9 Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy and the Struggle Against Capital Today

Peter McLaren and Derek R. Ford

Derek Ford: Greetings, Peter! Thanks so much for taking the time out of your schedule for this interview with *The Hampton Institute*. I wonder if we can start the conversation with where you are right now, in China. Can you tell us a bit about what you are doing there, and how and why it is that your activist and academic work has increasingly brought you to the international arena?

Peter McLaren: Thanks for starting this conversation, Derek, it's always a pleasure. To answer your question I'll have to dig back a bit. For even as a slatternly and relatively untutored youth the question of oppression and exploitation was of grave discernment to me. I trace this concern to the economic fate suffered by my father, who as a working-class wallpaper salesman before he went overseas for 6 years to fight the Nazis during WWII, found himself on the dole after he was fired from a managerial position he landed in an international electronics firm once the war ended. The severe trauma suffered by my family during this period stayed with me from my teenage years into my early twenties, and after my first marriage fell apart due, partly, to financial pressures, I decided that teaching offered me a chance to test my interpersonal skills and creativity, clear some pedagogical space for examining alarming social trends of the day, as well as try to make a positive difference in the lives of young people—and at the same time enjoy some financial security. That was 1974.

I had always perceived as banal most of what was meant to provoke my interest and attention in the world of commodity culture and for the most part refused to answer invitations to participate in the suburban dream. So in 1968, I made the decision to hitchhike to San Francisco and Los Angeles in 1968, a year after the storied the "summer of love", and participate in demonstrations against the Vietnam War, as well as take advantage of the chemical and cultural offerings of the psychedelic age that was in full blossom at the time. That was my first international trip, no pun intended. It gave me the opportunity to

meet and explore interior space with Timothy Leary, and to have my poetry mentored by Allan Ginsberg. I returned to Canada to finish my university degree in Elizabethan drama, and eventually found myself teaching elementary school in the largest public housing complex in Canada, located in Toronto's Jane-Finch Corridor.

After publishing a book about my teaching experiences in 1980, which rose to number 7th on the better-seller lists in Canada, and finishing my Ph.D. in 1984, I tried out university teaching for a year, but my contract wasn't renewed the following year, for political reasons that you can likely imagine. Fortunately, Henry Giroux had seen some of my writings and invited me to join him at Miami University of Ohio (Henry had been fired from Boston University in 1983 by reactionary university president, John Silber, in a landmark tenure case) to create the first cultural studies centre in education in the US at the time. So in 1985, I head for the US where I have been based ever since. My first formal invitation to speak internationally came from one of my mentors, the renowned educator, Paulo Freire, who not only gave my work early support but provided opportunities for me to travel outside of the US.

Paulo invited me in 1987 to speak in Havana, Cuba, at an international conference, and it was there that I made friends with scholars and activists in Cuba as well as with visitors from Brazil and Mexico. My work eventually caught the eye of some radical educators in northern Mexico and they established Instituto McLaren de Pedagogía Crítica y Educación Popular in 2007. From there I went on to present my work and build connections and networks, in Colombia, Argentina, Brazil and Puerto Rico mostly, and then around the mid-1990s my work began to capture the attention of Marxist educators in the United Kingdom, and later on in Turkey, Greece, Taiwan, Poland, Hungary, Germany, Pakistan, India, Occupied Palestine (known also as 'Israel'), Palestine proper, Croatia, Serbia, and other countries who had constituencies, large and small, interested in critical pedagogy. One of my books, *Life in Schools*, was translated into Russian as an award for coming in 11th place in an international poll conducted in Moscow regarding the 12 most significant education books written to date.

Ford: And you have also worked closely with the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, correct?

McLaren: Yes, eventually, I was invited to help critical pedagogy become more integrated into the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela. After meeting with Hugo Chávez in Miraflores Palace, I began to realize that no revolution could exist in isolation. That

meeting further inspired me to establish as many relationships with radical groups as I could with the idea of turning critical pedagogy into a transnational social movement. Eventually my work drew interest from northeast China, where I was to meet my wife Wang Yan, and I have been invited to serve as honorary director of a centre for the study of critical education, which we hope to get off the ground this fall.

I retired from UCLA in order to take up a position in Orange County (yes, behind the Orange Curtain) when a group of Freirean educators at Chapman University invited me to try to make a difference in their doctoral program in this very conservative part of California. As somebody whose life has always been an uphill battle, I relished the opportunity. To be honest, I can't tell you how that struggle is going yet; it's much too early. I've spent time as faculty and in visiting capacities in various academic institutions for over forty years. I've met great scholars and activists from all over the world who I admire greatly who have managed to do good work within the academy. During this time I have also heard plenty of horror stories that were documented in a book I co-edited with Richard Kahn, Steve Best and Tony Nocella called *Academic Repression*. But I can tell you that being at Chapman has revived my faith that academic life can be more than just swimming with the sharks and being morally suffocated by a group of self-aggrandizing, self-righteous and power-harvesting egos fuelled by a rampant careerism and willing to do anything to enhance their power and prestige, including selling out their colleagues.

Ford: It seems to me that this process of internationalization has been accompanied by a radicalization of your thinking and activism. Can you speak a bit about that? In particular, I am wondering what the historical, material, and theoretical factors are that have contributed to this radicalization.

McLaren: Of course much of my journey and formation has to do with developing a theoretical framework and political line of march. I will discuss that road shortly. But traveling and meeting activists far more courageous and politically astute than I afforded me moments of clarity and reflection. And meeting individuals—some renowned and some unknown—who had forged their lives in the heat of struggle gave me pause to think about how much you can really learn from books alone.

Ford: Are there particular moments that you recall?

McLaren: Absolutely: visiting East Germany shortly after the wall came down when the universities were firing Marxist professors and replacing them with West German critical theorists; visiting Russia during its formal transition to capitalism and watching

people scavenge through the garbage bins to find food; staying in Cuba with the Soviet boxing team at the old Capri Hotel; visiting the Museum of the Revolution in Old Havana and spending hours talking to Aleida Guevara about her father (with the help of a translator since my Spanish is atrocious); Paulo Freire attending one of my lectures in Brazil and trying to assist a frustrated translator who was struggling with my unorthodox prose; meeting Hugo Chavez in Miraflores Palace and listening to him encourage an office secretary to return to university; speaking to 25,000 protesting teachers in Morelia, Michoacán; meeting Lopez Obrador in Mexico; weeping alongside the sons and daughters of los desaparecidos in Rosario, Argentina, casualties of La Guerra Sucia; listening to Ernesto Cardinal call Hugo Chavez a prophet during a live broadcast of Aló Presidente outside of Caracas; flying in a Venezuelan National Guard airplane as part of a tour of support for the revolution and watching the two young pilots, their machine guns on the floor of the cockpit, trying to figure out where the landing strip was located; singing Hasta Siempre Comandante along with factory workers on buses roaring through the Venezuelan countryside in support of La Revolución Bolivariana; meeting Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo who visited me during a ceremony in Buenos Aires; speaking at a conference in Morelia when La Familia Michoacana attacked the city, setting passenger buses on fire to block the exits out of the city and being saved from danger by a radical taxi driver who was able to get me safely to the airport; suddenly finding myself listed as "the most dangerous professor at UCLA" by a right-wing organization backed with Republican dollars that offered to pay students 100 dollars to secretly audiotape my classes and 50 dollars to provide notes from my lectures (there were 30 professors who were targeted) and finding few official condemnations of this action by North American teacher groups in contrast to vigorous defence of my work by Latin American educational organizations; conversing with the head of a teachers union in Bogota about how former leaders of the union had been assassinated and that he was fully prepared to die in the struggle to help educate the young people of Colombia; being asked to speak at a school outside of Medellin, Colombia, and using a very ultra-leftist discourse in my talk, and then being gently reprimanded that such a militant language could get both students and teachers killed as when the community in which the school was located was attacked several years earlier by helicopter gunships, thousands of troops, followed by a wave of paramilitary assassinations; being humbled by the dedication of activists all around the world who risk life

and limb everyday while I am able to return to the comfort of my job and home back in the United States.

Those moments congeal in the memory and become part of the emotional strata of my work. They form their own pathways to the heart and of course are entangled with the theoretical work—in a type of dialectics between the head and heart—that has persuaded me over the years that we are faced with no other choice than a socialist alternative to capitalist value production. However, in citing these examples, I am aware of the danger of falling into an oversimplified and uncritical euphoria often linked to the politics of memory that can override contradictions that I observed in many of these settings.

When I was a teenager I was inspired by the works of William Blake, Dylan Thomas, Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer, the new criticism of Northrop Frye. In the late 1960s and early 1970s I become influenced by the Beat Poets, the Harlem Renaissance and works by James Baldwin and W. E. B. Du Bois. Then of course, there was the Black Power Movement and the works of Angela Davis, Malcolm X, Amiri Baraka (Leroy Jones) and others. The writings of Margaret Randal were certainly an influence. Now, Derek, you need to understand that this shift from classical literature to more radical works was not easy. My parents were very conservative. My dad was in the Royal Canadian Engineers during WWII and was a member of the conservative party in Canada. My uncle, Terry Goddard, was a hero in the Royal Navy and flew his Fairey Swordfish off the Arc Royal and disabled the German Battleship Bismarck with a torpedo strike. I was disparaged for turning into a hippie, and I was an outcast among my larger family of cousins, uncles and aunts (which isn't to say that I wasn't proud of my father's service in the war, or my uncle's Distinguished Service Medal pinned on him by King George VI (The King's Speech)—I was very proud of both of them). My two best friends committed suicide during those years of rebellion, and for the longest time I felt guilty that I had survived the tumultuous 1960s without my closest friends.

Ford: Yes, the political and the personal. . . .

McLaren: Certainly. There are always personal struggles that shadow shifts in political perspectives. I think it is important to recognize, too, that theory doesn't just come to you through books alone but through an engagement with the authors, if you are fortunate enough to do so. I was fortunate that in my early formation there were individual scholars who took time out to acknowledge my interest in their work—I was impressed, for instance, that Michel Foucault gave me the time of day during a class of his that I audited while a doctoral student in Toronto; there were

others, too, that were courteous and hospitable and patient with my naïve questions: Jean Francois Lyotard, Anthony Wilden, and Ernesto Laclau stand out. That they were willing to engage with me, however briefly, in person, while I was a young scholar certainly influenced my early "critical postmodernism" period from the mid-1980s to early 1990s since I was more inclined to gravitate to their work after having conversations with them. Henry Giroux was another scholar who befriended me early on when I was a doctoral student and later I had the fortunate opportunity to work with Henry for eight very productive years at Miami University of Ohio. Stanley Aronowitz's mentoring was significant in my early leftist formation. So I owe a great deal of my orientation—both in my postmodern period and in my current Marxist work—to the kindness of individuals who were humble and gracious enough to befriend a relatively unknown scholar from el norte.

One of the biggest influences on my work other than Paulo Freire and the life and legacy of Che Guevara has been the formidable Marxist scholar and activist, Peter Hudis. Peter was secretary to Raya Dunayevskaya, who served as the Russian language translator for Leon Trotsky in 1937, returning several years before his assassination in Coyoacán, Mexico in 1940. Raya's theory of state capitalism had a big impact on my work. So did the writings of Mas'ud Zavarzadeh and Teresa Ebert. I should mention, in passing, one other moment that stands out for me. Three Marxist educators in the UK—Mike Cole, Dave Hill, and Glenn Rikowski—saw potential in my early critical postmodernist work but were also highly critical of it from their own Marxist perspectives. They took time to engage my work personally and eventually we became close comrades. I learned a great deal from them. E. San Juan is another scholar whom I was fortunate enough to meet on a number of occasions and his critique of cultural studies has certainly had a considerable impact on my work. While I was in Venezuela, I had the opportunity to spend time with Marta Harnecker and Michael Lebowitz and found much to admire in their work. Instituto McLaren de Pedagogía Crítica has brought both Marta Harnecker and Peter Hudis to address our annual Volver a Marx conference that we hold in different cities throughout Mexico each year, along with scholars such as Atilio Boron and Enrique Dussel. The internet has now made it much easier for scholars and activists to connect with each other in person, but given the volume of queries that I receive each day, I can fully understand how difficult it is to respond personally to every budding young leftist with a bucket full of pressing questions.

Ford: Given this political and personal journey, how do you now identify yourself?

McLaren: I describe myself as Marxist humanist and share an affinity with the International Marxist Humanist organization. I also work in the field of liberation theology and more recently this influence has begun to surface in my work. Some have described my work as Christian communism and this is not an inaccurate description. What my work attempts to do is develop a philosophy of praxis, grounded in a Hegelian-Marxist understanding of history and politics. This is the deep undercurrent that drives my revolutionary critical pedagogy, and works very well with a Freirean approach which was very much influenced by Karel Kosik's dialectics of the concrete. It works well with Marx's understanding of revolutionary praxis.

Ford: I would say that your thinking has also radicalised in response to the depoliticisation of foundations of education. One of the battle fronts in your work has been within the field of foundations of education, and one of the main lines of demarcation has been between post-structuralism and Marxism, or historical materialism. This is why scholars like Ebert and Rikowski were so important to your development as a scholar and, as you said, to your break from critical postmodernism. I am wondering what theoretical or political tendencies you see as our main adversaries in foundations of education today?

McLaren: Derek, I prefer the term adversity to adversaries, since I believe the problems in the foundations of education is a condition that can be found not just among the poststructuralists or postmodernists but embedded within the axial question: What social class do the central theorists studied in foundations courses represent?

Ford: Yes, that phrasing certainly emphasizes more appropriately the structural nature of this manifestation of the class struggle.

McLaren: So, in education there are three fundamental approaches in philosophical reasoning: essentialism, perennialism, and progressivism, and the focus today among the educational left is mainly on progressivism-romantic progressives and pragmatic progressives (to use terms developed by Richard Quantz), and in my observations over the years, Marxism usually comes into the picture during discussions of the various political-economic ideologies within the progressive coalition. It is therefore important for me to address the following question to students of education: To what extent do these progressive thinkers believe their work rises above the reigning class antagonisms of transnational austerity capitalism?

Most students likely believe that the theories that they study are relatively free of class determinations, and that should be

a signal to us as critical educators, a warning about how and why certain theories have made their way into the official curriculum. For me, the immediate challenge is to locate theoretical and philosophical work politically within a larger vision or project of emancipation. Ideas—which under certain conditions can certainly exert a material force—are always situated in particular settings. These settings are always conditioned by the ideological and political superstructure, the historical conjuncture in which they were produced and in which they are now studied, and the economic and social structure. We need to understand how possibilities unleashed by the theories we study can be transformed into necessities and for that to happen we need to examine our present conjuncture dialectically, because social conditions and ideologies reciprocally inform each other; they are entangled and to a large extent mutually constitutive, and clearly they are never static or eternal. That being the case, we need to ask ourselves: What are the objective possibilities at this certain historical moment for socialism to become a viable possibility? As a socialist educator, that becomes the fundamental question. That means helping our students navigate beyond false dualisms and abstractions, between thought and action, theory and practice and it is here that a Marxist dialectic becomes important, especially the concept of praxis.

One of the primary goals could be put thusly: How can we help the working-class become conscious of itself and its universal role in a permanent revolution? The really important consideration here is what standpoint we take when we move from merely interpreting the world to changing it, when we move from the indicative to the imperative. All of this, of course, is fuelled by commitment and commitment relies on being able to assume the standpoint of the oppressed, the subaltern. Do we educate our teachers by discussing authors that place themselves in the class perspectives of the proletariat, the cognitariat, or the precariat? Paulo Freire, Howard Zinn, Frantz Fanon and Che Guevara all do. But does that mean we only read working-class authors or authors sympathetic to the working-class? Of course not. But we need to teach students to consider how an author's own class positionality influences his or her work. Over time, and during years of deliberation, I came to understand postmodern thought and reformist liberalism embedded in the work of some critical theorists such as Habermas and in the work of John Dewey as insufficient for challenging the behemoth of transnational capitalism. Rousseau's voluptuous protest was against the vile and iniquitous social institutions dominated by capitalists. He wagered that if the social contradictions stemming from

these institutions could be abolished or severely attenuated, then there would be greater possibility for liberty and sovereignty.

Yet as Istvan Meszaros pointed out, Rousseau could not abstain from idealizing the very conditions against which he provided alternatives since it was clear that the contradictions that he condemned were integrated within the objective conditions of capitalist society itself. After all, Rousseau considered private property to be one of the ultimate foundations of civilized life. Many well-intentioned theorists idealize the very conditions of alienation and atomization that they rail against, affirming what they originally intended to negate and they do this by employing abstract moral ideals to challenge what are essentially economic systems of exploitation and thus fail to mediate their ideas to the material base of society (i.e. the social relations of production as well as determinate human relations). The only way out of this impasse in which one interest is set up against another in permanent struggle is through a dialectical materialist analysis. We see a similar predicament in the later Marcuse when he became more interested in the development of Hegel's ontology than his dialectics, which forced him into an aesthetic ontology marked by an antinomial (neo-Kantian) cul-de-sac in which his critique vacillated between poles regarded as independent rather than internally related, preventing Marcuse from forging a path forward to transformation.

While Marcuse's earlier Great Refusal was rooted in the Hegelian notion of negativity where a positive is constituted as the old is being negated, Marcuse tended at times to separate the normative and the descriptive, thus remaining in the thrall of the Kantian ought or an indeterminate rather than a determinate negation, lacking in the final instance the concrete emancipatory universals of Marx. This, of course, relates to Dunayevskaya's critique of Marcuse, when she accuses Marcuse of viewing Hegel's Absolute Idea as a closed totality when Dunayevskaya saw it as containing the highest opposition within itself, a dialectic of negativity that served as the lifeblood of transcendence, a place of self-movement where contradictions cannot be adventitiously dismissed or harmlessly reconciled or cancelled. For Dunayevskaya, absolute negativity constituted important new beginnings for revolutionary thought. But this is not to dismiss the important work of Marcuse. As Charles Reitz points out, Marcuse's work importantly contributed to a philosophy of labour, which recognizes labour's central and transformative role in human life. The point I am trying to make is that even within the field of critical pedagogy there is a studied reluctance when it comes to confronting the transformation of surplus labour into

private capital. Again, we come back to my earlier question: What do educational theorists represent by their ideas? This is no small matter at a time when we are witnessing the gargantuan rise of transnational state apparatuses, interlocked networks of nation states and supranational and transnational institutions that fuels the new global ruling class, a class that is intent on superseding national accumulation. Or, as William I. Robinson points out, at a time of capitalist restructuring, reorganization and refurbishing, producing a new transnational class based on deregulation, informalisation, deunionisation and the flexibility of labour, creating vast armies of precariats and new strategies by the transnational elites to contain real and potential rebellion by the immiserated masses.

Ford: And so it is the two irretrievably connected questions of how we understand and combat this new transnational capitalist class, yes?

McLaren: Right, and right now colleges of education courses that attempt to be radical usually follow through with hefty doses of Foucault, Holloway, Deleuze, Hardt, Negri and Said. Such foundation courses in schools of education tend to focus on autonomous Marxism, post-colonialism, and the strategic importance of the self-limiting revolution. Taken together, this constitutes a rejection of Marxism and revolution and the affirmation of a position that supports labour reform but does not advocate overthrowing state power. Here, the utopian horizon of Marxism is often conflated with repression, something that is likely to lead to the gulag. Kevin Anderson and Peter Hudis have written about this and I am in agreement with them. There is a serious problem with Foucault's rejection of the Marxist conception of false consciousness in favour of a view in which power is productive and enabling rather than repressive; power is something that, according to Foucault, produces alternative realities.

Marx's humanism is held in suspect as Promethean within which a colonial hubris is embedded. With Foucault there exists no main locus of power that must be challenged, and therefore no concept of liberation or emancipation is possible, only the more truncated possibility of challenging power as forms of micro-resistance. Kevin Anderson maintains that a similar position is reflected in Hardt and Negri's politics of difference where global struggles are viewed as incommensurable to the extent that they can only be challenged in terms of localized bio-power absent of any unified philosophy or organization. Anderson notes that Hart and Negri posit a one-sided alternative by choosing to remain on the plane of immanence or within the given social reality as a point of resistance, preferring to

take their inspiration from a pre-Hegelian world cut off from the dialectic and thereby sidelining the positive contained within the negative. While I may agree that the working-class is immanent to capital, I also maintain that it can also become a force for transcendence, as the future is always contained in the present. This does not mean that I reduce everything to proletarian class struggle. Marxist humanists vigorously embrace struggles around race, disability, gender and sexuality but they do so within a revolutionary praxis that is capable of overcoming capitalism and building a social universe outside of the value form of labour. I have faith that people can overcome capitalism through their own emancipatory praxis, as people change society and change their own consciousness at the same time.

Ford: And this brings us to the question of consciousness, which has always been a central concern of critical pedagogy. What is your position here, in regards to the role of consciousness in struggle and as an educational object of transformation?

McLaren: Here, I concur with Che's stress on the struggle of human consciousness against alienation and believe that this is necessary in order to create a more human, radical and egalitarian world. I am not reluctant to say that the creation of socialism is a heroic act. After all, the capitalist regime is brutal, as social life throughout the US now reflects the imprint of austerity capitalism and the world is being brought to an ecological tipping point as quantitative changes are transforming into qualitative changes. Garry Leech called capitalism a form of genocide—so we are fighting against the triple threat of genocide, ecocide, and epistemicide—the latter referring to the destruction of indigenous communities and their languages and way of life, their cosmovisions, their ecologies of the mind. A friend of mine at Instituto McLaren de Pedagogía Crítica was talking to an indigenous group leader who told him the community has decided not to reproduce new members, they want to become extinct, life is too difficult, to unremittingly devastating for them to keep going. Capitalism has assumed the jeering rictus of the Grim Reaper as we move ineluctably towards a militarized surveillance state and its fatal degeneration into forms of authority that can only be compared to fascism.

We must roundly reject the so-called economic laws of a system oriented to growth, where all activity is reduced to profit calculations and all life is quantified and turned to stone. Hence, we choose not replace capitalist market ecology. Our focus is on use value, not exchange value. The historical totality is not static, conjunctures change and because history is not independent of human will and action we must resolve at each moment of

history to turn the spontaneity of the masses into consciousness, into critical consciousness, taking socialism as an idea-force to create conditions for ecological revolution, for economic equality, for a social universe outside of capital's value form where we can create a society free from necessity and absent of racism, sexism, patriarchy, white supremacy and militarism. We do this by reaching out to the people, by taking their individual and personal concerns about family life such as health insurance, job security, violence, racism and meaningful coexistence with their neighbours, and connecting their personal struggles to the larger structures of oppression and exploitation in today's austerity capitalism.

Ford: Rewinding slightly to your remarks on understanding and combatting the current manifestations of capital, let's shift now to your recent work. Don't you have a new book that is about to hit the presses?

McLaren: Yes, I do, it's titled *Pedagogy of Insurrection: From Resurrection to Revolution* (2015), and it is central to my ongoing project of developing a transnational pedagogy of revolution. I offer an analysis of the impact of transnational capitalism on education, particularly US education, including the devastating effects of various corporate initiatives to privatize schools. I discuss what I believe to be the most pressing issues and debates in education today, including advances in ecopedagogy, expanding and deepening ideas that I have been developing under the name "revolutionary critical pedagogy". Included is a chapter in which I engage in a spirited critique of new digital technologies. I also discuss historical figures that have been crucified in the US media but who merit a more serious and sympathetic consideration for their contributions to the liberation and emancipation of humanity—Paulo Freire, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Hugo Chavez. But the centrepiece of the book is a chapter called Comrade Jesus, which concludes with a discussion of violence.

Ford: Interesting. I am sure that some people might at first blush be a bit surprised to see you speaking about Jesus. Can you talk more about your interest there and the theoretical and practical work that it does?

McLaren: Absolutely. My basic premise, and it is certainly not an original one but one that is consistently abominated by the corporate media—is that there has been an egregious betrayal of doctrine in much Christian teaching, a profound transgiversation when it comes to the most authentic logia of Jesus, that of teaching communism. There have been some exceptions to this betrayal—for instance, liberation theology and critical spirituality. But to me it is clear from reading the bible that communism is identified

with being a Christian. Jesus, in fact, taught communism to the first Christians. In fact, the renunciation of property is a primary condition for entering the kingdom of God. I draw on numerous sources of biblical exegesis but rely a great deal on the work of Jose Porfirio Miranda. The kingdom of God is not an otherworldly place that exists in some supernatural realm but rather founded by Jesus here on earth, where it is unequivocally impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom. Mark (10: 21) tells us, "Go sell everything you have and give it to the poor" and that "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10: 25).

According to Miranda, Jesus is not against wealth in the absolute sense, but in the relative sense, in the way that such wealth contrasts with the poor, the destitute, the immiserated so that we can safely say that Jesus was against differentiated wealth, against inequality. Money made through profit is considered to be iniquitous. The rich have already received their comfort and are refused entry into the kingdom of God, something that is made clear in Luke 6: 24. The fact that some are rich and others are poor is indefensible, according to Jesus. The moral reprobation of Jesus with respect to the rich is undeniable. In fact, Jesus's condemnation of relative wealth is consistent with the teaching of the Old Testament, with Moses and the prophets. It is undeniably the case that the rich deserve to be punished for remaining rich in the face of the poverty, as Psalm 34: 11 makes clear. It is impossible to accept one's self-enrichment at the expense of the exploitation of others. The price of labour in the capitalist marketplace is imposed on the labourer—the differentiating social position of the rich is predicated on the unfreedom of the poor, whose only alternative to exploitation by the rich is unemployment, hunger and destitution. Differentiating wealth is the fruit of injustice. Chapter 24 of Job explains how the poor suffer at the hands of the rich, as this really is the problem of evil. Evil is a social condition. It is incorrect to interpret Jesus as saying that the poor will always be with us, and that we are never going to change the world and rid it of poverty. I discuss this translation problem in my book. Jesus was saying that the poor are with us continuously—not forever, not always.

The prosperity evangelical Christians will likely curse me as they exit their tents and put their serpents back in their baskets, but I believe that what I have to say is backed by careful scriptural exegesis. Since the election of Pope Francis, there have appeared in the mainstream media some interesting articles about a revival of liberation theology, or the social gospel of Jesus Christ, and I found it interesting that Raoul Castro recently

said he may return to the Catholic church as a result of conversations he has had with Pope Francis. I think this is a very good time for the book to become available to teachers, educators and theologians. The conditions for such a debate are ripening. It's time that people of faith who do freedom-work in the interest of social justice make their voices heard.

Ford: Peter, I know that you are spread quite thin right now, and so I don't want to keep you too much longer. But, as we are Marxists, we have to end with a note on the future. In your opinion, what work is there to do for critical pedagogues to contribute most effectively toward the intensification of resistance to capitalism? What theorists and movements should we be investigating and engaging?

McLaren: Well, Derek, honestly the first thing that comes to mind is your book with Curry Malott (2015), *Marx, Capital and Education: Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Becoming*, which is a glowing testament to generation of scholars who have discovered Marx and are using his work in politically innovative ways, opening up new options for living and labouring freely and creatively. The difficulty I think is that the organization, the culture, and the climate of universities today, with their emphasis on harvesting corporate grants, and focusing on instrumental and technocratic skills to prepare students for positions within the capitalist marketplace, is less hospitable to leftists whose research, teaching, or personal activism is driven by a socialist agenda. You can be centre-left and survive but it is much more difficult if you are on the revolutionary left. Some leftists I know who populate the universities remain very cautious in the classrooms and relegate their political work to their free time outside of the campus. It's a kind of self-monitoring, self-censorship.

In the years to come, what spaces will be available for Marxist scholarship and a Marxist politics, especially in very conservative places such as colleges of education? There will always be spaces for identity politics, but fewer spaces for what Angela Davis calls identity in politics. As long as educators rewrite economic problems as moral problems or cultural issues and see class as simply just one other "ism" along with racism, sexism, speciesism or ableism, then the crisis of capitalism will not be regarded as a strategic priority. And I think that deserves to be seen as such. Don't misunderstand me, Derek, I believe identity politics is very important, questions of inclusion are important, questions about making our curricula culturally responsive and appropriate are important, and examining culture as a site of contestation is also extremely important. I've written books about the importance of interculturality and have created many

anti-racist and anti-sexist and anti-homophobic initiatives through my work. And I think that you and Curry address the relationship between race and class quite productively in your chapter on the Ferguson rebellion, which if I recall correctly was actually first published on *The Hampton Institute*.

I believe we should struggle for cognitive justice, and that we should be engaging in decolonizing pedagogies, and learning from epistemologies that have been developed over the centuries by indigenous groups, including those from America Latina. I am a big proponent of the concepts of "buenvivir" and "communalidad" (you can find these terms written into the constitutions of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador) and recently spent time in Chiapas in communities supporting the Zapatistas. There is much to be learned from these autonomous communities. But our struggles against racism, for example, can also be deepened by seeing the role that capitalism plays and has played since the cotton industry of the early Virginia plantations. I sometimes wonder in my less optimistic moments if the few Marxists, anarchists and revolutionary socialists that currently fleck the landscape of teacher education will be replaced in the years to come mostly by part-time contingent labour, functionaries who will only be able to survive on their grit and food stamps. But what I am seeing now is a resurgence of interest in Marx, at least among the youth, and they need to demand more critical scholarship in the universities. Otherwise they will be contributing to a longer and more resilient school-to-prison pipeline, to more integration of universities into the military industrial complex and to more control over education by corporate investors.

The young people need to start a new political party with a clear cut socialist agenda, a party that can make transnational alliances with left parties in Latin America and elsewhere, and chart out a new global future for humanity. The difficulty is that there are very few outlets for critically literate media to challenge the lies, deceptions and the common-sense ignorance of the corporate media. We need to win the war of position, which means, of course, that the left needs to create a viable alternative to austerity capitalism—a socialist alternative—that the majority of people can invest in both rationally and emotionally, something that can build and reinforce their protagonistic agency and will for change. In Venezuela, the state media outlets were overwhelmingly owned and controlled by the rich and favoured the ideas of the ruling class, and still do. And still, the people prevailed and elected Hugo Chavez and his successor, Nicolas Maduro to power. In most countries the rich celebrate and the poor protest while in Venezuela the poor celebrate and

the rich protest. Perhaps something like this can happen here. Let's hope the situation here does not have to get as desperate as it did in Venezuela, in order for that to happen.

Ford: I think that we are both in a sort of grounded agreement in respect to the revolutionary potential that is bubbling over across the US.

McLaren: Indeed, and this comes from our activism no doubt.

Ford: Peter, I promise that I will let you go now. I know that you are anxious to start writing your keynote speech for this year's International Conference on Critical Education in Poland for next week. And I also don't want to keep you from reading and responding to the first draft of my dissertation! But I do want to thank you again. Your willingness to collaborate and your readiness to engage in dialogue are really inspiring to young scholars and activists like me. I am looking forward to digging into your new book when it's out later this summer, and I am sure we will be seeing each other soon.

McLaren: We definitely will be. It's great to contribute to *The Hampton Institute*, so thanks for that opportunity. Solidarity!

References

Malott, C. and Ford, D. (2015). *Marx, Capital, and Education: Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Becoming*. New York: Peter Lang.

McLaren, P. (2015). *Pedagogy of Insurrection: From Resurrection to Revolution*. New York: Peter Lang.