

Teaching for Democracy: The Risks and Benefits of Teaching in the Danger Zone

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Introduction:

Teaching as Revolutionary and Its Moral Implications

The educator for liberation has to *die* as the unilateral educator of the educatees, in order to be born again as the educator-educatee of the educatees-educators. An educator is a person who has to live in the deep significance of Easter.

—Paulo Freire¹

I would like to explore the notion of teaching as revolutionary, which I believe to be essential in building the foundations of democratic citizenry. I am deeply concerned with the idea that the public sphere of education both limits, in a narrow fashion, discernable truth, and creates covert pressures on the degree to which democratic teaching may be practiced. Set within the context of the pedagogy of democracy and transformation of Paulo Freire, I will argue that teachers have a moral responsibility, both to their students and to their community, to empower their students in the practice of democratic values. However, simply put, teachers also have a moral and legal responsibility (as employees) to reflect and model to their students a particular community's values. What happens then when there is a disagreement over which values are the "right" ones to commit to? In my opinion, a "revolutionary" teacher is one who, in the tradition of Freire, "lives in the deep significance of Easter"; that is, as one who commits to the role of an educator-educatee for the educates-educators. According to Freire, this means that a revo-

lutionary teacher is committed to practicing “co-intentional” education whereby, “teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators.”² A revolutionary teacher is, in this light, one who enables their students, through the practice of democratic teaching, to have an active involvement in determining which values are the “right” ones to commit to in a school community.

Defining Democratic Teaching

As I stated earlier, I feel that teachers must fulfill a larger moral agency than just reflect a particular community’s and school board’s values.³ In other words, it is my belief that a teachers’ professional autonomy must be demonstrated through democratic teaching. For the purposes of this paper, I define democratic teaching as a commitment to helping students discover and nurture their self-expression, develop consciousness, claim a new and ever-evolving awareness, as well as act on it. Whatever this new awareness is, it will be a result of unrestricted critical examination, “the most distinguishing characteristic of a free society.”⁴ My own understanding of democracy and how it can best be taught is still evolving but what I have discovered is that it is the most rewarding way for me to teach. I am a different person because teaching for democracy is something I “do” and am, both in and out of the classroom.

This type of transformative teaching requires a dedication to the ideals of democracy that results in so much more than just teachers’ submission to the ruling status quo. It is my contention in this paper that it is the moral imperative of teachers to take a revolutionary stance⁵ in their roles as educators or risk betraying themselves, their students and the ideals of democratic teaching.⁶ Democratic teaching is in fact a moral and not *just* a political imperative precisely because it goes beyond enhancing a school climate or enhancing students’ self-expression and self-esteem.⁷ School programs that focus solely on prescriptive measures (for example, the character education movement as practiced in Ontario schools),⁸ may end up looking like models of democracy but are really superficial “band aid” remedies for social justice. How, for example, can a school claim to be teaching “good character” and at the same time ignore and/or minimize the everyday challenges that many urban students face, such as poverty, child abuse, and prejudice. Unlike the character education movement, teaching for democracy seeks not only to narrow

the limits of oppression and social inequity in schools but to eradicate the very conditions that generate them.

A Brief Overview of the Arguments

In examining the reasons I believe teachers must adopt a revolutionary role in their teaching practices, I would like to first examine the different ways in which teachers face pressures to conform and become, instead, agents of cultural reproduction. In my opinion, it is necessary to examine these limitations in order to find the most appropriate methods by which teachers and their students can be freed from these constraints. I plan to examine in some detail three main types of pressures teachers in the classroom face today: first, staff and school community “surveillance” methods, including the primary means by which Ontario teachers are evaluated, through the *Teacher Performance Appraisal*⁹; second, both the current Ontario Ministry of Education and Ontario College of Teachers’ focus on accountability and the inequity it fosters; and third, the often times not so covert pressures of the school community which emphasizes obedience and “servant-like”¹⁰ behaviour and the adaptation of school community and school board values.

Despite these pressures on a teacher to conform to authority, it is my intention to, secondly, explore possibilities of how teachers can become liberating educators, and criticize the system while teaching within it, in a way that transforms traditional authority and promotes social transformation. Augusto Boal provides a dramatic vehicle through his method of the “theatre of the oppressed,” within which the dialogical method can be enacted in a safe, empowering, highly participatory and equitable environment. By paralleling Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed with Boal’s forum for exercising liberating discourse, I plan to examine my own experiences as a school teacher both in and out of the drama classroom with case study scenarios that highlight the tension between authority and democracy in education. In particular, by examining the existing attitudes of administration, students and myself as the teacher, it is my aim to identify the contradictions between what students term a “corrupt” teacher (either by what a teacher does or fails to do) as compared to what administration classifies as satisfactory or even exemplary teacher practices (according to standards as listed in the *Teacher Performance Appraisal*). In exploring these case scenarios, it is also my hope to identify strategies for overcoming some of the key limitations any revolutionary educator faces in the classroom today.

Lastly, it is my intention to illustrate how, despite the pressures to conform and the limitations faced by revolutionary educators, it is still

possible to create democratic classrooms. I hope to illustrate, through my own case scenarios, the need for teachers to initiate and maintain a dialogue with their students based on “social class empowerment” and to make a commitment to “critical literacy”—that is, facilitating a dialogic inquiry that is based in the experiences, culture, language, politics and interests of the students. Moreover, this dialogic inquiry must necessarily lead to meaningful yet challenging struggles for both teachers and students—struggles that become opportunities for the evolution of social justice. It is my heart-felt opinion, and the underlying theme of this paper, that it is necessary for teachers to adopt a revolutionary stance, risking alienation and the reprimands of the school community, in order to help build a truly democratic community both in and out of the classroom.

The Pressures to Conform, Obey, and Normalize

Why aren’t more teachers stepping into this transformative role and why are public schools effectively disempowering its students? Doris Lessing offers insight into this question when she states:

Ideally, what should be said to every child, repeatedly, throughout his or her school life is something like this: “You are in the process of becoming indoctrinated. We have not yet evolved a system of education that is not a system of indoctrination. We are sorry, but it is the best we can do. What you are being taught here is an amalgam of current prejudices and choices of this particular culture ... you are being taught by people who have been able to accommodate a self-perpetuating system. Those of you who are more robust and individual than others will be encouraged to find ways of educating yourself—educating your own judgement. Those that stay must remember, always and all the time, that they are being molded and patterned to fit into the narrow and particular needs of this society.”¹¹

In this description, which I argue still continues to go on in many of our public schools, Lessing refers to how schools seem fundamentally organized in opposition to the goals of democratic citizenry, since they foster intellectual conformity, blind obedience to authority and normalization of values. Set within this context, not only are schools undemocratic for students, they are also relatively undemocratic for teachers. Moreover, it is my contention that the educational system is, unlike Lessing’s assessment, unapologetic and staunchly committed in implementing its aim of creating citizens who serve the interests of a more powerful socio-political group and parallels Noam Chomsky’s assessment of the role of the media in promoting apathy, obedience and silence among

the public.¹² Other writers explore this notion as well, suggesting that schools have exaggerated the degree of freedom education has brought to its citizens, all the while promoting a corporate agenda that focuses on the ideals of efficiency and success.¹³ The risks to teachers who take a revolutionary approach to teaching and challenge the corporate agenda are real and quite measurable: they risk being labelled a resistor or a cynical malcontent, or even worse—unprofessional; alienation from their peers; decreased administrative support both in and out of their classroom; being “black-listed” for promotions and other professional growth opportunities; and suffering subtle forms of humiliation or other more overt and grievable attempts at “corrective” discipline. Surveillance teams made up of teachers and administrators are also ready and more than willing, it seems, to implement seemingly harmless yet controlling measures to ensure teachers do not stray from what is considered a satisfactory or even exemplary teaching practice. In fact, I would have to say that the current Ontario College of Teacher’s mandated *Teacher Performance Appraisal*¹⁴ operates in a way similar to Foucault’s account of disciplinary training, a ritualized performance of power and authority.¹⁵ By making the standards by which teachers are judged a listing of non-negotiable “observable look-fors,” the principal’s role as evaluator becomes similar to that of a guard in Foucault’s model of a prison—to observe, compare, objectify, homogenize and exclude¹⁶—in other words, to normalize according to standards as defined, not by the teachers themselves, but by a hierarchical self-appointed governing authority, in this case the Ontario College of Teachers.

Another method by which teachers are under surveillance includes staff meetings where administration engages in a series of monologues and inform us of the “correct” way to teach and evaluate—much in the same way a prison warden is a source of information but never an enabler of communication with the prisoners. Peer mentoring, by which the principal, under the authority of the Director of Education, chooses the teachers and standards by which young teachers’ teaching practice will be supported, is another subtle method of staff surveillance and ensures conformity. These methods of surveillance also ensure that teachers are objectified; that is, in silencing teachers, they become alienated from their own decision-making capabilities and are thereby changed into objects by administrators. At a recent professional development workshop for principals and vice-principals in Toronto school boards, for example, a question was asked about the most effective way to deal with teachers defined as “resistors”; that is, those staff members who challenge and question local school policies. The answer was succinct and Foucault-like in its vision: “Kick your mules and stroke your racehorses.”¹⁷ Accord-

ing to this vision of educational leadership, teachers (or mules), must be forced into submission. The role of a revolutionary teacher, in challenging this vision, would be to challenge school authorities to treat him/her as a subject by not losing hope, voicing their objections consistently and practising non-compliance to policies that promote inequity and injustice.

Another pressure that teachers face to conform comes from the provincial government and Ontario College of Teachers. The public's focus on accountability rather than responsibility in public schools has resulted in an all-consuming emphasis on standardized testing and outcomes based curriculum. Both areas of focus have served as a source of infotainment for the media and a political tool for the provincial governments who wish to appear to be doing something constructive in education. However, its inappropriate and hasty implementation and misguided interpretations make it little more than a futile exercise for many students whose race, culture, or first language is not that of the majority. The Ontario Curriculum, for example, attempts to alter the role of teachers from participants to mere facilitators of a government mandate meant to suggest "accountability" and rising standards. Already in Ontario, teachers are being told exactly what to teach (learning outcomes based curriculum), how to teach (*Teacher Performance Appraisal* lists specific and non-negotiable "look-fors" in "exemplary" teaching practices) and who to teach (many schools, including my own, refuse to offer Essentials classes—basic level programs for students who are not able to meet grade-level course expectations—to students because they do not want to be known officially as a lower-achieving school). Once again, the point does not appear to be assessment, evaluation, or the actual content and/or quality of the curriculum for all students—rather, it is the appearance of surveillance, of being "in control" and raising standards, both of teaching and its teachers.¹⁸

Standardized testing and newly board mandated evaluation and assessment procedures for students seem to be used by principals, superintendents, directors of education, and ministry officials as yet another tool to "police" teachers—to control what and how they teach, the standards by which this can be evaluated and to provide the "evidence" for it to a data-hungry public. This concern with numbers and data distracts the public from addressing the real issue of how to improve learning for all students. The role of the revolutionary teacher would be to remind the school community that the diversity and uniqueness of students cannot be reduced to numbers or categories. I believe that any journalist, politician or educator who does so is acting unethically because they are feeding the public a false sense of the failure of our social system. In my school, for example, the principal uses the latest

*Education, Quality, and Accountability Office (EQAO)*¹⁹ results (for parents and school trustees) as “evidence” that our academic students (the minority of our student population) are thriving with the tests “raising of the bar” while at the same time ignoring the fact that the poor results for our applied students (the majority of our student population) is increasing. How have these tests “raised the bar” and “bridged the gap”²⁰ for these conveniently over-looked students? Unfortunately, as I have sadly witnessed, these students become marginalized and schools that serve these students become unfairly ghettoized. The role of the revolutionary teacher in this case is to question rankings, raise awareness in school communities about the dangers in making quick conclusions based on narrow data, and discuss with their students the purpose of the test and allow them to make their own decisions about its importance. In my particular case, the principal privately accused me of insubordination under Ontario’s *Education Act* when I decided to speak up and present a different perspective to parents on school test results. According to him, I was breaking the law by not supporting him in his interpretation of test scores. From that point on, it was made very clear to me that my opinion was unwelcome and expressed at a great price.

All of these described methods of surveillance ensure that teachers who teach against the modelled status quo²¹ will be given a hard time not just by their school board, staff and administration, but also by parents and the children they teach. A school community’s values can come into opposition with a teacher’s democratic teaching. If a religious school board, for example, requires “servant-like” behaviour from its employees, where does that leave a teacher’s professional autonomy? If allegiance to moral and religious values is proven through obedience to a higher authority both in and outside of a church, how might a revolutionary teacher fight injustice in the schools? A teacher must learn to negotiate the voice and interests of their students, the community— including their parents, board policies, and their own biases and beliefs. But how can all the pressures and constraints to conform be overcome, in safety and with integrity, so that democratic teaching can be the brave new “norm” in the classroom?

A Possible Response: The Freirean Model for Revolutionary Teaching

According to Paulo Freire, teachers can become liberating educators, despite the aforementioned pressures to conform, obey and normalize. In fact, Freire states that a revolutionary educator must reject the values imposed on schools because dominant values must be transformed.²² This

puts the teacher in the position of a rebel working on behalf of and with a community, someone who goes against traditional authority in order to question, evaluate and ultimately, transform accepted values so that no one in the community is displaced or marginalized. But how does a revolutionary teacher lead their class in this community-empowering rebellion?

Freire warns us that the “recipe” for empowerment cannot be prescriptive, suggesting that it “domesticates the mind.”²³ I often think back to my early years of teaching in the drama classroom when I often relied on school board and ministry prescribed packages on social justice issues such as harassment, sexism, racism, and violence in society. I recall with some embarrassment how dutifully I followed the lesson plans included in these packages, how proud I was of myself for implementing these units into my classroom, and I cringe at the thought of how I facilitated discussions of these topics—simply skimming the surface, assuming the role of neutrality, ending the discussion with some simple prescribed motto when the issue seemed to get “out of hand” and threaten my standards for classroom management. How easily I dismissed the key to transformative education—the students, and how easily I smoothed over controversial issues in my quest to be a “professional” in my job!

Freire in fact argues that every teacher is always a student and every student always a teacher. But how is this possible in our traditional educational system? Freire explains that, “the educator for liberation has to *die* as the unilateral educator of the educatees, in order to be born again as the educator-educatee of the educatees-educators. An educator is a person who has to live in the deep significance of Easter.”²⁴ The teacher who can see the contradiction between their words and their actions in the classroom faces an either-or position: become a reactionary (a hypocritical approach that asks the students to “do as I say, not as I do”) or a revolutionary—that is, accept a critical position with the students to engage through actions, not just words, and thereby transform what is “real.” According to Freire, this is what “making Easter” is all about, “to die as the dominator and to be born again as the dominated, fighting to overcome oppression.”²⁵ For the revolutionary teacher, this is a professionally risky road to liberation but the only one that leads to integrity with oneself and the school community.

Implementing the Freirean/Boalian Model in the Drama Classroom

In my more recent years as a drama teacher, it has been my students and what I believe Freire refers to as “affirmative love,” that have guided

me more than anything else in the choice of curriculum outcomes. What I mean by this is that my concern for them and the dialogues that have developed as a result of this concern have pushed me to go beyond what I saw possible in my role as a “professional” educator. By including my drama students in the planning and critique of lesson plans, I began to focus my concern on my responsibility to them as an educator primarily and only secondly on accountability (which is different from responsibility). I no longer focussed my attention on questions that addressed completing all the units in the curriculum or providing evidence to my Department Head and Principal of “proper” assessment and evaluation procedures. Questions that were of primary importance to me included the following: “How are my students the “experts” or my and others’ teachers in this subject area?” “Where do teacher and student experiences differ in what we know and do not know?” “What do we want to find out about what we do not know?” and “How do we go about learning more about what we do not know?” Welton and Mallon, in connecting the pedagogy of Freire with a teacher’s experiences in a classroom, refer to this process as “selective neglect,”²⁶ meaning students and teachers decide collaboratively what they will study and what they are not interested in and have no wish to study. This process provides a teacher with a mirror that reflects the collective interests of the class and students’ motivations for learning. It also enables teachers to re-evaluate their own prejudices and assumptions about their students.

In my particular case, this process took my class and I on an illuminating journey into the contradictions between what students term a “good” or “corrupt” teacher versus what administrators and ministry officials like to term as “exemplary” or “unsatisfactory” teaching practices. Midway through one groundbreaking semester, as trust was established, role plays in drama turned personal and intensely meaningful. In just one class assignment, I ended up with role plays that involved the following “real life” scenarios: a girl pregnant and involved with an older man, a boy who was forced to leave home due to conflicts with his step dad and was secretly living in his friends’ basements, a boy who stole for a living to support his family and was continually getting into trouble at school, and a girl who continued an abusive relationship with her boyfriend because he told her she was the only one who could “save” him and had threatened suicide. I had been experimenting, with the support and encouragement of my students, with a new theatre form modelled on Augusto Boal’s method called “theatre of the oppressed.”²⁷ This particular drama technique is a type of forum theatre, whereby audience members are allowed to intervene directly in the living play (unscripted and in the moment), as spectators become “actors.” First,

the participants are asked to present a short skit portraying a problem and a possible solution. Audience members are then asked to perform the scene in a way that solves the problem from their perspective. The original “actors” then have to face the newly created situation, responding to all the possibilities that the scene presents. This type of dramatic exercise is a problem-solving exercise in which the whole class is allowed to participate in order to find the best solution to a particular problem. Freire calls problem-solving education “revolutionary futurity,”²⁸ because it affirms people as human beings who are to move forward, into the world of possibilities. My students enjoyed participating in forum theatre because they said it gave them options and new perspectives they would never have considered in any other way, such as a lecture from a parent or disciplinary action from a teacher.

In combining Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed with Boal’s forum for exercising liberating discourse, I also believe that I finally initiated my aim to enact a democratic teaching practice. But it was not without its trials, for although this exercise took us two weeks to complete, the repercussions lasted the entire year and definitely went beyond the classroom! Teaching as a liberating educator required commitment and responsibility from myself and my students, involved infinite challenges, invited much controversy from my teaching colleagues and administration, constantly provided contradictions, and provided my students and I with no clear outcomes, expectations or even answers. What it did create was a sense of community and empowerment that I have never experienced before, while also making me fear for my job security at times. Each role play the students enacted became an opportunity for students to challenge, reflect and transform their own ideas of how to live their lives in a way that amazed and encouraged me. For example, the pregnant girl dating an older man was originally set to marry an older man, whom she begrudgingly admitted, had a “minor” drug problem. The students, in insisting in enacting what life would be like with this man, displayed what Freire would refer to as a “practice of freedom,” meaning they felt no need to foster a position of neutrality in communicating their perspectives. Their passionate appeals to the girl engaged her and helped her make a more informed decision about whether or not to marry her boyfriend. Whenever she insisted that the baby would “change” him, the class would engage in dramatizations with her that would make her think otherwise. In challenging the students learned passivity, forum theatre allowed us to engage in a dialogic inquiry. Students who normally would not speak to each other found themselves connecting with each other in a respectful, concerned and compassionate manner. As a teacher, I found myself teaching a unit on sex education, dating and the

characteristics of healthy relationships in a more meaningful way than any policy document could have provided.

If democratic dialogue is to take place in the schools, teachers must also become competent at listening to their students. Marker insists that a revolutionary or Freirean educator is “a critical, probing listener rather than a mechanical answer-giver with a pre-established curriculum”²⁹ or a detailed and prescriptive lesson plan. Freire insists that liberating educators must listen for deeper meaning, listen inside of class and listen outside of class.³⁰ When listening for deeper meaning, teachers must be aware of students’ histories, which can include homelessness, hunger, child abuse or other types of violence, and prejudice. These stories are part of our students’ “hidden voices” that they bring to the classroom. Students must be allowed to share their concerns without fear of judgement. If they do not feel comfortable sharing their life stories, Freire insists that learning cannot take place.

In my senior drama class, students began sharing their life stories. In one case scenario, the boy who stole for a living in order to support his family was urged by the class to consider how this might affect his future. Without fear of reprimands and disciplinary talks, he was able to openly and honestly talk about his history of crime and the legal troubles it had brought to him. In his mind, corruption was embodied by teachers failing to do their job and walking away from violence in the hallways and parking lots while pronouncing the virtues of social justice in the classroom. And so, for him, if you couldn’t work with the system, you beat it. Despite numerous suspensions and an over-night stay in jail, this student continued to attend drama classes and actively participate in class discussions and role playing because he did not want to, in his words, let the class down. I was pressured by administration to dismiss him from my class and not allow him to enter the classroom. I refused—for him, as well as everyone else in the classroom. The developed group dynamic had become a form of “social class empowerment”—and as Freire aptly states it, “[n]ot individual, not community, not merely social empowerment, but a concept of social class empowerment.”³¹ The student had not misbehaved in my classroom and to dismiss him would have been equivalent, in my mind, to dismissing his honesty and the integrity he had helped to build in relation to himself and others in the class. In Freire’s view, my experiences and the experiences of the other students in this classroom would be just one part of a long educational experience. Realizing that the problems of a society cannot be resolved in a single classroom, I refused the quick fix approach that administration typically resorts to. The student came back to me a year later, to thank me for never having given up on him. He was enrolled in college, much

to his delight and surprise, and had stayed out of legal trouble for the past year. This student had effectively been transformed from being an actor in my classroom to what Wallenstein refers to as becoming “an actor in their own worlds.”³²

As I learned over the course of the year, teaching for democracy by using student experiences and involving students in the planning and development of the curriculum is risky. I was threatened by administration to be pulled out of teaching the drama program during the semester but enough students (along with a few of their parents, and one teacher) protested to the principal, without my knowledge at the time, and it never happened. Teachers who take a revolutionary role in their teaching have a clear understanding of the domination that is a product of their personal educational experiences and their daily environment working in the school. This struggle to overcome domination and traditional authoritarianism in the schools is not just external but internal. Teachers must be aware of the need to initiate and maintain a dialogue with their students based on the ideal of “social class empowerment” and a commitment to “critical literacy” that addresses and is based on the culture, language, politics and interests of their students. However, developing a dialogic inquiry with one’s students is the foundation for developing a “practice of freedom” in the classroom. A revolutionary educator must take the next step and prepare students for “battle.” This battle I define as non-violent yet assertive, militant and necessary in the fight for social justice and the empowerment of our students as active citizens in a democratic society.

Preparing Our Students for Battle: Active Citizenship

As teachers, we need to take a revolutionary role in preparing our students to become active and responsible citizens for preserving the democratic values that will truly set us free. Liberating educators need to enact democratic teaching, both in and out of their classrooms, not only by their words but also by their actions. In building the foundations of democratic citizenry and transformation, we must practice what we preach and be ready to risk alienation from our school community.

As I described earlier, many of my students face incredible challenges and injustices as reflected in the dominant ideologies such as racism, sexism, classism, and terrorism (escaping as refugees from warring countries). A revolutionary educator must do more than understand their students and develop a “critical literacy” in their classrooms; they must find ways to nurture a “practice of freedom” that challenges social

injustice within a strategic and consistent continuum. They must, in fact, prepare their students to do battle with dominant ideologies by developing collective strategies that can effectively counter, block and resist control. Freire states that revolutionary teachers have a moral obligation to create liberatory classrooms that facilitate an actual lived out production of a more just and democratic society, “created, politically produced, worked on, in the sweat of one’s brow, in concrete history.”³³ In so far as we can inspire our students to go out and fight the battle for social justice within their own lives, we enlist them into the battle or social/political struggle to change the world to a more democratic ideal.

In my own life, I attempt to live out and express my vision of democratic values by volunteering in a local community organization, joining protest marches against injustice in my surrounding area, facilitating extra-curricular activities at school that raise consciousness and encourage critical thinking, signing petitions, attempting to increase and further develop my skills of empathy and understanding for others, researching the opinions of those who disagree with my views and attempting to engage them in constructive dialogic inquiries. I also encourage my students to see the various possibilities for action within their own reach and commit to the challenge to transform their reality. It is not an easy task, and there have been some semesters where I questioned my effectiveness as a revolutionary educator, even feeling disheartened by the enormity of the job. It is at such times that students have reminded me of my purpose as an educator, affirming me in ways that have energized me for future challenges. They educate me in the meaning of what it is to be member of a just democratic society—brave, resilient, curious, bold, authentic, forgiving, and still hopeful in the face of personal pain and struggle. As Freire so aptly states, liberatory educators are, in the very process of building a practice of freedom in the classroom, necessarily reborn as the educator-educatee. Every semester, without fail, I know that in some way, I will be taught new lessons in my struggle to fulfill my obligations as a revolutionary educator. Once fearful and disheartened by this challenge, I now welcome the struggle, as I grow more comfortable with Freire’s notion of Easter as a necessary part of social transformation.

Notes

¹ P. Taylor, Ed. *The Texts of Paulo Freire*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 1993, p. 53.

² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Anniversary Edition). New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003, p. 69.

³ The concept of “teacher ethics” must include, in my opinion, an obligation to take action against any pressures that restrict democratic freedom—namely,

the restriction of open discussion and critical thinking. It is my opinion, based on sixteen years of experience in the classroom and volunteer work with an Ontario teacher's union, that most teachers view "teacher ethics" as a more conventional and formal standard of practice determined by an outside source such as the Ontario College of Teachers rather than a moral choice made by everyone in the profession to either accept or reject the obligation to take action against the restriction of social criticism.

⁴ Dennis Cato, "Have Our Schools Kept Us Free?," *Paideusis*, 14:1, 2001, p.148.

⁵ I use the term *revolutionary* precisely because it connotes images of a battle fought in order to make a change for the better. In this context, a teacher is a "freedom fighter" when they teach democratic values both in and out of the classroom. As well, when I insist that teachers take a "revolutionary stance" I mean to say that all teachers must define the moral function of their job to be first, proactive and participatory in their school community, rather than passive and isolationist. Secondly, in taking a revolutionary stance, the aim of such a teacher is to create a more fully democratic community—that is, one that enables teachers, students, parents and all members of the school community to be respected and valued.

⁶ For a concise summary of the central concerns of democratic schools, I rely on Beane and Apple in their article "The Case for Democratic Schools" (1995) which lists seven distinguishing features of a democratic learning environment: the open flow of ideas, faith in the ability of people to resolve problems, critical reflection, concern for the "common good," concern for the rights of all (including minorities), the understanding of democracy as "idealized" values to be lived, and the effort to organize public life in order to make it possible.

⁷ Democratic teaching is more than just a 'political' imperative because it must by its nature go beyond that which is prescriptive—for example, provincial/state mandates and local school board edicts.

⁸ See, for example, information on how character education is implemented in both the York District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board in Ontario at the following website address: <http://www.charactercommunity.com/education.htm>. Both school boards claim to have identified, through community consensus, ten main attributes that are reflective of personal, interpersonal and civic involvement: respect, responsibility, honesty, empathy, fairness, initiative, courage, integrity, perseverance, and optimism.

⁹ For more information on how Ontario teachers are evaluated, visit the following Ministry of Education website: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/appraise.html>.

¹⁰ Tom Donovan and Noel Martin, both former Directors of Education for the Toronto Catholic District School Board, consistently used the metaphor of servitude when addressing teachers (their "flock") and stressed the importance of obedience, especially in the context of leadership opportunities in the school board.

¹¹ Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebooks* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), pp. xxiii-xxiv.

¹² Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic*

Societies (South End Press, 1989), p. 2.

¹³ See for example, Dennis Cato's article, "Have Our Schools Kept Us Free?" and Henry Giroux, in particular the chapter titled "Authority, Ethics, and the Politics of Schooling" in *Schooling for Democracy: Critical Pedagogy in the Modern Age*.

¹⁴ Ontario Ministry of Education, *Teacher Performance Appraisal*, 2002.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), pp. 170-194.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

¹⁷ "Professional Learning Communities" workshop for school leaders, August 2004, Toronto, Canada.

¹⁸ C. Wien and C. Dudley-Marling, "Limited Vision: The Ontario Curriculum and Outcomes-Based Learning," *The Erosion of Democracy in Education: From Critique to Possibilities* (Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises, 2001), p. 105.

¹⁹ The Ontario Education, *Quality and Accountability Office* website can be found at www.eqao.com.

²⁰ Bill Hogarth, Director of Education for the York District School Board. Hogarth is adopting these two phrases as guiding principles for York region schools to work by and improve test scores in the next few years.

²¹ By referring to teachers who "model the status quo," I mean to describe those who, for example, teach to a provincial or state test.

²² Paulo Freire, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 74-86.

²³ Paulo Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987), p. 172.

²⁴ Paulo Freire, *Op. Cit.*, p. 53.

²⁵ Paulo Freire, "Reading the World and Reading the Word: An Interview with Paulo Freire," *Philosophy of Education: Introductory Readings* (Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 2001), p. 148.

²⁶ David A. Welton and John T. Mallan, *Children and their World*, 2nd Edition. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

²⁷ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communications Group Inc., 1979).

²⁸ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003), p. 84.

²⁹ Perry Marker, "Not Only By Our Words," in *Democratic Social Education: Social Studies for Social Change*, Ed. David Hursh and Ross, E. Wayne. (New York: Falmer Press, 2000), p. 144.

³⁰ Nina Wallenstein, "Problem-Posing Education: Freire's Method for Transformation," in *Freire for the Classroom*, Ed. Ira Shor, p. 35.

³¹ Paulo Freire, *Dialogues on Transforming Education* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987), p. 111.

³² Nina Wallenstein, *Op. Cit.*, p. 44.

³³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*. (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 1994), p. 79.

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