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BOOK REVIEW

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PEDAGOGY OF INSURRECTION: FROM RESURRECTION TO REVOLUTION

Peter McLaren. Peter Lang Publishing, New York, NY, 2015, 465 pages.

I chose this book because of the title and the author. The link between insurrection and critical pedagogy strikes me as important and worthwhile. The text provides an interesting and iconoclastic take on the state of education today. Plus, Peter McLaren provides a great deal of worthwhile insight into pedagogues like Paulo Freire, the relevance of revolutionaries like Che Guevara, and the place of philosophers close to my heart in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx. I am intrigued by McLaren's take on revolutionary critical pedagogy, which serves as a counter to, in his words, the "intellectual chloroform that wafts from the corporate furnaces towering over [our educational] system" (p. 2). I met McLaren on a picket line in San Francisco during a rather large education conference. It was amidst a group of striking hotel workers outside one of the conference hotels. The theme of the conference was social justice, and the two of us stood with the workers against poor and exploitative working conditions, while our fellow conference attendees crossed into the hotel. McLaren was not there for the notoriety. As best as I could tell, I was one of only a few people who recognized him. He was there because he is genuine about his sympathies. I tell this story because this genuineness comes out in *Pedagogy of Insurrection: From Resurrection to Revolution*. A manifesto of revolutionary critical pedagogy, the text is a worthwhile culmination of thought and action, which reflects a humanist paradigm of thought, praxis, and emancipation.

McLaren frames his analysis within a reading and rereading of historical figures and social movements, reasserting their place in the intractable struggle for human freedom and emancipation. He brings into the fold comrade Jesus, citing the biblical foundations of communism, and fusing spiritual and Christian teachings with Marxism in a quest for social, economic, and educational justice. He also brings the abovementioned comrade Che into the conversation, along with comrade Fidel Castro and comrade Hugo Chávez. All of this happens within the revolutionary critical pedagogical tradition inaugurated by Freire and Ivan Illich. This begins with Chapter 1 and carries through to Chapter 5. As McLaren writes, these chapters (and the text) are about "purchasing more perspicuous conditions of possibility from which to inaugurate a radical reconstruction of society through educational, political, and spiritual transformation" (p. 53).

In Chapter 6, McLaren shifts to a discussion of revolutionary critical pedagogy with Sebastjan Leban. The conversation moves through critical pedagogy, capitalist social relations, classroom practice, and Marxism. The topic: Education is political, "[and] we have to create a space where [people] can be given resources to imagine a different world outside

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of capitalism's law of value" (p. 229). In Chapter 7, this topic resurfaces in a discussion with Petar Jandrić about the relationship between critical education and information and communication technologies. Chapter 8 is about revolutionary critical ecopedagogy. Chapter 9 is about radical negation and the radicalization of education through music. Chapter 10 delves headlong into violence and our contemporary moment of imperialism and transnational capitalism. Chapter 11 is about education as class warfare, and Chapter 12 asks a final question: "Where should critical pedagogy take us and where should we take critical pedagogy?" (p. 392) These chapters (and the text) are unapologetic, unflinching, and undeterred McLaren, carrying the conversation to a world of contradiction and a history of socially situated learning and knowledge. This text resonates with the times, confronting apparatuses of reification, commodity-fetishism, identity, deconstruction, pragmatism, and the bio-politics of the multitudes (p. xix). The text is a declaration by McLaren on how pedagogy is irretrievably tied to the project of transforming fundamental conditions of life.

McLaren engages deeply and on a profound level with the crisis of capitalism, pushing for social, economic, and educational justice. Demonstrating his proclivity toward Marx, he uses theory to articulate the concrete nature of things, including historical figures and social movements. He recalls their history and asserts their influence and relevance to our times. But not everyone shares McLaren's deep knowledge of historical figures and social movements, and at times I felt he could have done a better job of ensuring that they were explained. Still, *Pedagogy of Insurrection* is an enlightening affirmation of revolutionary theory and practice. I am a fan of the poetic, messianic, and revolutionary style of McLaren's writing.

Adult education in Canada has often been about voices of indignation, and in many cases represents a social critique of the situations that people find themselves in. Further, Canadian adult education is understandable only as it relates to its purpose, which rests on a view of people's beliefs and capabilities and the sort of society they wish to create. For these reasons, McLaren's book is a worthwhile addition to the library of anyone who has an interest in adult education or social justice. I am involved with a program for non-traditional and marginalized adult learners, and this text has me reflecting on my own practices (and praxis) and our program.

James M. Czank