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PEDAGOGY OF INSURRECTION: FROM RESURRECTION TO REVOLUTION

Peter McLaren. Peter Lang Publishers, New York, 2015, 465 pages.

When I studied theology at the radical Union Theology Seminary in New York City in the early 1990s, I heard a student preach a sermon that surprised me with its honesty. In describing the pain of his own life, he said that it was easier to come out gay than Christian, so anti-religious had the intellectual world in the city become. Twenty-five years later, his words still have resonance; religion or religious belief is usually no more welcome among liberal or critical educators these days than it was then. While there has been agreement of sorts in adult education, at least, that spirituality is acceptable, it is rare to find an intellectual of Peter McLaren's stature who will claim religious belief for fear of being mocked. So, it is refreshing to see a long-established scholar of critical pedagogy come out and acknowledge the ways that he is informed and inspired by his belief and commitment to a radical Christianity. Thank you, Peter McLaren, for that.

Pedagogy of Insurrection represents an integration of McLaren's critical pedagogy work with his understanding and belief in Jesus and the revolutionary Christianity that he founded. McLaren finds inspiration in liberation theologians such as Gutiérrez, Marxist comrades from all over, and most especially the life of Jesus, whom he names as a revolutionary. McLaren builds on his lifetime of scholarship in opposing neo-liberal education, unbridled capitalism, and systemic oppression, and weaves his understanding of a radical Christian message through it. I thoroughly enjoyed excerpts from earlier interviews and writings, and in some ways found this book to be a great McLaren reader—he is looking back somewhat introspectively at his life of teaching, writing, and speaking (he has visited more than 30 countries) and wants to share what he has learned. McLaren's message is clear: we need to seriously create a global pedagogy of change and we can find inspiration to do that. Judging by his cadre of intellectual comrades (18 endorsements, a preface, a foreword, and an afterword, all by different colleagues), he has found a way to create community and a critical mass of intellectuals to help create the change. This amount of support is truly inspiring.

Readers who know well McLaren's commitment to Marxism and criticality will be refreshed by (dare I say identify with?) his personal story of struggle in cold academic climates. And they will be more than envious of the congenial and critical environment he has found at Chapman University in California, which has allowed him to name his religious commitments and be nurtured by intellectual and supportive friendships. Despite the passion that goes into rage against destructive forms of capitalism, it is all too rare to

find critical pedagogues who can suspend that rage to go deep and support others along the way. McLaren does that.

In some ways, McLaren's identification with the radical Christian Left is late, given his intellectual friendship with Freire, who readily acknowledged and critiqued his own alliance with Christianity. Meanwhile, the chapters are rich with Gospel references and McLaren's genuine attempt to walk the 2000-year-old scholarly terrain of radical Christianity. In his "coming out" as Christian, McLaren has been honest in naming his many intellectual influences and supports. My hope is that as he continues on this road, he discovers the theological work of women such as Dorothy Day, Teresa of Ávila, Mary Daley, Ivone Gebara, and Rosemary Radford Ruether, who have also challenged structural inequity from within Christianity. I also hope he finds inspiration in the critical pedagogy work of adult educators like Paulette Isaac-Savage, Elizabeth Tisdell, and Carolyn Clark, who have also claimed their Christian roots.

Finally, I would like to recommend this book to those searching for heart and integrity in writing. McLaren has bravely opened himself to readers in a way that is both daring and hopeful. As writers and believers in change, we would all do well to name our heritage, our resources, and our beliefs. I highly recommend this book to adult educators.

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