

# PART V

## *Race, Multiculturalism, and Education*

**R**ace and multiculturalism are two of the most important factors that define American culture and education. In the case of race, the importation of the first slaves to Jamestown in 1612 led to outcomes such as the Civil War and the civil rights movement. While race relations and equity have advanced significantly since the 1950s, there is still an underlying tension in American culture over racial issues. The wounds from this conflict, while healing, are nonetheless there.

Along with race, multiculturalism (which can include race) is a second important theme in American culture. We are, and continue to be, a nation of immigrants from wide and diverse backgrounds, not only European but also Asiatic and African. The inclusion of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Law 94-142) in this section of the book also recognizes that individuals with special needs represent another aspect of our culture's diversity.

As you read the pieces in this section, consider the following questions:

1. How has race shaped American education? How would American education be different if race were not a factor?
2. How do issues discussed earlier in this book, such as the hidden and null curriculum, have relevance in a racial context to what is, or has been, taught in the schools?

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3. What types of issues are raised for the educational system as a result of the widespread diversity found in American culture?
4. How do factors such as gender, race, and ethnicity combine to define students and, in turn, their educational experience?
5. Will American society eventually become such a “blended” culture that issues of race and ethnicity will no longer be relevant?

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## *Laws Prohibiting the Education of Slaves (1830–1832)*

In the early 1830s, laws were passed throughout the South making it illegal to educate slaves to read and write. Part of the motivation for this movement was a result of several slave rebellions, including the famous Nat Turner rebellion in 1831. In addition, there was a fear that Northern abolitionists would move into the South and foment rebellion among slave populations.

As you read the following excerpts from state laws, ask yourself the following questions:

1. What were the probable reasons for prohibiting literacy among slaves?
2. What were the probable long-term consequences of deliberately keeping slaves from becoming literate?
3. If text literacy was not permitted in slave culture, did other things likely take its place?
4. What is the relationship between literacy and power?

# 22

## *Laws Prohibiting the Education of Slaves (1830–1832)*

### **General Assembly of the State of North Carolina**

#### AN ACT TO PREVENT ALL PERSONS FROM TEACHING SLAVES TO READ OR WRITE, THE USE OF FIGURES EXCEPTED

Whereas the teaching of slaves to read and write, has a tendency to excite dissatisfaction in their minds, and to produce insurrection and rebellion, to the manifest injury of the citizens of this State: Therefore,

*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, and it is hereby enacted by the authority of the same,* That any free person, who shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any slave within the State to read or write, the use of figures excepted, or shall give or sell to such slave or slaves any books or pamphlets, shall be liable to indictment in any court of record in this State having jurisdiction thereof, and upon conviction, shall, at the discretion of the court, if a white man or woman, be fined not less than one hundred dollars, nor more than two hundred dollars, or imprisoned; and if a free person of color, shall be fined, imprisoned, or whipped, at the discretion of the court, not exceeding thirty nine lashes, nor less then twenty lashes.

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**Sources:** Acts Passed by the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina at the Session of 1830–1831 (Raleigh, N.C., 1831), p. 11; Acts Passed at a General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1830–1831 (Richmond, 1831), pp. 107–108; and Acts Passed at the Thirteenth Annual Session of the General Assembly of Alabama, 1831–1832 (Montgomery, Ala. 1832), p. 16.

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II. *Be it further enacted*, That if any slave shall hereafter teach, or attempt to teach, any other slave to read or write, the use of figures excepted, he or she may be carried before any justice of the peace, and on conviction thereof, shall be sentenced to receive thirty nine lashes on his or her bare back.

III. *Be it further enacted*, That the judges of the Superior Courts and the justices of the County Courts shall give this act in charge to the grand juries of their respective counties.

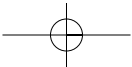
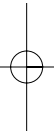
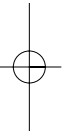
### **General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia**

5. *Be it further enacted*, That if any white person or persons assemble with free negroes or mulattoes, at a school-house, church, meeting-house, or other place for the purpose of instructing such free negroes or mulattoes to read or write, such person or persons shall, on conviction thereof, be fined in a sum not exceeding fifty dollars, and moreover may be imprisoned at the discretion of the jury, not exceeding two months.

6. *Be it further enacted*, That if any white person, for pay or compensation, shall assemble with any slaves for the purpose of teaching and shall teach any slave to read or write, such person, or any white person or persons contracting with such teacher, so to act, who shall offend as aforesaid, shall, for such offence, be fined at the discretion of a jury, in a sum not less than ten, not exceeding one hundred dollars, to be recovered on any information or indictment.

### **General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Alabama**

Sec. 10. *And be it further enacted*, That any person or persons who shall endeavor or attempt to teach any free person of color, or slave to spell, read, or write, shall upon conviction thereof by indictment, be fined in a sum not less than two hundred and fifty dollars nor more than five hundred dollars.



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## *“Industrial Education for the Negro” (1903)*

**B**y 1900, Booker T. Washington (1856–1915) had become the most prominent black leader in the United States. As head of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he argued for an accommodationist position in which American blacks would gradually achieve greater equality by making themselves indispensable to the economy. His views were in marked contrast to the more radical W. E. B. Du Bois, who called for the development of a black elite, or “Talented Tenth.”

As you read this selection, consider the following questions:

1. What should constitute the content of higher education?
2. Who is potentially served by Washington’s educational ideas?
3. What does Washington’s approach suggest about the creation of a social caste system in American culture?

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## *“Industrial Education for the Negro” (1903)*

*Booker T. Washington*

In what I say here I would not by any means have it understood that I would limit or circumscribe the mental development of the Negro student. No race can be lifted until its mind is awakened and strengthened. By the side of industrial training should always go mental and moral training, but the pushing of mere abstract knowledge into the head means little. We want more than the mere performance of mental gymnastics. Our knowledge must be harnessed to the things of real life. I would encourage the Negro to secure all the mental strength, all the mental culture—whether gleaned from science, mathematics, history, language or literature that his circumstances will allow, but I believe most earnestly that for years to come the education of the people of my race should be so directed that the greatest proportion of the mental strength of the masses will be brought to bear upon the every-day practical things of life, upon something that is needed to be done, and something which they will be permitted to do in the community in which they reside. . . .

I would teach the race that in industry the foundation must be laid—that the very best service which any one can render to what is called the higher education is to teach the present generation to provide a material or industrial foundation. On such a foundation as this will grow habits of thrift, a love of economy, ownership of property, bank accounts. Out of it in the future will grow practical education, professional education, positions of public responsibility. Out of it will grow moral and religious strength. Out of it will grow

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Source: Washington, Booker T. 1903. “Industrial Education for the Negro.” *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*, edited by Booker T. Washington et al., 16–23, 28–29. New York: James Pott.



wealth from which alone can come leisure and the opportunity for the enjoyment of literature and the fine arts . . .

I would set no limits to the attainments of the Negro in arts, in letters or statesmanship, but I believe the surest way to reach those ends is by laying the foundation in the little things of life that lie immediately about one's door. I plead for industrial education and development for the Negro not because I want to cramp him, but because I want to free him. I want to see him enter the all-powerful business and commercial world. . . .

Early in the history of the Tuskegee Institute we began to combine industrial training with mental and moral culture. Our first efforts were in the direction of agriculture, and we began teaching this with no appliances except one hoe and a blind mule. From this small beginning we have grown until now the Institute owns two thousand acres of land, eight hundred of which are cultivated each year by the young men of the school. We began teaching wheelwrighting and blacksmithing in a small way to the men, and laundry work, cooking and sewing and housekeeping to the young women. The fourteen hundred and over young men and women who attended the school during the last school year received instruction -in addition to academic and religious training-in thirty-three trades and industries, including carpentry, blacksmithing, printing, wheelwrighting, harnessmaking, painting, machinery, founding, shoemaking, brickmasonry and brickmaking, plastering, sawmilling, tinsmithing, tailoring, mechanical and architectural drawing, electrical and steam engineering, canning, sewing, dress-making, millinery, cooking, laundering, housekeeping, mattress making, basketry, nursing, agriculture, dairying and stock raising, horticulture.

Not only do the students receive instruction in these trades, but they do actual work, by means of which more than half of them pay some part or all of their expenses while remaining at the school. Of the sixty buildings belonging to the school all but four were almost wholly erected by the students as a part of their industrial education. Even the bricks which go into the walls are made by students in the school's brick yard, in which, last year, they manufactured two million bricks . . .

I close, then, as I began, by saying that as a slave the Negro was worked, and that as a freeman he must learn to work. There is still doubt in many quarters as to the ability of the Negro unguided, unsupported, to hew his own path and put into visible, tangible, indisputable form, products and signs of civilization. This doubt cannot be much affected by abstract arguments, no matter how delicately and convincingly woven together. Patiently, quietly, doggedly, persistently, through summer and winter, sunshine and shadow, by self-sacrifice, by foresight, by honesty and industry, we must re-enforce argument with results. One farm bought, one house built, one home sweetly and intelligently kept, one man who is the largest tax payer or has the largest bank account, one school or church maintained, one factory running successfully,

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one truck garden profitably cultivated, one patient cured by a Negro doctor, one sermon well preached, one office well filled, one life cleanly lived-these will tell more in our favor than all the abstract eloquence that can be summoned to plead our cause. Our pathway must be up through the soil, up through swamps, up through forests, up through the streams, the rocks, up through commerce, education and religion!

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## *“The Talented Tenth” (1903)*

“**T**he Talented Tenth” is among the most important early essays of the black social and political activist W. E. B. Du Bois (1869–1963). It was published late in 1903 as the second chapter in a collection of articles titled *The Negro Problem* and in the following year in Du Bois’s book, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois proposed the conscious creation, through education, of a black elite. Interestingly, while he objected to white domination of black people, he does not seem to have considered the possibility that a black elite, or “Talented Tenth,” could have had their own class and social biases that did not necessarily conform with the needs and interests of the black “masses.”

Du Bois’s distance from the black masses is clear. Toward the end of this essay, he asks,

Can the masses of the Negro people be in any possible way more quickly raised than by the effort and example of this aristocracy of talent and character? Was there ever a nation on God’s fair earth civilized from the bottom upward? Never; it is, ever was and ever will be from the top downward that culture filters. The Talented Tenth rises and pulls all that are worth the saving up to their vantage ground. This is the history of human progress.

1. Socioeconomic class issues are largely ignored in American culture. What are the implications of Du Bois’s ideas about the Talented Tenth, in terms of class?
2. What are the advantages and limitations of Du Bois’s model?
3. How does Du Bois’s model compare with those of a figure such as Booker T. Washington?

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## *"The Talented Tenth" (1903)*

*W. E. B. Du Bois*

**T**he Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races. Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men. Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools—intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it—this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life. On this foundation we may build bread winning, skill of hand and quickness of brain, with never a fear lest the child and man mistake the means of living for the object of life.

If this be true—and who can deny it—three tasks lay before me; first to show from the past that the Talented Tenth as they have risen among American Negroes have been worthy of leadership; secondly to show how these men may be educated and developed; and thirdly to show their relation to the Negro problem.

You misjudge us because you do not know us. From the very first it has been the educated and intelligent of the Negro people that have led and elevated the mass, and the sole obstacles that nullified and retarded their efforts were slavery and race prejudice; for what is slavery but the legalized survival of

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**Source:** Du Bois, W. E. B. "The Talented Tenth." *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*, edited by Booker T. Washington et al., Chap. 2. New York: James Potts.

the unfit and the nullification of the work of natural internal leadership? Negro leadership therefore sought from the first to rid the race of this awful incubus that it might make way for natural selection and the survival of the fittest. . . .

How then shall the leaders of a struggling people be trained and the hands of the risen few strengthened? There can be but one answer: The best and most capable of their youth must be schooled in the colleges and universities of the land. We will not quarrel as to just what the university of the Negro should teach or how it should teach it—I willingly admit that each soul and each race-soul needs its own peculiar curriculum. But this is true: A university is a human invention for the transmission of knowledge and culture from generation to generation, through the training of quick minds and pure hearts, and for this work no other human invention will suffice, not even trade and industrial schools.

All men cannot go to college but some men must; every isolated group or nation must have its yeast, must have for the talented few centers of training where men are not so mystified and befuddled by the hard and necessary toil of earning a living, as to have no aims higher than their bellies, and no God greater than Gold. This is true training, and thus in the beginning were the favored sons of the freedmen trained. Out of the colleges of the North came, after the blood of war, Ware, Cravath, Chase, Andrews, Bumstead and Spence to build the foundations of knowledge and civilization in the black South. Where ought they to have begun to build? At the bottom, of course, quibbles the mole with his eyes in the earth. Aye! truly at the bottom, at the very bottom; at the bottom of knowledge, down in the very depths of knowledge there where the roots of justice strike into the lowest soil of Truth. And so they did begin; they founded colleges, and up from the colleges shot normal schools, and out from the normal schools went teachers, and around the normal teachers clustered other teachers to teach the public schools; the college trained in Greek and Latin and mathematics, 2,000 men; and these men trained full 50,000 others in morals and manners, and they in turn taught thrift and the alphabet to nine millions of men, who today hold \$300,000,000 of property. It was a miracle—the most wonderful peace-battle of the 19th century, and yet today men smile at it, and in fine superiority tell us that it was all a strange mistake; that a proper way to found a system of education is first to gather the children and buy them spelling books and hoes; afterward men may look about for teachers, if haply they may find them; or again they would teach men Work, but as for Life—why, what has Work to do with Life, they ask vacantly. . . .

The problem of training the Negro is today immensely complicated by the fact that the whole question of the efficiency and appropriateness of our present systems of education, for any kind of child, is a matter of active debate, in which final settlement seems still afar off. Consequently it often happens that persons arguing for or against certain systems of education for Negroes,

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have these controversies in mind and miss the real question at issue. The main question, so far as the Southern Negro is concerned, is: What under the present circumstance, must a system of education do in order to raise the Negro as quickly as possible in the scale of civilization? The answer to this question seems to me clear: It must strengthen the Negro's character, increase his knowledge and teach him to earn a living. Now it goes without saying that it is hard to do all these things simultaneously or suddenly and that at the same time it will not do to give all the attention to one and neglect the others; we could give black boys trades, but that alone will not civilize a race of ex-slaves; we might simply increase their knowledge of the world, but this would not necessarily make them wish to use this knowledge honestly; we might seek to strengthen character and purpose, but to what end if this people have nothing to eat or to wear? A system of education is not one thing, nor does it have a single definite object, nor is it a mere matter of schools. Education is that whole system of human training within and without the school house walls, which molds and develops men. If then we start out to train an ignorant and unskilled people with a heritage of bad habits, our system of training must set before itself two great aims—the one dealing with knowledge and character, the other part seeking to give the child the technical knowledge necessary for him to earn a living under the present circumstances. These objects are accomplished in part by the opening of the common schools on the one, and of the industrial schools on the other. But only in part, for there must also be trained those who are to teach these schools—men and women of knowledge and culture and technical skill who understand modern civilization, and have the training and aptitude to impart it to the children under them. There must be teachers, and teachers of teachers, and to attempt to establish any sort of a system of common and industrial school training, without *first* (and I say *first* advisedly) without *first* providing for the higher training of the very best teachers, is simply throwing your money to the winds. School houses do not teach themselves—piles of brick and mortar and machinery do not send out *men*. It is the trained, living human soul, cultivated and strengthened by long study and thought, that breathes the real breath of life into boys and girls and makes them human, whether they be black or white, Greek, Russian or American. Nothing, in these latter days, has so dampened the faith of thinking Negroes in recent educational movements, as the fact that such movements have been accompanied by ridicule and denouncement and decrying of those very institutions of higher training which made the Negro public school possible, and make Negro industrial schools thinkable. It was: Fisk, Atlanta, Howard and Straight, those colleges born of the faith and sacrifice of the abolitionists, that placed in the black schools of the South the 30,000 teachers and more, which some, who depreciate the work of these higher schools, are using to teach their own new experiments. If Hampton, Tuskegee and the hundred other industrial

schools prove in the future to be as successful as they deserve to be, then their success in training black artisans for the South, will be due primarily to the white colleges of the North and the black colleges of the South, which trained the teachers who today conduct these institutions. There was a time when the American people believed pretty devoutly that a log of wood with a boy at one end and Mark Hopkins at the other, represented the highest ideal of human training. But in these eager days it would seem that we have changed all that and think it necessary to add a couple of saw-mills and a hammer to this outfit, and, at a pinch, to dispense with the services of Mark Hopkins. I would not deny, or for a moment seem to deny, the paramount necessity of teaching the Negro to work, and to work steadily and skillfully; or seem to depreciate in the slightest degree the important part industrial schools must play in the accomplishment of these ends, but I *do* say, and insist upon it, that it is industrialism drunk with its vision of success, to imagine that its own work can be accomplished without providing for the training of broadly cultured men and women to teach its own teachers, and to teach the teachers of the public schools.

But I have already said that human education is not simply a matter of schools; it is much more a matter of family and group life—the training of one's home, of one's daily companions, of one's social class. Now the black boy of the South moves in a black world—a world with its own leaders, its own thoughts, its own ideals. In this world he gets by far the larger part of his life training, and through the eyes of this dark world he peers into the veiled world beyond. Who guides and determines the education which he receives in his world? His teachers here are the group-leaders of the Negro people—the physicians and clergymen, the trained fathers and mothers, the influential and forceful men about him of all kinds; here it is, if at all, that the culture of the surrounding world trickles through and is handed on by the graduates of the higher schools. Can such culture training of group leaders be neglected? Can we afford to ignore it? Do you think that if the leaders of thought among Negroes are not trained and educated thinkers, that they will have no leaders? On the contrary a hundred half-trained demagogues will still hold the places they so largely occupy now, and hundreds of vociferous busy-bodies will multiply. You have no choice; either you must help furnish this race from within its own ranks with thoughtful men of trained leadership, or you must suffer the evil consequences of a headless misguided rabble.

I am an earnest advocate of manual training and trade teaching for black boys, and for white boys, too. I believe that next to the founding of Negro colleges the most valuable addition to Negro education since the war has been industrial training for black boys. Nevertheless, I insist that the object of all true education is not to make men carpenters, it is to make carpenters men; there are two means of making the carpenter a man, each equally important:

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the first is to give the group and community in which he works, liberally trained teachers and leaders to teach him and his family what life means; the second is to give him sufficient intelligence and technical skill to make him an efficient workman; the first object demands the Negro college and college-bred men—not a quantity of such colleges, but a few of excellent quality; not too many college-bred men, but enough to leaven the lump, to inspire the masses, to raise the Talented Tenth to leadership; the second object demands a good system of common schools, well-taught, conveniently located and properly equipped. . . .

Men of America, the problem is plain before you. Here is a race transplanted through the criminal foolishness of your fathers. Whether you like it or not the millions are here, and here they will remain. If you do not lift them up, they will pull you down. Education and work are the levers to uplift a people. Work alone will not do it unless inspired by the right ideals and guided by intelligence. Education must not simply teach work—it must teach Life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this work and Negro colleges must train men for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.



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## *“A Talk to Teachers” (1963)*

**“A** Talk to Teachers” was first given as a speech in 1963 by the black novelist and political activist James Baldwin (1924–1987). Baldwin’s essay was remarkably prophetic. In it, he brought to light the discrepancy between the United States’ heroic vision of itself and the actual treatment of African Americans in the United States.

Baldwin also asks how the educational system can reconcile the racism of the culture and the need of schools to teach its students to question what is around them. He called for black students to develop an understanding of their history and culture, separate, or at least differentiated, from that of the mainstream culture.

As you read this essay, consider the following questions:

1. If schools, to a certain degree, socialize and acculturate students, what responsibility do teachers have to their students if the culture is unjust or discriminatory?
2. How important is it for historically oppressed groups such as African Americans to have access to their history?

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## *“A Talk to Teachers” (1963)*

*James Baldwin*

Let's begin by saying that we are living through a very dangerous time. Everyone in this room is in one way or another aware of that. We are in a revolutionary situation, no matter how unpopular that word has become in this country. The society in which we live is desperately menaced, not by Khrushchev, but from within. So any citizen of this country who figures himself as responsible—and particularly those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young people—must be prepared to “go for broke.” Or to put it another way, you must understand that in the attempt to correct so many generations of bad faith and cruelty, when it is operating not only in the classroom but in society, you will meet the most fantastic, the most brutal, and the most determined resistance. There is no point in pretending that this won't happen. Now, since I am talking to schoolteachers and I am not a teacher myself, and in some ways am fairly easily intimidated, I beg you to let me leave that and go back to what I think to be the entire purpose of education in the first place. It would seem to me that when a child is born, if I'm the child's parent, it is my obligation and my high duty to civilize that child. Man is a social animal. He cannot exist without a society. A society, in turn, depends on certain things which everyone within that society takes for granted. Now, the crucial paradox which confronts us here is that the whole process of education occurs within a social framework and is designed to perpetuate the aims of society. Thus, for example, the boys and girls who were born during the era of the Third Reich, when educated to the purpose of the Third Reich, became barbarians. The paradox of education is precisely this; that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated. The purpose of education finally, is to create [in] a person the ability to look at the world for

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Source: Baldwin, James. 1963, December 21. *Saturday Review*, 44 (28): 42–44.

himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or white, to decided for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with these questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, that society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it - at no matter what risk. This is the only way societies change. Now, if what I have tried to sketch has any validity, it becomes thoroughly clear, at least to me, that any Negro who is born in this country and undergoes the American educational system runs the risk of becoming schizophrenic. On the one hand he is born in the shadow of the stars and stripes, and he is assured it represents a nation which has never lost a war. He pledges allegiance to that flag which guarantees "liberty and justice for all." He is part of a country in which anyone can become President, and so forth. But on the other hand he is also assured by his country and his countrymen that he has never contributed anything to civilization - that his past is nothing more than a record of humiliations gladly endured. He is assured by the republic that he, his father, his mother, and his ancestors were happy shiftless, watermelon-eating darkies who loved Mr. Charlie and Miss Ann, that the value he has as a black man is proven by one thing only - his devotion to white people. If you think I am exaggerating, examine the myths which proliferate in this country about Negroes. Now all this enters the child's consciousness much sooner than we as adults would like to think it does. As adults, we are easily fooled because we are so anxious to be fooled. But children are very difficult. Children, not yet aware that it is dangerous to look too deeply at anything, look at everything, have the vocabulary to express what they see, and we, their elders, know how to intimidate them very easily and very soon. But a black child, looking at the world around him, though he cannot know quite what to make of it, is aware that there is a reason why his mother works so hard, why his father is always on edge. He is aware that there is some reason why, if he sits down in the front of the bus, his father or mother drags him to the back of the bus. He is aware that there is some terrible weight on his parent's shoulders which menaces him. And it isn't long - in fact it begins very early - when he is in school - before he discovers the shape of his oppression. Let us say that the child is seven years old and I am his father, and I decide to take him to the zoo, or to Madison Square Garden, or to the U.N. Building, or to any of the tremendous monuments we find all over New York. We get into the bus and we go from where I live on 131st Street and Seventh Avenue downtown through the park and we get into New York City, which is not Harlem. Now, where the boy lives - even if it is a housing project - is in an undesirable neighborhood. If he lives in one of those housing projects of which everyone in New York is

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so proud he has at his front door, if not closer, the pimps, the whores, the junkies - in a word, the danger of life in the ghetto. And the child knows this, though he doesn't know why. I still remember my first sight of New York. It was really another city when I was born - where I was born. We looked down over the Park Avenue meant downtown. The Park Avenue I grew up on, which is still standing, is dark and dirty. No one would dream of opening a Tiffany's on that Park Avenue, and when you go downtown you discover that you are literally in the white world. It is rich or at least it looks rich. It is clean—because they collect garbage downtown. There are doormen. People walk about as though they own the world—and indeed they do. And it's a great shock. It's very hard to relate yourself to this. You don't know what is for you. You know this before you are told. And who it is for and who is paying for it? And why isn't it for you?

Later on when you become a grocery boy or messenger and you try to enter one of those buildings a man says, "Go to the back door." Still later, if you happen to have a friend in one of those buildings, the man says, "Where's your package?" Now this is by no means the core of the matter. What I'm trying to get at is that by the time the Negro child has had effectively, almost all the doors of opportunity shut in his face, and there are very few things he can do about it. He can more or less accept it with an absolutely inarticulate and dangerous rage inside—all the more dangerous because it is never expressed. It is precisely those silent people whom white people see every day of their lives - I mean your porter and your maid, who never say anything more than "Yes Sir" and "No Ma'am." They will tell you it's raining if that is what you want to hear, and they will tell you the sun is shining if that is what you want to hear. They really hate you—really hate you because in their eyes (and they're right) you stand between them and life. I want to come back to that in a moment. It is the most sinister of the facts, I think, which we now face. There is something else the Negro child can do, too. Every street boy—and I was street boy, so I know—looking at the society which has produced him, looking at the standards of that society which are not honored by anybody, looking at your churches and the government and the politicians, understands that this structure is operated for someone else's benefit - not for his. And there's no room in it for him. If he is really cunning, really ruthless, really strong and many of us are—he becomes a kind of criminal. He becomes a criminal because that's the only way that he can live. Harlem and every other ghetto in this city—every ghetto in this country—is full of people who live outside the law. They wouldn't dream of calling a policeman. They wouldn't for a moment, listen to any of those professions of which we are so proud of on the Fourth of July. They have turned away from this country totally and forever. They live by their wits and really long to see the day when the entire structure comes down. The point of all this is that black men were brought here as a source of cheap labor. They were indispensable to

the economy. In order to justify the fact that men were treated as though they were animals, the white republic had to brainwash itself into believing that they were indeed animals and deserved to be treated like animals. Therefore it is impossible for any Negro child to discover anything about his actual history. The reason is that this “animal,” once he starts to suspect his own worth, once he starts believing that he is a man, has begun to attack the entire power structure. This is why America has spent such a long time keeping the Negro in his place. What I am trying to suggest to you is that it was not an accident, it was not an act of God, it was not a well-meaning people muddling into something which they didn’t understand. It was a deliberate policy hammered into place in order to make money from black flesh. And now, in 1963, because we have never faced this fact, we are in intolerable trouble. The Reconstruction, as I read the evidence, was a bargain between the North and South to this effect: “We’ve liberated them from the land—and delivered them to the bosses.” When we left Mississippi to come North we did not come to freedom. We came to the bottom of the labor market, and we are still there. Even the Depression of the 1930’s failed to make a dent in Negroes’ relationship to white workers in the labor unions. Even today, so brainwashed is this republic that people seriously ask in what they suppose to be good faith, “What does the Negro want?” I’ve heard a great many asinine questions in my life, but that is perhaps the most insulting. But the point here is that people who ask that question, thinking that they ask it in good faith, are really the victims of this conspiracy to make Negroes believe that they are less than human. In order for me to live, I decided very early that some mistake had been made somewhere. I was not a “nigger” even though you called me one. But if I was a “nigger” in your eyes, there was something about you—there was something you needed. I had to realize when I was very young that I was none of those things I was told I was. I was not, for example, happy. I never touched a watermelon for all kinds of reasons. I had been invented by white people, and I knew enough life by this time to understand that whatever you invent, whatever you project is you! So where we are now is that a whole country of people believe I’m a “nigger,” and I *Don’t*, and the battle’s on! Because if I am not what I’ve been told that I am, then it means that you are not what you thought you were either! And that is the crises.

It is not really a “Negro” revolution that is upsetting this country. What is upsetting the country is a sense of its own identity. If, for example, one managed to change the curriculum in all the schools so that Negroes learned more about themselves and their real contributions to this culture, you would be liberating not only Negroes, you’d be liberating white people who know nothing about their own history. And the reason is that if you are compelled to lie about one aspect of anybody’s history, you must lie about all. If you have to lie about

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my real role here, if you have to pretend that I hoed all that cotton just because I loved you, then you have done something to yourself. You are mad.

Now let's go back a minute. I talked earlier about those silent people—the porter and the maid—who, as I said, don't look up at the sky if you ask them if it is raining, but look into your face. My ancestors and I were very well trained. We understood very early that this was not a Christian nation. It didn't matter what you said or how often you went to church. My father and my mother and my grandfather and my grandmother knew that Christians didn't act this way. It was as simple as that. And if that were so there was no point in dealing with white people in terms of their own moral professions, for they were not going to honor them. What one did was to turn away, smiling all the time, and tell white people what they wanted to hear. But people always accuse you of reckless talk when you talk like this. All this means that there are in this country tremendous reservoirs of bitterness which have never been able to find an outlet, but may find an outlet soon. It means that well meaning white liberals place themselves in great danger when they try to deal with Negroes as though they were missionaries. It means, in brief, that a great price is demanded to liberate all those silent people so that they can breathe for the first time and tell you what they think of you. And a price is demanded to liberate all those white children—some of them near forty—who have never grown up, and who never will grow up, because they have no sense of their identity.

What passes for identity in America is a series of myths about one's heroic ancestors. It's astounding to me, for example, that so many people really appear to believe that the country was founded by a band of heroes who wanted to be free. That happens not to be true. What happened was that some people left Europe because they couldn't stay any longer and had to go someplace else to make it. That's all. They were hungry, they were poor, they were convicts. Those who were making it in England, for example did not on the Mayflower. That's how the country was settled. Not by Gary Cooper. Yet we have a whole race of people, a whole republic who believe the myths to the point where even today they select political representatives, as far as I can tell by how closely they resemble Gary Cooper. Now this is dangerously infantile, and it shows in every level of national life. When I was living in Europe, for example, one of the worst revelations to me was the way Americans walked around Europe buying this and buying that and insulting everybody—not even out of malice, just because they didn't know any better. Well, that is the way they have always treated me. They weren't cruel, they just didn't know that you were alive. They didn't know you had any feelings. What I am trying to suggest here is that in the doing of all this for 100 years or more, it is the white American man who has long since lost his grip on reality. In some peculiar way having created this myth about Negroes, and the myth about his own history, he created myths about the

world so that for example he was astounded by the fact that some people could prefer Castro, astounded that there are people in the world who don't go into hiding when they hear the word "Communism" astounded that Communism is one of the realities of the twentieth century which we will not overcome by pretending that it does not exist. The political level in this country now, on the part of people who should know better, is abysmal. The Bible says somewhere that where there is no vision the people perish. I don't think anyone can doubt that in this country today we are menaced - intolerably menaced—by a lack of vision.

It is inconceivable that a sovereign people should continue, as we do so abjectly, to say, "I can't do anything about it. It's the government." The government is the creation of the people. It is responsible to the people. And the people are responsible for it. No American has the right to allow the present government to say, when Negro children are being bombed and hosed and shot and beaten all over the deep South, that there is nothing we can do about it. There must have been a day in this country's life when the bombing of four children in Sunday School would have created a public uproar and endangered the life of Governor Wallace. It happened here and there was no public uproar.

I began by saying that one of the paradoxes of education was that precisely at the point when you begin to develop a conscience, you must find yourself at war with your society. It is your responsibility to change society if you think of yourself as an educated person. And on the basis of the evidence—the moral and political evidence—one is compelled to say that this is a backward society. Now if I were a teacher in this school, or any Negro school, and I were dealing with Negro children, who were in my care only a few hours of every day and would then return to their homes and to the streets, children who have an apprehension of their future which every hour grows darker and grimmer, I would try to teach them—I would try to make them know—that those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies by which they are surrounded, are criminal. I would try to make each child know that these things are the result of a criminal conspiracy to destroy them. I would teach him that if he intends to get to be a man, he must at once decide that he is stronger than this conspiracy and that he must never make his peace with it. And that one of his weapons for destroying it depends on what he thinks he is worth. I would teach him that there are currently few standards in this country which are worth a man's respect. That it is up to him to begin to change these standards for the sake of the life of this country. I would suggest to him that the popular culture—as represented for example, on television and in comic books and in movies—is based on fantasies created by very ill people, and he must be aware that these are fantasies and they have nothing to do with reality. I would teach him that the press he reads is not as free as it says it is—and that he can do something about that, too. I would try to make him know that just as

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American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has every said about it, so is the world larger, more daring, more beautiful and more terrible, but principally larger—and that it belongs to him. I would teach him that he doesn't have to be bound by the experiences of any given policy, any given time—that he has the right and the necessity to examine everything. I would try to show him that one has not learned anything about Castro when one says, "He is a Communist." This is a way of not learning something about Castro, something about Cuba, something in fact about the world. I would suggest to him that he is living, at the moment, in an enormous province. America is not the world and if America is going to become a nation, she must find a way—and this child must help her to find a way—to use the tremendous potential and tremendous energy that this child represents. If this country does not find a way to use that energy, it will be destroyed by that energy.



# 26

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## *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*

(Public Law 94-142, November 29, 1975)

**T**he Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), represents a radical redefinition of the federal government's role in providing equal educational opportunity for students with special needs. The most important section of the legislation is that which requires that students with special needs be taught "to the maximum extent appropriate" in the same classrooms with mainstream students and that every student with special needs be provided an individualized education program.

As you read this selection, consider the following questions:

1. How does the work of the average classroom teacher change as a result of the implementation of public laws such as 94-142?
2. What does the passage of a law like 94-142 suggest about changing attitudes toward individuals with special needs and the ways they should be educated?

# 26

## *Education for All Handicapped Children Act*

(Public Law 94-142, November 29, 1975)

*Congress of the United States of America*

**T**he Congress finds that—

1. there are more than eight million handicapped children in the United States today;
2. the special educational needs of such children are not being fully met;
3. more than half of the handicapped children in the United States do not receive appropriate educational services which would enable them to have full equality of opportunity;
4. one million of the handicapped children in the United States are excluded entirely from the public school system and will not go through the educational process with their peers;
5. there are many handicapped children throughout the United States participating in regular school programs whose handicaps prevent them from having a successful educational experience because their handicaps are undetected;

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**Source:** Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142. November 29, 1975. Available at <http://asclepius.com/angel/special.html>

Education for All Handicapped Children Act 207

6. because of the lack of adequate services within the public school system, families are often forced to find services outside of the public school system, often at great distance from their residence and at their own expense;

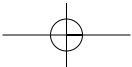
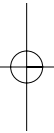
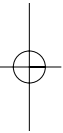
7. developments in the training of teachers and in diagnostic and instructional procedures and methods have advanced to the point that, given appropriate funding, State and local educational agencies can and will provide effective special education and related services to meet the needs of handicapped children;

8. State and local educational agencies have a responsibility to provide education for all handicapped children, but present financial resources are inadequate to meet the special educational needs of handicapped children; and

9. it is in the national interest that the Federal Government assist State and local efforts to provide programs to meet the educational needs of handicapped children in order to assure equal protection of the law.

It is the purpose of this Act to assure that all handicapped children have available to them . . . a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs, to assure that the rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected, to assist States and localities to provide for the education of all handicapped children, and to assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate handicapped children. . . .

The State has established . . . procedures to assure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature of severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily, and procedures to assure that testing and evaluation materials and procedures utilized for the purposes of evaluation and placement of handicapped children will be selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory. Such materials or procedures shall be provided and administered in the child's native language or mode of communication, unless it clearly is not feasible to do so, and no single procedure shall be the sole criterion for determining an appropriate educational program for a child.



# 27

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## *“Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism” (1988)*

In “Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism,” Henry Giroux (1943– ) argues for the need to teach students to read the different “cultural codes, experiences and languages” that make up American culture. According to Giroux, border pedagogy suggests a model of teaching and learning

which does more than provide students with a language and context by which to critically engage the plurality of habits, practices, experiences, and desires that define them as part of a particular social formation within ongoing relations of domination and resistance. Border pedagogy provides opportunities for teachers to deepen their own understanding of the discourse of various others in order to effect a more dialectical understanding of their own politics, values, and pedagogy.

Giroux’s model clearly calls for teachers to become more critically and politically engaged in their work.

As you read the following article, consider these questions:

1. What are the implications of border pedagogy for the work teachers do in classrooms?
2. To what extent is teaching a cultural act?
3. To what extent is teaching a political act?
4. From a cultural point of view, can teaching be neutral?

# 27

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## *“Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism” (1988)*

*Henry Giroux*

**B**order pedagogy offers the opportunity for students to engage the multiple references that constitute different cultural codes, experiences, and languages. This means educating students not only to read these codes critically but also to learn the limits of such codes, including the ones they use to construct their own narratives and histories. Partiality becomes, in this case, the basis for recognizing the limits built into all discourses and necessitates taking a critical view of authority. Within this discourse, a student must engage knowledge as a border-crosser, as a person moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power (Hicks, 1988). These are not only physical borders, they are cultural borders historically constructed and socially organized within maps of rules and regulations that limit and enable particular identities, individual capacities, and social forms. In this case, students cross over into borders of meaning, maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations which organize them become destabilized and reshaped. Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps. The terrain of learning becomes inextricably linked to the shifting parameters of place, identity, history, and power.

Within critical social theory, it has become commonplace to argue that knowledge and power are related, though the weight of the argument has often overemphasized how domination works through the intricacies of this relationship (Foucault, 1977b). Border pedagogy offers a crucial theoretical and political corrective to this insight. It does so by shifting the emphasis of the

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**Source:** Giroux, Henry. 1988. “Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism.” *Journal of Education*, 170, 162–181.

knowledge/power relationship away from the limited emphasis on the mapping of domination to the politically strategic issue of engaging the ways in which knowledge can be remapped, reterritorialized, and decentered in the wider interests of rewriting the borders and coordinates of an oppositional cultural politics. This is not an abandonment of critique as much as it is an extension of its possibilities. In this case, border pedagogy not only incorporates the post-modern emphasis on criticizing official texts and using alternative modes of representation (mixing video, photography, and print), it also incorporates popular culture as a serious object of politics and analysis and makes central to its project the recovery of those forms of knowledge and history that characterize alternative and oppositional Others (Said, 1983). How these cultural practices might be taken up as pedagogical practices has been demonstrated by a number of theorists (Brodkey & Fine, 1988; Cherryholmes, 1988; Giroux & Simon, 1988; Scholes, 1985).

For example, Robert Scholes (1985) develops elements of a "border pedagogy" around the notion of textual power. According to Scholes, texts have to be seen in historical and temporal terms and not treated as a sacred vehicle for producing eternal truths. Instead of simply imparting information to students, Scholes argues that teachers should replace teaching texts with what he calls textuality. What this refers to pedagogically is a process of textual study that can be identified by three forms of practice: reading, interpretation, and criticism, which roughly correspond to what Scholes calls reading within, upon, and against a text. In brief, reading within a text means identifying the cultural codes that structure an author's work. But it also has the pedagogical value of illuminating further how such codes function as part of a student's own attempt "to produce written texts that are 'within' the world constructed by their reading" (p. 27). This is particularly important, Scholes adds, in giving students the opportunity to "retell the story, to summarize it, and to expand it." Interpretation means reading a text along with a variety of diverse interpretations that represent a second commentary on the text. At issue here is the pedagogical task of helping students to analyze texts within "a network of relations with other texts and institutional practices" so as to make available to students "the whole intertextual system of relations that connects one text to others—a system that will finally include the student's own writing" (Scholes, 1985, p. 30). The first two stages of Scholes's pedagogical practice are very important because they demonstrate the need for students to sufficiently engage and disrupt the text. He wants students to read the text in terms that the author might have intended so as not to make the text merely a mirror image of the student's own subjective position, but at the same time he wants students to open the text up to a wide variety of readings so it can be "sufficiently other for us to interpret it and, especially to criticize it" (Scholes, 1985, p. 39). Finally, Scholes wants students to explode the cultural codes of the text through the assertion

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of the reader's own textual power, to analyze the text in terms of its absences, to free "ourselves from [the] text [by] finding a position outside the assumptions upon which the text is based" (p. 62). Scholes combines the best of postmodern criticism with a notion of modernity in his notion of pedagogy. He wants, on the one hand, to engage texts as semiotic objects, but on the other hand he employs a modernist concern for history by arguing that the point of such an interrogation is to "liberate us from the empirical object—whether institution, even, or individual work—by displacing our attention to its constitution as an object and its relationship to the other objects constituted" (Scholes, 1985, p. 84).

Another example of how a postmodern pedagogy of resistance might inform the notion of border pedagogy can be found in some of the recent work being done on educational theory and popular culture (Giroux & Simon, 1988; Giroux & Simon, 1989). Two important issues are being worked out. First, there is a central concern for understanding how the production of meaning is tied to emotional investments and the production of pleasure. In this view, it is necessary for teachers to incorporate into their pedagogies a theoretical understanding of how the production of meaning and pleasure become mutually constitutive of who students are, how they view themselves, and how they construct a particular vision of their future. Second, rethinking the nature of how students make semantic and emotional investments needs to be theorized within a number of important pedagogical considerations. One such consideration is that the production and regulation of desire must be seen as a crucial aspect of how students mediate, relate, resist, and create particular cultural forms and forms of knowing. Another concern is that popular culture be seen as a legitimate aspect of the everyday lives of students and be analyzed as a primary force in shaping the various and often contradictory subject positions that students take up. Finally, popular culture needs to become a serious object of study in the official curriculum. This can be done by treating popular culture either as a distinct object of study within particular academic disciplines such as media studies or by drawing upon the resources it produces for engaging various aspects of the official curriculum (Giroux & Simon, 1988).

In both of these examples, important elements of a border pedagogy informed by postmodern criticism point to ways in which those master narratives based on white, patriarchal, and class-specific versions of the world can be challenged critically and effectively deterritorialized. That is, by offering a theoretical language for establishing new boundaries with respect to knowledge most often associated with the margins and the periphery of the cultural dominant, postmodern discourses open up the possibility for incorporating into the curriculum a notion of border pedagogy in which cultural and social practices need no longer be mapped or referenced solely on the basis of the dominant models of Western culture. In this case, knowledge forms emanating from the



margins can be used to redefine the complex, multiple, heterogeneous realities that constitute those relations of difference that make up the experiences of students who often find it impossible to define their identities through the cultural and political codes of a single, unitary culture.

The sensibility which informs this view of knowledge emphasizes a pedagogy in which students need to develop a relationship of non-identity with respect to their own subject positions and the multiple cultural, political, and social codes which constitute established boundaries of power, dependency, and possibility. In other words, such a pedagogy emphasizes the non-synchronous relationship between one's social position and the multiple ways in which culture is constructed and read. That is, there is no single, predetermined relationship between a cultural code and the subject position that a student occupies. One's class, racial, gender, or ethnic position may influence but does not irrevocably predetermine how one takes up a particular ideology, reads a particular text, or responds to particular forms of oppression. Border pedagogy recognizes that teachers, students, and others often "read and write culture on multiple levels" (Kaplan, 1987, p. 187). Of course, the different subject positions and forms of subjugation that are constituted within these various levels and relations of culture have the potential to isolate and alienate instead of opening up the possibility for criticism and struggle. What is at stake here is developing a border pedagogy that can fruitfully work to break down those ideologies, cultural codes, and social practices that prevent students from recognizing how social forms at particular historical conjunctures operate to repress alternative readings of their own experiences, society, and the world.

### **Border Pedagogy as Counter-Memory**

Postmodernism charts the process of deterritorialization as part of the breakdown of master narratives. It celebrates, in part, the loss of certainty and experience of defamiliarization even as it produces alienation and the displacement of identities (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986). In opposition to conservative readings of this shifting destabilizing process, I believe that such a disruption of traditional meaning offers important insights for developing a theory of border pedagogy based on a postmodernism of resistance. But this language runs the risk of undercutting its own political possibilities by ignoring how a language of difference can be articulated with critical modernist concerns for developing a discourse of public life. It also ignores the possibilities for developing, through the process of counter-memory, new and emancipatory forms of political identity. In what follows, I address some of the important work being done in radical public philosophy and feminist theory, paying particular attention to the issues of identity and counter-memory. The brief final section of

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this paper will offer some considerations of how the critical insights of a post-modernism of resistance can be deepened within a theory of border pedagogy.

Postmodernism has launched a major attack on the modernist notion of political universality (Ross, 1988). By insisting on the multiplicity of social positions, it has seriously challenged the political closure of modernity with its divisions between the center and the margins and in doing so has made room for those groups generally defined as the excluded others. In effect, postmodernism has reasserted the importance of the partial, the local, and the contingent, and in doing so it has given general expression to the demands of a wide variety of social movements. Postmodernism has also effectively challenged the ways in which written history has embodied a number of assumptions that inform the discourse of Eurocentrism. More specifically, it has rejected such Eurocentric assumptions as the pretentious claim to “speak” for all of mankind (sic) and the epistemological claims to foundationalism.

Laclau (1988) rightfully argues that an adequate approximation of the postmodern experience needs to be seen as part of a challenge to the discourses of modernity, with their “pretension to intellectually dominate the foundation of the social, to give a rational context to the notion of the totality of history, and to base in the latter the project of global human emancipation” (pp. 71–72). But Laclau also points out that the postmodern challenge to modernity does not represent the abandonment of its emancipatory values so much as it opens them up to a plurality of contexts and an indeterminacy “that redefines them in an unpredictable way” (p. 72). Chantal Mouffe (1988) extends this insight and argues, that modernity has two contradictory aspects: its political project is rooted in a conception of the struggle for democracy, while its social project is tied to a foundationalism which fuels the process of social modernization under “the growing domination of relations of capitalist production” (p. 32). For Mouffe, the modernist project of democracy must be coupled with an understanding of the various social movements and the new politics that have emerged with the postmodern age. At the heart of this position is the need to rearticulate the tradition of liberty and justice with a notion of radical democracy; similarly, there is a need to articulate the concept of difference as more than a replay of liberal pluralism or a pastiche of diverse strands of interests with no common ground to hold them together.

This is not a liberal call to harmonize and resolve differences, as critics like Elizabeth Ellsworth (1988) wrongly argue, but an attempt to understand differences in terms of the historical and social grounds on which they are organized. By locating differences in a particular historical and social location, it becomes possible to understand how they are organized and constructed within maps of rules and regulations and located within dominant social forms which either enable or disable such differences. Differences only exist relative to the social forms in which they are enunciated, that is, in relation to schools, workplaces,

families, as well as in relationship to the discourses of history, citizenship, sex, race, gender, and ethnicity. To detach them from the discourse of democracy and freedom is to remove the possibility of either articulating their particular interests as part of a wider struggle for power or understanding how their individual contradictory interests are developed with historically specific conjunctures. At stake here is the need for educators to fashion a critical politics of difference not outside but within a tradition of radical democracy. Similarly, it is imperative for critical educators to develop a discourse of counter-memory, not as an essentialist and closed narrative, but as part of a utopian project that recognizes "the composite, heterogeneous, open, and ultimately indeterminate character of the democratic tradition" (Mouffe, 1988, p. 41). The pedagogical issue here is the need to articulate difference as part of the construction of a new type of subject, one which would be both multiple and democratic. Chantal Mouffe (1988) is worth quoting at length on this issue:

If the task of radical democracy is indeed to deepen the democratic revolution and to link together diverse democratic struggles, such a task requires the creation of new subject-positions that would allow the common articulation, for example, of antiracism, antisexism, and anticapitalism. These struggles do not spontaneously converge, and in order to establish democratic equivalences, a new "common sense" is necessary, which would transform the identity of different groups so that the demands of each group could be articulated with those of others according to the principle of democratic equivalence. For it is not a matter of establishing a mere alliance between given interests but of actually modifying the very identity of these forces. In order that the defense of workers' interests is not pursued at the cost of the rights of women, immigrants, or consumers, it is necessary to establish an equivalence between these different struggles. It is only under these circumstances that struggles against [authoritarian] power become truly democratic. (p. 42)

How might the issue of democracy and difference be taken up as part of a border pedagogy informed by a project of possibility? I want to argue that the discourses of democracy and difference can be taken up as pedagogical practices through what Foucault calls the notion of counter-memory. For Foucault (1977a), counter-memory is a practice which "transforms history from a judgment on the past in the name of the present truth to a 'counter-memory' that combats our current modes of truth and justice, helping us to understand and change the present by placing it in a new relation to the past" (pp. 160, 163–164). Counter-memory represents a critical reading of not only how the past informs the present but how the present reads the past. Counter-memory provides a theoretical tool to restore the connection between the language of public life and the discourse of difference. It represents an attempt to rewrite the language of resistance in terms that connect human beings within forms of remembrance that dignify public life while at the same time allowing people to

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speak from their particular histories and voices. Counter-memory refuses to treat democracy as merely inherited knowledge; it attempts, instead, to link democracy to notions of public life that “afford both agency and sources of power or empowering investments” (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 25). It also reasserts as a pedagogical practice the rewriting of history through the power of student voice. This points to the practice of counter-memory as a means of constructing democratic social forms that enable and disable particular subjectivities and identities; put another way, democracy in this instance becomes a referent for understanding how public life organizes differences and what this means for the ways in which schools, teachers, and students define themselves as political subjects, as citizens who operate within particular configurations of power.

In effect, the language of radical democracy provides the basis for educators not only to understand how differences are organized but also how the ground for such difference might be constructed within a political identity rooted in a respect for democratic public life (Giroux, 1988b). What is being suggested here is the construction of a project of possibility in pedagogical terms which is connected to a notion of democracy capable of mobilizing a variety of groups to develop and struggle for what Linda Alcoff (1988) calls a positive alternative vision. She writes, “As the Left should by now have learned, you cannot mobilize a movement that is only and always against: you must have a positive alternative, a vision of a better future that can motivate people to “sacrifice their time and energy toward its realization” (Alcoff, 1988, pp. 418–419). If the notion of radical democracy is to function as a pedagogical practice, educators need to allow students to comprehend democracy as a way of life that consistently has to be fought for, has to be struggled over, and has to be rewritten as part of an oppositional politics. This means that democracy has to be viewed as a historical and social construction rooted in the tension between what Bruce James Smith (1985) calls remembrance and custom. I want to extend Smith’s argument by developing remembrance as a form of counter-memory and custom as a form of reactionary nostalgia rooted in the loss of memory.

Custom, as Smith (1985) argues, constructs subjects within a discourse of continuity in which knowledge and practice are viewed as a matter of inheritance and transmission. Custom is the complex of ideologies and social practices that views counter-memory as subversive and critical teaching as unpatriotic. It is the ideological basis for forms of knowledge and pedagogy which refuse to interrogate public forms and which deny difference as a fundamental referent for a democratic society. According to Smith (1985), custom can be characterized in the following manner:

The affection it enjoys and the authority it commands are prescriptive. The behavior of the person of custom is, by and large, habitual. To the question “why?” he [sic] is apt to respond simply, “This is the way it has always been done.” . . . A creature of habit, the person of custom does not reflect upon his

condition. To the extent that a customary society “conceives” of its practice, it is likely to see it, says Pocock, as “an indefinite series of repetitions.” If the customary society is, in reality, a fluid order always in the process of adaptation, its continuity and incrementalism give rise to perceptions of changelessness and of the simple repetition of familiar motions. . . . Indeed. . . . custom operates as if it were a second nature. . . . Custom is at once both more and less inclusive than remembrance. It includes things that are remembered and things that are forgotten. It is almost a definition of custom that its beginnings are lost. (pp. 15–16)

Remembrance is directed more toward specificity and struggle, it resurrects the legacies of actions and happenings, it points to the multitude of voices that constitute the struggle over history and power. Its focus is not on the ordinary but the extraordinary. Its language presents the unrepresentable, not merely as an isolated voice, but as a subversive interruption, a discursive space, that moves “against the grain” as it occupies “a view . . . carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparatus” (De Lauretis, 1987, p. 25). Remembrance is part of a language of public life that promotes an ongoing dialogue between the past, present, and future. It is a vision of optimism rooted in the need to bear witness to history, to reclaim that which must not be forgotten. It is a vision of public life which calls for an ongoing interrogation of the past that allows different groups to locate themselves in history while simultaneously struggling to make it.

Counter-memory provides the ethical and epistemological grounds for a politics of solidarity within difference. At one level, it situates the notion of difference and the primacy of the political firmly within the wider struggle for broadening and revitalizing democratic public life. At the same time, it strips reason of its universal pretensions and recognizes the partiality of all points of view. In this perspective, the positing of a monolithic tradition that exists simply to be revered, reaffirmed, reproduced, or resisted is unequivocally rejected. Instead, counter-memory attempts to recover communities of memory and narratives of struggle that provide a sense of location, place, and identity to various dominant and subordinate groups. Counter-memory as a form of pedagogical practice is not concerned with simply marking difference as a historical construct; rather, it is concerned with providing the grounds for self-representation and the struggle for justice and a democratic society. Counter-memory resists comparison to either a humanist notion of pluralism or a celebration of diversity for its own sake. As both a pedagogical and political practice, it attempts to alter oppressive relations of power and to educate both teachers and students to the ways in which they might be complicitous with dominant power relations, victimized by them, and how they might be able to transform such relations. Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd (1987) are instructive on what counter-memory might mean as part of discourse of critique and transformation:

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Ethnic or gender difference must be perceived as one among a number of residual cultural elements which retain the memory of practices which have had to be and still have to be repressed in order that the capitalist economic subject may be more easily produced. . . .”Becoming minor” is not a question of essence but a question of positions—a subject-position that can only be defined, in the final analysis, in “political” terms, that is, in terms of the effects of economic exploitation, political disfranchisement, social manipulation, and ideological domination on the cultural formation of minority subjects and discourses. It is one of the central tasks of the theory of minority discourse to define that subject-position and explore the strengths and weaknesses, the affirmations and negations that inhere in it. (p. 11)

Remembrance as a form of counter-memory attempts to create for students the limits of any story that makes claims to predetermined endings and to expose how the transgressions in those stories cause particular forms of suffering and hardship. At the same time, remembrance as counter-memory opens up the past not as nostalgia but as the invention of stories, some of which deserve a retelling, and which speak to a very different future—one in which democratic community makes room for a politics of both difference and solidarity, for otherness stripped of subjugation, and for others fighting to embrace their own interests in opposition to sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, and class exploitation. Counter-memory is tied in this sense to a vision of public life that both resurrects the ongoing struggle for difference and situates difference within the broader struggle for cultural and social justice.

Counter-memory provides the basis and rationale for a particular kind of pedagogy but it cannot on its own articulate the specific classroom practices that can be constructed on the basis of such a rationale.

The formation of democratic citizens demands forms of political identity which radically extend the principles of justice, liberty, and dignity to public spheres constituted by difference and multiple forms of community. Such identities have to be constructed as part of a pedagogy in which difference becomes a basis for solidarity and unity rather than for hierarchy, denigration, competition, and discrimination. It is to that issue that I will now turn.

### **Border Pedagogy and the Politics of Difference**

If the concept of border pedagogy is to be linked to the imperatives of a critical democracy, as it must, it is important that educators possess a theoretical grasp of the ways in which difference is constructed through various representations and practices that name, legitimate, marginalize, and exclude the cultural capital and voices of subordinate groups in American society.

As part of this theoretical project, a theory of border pedagogy needs to address the important question of how representations and practices that

name, marginalize, and define difference as the devalued Other are actively learned, interiorized, challenged, or transformed. In addition, such a pedagogy needs to address how an understanding of these differences can be used in order to change the prevailing relations of power that sustain them. It is also imperative that such a pedagogy acknowledge and critically interrogate how the colonizing of differences by dominant groups is expressed and sustained through representations: in which Others are seen as a deficit, in which the humanity of the Others is either cynically posited as problematic or ruthlessly denied. At the same time, it is important to understand how the experience of marginality at the level of everyday life lends itself to forms of oppositional and transformative consciousness. This is an understanding based on the need for those designated as Others to both reclaim and remake their histories, voices, and visions as part of a wider struggle to change those material and social relations that deny radical pluralism as the basis of democratic political community. For it is only through such an understanding that teachers can develop a border pedagogy, one which is characterized by what Teresa De Lauretis (1987) calls "an ongoing effort to create new spaces of discourse, to rewrite cultural narratives, and to define the terms of another perspective—a view from 'elsewhere'" (p. 25). This suggests a pedagogy in which occurs a critical questioning of the omissions and tensions that exist between the master narratives and hegemonic discourses that make up the official curriculum and the self-representations of subordinate groups as they might appear in "forgotten" or erased histories, texts, memories, experiences, and community narratives.

Border pedagogy both confirms and critically engages the knowledge and experience through which students author their own voices and construct social identities. This suggests taking seriously the knowledge and experiences that constitute the individual and collective voices by which students identify and give meaning to themselves and others and drawing upon what they know about their own lives as a basis for criticizing the dominant culture. In this case, student experience has to be first understood and recognized as the accumulation of collective memories and stories that provide students with a sense of familiarity, identity, and practical knowledge. Such experience has to be both affirmed and critically interrogated. In addition, the social and historical construction of such experience has to be affirmed and understood as part of a wider struggle for voice. But it must also be understood that while past experiences can never be denied, their most debilitating dimensions can be engaged through a critical understanding of what was at work in their construction. It is in their critical engagement that such experiences can be remade, reterritorialized in the interest of a social imagery that dignifies the best traditions and possibilities of those groups who are learning to speak from a discourse of dignity and self-governance. In her analysis of the deterritorialization of women as Other, Caren Kaplan (1987) astutely articulates this position:

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Recognizing the minor cannot erase the aspects of the major, but as a mode of understanding it enables us to see the fissures in our identities, to unravel the seams of our totalities. . . . We must leave home, as it were, since our homes are often sites of racism, sexism, and other damaging social practices. Where we come to locate ourselves in terms of our specific histories and differences must be a place with room for what can be salvaged from the past and made anew. What we gain is a reterritorialization; we reinhabit a world of our making (here "our" is expanded to a coalition of identities—neither universal nor particular). (pp. 187–188)

Furthermore, it is important to extend the possibilities of the often contradictory values that give meaning to students' lives by making them the object, of critical inquiry—and by appropriating in a similarly critical fashion, when necessary, the codes and knowledges that constitute broader and less familiar historical and cultural traditions. At issue here is the development of a pedagogy that replaces the authoritative language of recitation with an approach that allows students to speak from their own histories, collective memories, and voices while simultaneously challenging the grounds on which knowledge and power are constructed and legitimated. Such a pedagogy contributes to making possible a variety of social forms and human capacities which expand the range of social identities that students may carry and become. It points to the importance of understanding in both pedagogical and political terms how subjectivities are produced within those social forms in which people move but of which they are often only partially conscious. Similarly, it raises fundamental questions regarding how students make particular investments of meaning and affect, how they are constituted within a triad of relationships of knowledge, power, and pleasure, and why students should be indifferent to the forms of authority, knowledge, and values that we produce and legitimate within our classrooms and university. It is worth noting that such a pedagogy not only articulates a respect for a diversity of student voices, it also provides a referent for developing a public language rooted in a commitment to social transformation.

Central to the notion of border pedagogy are a number of important pedagogical issues regarding the role that teachers might play within the interface of modern and postmodern concerns that have been taken up in this essay. Clearly, the concept of border pedagogy suggests that teachers exist within social, political, and cultural boundaries that are both multiple and historical in nature and that place particular demands on a recognition and pedagogical appropriation of differences. As part of the process of developing a pedagogy of difference, teachers need to deal with the plethora of voices, and the specificity and organization of differences that constitute any course, class, or curriculum so as to make problematic not only the stories that give meanings to the lives of their students, but also the ethical and political lineaments that inform their students' subjectivities and identities.



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In part this suggests a pedagogy which does more than provide students with a language and context by which to critically engage the plurality of habits, practices, experiences, and desires that define them as part of a particular social formation within ongoing relations of domination and resistance. Border pedagogy provides opportunities for teachers to deepen their own understanding of the discourse of various others in order to effect a more dialectical understanding of their own politics, values, and pedagogy. What border pedagogy makes undeniable is the relational nature of one's own politics and personal investments. But at the same time, border pedagogy emphasizes the primacy of a politics in which teachers assert rather than retreat from the pedagogies they utilize in dealing with the various differences represented by the students who come into their classes. For example, it is not enough for teachers to merely affirm uncritically their students' histories, experiences, and stories. To take student voices at face value is to run the risk of idealizing and romanticizing them. The contradictory and complex histories and stories that give meaning to the lives of students are never innocent and it is important that they be recognized for their contradictions as well as for their possibilities. Of course, it is crucial that critical educators provide the pedagogical conditions for students to give voice to how their past and present experiences place them within existing relations of domination and resistance. Central to this pedagogical process is the important task of affirming the voices that students bring to school and challenging the separation of school knowledge from the experience of everyday life (Fine, 1987). But it is crucial that critical educators do more than allow such stories to be heard. It is equally important for teachers to help students find a language for critically examining the historically and socially constructed forms by which they live. Such a process involves more than "speaking" one's history and social formation, it also involves engaging collectively with others within a pedagogical framework that helps to reterritorialize and rewrite the complex narratives that make up one's life. This is more than a matter of rewriting stories as counter-memories, it is what Frigga Haug (1988) and her colleagues call memory-work, a crucial example of how the pedagogical functions to interrogate and retrieve rather than to merely celebrate one's voice. She writes:

By excavating traces of the motives for our past actions, and comparing these with our present lives, we are able to expand the range of our demands and competences. Admittedly, this is not as easy as it sounds. Our stories are expressed in the language we use today. Buried or abandoned memories do not speak loudly; on the contrary we can expect them to meet us with obdurate silence. In recognition of this, we must adopt some method of analysis suited to the resolution of a key question for women; a method that seeks out the unnamed, the silent and the absent. Here too, our experience of education maps out a ready-made path of analysis; we have been taught to content ourselves with decoding texts, with search for truth in textual analysis, complemented at best by the author's own analysis. "Re-learning" in this context means seeing what is not

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said as interesting, and the fact that it was not said as important; it involves a huge methodological leap, and demands more than a little imagination. (p. 65)

The different stories that students from all groups bring to class need to be interrogated for their absences as well as their contradictions, but they also need to be understood as more than simply a myriad of different stories. They have to be recognized as being forged in relations of opposition to the dominant structures of power. At the same time, differences among students are not merely antagonistic as Liz Ellsworth (1988) has argued. She suggests not only that there is little common ground for addressing these differences, but that separatism is the only valid political option for any kind of pedagogical and political action. Regrettably, this represents less an insight than a crippling form of political disengagement. It reduces one to paralysis in the face of such differences. It ignores the necessity of exploring differences for the specific, irreducible interests they represent, for the excesses and reactionary positions they may produce, and for the pedagogical possibilities they contain for helping students to work with other groups as part of a collective attempt at developing a radical language of democratic public life. Moreover, Ellsworth's attempt to delegitimize the work of other critical educators by claiming rather self-righteously the primacy and singularity of her own ideological reading of what constitutes a political project appears to ignore both the multiplicity of contexts and projects that characterize critical educational work and the tension that haunts all forms of teacher authority, a tension marked by the potential contradiction between being theoretically or ideologically correct and pedagogically wrong. By ignoring the dynamics of such a tension and the variety of struggles being waged under historically specific educational conditions, she degrades the rich complexity of theoretical and pedagogical processes that characterize the diverse discourses in the field of critical pedagogy. In doing so, she succumbs to the familiar academic strategy of dismissing others through the use of strawman tactics and excessive simplifications which undermine not only the strengths of her own work, but also the very nature of social criticism itself. This is "theorizing" as a form of "bad faith," a discourse imbued with the type of careerism that has become all too characteristic of many left academics.

At stake here is an important theoretical issue that is worth repeating. Knowledge and power come together not merely to reaffirm difference but also to interrogate it, to open up broader theoretical considerations, to tease out its limitations, and to engage a vision of community in which student voices define themselves in terms of their distinct social formations and their broader collective hopes. As teachers we can never inclusively speak *as* the Other (though we may be the Other with respect to issues of race, class, or gender), but we can certainly work *with* diverse Others to deepen their understanding of the complexity of the traditions, histories, knowledges, and politics that they bring to the schools. This means, as Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd (1987) point out, that educators need to recognize the importance of developing a theory

of minority discourse which not only explores the strengths and weaknesses, affirmations and negations that inhere in the subject positions of subordinate groups but also “involves drawing our solidarities in the form of similarities between modes of repression and modes of struggle which all minorities separately experience, and experience precisely as minorities” (JanMohamed & Lloyd, 1987, p. 11). To assume such a position is not to practice forms of gender, racial, or class-specific imperialism as Ellsworth suggests; rather, it is to create conditions within particular institutions that allow students to locate themselves and others in histories that mobilize rather than destroy their hopes for the future.

The theoretical sweep may be broad, the sentiment utopian, but it is better than wallowing in guilt or refusing to fight for the possibility of a better world. Sentimentality is no excuse for the absence of any vision for the future. Like Klee’s angel in the painting ‘Angelus Novus,’ modernity provides a faith in human agency while recognizing that the past is often built on the suffering of others. In the best of the Enlightenment tradition, reason at least offers the assumption and hope that men and women can change the world in which they live. Postmodernism frays the boundaries of that world and makes visible what has often been seen as unrepresentable. The task of modernity with its faith in reason and emancipation can perhaps renew its urgency in a post-modern world, a world where difference, contingency, and power can reassert, redefine, and in some instances collapse the monolithic boundaries of nationalism, sexism, racism, and class oppression. In a world whose borders have become chipped and porous, new challenges present themselves not only to educators but to all those for whom contingency and loss of certainty do not mean the inevitable triumph of nihilism and despair but rather a state of possibility in which destiny and hope can be snatched from the weakening grasp of modernity. We live in a postmodern world that no longer has any firm-but has ever flexing-boundaries. It is a time when reason is in crisis and new political and ideological conditions exist for fashioning forms of struggle defined in a radically different conception of politics. For educators, this is as much a pedagogical issue as it is a political one. At best, it points to the importance of rewriting the relationship between knowledge, power, and desire. It points as well to the necessity of redefining the importance of difference while at the same time seeking articulations among subordinate groups and historically privileged groups committed to social transformations that deepen the possibility for radical democracy and human survival.

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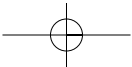
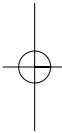
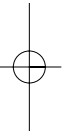
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# 28

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## *“Multicultural Education and School Reform” (2002)*

**S**onia Nieto is among the United States' most distinguished multicultural educators. In the following selection from her book *Language, Culture, and Teaching: Critical Perspectives for a New Century*, Nieto defines the meaning of *multicultural education*. In doing so, she calls for a model of multicultural education that is critical and addresses questions of social justice. For her, multicultural education is more than just the celebration of diversity; it also involves the careful examination of American culture and its values concerning race and ethnicity.

Specifically, Nieto argues that multicultural education is (a) antiracist education, (b) basic education, (c) important for all students, (d) pervasive, (e) education for social justice, (f) a process, and (g) critical pedagogy.

As you read the following selection, consider the following questions:

1. What defines multicultural education? Are some types of multicultural education more political than others?
2. Should multicultural education be part of the basic curriculum of schools? What does this mean?
3. What are the implications of marginalizing multicultural education?
4. Is multicultural education appropriate for all people? If so, why?

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## *“Multicultural Education and School Reform” (2002)*

*Sonia Nieto*

### **A Definition Of Multicultural Education**

I define *multicultural education* in a sociopolitical context as follows:

Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect. Multicultural education permeates the schools' curriculum and instructional strategies, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and families, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes democratic principles of social justice.

The seven basic characteristics of multicultural education in this definition are:

Multicultural education is antiracist education.

Multicultural education is basic education.

Multicultural education is important for all students.

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**Source:** Nieto, Sonia. (2002). “Multicultural Education and School Reform.” *Language, Culture, and Teaching: Critical Perspectives for a New Century*, Chap. 1. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.



Multicultural education is pervasive.

Multicultural education is education for social justice.

Multicultural education is a process.

Multicultural education is critical pedagogy.

## **Multicultural Education Is Antiracist Education**

Antiracism, indeed antidiscrimination in general, is at the very core of a multicultural perspective. It is essential to keep the antiracist nature of multicultural education in mind because in many schools, even some that espouse a multicultural philosophy, only superficial aspects of multicultural education are apparent. Celebrations of ethnic festivals are as far as it goes in some places. In others, sincere attempts to decorate bulletin boards or purchase materials with what is thought to be a multicultural perspective end up perpetuating the worst kind of stereotypes. And even where there are serious attempts to develop a truly pluralistic environment, it is not unusual to find incongruities. In some schools, for instance, the highest academic tracks are overwhelmingly White and the lowest are populated primarily by students of color, or girls are invisible in calculus and physics classes. These are examples of multicultural education *without* an explicitly antiracist and antidiscrimination perspective.

I stress multicultural education as antiracist because many people believe that a multicultural program *automatically* takes care of racism. Unfortunately this is not always true. Writing about multicultural education almost two decades ago, Meyer Weinberg asserted,

Most multicultural materials deal wholly with the cultural distinctiveness of various groups and little more. Almost never is there any sustained attention to the ugly realities of systematic discrimination against the same group that also happens to utilize quaint clothing, fascinating toys, delightful fairy tales, and delicious food. Responding to racist attacks and defamation is also part of the culture of the group under study.<sup>2</sup>

Being antiracist and antidiscriminatory means paying attention to all areas in which some students are favored over others: the curriculum, choice of materials, sorting policies, and teachers' interactions and relationships with students and their families.

To be more inclusive and balanced, multicultural curriculum must by definition be antiracist. Teaching does not become more honest and critical simply by becoming more inclusive, but this is an important first step in ensuring that students have access to a wide variety of viewpoints. Although the beautiful and heroic aspects of our history should be taught, so must the ugly

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and exclusionary. Rather than viewing the world through rose-colored glasses, antiracist multicultural education forces teachers and students to take a long, hard look at everything as it was and is, instead of just how we wish it were.

Too many schools avoid confronting in an honest and direct way both the positive and the negative aspects of history, the arts, and science. Michelle Fine calls this the “fear of naming,” and it is part of the system of silencing in public schools.<sup>3</sup> To name might become too messy, or so the thinking goes. Teachers often refuse to engage their students in discussions about racism because it might “demoralize” them. Too dangerous a topic, it is best left untouched.

Related to the fear of naming is the insistence of schools on sanitizing the curriculum, or what Jonathan Kozol many years ago called “tailoring” important men and women for school use. Kozol described how schools manage to take the most exciting and memorable heroes and bleed the life and spirit completely out of them. It is dangerous, he wrote, to teach a history “studded with so many bold, and revolutionary, and subversive, and exhilarating men and women.” Instead, he described how schools drain these heroes of their passions, glaze them over with an implausible veneer, place them on lofty pedestals, and then tell “incredibly dull stories” about them.<sup>4</sup>

The process of “sanitizing” is nowhere more evident than in current depictions of Martin Luther King, Jr. In attempting to make him palatable to the mainstream, schools have made Martin Luther King a Milquetoast. The only thing most children know about him is that he kept having a dream. Bulletin boards are full of ethereal pictures of Dr. King surrounded by clouds. If children get to read or hear any of his speeches at all, it is his “I Have a Dream” speech. As inspirational as this speech is, it is only one of his notable accomplishments. Rare indeed are allusions to his early and consistent opposition to the Vietnam War; his strong criticism of unbridled capitalism; and the connections he made near the end of his life among racism, capitalism, and war. Martin Luther King, a man full of passion and life, becomes lifeless. He becomes a “safe hero.”

Most of the heroes we present to our children are either those in the mainstream or those who have become safe by the process of “tailoring.” Others who have fought for social justice are often downplayed, maligned, or ignored. For example, although John Brown’s actions in defense of the liberation of enslaved people are considered noble by many, in our history books he is presented, if at all, as somewhat of a crazed idealist. Nat Turner is another example. The slave revolt that he led deserves a larger place in our history, if only to acknowledge that enslaved people fought against their own oppression and were not simply passive victims. Yet his name is usually overlooked, and Abraham Lincoln is presented as the “great emancipator,” with little acknowledgment of his own inconsistent ideas about race and equality. Nat Turner is not safe; Abraham Lincoln is.

To be antiracist also means to work affirmatively to combat racism. It means making antiracism and antidiscrimination explicit parts of the curriculum and teaching young people skills in confronting racism. It also means that we must not isolate or punish students for naming racism when they see it, but instead respect them for doing so. If developing productive and critical citizens for a democratic society is one of the fundamental goals of public education, antiracist behaviors can help to meet that objective.

Racism is seldom mentioned in school (it is bad, a dirty word) and therefore is not dealt with. Unfortunately, many teachers think that simply having lessons in getting along or celebrating Human Relations Week will make students nonracist or nondiscriminatory in general. But it is impossible to be untouched by racism, sexism, linguicism, heterosexism, ageism, anti-Semitism, classism, and ethnocentrism in a society characterized by all of them. To expect schools to be an oasis of sensitivity and understanding in the midst of this stratification is unrealistic. Therefore, part of the mission of the school becomes creating the space and encouragement that legitimates talk about racism and discrimination and makes it a source of dialogue. This includes learning the missing or fragmented parts of our history.

The dilemma becomes how to challenge the silence about race and racism so that teachers and students can enter into meaningful and constructive dialogue. In the words of Marilyn Cochran-Smith,

How can we open up the unsettling discourse of race without making people afraid to speak for fear of being naive, offensive, or using the wrong language? Without making people of color do all the work, feeling called upon to expose themselves for the edification of others? Without eliminating conflict to the point of flatness, thus reducing the conversation to platitudes or superficial rhetoric?<sup>5</sup>

A helpful answer to this dilemma, in terms of students, is offered by Henry Giroux. He suggests that although White students may become traumatized by these discussions, bringing race and racism out into full view can become a useful pedagogical tool to help them locate themselves and their responsibilities concerning racism.<sup>6</sup> Beverly Tatum has proposed that discussing racism within the framework of racial and cultural identity theory can help focus on how racism negatively affects all people and provide a sense of hope that it can be changed.<sup>7</sup>

What about teachers? Many teachers have had little experience with diversity. Discussions of racism threaten to disrupt their deeply held ideals of fair play and equality. Since most teachers are uneasy with these topics, fruitful classroom discussions about discrimination rarely happen. If this is the case, neither unfair individual behaviors nor institutional policies and practices in schools will change. Students of disempowered groups will continue to bear the brunt of these kinds of inequities.

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Multicultural education needs to prepare teachers to confront discrimination of all kinds, and this needs to happen not just in college classrooms but also through inservice education. In one example of the powerful impact that this preparation can have, Sandra Lawrence and Beverly Daniel Tatum described the impact of antiracist professional development on teachers' classroom practice. In their research, they found that many White teachers were apprehensive about engaging in discussions about race with their students because they thought they would degenerate into angry shouting matches. Yet, according to Lawrence and Tatum, after the teachers had participated in an inservice course, most of them took concrete actions in their classrooms and schools that challenged unfair policies and practices, and they were more comfortable in confronting racist behaviors and comments.<sup>8</sup>

The focus on policies and practices makes it evident that multicultural education is about more than the perceptions and beliefs of individual teachers and other educators. Multicultural education is antiracist because it exposes the racist and discriminatory practices in schools discussed in preceding chapters. A school truly committed to a multicultural philosophy will closely examine its policies and the attitudes and behaviors of its staff to determine how these might discriminate against some students. How teachers react to their students, whether native language use is permitted in the school, how sorting takes place, and the way in which classroom organization might hurt some students and help others are questions to be considered. In addition, individual teachers will reflect on their own attitudes and practices in the classroom and how they are influenced by their background as well as by their ignorance of students' backgrounds. This soul searching is difficult, but it is a needed step in developing an antiracist multicultural philosophy.

But being antiracist does not mean flailing about in guilt or remorse. One of the reasons schools are reluctant to tackle racism and discrimination is that these are disturbing topics for those who have traditionally benefited by their race, gender, and social class, among other differences. Because such topics place people in the role of either the victimizer or the victimized, an initial and understandable reaction of many White teachers and students is to feel guilty. Although this reaction probably serves a useful purpose initially, it needs to be understood as only one step in the process of becoming multiculturally literate and empowered. If one remains at this level, then guilt only immobilizes. Teachers and students need to move beyond guilt to a stage of energy and confidence, where they take action rather than hide behind feelings of remorse.

Although the primary victims of racism and discrimination are those who suffer its immediate consequences, racism and discrimination are destructive and demeaning to everyone. Keeping this in mind, it is easier for all teachers and students to face these issues. Although not everyone is directly guilty of racism and discrimination, we are all responsible for it. Given this perspective,

students and teachers can focus on discrimination as something everyone has a responsibility to change.

In discussing slavery in the United States, for example, it can be presented not simply as slave owners against enslaved Africans. There were many and diverse roles among a great variety of people during this period: enslaved Africans and free Africans, slave owners and poor White farmers, Black abolitionists and White abolitionists, White and Black feminists who fought for both abolition and women's liberation, people of Native American heritage who stood on the side of freedom, and so on. Each of these perspectives should be taught so that children, regardless of ethnic background or gender, see themselves in history in ways that are not simply degrading or guilt-provoking.

I clearly remember the incident told to me by the father of the only Black child in a class whose teacher asked all the students to draw themselves as a character during the Civil War. This child drew a horse, preferring to see himself as an animal rather than as an enslaved man. We can only imagine the deep sense of pain and emptiness that this child felt. I have also heard teachers talk about White students who, after learning about slavery or the internment of the Japanese in our country during World War II, feel tremendous guilt. No child should be made to feel guilt or shame about their background. Providing alternative and empowering roles for all students is another aspect of an antiracist perspective because it creates a sense of hope and purpose.

## **Multicultural Education Is Basic Education**

Given the recurring concern for the "basics" in education, multicultural education must be understood as basic education. Multicultural literacy is as indispensable for living in today's world as are reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.

When multicultural education is peripheral to the core curriculum, it is perceived as irrelevant to basic education. One of the major stumbling blocks to implementing a broadly conceptualized multicultural education is the ossification of the "canon" in our schools. The canon, as understood in contemporary U.S. education, assumes that the knowledge that is most worthwhile is already in place. According to this rather narrow view, the basics have in effect already been defined, and knowledge is inevitably European, male, and upper class in origin and conception. This idea is especially evident in the arts and social sciences. For instance, art history classes rarely leave France, Italy, and sometimes England in considering the "great masters." "Classical music" is another example: What is called classical music is actually *European* classical music. Africa, Asia, and Latin America define their classical music in different ways. This same ethnocentrism is found in our history books, which place

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Europeans and European Americans as the actors and all others as the recipients, bystanders, or bit players of history. But the canon as it currently stands is unrealistic and incomplete because history is never as one-sided as it appears in most of our schools' curricula. We need to expand what we mean by "basic" by opening up the curriculum to a variety of perspectives and experiences.

The problem that a canon tries to address is a genuine one: Modern-day knowledge is so dispersed and compartmentalized that our young people learn very little that is common. There is no core to the knowledge to which they are exposed. But proposing a static list of terms, almost exclusively with European and European American referents, does little to expand our actual common culture.

At the same time, it is unrealistic, for a number of reasons, to expect a perfectly "equal treatment" for all people in the curriculum. A force-fit, which tries to equalize the number of African Americans, women, Jewish Americans, and so on in the curriculum, is not what multicultural education is all about. A great many groups have been denied access in the actual making of history. Their participation has not been equal, at least if we consider history in the traditional sense of great movers and shakers, monarchs and despots, and makers of war and peace. But the participation of diverse groups, even within this somewhat narrow view of history, has been appreciable. It therefore deserves to be included. The point is that those who have been present in our history, arts, literature, and science should be made visible. Recent literature anthologies are a good example of the inclusion of more voices and perspectives than ever before. Did they become "great writers" overnight, or was it simply that they had been buried for too long?

We are not talking here simply of the "contributions" approach to history, literature, and the arts.<sup>9</sup> Such an approach can easily become patronizing by simply adding bits and pieces to a preconceived canon. Rather, missing from most curricula is a consideration of how generally excluded groups have made history and affected, the arts, literature, geography, science, and philosophy on their own terms.

The alternative to multicultural education is monocultural education. Education reflective of only one reality and biased toward the dominant group, monocultural education is the order of the day in most of our schools. What students learn represents only a fraction of what is available knowledge, and those who decide what is most important make choices that are of necessity influenced by their own limited background, education, and experiences. Because the viewpoints of so many are left out, monocultural education is at best a partial education. It deprives all students of the diversity that is part of our world.

No school can consider that it is doing a proper or complete job unless its students develop multicultural literacy. What such a conception might mean in

practice would no doubt differ from school to school. At the very least, we would expect all students to be fluent in a language other than their own; aware of the literature and arts of many different peoples; and conversant with the history and geography not only of the United States but also of African, Asian, Latin American, and European countries. Through such an education, we would expect students to develop social and intellectual skills that would help them understand and empathize with a wide diversity of people. Nothing can be more basic than this.

### **Multicultural Education Is Important for All Students**

There is a widespread perception that multicultural education is only for students of color, or for urban students, or for so-called disadvantaged students. This belief is probably based on the roots of multicultural education, which grew out of the civil rights and equal education movements of the 1960s. The primary objective of multicultural education was to address the needs of students who historically had been most neglected or miseducated by the schools, especially students of color. Those who promoted multicultural education thought that education should strike more of a balance, and that attention needed to be given to developing curriculum and materials that reflect these students' histories, cultures, and experiences. This thinking was historically necessary and is understandable even today, given the great curricular imbalance that continues to exist in most schools.

More recently a broader conceptualization of multicultural education has gained acceptance. It is that all students are miseducated to the extent that they receive only a partial and biased education. The primary victims of biased education are those who are invisible in the curriculum. Females, for example, are absent in most curricula, except in special courses on women's history that are few and far between. Working-class history is also absent in virtually all U.S. curricula. The children of the working class are deprived not only of a more forthright education but, more important, of a place in history, and students of all social class backgrounds are deprived of a more honest and complete view of our history. Likewise, there is a pervasive and impenetrable silence concerning gays and lesbians in most schools, not just in the curriculum but also in extracurricular activities. The result is that gay and lesbian students are placed at risk in terms of social well being and academic achievement.<sup>10</sup>

Although the primary victims of biased education continue to be those who are invisible in the curriculum, those who figure prominently are victims as well. They receive only a partial education, which legitimates their cultural blinders. European American children, seeing only themselves, learn that they are the norm; everyone else is secondary. The same is true of males. The

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children of the wealthy learn that the wealthy and the powerful are the real makers of history, the ones who have left their mark on civilization. Heterosexual students receive the message that gay and lesbian students should be ostracized because they are deviant and immoral. The humanity of all students is jeopardized as a result.

Multicultural education is by definition inclusive. Because it is about all people, it is also for all people, regardless of their ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, religion, gender, race, class, or other difference. It can even be convincingly argued that students from the dominant culture need multicultural education more than others because they are generally the most miseducated about diversity. For example, European American youths often think that they do not even have a culture, at least not in the same sense that clearly culturally identifiable youths do. At the same time, they feel that their ways of living, doing things, believing, and acting are the only acceptable ways. Anything else is ethnic and exotic.

Feeling as they do, these young people are prone to develop an unrealistic view of the world and of their place in it. They learn to think of themselves and their group as the norm and of all others as a deviation. These are the children who learn not to question, for example, the name of "flesh-colored" adhesive strips even though they are not the flesh color of three-quarters of humanity. They do not even have to think about the fact that everyone, Christian or not, gets holidays at Christmas and Easter and that other religious holidays are given little attention in our calendars and school schedules. Whereas children from dominated groups may develop feelings of inferiority based on their schooling, dominant group children may develop feelings of superiority. Both responses are based on incomplete and inaccurate information about the complexity and diversity of the world, and both are harmful.

Despite this, multicultural education continues to be thought of by many educators as education for the "culturally different" or the "disadvantaged." Teachers in predominantly European American schools, for example, may feel it is not important or necessary to teach their students anything about the civil rights movement. Likewise, only in scattered bilingual programs in Mexican American communities are students exposed to literature by Mexican and Mexican American authors, and it is generally just at high schools with a high percentage of students of color that ethnic studies classes are offered. These are ethnocentric interpretations of multicultural education.

The thinking behind these actions is paternalistic as well as misinformed. Because anything remotely digressing from the "regular" (European American) curriculum is automatically considered soft by some educators, the usual response to making a curriculum multicultural is to water it down. Poor pedagogical decisions are then based on the premise that so-called disadvantaged students need a watered-down version of the "real" curriculum, whereas more



privileged children can handle the “regular” or more academically challenging curriculum. But rather than dilute it, making a curriculum multicultural makes it more inclusive, inevitably enriching it. All students would be enriched by reading the poetry of Langston Hughes or the stories of Gary Soto, or by being fluent in a second language, or by understanding the history of Islam.

## **Multicultural Education Is Pervasive**

Multicultural education is not something that happens at a set period of the day, or another subject area to be covered. In some school systems, there is even a “multicultural teacher” who goes from class to class in the same way as the music or art teacher. Although the intent of this approach may be to formalize a multicultural perspective in the standard curriculum, it is in the long run self-defeating because it isolates the multicultural philosophy from everything else that happens in the classroom. Having specialists take complete responsibility for multicultural education gives the impression that a multicultural perspective is separate from all other knowledge. The schism between “regular” and “multicultural” education widens. In this kind of arrangement, multicultural education becomes exotic knowledge that is external to the real work that goes on in classrooms. Given this conception of multicultural education, it is little wonder that teachers sometimes decide that it is a frill they cannot afford.

A true multicultural approach is pervasive. It permeates everything: the school’s climate, physical environment, curriculum, and relationships among teachers and students and community.<sup>11</sup> It is apparent in every lesson, curriculum guide, unit, bulletin board, and letter that is sent home; it can be seen in the process by which books and audiovisual aids are acquired for the library, in the games played during recess, and in the lunch that is served. *Multicultural education is a philosophy, a way of looking at the world, not simply a program or a class or a teacher.* In this comprehensive way, multicultural education helps us rethink school reform.

What might a multicultural philosophy mean in the way that schools are organized? For one, it would probably mean the end of tracking, which inevitably favors some students over others. It would also mean that the complexion of the school, both literally and figuratively, would change. That is, there would be an effort to have the entire school staff be more representative of our nation’s diversity. Pervasiveness probably would also be apparent in the great variety and creativity of instructional strategies, so that students from all cultural groups, and females as well as males, would benefit from methods other than the traditional. The curriculum would be completely overhauled and would include the histories, viewpoints, and insights of many different peoples and both males and females. Topics usually considered “dangerous”

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could be talked about in classes, and students would be encouraged to become critical thinkers. Textbooks and other instructional materials would also reflect a pluralistic perspective. Families and other community people would be visible in the schools because they would offer a unique and helpful viewpoint. Teachers, families, and students would have the opportunity to work together to design motivating and multiculturally appropriate curricula.

In other less global but no less important ways, the multicultural school would probably look vastly different as well. For example, the lunchroom might offer a variety of international meals, not because they are exotic delights but because they are the foods people in the community eat daily. Sports and games from all over the world might be played, and not all would be competitive. Letters would be sent home in the languages that parents understand. Children would not be punished for speaking their native language; on the contrary, they would be encouraged to do so and it would be used in their instruction as well. In summary, the school would be a learning environment in which curriculum, pedagogy, and outreach are all consistent with a broadly conceptualized multicultural philosophy.

### **Multicultural Education Is Education for Social Justice**

All good education connects theory with reflection and action, which is what Paulo Freire defined as praxis.<sup>12</sup> Developing a multicultural perspective means learning how to think in more inclusive and expansive ways, reflecting on what we learn, and applying that learning to real situations. In this regard, John Dewey maintained that “information severed from thoughtful action is dead, a mind-crushing load.”<sup>13</sup> Multicultural education invites students and teachers to put their learning into action for social justice. Whether debating a difficult issue, developing a community newspaper, starting a collaborative program at a local senior center, or organizing a petition for the removal of a potentially dangerous waste treatment plant in the neighborhood, students learn that they have power, collectively and individually, to make change.

This aspect of multicultural education fits in particularly well with the developmental level of young people who, starting in the middle elementary grades, are very conscious of what is fair and what is unfair. When their pronounced sense of justice is not channeled appropriately, the result can be anger, resentment, alienation, or dropping out of school physically or psychologically.

Preparing students for active membership in a democracy is the basis of Deweyan philosophy, and it has often been cited by schools as a major educational goal. But few schools serve as a site of apprenticeship for democracy. Policies and practices such as rigid ability grouping, inequitable testing, monocultural curricula, and unimaginative pedagogy mitigate against this lofty aim.

The result is that students in many schools perceive the claim of democracy to be a hollow and irrelevant issue. Henry Giroux, for example, has suggested that what he calls “the discourse of democracy” has been trivialized to mean such things as uncritical patriotism and mandatory pledges to the flag.<sup>14</sup> In some schools, democratic practices are found only in textbooks and confined to discussions of the American Revolution, but the chance for students to practice day-to-day democracy is minimal. Social justice becomes an empty concept in this situation.

The fact that power and inequality are rarely discussed in schools should come as no surprise. As institutions, schools are charged with maintaining the status quo, but they are also expected to wipe out inequality. Exposing the contradictions between democratic ideals and actual manifestations of inequality makes many people uncomfortable, and this includes educators. Still, such issues are at the heart of a broadly conceptualized multicultural perspective because the subject matter of schooling is society, with all its wrinkles and warts and contradictions. Ethics and the distribution of power, status, and rewards are basic societal concerns. Education must address them as well.

Although the connection of multicultural education with students’ rights and responsibilities in a democracy is unmistakable, many young people do not learn about these responsibilities, the challenges of democracy, or the central role of citizens in ensuring and maintaining the privileges of democracy. Multicultural education can have a great impact in this respect. A multicultural perspective presumes that classrooms should not simply allow discussions that focus on social justice, but in fact welcome them. These discussions might center on concerns that affect culturally diverse communities—poverty, discrimination, war, the national budget and what students can do to change them. Because all of these concerns are pluralistic, education must of necessity be multicultural.

### **Multicultural Education Is a Process**

Curriculum and materials represent the content of multicultural education, but multicultural education is above all a process. First, it is ongoing and dynamic. No one ever stops becoming a multicultural person, and knowledge is never complete. This means that there is no established canon that is frozen in cement. Second, multicultural education is a process because it involves primarily relationships among people. The sensitivity and understanding teachers show their students are more crucial in promoting student learning than the facts and figures they may know about different ethnic and cultural groups. Also, multicultural education is a process because it concerns such intangibles as expectations of student achievement, learning environments,

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students' learning preferences, and other cultural variables that are absolutely essential for schools to understand if they are to become successful with all students.

The dimension of multicultural education as a process is too often relegated to a secondary position, because content is easier to handle and has speedier results. For instance, developing an assembly program on Black History Month is easier than eliminating tracking. Changing a basal reader is easier than developing higher expectations for all students. The first involves changing one book for another; the other involves changing perceptions, behaviors, and knowledge, not an easy task. As a result, the processes of multicultural education are generally more complex, more politically volatile, and more threatening to vested interests than even controversial content.

Multicultural education must be accompanied by unlearning conventional wisdom as well as dismantling policies and practices that are disadvantageous for some students at the expense of others. Teacher education programs, for example, need to be reconceptualized to include awareness of the influence of culture and language on learning, the persistence of racism and discrimination in schools and society, and instructional and curricular strategies that encourage learning among a wide variety of students. Teachers' roles in the school also need to be redefined, because empowered teachers help to empower students. The role of families needs to be expanded so that the insights and values of the community can be more faithfully reflected in the school. Nothing short of a complete restructuring of curriculum and of the organization of schools is called for. The process is complex, problematic, controversial, and time consuming, but it is one in which teachers and schools must engage to make their schools truly multicultural.

### **Multicultural Education Is Critical Pedagogy**

Knowledge is neither neutral nor apolitical, yet it is generally treated by teachers and schools as if it were. Consequently, school knowledge tends to reflect the lowest common denominator: that which is sure to offend the fewest (and the most powerful) and is least controversial. Students may leave school with the impression that all major conflicts have already been resolved. But history, including educational history, is full of great debates, controversies, and ideological struggles. These controversies and conflicts are often left at the school-house door.

Every educational decision made at any level, whether by a teacher or by an entire school system, reflects the political ideology and worldview of the decision maker. Decisions to dismantle tracking, discontinue standardized tests, lengthen the school day, use one textbook rather than another, study the

Harlem Renaissance, or use learning centers rather than rows of chairs—all reflect a particular view of learners and of education.

As educators, all the decisions we make, no matter how neutral they may seem, have an impact on the lives and experiences of our students. This is true of the curriculum, books, and other materials we provide for them. State and local guidelines and mandates may limit what particular schools and teachers choose to teach, and this too is a political decision. What is excluded is often as telling as what is included. Much of the literature taught at the high school level, for instance, is still heavily male, European, and European American. The significance of women, people of color, and those who write in other languages is diminished, unintentionally or not.

A major problem with a monocultural curriculum is that it gives students only one way of seeing the world. When reality is presented as static, finished, and flat, the underlying tensions, controversies, passions, and problems faced by people throughout history and today disappear. But to be informed and active participants in a democratic society, students need to understand the complexity of the world and the many perspectives involved. Using a critical perspective, students learn that there is not just one way of seeing things, or even two or three. I use the number 17 facetiously to explain this: There are at least 17 ways of understanding reality, and until we have learned to do that, we have only part of the truth.

What do I mean by “17 ways of understanding reality”? I mean that there are multiple perspectives on every issue. But most of us have learned only the “safe” or standard way of interpreting events and issues. Textbooks in all subject areas exclude information about unpopular perspectives, or the perspectives of disempowered groups in our society. These are the “lies my teacher told me” to which James Loewen refers in his powerful critique of U.S. history textbooks.<sup>15</sup> For instance, there are few U.S. history texts that assume the perspective of working-class people, although they were and are the backbone of our country. Likewise, the immigrant experience is generally treated as a romantic and successful odyssey rather than the traumatic, wrenching, and often less-than-idyllic situation it was and continues to be for so many. The experiences of non European immigrants or those forcibly incorporated into the United States are usually presented as if they were identical to the experiences of Europeans, which they have not at all been. We can also be sure that if the perspectives of women were taken seriously, the school curriculum would be altered dramatically. Unless all students develop the skill to see reality from multiple perspectives, not only the perspective of dominant groups, they will continue to think of it as linear and fixed and to think of themselves as passive in making any changes.

According to James Banks, the main goal of a multicultural curriculum is to help students develop decision-making and social action skills.<sup>16</sup> By doing

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so, students learn to view events and situations from a variety of perspectives. A multicultural approach values diversity and encourages critical thinking, reflection, and action. Through this process, students can be empowered as well. This is the basis of critical pedagogy. Its opposite is what Paulo Freire called “domesticating education,” education that emphasizes passivity, acceptance, and submissiveness.<sup>17</sup> According to Freire, education for domestication is a process of “transferring knowledge,” whereas education for liberation is one of “transforming action.”<sup>18</sup> Liberating education encourages students to take risks, to be curious, and to question. Rather than expecting students to repeat teachers’ words, it expects them to seek their own answers.

How are critical pedagogy and multicultural education connected? They are what Geneva Gay has called “mirror images.”<sup>19</sup> That is, they work together, according to Christine Sleeter, as “a form of resistance to dominant modes of schooling.”<sup>20</sup> Critical pedagogy acknowledges rather than suppresses cultural and linguistic diversity. It is not simply the transfer of knowledge from teacher to students, even though that knowledge may challenge what students had learned before. For instance, learning about the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II is not in itself critical pedagogy. It only becomes so when students critically analyze different perspectives and use them to understand and act on the inconsistencies they uncover.

A multicultural perspective does not simply operate on the principle of substituting one “truth” or perspective for another. Rather, it reflects on multiple and contradictory perspectives to understand reality more fully. In addition, it uses the understanding gained from reflection to make changes. Teachers and students sometimes need to learn to respect even those viewpoints with which they may disagree, not to teach what is “politically correct” but to have students develop a critical perspective about what they hear, read, or see.

Consider the hypothetical English literature book previously mentioned. Let us say that students and their teacher have decided to review the textbook to determine whether it fairly represents the voices and perspectives of a number of groups. Finding that it does not is in itself a valuable learning experience. But if nothing more is done with this analysis, it remains academic; it becomes more meaningful if used as the basis for further action. Ira Shor has proposed that critical pedagogy is more difficult precisely because it moves beyond academic discourse: “Testing the limits by practicing, theory and theorizing practice in a real context is harder and more risky than theorizing theory without a context.”<sup>21</sup> In this sense, critical pedagogy takes courage.

In the example of the English textbooks, students might propose that the English department order a more culturally inclusive anthology for the coming year. They might decide to put together their own book, based on literature with a variety of perspectives. Or they might decide to write a letter to the publisher with their suggestions. Critical pedagogy, however, does not mean that

there is a linear process from knowledge to reflection to action. If this were the case, it would become yet another mechanistic strategy.

A few examples of how the typical curriculum discourages students from thinking critically, and what this has to do with a multicultural perspective, are in order. In most schools, students learn that Columbus discovered America; that the United States was involved in a heroic westward expansion until the twentieth century; that Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship in 1917; that enslaved Africans were freed by the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863; that the people who made our country great were the financial barons of the previous century; and if they learn anything about it at all, that Japanese Americans were housed in detention camps during World War II for security reasons.

History, as we know, is generally written by the conquerors, not by the vanquished or by those who benefit least in society. The result is history books skewed in the direction of dominant groups in a society. When American Indian people write history books, they generally say that Columbus invaded rather than discovered this land, and that there was no heroic westward expansion but rather an eastern encroachment. Mexican Americans often include references to Aztlán, the legendary land that was overrun by Europeans during this encroachment. Puerto Ricans usually remove the gratuitous word granted that appears in so many textbooks and explain that citizenship was instead imposed, and it was opposed by even the two houses of the legislature that existed in Puerto Rico in 1917. African Americans tend to describe the active participation of enslaved Africans in their own liberation and they may include such accounts as slave narratives to describe the rebellion and resistance of their people. Working-class people who know their history usually credit laborers rather than Andrew Carnegie with building the country and the economy. And Japanese Americans frequently cite racist hysteria, economic exploitation, and propaganda as major reasons for their evacuation to concentration camps during World War II.

Critical pedagogy is also an exploder of myths. It helps to expose and demystify as well as demythologize some of the truths that we take for granted and to analyze them critically and carefully. Justice for all, equal treatment under the law, and equal educational opportunity, although certainly ideals worth believing in and striving for, are not always a reality. The problem is that we teach them as if they were always real, always true, with no exceptions. Critical pedagogy allows us to have faith in these ideals without uncritically accepting their reality.

Because critical pedagogy is based on the experiences and viewpoints of students, it is by its very nature multicultural. The most successful education is that which begins with the learner and, when using a multicultural perspective, students themselves become the foundation for the curriculum. But a liberating education also takes students beyond their own particular and therefore limited experiences, no matter what their background. . . .

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**Notes**

1. See James A. Banks, "Multicultural Education: Historical Development, Dimensions, and Practice." In *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, edited by James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks (New York: Macmillan, 1995).
2. Meyer Weinberg, "Notes from the Editor." *A Chronicle of Equal Education*, 4, 3 (November, 1982), 7.
3. Michelle Fine, *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991).
4. Jonathan Kozol, "Great Men and Women (Tailored for School Use)." *Learning Magazine* (December, 1975), 16–20.
5. Marilyn Cochran-Smith, "Uncertain allies: Understanding the boundaries of race and teaching." *Harvard Educational Review*, 65, 4 (Winter, 1995), 541–570.
6. Henry Giroux, "Rewriting the discourse of racial identity: Towards a pedagogy and politics of whiteness." *Harvard Educational Review*, 67, 2 (Summer, 1997), 285–320.
7. Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? and other conversations about race* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).
8. Sandra M. Lawrence and Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Teachers in transition: The impact of antiracist professional development on classroom practice." *Teachers College Record*, 99, 1 (1997), 162–178.
9. For a discussion of different levels of curriculum integration in multicultural education, see James A. Banks, *Teaching strategies for ethnic studies*, 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997).
10. Cathy A. Pohan and Norma J. Bailey, "Opening the closet: Multiculturalism that is truly inclusive." *Multicultural Education*, 5, 1 (Fall, 1997), 12–15.
11. A good example of how a multicultural approach can include educators, students, and families is found in *Teaching and learning in a diverse world: Multicultural education for young children*, 2nd ed., by Patricia G. Ramsey (New York: Teachers College Press, 1998).
12. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (New York: Seabury Press, 1970).
13. John Dewey, *Democracy and education* (New York: Free Press, 1966; first published 1916), 153.
14. Henry A. Giroux, "Educational leadership and the crisis of democratic government." *Educational Researcher*, 21, 4 (May 1992), 4–11.
15. James W. Loewen, *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got wrong* (New York: New Press, 1995).
16. James A. Banks, *Teaching strategies for ethnic studies*, 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997).
17. Paulo Freire, *The politics of education: Culture, power, and liberation* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1985).
18. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed*.
19. Geneva Gay, "Mirror Images on Common Issues: Parallels Between Multicultural Education and Critical Pedagogy." In *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference*, edited by Christine E. Sleeter and Peter L. McLaren (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 155–189.
20. Christine E. Sleeter, *Multicultural education and social activism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press), 2.
21. Ira Shor, *When students have power: Negotiating authority in a critical pedagogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3.