



ISSN - 2175-6600

Vol.17 | Número 39 | 2025

Submetido em: 12/02/2025

Aceito em: 24/05/2025

Publicado em: 28/05/2025

Critical pedagogies and education for today: interview with Peter McLaren¹

Pedagogias críticas e educação para hoje: entrevista com Peter McLaren

Pedagogías críticas y educación para hoy: entrevista con Peter McLaren

*Luis Bonilla-Molina*²

*Allisson Goes*³

*Carlos Alberto Vasconcelos*⁴



<https://doi.org/10.28998/2175-6600.2025v17n39pe19209>

Abstract: Peter McLaren is a Canadian teacher who has worked in Canada and the United States. She has developed her own perspective on critical pedagogies and is recognized today as one of the main figures of alternative theory in education. He met and worked with Paulo Freire, about whom he wrote a book. He is today considered one of the most important representatives of critical pedagogy worldwide. His publications address issues of politics, anti-racism, citizen rights and education. His best-known books are War in Ukraine and America. DIO Press, 2022; Critical Pedagogy Manifesto. Teachers of the World Unite. DIO Press, 2021; He Walks Among Us: Christian Fascism Ushering in the End of Days. DIO Press, 2020; Postdigital Dialogues on Critical Pedagogy, Liberation Theology, and Information Technology (with Petar Jandric). Bloomsbury Academic, 2020; Breaking Free: The Life and Times of Peter McLaren, Radical Educator (with M. Wilson). Myers Education Press, 2019; Pedagogy of Insurrection: From Resurrection to Revolution. Peter Lang, 2016; Revolutionizing Pedagogy: Educating for Social Justice Within and Beyond Global Neo-liberalism (with S. Macrine, S., and D. Hill, Eds.). Palgrave Macmillan, 2010; Academic Repression: Reflections from the Academic Industrial Complex (with A. Nocella, S. Best, S., Eds.) (2010). AK Press, 2010.; Havoc of Capitalism. Educating for Social and Environmental Justice (with G. Martin, D. Houston, D., & Suoranta, J., (Eds.). Sense Publishers, 2010; Critical Pedagogies of Consumption: Living and Learning in the Shadow of the "Shopocalypse" (with Sandlin, J.A.). Routledge, 2019; Pedagogy and Praxis

¹ The reflections contained in this interview will be expanded upon through the publication of a book.

² Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil. Emergency Academic Solidarity Program (CAPES, Brazil). Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/7274083870544104>. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4846-8345>. Contato: luisbonillamolina.62@gmail.com.

³ Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil. Emergency Academic Solidarity Program (CAPES, Brazil). Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/5095667640416252>. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4403-8823>. Contato: allissongoes@gmail.com.

⁴ Federal University of Sergipe, Brazil. Study and research group on teacher training and information and communication technologies. Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3035538916868812>. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9049-5294>. Contato: geopedagogia@yahoo.com.br.



in the Age of Empire (with N. Jaramillo). Sense Publishers, 2007; Rage + Hope. Peter Lang, 2006; Capitalists and Conquerors. Rowman and Littlefield, 2005; Teaching Against Global Capitalism and the New Imperialism (with R. Farahmandpur). Rowman and Littlefield, 2005; Red Seminars: Radical Excursions into Educational Theory, Cultural Politics, and Pedagogy. Hampton Press, 2005; Marxism Against Postmodernism in Educational Theory (with D. Hill, M. Cole, & G. Rikowski). Lexington Books, 2002. Red Chalk (with M. Cole, D. Hill, and G. Rikowski). The Tufnell Press, 2000; Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Pedagogy of Revolution. Rowman and Littlefield, 2000; Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education, 1998; Revolutionary Multiculturalism: Pedagogies of Dissent for the New Millennium. Westview Press, 1997; Counternarratives (with H. Giroux, C. Lankshear & M. Peters). Routledge, 1997; Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture. Routledge, 1995; Schooling as a ritual performance. Routledge, 1986; Cries from the corridor: The new suburban ghettos. Methuen, 1980.

1. PETER MCLAREN, WHAT CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR A CANADIAN TEACHER TO ASSUME CRITICAL THEORY IN EDUCATION?

That is a good question, Luis. A short answer would be that my basic political formation (what the Germans call 'bildung') occurred during the 1960s in my native Toronto, Canada. Toronto had an active counterculture. There was a street in the city center called Yorkville, and that is where artists, musicians, poets, writers, people from different religious sects, and political activists would congregate on weekends. The street had alternative bookstores and cafes with live folk music performed by songwriters such as Gordon Lightfoot. I spent several years visiting Yorkville almost every week as a teenager. During summers I worked as an hospital orderly (cleaned the floors and toilets) in a children's cancer ward, shelved books in the local public library, and worked as a groundskeeper at another hospital. With the money that I had saved, during the summer, I would return after evenings in Yorkville to my quiet home in the suburbs of Willowdale with bags stuffed with records and alternative literature, and of course pockets full of 'green weeds'. There were alternative newspapers in Yorkville with leftist politics. I read those with great interest.

I was born in Toronto, where I lived for 35 years, except for four years in Winnipeg from the age of 11 to 15. My parents were working-class. My family came from a long line of farmers and miners. My dad grew up in Hamilton, Ontario, which at that time was the site of two steel manufacturing companies, Stelco and Dofasco. My dad didn't want to work in the steel factories or the other manufacturing plants in the area and so he headed to Toronto to look for better employment opportunities. He found a job as a bouncer in a bar. (Bouncers break up fights and throw out drunks from the bar). My dad was 6 foot 3, and my mom was 4 feet 11. I was five feet eleven but have shrunk considerably in my old age. My dad volunteered to fight the Nazis in World War II, and left Canada in 1939 as a member of the Royal Canadian Engineers, to do training in England. He saw combat during the Italian campaign and in the Netherlands. He returned to Toronto after the war



ended in 1945 and was reluctant to share the horrors that he had experienced. I was born three years after the war ended. My dad found he had a gift for selling products and he ended up in television and radio sales for Philips Electronics, a company based in the Netherlands. During the War my father was part of the armed forces who helped to liberate that country from the Nazis. My dad ended up as the manager of Philips for Eastern Canada and so we settled into a comfortable middle class life. During the 1960s, I was considered a “hippie” and part of the counterculture and after I finished high school, I left for San Francisco and Los Angeles to protest the Vietnam War. Thousands of Canadians had volunteered to fight in that war, and I wanted to meet American activists who were against the war. In San Francisco, during a concert, I ended up meeting Timothy Leary, the famous Harvard professor who pioneered the use of LSD. He asked me if I wanted to try some purple pills. We ended up having a psychedelic trip together. Leary ended up on the FBI’s most wanted list, and was sent to prison, where he occupied a cell next to the mass murderer Charles Manson. I did meet up with Leary briefly years later when he was released from prison and it was clear he didn’t remember me. While in San Francisco--this would be 1968--I lived with a group of hippies in the Haight Ashbury District and was investigated by the FBI for being a military deserter, but was not arrested when they found out I was Canadian. I left the US for Canada a few months later for my comfortable middle class home in Toronto. It was there I learned about a famous Canadian, Norman Bethune, who grew up in Gravenhurst, a three-hour drive from my parent’s home. A Scottish Canadian, like my father, Bethune was a medical doctor, who was a member of the Communist Party of Canada, who fought for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War with his unit, the Servicio canadiense de transfusión de sangre. Bethune joined Mao’s Eighth Route Army who were fighting the Japanese where he developed innovative battlefield medical procedures. Bethune was an international communist fighter not only brought medicines and medical devices to the base area, but also trained doctors and nurses. I learned that Bethune had developed mobile blood transfusion methods and was credited with bringing modern medicine to China. Bethune even treated a wounded Japanese soldier who, afterwards, stayed in China as part of the anti-war alliance and became an anti-fascist fighter. Mao gave the eulogy when Bethune died in 1939. I always considered Bethune a great Canadian hero. Many decades later, when I was in my late 60s and teaching in Northeast China, I was admitted to the Second Norman Bethune Hospital of Jilin University in Changchun, and when they heard I was a Canadian, the hospital staff would smile and give me a special welcome.

The example of Bethune always stayed with me.



As an undergraduate at the University of Toronto, and later at the University of Waterloo, I took various classes, such as Spanish (which I failed), Russian literature, children's drama and Christology (I recall the Christology class was at Wilfred Laurier University). Some of my professor were from the US, and were 'draft resisters' who had refused to fight in Vietnam so they came to Canada to avoid being put in prison. They held meetings where they criticized US imperialist wars and hundreds of students attended these meetings. They handed out anti-Vietnam war literature and I began to read about the Civil Rights Movement, works by Martin Luther King and Malcolm X (both assassinated). I was introduced to works by Lenin, Marx, Trotsky. After graduating with my bachelor's degree at the University of Toronto, I spent a year training to become an elementary school teacher and taught for a year in a wealthy Canadian town. I taught middle school, grades 7 and 8, and decided that these students were going to be admitted to university because they were children of the ruling class and the following year I went to teach in the Jane-Finch Corridor in North York, which was considered to be the most dangerous area in Canada for violent crime. I wanted to work with children of the working-class, and I was hired by an amazing principal at an elementary school in the Jane-Finch Corridor. This was during the 1970s. The area was flanked by government subsidized high rise buildings. Working with children in single-parent families, with fathers sometimes in prison, and with scarce community resources, proved to be challenging. I was lucky I had a famous principal who had a profound influence on my teaching. His name was Jim Montgomerie, and he was known as the "hugging principal". One day he took a sledge hammer into the school and smashed the walls of his office. He threw out his metal office desk and metal chair and replaced them with a round pine table and a rocking chair. At any time during the school day, students could go to his office and he would give them a hug and talk to them about the ups and downs in their lives, much like a benevolent grandfather. He was just the type of educator the students needed. He was dedicated to making students feel good about themselves, feeling confident about who they were. Jim and I had a type of father-son relationship. I spent close to four years teaching at that school, but it was getting exhausting since I would drive two hours after school to take classes for my Master's Degree at Brock University, in St. Catharines, not far from Niagara Falls. During the year I was accepted into the Ph.D. program, I think it was 1979, I decided that I would publish the diary that I had kept during my four years of teaching. It documented the violence I had witnessed among the students. But I also shared heart-warming stories of their essential goodness and humanity. My diary was published under the title, *Cries from the Corridor*, and became a Canadian bestseller in the year 1980.



There was no analysis in my diary; I failed to provide a sociological analysis of the community or the literature on educational theory. So while my book was a bestseller, it was criticized for not providing a sufficient context for my diary. I editor gave me what turned out to be bad advice—"let the stories you tell speak for themselves." But by not providing a context for my diary such as a class analysis, and theoretical framework, some readers put the blame on the violence in the school on the students themselves. Nevertheless I went on a book tour and was interviewed on television by Margaret Trudeau, the mother of Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. Justin would have been 9 years old at the time.

By the time my book was published, I was enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. Here, I learned about an educator in Brazil whose name was Paulo Freire. After reading Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I questioned why Freire's work did not appear in any of the programs at OISE. I never received any credible answers. But in one my classes, Professor Richard Courtney, considered to be one of the world's leading specialists in children's drama, mentioned the book, *Theater of the Oppressed*, by Augusto Boal, and I was very impressed with this work by a Brazilian theater director who had been inspired by Paulo Freire. For a while I considered joining the field of drama studies. (Years later I had the honor of serving on a panel with Paulo and Augusto held in the Rose Theater in Omaha, Nebraska, and I was told it was the first time Paulo and Augusto had presented together on the same stage.) I decided to ask Professor Courtney to Chair my doctoral dissertation. While I was a doctoral student, I gave a lecture in the anthropology department on ritual, which I had been studying for my ethnographic work. During this time, I also took a course with a visiting professor, Michel Foucault. He taught his class in English, with some help with translation. He asked me to show him around Toronto; he especially wanted to see what works of his were in the local bookstores. He told me privately, with a wry smile, that Toronto was not 'decadent' enough for him. He was brilliant, but I never became a Foucauldian. I enjoyed listening to another invited guest professor, Umberto Eco, who gave me a copy of one of the manuscripts he was working on, which I ended up losing in my move to the United States. I also audited a class at York University in Toronto, taught by Ernesto Laclau. So I would say that I was very lucky to be in the doctoral program at that time. During a conference held at OISE, I also had the good fortune of meeting one of our invited speakers, Henry Giroux. We kept in touch after the conference.



I finally completed my Ph.D. in 1984. A friend of mine, Anthony Wilden (who translated a famous work of Jacques Lacan called *The Language of the Self*), took my doctoral dissertation with him during a trip to England and dropped it off at the offices of Routledge publishers. It came as a complete surprise. Anthony (or Tony as he friends called him), didn't tell me, because he didn't want me to be disappointed if it was not accepted for publication. Routledge gave it to socio-linguist, Basil Bernstein, to evaluate it, and Professor Bernstein encouraged Routledge to publish it as a book. I received a telegram from Routledge telling me not to show my book to other publishers, as they wanted to publish it. This came as a complete surprise. My book was published in 1986 with the title, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance*, and was an ethnographic study of a school in a mixed Italian and Azorean neighborhood in Toronto. It was a Catholic School. I had developed a strong theoretical context when writing my dissertation, which was for me a way of making amends for the lack of context in my diary, *Cries from the Corridor*.

After completing my doctorate in 1984, I was invited by Giroux to apply for a position at Miami University of Ohio. Giroux had been fired at Boston University by the fascist university president, John Silber, and was now a professor at Miami University of Ohio, a university surrounded by cornfields in rural Ohio—a very conservative area of the United States. Silber was obviously intimidated by Giroux's laser-sharp mind and radical politics. After consulting with my wife and daughter, we immigrated to the United States, pulling all of our belongings behind our tiny Volkswagen Beetle. Henry and I ended up working together for eight years. I helped Henry develop a center for education and cultural studies which was, to my knowledge, the first center for cultural studies in education in the US at the time. While at Miami, I wrote an expanded version of my diary, complete with the theoretical context that was missing in *Cries from the Corridor*. I called this book, *Life in Schools*. After all these years it is the book for which I am best known. The book is still used in classes by professors with a background in critical studies. Eventually Henry left Miami of Ohio to teach at Pennsylvania State University and I was recruited by UCLA. This was after the televised brutal beatings of Rodney King by the Los Angeles police. UCLA needed somebody who could bring a critical perspective to UCLA's graduate school faculty. I taught courses on critical theory, and critical pedagogy and critical ethnographic research. I met Paulo Freire in 1985 at a conference in Chicago, where Freire was the honored speaker. Paulo was amazing in his humility and kindness. He wrote the Preface for an early book of mine, *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture*. And he invited me to attend a conference in Cuba, I think it was 1987. That is where I met Cuban, Mexican and Brazilian teachers for the first time. And I was given invitations to Brazil, and Mexico. That



marked the beginning of my international travels. Around the early 2000s, I met a wonderful Mexican professor, Sergio Quiroz Miranda--whom you knew Luis--and he asked if I would work with him on developing Instituto McLaren, an institute offering classes on critical pedagogy from a Marxist perspective, and I agreed. Instituto McLaren is still running, and it has a great faculty, and I know you have spent time teaching there, Luis. Sergio, who helped to found the Partido Comunistas de los Mexicanos, was a great inspiration for me. Together we traveled all around Mexico, working with teachers. I've been teaching at Chapman University for the past ten years. So that's more or less the context that shaped my work over the years. More recently, I have been interested in liberation theology as it was developed in America Latina. This movement has been very important to my work.

2. RETURNING TO THE FIELD THAT HAS OCCUPIED THE BULK OF YOUR WORK, WHAT ARE THE CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES?

I'm glad you used the term critical pedagogies in the plural. Yes, there is no singular model of critical pedagogy. Mine is simply one of many incarnations within the broad field of critical pedagogy. Prior to the mid-1990s, I was influenced by academic trends in the US which involved semiotics, poststructuralism, deconstruction, discourse analysis, queer theory, postcolonialism, cultural studies, and to a lesser extent, Marxism. Latin American students, I have noticed, have a much greater familiarity with Marxist thought. When I was in China I thought I would find the same situation with students, given that they have schools of Marxism on their university campuses. But the student didn't seem well versed in Marx, at least in the universities which I had the opportunity to visit and to speak. When I began developing critical pedagogy, soon after my move to the US, the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School became important sources for me, especially Marcuse, Fromm and Walter Benjamin. But I was also engaged with postmodern theory and poststructuralism, such as found in works by, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Derrida, Guattari, Fredric Lyotard, Žižek, etc. I often described my work during that time as 'critical postmodernism' and it was, to a certain extent, an overly eclectic and hybrid collection of socio-cultural perspectives directed at interrogating what postmodernists referred to as "the crisis of representation" in the referential world due to the fragmentation of language and the crisis of truth in political discourse. I was preoccupied for a time in readings about legitimation crisis, cognitive mediation, what Derrida referred to as *difé'rance*, autopoiesis, the paradox of self-referentiality, the impossibility of objectivity, the idea that criticism has no ground because there exists nothing outside of language effects, etc. I was encouraged by colleagues



both in the United States and England to consider the limitations of my critical orientation and consider getting more grounded in a Marxist (historical materialist) analysis of capitalist schooling and so my criticism moved from a concentration on discursive structures to a concern with a more materialist politics in keeping with Marxist critiques of political economy. We are, after all, facing a capitalist arche-strategy that marginalizes working-class collectivity and protects the individual as the drive-chain of entrepreneurial capitalism. Their criticism was warranted since I had been preoccupying myself with textualism, voluntarism, and the politics of desire, and the instability of meaning--terms that were in common usage by postmodernists. The work of Teresa Ebert was of profound significance to my shift in theoretical orientation away from ahistorical and descriptive modes of contemporary thought and readings of culture and society. The work of Freire, of course, provided me with the intellectual momentum. needed to shift my focus from a politics of representation to a politics of radical social change and transformation that situates the central problems of our time in capitalist relations of exploitation--to a world of the oppressed and the oppressor. In other words, I shifted my preoccupation with poststructuralist analyses of popular culture and eventually embraced a revolutionary Marxist humanist perspective. Many of my leftist colleagues at the time were wary of Marxist critique, especially orthodox Marxist-Leninist philosophers. They were also suspicious of first-generation members of the Frankfurt School, since the Marxist tradition was virtually absent in educational scholarship in the US at the time, including the work of critical theorists, and I surmised that this was due to a lack of serious engagement with Marx's writings. Their aversion to reading Marx was also due to their contempt for the totalitarian dictatorships of the Soviet Union, China and the Eastern Bloc countries, who claimed to be following in the footsteps of Marx. Those who were ambitious enough to read Marx balked at the idea of reading Hegel, especially his Science of Logic, whom they claimed would take years of study in order to comprehend his philosophy. Educators in the US often complained of the complex language used by critical theorists and dialectical materialists. So many of my colleagues remained trapped by utopian theories of entrepreneurial individuality and agency linked to forms of voluntarism and pragmatism, forms unburdened by the forces of history. To many of my colleagues, poststructuralism and its affiliative liaison with identity production was all that was needed to understand the problems of contemporary socio-cultural formations and institutions and to ensure that they function democratically. Yet such an approach was too often tolerant of exploitation--capitalist exploitation in particular. What was missing in their work was the oppressive role of finance capital and its relationship to the relations and forces of capitalist production and



a critical grasp of the social totality in its historical specificity. For them, Marxism was too totalizing a theory, too deterministic, too fraught with pre-ordained assumptions. They fell into the trap of creating a pedagogy that fosters an isolated, alienated, bourgeois subject—in other words, a pedagogy of free expression, and trans-social individualism. Too often bourgeois liberal pedagogies view oppression as a question of identity—the experience of being black, or gay, or white. But oppression cannot be explained by experience. We need an analysis of experience, an analysis of experience effects, that is, a grasp of the effects of experience, an analysis that, in other words, goes beyond experience. You only learn from experiences that you learn from. This means that we need a language to interpret experience, a language that can help us unpack the material conditions of experiences. Critical pedagogy points to the social sciences as a means of developing new terminologies that can help us understand our experiences as resulting from both the structural determinations and contingencies of capitalism, which form part of capitalism's contingent totality. My concern is to focus on theories that will lead to material change in society, that would, in effect, help to advance the conditions of possibility for a socialist alternative to a world geared towards the production of value (i.e., accumulated monetary wealth). This was a complaint I discussed one evening with Lyotard in relation to his work on postmodernism. As time went on, I appreciated more and more Freire's emphasis on socioeconomic and ideological transformation and liberation, and was impressed by his Marxist epistemology and the dialectical materialism at the core of Freire's pedagogy. Wayne Au revealed that dialectical materialism was a paradigmatic world view that informed Freire's work, existing as a multi-layered, interrelated system, a totality, a chain of relationships and processes. Freire's way of thinking was paradigmatically distinct from the individualist rational logic of Western Enlightenment; it was very different from the postmodernist's penchant for developing their own contingent idioms as they went along, in stark complicity with capitalist social relations. So from critical theory and Freire's work, I adapted ideological critique, which attempted to unmask and undress the regnant cultural assumptions of agents, and to critically interrogate dominant societal power structures and relations. In so doing, we need to locate our own experience and that of our students in a world-historical frame; in other words, within specific social relations of production. Marx talked about not only understanding the world but changing it—"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it"—and I take that challenge to heart. What is important is transforming the very structures of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy by means of a pedagogical praxis guided by the revolutionary knowledges produced by historical materialism. I address my work in the



context of the crisis of modernity and the systematic extraction of surplus value from proletarianized regions of the world (regions that are experiencing decay in a climate of bourgeois-comprador nationalism) culminating in a condition of gross inequality and an egregiously unequal and structurally inescapable division of labor.

Revolutionary critical pedagogy addresses itself to the problems of reification and the commodification of everyday life, when the concept of the social is conceived as a contingent totality. Changing the world cannot be achieved by simply appealing to people's individual conscience. Istvan Meszaros claims, correctly, that an appeal to individual consciousness ultimately remains insufficient because "it avoids the social causes of the denounced negative symptoms." We need, instead, to change the structural determinations of the established social order, an order that produces and reproduces the destructive effects of capitalist social relations of exploitation. For me, the worker is the producing subject of capitalist society and the capitalist is the pseudo-subject. As Meszaros explains: "Notwithstanding the fetishistic mystifications of the capital system, the real producing subject is the worker; the capitalist as the presumed controlling subject—who is in fact firmly controlled through the necessarily prevailing structural imperatives of the established order—can only be a usurping pseudo subject. Consequently, only the actually producing subject, labor, can acquire the feasible and productively viable regulatory consciousness under the historical conditions of our time."

We need to comprehend critically that education is reproductive of an exploitative social order because it rests on the foundations of capitalist exchange value. Revolutionary critical pedagogy is a mode of social knowing that works to un-conceal economic and political power, the abstract logic of the exploitation of the working-class that operates within regimes of domination. We need more than liberal compassion and a polyglot cosmopolitanism that effectively masquerades the contradictions inherent in the today's system of capitalist commodity production. Marx warned us again and again that every new society carries its own negation within itself the inner contradiction—and we can become agents that effect change. That's what Freire's work is all about, creating agents that can shape their own histories, instead of remaining the casualties of the history of the capitalist class. How do we prove the truth of our own thinking? We prove it in our praxis. And in the case of Freire, our revolutionary praxis.

This contradiction that Marx refers to is expressed in the class struggle. Which mandates that as international socialists, we transform the circumstances in which we find ourselves intractably enmeshed. Again, we can do this through a form of revolutionary



praxis we call class struggle—where the various classes struggle over the surplus produced by social labor. A struggle, by the way, that has become more difficult since we now have to deal with forms of transnational capitalism, with new and emerging global circuits of production, with a much larger global production and financial system than we have ever seen in the history of capitalism, as system that is organized in a globally fragmented and decentralized way, often with the assistance of computerized technology. We are now facing a transnational capitalist class, according to William I. Robinson, and he doesn't paint a pretty picture. What role do we, as educators, have to play as part of an international working-class that can stand up to and eventually defeat these forms of transnational capitalism? The situation in the US is grim since the power of the unions has dramatically declined. My role in the field of critical pedagogy has been to call for a broad, non-sectarian coalition or social movement that is able to not only challenge contemporary modes of production and reproduction but to create conditions in educational settings can empower students become activists, to challenge the dominant structures of class rule that serve the interests of the few at the expense of the many.

There is not just one critical pedagogy but many critical pedagogies, as we mentioned earlier. I don't like to use the term in the singular. What I tried to do is expose the limitations of left-liberal critical pedagogy, liberal critical pedagogy, conservative critical pedagogy, and variants of each of these and pose an alternative that I call revolutionary critical pedagogy. To put it briefly, revolutionary critical pedagogy is grounded in class struggle and is materialist in nature—which doesn't mean we can't discuss the importance of spirituality, liberation theology, and the like. But there are critical pedagogies that do not challenge capitalism and I wanted to emphasize that my approach to critical pedagogy is geared to challenge capitalist social relations directly. Each approach to pedagogy has implicit or explicit views of the state, of democracy, of race, and so on. My challenge was to reveal the limitations of pedagogies that converge, often unintentionally, with neoliberal ideology, policy, and practice, which adopt the normative principles of the Keynesian welfare state. Other pedagogies converge ideologically with the entrepreneurial state—which follows the capitalist law of value championed by Hayek. Tony Smith looks at Polyani to identify what he calls an "activist state" which administers state intervention into its industrial policy and places government restrictions on the rules and regulations for attracting global investment capital. Some left-liberal educators prefer the idea of "cosmopolitan state" derived from the writings of Habermas, where forms of global market governance can prevail that are intra-national rather than



national. This is the idea of the state as the protector of global civil society. I wouldn't want to support models of the state that support wage labor. Because Marx has shown us that wage labor only "appears" to include an equal exchange. Workers sell their capacity to labor to an employer who is able to extract a higher value from the worker than the workers' means of surviving. I prefer a market socialist model, based on co-operatives, that is, democratically self-managed and worker-run industries. I wouldn't put all my faith in civil society, in NGOs and in the new social movements because these operate out of contradictory relations internal to the process of capitalism itself, contradictions that manifest themselves through the long history of vertical and horizontal expansions of capitalism. I ascribe instead to a critical revolutionary praxis where one understands the internal relations of capital and struggles to overcome them, to transcend them by means of creating a world where value production ceases to exist. But the question we need to ask is: How do we abolish value production, wage labor? Am I just a romantic utopian? Well, some people no doubt think so. But I don't think civil society is a key site of emancipation.

After all, civil society is part and parcel of the state. And capitalism has permeated all spheres of social life, including civil society and the public sphere. The larger goal has to be the creation of a social universe outside of capital's value form. Anything short of this will not bring about emancipation. Revolutionary critical pedagogy strives for the abolition of capital as a social relation. This is the major difference between my position and that of many other critical educators. I am not calling for a violent revolution. I am calling for a revolution in the way we understand the perils of capitalism. It's a huge challenge...I mean if you even mention the word capitalism in a derogatory sense, you will be scrutinized in university settings as perhaps an enemy of the state. It's happened to me and it's not something you want to wish for.

3. IN WHAT ASPECTS OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE CAN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY BE USEFUL TO CLASSROOM TEACHERS TODAY?

There are elements of critical pedagogy from which classroom teachers can benefit. But not not at this historical juncture in the Belly of the Beast. For instance, my colleague Suzanne SooHoo tells the story of a kindergarten teacher. The teacher took her class on a tour of their school and asked the pupils to write down what they liked about the school and what they didn't like. All the students agreed that they didn't like the dog shit on the playground. The teacher had them count the dog turds each day and make simple bar graphs of what they counted. It was discovered that Monday was the day that most of the



turds appeared on the playground. The students realized that the dogs are shitting the most during weekends. The teacher took the students to City Hall where they made a presentation to the Mayor and City Council. City council passed a law that prohibited people walking their dogs on school property during the weekends, punishable by a fine, since it posed a health threat to the children. It posted plaques on all the school buildings in the school district with a message to that effect. Congratulations to these kindergarten students for their grasp of elementary sociology. May they grow up to be critical researchers. So you can start simple. You do what you are able to do as a teacher within the structural constraints that exists. Today in the US, teachers are leaving their jobs at record rates because of the cult of Trump that has imprisoned the minds of Republican politicians who are attacking the schools for practicing “woke” (liberal) ideology. DeSantis signed the ‘Stop WOKE Act’ in 2022, designed to restrict how issues of race are taught in public schools and workplaces. At stake in these historical narratives is the ability to teach history. And our ability to challenge our understanding of the nature of the relationship between history and truth. DeSantis’s guidelines actually maintain that African slaves benefited from slavery, by developing skills that served them well after they were freed. Such a view of slavery ‘whitewashes’ the traumatizing horror of slavery, the beatings, the raping, the torturing, the forced separation of family members, the long-term trauma that was passed down through generations, effectively erasing from history the acts of white slaveholders, so that white people cannot be seen in a negative light by students. The guidelines, in fact, emphasize how white people stood up to slavery. What’s next, teach about the Holocaust and claiming the Jews learned basic skills in the concentration camps! It was Africans’ skills in cultivating tobacco, sugar and rice that proved beneficial to the slave owners and create the obscene wealth of the United States. Africans were not ‘blank slates’ before being sold as slaves. They already had skills and the slave owners made sure those skills benefitted them, and not the slaves. The teaching of race requires that we co-process our emotions with our students, providing spaces for naming our feelings and reactions to historical events involving slavery in the United States and locating these historical events in actual slave testimonies. But students will not be allowed to read the Slave Narrative Collection, a group of autobiographical accounts of former slaves, which was compiled in seventeen states during the years 1936–1938 and consists of more than two thousand interviews with former slaves.

One proposed law by Republicans in Florida, known by critics as the ‘Don’t Say Gay’ bill, prohibits public school districts from teaching about sexual orientation or gender identity in kindergarten through the third grade, opening the door for a similar ban in higher grade



levels. Attacks on 'woke' teachers who teach 'divisive subjects' related to LGBTQ issues and Critical Race Theory have changed the landscape of teaching across the country.

Critical Race Theory (CRT), which is a form of critical theory that analyzes systemic racism in the United States, is now outlawed. If you teach about racist practices by the White majority, you will be labelled a racist! If you discuss with students the persistence of anti-Black racism throughout the United States and the unjustified killings of Black men by the police, you could be fired from your job. CRT (which is taught at the university or college level) developed out of critical legal studies associated with law schools whose researchers borrowed ideas from critical theory, legal realism and Marxist analyses and were interested in the social construction of race, the normalization of racism and the means by which people of colour continue to be systematically exploited through institutions and structures which are race-based, ideologically biased in favour of the dominant class, hierarchical and exceedingly unjust and serve to reproduce structured hierarchies that serve the interests of the rich and powerful. As you can imagine, CRT has proved crucially important in the teaching of history but there can be no teaching of history as illuminated by CRT. This is essentially an attack on the meaning and purpose of history itself. CRT reveals that racist actions are not simply perpetrated by isolated individual acts of vile, but are fully and fatefully embedded in unfair systemic discrimination against African Americans and other racial minority groups across a wide swath of the civic commons. CRT enhances our understanding of microaggressions directed at people of color on a daily basis. It also reveals practices of differential racialization and illuminates the way society has been systemically organized to serve the interests of the essentially White bourgeoisie. Republicans are 'firing up' their base of supporters—the same supporters who tried to overthrow the 2020 election, who tried to find Mike Pence in the Capitol building and hang him, the same supporters who openly brag that they are Neo-Nazis. What will they try next?

Just look at the exponential growth of White militia groups, neo-Nazis, and white supremacist ethno-nationalists, and outright fascists that now exist throughout the United States – they are carrying AR-15s into public spaces, including to school meetings – and some of them are targeting black people to murder in cold blood. If we are forced to shroud the civil rights struggle in a blanket of social and historical amnesia, we are lost as a nation in combatting racism, in challenging ongoing discrimination against people of colour, including immigrants. The current culture wars are unlike those of the previous decade in that they now originate from a 'fear of extinction' of the White race. They inflame latent racist, misogynist and sexist sentiments and message them through social media



with little or no accountability. The toxicity of contemporary US politics has weaponized race and transformed whiteness into a sacred identity—whites are referred to as “legacy citizens—whose rights must be defended above all others, including those rapist and murdering immigrants Trump described as coming from Mexico, or those Trump described as coming from ‘shit hole countries’, even at the cost of suspending the Constitution and taking matters into their own hands. There was a time when teachers could express critical views about their country. But that time is not now. Teachers in blue states (Democratic states) such as California have more possibilities for expressing their views with their students in university settings. But this is not necessarily the case in public high schools or elementary schools. In my own classes I would unreservedly and frequently condemn the US political class and triumphalist US foreign policy, which includes the still ongoing military interventions of the United States, as well as the past incursions of the US into Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan (to name just a few) that killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people and displaced millions. I have not refrained from describing America’s military as the Masters of War. I have discussed with my students the record of violence by the US political class that is unparalleled in modern history – and here I am thinking of the 1973 US military-backed coup in Chile, leading to the overthrow and death of President Salvador Allende, and the torture and murder of thousands of Chileans. I am thinking of the struggle for freedom in El Salvador and the arms provided by the US to the death squads who carried out heinous acts of torture and murder against the campesinos and the Jesuit priests and nuns who spoke out against the killers. I am thinking of the US support of the Contras in Nicaragua who targeted teachers and children. I have no hesitation in mentioning to my classes that our think tanks are funded by arms dealers, and our decisions on who to invade are made with the approval of America’s billionaire class. The US government’s history of imperialist adventurism is not off limits in many university settings in the blue states, but the red states (who have a Republican majority) you are risking your job if you criticize the United States. The Republicans came up with a brilliant strategy, arguing that America’s teachers are communists, and hate America. They are trying to build a global society controlled by the United Nations. They are grooming children to change their genders. So a group called Moms of Liberty has been created that hold tremendous influence and power in deciding which books may be taught in schools, and which books must be banned, and which teachers must be fired for disrespecting the country. They are doing this under the auspices of ‘parental rights.’ Here is how they describe themselves:



Moms for Liberty welcomes all that have a desire to stand up for parental rights at all levels of government.

Our founders are Tiffany and Tina, moms on a mission to stoke the fires of liberty. As former school board members, they witnessed how short-sighted and destructive policies directly hurt children and families. Now they are using their first-hand knowledge and experience to unite parents who are ready to fight those that stand in the way of liberty. Moms for Liberty is dedicated to fighting for the survival of America by unifying, educating and empowering parents to defend their parental rights at all levels of government.

Any teacher who gets criticized by a member of Moms for Liberty will have a difficult time keeping their job. Here is how Christopher Rufo, the major critic of critical race theory in the US, has condemned Paulo Freire's influence in this country, as well as my work and that of my comrade, Henry Giroux⁵.

If Trump gets reelected in 2024, the Republican knives will be sharper than ever.

4. EDUCATION IS UNDER PRESSURE TO PLACE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AT THE CENTER OF ITS WORK. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

Teachers had better understand the effects of digital transformation or we are going to be in serious trouble, more trouble than we can imagine. I am saying this as someone who for many years resisted investigating our digital and post-digital world. Adolescents and teenagers have been absorbed in this world since they were children and I felt that I was lagging too far behind in order to catch-up to my children or grandchildren, or students in my classes. I am an old-timer and what we in the US call "old school"--which means I still stubbornly write with a pen, then transfer my notes onto my my computer. I wear vintage clothes from the 1940s and 50s. I sometimes feel lost in time. I still have trouble fixing glitches on my cell phone and computer. However, I have a responsibility as a critical educator to understand how technology is affecting us emotionally, psychologically and politically. Petar Jandric, a Croatian professor and comrade, has been instrumental in shining a critical light on today's technological universe. Imagine, we are now in a world where OpenAI's ChatGPT (part of the Generative Pre-trained Transformer family of language models) has features that allow us to dialogue with a "chatbot" or LLM [logic learning machine] that has the ability "to answer followup questions, admit its mistakes, challenge incorrect premises, and reject inappropriate requests." Chomsky is correct

⁵ RUFO, Christopher. The Left Is Reengineering the Human Soul. Our Children Are the Guinea Pigs. Available: <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2023/07/the-left-is-reengineering-the-human-soul-our-children-are-the-guinea-pigs>. Access: sep. 2024.



when he warns about the dangers of using ChatGPT as a form of high-tech plagiarism. But there are other concerns, as well. These systems really need to be regulated. There needs to be some age-gating and privacy regulations and data protection rules. Privacy rules were breached in Italy recently and there was a general geo-blocking of users in that country. Users need to be able to exercise their rights and not agree to allow their personal data to be used to train OpenAI's algorithms. There is also a danger of these chatbots making up false information about individuals.

When I was a high school student, my English teacher suggested that I read the work of Canadian scholar, Marshal McLuhan, who in some ways was a technological determinist but who revolutionized the study of information. A bona fide Canadian hero. I quickly buried myself in all of his books. I was presumptuous enough to consider inviting McLuhan to be on my dissertation committee as an outside reader during my doctoral studies before I learned that he had had a stroke and had lost his ability to speak. So that dream never materialized. I was always more of an "arts" person than a tech person, having done an undergraduate degree in Elizabethan drama, and participated in a few high school and college plays, and considered myself, correctly or incorrectly, a poet throughout my teens and into my twenties (I was part of a group of junior high students known as the Young Poets, long before the film, *The Dead Poets Society*, made poetry fashionable. Even though I have almost lost all my hearing, and have several debilitating hearing and vestibular disorders, I still play my guitar nearly every day. So it wasn't easy for me to transition from an immersion in the arts to an engagement with technology. My focus has been on digital technology's contribution to fascist ideology and propaganda. I prefer the term, post-digital fascism. Some people may feel that I overuse the term fascism, and they may be correct, but I don't think public intellectuals are using the term enough. Fascism is one of the biggest threats facing our world, and I rank it along with climate chaos and nuclear war. Okay, yes, we all know the positive contributions of the internet. But I am focussing on its more perilous features that have marked the past few decades. Our post-digital universe today is overwhelmed by platforms designed to foster self-organizing structures of hate, fear and rage and this has helped to redefine contemporary civil society by normalizing far-right ideologies, policies, and manifestos on racial purity, ethno-nationalism, anti-globalism and white supremacy. This has resulted in dangerous consequences for our increasingly fragile democracy, and especially with respect to the ongoing battle for the hearts and minds of our youth. Online hate has offline consequences, such as the entwinement of far-right hate groups and network-oriented developments in technology.



The work of Stephen Albrcht, Maik Fielitz and Nick Thurston have been especially illuminating in terms of understanding how the media mediate contemporary politics, creating far-right forms of digital citizenship through algorithms of hate that networks can rely upon in order to attract viewers.

These algorithms of hate embedded in our everyday digital interactivity play havoc with our insecurities, producing online ‘affective publics’ designed to create chaos in the our modern “attention economy”. Algorithms are used to control how much time we are likely to focus on a particular issue or event. Republicans have used digital technologies and the socio-technical infrastructure of social media, to foster anti-immigrant bias through the sheer pervasiveness of stories accrued and cross-referenced. This has produced an in-group victimization and out-group stereotyping of immigrants as outsiders, by manufacturing forms of surplus enjoyment connected to an algorithmic clustering of content breeding hate, and mainstreaming xenophobia. The most toxic forms of digital fascism create ‘imaginary others’ who then become objects of internet-enabled racial violence. The lines between the digital and everyday life have become dangerously blurred.

Populist authoritarian leaders are able to convey their post-truth utterances to their networked masses of followers--those who are most vulnerable to digital hate cultures--through an algorithm-based curation of falsehoods and an exponential dispersal of vitriol. The digitized architecture and metric manipulation used by white Christian nationalists is a case in point, as they spread wild conspiracies on a continual basis through an digital echo chamber that canalizes fears, increasingly tribalizes politics, and overwhelms attempts to challenge lies by fact-based means and strategies.

White supremacists have used cyber-fascist techniques, including intense fear-mongering, to cultivate themselves as an endangered community that is being driven to extinction by non-white immigrants and therefore is in need of a strong, authoritarian leader who will enact strong, anti-immigrant laws. The new incarnations of broadband terrorists in the US are obsessed with ultranationalist themes and narratives that depict the US under attack by ‘cultural marxists’ and communists. At the same time, these post-digital, ethno-nationalist warriors disguise their fascist ontology under an American dreamscape studded with fantasies of self-glorification. This digital annulling of democracy has also eroded international solidarity with socialist comrades in both Ukraine and Russia—failing to recognize that you can be opposed to Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, and at the same time be opposed to NATO.



We need to condemn the machinations of NATO and the role of US imperialism. We also need to recognize Russia as a proto-fascist state engaged in an imperialist war against Ukraine. It is possible to take a stand against NATO, US imperialism and Russian imperialism and still support Ukraine's right to pursue its own destiny as a nation.

Is there a way that we can change this post-digital ecosystem? Shutting down free speech and free expression is not the way to go. We need to understand how structures of perception are produced by the new post-digital fascism, and that means a critical analysis of how fascist algorithms are built into the very post-digital structures of our central nervous system via the internet cosmology? We need to create our aptitude in disentangling, disambiguating, and deciphering the symbology and iconography of far-right cultures. We need to punch holes through far-right firewalls of obfuscation and deceit. We must learn to protect ourselves from becoming emotionally aligned with the digitally-weaponised provocations from far-right actors who take comfort in the chaos and discomfort that they create.

We need to be wary of the asynchronous digital spaces created by TikTok that are grooming our youth who have migrated onto the world wide web without the necessary facility for navigating intercultural online interactions of far-right netizens, thus falling prey to fascist undercurrents and finding themselves lost in the labyrinthine catacombs of the Fascist Technoverse or the cult of QAnon.

Media technology has a way of firewalling us from our protagonistic selves, preventing us from making independent decisions. For those of us who are fighting for a socialist alternative to neoliberal democracy's law of value, post-digital fascism poses an urgent threat to the survival of freedom itself in the ways that information technologies are being used by capital to create capital mobility across national boundaries. This has trapped us in the panoptic sepulcher of the national security state.

We need to build strategies to combat soft power fascism, a fascism that results in death by a thousand cuts across the digitalized brain. We are fighting an adversary that is giving us a mind-makeover, that is bringing us death by digital lobotomy, by cleaving away our defenses to our own unintentional fascist devices. We are facing a technology that is in the service of high-tech imperialism, that is out to hijack the world's informational supply chain. It is taking us down the rabbit hole and replacing reality with the artificial dreamscape of Google-run-trend analysis, making us believe that we are living in the best of all possible worlds.

Like Marx's proletariats, who possess the means to become the gravediggers of capitalism, we can refuse to participate in digital fascism not by withdrawing from the technological present but by holding the techno-fascists accountable.

You asked me about social movements in your previous question. When I look at the history of social movements, what immediately springs to mind is the abolitionist movement that called attention to the evils of slavery, the women's suffrage movement after the Civil War, which won women the right to vote with the ratification of the 19th Amendment. There is the labor movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which gave us a minimum wage and a 40-hour workweek. It also gave us the right to strike. Then, of course, there was the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and the anti-Vietnam antiwar movement of the 1960s and 1970s. What also comes immediately to mind is the "MeToo" Movement and the gay rights movement, the marriage equality movement, and the environmental movement. There is the anti-apartheid movement, and the indigenous rights movement. Perhaps one day there will be a popular movement dealing with digital technology, the dangers of which we are only beginning to understand. I recall watching the influx of images on my computer, images of screaming insurrectionists smashing their way into Brazil's main government complex. It made me shudder. It reminded me of the insurrection at the US capitol building on January 6. It revealed all too clearly the obstacles Brazilians face in confronting the disinformation and hate campaigns exercised by repressive regimes such as Bolsonaro's. Bolsonaro's insurrectionists tried to propagate digital platforms through a sovereign nationalist technological infrastructure that reminded me of Brazil's brutal military dictatorship so loved by Bolsonaro. Journalist Jake Johnson reported that the attempt to overthrow Brazil's newly elected government was 'directly aided' by major social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Telegram, according to the global watchdog group SumOfUs. Bolsonaro's supporters utilised the platforms, tools, and algorithms of major media corporations in order to agitate for fascism.

This type of digital architecture is in the hands of fascists all over the world. Many of these platforms are used to spread conspiracies such as QAnon. QAnon conspiracy theorists in the US claim Democrats are paedophile cannibals and drink the blood of children, under the snickering gaze of Lucifer. They believe Donald Trump will usher in The Storm, where he will arrest and execute these Democrat paedophiles in public. And Bolsonaro actually bragged that he would enjoy cannibalising an Indian while describing a trip to the Yanomami people.



TikTok and Meta – the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp – need to be held accountable. Far-right extremists are operating freely on Meta’s platforms in Brazil and calibrating their algorithms so as to prioritise anti-democratic groups. The same thing is happening in the US and other countries, where digital connective tissue is growing that supports, protects, and gives structure to larger organs of hate. We are allowing digital monsters to operate freely in our midst. They are hiding in plain sight. We have dressed them in respectable clothing and they now have free access to the brain pans of many of the world's citizens. If we ever awaken from our digital nightmare we will find ourselves entombed in a graveyard where humanity's dreams lay impaled on iron stakes by the delicate and complaisant gestures of computer programmers, supreme in their algorithmic heresies and secure in their headlong precision towards oblivion.

5. IS THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AN ISSUE OF CONCERN FOR CRITICAL PEDAGOGIES? HOW DO THEY APPROACH IT?

Luis, it is a major concern for critical educators. For many it is the key concern of our times. The tragedy is, when only 20 percent of Republicans believe that climate change is an urgent problem, it's difficult to make ecopedagogy a mandatory course in teacher education. But we must. It is one of the most urgent educational priorities. In North America, ecopedagogy is sometimes seen as a major tributary flowing from the field of critical pedagogy but its origins have been traced to the second Earth Summit that was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. In fact, one of my former students, Richard Kahn, is one of the pioneers of ecopedagogy. I have written on this topic but I am certainly no authority in this area. The field has developed significantly from the days I used to spar with Chet Bowers on the contributions of Freire to ecopedagogy (sadly, Chet passed away just as we were planning to do some writing together). I am indebted to my former students who have made very strong inroads in this crucial area of scholarship and activism and what knowledge I have of this field has been due to their generosity. Ecopedagogy began, as I understand it, as a powerful critique of what used to be called ‘environmental education’ or sometimes ‘outdoor education’. It focuses on issues of environmental degradation and sustainable development and concerns itself with how nature is represented by environmentalists in the global north. I remember as an elementary school teacher in the 1970s, I would take my students to an outdoor education center to learn how to make maple syrup. We would gather the sap and take it to the sugarhouse to the evaporator and watch it turn into syrup. That was considered environmental education. By taking my students to an environmental center, I was



considered a 'well rounded' teacher. It was certainly not part of an outdoor community-based ecopedagogy program! Ecopedagogy is situated at the forefront of the environmental justice movement, bringing the power of critique and problem-posing approaches to education to state and corporate-sponsored science; it works to identify what structural changes need to be made in our society and culture in order to develop and maintain a sustainable future. It also has a class-based component. Richard Kahn has outlined three key goals of the ecopedagogy movement, which involve "creating opportunities for the proliferation of ecoliteracy programs, both within schools and society; bridging the gap of praxis between scholars and the public (especially activists) on ecopedagogical interests; and instigating dialogue and self-reflective solidarity across the many groups among educational left, particularly in light of the existing planetary crisis." Three general domains predominate in ecopedagogy: the cosmological, technological and organization domains. Again, to quote Richard Kahn: "The cosmological dimension focuses on how ecoliteracy, i.e. understanding the natural systems that sustain life, can transform people's worldviews. For example, assumptions about society's having the right to exploit nature can be transformed into understanding of the need for ecological balance to support society in the long term. The success of such 'cosmological' thinking transformations can be assessed by the degree to which such paradigm shifts are adopted by the public." I strongly maintain that climate change has to be seen in relationship to predatory capitalism—what some call neoliberal capitalism. We have to understand what's going to happen over the next few decades and beyond if we don't stop global warming, and soon. We are facing the destruction of the human species. We need to educate students about the Anthropocene. Human life as we know it is at the edge of a precipice. Since we don't know when the human experiment will come to an end, we have to make inferences to the best explanations available. What is clear is that we need affordable energy-generating processes, without them we are finished as a species. Renewable energy? Reforestation? We already know the reactions from the fossil fuel sector. What will a zero emissions economy look like? We've only got 30 years to find out. If Trump gets in power again and starts removing pollution controls from factories, we know who will be the first to suffer—the people who live close to factories, and they aren't located in Beverly Hills. The global south is suffering the most. It will be the first to burn up unless we drastically reverse our slide into environmental destruction. The ecopedagogy movement shows just how broad the impact of Freire's work has been and continues to be. The ecosocialist movement is crucial for our times. As David Black has mentioned, Marx's notebooks on geology, botany and agricultural chemistry, right up to his death in 1883, did



not support a reformist ecosocialism, but rather the revolutionary idea of "de-growth communism."

Recently published texts of Marx, made available in the recently published Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe (MEGA), reveal insights from Marx's notebooks on geology, botany and agricultural chemistry.

Marx's theory of "metabolism" speaks of a 'metabolic rift' historically specific to capitalist social relations. The rift is caused by the theft of nature's resources. Ecopedagogy and ecosocialism go hand-in-hand with insights from Marx.

6. FINALLY, PETER, WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO THE NEW GENERATIONS THAT ARE COMING INTO TEACHING IN THE MIDST OF THE CIVILIZATIONAL CRISIS OF THE 21ST CENTURY?

I would ask the new generation to remember always that despite being overwhelmed by the pent-up heterogeneity of social, cultural and institution life, despite being caught in the post-industrial pincer of the 'administered society' that Adorno and Horkheimer warned us about, despite your dismay at humanity drifting towards what Slavoj Zizek, citing philosopher Jean-Pierre Dupuy, calls "the dystopian fixed point," the zero-point of nuclear war, ecological breakdown, global economic and social chaos, etc.", there is still the possibility of a hope. This is the case even when Zizek warns us that while this zero point is indefinitely postponed, it remains "the virtual "attractor" toward which our reality, left to itself, tends." So the takeaway here is: Don't leave reality to itself. Interrupt reality whenever you can by becoming a protagonistic agent for the creation of a catechesis of liberation. Or perhaps an irresponsible agent would be better prepared to get the job done. Somewhere on this horizon of catastrophe we need to find liminal spaces of "not yet" that enable us to rescue emancipatory moments from the sepulcher of dead knowledge debasement and perversion of history. If we can't find them, then we must create them. Because when we are in an historical deadlock such as the one facing us today, between fascism or barbarism, liminal spaces make porous the seamlessly invincible walls of state power, where hegemony leaks from the cracks of capitalism's most vulnerable social force—the refusal of human beings to remain supplicatory to its leaders and placatory to its laws of motion. Liminal spaces manufacture possibility and enable us to discern alternatives to the present. Here we reclaim our revolutionary subjectivity by casting the barbarism of history into the blast furnace of our political unconscious so that we begin to realize that we can replace temporal narratives forged in the blood of innocents with new, emancipatory memories, that we can bring to consciousness new



discourses of possibility that carry traces of an emancipatory future, new modes of protagonistic agency that prefigure the coming age of freedom, an age where historical agency is understood as assuming the authorship of one's life, as a narrator who constantly reimagines one's own story in relation to the established cultural archives of the wider community. In this sense, our struggle is similar to Paulo Freire's notion of critical reflection, of awakening from the 'nightmare' weighing on the brain of the living that compelled Marx to write his critiques of political economy. So the important project at hand will be developing and nurturing an epistemic disobedience towards the bio-political coloniality of power (*patron de poder colonial*) that imperils any possibility for productive dialogue over the political cartography of war that maps the epistemic margins and centers of possible futures that are not guaranteed to be dominated by the past. It is never too late to begin our dialogue, but we must try to make such dialogue happen before the shells start falling and the killing fields are drenched in blood.

The real problem is that the internet is creating a massive fascist subculture of Americans who haven't benefited from a critical education, have identified liberals as the enemy in the culture wars, and who get their emotional relief and entertainment needs from trolling those whom QAnon has designated as the enemy – which is most likely to be you and me. And it is unclear what kind of future this zero point of chaos will bring.

The political landscape and political temperature today would be vastly different if students graduated from high school having been taught by teachers committed to critical pedagogy. The extent to which this is true is not easy to judge in a world where so many struggle with the rootless banality of everyday life. But I remain convinced that students must graduate with an understanding of the nature of capitalism's social universe, particularly the substance of labor itself, from the perspective of Marx's critique of political economy, his Labor Theory of Value. So, I would recommend that teachers return to Marx. And, it is imperative for teachers to welcome criticisms and encourage debates over Marx's theories. Critical pedagogy is not a pedagogy of imposition. It is a problem-posing pedagogy and teaches through dialogue, reflection and respect for mutuality, reciprocity and difference. If you students cannot create counter-arguments to yours, then you are not a critical educator. I would also recommend that students not neglect the spiritual direction of their lives and to extend ourselves to others in a spirit of love, that we make it a permanent practice to recognize others, for the act of recognition is the fountain from which love drinks. It is not easy to love in a world of capitalist precarity, chaos and insecurity. Yes aspire for love, even in the darkest moments. Seize those liminal moments, use those spaces as places of self-determination, of the creation of new sensibilities and



new insurgent passions, create a terrain of contestation, find a counterpower to the forces of hate. You will not be alone in those liminal spaces for they nurture all those who have the courage to find them.

