

Editor's Introduction

by

Joe L. Kincheloe

It is exciting to introduce the second issue of the *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*. We are so fortunate to have the Internet resources to put out a journal and to have the Freire Project off and running. So far, we have been more successful than we could have ever imagined with a range of people from all over the world contributing to the project. The reaction to the journal has been very positive, the Project's films and video interviews have received much affirmative response, the Project website's blogosphere has been more successful than we ever imagined thanks to dazzling bloggers and brilliant respondents, and the launches of the project in Montreal and at the University of Barcelona were "moments" that many of us will never forget. The people we've met and the critical social networks that have been established as a result of these initiatives can help make the world a better place and education more socially just and intellectually challenging. We are excited to help set up brother and sister organizations around the world and work with those that already exist.

As we present the second issue of the IJCP, critical academics face an increasingly hostile academic and educational atmosphere. As I have written elsewhere, while critical scholars are obviously committed to the work of social activism and the alleviation of human suffering in all its forms, we must work tirelessly to address the grotesque injustice and cruelty that surrounds us in the academy. Over the last few months I have been profoundly affected by a series of occurrences in higher education around North America and the world where critical scholars have been brutalized by conservative and so-called "liberal" forces within the academy. My first blog on the Freire Project website dealt with a few of these issues.

Still, they continue, unabated, slowly but steadily turning up the heat on those coming from a critical theoretical/critical pedagogical context. I beseech my critical colleagues to help those of us in the Freire Project to use this journal and our site to help organize groups of critical scholars who can help respond when one of our own is politically persecuted for attempting to help students, create critical knowledge, intervene against racism, ethnic oppression, sexism, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance, discrimination toward those with physical challenges, and other forms of subjugation. It often seems to me that one of the worst things one can do as an academic in the present configuration of the domain is to care too much about the well-being of the people with whom one works. Such critical caring will get one into trouble. I hate to make the following statement, but one of the "worst" things one can do as a professor/teacher in the eyes of many administrators and colleagues is to care too deeply about one's students, to give them "too much" time and feedback, and to help them get published and vocationally prepared for their future positions. It's a sick institution that punishes such actions.

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I would be less than honest if I didn't admit my depression emanating from the treatment of these caring critical scholars in the world of education. Too many times during the average week I receive word of another brilliant, committed, hard working, savvy scholar who faces a life trauma because the university's or the school's reaction to his or her good works, to his or her efforts to create new ways of seeing and interpreting the world of pedagogy. And what is more depressing in light of the vicious attacks that follow, few come to the aid of the scholar/teacher—knowing that supporting such a pariah will reflect negatively on one's personal ambitions within the institution. Paulo Freire went to jail for his critical caring. While I'm not asking us to spend time in prison, though many brave criticalists have made this sacrifice, I am requesting that we display more intestinal fortitude to use our networks to aid those who find themselves in difficulty as the result of the academic biases against the type of work that we do.

We can make a difference. Those of us committed to a complex, nuanced understanding of critical pedagogy can help make the lives better for peoples in diverse oppressive settings including schools of all types and at all levels. I believe so passionately in the power of critical pedagogy when it is tempered by self-reflection and is hungry for self-criticism. My commitment is so ardent when critical pedagogy recognizes its own fallibility and is humble in its concern for the oppressed. I dedicate my life to pursuing critical goals when scholarly egocentrism and narcissism are recognized and studiously avoided by criticalists in their everyday actions. I am willing to work as hard as is needed for critical pedagogical goals when critical scholars/activists/teachers renounce established hierarchies, and such renunciation shapes the way such individuals operate in their everyday lived worlds. And I am inspired and moved to an even new level of commitment when I observed criticalists at work who celebrate the successes of their like-minded colleagues instead of seeing them as threats to their own careerist ambitions. Obviously, I make no claim to have achieved such levels of action in my own life—I fail far too often in such pursuits.

Of course, a central point I'm making here is that we must live our ideology, we must discover ways of engaging in a critical ontology that remakes our ways of being in the world to reflect the radical love and social justice of Paulo and Nita Freire and the best instincts of critical pedagogy. Please, join with us in the Freire Project's efforts to extend the influence of critical pedagogy and to change the culture of higher education from the politics of personal character assassination to a cooperative learning community of diverse scholars who whenever possible learn from and respect one another's differences.

The essays in this issue of the journal cover three main general topics:

- 1) General concerns about the nature of critical pedagogy and the intersection of its historical past and future possibilities. Paul Carr's excellent article entitled, "But What Can I Do? Fifteen Things Education Students Can Do to Transform Themselves In/Through?With/Education" and Dale T. Graden's insightful piece, "Notes from a Fan: Paulo Freire Comes to Idaho" provide specific insights into the goals of critical teaching and the foundations of past, present, and future dimensions of critical pedagogy.

- 2) Examples of critical teaching and assessing. Mary Frances Agnello's "More Than 'Water under the Bridge': Initiating a Critical Democratic Interpretation of Economics Education," Brad J. Porfilio and Mike Watz's "Promoting Critical Literacy in Social Studies Classrooms: Guiding Students to Remake Themselves and Their World Through a Critical Analysis of Victorian World's Fairs and the Neoliberal Ordering of Today's Social World," Michael Carbett's "Captain Beefheart's Piano: Confessions of an Unrepentant Illiterate," and sj Miller's "Liberating Grades/Liberatory Assessment" all provide compelling, theoretically rich and practical insights into the complexities of critical teaching.
- 3) International political and cultural concerns in higher education. Here Yehuda Bar Shalom, Ruba Daas, and Zvi Bekerman's "Where Have All the Palestinians Gone?" provides a profound analysis of the oppression Palestinians suffer in Israeli institutions of higher education. This subjugation, the authors maintain, occurs despite all the rhetoric issued by such institutions about social justice and inclusion.

I hope readers find these pieces valuable and challenging. Please send the authors and us your comments on the pieces. And if you haven't, please join us in the work of the Freire Project.