation, we refuse to let our subjectivities be cooked in the ovens of the state, we refuse to ask permission for anything, we refuse to be colonized or to colonize, we refuse to be exiled from our own flesh, we refuse to let our languages, our songs, our histories, and our dreams be expropriated by the mass media. We will not let capital disfigure us. We understand the hidden transcript of capitalist normality and we are making it manifest for the world to see. We are the WikiLeaks of the seminar rooms and classrooms and we will expose the lies and corruption of all Ministries of Education. We will not burn our copies of Marx and genuflect at the altar of neoliberal capitalism. It's been a capricious ruse of corporate media to confuse capitalism with democracy.

We know that we exist as intersubjective beings and will not let wage labor tear us from our friends, our families, our communities. We refuse to be decomposed by the social machinery of the state apparatuses. We will not be the subjects of your social experiments. We understand fully that there is no separation between the definition of justice and our obligation to do justice. We aren't proud to announce that The Forever Cafe has been closed, it just goes with the economic territory. We aren't embarrassed to wear vintage shirts from Pendleton Wollen Mills, turquoise jewelry, and 50's glass frames; so go ahead, be our guest, and criticize us as bourgeois, we don't care. If we want to stuff gloves in our hip pocket and go barefoot like Billy Jack or choose to dress like a NASA scientist, then so be it. You follow YouTube instructions on how to look like a hipster so by definition you can't call yourself one. We're freeskiers and do backflips off fluffies.

We read Hegel and Marx in an abandoned portapotty near our favorite road house, so don't expect us to be impressed when

you read your Wittgenstein under a table in Ralph Lauren's new Polo Bar. Give our best to Ralph, will you? Tell him that he looks most elegant in fitted Scottish wool suits. We lost our front teeth playing hockey in the minor Canadian leagues and we aren't interested that you drove your Holland & Holland Range Rover with a custom gun box to your field level seat for game 6 of the World Series at Fenway Park. We say, good for you! We were just as content to drive to the nearest bar on our Harleys and watch the game on the big screen. If we appear overburdened by a rash of obloquies and excoriating invectives directed against the transnationalist capitalist class, please know that it is not because we are especially prone to rage but because we are morally exhausted in our refusal to accept their constant barrage of lies and deceptions. If this paragraph sounds like I miss the 60s, you're right, but you're wrong if you think my critique is fueled by nostalgia alone.

We read the following quotation by Noam Chomsky and not only do we agree with it, we see it as an understatement:

Europe has a very bloody history, an extremely savage and bloody history, with constant massive wars that was all part of an effort to establish the nation-state system. It has virtually no relation to the way people live, or to their associations, or anything else particularly, so it had to be established by force—centuries of bloody warfare. That warfare (in Europe) ended in 1945—and the only reason it ended is because the next war was going to destroy everything. So it ended in 1945—we hope; if it didn't, it will destroy everything. The nation-state system was exported to the rest of the world through European colonization. Europeans were barbarians basically, savages: very advanced technologically, and advanced in methods of warfare, but not culturally or anything else particularly. And when they spread over the rest of the world, it was like a plague—they just destroyed everything in front of them. [...] They fought differently, they fought much more brutally,

they had better technology—and they essentially wiped everything else out. The American continent is a good example. How come everyone around here has a white face and not a red face? Well, it's because the people with the white faces were savages, and they killed the people with red faces. (314)

And hasn't the U.S. exceeded Europe in its brutality? Do we need to go through all of the U.S. invasions since 1945? And the horror it has reigned down on Southeast Asia and Latin America? And do you think the history of Christianity will protect you? Did not religious leaders in Spain justify the war against indigenous peoples in Las Americas on the grounds that they be converted to Christianity? Did anybody utter a peep about this in your holy Council of Trent? Didn't Bishop Moscos of Cuzco condemn the rebellion by Tupac Amaru against indigenous slave labor and didn't he describe Tupac Amaru as a "rebel against God, religion, and the law"? Didn't the Vatican's Holy Office officially deny on 20 June 1886 that slavery was contrary to natural law?

Before the Spanish executed him by decapitation, did not Tupac Amaru cry out, "Ccollanan Pachacamac ricuy auccacunac yahuarniy hichascancuta!" ("Mother Earth, witness how my enemies shed my blood!")? We don't care if you live in a converted granary with handmade clay tiles. Take your make-believe ruralism and shove it up the copper pipes of your neo-vernacular estate! We proudly sing "Rejoice, O Virgin" from Rachmaninoff's Vespers, wearing denim overalls from the Dust Bowl and if Putin wants to put us into prison, we say, let him try! We appear every 200 years like *Brigadoon*, with Cyd Charisse playing my sister. Capitalism has made us feel alone together and homesick at home and we won't allow you into our community unless you can enrich the debate about the future of humanity! We want to engage in acts of self-creation, you have forced us to act in self-preservation because you compel us into acts of self-alienation for our survival. We want to be self-motivated, you want to coerce us!

You want ownership in severalty, we want collective ownership! You want to create our needs, we want to create our future! You want to manufacture our consent, when we are unable to consent to having a life! We will not be cast into your world; we will not let your despotic capitalist mind lead us to suffocate in the urban sprawl of an extractive economy. You can fly the fish you catch on the U.S. coast to Japan for processing and then send it back here to fancy seafood restaurants at Pier 39 in Fisherman's Wharf, but we are not impressed. We don't care how many frequent flyer miles your fish have accumulated. We would rather eat corn grown in an urban garden than be part of this insanity! You are interested in science for preserving your hair and teeth until you die. We are interested in fathoming the mysteries of the universe. Don't try to send us into a brick cell with a whiteboard and then have us read a book about nature. We prefer to live in nature than read about nature in a classroom that supports the expropriation of the means of production. Every time one of you Republicans talks about abolishing social security because it's socialist you are sentencing Americans to death. Every time one of you Democrats runs away from the word socialism you are sentencing the entire world to death! Your corporations pretend to be one-worlders but they always turn to their national government when they are in crisis and need to be bailed out. We are not interested in *The Expendables* or *Independence Day*, or Adam Sandler films, so decry us as elitist postuniversal cosmopolitanists or post-national liberals, we don't care. We prefer to stay at home and watch Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*. By the way, your nerd couture doesn't impress us, although if you gifted us your Nintendo bow tie and muted red jacket, we wouldn't turn you down. Please try to understand us: We don't want to break with the history of the last century, we want to break with the history of the past two thousand years! Now do you get it?

We know that you know that you have created a mass society

of dopamine deprived, stressed-out citizens and that you need to modulate our brain/ body chemistry—deliver to our brains enough dopamine, serotonin, spinephrine, and all the neurotransmitters and hormones and all the other systems of comfort needed to prevent us from keeping us from storming the barricades that you have constructed and seizing our freedom. You can addict us to reality television shows, expand the sports channels, disorient us in your shopping malls so that we can only relieve our anxiety with a purchase. Yes, you can do all of these things. Go ahead and hijack our neurotransmitters, make us feel our submission, pump up our stress hormones and then, like missionary heroes, offer us a means of relieving our stress by patting us on the back and calling us good consumers who are helping to strengthen the economy. And then literally take over our working-class youth by offering them a free education in the military so that they can go and beat up little countries every so often—intermittent reinforcement, catch them unawares—and let the world know that we mean business. And of course, we are talking about business, so you had better give our corporations free reign. You have predisposed us to acting like your serfs, but we know that we are predisposed to violating our own predispositions and the hard-wiring that has gone into our brains, courtesy of your schoolmasters and clergy, can be overruled (cf. Smail).

We hereby overrule you! You have ripped Marx's ideas out of their revolutionary soil by decades of toxic bombardment by the corporate media and repotted them in greenhouse megastores where, under hydrofarm compact fluorescent fixtures, so that they can be deracinated, debarked, and made safe for university seminars and condominium living alike for highly committed twentysomethings who like to whistle to ballpark tunes in their faux-Victorian bathtubs. Shame on you! And shame on you for disturbing my slumber. Now, when I dream, I discover myself squatting atop a Gothic cathedral, whose gargoyles perched below

my feet are spouting the blood of history's time-enduring saints to quell the maelstrom of angry crowds below—crowds made up of the powerless, the forgotten, the excluded, victims caught in the crossfire of capitalism (the result of watching too many of your Zombie or vampire films, no doubt). I peer down at the collarless, blood-covered, and spindle-shanked figures below, shafts of brilliant light slicing through the clouds that hover hesitatingly over the entangled gloom, and then the noxious exhalation and clouds of putrid effluvia wafting upwards from the dank and pungent sewer mist rises to meet the light, and suddenly everyone is playing and celebrating in the city streets, like neighborhood kids who have yanked open a fire hydrant during a heat wave. But what are they celebrating? Their new credit card advance? You are the heirs of the Magna Carta, that 800 year-old document signed at Runnymede on the banks of the Thames between Windsor and Staines. Congratulations on that! I'm glad that King John was finally subjected to some oversight by a panel of wealthy barons! I'm glad that world historical document resulted in some limitation on taxation without representation; that certainly helped out a lot of important aristocrats.

That's just great! And I'm gratified that my ancestral homeland, Scotland, was able to survive as an independent state and the King was prevented from turning it into his own feudal stomping ground. No king (or queen) is above the law these days, so thank you for that, heirs of the Magna Carta. Excuse our bad breath, but are not the poor and the powerless also heirs to the Magna Carta, and what about them? Now taxes are no longer extracted in an arbitrary way by an acquisitive king, but systematically by the state, advantaging the rich, white property owners, as always. Free men are no longer arbitrarily imprisoned, except for African American men caught 'being black' and warehoused in our penitentiaries as part of the school-to-prison pipeline. I suppose they are the modern day equivalents to feudal serfs. Well, we

have the U.S. Constitution, you tell us. But that mainly protects the rich, white property owners, courtesy of the extermination of most of the indigenous population. Damn any concentration of power—be it church or state—that dares to mess with white male property owners! And so the rich have always presented themselves as the oppressed each time the law prevents them from buying up everything, including us! And what about your hero, Samuel Adams, one of the so-called Founding Fathers of the United States, whose namesake beer you quaff down in buckets and whose praises you used to sing during your internship at the Cato Institute? And whose name (along with James Madison) you sometimes mixed into your witty retorts and bon mots at Vauclus, on Sunset Boulevard in West Hollywood, or the Algonquin Hotel in New York City, both of which were happy to serve you a 10,000 dollar diamond martini (thanks to your calling in advance to pre-order the diamond). Did you know Samuel Adams drafted the Riot Act that suspended habeas corpus so that debtors and protesters could be kept in jail without trial? That didn't sit well with a group called the Regulators, who wanted to shut down the courts and turn debtors out of jail. Adams believed that while all men were equal under the law and in the eyes of God, they would always be unequal in beauty, talents, and fortunes. James Madison argued that the abolition of debt and the institution of an equal division of labor was absolutely wicked. Sorry, but I'm with Shays' rebellion, led by revolutionary war veteran Daniel Shays, the spirit of which I hope is reflected here. We also take our inspiration from the communism of the early Christian Church, the Gospel message of the Kingdom of God and the rich homiletic material made available in the parables of Jesus. You take the parable of the “talents” (Matthew 25.14-30; Luke 19.12-27) to argue that Jesus preached the glories of capitalism and usury, but we see it as a warning to the rich not to exploit their workers! You bring your own desire to the interpretation, we try to understand it from the worldview of a firstcentury Palestinian.

The human logos will not suffice to explain the mystery which is inexpressible, impenetrable, and wholly other, unable to be represented by our eyes that lust for the visible, or any of our other senses. We can only reply to your theologians that we know God through our adission that God is unknowable. And for that matter, ours is a suffering God—the scourged Christ—who suffers along with the poor and the oppressed and yours is the triumphant Christ ruling all from His heavenly throne!

We struggle with the texts of scripture in community while you sit in your suburban church pews. You see *the Bible* as some kind of aperture through which you can know how God worked in the days of old; we see the Bible as a reflection of our lives as we suffer the daily indignities of life. But all this talk is about ancient history, you tell me. Okay, let me talk about something closer to home. Ok, squint hard, will you? How about Los Angeles? Can't you see in the distance the Sheriff of Skidberry, patrolling San Pedro and San Julian streets, tipping his bald plate to The Hurricane, Bow Leg, Slow Bucket, and Thick 'n' Juicy? Can't you see him handing out a donated hygiene kit to a woman shooting heroin between her toes, while nearby a beer baron sells 2 dollar bottles outside of AA meetings (cf. O'Neil)? You can't? Well, have you ever been to downtown Los Angeles, not far from City Hall? Have you ever gone 'sliding down The Nickel,' you know, made the trek to Skid Row, where the city warehouses its homeless population from Third Street on the north, Seventh Street on the south, Alameda Street to the east, and Main Street to the west? Do you know that the 2000 down-on-their-luck men, women, and children who live under tarps strewn across shopping carts in this one-square mile are now at risk of losing their squalid surroundings to gentrification, since urban development—residential lofts, trendy bistros, influx of yuppies, etc.—has brought 50,000 people next door and developers are lining up, salivating to grab more territory for their urban hipsters

clients? Have you ever wondered what happened to low-income housing? Have you ever been on the mean streets of L.A., this city of angels, and watched thousands of hardscrabble members of Marx's always unpopular reserve army of unemployed and their blank-faced children line up uncomfortably outside of the Los Angeles Sports Arena to get their yellow wristbands, their once-in-a-million ticket to see in the flesh a doctor, a dentist, a healthcare volunteer? When thousands line up all night, in the desert climate chill, to see a dentist, what does that portend for their future, aching molars aside? Even the health care aides of the sick wait patiently beside their own brittle-boned patients, who wait beside undocumented day laborers, who wait beside Orange County housewives abandoned by their gambling husbands, who wait beside teachers seeking mammograms and treatment for their diabetes. What will it take for you to be outraged? Do you have to be pushed into the ranks of the living dead to fight back?

I have stood on the banks of the Yangtze River, which flows 3,200 miles across central China to the sea, waters in which Mao liked to swim. Like Mao, we will swim against the current and arrive on the opposite bank and show the goddess of the mountain a new world!

Will this population be the first to be shipped off to a labor camp somewhere should fascism consolidate its legal, economic, criminal justice and affective regime in the United States? Will we muter a fight or be compelled to join them? Will we all end up singing "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" from the film, *Cabaret*? And does a 'volkisch' community have to be fascist? Can't an effect precede its cause? Can't our 'American' tradition be led not be some jerry-rigged assemblage of backward-looking times, some broken remnants of the past, but by a dream of the future—by a feeling of contemporaneity, of sharing the present time collectively, whose arc is wide enough to harness our collective, generalized affect for the liberation of humanity from capital,

even in this prevailing apotheosis of despair? The present, after all, is no longer mostly the past. Well, at least for those who are wired to the World Wide Web.

Our struggle is eschatological, the possibility of making a dialectical leap into a new aeon where the Gospels and education can create synergistically a transitional functionality for building a world free from necessity and needless suffering. The notion of free clinics for the poor has stoked the ire of those who think this is ‘socialism,’ helping all those ‘freeloaders,’ and especially the scraggly immigrants south of the border, while those responsible for the overexploitation of las Americas sit in their mahogany offices, wet their kerosene lips on shipwrecked 1907 Heidsieck champagne (which, at \$275,000 a bottle could subsidize all those diagnosed for root canals and then some) and watch the fascism of the nation unfold, as Hannity, Beck, and O'Reilly call for liberal heads to roll.

Francisco Franco, beloved fascist dictator of Spain, allegedly slept beside the incorruptible arm of Saint Teresa de Avila (can't you see him using it to scratch the hairs on his back), clutching it like a crucifix to fend off the dark prince. Perhaps George Bush Jr. has hidden some religious relic under his bed, perhaps even the skull of Geronimo, while Barack Obama, needing no protective relic, sleeps soundly, unperturbed by terrorists, or Marx's reserve army snaking around the block in the city of angels, as his own angels of steel hover overhead, their tactical control systems humming *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. Instead of calling upon Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, or Raphael, our beloved leader feels safe enough under the watchful eyes of Predator, Global Hawk, Fire Scout, and Hunter as he called for the birth of new nations under god, liberated by the mighty F-16. May God bless America. And nobody else. Our new leader, the soul-eating Leviathan that has emerged from the cultivated swamp of history, who lives inside

his own brainpan lined with mirrors so he can admire himself even in his dreams, readies himself to squeeze the planet like a petulant child with a piece of clay. Long after your bones and our excrement have been fossilized and studied in a spaceship circling a space station where earth's survivors were first sequestered after experiments in engineered algae and synthetic biology failed, your ancestors will look back at you in disgrace and it won't be with heroic recrimination but just plain, measured disgust. We therefore proclaim that we will treat our fellow human beings as ends in themselves and not as a means for something else. As far as entering your normal universe is concerned, we are on permanent strike. And this is but a short prelude to a path for social change. We stand firm for a multi-tendency revolutionary democracy that advocates direct forms of mass self-rule.

Yet even against logo-swathed backdrops and image-based commentaries of daunting corporate grandeur, we keep ransacking Marx's tomb, especially when an economic crisis hits that demands some kind of explanation not afforded by the pundits of the Wall Street Journal. Everywhere it seems—perhaps especially in education—you find Marxism being derided with a leering flippancy or galvanized indifference. You can't escape it, even in coffee shops for the urban literati, as a recent visit to a popular Los Angeles establishment taught me. There, among the hard-nosed espresso drinkers, a stranger approached me waving heavy hands. Bobbing over a thin nose and pair of succulent roasted lips were a set of lobster eyes, as if they were clumsily plopped onto plump, fleshy stumps that sprung out ominously from deep within his sockets. With wobbling eyes and an oversized tongue straining to escape his overly caffeinated oral cavity, he remarked with a theatrical intensity: "Oh, you're McLaren, the one that writes that Marxist shit." After conveying his sentiments, an unpleasant patina of decay descended upon his flapping jowls as if he had suddenly aged a generation. I responded with a simple

retort, as quickly as if I had rehearsed it in advance: “I assume you’re already so full of capitalist shit that I wonder how you noticed mine.”

We cannot be evasive in our search for justice, tranquilized by self-deception, led to political hibernation by our own topor, or unwarrantably adventitious in our actions. We must recognize those whom Jesus reproofed with ‘fierce censure’ for not bearing fruit (i.e., for not loving one’s neighbor) and for not recognizing that the end of history has already arrived in history (cf. Miranda 168-71) with the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. For those of us who call ourselves Christians, we must challenge those in our communities of faith who prevent the Messiah from being truly recognized (i.e., prevent love and justice from being seen as one and the same), those who relegate Jesus to an indefinitely postponable future, keeping him ‘eternally pre-existent’ or ‘eternally future’ but never existing in the ‘now,’ that is, in the ‘supra-individual reality’ that is the Kingdom of God (cf. Miranda 196-201). The Kingdom of God is where faith and justice determine our being as we confront history in its totality and as we bring forth through faith and class struggle those fruits of love, communalidad, and peaceful intercultural existence that have been annulled by the forces of capital.

Tell your teachers to become attentive to their self-transforming potential, to stop loitering around the trash cans of tradition and to stop resisting the prospect of a possible future. Please tell them to leave the shepherd’s crook and the winnowing whip in a stone reliquary for old school hand-me-downs; they don’t need them anymore. Instruct your teachers that they have become endowed with the capacity to become more aware of their mission. Ask them to remove the cover from the straw basked at their feet. In it they will find a serpent coiled in three and a half turns. Tell them to place the serpent in an empty baptismal

font or a crystal aspersorium and anoint themselves. Insist that the teachers take up the ladle of public service and drink from the elixir of immortality. Invite them to partake of its grace. For if you are committed to serve the people you are serving all of eternity. For time was brought into existence out of nothing to give us an opportunity to share an infinite compassion and active receptivity to the anguished cries of our people and a graced realization that we are one with all those who suffer and are heavily burdened. The sound of Einstein's equation,  $E = mc^2$  is OM. Aristotle freed us from the bondage of the gods but we cannot transform reality through the waking consciousness of rationality alone. Advise your teachers to abandon their altars of capital and the slaughter bench of imperial war. It's time to put aside such childish myths about America's providential mission to civilize the world; our rulers cling to this myth, even if it means bombing that world back into the Stone Age. It is time to put aside such childish things. The abysslike presence of alienation from nature both inwardly and outwardly, and from our divine nature, can be defeated and the divine destination of our lives can be realized. Be one with the people—not only meditatively but through praxis—through acting on and in and even alongside the world with them. You are not them, but you are not other to them. Accustom yourself to wonder. Abide in the miracle of life. As Saint Francis de Sales put it, the only measure of love is to love without measure. I beckon you to go forth and teach, acting lovingly. For it is only by teaching that you can learn, and only by learning that you are fit to teach. And it is only through love that we can transform this world.

When we contemplate our state of spiritual infinitude, we are confronted with a myriad of choices. We can imagine the putrid stench of flesh decaying from regret; ambition lying fallow from an over-tilled darkness; voices rasping, hollowed out by unwelcomed perseverance; hope rattling like a dust-choked dream coughing in your brainpan. We can let death jeer at us, its chilling

rictus pulled tight over our fears like a Canadian winter cap or we can use the past not as the deathbed of our last remorseful slumber but transformed into a bow forged from our weary heartstrings, sending us spinning, a delirious flame shot into the temple of fate. Let us always be fearless teachers, even unto our last breath, and hope that such fearlessness will lead to wisdom. And such wisdom will lead to a transformation of this world to another world where love and justice prevail. Perhaps one day, while decamping from your conference on the common core, or value added instruction, you'll find time to ponder this choice. After your continental breakfast at Motel 6, you might consider glancing across the street at the empty lot of jimsonweed, concrete shards, gasoline soaked soil, and mercury vapors. There you will find a man in seamless twill-woven pants, clutching his rake handle with a long iron ridged nail driven into the tip colorfully festooned with collapsed styrofoam cups and Chuck E. Cheese and Happy meal coupons. He's the one spearing paper wrappers along the spongy gutters. Look to the right and you will notice a communion chalice and a bagel crust sitting on a collapsed lawn chair. Are you telling me that it's a coke can? Then focus your spirit. In the distance someone will play a trumpet. And a glint of sunlight will catch a swarm of windborn mustard seeds redounding from the future that will circle your head and you will cry out with indescribable joy.





Here we can appreciate how our political imagination helps to galvanize our protagonistic agency, our revolutionary praxis, in building sites of mutual solidarity, counter-public spaces autonomous of social relations of capitalist production, liminal spaces of critique and co-operation, of imagining a world outside of capitalist value production. And imagining the conditions of possibility for the emancipation of new forms of political subjectivity capable of resisting the law of value and looking beyond it. Here we can appreciate how spontaneous self-activity or mass practices such as the recent Black Lives Matter uprising sparked by the murder of George Floyd are also potential expressions of new theoretical developments as well as new strategies and tactics so that we can observe how the movement from practice is also a form of theory. And practice is also a form of making history as “history itself is to be understood as in essence an object of human practice . . . Action takes on a universal significance, going beyond the social world to affect being as such.” (Feenberg 2014: 66)

Che Guevara’s call for the creation of the ‘new man and woman’ through a force that takes place ‘in our habits and our minds’ is worth elaborating:

Our task is to prevent the current generation, torn asunder by its conflicts, from becoming perverted and from perverting new

generations. We must not create either docile servants of official thought, or ‘scholarship students’ who live at the expense of the state — practicing freedom in quotation marks. Revolutionaries will come who will sing the song of the new man and woman in the true voice of the people. This is a process that takes time. ...A new generation is being born. (Guevara 1965)

What does it mean to operationalize a pedagogy of liberation? Over the decades, critical pedagogues have rethought the idea of teachers as transformative and public intellectuals (Henry Giroux), as researchers (Joe Kincheloe), and as cultural workers. Josh Winn and Mike Neary have contributed to the important project of converting the university from a neoliberal corporation to a worker-cooperative with teachers and students as producers, as protagonistic agents furthering the development of socialism for the commons, for the public good. Teachers and students together become active agents of history. Rather than enabling history to act on them, they act on history, in a dialectical dance of revolutionary praxis. University campuses can—and should, in my view—become places of solidarity with social movements, new and old, as well as labor unions and teachers unions who may be open to socialist alternatives. New initiatives have been advanced for reimaging universities on the model of the worker-cooperative rather than corporation and along the lines of the student as producer. The co-operative values informing the new design of the university would include, according to Joss Winn: Self-help, Self-responsibility, Democracy, Equality, Equity, and Solidarity. The principles are Voluntary and Open Membership; Democratic Member Control; Member Economic Participation; Autonomy and Independence; Education, Training and Information; Co-operation among Co-operatives; and Concern for Community. The platform for building worker co-operatives and for rethinking the very idea of academic labor in the era of cognitive capitalism would, in this model, be the international co-operative movement (Winn, 2015). As they stand, universities

are capitalist employers who reproduce academic labor in the form of student labor. According to Winn, knowledge that is produced in this form of organization is powered through value production and exists mainly as a commodity form. But Winn (2015), Neary (2020) and others call for the transformation of the university into a worker-owned and managed co-operative university that would control the means of knowledge production and potentially produce new forms of social knowledge through a ‘common ownership’ form of property relations that transforms the distinction between ‘public’ and ‘private’ in order to create an ‘academic commons’ designed for the good of the community (McLaren, forthcoming). This would involve a new type of student- teacher relationship through forms of solidarity, equality and mutuality in terms of the division of labor. Here, neoliberal business models based on institutional precedents are replaced by Freirean dialogical models grounded in historical materialist analysis that stresses the development of critical consciousness and protagonistic agency and what Winn (2015) and Neary (2020) refer to as the Student as Producer. The community of scholars comprising the cooperative university would co-construct the curriculum with students through an active involvement in political struggles against the imperatives of capitalist value production. There is much work to be done in the struggle for a socialist alternative to value production. There is no time to waste.

\* This manifesto is a combination of new material and several of my previous works: Peter McLaren, *Pedagogy of Insurrection: From Resurrection to Revolution*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2015 and *The Capilano Review*, volume 3, issue 13, 2011.



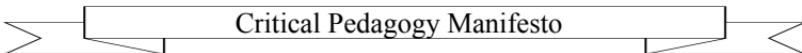


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## Critical Pedagogy Manifesto

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