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# Interview with Peter McLaren: “Critical Education Must Transform the World”

**ENTREVISTA CON PETER MCLAREN:  
“LA EDUCACIÓN CRÍTICA DEBE  
TRANSFORMAR EL MUNDO”**

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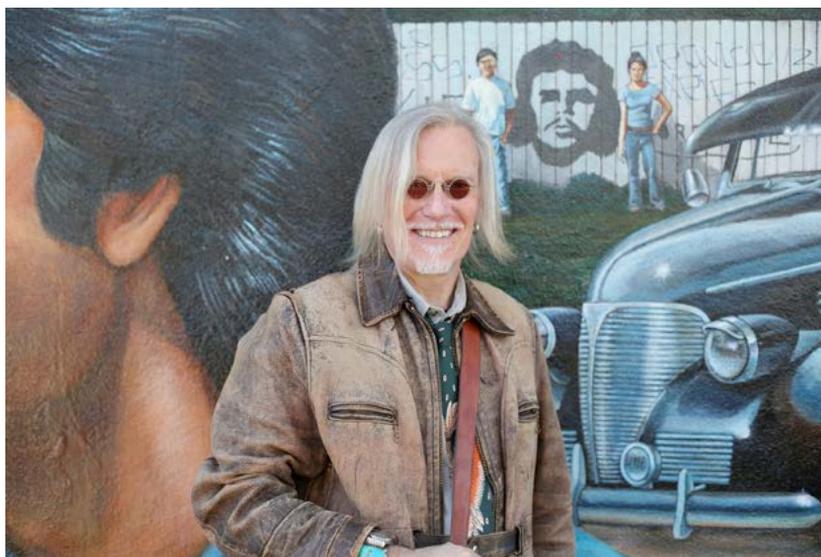
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Peter McLaren smiling in the McLaren Institute localized in Ensenada, Mexico.

**Javier Collado:** Today we welcome our special guest, PhD Peter McLaren, distinguished Professor in Critical Studies, College of Educational Studies, Chapman University, where he is Co-Director of the Paulo Freire Democratic Project and International Ambassador for Global Ethics and Social Justice. He is the author and editor of over forty-five books and hundreds of scholarly articles and chapters. His writings have been translated into over 20 languages. Estimado amigo McLaren, muchas gracias por compartir tu tiempo y reflexiones con todos nuestros lectores. After many years of experience working with critical pedagogy and against capitalist schooling, what are the most important keys that all educators must know to transform traditional formal education?

**Peter McLaren:** Thank you Javier, for the opportunity for this dialogue. Well, I would say that nobody can teach anyone anything. Teachers can only create the maximum conditions for groups and individuals to learn. Education must begin with the experiences of students in order to be relevant to their lives. But relevance is only the first step. We must make those experiences critical. Yes, we must begin with the lived experiences of the students but as the great Appalachian educator, Myles Horton, used to say, you can only learn from the experiences that you learn from. In other words, experiences

are shaped by our understanding of them, they are not unsullied or pristine. They are shaped by our various languages of analysis and populated with the intentions of the ruling class—and this includes what we consider to be common sense. Now critical education begins with experiences of students, and those experiences must be understood critically, using languages of critique—indigenous cosmovisions, critical theory of, say, the Frankfurt School, the work of José Carlos Mariátegui, Marx, Freire, the work of ecosocialists and ecopedagogues, and other languages of critique and possibility. We need critical ways of interpreting our experiences, our reality, and those of other people with whom we share the planet. Unfortunately, many of the so-called critical educational languages students engage in the United States are concerned with identity politics, that include the topics of racial, ethnic, gender and sexual identity. I am not against understanding how these identities are produced but in my view they do not deal sufficiently with capitalism. They may make reference to “working-class” or “lower class” identities but there is insufficient discussion about how these identities are co-constructed in the context of the forces of capitalist production, capitalist social relations of production, circulation, social reproduction, etc. For instance, the history of racism is intimately connected to the history of capitalism, and they are internally related but to see this we need a dialectical approach, not a mechanistic approach, in order to understand these social relations from an historical materialist perspective. This is sorely lacking in the U.S. But education must also be transformative, as Henry Giroux has argued. In other words, as we have learned from Freire, critical education must transform the world.

I also feel that the question of spirituality is ignored within the US educational system. Yes, there are religious schools which unfortunately are very sectarian. But even within schools of education, the question of spirituality is basically ignored. So we need to examine these themes within their geopolitical and historical contexts if we are to become responsible educators. In addition, very few programs in schools of education engage with ecopedagogy. That is a matter which I will take up in the remainder of my answer. In order to provide an adequate answer to your excellent question Javier, I must first address the decrepit state of our planetary humanity—or, perhaps I should say our lack of planetary humanity. In these Manichean times, and I am especially referring to the United States (*las entrañas de la bestia*) a gaping moral gulf has grown in tandem with ideological polarization, between what were once conservatives (and who now have become the neofascist “alt right”) and the progressive, yet still neoliberal, so-called left. On both sides of this conflict exists a persistent and habitual

deference to the idea that capitalism must be preserved at all costs, fueled by a motivated amnesia related to capitalism's present and historical victims. Insanely condemning climate change, ecologists and eco-critique, the Republican Party of the United States bears the dubious distinction of being the most dangerous organization in world history, to echo a statement by Noam Chomsky. Take the issue of Trump pulling the U.S. out of the Paris climate accords, putting climate change deniers in the Environmental Protection Agency. And we must confront the brute reality that we are the only generation who has the capacity to destroy the earth completely. These individuals must be acutely condemned, but all of us bear responsibility. We have buried our concern for victims in the sepulcher of modernity where we flagellate the engaged corpses of the dead, leaving us morally dead as we both legitimate their executioners by failing to admit that they are also us. No, we do not read *Ostara* and the new Templars. We dislike Strindberg's Nazi sympathies and never listen to Adolf Lanz's psalms. After all, we are not Aryo-heroic monsters like Hitler. Yet as the caretakers of our planetary community we do bear some complicity for our political inertia. As we came of age in the 60s and 70s, some of us read the Club of Rome report in 1972. And so we began to fight for the preservation of some endangered species and donated money to groups who wished to create more nature reserves. We fought for the preservation of the tropical forests which nurture the greatest biodiversity on the planet. We even railed against anthropocentrism in our journal articles and perhaps even discussed cosmogenesis at our elite university seminars. Many of us "talked the talk" instead of "walking the walk" and in so doing we lost some our sense of revolutionary struggle. We fell into the trap of what Kosik calls the pseudo concrete, in other words, the social universe of "fetishized praxis" in which we speak of a world beyond neoliberal capitalism yet in a language that prevents us from challenging the very epistemological, ethical and ontological dimensions of the object of our critique. But—and this is a most serious question—do we recognize that the poor and the oppressed are part of nature? While some of us may nod our heads in agreement as good American citizens, we nevertheless continue to feed the death machine of capitalism. To abjure one's own culpability—whether on the grounds of ignorance or indecision places the freedom of all in serious jeopardy.

Freedom is a moral value, not a natural state, and continues to be threatened by the structural crises of capitalism. We are entombed by this structural crisis of capitalism whose economic stagnation can be described today as neo-liberal austerity capitalism and which can be traced as far back as the 1970s. This has had a serious impact on the transnational capitalist class and the reconfiguration

of the transnational capitalist state. The liberal-democratic state has been destabilized as a result but as yet the left has not sufficiently presented a viable alternative to the structural sin of value augmentation, or what Marx called the value form of labor. And, of course, rising social movements to challenge this crisis have been beaten back, especially here in the United States. Yet they persist and while they are too strong to yield, they are too weak at the moment to prevail. Our evasion as members of the academy has in the case of the U.S., been so grossly shameful that we have not accorded the poor ecclesiastic worth in the cause of justice but simply charitable value in the cause of the valorization of capital. Feeling trapped in the academy is what led me to work with Instituto McLaren de Pedagogia Critica in Mexico, and the Chavistas in Venezuela. To fight for "buen vivir" rather than the "American Dream" or what in reality has become the "American Nightmare." To fight for a socialist alternative to neoliberal capitalism is not easy anywhere in the world. When I was teaching at UCLA I was put on a list of thirty professors--we were called "the dirty thirty"--and accused by a rightwing group as indoctrinating the lives of students with socialist and communist propaganda. I was put on the top of the list as the most dangerous professor at UCLA and this well-funded rightwing group offered to pay students \$100 dollars to secretly audiotape my lectures and \$50 dollars to provide notes about my lectures. This was in 2006 during the Bush son administration. Today, with the corporatization of the universities--public and private--it's becoming more difficult to challenge the sentinels of the capitalist status quo. And while I am not optimistic, I have hope. Hope needs to be joined with a commitment to struggle--not to build some bucolic utopia but in the sense of Hegel's concrete utopia. Utopia is important but it must be connected to the struggle of the poor and powerless at the level of everyday life.

We must avoid yolking together what in reality cannot coexist--capitalism and democracy. We must avoid the coexistence of opposites: neoliberal capitalism and the cause of justice for the poor. Leonardo Boff, the great liberation theologian, argues that the starting point of liberation theology is "the anti-reality, the cry of the oppressed, the open wounds that have been bleeding for centuries." So many social justice educators talk about transcending dualisms. Yes, that is important. But we must not only strive upward in understanding the state of the planet but in Leonardo Boff's terms, undertake a "trans-descendence"—that is, to be open to the suffering of the poor and the dispossessed, whom Frantz Fanon referred to as "the wretched of the earth." I think the work of William Robinson is important here. First of all, he notes that there is a direct correlation between the escalation of global inequalities and the freeing

up of global markets, deregulation, free trade, etc., since the 1980s and on. According to Robinson, this is an empirical fact that belies neo-liberal claims. Witness the incredible escalation of worldwide inequalities, within and among countries—there is some pretty dramatic data from the Oxfam annual reports on global inequalities, released each January the past few years to coincide with the WEF meetings in Davos. Second, Robinson notes that the countries worldwide in this neo-liberal age that have registered the highest growth rates and rising prosperity are precisely those that have not followed the neo-liberal prescription of deregulation and a withdrawal of the state, in particular, China. A third point argued by Robinson, is that, historically, those countries that have become industrialized and developed have never done so through free market policies, not the United States, not Europe, not Japan, and now not China. All have followed heavy state intervention to guide market forces, public sectors, protection of industry and so on. There is in other word, and historical correction between development and rejection of the neoliberal policies, and no historical evidence to support neoliberal policies. Fourth, Robinson makes the claim that many other environmental activists have made, that we are on the verge of an ecological holocaust, as confirmed by 97% of scientists and all the evidence, and any salvation requires a massive intervention of states to redirect (if not suppress) market forces, which is anathema to neoliberals and free marketeers. Even if neoliberalism was shown to increase growth, which it does not, the type of unregulated growth it generates is creating ecological havoc. Using empirical data, Robinson argues that there is a direct correlation between liberating capital and markets from state and public control and regulation, on the one hand, and an actual increase in green house gas emissions and in environmental destruction over the past few decades of neoliberalism.

We have to organize strategically by understanding the full implications of this current historical conjuncture—effect tactics can then result. Trump's neo-fascist populist discourse and other nationalist groups hide the real issues represented by the capitalist economy and the state and avoid the question of the socialist alternative. Under Trump more virulent forms of white supremacy, hatred for immigrants, and fascist forms of nationalism have emerged. Trump is a disaster not only for the United States but for the world. On the other hand, it would have been disastrous for the left to vote for Hillary Clinton against Trump. Clinton would have been better on social and moral issues but she is also a dangerous choice and she fully supports the neoliberal global project. Voting for Macron against Le Pen was a victory, yes, but Macron, like Clinton is still in league with the transnational capitalist class. In the U.S. it would have been

better to vote for Bernie Sanders, or in France, for Mélenchon. Sanders, however, is not running for president as a socialist, although privately he may deeply believe in socialism as the only viable alternative to capitalism. But he presents himself as a social democrat. Social democrats are very different than socialists, since social democrats do not challenge neoliberal capitalism. However, they do try to move concentrations of wealth and power from the powerful to the powerless, but at the same time they do not fundamentally challenge capitalism itself. But the fact that Sanders is popular with young people is no small matter. Since it shows that many of his supporters (young people especially) are starting to question the viability of neoliberal capitalism. This is very rare in the modern United States history and could have world-historical impact should one day in the future socialism be legitimized as a viable alternative to capitalism. But that is very unlikely to happen. The more likely case is that Sanders could be successful in legitimizing a class-based strategy along social democratic lines based on shifting some resources from the rich to the poor—redistributing wealth from capital to labor. But by that he means returning to the Keynesian welfare state. But it is impossible to return to that form of capitalism for many reasons. Politicians sometimes refer to this as creating capitalism with a human face. With today's form of neoliberal capitalism, that is impossible. You can't be opposed to neoliberalism and support capitalism at the same time. You can't be opposed to neoliberalism and support capitalism at the same time. If capitalism did possess for a short time a human face then it was the face of Oscar Wilde's famous story of Dorian Gray. Because we inhabit a world that is neoliberal capitalist. Mélenchon in France has a much stronger socialist tendency than Sanders. And Jeremy Corbyn in the UK looks to be perhaps the best alternative available. But rather than hope for social democrats or socialists occupying seats of capitalist power and trying to undermine the capitalist class by reforming tax codes, and redistributing some of the wealth to the poor, the important point is to create mass movements, a class-based socialist alternative for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is able to bridge racial and gender divisions.

**Javier Collado:** From the National University of Education of Ecuador we highly believe that Education has an important role to transform our societies, but from the very beginning the capitalism has used formal education across the world to create passive citizens and uncritical consumers. You say in many of your books that formal education reproduces the Neoliberal system structures that are destroying our planet. In fact, I think that money has colonized the own life and, for this reason, we are facing today new ecological challenges in the era of the Anthropocene. How to develop critical eco-literacy in Environmental

Education Programs? How could critical pedagogies raise environmental awareness?

**Peter McLaren:** As I became interested in debates surrounding ecology through the work of people such as John Bellamy Foster, Jason W. Moore, Joel Kovel, Michael Lowy, and others, I am pleased to say that some of my students, such as Richard Kahn, have contributed in major ways to advancing what is now referred to as ecopedagogy. I think Jason Moore's work is very important in that he has identified, and transcended, the Cartesian dualism that has infected much of the current work in ecology. Moore warns us not to fall into the ontological dualism that discretely separates social relations from the biosphere—or nature from society. I'm particularly interested in capitalism as a world ecology, which is not the same thing as seeing capitalism as part of the ecology of the world. Moore explains the difference. He sees capitalism as part of the web of life which he refers to as *oikeois*. He views the web of life dialectically, as species-environment configurations, dialectically related to power, capital and nature. These configurations form and re-form historically. Thus, we no longer begin with the question: How did humanity separate from nature? We begin with the question: How is humanity unified with nature? Instead of asking what capitalism does to nature, we are encouraged here by Moore to ask the question: How does nature work for capitalism? This gives us a different perspective on the issue of differentiation. Rene Descartes famous maxim, "I think therefore I am" can now be seen in relation to the formation of capitalism and conquest, of the arrogance of the philosopher who lives in the center of colonial domination. The work of Enrique Dussel, reveals the historical necessity of "I think, therefore I am" of being preceded by the *ego conquiro*—I conquer you, therefore I am, and the *ego extermino*—I exterminate you, therefore I am. This ontological history is enfolded not only in Europe but in the birth of United States as a settler colonial state. Its beginnings were tragically marked by the extermination of the indigenous peoples and the cotton plantation economy of the southern U.S. Dussel explains how Descartes famous maxim—"I think therefore I am"—is enfolded geopolitically within the history of colonialism and conquest. Is it any wonder that Descartes separates the mind and body, since he wrote his major works in the Dutch Republic between 1629 and 1649 when, as Moore points out, capitalism (capital, power, and nature) was reorganizing itself is a powerful means of social, economic, geographical control and when there was massive deforestation, pollution, food insecurity, and the destruction of resources. Dussel decolonizes Descartes' "I think therefore I am," revealing its imperial arrogance and its dualistic separation of the mind and body. Indigenous

cosmovisions are much more advanced than Descartes, as they escape this dualism. And yet their civilizations were destroyed by European conquerors.

We have now reached the end of what Moore calls the Four Cheaps (cheap food, labor power, energy and raw materials) with no resolution in sight. During the nineteenth century, agricultural stagnation and food prices in England were resolved by the farmers in the U.S. who merged mechanization and uncommodified frontiers. The stagnation of early twentieth-century capitalist agriculture in Western Europe and North America was resolved through what Moore calls "green revolutions." Renewed rounds of commodification have, however, failed to halt the slowdown of productivity, sending the world into a tailspin where, despite the entrenched strength of capitalism and gains made in agro-biotechnology, the process of commodification of everyday life can no longer organize nature at a time when we are facing a world of endless accumulation of capital and an endless internalization of nature, since the Four Cheaps are no longer cheap and we have what Moore calls "a rising value composition of capital and a declining ecological surplus".

In the U.S. we have a strong "cultural studies" movement in the universities towards the study of post-colonialism and post-structuralism as well as decolonial pedagogy. However, too often "culture" replaces "class antagonisms" and we forget or reject the contributions of Marx. My early work was symptomatic of this trend. However, around 1995 I began to reengage with the work of Marx. We cannot forget that Marxian tradition has also analyzed similar issues around race, gender and sexuality, and sometimes with more depth and insight. Too often poststructuralist or postmodernist educators neglect to talk about capitalism at all and they virtually ignore the mutually constitutive aspect of human beings and nature. I took a course taught by Michel Foucault when I was a doctoral student, and for a while my work was influenced by his writings. But I was dissatisfied with his lack of a framework for resistance. Today, it is absolutely clear that we need, as John Bellamy Foster argues, an eco-revolutionary movement that recognizes that Marx, while working in the nineteenth century, developed an ecological systems view, and engaged himself with many of the major environmental challenges that we face today. Foster not only talks about Marx's discussion of metabolic rift, but also metabolic shifts, the historical-geographical entanglement of life and matter. One example is the shift in the labor-land ratio that occurred in sixteenth century capitalism. Foster has written about Marx's discussions of regional climate change, desertification, deforestation, species extinction, pollution, the town-country divide,

population issues, degradation of the soil, the abuse of animals, and other issues. Marx's ecological critique of political economy, was rooted in the concept of a metabolism between society and nature—a metabolism that could be rationally regulated so the human needs of all could be met without destroying the ecology of the planet. Moore takes his world-ecology view of metabolism one step further by showing how value relations create rules of production that admit flexibility and contingency in the ways in which capitalism is able to mobilize and recombine parts of nature in the quest for endless accumulation. Capitalism, as Moore notes, is an "open flow" system that "exhausts its sources of nourishment."

The big problem is that the climate change movement challenges capitalism root and branch and to stabilize the earth's climate requires us, first and foremost, to oppose capitalism. Politicians, who serve the corporations, are compelled to preserve the capitalist commodity economy even if it means the destruction of the planet. They are engaged in their quest for surplus value and profit, even accompanying their actions with paeans of praise for the neoliberal globalization of capital, despite the obvious truism that capitalism is premised on infinite accumulation whereas Nature is finite.

The choices that we make at this historical juncture of life-threatening political decisions can neither be evaded nor postponed.

**Javier Collado:** As you know it, Ecuador is the first country in the world that recognized in its Constitution the rights of nature. The indigenous peoples of Bolivia and Ecuador share the cosmivision of "Sumak kawsay," also known as "Good Living." This is a philosophical worldview where all human beings are interconnected with the Pachamama, our Mother-Earth. What is your opinion about this contribution of Latin American countries to build social movements to the idea of justice and democratic politics? What do you think is the role of Latin America countries in the geopolitics of knowledge to create political alternatives in the next years, specially now that Donald Trump is the "president of the world"?

**Peter McLaren:** I have never visited Ecuador, but I have spent time in other countries in America Latina. Mostly in Mexico. During talks in Oaxaca, Mexico and in Venezuela—I became familiar with the concept of "buen vivir". And I have learned how important the cosmivision of "Sumak kawsay" is for the indigenous peoples of Bolivia and Ecuador. And yes, I am

aware that your country was the first country to integrate this concept into the constitution. This was a magnificent achievement. I cannot imagine a momentous event such as this happening here in the US. But here in North America many activists have been struggling to honor the cosmovisions of indigenous peoples throughout Las Americas. The group, Idle No More, which began in Canada, is an activist movement founded in 2012 by three First Nations women and one non-native ally. This movement has galvanized the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, comprising First Nations (pueblos originarios), Métis and Inuit peoples. This movement has allies all over the world. It was inspired by the hunger strike of Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence. This group has been involved in major protests against the treatment of indigenous peoples, and have blockaded railroad lines as part of their activist tactics against the Canadian government. Idle No More is also in solidarity with indigenous groups worldwide, including the Standing Rock Sioux "water protectors" who are protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline. Sylvia McAdam Saysewahum, a land protector and one of four Idle No More founders, left her residence at Big River to travel to Cannon Ball, North Dakota, to stand in support of the Standing Rock Sioux. The Standing Rock Sioux, along with water protectors and allies from across North America, have camped out since April near the Missouri River and adjacent indigenous lands which are being threatened by the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline that pumps 470,000 barrels a day across four states, from North Dakota to a terminal in Illinois, where it is shipped to refineries, threatening to contaminate drinking water and damage sacred burial sites. The pipeline will dramatically increase fossil fuel production. The Standing Rock Sioux have set up a number of spiritual sites, Sacred Stone, Oceti Sakowin, Red Warrior, and Rosebud Sicangu - near the Missouri river. Heavily armored military vehicles enforcing the interests of the corporate land extractors have been put in place to stop the protestors. Hundred of protestors have been arrested by police who have doused crowds with pepper spray and freezing water as well as using sound cannons, bean bag rounds and rubber bullets against the protestors. I remember. Idle No More has been recognized worldwide. Shortly before Idle No More was created, I visited Cherán, a Purépecha town of approximately 20,000 people in Michoacán, Mexico, shortly after Cherán's levantamiento, and there were armed checkpoints put in place supervised by the Ronda Comunitaria - a militia or local police force made up of men and women from Cherán. The people of Cherán had risen up against masked men who were demanding extortion payments from small businesses. They had successfully resisted the armed loggers, part of Mexican cartels who were now trying to dominate the timber industry, and timber is the foundation of Cherán economy. In Cherán

land is mostly held in common. Families don't own the land but they manage it. While Cherán enjoys some state and federal funding, it has been recognized by the government as an autonomous indigenous Purépecha community. And this has now been solidified into law by the Mexican government. The fearless and redoubtable people of Cherán have banned all political parties, and the courts have upheld the rights of the people of Cherán not to participate in local, state or federal elections. Some members of the community are part of Instituto McLaren de Pedagogía Crítica, and I have seen recent photos of members of the community holding Idle No More signs.

Recently, I was interested to learn that a comrade of mine, Peter Hudis, a philosopher and activist, and leading Marxist scholar had visited Quechua and Aymara-speaking communities in Cochabamba, La Paz and Cusco, and interviewed and lived among members of over a dozen indigenous rural communities in northern Bolivia and southern Peru. I consider Peter Hudis one of the most important intellectuals in the United States, and he is much more knowledgeable than I am about Sumak Kawsay and Suma Qama, and movements for indigenous rights in the Highlands of Bolivia and Peru. Peter was surprised to discover that the Martinique scholar and activist, Frantz Fanon, had influenced a number of prominent leaders in the Aymara consciousness movement and that they had discovered an important connection with Fanon's work related to the formation of racial identities. Reflecting on this, it makes absolute sense, given Fanon's work on colonial domination and the production.

Let me switch gears and talk about what has been happening in the schools in the United States. Many Latino/s students and their non-Latino/a allies have been struggling for many years to create "ethnic studies" classes, which just a few years ago were banned in Tuscon Arizona as a result of Arizona House Bill 2281 in which white supremacist politicians and community members targeted the Mexican American studies program, claiming that any course that focuses only on one group was racist. This is the argument used by politicians and school board officials who claim that we are all just "Americans." But what remains invisible to these whites is their own racial privilege and Euro-Americans, as enjoying the protection of the Anglosphere. They don't need white studies programs because they already control the country. They are against social justice programs and curricula that are used in the ethnic studies program because they claim it is critical of Anglo-European values. Now, under Trump, we have a massive growth of neo-Nazi, white supremacists, who want to recreate the United States as a white ethno-state. They are like the Klu Klux Klan, only

they are now wearing suits and ties and speaking at college campuses to recruit their members. They call themselves the "alt right."

Basically, the ethnic studies classes in high school were developed for Latino/a students, mostly Chicano/as. At the beginning of each class, students recite this part of a poem written by Luís Valdez, known as the father of Chicano theater. Valdez incorporated the Mayan precept In Lak'Ech into a larger poem he called "Pensamiento Serpentino." Valdez inherited the cosmovision In Lak'Ech directly from his mentor, the late Professor Domingo Martinez Paredes of the National University of Mexico in the 1970s. It is based on the Mayan definition of the human being, which they called "*huinik'ilil*" or "vibrant being." It celebrates collective being rather than individual being. A Chapman doctoral student, Jose Paolo Magcalas (a Filipino-American), also a member of the Anaheim Elementary School Board, created an ethnic studies class in his high school, and there is a powerful movement percolating throughout many states in the country to make ethnic studies a mandatory part of the curriculum.

#### IN LAK'ECH

*Tú eres mi otro yo.*

You are my other me.

*Si te hago daño a ti,*

If I do harm to you,

*Me hago daño a mi mismo.*

I do harm to myself.

*Si te amo y respeto,*

If I love and respect you,

*Me amo y respeto yo.*

I love and respect myself.

As a point of interest, I recited In Lak'Ech at the beginning of courses I taught at Northeast Normal University in China. The Chinese students were very receptive and were curious about indigenous cosmovisions. Speaking of indigeneity, I think María de Jesús Patricio (Marichuy) from southern Jalisco, Mexico, would be a good choice for President of Mexico, as she is the spokesperson for the Indigenous Government Council and has a collectivist

orientation, a struggle for *comunalidad*. While Lopez Obrador, whom I met last year, would be an improvement on the current narco-government, I still think the best candidate is Marichuy. She has the support of the Zapatistas and her ideas appear deeply rooted in *comunalidad* wherein processes of cultural, economic, and political resistance are coalesced into a communal way of being and becoming—which is also an act of resistance to the coloniality of power (*patrón de poder colonial/moderno/capitalista*) that Anibal Quijano has articulated so powerfully in his writings. The concept of *comunalidad* both conserves, preserves and creates knowledge, preserving ancestral knowledge yet at the same creating conditions of possibility for new conceptual/epistemological perspectives. The concept of *comunalidad* was written into the State Education Act of 1995, as one of the guiding principles of Oaxacan education and it is meant to become the foundational knowledge into which all other knowledge is communally integrated. Oaxacan *comunalidad* breaks with the Cartesian dualism embedded in western systems of knowing. It also reflects much of Paulo Freire's concept of reading the word and the world simultaneously. There are some independent schools in California that are attempting to approach learning using concepts such as *comunalidad* and *buen vivir*—I am thinking of a school in East Los Angeles, and I am thinking of Anahuacalmecac, part of the Semillas del Pueblo Community and Los Angeles' first international baccalaureate world school. Anahuacalmecac International University Preparatory High School of North America for kindergarten through grade twelve has declared itself a sacred space and community sanctuary. In addition to offering bilingual programs in English and Spanish, Semillas students learn Nahuatl. Nahuatl plays a key role in the development of critical thinking and global inclusiveness for the students. When I was visited San Cristóbal de las Casas (it's Tzotzil name is Jovel) Chiapas, Mexico the Secretary of Environmental Education gave me some books his department had produced for elementary classrooms, and they were written in various indigenous languages and authored by groups such as the Tzeltal, the Tzotzil, the Chol, the Zoque, and the Tojolabal. I gave them to Marcos Aguilar, the executive director of Anahuacalmecac.

**Javier Collado:** Let's make an exercise of imagination now. Let's imagine you are doing a speech in front of both Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment of my country, Ecuador. They both are working in the National Program and Strategies of Environmental Education. What kind of suggestions and advices would you like to tell them in order to raise critical awareness with the new young generations of educators? How to build today the educational policies of tomorrow society?

**Peter McLaren:** I appreciate your question but I must admit my lack of knowledge of Ecuador. What I would say to these officials would be the same advice I would give to Ministries of Education and Ministries of the Environment in North America. I would advise them to throw away market based economic models of education, particularly in the fields of the social sciences if we wish to regenerate the lifeblood of the planet. I would also advise them that all educators need to become more familiar with critical intercultural education, and become more aware of how the coloniality of power works in various insidious and often invisible ways, even in countries that were once colonized but now consider themselves 'postcolonial.' There are no postcolonial countries. There are only neocolonial countries and colonizer settler societies (such as the US and my native Canada) and we must recognize the importance of developing a decolonial pedagogy. I would request that they reconsider using so-called educational "advances" in highly developed capitalist countries. If you want to learn from a European country, then I would choose Finland where there is no homework and where "subjects" (math, science, social studies, etc) have been replaced with "topics". Teaching by subject and teaching by topic is very different. Students work in small groups, solving problems. Depending upon what the problem is, they could incorporate mathematics, political science, geography, ecology, etc. This is co-teaching and co-learning, the co-production of knowledge. This is closer to the idea of "buen vivir" and "comunalidad."

I would tell the officials in the room to please make the study of the topic of capitalism of primary importance. Encourage sustainability and efficiency protocols when studying how to recreate an economy not based on the production of value (I am using the term "value" to mean monetized wealth). Begin with localized energy production—and make sure that you work from principles of cooperation rather than competition. Try to imagine remaking society—think about solar power, small wind-harvesting systems, reimagine mass transit networks for large urban environments using sustainable resource allocation strategies. We need a new generation of industrial designers. Think about harvesting energy from airflow from airplanes and ocean currents. Peter Joseph writes about using an "integrated systems approach" to achieve key sustainable energy abundance. He talks about using wind farms, solar fields, and ocean hydropower. Joseph notes that harnessing energy from open ocean currents could power the entire planet. The technology is available to reuse piezo-engineered floors and sidewalks and even rail systems that can capture energy from passing train cars through pressure. Students should be involved in inventing new forms of small scale and large scale energy production, especially

ocean-based energy sources—i.e., ocean thermal energy conversion—that can drive turbines. But these possibilities are impeded by the logic of capital, by a price-oriented financial system that is choking the life out of pachamama. We need to move price and profit from the system. We need to incentivize cooperation over competition and move from a corporate to communal commons. Given that half the current jobs in the US will be computerized in a few decades, and that machines will soon be outperforming humans and “speed factories” using robots are being built in order to counter wage increases by workers, the future does not bode well for 99 percent of the population, and of course the brunt of the suffering will be visited upon the poor in America Latina and elsewhere. I incorporate liberation theology into my educational praxis, and use the work of Leonardo Boff and José Porfirio Miranda de la Parra, and others to emphasize the central concern for justice in the biblical scriptures. Liberation theology utilizes Marx, and begins with social sin, with injustice that accompanies capitalist social relations of exploitation. Jesus was against differentiated wealth. That is to day, in the Kingdom of God there cannot be someone who is rich and someone who is poor. There is a lot of communism in the Bible, and Marx was very much influenced by the teachings of Jesus, despite his opposition to clericalism and organized religion. Liberation theology began with a powerful, if not prophetic, condemnation of the injustices imposed on the peoples of America Latina and of course liberation theology was attacked and nearly destroyed by Pope John Paul II and US President Ronald Reagan (who saw it as a communist type of insurgency). But there is much in liberation theology that is in common with indigenous struggles today. I welcome a resurgence of liberation theology and theologies of the people. It is worth examining this relationship and building upon it. I remember meeting Ernesto Cardenal when we were invited to *Alo Presidente!*, a tv program hosted by President Chavez. I recalled the moment, decades earlier, when Ernesto Cardenal was at the airport in Managua, Nicaragua, waiting for the arrival of Pope John Paul II. As the Pope descended from his airplane, Ernesto Cardenal was kneeling and preparing to greet the Pope. The Pope paused before the kneeling Ernesto and gave him a stern lecture. Unfortunately, that is what happens when the powerful become threatened by the prospect of social justice for the poor. You can choose to curse the rose because it has thorns or you can choose to rejoice that the thorns have a rose.

**Javier Collado:** Thank you very much for sharing all your critical reflections with all our readers. Espero vernos pronto por Ecuador para sembrar esa visión crítica de la pedagogía. Un abrazo.