

Toward a Critical Revolutionary Pedagogy: An Interview with Peter McLaren

By Michael Pozo

Peter McLaren is a Professor of Education at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. Peter McLaren is one of the leading practitioners of Critical Pedagogy in the U.S. as well as one of its leading advocates worldwide. McLaren began as an inner city schoolteacher in the Toronto, Canada area and later graduated with a Ph.D from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. McLaren's work focuses on developing and implementing critical pedagogy strategies into the classroom. His critical pedagogy is based on Marxist theories applied to curriculum development and instruction, and the development of pedagogical theory and practice based on critical multiculturalism, critical ethnography, and critical literacy. In short, critical pedagogy confronts both teacher and student with questions about how *power* plays a role in their learning experience and examines how it favors some and not others. Professor McLaren was the inaugural recipient of the Paulo Freire Social Justice Award presented by Chapman University, California, April 2002. He also received the Amigo Honorifica de la Comunidad Universitaria de esta Institucion by La Universidad Pedagogica Nacional, Unidad 141, Guadalajara, Mexico. In addition, two of his books were winners of the American Education Studies Association Critics Choice Awards for outstanding books in education.

MP-*Can you give us some background to your most well known book of critical pedagogy?*

PM-I started out in the world of pedagogy as an elementary school teacher in the mid-seventies and when I published my school diary, *Cries from the Corridor: The New Suburban Ghettoes*, in 1980, I was as heart-thumpingly surprised as everyone else that it became a national best-seller, even provoking a national debate on the state of Canada's inner-city schools. I eventually grew to dislike the book—disgusted perhaps is a better term—but felt it was useful in publishing here in the US on condition that it be accompanied by an extended self-critique. The problem that I had with the original book is that it was a journalistic description of my experience with little analysis so that it could have been—and was—read as blaming the students and their families for the violence that permeated their lives both inside and outside of the school context. That all changed when I republished the book as *Life in Schools*, with an extended leftist analysis, and the book gradually became more politically radical and more theoretically nuanced with each edition (there have been four so far). I was fortunate indeed to have had a left-wing editor who took a chance on the book when most publishers felt it was too radical to be taken up in colleges of education for any purpose other than mockery.

MP-*Can you describe your initial steps into critical pedagogy as a student and then as a professor?*

PM-When I entered graduate school, I was seen as a 'hands on' veteran inner-city teacher who, having paid his dues, understandably emphasized the everyday pedagogical dilemmas and concerns of the classroom teaching. The more that I had time to read in the field of critical theory, Marxist revolutionary theory, cultural studies, and feminist studies, the more that I realized that teachers could benefit from being grounded theoretically and politically (that they refracted their experiences through both practical/informal/tacit knowledge and formal theoretical constructs) —and this meant the difficult work of developing a coherent 'philosophy of praxis. After I finished publishing a number of subsequent books, the descriptions that followed me through the field changed from a hands-on practitioner to that of: "a theorist whose vocabulary is a definite challenge for many teachers." My work became less directed at the classroom per se, and more focused on issues such as political, cultural and racial identity, anti-racist/multicultural education, the politics of white supremacy, resistance and popular culture, rituals of the school as vehicles for both resistance and conformity; the formation of subjectivity, and liberation theology. I was becoming focused on the larger relevance of critical pedagogy. In other words, I felt that critical pedagogy was habitually elusive when it came to hands-on solutions but fiercely relevant when addressing life's permanent conditions of exploitation. I realized that there were teachers who could write about the classroom and in doing so provide more practical insights than I could but that I could make a contribution in rethinking the conceptual and political terrain of critical pedagogy in the educational

literature. When Henry Giroux graciously invited me to come to the US to start a cultural studies center with him (after my first year as a professor in Canada ended with the Dean refusing to renew my contract because of the controversy over my politics and pedagogy), I left for the mid-western US. This was the mid 1980s. Around that time Paulo Freire had invited me to a conference in Cuba, where I met a lot of *Brasilians* and Mexicans in attendance. I began spending time in Latin America and becoming more interested in Marxist critique of political economy. Subsequently, I began to realize that postmodern theory could be quite a reactionary approach in so far as it failed to challenge with the verve and sustained effort that was demanded of the times the social relations of capitalist production and reproduction. While I still adopted the term, critical postmodernism, or resistance postmodernism, to describe my work, I was haunted by the realization that I had not sufficiently engaged the work of Marx and Marxist thinkers. The more I began engaging in the work of Marx, and meeting social activists driven by Marxist anti-imperialist projects throughout the Americas, I no longer felt that the work on 'radical democracy' convincingly demonstrated that it was superior to the Marxist problematic. It appeared to me that, in the main, it had despairingly capitulated to the inevitability of the rule of capital and the regime of the commodity. That work, along with much of the work in post-colonialist criticism, appeared too detached from historical specificities and basic determinations. Marxist critique to my mind more adequately addressed the differentiated totalities of contemporary society and their historical imbrications in the world system of global capitalism.

MP- *So in your book **Life in Schools** we read of your personal growth as an inner city elementary school teacher to a future practitioner of critical pedagogy. In 2000 your book, **Che Guevara, Paulo Freire and the Pedagogy of Revolution** seemed like yet another step in your life as an educator. Can you then describe the differences/similarities between the critical pedagogy you began with and the pedagogy of revolution you now practice?*

PM- Rather than employ the term critical pedagogy, I often use the term that British educator Paula Allman has christened "revolutionary critical pedagogy." I do so because it raises issues and unleashes the kind of uncompromising critique that more domesticated currents of critical pedagogy do not. It draws attention to the key concepts of imperialism (both economic and military) and neoliberalism and, by tacking around the work of Karl Marx, Paulo Freire, and Antonio Gramsci (not to mention Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, and Walter Rodney); it brings some desperately needed theoretical ballast to the teetering critical educational tradition. Such theoretical infrastructure is absolutely necessary for the construction of concrete pedagogical spaces in schools and in other sites where people struggle for educational change and social and political transformation. I will say that I am more comfortable having my work described as Marxist humanist, a term developed by Raya Dunayevskaya, who once served as Trotsky's secretary in Mexico and who developed the tradition of Marxist humanism in the US. Let me also say that critical revolutionary pedagogy, as I am trying to develop it, offers a counterpoint to many educational programs that describe themselves under the heading of "social justice". As I see it, the term "social justice" often operates as a cover for legitimizing capitalism or for tacitly admitting to or resigning oneself to its brute intractability. I try to develop a counterpoint to the way social justice is used in progressive education by inviting students to examine critically the epistemological and axiological dimensions of democracy. I reject the idea of evaluating a society primarily on the basis of maximizing minimal well-being for the poor and the powerless. I do this because the concept of social justice often serves an ideological smokescreen for reproducing ruling class interests when it is used to refer to resource redistribution. Programs centering on the concept of education and social justice—and this is the case in many colleges of education, as far as I am concerned—draw inspiration from a liberal, Rawlsian or Habermasian conception of social justice. Such conceptions are premised on the idea of a democratic society preoccupied by the logic of reformism. This is at odds with the idea of a socialist society actively engaged in revolutionary transformation. When the production of inequalities begins to affect the weakest, only then does capitalist society consider an injustice to have occurred. Marx's critique of political economy and the theories of social justice propounded by Rawls and Habermas are fundamentally at odds; in fact, they are virtually irreconcilable. Liberal theories of justice attempt to harmonize individual interests in the private sphere. But as Daniel Bensaïd points out, correctly in my view, you can't allocate the collective productivity of social labor individually; the concept of cooperation and mutual agreement between individuals is a formalist fiction. Nor can you reduce social relations of exploitation to intersubjective relations. I agree with Bensaïd's

critique of the Rawlsian conception of the social contract—that its conclusions are built into its premises. For Rawls, it is possible for inequality to exist only so long as such inequalities make a functional contribution to the expectations of the least advantaged. It is okay for the capitalist pie to get bigger for the captains of industry as long as the narrow piece carved out for the poor grows a sliver in return. But the political conception of justice, be it Rawls or Habermas, starts to break down in the face of real, existing inequality premised on the reproduction of capitalist social relations of exploitation. In a world devoid of class conflict, one that is fundamentally driven by intersubjectivity and communicative rationality, the political conception of social justice makes sense; but we don't inhabit such a world. We don't live in a world where class relations and property relations are dissolved in a formal world of inter-individual juridical relations. I can't accept the social justice position because it accepts *a priori* the despotism of the market; it egregiously ignores questions of production and in my mind all theories of justice are relative to the mode of production. As long as you focus one-sidedly on the distribution of wealth, and issues of fairness and justice in this regard, you intentionally or not camouflage the social relations of production, the execrable systemic exploitation of workers by capitalists, and the exploitative nature of capitalism (the subsumption of living labor by abstract labor) at its very roots. To what extent, then, do schools that are underwritten by a theory of social justice function as NGOs (See Michael Parenti on this) that help to provide "self-help" projects, "popular education," and job training, to temporarily absorb small groups of poor, to co-opt critical efforts to contest capitalist exploitation, and to undermine anti-imperialist struggles? To what extent do social justice programs give the impression that capitalism is fundamental to democracy?

So, in effect, this is a position that I take within revolutionary critical pedagogy, a position that is highly critical of most social justice agendas as they are put into practice in schools and colleges of education. Let me make clear, however, that the emphasis on redistribution of wealth is not rejected tout court, but its inner contradictions are exposed and opportunities are created for discussing the possibility, the necessity, of creating a world outside the social universe of capital. We start to ask ourselves: What might a transition to socialism mean at this precise time in world history, and especially in terms of what is happening here in the United States, in what has been called the belly of the beast. Remember, Mike, that whereas it was a difficult struggle for popular movements of poor and working people to pressure states to intervene in the capitalist economy—in the processes of production and circulation—in order to redistribute wealth and provide some kind of social protection from unchecked market forces during the time of Keynesianism or social capitalism, it is much more difficult today. As Bill Robinson points out, during the days of Keynesianism the state intervened under pressure by the working-class by means of taxes on capital, government regulation of corporate activities, minimum wages, strong labor and other social protection laws, public spending on the social wage in health, education, public housing, etc., job creation programs, and public provision of essential services such as water, sanitation, and electricity. But these constraints on profit-making can be eradicated by neoliberalism—which is what is happening at present—by means of unfettered global transnationally-oriented capital. There are two processes at work here. One is worldwide market liberalization and the construction of a new legal and regulatory superstructure for the global economy. The other is the internal restructuring and global integration of each national economy. Robinson underscores correctly that the goal of this twin-engine juggernaut of capitalist globalization is to break down all national barriers to the free movement of transnational capital across borders, and to institute the free operation of capital within borders, which has the combined effect of opening up all areas of society to what he calls "the logic of profit-making unhindered by the logic of social need". Robinson calls this "global apartheid" – a very appropriate term, in my view. I am not against attempts to redistribute the wealth from the tiny minority who exercise political power over the poor due to the fact that they control most of the wealth, to the vast armies of the poor, but rather to challenge the very social relations and social logic of capital and resist it. Of course, redistribution with a democratic socialist initiative could indeed be a first step.

MP-*Most students are taught under a skills orientated type of education that basically prepares them to be workers and not, say, revolutionaries. What would you say differentiates a student taught by critical pedagogy as she enters the same world after graduation?*

PM-I teach in the doctoral program at UCLA, but my classes are often a collection of doctoral, masters, and undergraduate students. Most of my doctoral student advisees are getting their Ph.Ds so that they can

become professors and transform teacher education institutions. They were radical teachers and/or social activists who now want to help to transform institutions of ‘higher’ learning. So my own classroom teaching focuses on the philosophical, theoretical, and political debates among the left progressives and the more revolutionary left and how this could apply to critical pedagogy. My main task has been to develop a coherent philosophy of praxis in which critical pedagogy can be located. This has meant for me de-domesticating critical pedagogy, which has, in many cases, been limited to putting students in a circle and having discussions on contemporary themes, so that everyone is encouraged to speak. Or else it has been confined to creating versions of student-centered curriculum, etc. My particular task is to transform teacher and student practice into a far-reaching political praxis linked to social movements – to contribute to creating a multi-racial, gender-balanced, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist movement that is internationalist in scope. The process whereby labor -power is transformed into human capital and concrete living labor is subsumed by abstract labor requires a dialectical understanding that historical materialist critique can best provide. Historical materialism provides critical pedagogy with a theory of the material basis of social life rooted in historical social relations and assumes paramount importance in uncovering the structure of class conflict as well as unraveling the effects produced by the social division of labor. I have set my work up to critique mainstream liberal versions of critical pedagogy—which attempts to reconcile social change to the imperatives of capital’s law of value—by using an historical materialist approach.

MP- *How does your classroom environment prepare students for a world that is often like a harsh wake-up call from life in a University where different groups mix together and academic success is said to be equally accessible to all?*

PM- For teachers working in teacher preparation programs, critical pedagogy has been a way of introducing students—often white, middle-class students—to revolutionary figures such as Paulo Freire and Malcolm X, for example. When teachers read the works of Freire, or other critical educators, often they are introduced for the first time to the irrepressible conflictuality of the capital/labor dialectic and are given the rare opportunity—rare within colleges and schools of education that are traditionally conservative—to explore various theoretical languages with which to unpack this intractable antagonism and open it up for scrutiny. Many students claim that their courses in critical pedagogy apprised them for the first time with the opportunity to explore the relationship between ideology and pedagogical practice. By the end of the course they were able to participate actively and creatively in a critique of the manifold mediations of social forces and social relations of exploitation that shaped the historical specificity of their social being. They were able to explore their own self and social formation in a language that uncovered the role of capital and class in their everyday lives and helped to explain how class relations have been *racialized* and linked to patriarchy and heterosexism. It is not that critical pedagogy helped to bring this knowledge and insight all about. But critical pedagogy helped many to clarify some aspects of these processes and relations and assisted in providing a more succinct sociological language in which to discuss them. Many had already come to recognize that the inequality, racism, and sexism that is rife in civil society is indeed historically alterable. They had already come to acknowledge, as well, the profound fecundity of their own social agency. But critical pedagogy enabled them to clarify their tacit knowledge about these issues and locate their understanding in a wider theoretical framework that enabled them to make connections that they didn’t make beforehand. In the end, some would ally themselves with Freire’s practice of critical literacy, for example. Others would want to focus on anti-racism. Still others made the decision to contribute to the development of feminist pedagogy. In some cases, students decided that revolutionary critical pedagogy makes much more sense than the liberal variants of critical pedagogy in addressing issues such as the globalization of capital, U.S. imperialism, and the privatization, corporatization, and businessification of schooling, and its links to the military industrial complex. But the important issue is that the seeds of critique and transformation have been planted as soon as students are afforded the opportunity to become—and treated as—agents of their own history rather than passive recipients of a history written for them by the ambassadors of empire and their corporate quislings. It takes human beings to recreate the revolutionary dialectic. And as Raya Dunayevskaya notes, it is not enough to meet this

challenge from practice, or from one's experience, but also from the self-development of the Idea (Hegel's term) so that theory can be deepened to the point where it can engage the Marxian notion of the philosophy of revolution in permanence. Here, the work of Marx becomes the quilting point between theory and practice, where ideas can be made concrete in the specificity of human struggle. A philosophically-driven revolutionary critical pedagogy—one that aspires towards a coherent philosophy of praxis—can help teachers and students grasp the specificity of the concrete within the totality of the universal – for instance, the laws of motion of capital as they operate out of sight of our everyday lives and thus escape our common-sense understanding. Revolutionary critical pedagogy can assist us in understanding history as a process in which human beings make their own society, although in conditions most often not of their own choosing and therefore populated with the intentions of others. And further, the practice of double negation can help us understand the movement of both thought and action by means of praxis, or what Dunayevskaya called the 'philosophy of history'. The philosophy of history proceeds from the messy web of everyday social reality—from the arena of facticity and tissues of empirical life—and not from lofty abstractions or idealistic concepts gasping for air in the lofty heights of Mount Olympus (the later being an example of the bourgeois mode of thought). Critical revolutionary educators engage students in a dialectical reading of social life in which 'the labor of the negative' helps them to understand human development from the perspective of the wider social totality. By examining Marx's specific appropriation of the Hegelian dialectic, students are able to grasp how the positive is always contained in the negative. In this way, every new society can be grasped as the negation of the preceding one, conditioned by the forces of production – which gives us an opportunity for a new beginning. I think it is certainly a truism that ideas often correspond to the economic structure of society, but at the same time we need to remember that history is in no way unconditional. In other words, not everything can be reduced to the sum total of economic conditions. The actions of human beings are what shapes history. History is not given form and substance by abstract categories. Both Freire and Dunayevskaya stress here that the educator must be educated. The idea that a future society comes into being as a negation of the existing one (whose habits and ideas continue to populate it) finds its strongest expression in class struggle. Here we note that dialectical movement is a characteristic not only of thought but also of life and history itself.

But at this current historical moment it seems to many of us that we are being overtaken by history, it appears to be moving too fast, we feel that we are powerless to stop it from leaving us behind, flailing wildly in its wake as it rushes towards a globalized future. Globalization has meant worldwide empowerment of the rich and devastation for the ranks of the poor as oligopolistic corporations swallow the globe and industry becomes dominated by new technologies. The transnational private sphere has been empowered by globalization, as corporations, financial institutions, and wealthy individuals seize more and more control. The creation of conditions favorable to private investment becomes the cardinal function of the government. Deregulation, privatization of public service, and cutbacks in public spending for social welfare are the natural outcomes of this process. The signal goal here is competitive return on investment capital. In effect, financial markets controlled by foreign investors regulate government policy and not the other way around since investment capital is for the most part outside all political control. Citizens can no longer be protected by nation-states and offered any assurance that they will be able to find affordable housing, education for their children, or medical assistance. And it is the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization who oversee regulatory functions outside the purview of democratic decision-making processes. It is these bureaucratic institutions that set the rules and arbitrate between the dominant economic powers, severely diminishing the power of governments to protect their citizens, and crippling the democratic public sphere in the process. We are now in the midst of 'epidemics of overproduction', and a massive explosion in the industrial reserve army of the dispossessed that now live in tent cities—or *casas de carton*—in the heart of many of our metropolitan centers. At this moment we are witnessing a re-feudalisation of capitalism, as it refuels itself with the more barbarous characteristics of its robber baron and McKinley-era past. We are not talking here about lemonade stand capitalism on steroids, but the most vicious form of deregulated exploitation of the poor that history has witnessed during the last century.

MP- *I draw certain parallels from Paulo Freire's comments on the responsibility of the oppressed to that of some students who believe the sole purpose of an education is to provide the means to achieve material gains. In **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** Freire describes the dual task of the oppressed as self and social*

liberation. He writes, "In order for this struggle to have meaning the oppressed must not in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it) become in turn oppressors of the oppressors but rather restorers of the humanity of both"(26). Have you encountered resistance from students to your ideas? And if so, how do teachers with similar concerns use critical pedagogy to convince students of such a heavy responsibility to not only their needs but those of the community?

PM-Yes, I have encountered resistance indeed. The first reaction I get to the critique of political economy from many students in my classes is either plumping for free enterprise capitalism out of a panglossian conviction that it represents the best of all possible arrangements or a "pragmatic" desire to "fix" capitalism so that resources are more evenly distributed—the latter is not a bad sentiment in and of itself, of course—and these same students often stubbornly express the view that revolutionary praxis is but an abstract ideal—a thin red membrane in the metaphysical body of the social -- that can serve as little more than a moral corrective to capitalism by making capitalism a bit more "humane" and "people friendly". They point to what they perceive to be the abysmal 'failure' of revolutions of the past and the historical defeat of revolutionary movements worldwide. Many defensively—if not triumphantly—embrace the view that capitalist democracy, while admittedly imperfect, is still by far the least oppressive social arrangement available to humankind and that it has brought freedom and human rights to many nations around the world. So as you can see, Mike, there is a great deal of work to do in class in terms of mounting a trenchant, uncompromising and convincing challenge to these perspectives that are very commonly (although sometimes cautiously and occasionally reluctantly) held by US students entering graduate programs in education. This is not to dismiss their views tout court but to tease out the contradictions in their perspectives. We begin by examining the intrinsically exploitative nature of capitalist society, using some introductory texts and essays by Bertell Ollman, and then tackle the difficult task of reading of *Capital*, Volume 1, and the labor theory of value. We look at this issue from the perspective from a number of Marxist orientations and I try to present the case that capitalism can't be reformed and still remain capitalism. This provokes lively debates, as you can well imagine. Students also anguish about the fact that, as future professors of education, they will be co-opted by the system. Some want tangible evidence that critical pedagogy can be effective in transforming the system. And it does happen that some opt out of the doctoral program to engage in grassroots political activism. Others resign themselves to a left liberalism that works on the basis of making slow, step-by-step, incremental changes. Still others approach their work from the perspective of the dialectic between reformism and revolution: they work in the arena of policy, curriculum and pedagogical reform, while keeping in mind the wider goal of revolutionary social change which stipulates an eventual transition to socialism. I would put myself in this category, although I certainly lean heavily on the side of a Marxist revolutionary politics. All kinds of dynamics occur and perspectives are raised in my classrooms. We try to work through them, name them for what they are, raise issues, pose difficult questions that are dangerous to the system, and develop strategies.

I can say that I am proud, for instance, of the way that many students in our graduate school of education took action against the imperialist war on Iraq, how they organized protests, challenged professors who supported the war, and made links with social movements inside and outside of the university. Not all students were active on this front. Some students feel that upon graduation they won't be hired by schools of education if they work in the field of critical pedagogy and if they are perceived as outspoken critics of the system. I've heard from students who attend Ivy League schools of education that critical pedagogy is decried in many of their courses as 'unscientific' and its more revolutionary variants are deemed an example of left-wing, anti-American political propaganda. A few students have told me that references to critical pedagogy have to be expunged from their dissertations. But your question raises an important issue: How do the oppressed avoid becoming the oppressor? As I have mentioned, one of the ways to approach this with students is through Raya Dunayevskaya's work on the negation of the negation—which uses a left Hegelian and Marxist approach to the concept of absolute negativity. One of the questions raised within the Marxist humanist tradition becomes: Why have so many revolutions in the past transformed into their opposite? Here Dunayevskaya's protean concept of absolute negativity come in play in the sense that it represents both totality and a new beginning. She noted that without a philosophy of revolution, activism focuses on anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism without ever revealing what it stands for, without ever describing what a society outside of the value form of labor or social universe of capital might look like. For a new beginning to occur, the separation between mass activity and the activity of thinking must be

broken down. But to do this, students and teachers need to grasp the vantage point of critique and transformation for themselves.

MP-*How does critical pedagogy address the more standard pedagogy practiced so widely in most schools? How do you see critical pedagogy surviving and growing in an atmosphere of rampant conservatism from school administrators?*

PM-Speaking about the current atmosphere of rampant conservatism, I just read an attack on critical pedagogy by The Hoover Institute's education journal, *Education Next*, that demonstrates the type of overt attempts by conservative attack-dogs to harmonize the purpose and function of schooling with the current reign of capital and the contemporary dynamics of advanced capitalism--not necessarily in the gratingly familiar mode of conservative denunciations and sound-byte Viagraizations associated with FOX TV editorializing--but in the reasoned tone of conservative academics who routinely dismiss attempts on the part of radical educators to 'politicize' classroom subject-matter. For instance, the author attacks me for failing to mention the "normal stuff of schooling" which he characterizes as "alphabets", "algorithms", and "lab experiments", and he condemns, among many things, my remark that the "U.S. is fascist" and the point I make that "the greed of the U.S. ruling class are seemingly unparalleled in history." Offering no arguments to counter my statements, he sets forth his own vision of education—promoting "the discipline and furniture of the mind"—that he takes—astonishingly—from an 1830 Yale University report (about as enfeebling a vision of education that you could find anywhere). The ideology driving this creed evades the systemic totality of capitalism, and the determinative force of capitalism, capturing one reason why critical pedagogy is under intense scrutiny in schools or why it comes under attack by conservative forces in schools of education. Dare I say that critical pedagogy comes under similar attacks among critics in the humanities?

In schools of education, critical pedagogy has always been a marginal approach and continues to be so, although panels on critical pedagogy continue to attract interest at some of the national education conferences. It is at the same time in a process of transition; while critical pedagogy is becoming more visible in certain venues, it never the less remains in danger of political domestication through its dalliance with conservative postmodern theories and in approaches that define themselves as post-Marxist. The type of curricula and pedagogies practiced widely in schools of education do not, for instance, address the concept of labor. For me, the concept of labor is axiomatic—the Archimedean fulcrum—for theorizing the school/society relationship and thus for developing radical pedagogical imperatives, strategies, and practices for overcoming the constitutive contradictions that such a coupling generates, such as educating students to play a role in the privatization of surplus extraction. The larger goal that revolutionary critical pedagogy stipulates for radical educationalists involves direct participation of students in thinking critically about what a socialist reconstruction and alternative to capitalism might look like. However, without a critical lexicon and interpretative framework that can unpack the labor/capital relationship in all of its capillary detail, critical pedagogy is likely to remain at the level of what I have called 'the democracy of empty forms'. By that term I refer to formal changes in the structure of classroom discourse—sitting in a circle, student-centered curricula, matching teaching styles to learning styles, etc—something that I mentioned in my answer to one of your previous questions. Of course, any improvements in these directions are to be welcomed, but they can't be a substitute for critical pedagogy. Today, as has been the case throughout the history of capitalism, labor-power is capitalized and commodified and education plays a tragic role in this cruel history. But—and here is a fundamental point—in so far as schooling is premised upon generating the living commodity of labor-power, upon which the entire social universe of capital depends, it can become a foundation for human resistance. There are constitutive and defining limits to how far labor-power can be commodified. After, all, workers are the sources of labor-power, and as such can potentially engage in acts of refusing alienation. Capital, a relation of general commodification predicated on the wage relation, needs labor. But labor does not depend upon capital. Labor can dispense with the wage, and with capitalism, and it is potentially *autonomous in the sense that it can potentially organize its creative energies in a different way outside of the value form of labor*. One of the goals of revolutionary critical pedagogy is to discover socialist alternatives to the current value form of labor that drives capitalist society. In so far as education and training socially produce labor-power, this process can be resisted. The most stalwart radical educators push this resistance to the extreme in their pedagogical

praxis centered around an anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist agenda. The overall goal of revolutionary critical pedagogy, in my view, is to help students discover how the use-value of working-class labor-power is being exploited by ruling class capital but also to learn that working-class initiative and power can destroy this type of determination and force a recomposition of class relations. Sure, it's unreasonable to expect a working-class revolution at this particular historical moment. But it is possible down the line with an increase in the creation of critical consciousness among workers, and the likelihood that the current crisis of capital will worsen. Critical pedagogy can help students in their efforts to break down capital's control of the creation of new labor-power and to resist the endless subordination of life to work in the social factory we call everyday life. Critical pedagogy is necessary but insufficient. In the ongoing struggle, it is not a panacea for bringing about the social revolution we all very much desire. But it can play a formidable role. As a critical educator, I encourage students to ask themselves the following question: What is the maximum damage we can do to the rule of capital, to the dominance of capital's value form? The answer to this is not simple. It might include organizing against sweatshops; working with aggrieved communities in the area of media literacy; assisting grassroots activist organizations in developing pedagogical projects directed at unpacking the links among capitalism, imperialism, and war; joining forces with anti globalization groups, increasing public awareness about the dangers of educational privatization, fighting racism and sexism in the workplace, and the list goes on.

MP-Again, in *Che Guevara, Paulo Freire and the Pedagogy of Revolution* you quote an important passage from Freire. "*Hoping that the teaching of content in and of itself will generate tomorrow a radical intelligence of reality is to take on a controlled position rather than a critical one. It means to fall for a magical comprehension of content which attributes to it a criticizing power of its own, 'The more we deposit content in the learner's heads and the more diversified the content is, the more possible it will be for them to, sooner or later experience a critical awakening, decide and break away'*"(157). Do you feel places like English or History Departments or even Composition Courses are viable sites for sustainable dissent and/or critical pedagogy?

PM-If they are not already viable sites, then they must be made into viable sites. One indication that they are not becoming sites of sustainable dissent is the way in which the work of Paulo Freire has become—in many instances—reconciled to capitalism through political vulgarization and pedagogical domestication. The work of Freire is often used in the field of critical literacy in a way that alarmingly disconnects literacy and pedagogy from capitalist exploitation and class struggle: in short, in a way that side-steps revolutionary praxis. It is not enough to put Freire on the reading lists, or Fanon, or Malcolm X, or Menchu, and others, for that matter. It is essential that they be read against, alongside and upon the daily struggles that envelope us, both here and elsewhere around the world. As universities become more privatized, or corporatized, this task becomes more difficult. It is also more difficult post-9/11. Here, at UCLA, progressive faculty are currently resisting an attempt by the senate to weaken academic freedom by placing it in the hand of the university's governing body, rather than leaving it—as it currently exists—linked to an individual professor's constitutional rights.

MP-How would you describe the roles teachers, students and workers play after 9-11?

PM-I am writing this interview in a café in West Hollywood that currently displays a big ugly banner surrounded by American flags that says: "We Will Never Forget". Rather than focus on the horrible tragedy of 9/11 in the context of the murder of thousands of innocent civilians, I think it would be better for the political soul of the United States if it decided not to forget its complicity in the murder of millions of innocent victims over the last century alone. We should not forget that Bush's permanent war on terrorism is sacrificing the lives of the poor who serve in the military to enforce the profit-making capacities of the rich CEO's of companies like Halliburton. More than ever, teachers need to educate their students about US imperialism, militarism, war crimes, and support for right-wing dictatorships throughout the world. Of course, we should remember 9/11 and mourn the victims and honor their lives, but we should not let this act of infamy contribute further to our egregious historical amnesia surrounding the destructive role that the US has played in the history of other nations. I am not simply referring to the practice of surveying the

brute, incontrovertible historical facts, those that Michael Parenti, Noam Chomsky, Bill Blum, and others have courageously made available to the American public (but which remain relatively unknown among teacher educators as well as education students because they get little, if any, mainstream media exposure): that over the last five decades the US national security state funded and advised right-wing forces in the overthrow of reformist governments in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Brazil, Indonesia, Uruguay, Haiti, the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Syria, Greece, etc.; that the US has participated in proxy mercenary wars against Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Portugal, Cambodia, East Timor, Peru, Iran, Syria, Jamaica, South Yemen, the Fiji Islands, Afghanistan, Lebanon, etc.; that they have supported ruthless rightwing governments who have tortured and murdered opposition movements such as in the case of Turkey, Zaire, Chad, Pakistan, Morocco, Indonesia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Peru, etc., or that, since World War II, the US military has invaded or bombed Vietnam, North Korea, Cambodia, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Yugoslavia, Libya, Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Laos, etc.. My emphasis is on linking these acts of barbarism to the political history of capitalism. This will involve examining critically the recent invasion and occupation of Iraq, the counter-insurgency war the US has launched against Colombian guerrilla movements, the attempt to overthrow Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, as well as the continuing U.S. support for death squads linked to reactionary ruling oligarchies throughout the world who are served by neo-liberal globalized capitalism and imperialism. What Parenti, Chomsky, and others have made clear is that the US will oppose any country unwilling to become integrated into the capitalist marketplace. Those that refuse to open themselves up to transnational investors will be in serious trouble. The U.S. will oppose—ruthlessly, and militarily if need be—countries where economic reformist movements and labor unions, peasant insurgencies, etc., threaten to destabilize unequal distributive policies that favor the ruling class. Democracies must be market-based, or they are not considered democracies at all. If they are not market-based, they must be reoriented into the world market—by force, if necessary. Publicly owned or worker-controlled companies might set an example for the rest of the world that a successful alternative to capitalism exists—and could exist—for the betterment of humankind. Successful radical change, such as under Allende in Chile, was threatening to the US because this was seen as possibly fomenting similar changes throughout Latin America. Successful socialist agendas in one country could be alluring to other countries whose impoverished populations faced daily suffering and misery under brutal political regimes. For the US ruling class, rising expectations on the part of the suffering masses had to be obliterated. Joel Kovel points out in his Foreword to *Marxism and Freedom* by Dunayevskaya, that during the McCarthy era, even university courses that were blatantly anti-Marxist were banned simply for exposing Marx's name to a generation of growing minds. We don't ban discussions of Marx today, largely because the corporate media in the US has done such a good job of rendering him a relic of the past—an imbrutement of the old bearded devil that we are told gave birth to the gulags of Stalin. Yet we still can't afford to give socialism even the slightest degree of attention that isn't already dipped in acrimony and derision. If a few countries, by some circumstance of history, manage to survive outside the rules of the marketplace laid down by the IMF, World Bank, and other organizations who work on behalf of US and dominant Western capital, despite all attempts by the US to destabilize them, then it becomes necessary to demonize the leaders, as in the case of Cuba's Fidel Castro. This history of convincing the citizenry—largely through the channels of the corporate media—that no alternative to free-market capitalism can work—needs to be understood in the context of US capitalist elites and their opposition—vis-à-vis the military industrial complex—to progressive forces in the Middle East, East Asia, Africa, and Latin America, both in the past and in the present. Parenti recently raised an important point with respect to the history of US imperialism: Why, after the end of World War II, didn't the US and its capitalist allies eradicate fascism from Europe? Clearly because fascist governments were the lesser evil when compared to the rising up of masses of popular democratic struggles which at that time were vociferously demanding public ownership of the means of production and an eradication of class society.

One of the goals of revolutionary critical pedagogy is to develop hope and possibility through the creation of "critical subjectivity." Critical subjectivity operates out of a practical, sensuous engagement within social formations that enable rather than constrain human capacities. Here critical pedagogy reflects the multiplicity and creativity of human engagement itself: the identification of shared experiences and common interests; the unraveling of the threads that connect social process to individual experience; rendering transparent the concealed obviousness of daily life; the recognition of a shared class interests; unhinging the door that separates practical engagement from theoretical reflection; the changing of the

world by changing one's nature, and changing one's nature by changing the social relations in which individual and collective subjectivity is formed. Here, revolutionary critical pedagogy seeks to make the division of labor coincident with the free vocation of each individual and the association of free producers. At first blush this may seem a paradisiac notion in that it posits a radically eschatological and incomparably "other" endpoint for society as we know it. Yet this is not a blueprint but a contingent utopian vision that offers direction not only in unpicking the apparatus of bourgeois illusion but also in diversifying the theoretical itinerary of the critical educator so that new questions can be generated along with new perspectives in which to raise them. Here, the emphasis is on posing new questions rather than on providing blueprints for social change. Historical changes in the forces of production have reached the point where the fundamental needs of people can be met—but the existing social relations of production prevent this because the logic of access to "need" is "profit" based on the value of people's labor for capital. Consequently, critical revolutionary pedagogy argues that without an accompanying class struggle, critical pedagogy is impeded from effecting praxiological changes (changes in social relations). Revolutionary critical pedagogy supports a totalizing reflection upon the historical-practical constitution of the world, our ideological formation within it, and the reproduction of everyday life practices. Capitalist societies to reproduce themselves and to create more surplus value. The core of capitalism can thus be undressed by exploring the contradictory nature of the use value and exchange value of labor-power. In Los Angeles, this challenge can be made concrete through comparative analysis: by looking at labor conditions in West Los Angeles and comparing them to East Los Angeles, the Pico-Union district, and South Central or Watts. A number of my students have grown up in these areas, and can revisit their experiences in light of the vocabulary of critique they are helping to create in class.

MP- *Let's address the Post-Modernist "legacy" in academics. Your critique of Post Modernism runs throughout your work and is an important yet often neglected argument against the hype of Post Modernist theories. Can you elaborate on your definition of Post Modernism and where you locate its shortcomings?*

PM- I have just finished editing a book on this very topic with some British colleagues in which I perforce admit a certain generalizing sweep that for the most part avoided mentioning particular authors, which is decidedly a weakness, not one I would attribute to the book itself, but to some of my own arguments in that book. In a nutshell, my critique of postmodernism from a nonsectarian and broadly defined Marxist humanist perspective takes the position that postmodernism is more inclined to locate power in discourse and 'representations' rather than in social relations. The issue of mediation has been replaced by that of representation. Contradictions between labor and capital are ignored or omitted and issues dealing with conflicting epistemologies put in their place. The problem with understanding discourses as epistemologies of oppression is that too often they are stripped of their historical specificity by bourgeois, postmodern theorists. What is of singular importance to the critical educator is not, say, their formal link to Eurocentrism, but the way in which these discourses have been used by capitalists to exploit the objective world (as opposed to the lexical universe) of the working-classes. Just as I would not reject my former work, which was informed by a critical postmodernist perspective, neither do I want to denigrate the work of other postmodernists unfairly. To be sure, postmodern theory enabled me to transcend the limitations of some inherited frameworks and think through the prolix and variegated issues of identity construction within the context of contemporary US culture. But over the years I became increasingly concerned that political agency was—and here I would like to borrow the terminology from an interview I did recently when I was asked a similar question—being reduced to little more than the part that we play in some unending signifying chain that descends from the sky in the middle of nowhere, like Jacob's Ladder. Reading postmodern theory, political agency seems locked into the role of affirming our right to difference as a call for dignity and respect (which is a good thing in itself), without addressing issues of how the very concept of difference—racial, gender, etc.-- is defined in relation to existing social relations of capitalist production and subjected to their interests. Postmodernism fails in my mind to reveal how class exploitation impacts on all identities and social relations. In postmodernism's rejection of grand historical narratives, of central struggles that teleologically define history, of the pure historical subject, and in its argument that knowledge is constituted in diffuse power relations – that is, in discourse (which is for postmodernists the sole constitutive element in social relations) – has helped to pave the way for important discussions of the role of language in the ordering and regulation and reproduction of power. But many of these contributions by postmodern theory and its perfumed vocabulary of 'difference' hasn't been up to the

task of exploring adequately how differences are shaped by the historical shifts within the globalization of capitalism that are currently devastating the entire globe. Nor have they adequately explained how identity formations are implicated in the coercive structures and homogenizing tendencies of capital's value form. In my view postmodernists too often detach cultural production from its basis in economic and political processes. Culture is spoken about as a signifying system that is all but sundered from its constitutive embeddedness in the materiality of social life or, at the most, that is tenuously connected to the production of value. Exploitation is not primarily a linguistic process – it takes place in the materiality of social life, in the bowels of everyday contradictions, which expel relations of equality.

I don't want to deny, of course, that there are some postmodernists who have written with great sensitivity and erudition about issues of globalization, but many have been unwilling to make the connection between globalization and imperialism, which I think is a major weakness. For me, it is important to operate from a critique of political economy within an international framework of opposition to US imperialism, an imperialism that is grounded in super-exploitation (especially of colonial and female labor) through economic, military and political aggression in the context of protecting United States interests. Postmodern educationalists, as I saw them, were championing a diversity of identities, but they failed in important ways—in my view, at least—to situate identity within the totality of capitalism, the international division of labor, and within the politics of class differences. Difference was rendered opaque in that it was often unhinged from its historical embeddedness in colonial/imperialist relations. And for me, opposition to US imperialism—especially in the grip of Bush's hair trigger, flash-point mentality-- is crucial if we want to fully challenge structural racism, white supremacy, patriarchy, homophobia, oppressed nationalities, xenophobia and other injustices that are part and parcel of the cruel legacy of transnational capitalism that is centered here in the United States. Capitalism needs to be investigated for its negative propensity to create social divisions and in this way we can, for instance, view racism as the product of distinctive tendencies brought about by the capitalist mode of production and capitalist social relations of production. There is no question that to raise the issue of class exploitation is to demand that we understand that such exploitation includes forms of racialized and gendered class production. Signification doesn't take place in some structural vacuum, frozen in some textual netherworld, de-fanged of capitalist alienation. Anyway, I found that the work by many postmodernists devalued or downgraded and in some instances scuppered altogether the material basis of cultural production, and instead embraced the fabulously entrenched pessimism advanced by Foucault and other post-structuralists in their assertion that articulating a vision of the future—however contingent—only reinforces the tyranny of the present. Contrary to Derrida and others, the fetish is opposable. We can do more than engage in an endless critique of the forms of thought defined by commodity fetishism. We can accomplish a great deal more than an enjoyment of our symptoms in a world where the subjects of capitalism have been endlessly disappearing into the vortex of history. I believe that the value form of mediation within capitalism is indeed permeable and that another world outside of the social universe of capital can be achieved. We are in need of an overall philosophy of praxis—and I would argue this struggle must be rooted in class struggle.

MP-As a student of critical theory it's easy to feel the sway of post structuralist "bohemia" and academic celebrities. But it seems so much of their "discoveries" of inadequacies or biased social structures have never been lost on those who lived through them. Do you think it has been a question of not having the "language" to adequately express such ideas from the perspectives of "minorities" or marginalized groups?

PM-I don't think it would be appropriate for me to speak on behalf of people of color, I would prefer for them to answer, but let me address this in a more general way. Among many middle-class Euro-Americans –white folks— it is not just a question of lacking a language of analysis— via, say, the counter-canon of Third World literature or anti-imperialist critique—that can lead to obstacles on the path revolutionary praxis. Sometimes it is a question of never being a victim of racist, sexist, and homophobic violence, as well as other types of violence, and therefore not being able to connect one's lived experiences of this violence to the variegated and specific histories of racism, sexism and homophobia and to their local and wider determinations. Being hit over the head with a police baton in a demonstration can give you a more convincing understanding of the power of the state than any book on critical theory. Where critical social theory can help—both minorities and marginalized groups, including working class white folks, is in the development of a coherent philosophy of revolution that can approach the question of resisting and

transforming capitalist exploitation and the racialization of class relations (and other forms of oppression) dialectically and not from a presumed position of unequivocal transhistorical continuity.

MP-*How has your implementation and study of people like Ernesto Guevara, Malcolm X and Rosa Luxembourgh returned the lived experiences back to students taught under "detached" theories?*

PM-It is impossible to return experiences to the oppressed without, in some way, first taking them away, and once they are taken away, and returned, categories are invariably imposed upon them. It is not that there exists as recoverable some kind of pristine, unmediated, untainted or unsoiled experiences—which would be a romantic, nativist pursuit or else a blind concession to solipsism—but that experiences read through external theories are always necessarily counterfeit, although they might be airbrushed to appear as though they have been redeemed by the philosopher's pen so as to make their return appear as a gift that has been detoxified and perfumed. The question is not one of providing the correct political language—revolutionary critical pedagogy, critical theory, historical materialism, analytical or dialectical Marxism, or what have you—but to create pedagogical *spaces* and *contexts* for the oppressed to fashion their own understandings out of their shared history of struggle. If they want to borrow from the aforementioned theoretical approaches, yes, that could be extremely valuable, but there is always the danger of dissolving one's own historicity in the process. Theories—especially those grounded in post-Cartesian philosophy—often set up an opposition—an irreconcilable dualism or un-transcendable antimony or incontestable contradiction between the subject and the object or nature of knowledge where the ontological structure of subjective agency supposedly corresponds to the actual dualisms of the mode of production, albeit in its alienated and reified formations. In this process, the concrete historical subject is obliterated, abstracted away, so that it is made to feel as if it were at one with the madness of capital into which it has been insinuated, so that the subject resigns itself to an inevitable complicity with the processes of its own formation. The outcome is that what is contingent about subjectivity has been eternalized; what is concrete and material has been made supra-historical. The antagonisms of the empirical world are eviscerated, dependent hierarchies are 'flattened out' and transformed into a metaphysical unity of oppositions—as part of the universe of natural law. What gets lost is the notion of social determinateness, or structurally enforced domination, or what Istvan Meszaros identifies as the hierarchical structural determinations of domination and subordination within the antagonistic class parameters of the social totality or existing capitalist society. We can reconcile the antinomies of labor/capital, for instance, in the heady discourses of bourgeois ethics and their ought-ridden, impervertible ethical propositions, or within bourgeois conceptions of morality but what we are left with is precisely what Meszaros calls an "impotent counter-image of the real world" that is condensed in idealistic exhortations addressed to the individual, in moral approbation and disapprobation, and the like. Isn't this what most schools of education do in their teacher education classes—reduce structural contradictions to moral a prioriism, to appeal to the individual consciousness to exercise goodness—not to dismantle the world of facticity, the existing social order and its fundamental structures of exploitation—and instead impotently occupy vertical spaces of power and privilege, armed to the teeth with private decision-making criteria that emanate from subjective and arbitrary world views. This leads to a radicalism that extols transformation in the very act of repudiating it. The challenge of what to do about the dehumanizing public world of oppression and exploitation then becomes a dialogue between irreconcilable private and public values. According to Meszaros, this process works to reproduce the overall relationship between capital and labor as a form of structural dependency in which the rule of capital is intrinsically exploitative, and this antagonism can never be transcended as long as they are part of a system that reproduces the unvarnished and brute antinomies of real life, which give rise to these philosophical conceptualizations in the first place. So a key pedagogical task for me is to invite students to analyze the philosophical ground out of which the languages of political economy and ethics emerge—i.e., their limited ethico-political parameters. Of course, this is part of a far-reaching—indeed, a never-ending—task of developing a philosophy of praxis. As revolutionary educators, we need to understand how philosophy and political economy end up being articulated from the standpoint of capital in which practical dualisms are reproduced in actuality, while attempts are made to resolve them at some metaphysical level. We need to be able to fathom how rigid asymmetrical relations of power and privilege are reproduced within post-Cartesian philosophy so that they a priori reject the possibility of mediation and transformation of these relations of domination and capitalist exploitation. Meszaros is helpful here; Bertell Ollman is excellent, as well. There are many good sources available. We read philosophers and social theorists, but

do so critically. We also read the lives and ideas of social activists and political revolutionaries. The key for me is to break out of philosophical dualism by means of a dialectical approach and this requires presenting students with various vocabularies of struggle—those of Malcolm, Che, Luxemburg, Raya Dunayevskaya—and then invite students to connect these dialectically to the circumstances in which they are making sense of the world around them. It is not to re-tread student experiences with theory, or to read experiences back to students through these various analyses and vocabularies of critique, but to invite students to engage them for their usefulness in understanding the forces and relations in which they, the students, are enmeshed—but more importantly, for overcoming them. The goal, of course, is to become associated producers, working under conditions that will advance humankind, where the measure of wealth is not labor time but solidarity, creativity, and the full and creative development of human capacities.

MP- *Henry Giroux has always called for teachers to be at the forefront of social/political issues. But do you think we see so very few "public" or "notable" radicals of color today because they are under pressure to curb their ideas on race, class or the War on "terror" in order to be perceived as non-threatening or loyal patriots?*

PM-I would think that this is the case, yes, Mike. Look at the racialization of individuals and group affiliations that have filled the air with ideological toxins and soiled civil society with practices of political repression—it has been intensified dramatically post-9/11, especially the demonization of Muslims and their Islamic communities. Whereas Dante cast the prophet Muhammad into the eighth of the nine circles of hell, in his *Inferno*, where Muhammad's body was eternally being severed from groin to brain, Bush has followed Reagan in casting entire nations into the pit of hell through his denunciation that they are evil. What makes this any different from religious positions taken towards the United States by the Taliban? The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* was given transcripts of a negotiating session between (former) Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and faction leaders from Hamas and other militant groups. In these transcripts, Abbas described his recent summit with Ariel Sharon and Bush *hijo*. During the summit, Bush allegedly told Abbas: "God told me to strike at al Qaida and I struck them, and then He instructed me to strike at Saddam, which I did, and now I am determined to solve the problem in the Middle East. If you help me I will act, and if not, the elections will come and I will have to focus on them." This reminds me of the same kind of social Darwinist millenarianism that I felt in 1982 when Admiral Rickover implied that nuclear war was inevitable and said that a better species might follow, and that getting rid of the Defense Department might be the best way to increase our security. Bush does little to assuage the current sordid atmosphere of mutual fear, and actually takes the current climate of hate and instability to cosmic proportions. To exercise political agency as educators and speak out against the madness of US imperialism, and the eschatological aspect of US foreign policy, is to go directly against the White House consensus and risk being (symbolically) burned as a heretic in the corporate media. Bush has established a global nursery for nurturing such dangerous perspectives among Western democracies. In his subordinated partnership with the Jesus of the rightwing Christian fundamentalists, Bush and his deacon of the faith, John Ashcroft, have created a theocratic climate of fear surrounding the politics of dissent that gives many people pause before challenging the guardians of the Homeland. It is very likely that the Bush gang will make more concerted efforts to root out dissent in the universities, especially if there are further attacks on US soil. Once they feel they have public support for such a measure, they won't hesitate.

MP- *Finally, do you feel class/race issues in the United States are often upstaged by the more "global" events and concerns? Of course, such events are important yet at times they seem more tolerable topics of discussion and protest from dissidents, radicals and the left solely because of their distance?*

PM-I agree. Yesterday I went to see Chris Marker's, "One Day in the Life of Andrei Arsenevich", which is a wonderful documentary film about Russian filmmaker, Andrei Tarkovsky, and also Marker's film, "The Last Bolshevik," which examines the work of the Russian filmmaker Alexander Medvedkin. I couldn't help but see these films in terms of critical pedagogy. Especially in the case of Marker's discussion of Medvedkin, I could see both a critique and embrace of Soviet Communism, but I could also apply a similar critique to the increasingly authoritarian aspects of U.S. society, especially after 9/11, but especially the ruthless totalizing aspect of capitalism itself. On the one hand you have a form of bureaucratic Soviet state capitalism, and on the other, a form of decentralized, free market capitalism. It always seems as though we

are more comfortable criticizing another country, another time, or another type of outcome of capital's value form. We are prone in the US to criticize Cuba, for instance, but we never talk in the corporate media about the Cuban Five held in prison here in the United States—imprisoned because they were trying to infiltrate US terrorist groups plotting attacks on Cuba. We rarely talk about the war against the poor by the rich and the odious practices of the state to keep the poor in a condition of powerlessness. Here in the U.S. there exists an implosive reduction of the central antagonism of labor and capital to a single, uniform, denial of structural class conflict. The mirror of capitalist production reflects back images that so sharply contradict the generalized image that has been manufactured for us of the defining virtues upon which this country rests, that it must always be held outwards, away from us, and towards the empty horizon of the Other.

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