



Book Review

Postdigital Dialogues on Critical Pedagogy, Liberation Theology and Information Technology

Joni Schwartz

City University of New York, LaGuardia

Postdigital Dialogues on Critical Pedagogy, Liberation Theology and Information Technology. Peter McLaren & Peter Jandric. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. ISBN: 9781350099951. 289 pages.

A Pedagogy of Faith: The Theological Vision of Paulo Freire offers the compelling argument of McLaren and Jandric, two eminent and radical scholars, in their recent publication, *Postdigital Dialogues on Critical Pedagogy, Liberation Theology and Information Technology*, examine critical pedagogy and liberation theology in an age of digitized and techno capitalism. This dense book is a rigorous read and spans the fields of critical pedagogy, history, sociology, global studies, literature, and philosophy through a spirited dialogue between the authors. This dialogue is prefaced in the first chapter, *Portrait of Peter McLaren a Revolutionary*, with a biography written by Petar Jandric. The second chapter is a *Portrait of Petar Jandric* by a colleague and friend, Sarah Hayes.

Chapter 3, *Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy is Made by Walking: In a World Where Many Worlds Coexist*, is appropriately titled as it spans the facets of our world where revolutionary critical pedagogy is crucial, and these include but are not limited to systemic economic inequality, television, the internet, social media, ecology, and the many digital cultures. This chapter also engages and credits “the ideas of Che Guevara, Oscar Romero, Hugo Chavez, Paulo Freire, Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ and others” (p. 62) for constructing a relevant and contemporary critical pedagogy for our world. Chapter 4 through a critical pedagogical lens analyzes the many dangers (and some possibilities) of networked learning including, but not limited to, the “marketization of the spirit” – the marketing of products and services for the purpose of spiritual control and manipulation, and loss of jobs replaced by new technology as well as racist structured economic inequality. This chapter concludes with a discussion of critical pedagogy as a call to scholarship as activism thus creating what the authors identify as a “counterpublic sphere.” (p. 90)

Chapter 5 opens with McLaren’s personal journey to liberation theology as a Catholic convert and Marxist educator. Chapter 6 connects Karl Marx and liberation theology and the overarching

understanding of the Bible as a subversive document. Chapter 7 engages a discussion of Paulo Freire, his history, his Christianity, and his sympathy with Marxism. Chapter 8 addresses the very real global threat of neoliberal fascism most notably represented by Trump in America and fascinatingly unpacking the thinking and influence of Ayn Rand in Chapter 9. The book concludes with a discussion of the existence of God and science and an attempt to define what is meant by postdigital theory.

The structure of this book is a dialogue between two great friends, two great minds, and two important thinkers in the field of adult education and critical pedagogy. It is a complicated and comprehensive read which takes the dedicated reader through Boff, Miranda, Marx, Freire, Rand, Girard, and Jesus to name just a very few. The authors reference public figures such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Julian Assange, Pope Francis, and Alan Greenspan as they connect and engage seemingly disparate thought and ideas in a fascinating collage of readings, musings, dialogue.

For adult educators interested in social justice, two of the most significant conversations, and there are many, distinguish critical pedagogy and revolutionary critical pedagogy. As defined by the authors, neoliberal education creates the consumer citizen in the service of capitalism, whereas critical pedagogy aims to create critical thinking citizens but not necessarily in the service of dismantling structures of oppression and inequality. The authors favor revolutionary critical pedagogy that understands that the system of capitalism is rigged and that critical thinking and changing the world toward human community, equity and Marxist principles is the order of the day. (p. 203).

The second conversation engages liberation theology and Marxism as they relate to revolutionary critical pedagogy. To adult educators interested in the role of faith and religion, in particular Christianity, this book is a must read. According to the authors, poverty is a structural and institutionalized sin characterized by the societal unjust distribution of wealth. The Bible has an inherent political dimension which addresses both liberation and salvation; this is the fabric of both liberation theology and revolutionary critical pedagogy.

This challenging read covers the historical roots of liberation theology and adult education praxis in Latin America but also challenges the contemporary climate in America where the Gospel has been highjacked by misled evangelicals and neoliberals especially in the Trump era. According to McLaren, “The Kingdom of God is found in the act of struggling and sacrificing for others.” (p.109) This perspective undergirds liberation theology, revolutionary critical pedagogy and historical adult education perspectives grounded in solidarity with the poor. This is a complicated, comprehensive book that should be of interest to any social justice adult educator.



Joni Schwartz, is Professor of Humanities at the *City University of New York, LaGuardia Community College*. She is a critical researcher, social activist scholar, mother and grandmother. She is a co-editor and author of three books: *Race, Education and Reintegrating Formerly Incarcerated Citizens: Counterstories & Counterspaces*; *Learning to Disclose: A Journey of Transracial Adoption* and *Gifts from the Dark: Learning from the Incarceration Experience*.