

The Death Rattle of the American Mind: A Call for Pedagogical Outlawry

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Abstract

This article surveys the recent political scene in the United States, paying particular attention to contradictions embedded in foreign policy and domestic initiatives. Also addressed are educational issues within the context of the struggle for both educational justice and economic justice. The author recounts, as well, some of his recent experiences in Michoacan, Mexico, and outlines an approach for social justice education through revolutionary critical pedagogy.

Keywords

revolutionary critical pedagogy, socialism, U.S. politics, colonization, imperialism, capitalism

I regret to inform my liberal friends and colleagues that we have moved well beyond the return of a progressive Keynesianism. That the domination of post–World War II economics by Fordism/Keynesianism is over (as the production of profit no longer relies upon the production of commodities and their sale) should not be a revelation to the most astute observers of the contemporary political scene who have been examining in minute detail the collapse of our capitalist universe. Their most grim prognosis tells us that we have nowhere to run and nowhere to hide. Either we slay the beast of capital, or it will slay us. Yes, we have reached the point of this stark choice.

Because we can't see the profits of speculative capital as clearly as we can see the rising levels of state and federal debt and feel the strain of government cutbacks, the capitalist class had recognized a golden opportunity for some major ideological mystification by convincing the aggrieved working- and middle-classes that the reason for their unraveling living conditions is that the government is spending too much of their own money. By convincing voters to agree to government cutbacks on the grounds of that debt levels threaten their standard of living, and by advising voters to put their faith in the machinations of white billionaires, the capitalist class is able to redistribute value from labor to capital without revealing how the whole corrupt system works (Hudis, 2010). Wall Street's financial aristocracy is looting the treasury through the steady destruction of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and other social programs in what could be called Grand Theft Finance, 2008–2009, or The Great Financial Robbery of the Working-Class, when the bankers, CEO's and wealthy investors transferred to the federal government its debts and loses from years of blind speculation, and placed these debts on the already swaying backs of the working-class. The climate is now set for finding

scapegoats for the current Great Recession and unleashing our embedded hatred for dark-skinned interlopers.

Oligarchies such as the U.S. power elite benefit from the consolidation of numerous matrices of power, whose generation of surplus value potential is transnational in reach, and whose multifarious and decentralized institutional arrangements are organized around the industrial, bureaucratic, and commodity models that have commonly been associated with the military industrial complex. All of these “power complexes” have intersecting social, cultural, and political spheres that can be managed ideologically by means of powerful, all-encompassing corporate media apparatuses and the culture industry in general, including both popular and more traditional forms of religious dogma and practice.

We inhabit a social and economic system that is structured in terms of those who control the means of production and extract surplus labor from those who work for them. This is a society where social justice is reflected in an ethics of the ruling class who are determined at all costs to maintain social cohesion and economic prosperity and who seek the best conditions for its continuity. We know now that the financial crisis created the great recession, which then resulted in the fiscal crisis. Massive layoffs and unemployment followed the financial crisis. Peter Hudis (2010) is correct in stating that as inflated profits on fictitious capital dry up after the implosion of a speculative bubble, capitalism must reduce the amount

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of variable capital relative to constant capital to restore profitability. Costs associated with providing public services go up as workers get laid off and tax revenues decline. The government uses taxpayer dollars to bail out those financial institutions that helped to create the financial crisis while those workers suffering most from the crisis are told that they are consuming too much and must be punished even further through austerity programs. The relative amount of value that goes to workers must be cut so that the succulent capitalist class can once again retool its digestive tract for devouring the profits of speculative capital. Voters are told that debt levels threaten their economic well-being, so out of fear they agree to cutbacks in government spending and this is how capital manages to redistribute value from labor to capital—forcing the poor to pay for the rising debt levels afflicting global capital.

Demanding that the rich or the financial institutions pay for the crisis is not the real answer, either, because, as Hudis (2010) notes, the relative proportion of value going to capital as against labor must be increased to guarantee that capital accumulation is sustained, and this is true even though 80% of the economic growth in the United States over the past 20 years has ended up in the hands of the wealthiest 5% of the population. Hudis (2010) warns us not to be misled by conceiving of social wealth as reducible to the revenue paid out to workers on one hand and capitalists on the other. This is because most of the value produced in capitalism is not consumed by the capitalists or the workers, but by capital itself. When the left demands that wealth be distributed to the poor, this only intensifies the crisis of capital, so long as the capitalist law of value is not challenged. We know, for instance, that stagnation results when either capital or labor dominates the other. In free-market periods, capital dominates labor, leading to contraction caused by underconsumption; when labor dominates capital, it leads to contraction due to a profit squeeze. Even if labor prevails through pro-labor government policies, there would still be no lasting solution since a period in which labor is dominant would result in a profit squeeze, which would trigger a recession (Asimakopoulos, 2011). We don't need to call for a redistribution of the wealth within capital's current value form. We need to uproot the very law of value itself. But to do that, we must create a viable conception of social organization that can replace capitalist value production. The left has failed to do this and it is up to us now to take up the challenge.

Corporations now exert control over governments, and the principles of global trade and financial monopolies have segmented the world's workers into two regimes: the democratic West (or global North) based on consumption with high wages and living standards, and those who live in often non-democratic nations based on authoritarian production with low wages and living standards (Asimakopoulos, 2011). Having become absorbed into the very ideological

fabric of the capitalist system and used as a vehicle for oppressing the more militant workers who take the struggle against oppression seriously, the labor movement itself has, in the United States at least, become a "cárcel" rather than a hammer to break the chains of exploitation. Why don't more workers reject the exploitative relations of production–consumption under capitalism in favor of autonomy and egalitarianism? The simplest answer is that we need to erode the legitimacy of the dominant ideology much further than do Rachel Maddow (of cable news channel MSNBC) or Jon Stewart (host of *The Daily Show*)—bless them both—and create community control over corporate boards that involves codetermination rights, independent worker and community governance of the media, and education that that could help educate the public in direct action, participatory democracy, and direct democracy (Asimakopoulos, 2011). We need a democracy that can expand the functional dimension of public power from the traditional judiciary, legislative, and executive powers. I would call this, after Thomas Muhr, revolutionary democracy. Revolutionary democracy is really a form of evolutionary democracy and combines direct democracy and participatory democracy. Participatory democracy emphasizes the social, political, economic, and cultural aspects of protagonist agency based on human rights. Direct democracy refers to popular control of the means of production and organization by workers councils. Other than working toward a revolutionary democracy, there exist few ways to convince those who control our economic system to adapt to changing economic conditions according to social needs instead of profits benefitting the corporations. A precondition for socialism includes the ideological development of a feasible alternative to existing hegemonic forms of social organization based on self-organization in civil society and self-direction in production (Asimakopoulos, 2011). That has yet to occur and we have little time left.

In the United States, tragedy has become the representative trope of our era because its structural categories constitutively coincide with today's political realities. But the tragedy that we now call the American dream is quickly transforming itself into farce. How the poor have endured for so long the cosmic arrogance of statutory poverty, racism, sexism, and homophobia in the United States is anyone's guess. The challenge today for the ruling class is to successfully stage manage the rage of downwardly mobile White folks whose social base is drawn from those formerly privileged sectors of the White working class that have been victims of the economic crisis, the deregulation of labor, and global capital flight. This will not be easy since the right has opportunistically commandeered Christianity to bolster its quest for political power and to legitimize its interpretation of the current economic crisis. And the Southern Strategy that is part and parcel of the Tea Party Movement is moving us ever closer to a New Confederacy based on a refeudalization of the economy and the creation of a new Jim Crow Racial Caste

System by means of the process of imprisonment of people of color camouflaged by the argument that we live in a new post-racial society. With more African Americans under correctional control today than were enslaved in 1850, we are witnessing a new generation of African Americans living in the American Gulag who will lose their voting rights permanently as well as be denied employment, housing, and a decent education as a result of the new engine of social policy toward African Americans: mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010).

Historically, the United States has built its political theater on the schematic plan of a slave ship while the Gordian weave of the storyline has been masterminded by a playwright dressed in Boss Hogg's white flannel suit and slouched into a rocker on a rickety porch somewhere in the Deep South. The tattered seam in the historical narrative of America that is most visible today is the unfinished business of Manifest Destiny and the treatment of formerly conquered peoples we call "illegals." But any successful dramatist knows that you can't treat undocumented immigrants like you could treat African Americans in the good old bullwhip days. And you can't forcefully annex half of Mexico like you could in the 1800s. So today, you don't see Latina/os treed by packs of frenzied hounds, or rolled down ravines in barrels that have nails driven through them, or whipped for amusement, or lynched by jeering at least not on the scale of earlier times. It appears that it's time for a different kind of war against undocumented immigrants designed to rechannel repression and racism and unleash White pent-up anger and repudiation in new ways that extend beyond the increasingly militarized 3000 kilometer U.S.-Mexico border, where thousands of immigrants have died trying to cross "la linea."

While a lot of the anti-immigrant sentiment in Arizona is "border-related violence and crime due to illegal immigration," the reality is that, despite the activity of the drug cartels in Mexico, the border area with Mexico is one of the nation's safest corridors. According to the FBI, the four large U.S. cities (with populations of at least 500,000) with the lowest violent crime rates—San Diego, California; Phoenix, Arizona; and the Texas cities of El Paso and Austin—are all in border states. But that has not deterred Arizona's lawmakers from introducing a proposal to require hospitals to confirm whether patients are legal U.S. residents. And while it is clear that many of the fears that provoked the harsh Arizona laws are unfounded, this has not deterred President Obama from recently sending 1,200 more National Guard troops to the region. And it certainly hasn't stopped movie star and action hero, Steven Seagal, from joining Arizona's infamous lawman, Sheriff Joe Arpaio, and participating in the arrests of undocumented immigrants in Maricopa County near Lower Buckeye Road and Durango Street.

In his breakout film, *Above the Law*, Seagal played a pony-tailed martial arts hero using his aikido skills to

defend oppressed groups, and in his later films, he often infused themes animated by his personal spiritual beliefs and his distain for the abuse of the environment (in one film, *On Deadly Ground*, he single handedly attempts to save Alaska's indigenous inhabitants from an avaricious oil tycoon; in another, *The Fire Down Below*, he plays an environmental agency expert who is investigating the dumping of toxic waste in Kentucky coal mines; and in yet another, *The Patriot*, he plays a medical specialist trying to stop an extremist group from unleashing a lethal virus). Seagal, a real-life aikido master who has been accorded the title of tulku (which means he is a reincarnated Buddhist Lama, having been recognized by Penor Rinpoche, head of the Nyingma school, as the reincarnation of Chungdrag Dorje, a 17th-century terton from eastern Tibet) is now a member of Arpaio's Illegal Immigration Enforcement posse. If this suave, bone-crushing supplicant of the anti-immigration junta is so concerned with progressive social messaging in his films, he might consider what kind of message he is sending to the public by joining forces with repressive right-wing law enforcement in the land of Mordor. To make Arpaio's efforts even more bizarre, joining forces with Seagal is Lou Ferrigno, who played the title role in the 1970s TV series, "The Incredible Hulk" (and who now sells gym equipment online). I suppose Seagal sees himself as trying to save a state under siege, but this time, not from bomb-wielding counter agents but from what he likely sees as the brown-skinned hordes of undocumented immigrants scrambling across *la frontera* to find work to help feed their families (and maybe giving birth to some anchor babies in unsuspecting neighborhoods). This time, in real life, Seagal has indeed put himself above the law.

In fact, it seems as though it's the anti-illegal immigrant activists, not the undocumented immigrants, that should be the focus of Arpaio and Seagal's illegal Immigration Enforcement posse. Recently, Shawna Forde, an anti-illegal immigration activist, was convicted of murder in the killing of a Latino man and his 9-year-old daughter during a vigilante raid she led on their home in 2009. Forde also attempted to murder the child's mother. The child and her father turned out to be American-born U.S. citizens. Forde had been ejected from the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps and had retaliated by forming her own splinter group, the Minutemen American Defense. Before her murderous rampage, she had led protests against undocumented immigrants and patrolled the Arizona-Mexico border armed with weapons.

In 1513, the *conquistadores* would read to the indigenous peoples of Las Americas a declaration of sovereignty and war, in the form of the "Requerimiento," to assert their domination over the entire continent. This document maintained that through St. Peter and his Papal successors, God ruled the entire earth and that Pope Alexander VI conferred title over all the Americas to the Spanish

monarchs. Those indigenous peoples who did not convert to Catholicism were to be made slaves and disposed of in any manner deemed appropriate by the Spanish. And if they refused, the *Requerimiento* stipulated that it was to be *their own fault*.

So instead of the *Requerimiento* being read threateningly from a brigantine anchored off the Yucatan peninsula to indigenous populations crowding the shoreline, we have gaining traction today paramilitary organizations such as the Minutemen, who volunteer to secure the border in T-shirts emblazoned with slogans such as “Kill a Mexican Today?” and who, with the backing of politicians, businessmen, and wealthy ranchers, organize for-profit “human safaris” in the desert. While there, ordinary citizens can join the Minutemen in catching the “illegals” crossing the border, and if they are lucky, they might be granted an opportunity to indulge in some savage beatings (that is, if *la migra* isn’t watching).

If this situation isn’t disconcerting enough, there’s the bill that stipulates the banning of ethnic studies in Arizona schools, HB 2281, and SB 1070, the racial profiling law, and SB 1097, the proposed law that will require children to identify the immigration status of their parents; and HB 2561/SB 1308 and HB 2562/SB1309—bills that seek to nullify birthright citizenship (guaranteed by the 14th amendment) to children whose parents cannot prove their legal status. But the most reactionary bill of them all, recently introduced by state legislators is, SCR 1010, a bill that seeks to exempt Arizona from international laws. Copycat legislation from Arizona is springing up throughout the United States as 15 states have introduced legislation closely modeled on Arizona’s law since the beginning of the 2011. Legislators in other states are waiting for clarification from the courts before introducing similar measures. New legislation has attacked the right of citizenship to so-called *anchor babies* or children born in the United States to migrant families (whose might be stealth terrorists who would grow up hypnotically programmed to assassinate political figures). Fortunately, the two proposals to deny citizenship to the children of illegal immigrants faltered recently when proponents could not get the votes of a Senate panel. There was opposition from the business community that, if passed, the proposals would hurt business ventures in Arizona.

Arizona lawmakers’ attacks on ethnic studies programs is an attempt to preempt any opportunity to gain critical insight into the political workings of U.S. society that might be offered in such programs or that might compel the curious to question the status quo. The lawmakers maintain that ethnic studies programs teach hate, racial separation, and the overthrow of the U.S. government. However, the real target of HB2281 is the Mexican American studies K-12 program in Tucson. It is dedicated to keeping Mexican American students from being able to write an essay like

the one you are reading. The Mexican American studies K-12 program is not grounded in the revered Western canon, and its history does not commence with the pilgrim fathers; in contrast, the foundations of the program are built on a 7,000-year old maize-based curriculum in which students are taught indigenous (Mayan) concepts such as In Lak Ech (“tu eres mi otro yo” or you are my other self); Panche Be (to seek the root of the truth) and Hunab Ku (we are all part of creation). This program has a 97.5% high school graduation rate. For the stentorian sentinels of public education, this program is an outrage; it amounts to sabotaging a rationally coordinated universe of multiple choice tests with a pre-Cartesian unconsciousness, to despoiling the sacred Western monoculture and curbing its relentless spread. From the point of view of the oppressed, eliminating the ethnic studies program amounts to a form of cultural genocide, of epistemicide. What is the response by other states to this crisis of immigrant rights? As of this writing (early 2011), 15 more states want legislation modeled on Arizona’s antiimmigration law (which is now on hold, pending court appeals).

Illustrative of the Right’s disdain for immigrant rights and the struggle for a more inclusive democracy is the popularity of Glenn Beck, the bloviating Mad Maestro, the Circus Clown of Broadcast Demagoguery, ranting and raving on the Republican Propaganda Machine (also known as Fox News/Fox Broadcasting Company). Beck has been described by left-wing media commentators as the Great Recession’s Father Coughlin. Coughlin, the inflammatory Catholic priest broadcaster from the Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, Michigan, galvanized millions of listeners into his shock troops each week against the twin evils of capitalism and communism. It’s unfortunate that Father Coughlin called his 1934 organization, the National Union for Social Justice, because his admiration for Hitler and Mussolini and his anti-Semitism has given democratic socialist movements since that time a bad name. However, Beck does share a palpable difference with Coughlin. While morally repugnant, Coughlin was, at least, an intelligent fool. Beck is an unintelligent lunatic who believes Obama is a Marxist and social justice educators are hiding in every back alley off Main Street trying to bring down democracy. The Right is filled with Shape Shifters like Beck, who will promote any position that makes them look better to the emergent Tea Party movement. Take another well-known Shape Shifter, Mitt Romney. Romney’s second book, *No Apology*, came out a year ago in hardcover. In the recent paperback version, Romney changes his position on a number of issues. Not only does he pander to Glenn Beck and Joe the Plumber by mentioning them in the paperback edition’s new introduction, he cunningly shifts his position on the Recovery Act, from according it faint praise in the hardcover edition to pronouncing it a “failure” in the paperback edition. And,

apparently, he now despises the Affordable Care Act, which resembled his own state-based health care law (Bernstein, 2011).

While the quisling Romney tries to figure out other ways to ingratiate himself with the Tea Party, I imagine Glenn Beck is already busy at work creating a new immigrant conspiracy, huddling around his chalkboard, chanting incantations from the *Clavicula Salomonis* or the Grimoire of Armadel like a deranged sorcerer's apprentice in Imperial Wizard regalia, trying to summon the ghost of The Gipper to help him launch a Contra-like war on undocumented Mexicans. And, of course, link it all in his blog, *Blaze*, to ACORN, SDS, George Soros, the Open Society Institute, the Cloward-Piven Plan (hatched in *The Nation* magazine in 1966), or to a secret Egyptian Caliphate hidden in the bowels of the Great Pyramid of Giza and personally administered by Barack Obama in a velvet cape colorfully festooned with gnostic symbols of the Illuminati.

The election of a Black president and fear of the increasing racial diversity of the population—fear that the country could become a majority of “dark-skinned races”—has enraged many disenfranchised White workers and some within the diminishing middle class. On the home front, the curtain was drawn back on the Potemkin village we call America by Jared Loughner's attempted assassination of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords in Tucson. The Far Right urges vigilante tactics while condemning violence, quite the feat of political legerdemain. But what no one is attempting to hide is the racism spawning in the fetid arteries of those who are panicking at the impending disappearance of the Great White Nation. The spectacle of the attack on Gifford shed light on the routine vigilantism directed daily at Latinas/os, migrants and other people of color.

But what is happening at the level of Arizona is writ large internationally in the malignant form of U.S. foreign policy. The faux reality surrounding President Hugo Chavez (a harsh critic of U.S. imperialism) has been craftily created by the “perception managers” of the U.S. media, as Chavez is often referred to as a “dictator,” whereas Egypt's murderous Hosni Mubarak (largely a puppet of the United States) was, until his recent overthrow, referred to as “President” (and fortunately, the now-defunct “President”). Recently, critics of the Venezuelan “dictator” from the “counter-revolutionaries” (I hate to use the term *opposition*) have accused him of remaking Venezuela's higher education system into a massive propaganda machine (something akin to a leftist Fox News). These are critics who obviously don't trust the notion of social equity through popular action. It appears that they are at a loss to know how to respond to an education system in which learning is accorded respect and is embedded within an ecology of knowledge as opposed to a monoculture of knowledge. Venezuela's capitalist elite cannot seem to fathom why the goal of education should not be to produce human capital but a critical citizenry and why it should not be

directed at creating an entrepreneurial-competitive global elite but social justice on a global scale, not economic sustainability but human sustainability.

When education is designed to serve the entire society and is not narrowly conceived as the enhancement of social mobility within the larger capitalist social order, it cannot be articulated only or mainly in positivistic quantifiable standards. Granted, the 2,000 newly created *aldeas universitarias* housed in educational institutions, prisons, military garrisons, and libraries throughout all of the 335 municipalities in Venezuela might not count much in terms of international standards of academic prestige. However, when a central criterion of successful education rests on the notion of improving the living conditions of the Venezuelan people, this might not serve as a key condition for helping Venezuela's universities compete in the top 1,000 of world academic institutions, but it is a criterion that world-class universities would do well to follow. If we regard the Cuban Literacy Campaign as one of the greatest educational achievements of the past 100 years, then Chavez's achievement of an illiteracy-free Venezuela would surely count as a runner up. But do these standards matter to the critics of the revolution? While I am sure Chavez's critics would not like to return to the days of the late fourth Republic when universities and colleges were places that allocated according to sociogeographical criteria such as place of residence (in which case applicants from *los barrios pobres* would be automatically excluded), or when the law faculties would demand strict dress codes (which would exclude from studying law those who could not afford the right clothes), it is clear that they find the goal of socialism for the 21st century a hard pill to swallow. By advancing the economic, social, and cultural role of education as a part of local, national, and regional endogenous development for the purpose of creating a 21st century socialism dedicated to both participatory and direct democracy, Venezuela is undertaking an ethical and moral refoundation of the public sphere. Moving toward economic equality requires not only long-term structural transformation but a rescaling of power from the bourgeoisie and private managerial elite to those toiling in the barrios. Contrast Chavez's Bolivarian initiative with a recent state appeals court ruling in New York that maintained that the state was obliged to provide no more than a middle school-level education and to prepare students for nothing more than the lowest level jobs (Perez-Pena, 2002). Contrast developments in Venezuela with the partnering of neoliberal education initiatives with social conservatives in the for-profit charter school movement in the United States. Contrast Venezuela to the NEA and the AFT teachers unions in the United States, who overwhelmingly accept neoliberalism's definition of democracy and view the world of learning and knowledge production through the eyes of U.S. capitalism (they largely betray the interests of the teachers whom they purport to

serve and are happy to collaborate with those leading the charterization efforts currently destroying public education, as long as they get to represent the teachers, i.e., collect union dues).

Recently, Hillary Clinton rushed off to Haiti, alarmed that this tiny and impoverished country is demanding free elections. Apparently, the Haitian government had the temerity to refuse to reverse the results of the first round of its November presidential elections, much to the chagrin of the United States who supports (no surprise here) the right wing candidate. The United States had threatened to cut aid to Haiti if Jude Celestin was not knocked down from first to third place. Furthermore, the United States had made sure that Haiti's most popular political party, Fanmi Lavalas, which supports former president Jean Bertrand Aristide, was banned from participating in the November elections. The U.S. was furious that the Haitian government had decided to issue a diplomatic passport to Aristide, who has been in exile in South Africa since he was ousted by a U.S.-organized coup. Not only did the United States organize the 2004 coup, but they had given support to the anti-Aristide death squads since 1991. But of course, this is just business as usual. After all, the United States is not your garden-variety imperialist nation.

The news media are sick with celebrations of 100 years since the birth of Ronald Reagan, who spent many of those storied years under klieg lights before he moved into the White House. At the same time, they are relatively silent about the recent cancellation of a speech in Switzerland by George W. Bush due to a fear he might end up, like the late Augusto Pinochet, arrested outside his country for his war crimes, and in Bush's case, for his torture of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay. Republicans hold unfalteringly that Reagan, the Great Communicator, was one of the greatest of all U.S. presidents and assume unshakably that he was morally untainted. I hate to spoil the party but Reagan ran a criminal administration that, by the end of his term, witnessed 138 Reagan administration officials being convicted or indicted, or the subject of official investigations for official misconduct and/or criminal violations. How could we forget the gap-toothed and straight-backed, Oliver North, who was indicted on 16 felony counts and on May 4, 1989, he was convicted of three: accepting an illegal gratuity, aiding and abetting in the obstruction of a congressional inquiry, and destruction of documents (although I am sure North's former secretary, Fawn Hall, who shredded North's documents and with whom I have had several conversations at Sunset Boulevard venues, would like to remember North in a more positive light). He was sentenced on July 5, 1989, to a 3-year suspended prison term, 2 years probation, US\$150,000 in fines, and 1,200-hr community service. His conviction would later be overturned. The Reagan Gang covered up many atrocities

in Latin America and elsewhere. Reagan might have been America's friendly grandfather, always ready with a bowl of jellybeans to accompany his superficial geniality, but what did he actually do with his power?

The myth that Reagan "won the Cold War"—even though his belligerent attitude toward the Soviet Union may have actually extended the Cold War—has diverted retrospective attention from the tyranny of his foreign policy built upon Manifest Destiny, socially reactionary theocratic ideology, and his war on America's poor (and especially people of color). Reagan widened the income gap between the rich and the poor, eroded the standard of living of millions of low-wage workers, and dramatically increased the number of people living beneath the federal poverty line.

Reagan's infamous attack on striking air traffic controllers early in his presidency is compared to Margaret Thatcher's crushing of the miner's strike in England in terms of advancing the cause of neoliberal capitalism and leaving the welfare state in ruins. In fact, Reagan made union-bashing a popular pastime among Americans, when they were not exploiting White male resentment by denouncing the African American "welfare queens" so brutally demonized by Reagan (the example of the Chicago "welfare queen" described by Reagan as driving a Cadillac, cheating the government out of US\$150,000 by using 80 aliases, 30 addresses, a dozen Social Security cards and four fictional dead husbands, was later proven to be fictitious). The economic prosperity that Reagan brought to the nation benefited the rich, not the poor, and the Savings and Loans scandal under his Presidential watch offered a prophetic glimpse of the frenzied action on futures-trading floors at the dawn of the credit crisis and intimated what might be in store for future Americans if the banks were allowed to go berserk (something gleefully facilitated by Reagan's fiscal policies of deregulation).

Reagan's avuncular persona and anodyne reassurances of America's greatness often camouflaged his unflinching support of right wing death squads in Central and South America. His chilling aid to regimes engaged in genocide should have had Reagan denounced by the American public as a heinous ideologue and war criminal. But, of course, the hundreds of thousands of the victims of the "dirty wars" he supported were leftists, so this gave cause for Americans to rationalize Reagan's complicity in murder and torture on a mass scale.

As a columnist during the Carter administration, Reagan would defend the murderous Argentine junta. When Reagan was elected president in November, 1980, he directed the CIA to work with the Argentine intelligence service for training and arming the Nicaraguan Contras, a group of thugs who carried out atrocities against the Sandanistas, attacking purely civilian targets utilizing tactics that

included murder, rape, beatings, kidnapping, and disruption of harvests (including the torture and murder of women and children). The Contras were aided by an “assassination manual” prepared by the CIA specifically for Contra use. Reagan also supported the right-wing Salvadorean military, and the “dirty war” in Guatemala. By lifting the ban on military aid to Guatemala and sending military equipment to the Guatemalan military to assist them in counterinsurgency and paramilitary operations, Reagan was guilty of aiding and abetting acts of government-sponsored genocide against leftist rebels and their sympathizers. Reagan proclaimed the notorious Guatemalan General, Efraim Rios Montt, to be “a man of great personal integrity” even as Rios Montt began a murderous campaign that utilized seasoned death squads to kidnap, torture, and murder students and teachers and union members and carry out a bloody campaign against the indigenous population suspected of supporting guerrilla insurgents, and in the process, wiping out entire Mayan villages in the northern highlands. Reports during those years described children thrown into burning homes by the “Archivo” hit squads or tossed like rag dolls into the air and impaled on bayonets. And then, there was the infamous Ratealhuleu death camp (which the Guatemalan military failed to cover up), a warehouse of peeled skin and pulverized bone and gristle that makes Abu Ghraib look tame in comparison.

Despite Reagan’s monstrous foreign policy history, including his administration’s arming and training of native mujahedeen “freedom fighters” from Afghanistan whom he likened to America’s founding fathers—some of whom went on to form the Taliban—during the 1990s he was being manufactured by the corporate media and its Republican paladins of wealth and power as an impervious and unassailable national icon. In the spirit of Reagan’s sordid legacy, Wisconsin’s new Republican governor, Scott Walker, has recently proposed to take away the bargaining rights of nearly all government workers, and during the passing of the legislation he had warned reporters that he had alerted the National Guard to intervene in case there was an interruption of state services or heated reaction from the workers. While law enforcement and fire employees as well as state troopers and inspectors would be exempt from the rule, all other state workers would be prohibited from negotiating for better pensions and health benefits. In fact, he has pronounced his plan nonnegotiable, cutting off discussions with prison guards, teachers, and other state workers. Walker’s proposal would be risible if it were not so tragic. Walker’s megalomaniacal streak and delusive political vision became evident when he actually compared himself to Reagan, maintaining that Reagan’s 1981 firing of the air traffic controllers led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the defeat of communism and when he argued that smashing public sector unions in Wisconsin was going to

change the course of the U.S. history. Walker, of course, is backed by the Koch brothers, egregiously ultra-right billionaire oilmen who helped give birth to the Tea Party.

If the struggle for democracy is in retreat in the United States, it is certainly on the rise in the Middle East. In Egypt, Iraq, Tunisia, Lebanon, and elsewhere, we are witnessing the Arab world resisting U.S.-backed tyranny and the diminished capacity of the United States to shape events. It was instructive to watch CNN and other news organizations praise the defiance of Egyptian protestors, while at the same time, in Los Angeles, City Attorney Carmen Trutanich was trying to get jail time for dozens of people arrested during recent political demonstrations. Some of the activists targeted by Trutanich included eight college students and one military veteran who took part in a Westwood rally last year in support of the DREAM Act. They could spend up to 1 year in county jail, if Trutanich has his way. Apparently, recent demonstrations, especially those conducted without permits, had cost the city thousands of dollars for police response and disrupted traffic. Trutanich argued that “There’s a right way and a wrong way” to protest. I wonder what would have happened to the protests in Egypt if the Egyptians had taken Trutanich’s advice. And in at least three U.S. states, it is now illegal to record any on-duty police officer with a camera—even if the filming occurs on a public street or if the encounter involves you and filming is necessary for your defense. I wonder how this could be tolerated at home, where so much praise—and rightly so—has recently been heaped on Egyptians filming police abuse during the demonstrations in Cairo.

Protestors here, as well as those in the Middle East, are up against another formidable enemy, one as powerful as the warships of the U.S. Fifth Fleet traveling through the Suez Canal: state controlled and corporate media. The media shape the contours of our subjective formation as they wrap us up in the pedagogy of the spectacle. In the United States, the state encourages various forms of desublimation and freedom to distract attention from the oppressive and authoritarian dimensions of capitalist society. People are willing to give over their sovereignty and liberty to tyrants—even gleefully willing!—in favor of imbibing the sensuality of the media spectacle and the drab but familiar commodification of everyday life in *las entrañas de la bestia*. This has transmogrified into a renewed growth of the racist right-wing, accompanied by a populist, reactionary agenda facilitated by the phone-hacking empire of Rupert Murdoch and his ilk.

Recently in Morelia, Michoacán, at the *Volver a Marx* conference, I joined thousands of workers and teachers gathered together to listen to Mexican and international speakers talk about social change. *Volver a Marx* brought together a cross-section of the working class of Mexico and Latin America—teachers, students, peasants, intellectuals,

artists, and unemployed workers—to commit themselves to fighting the forces of imperialism and its allies, to protest the national oligarchy’s war against the people, and to design their own strategies for resistance from an analysis of the current situation.

I was apprehensive about going to Morelia, given the activity of La Familia Michoacana, which formed in the 1980s with the stated purpose of bringing law and order to Michoacan, emphasizing help and protection for the poor. It originally began as a vigilante group organized to respond to trespassing kidnappers and drug dealers, who were their acknowledged enemies. However, La Familia eventually transitioned into a powerful and ruthless criminal gang, more specifically as a paramilitary gang of the Gulf Cartel who trained with Los Zetas and then formed themselves into an independent drug trafficking operation. La Familia is now a major rival to Los Zetas and the Beltrán-Leyva Cartel, but maintains a strategic alliance with the Sinaloa Cartel of “El Chapo” Guzmán (Joaquín Archivaldo Guzmán Loera).

La Familia Michoacana has been referred to as a quasi-religious cult that mixes an evangelical-style self-help philosophy with slogans from the Mexican Revolution. Not only does the La Familia cartel emphasize religion and family values, it gives loans to farmers, businesses, schools, and churches and claims in newspaper advertisements that it does not tolerate substance abuse or exploitation of women and children. La Familia Michoacana passes out Bibles and money to the poor and operates with a Robin Hood-type romanticism. La Familia’s assassinations and beheadings are often referred to by members as a form of “divine justice.” There appears to be some similarity in the religious dimension of La Familia Michoacana to Swedenborgianism, or the Church of the New Jerusalem religious movement, which promotes a social justice agenda. While I was in Michoacán, La Familia’s spiritual leader, *El Más Loco* (Nazario Moreno González), who was raised a Catholic but became a Jehovah’s Witness, was gunned down in Apatzingán, located in the hot Tierra Caliente valley in the west-central part of Michoacán, during a battle with Federal Police. (A few months after I left Michoacan, Mexican authorities captured the top leader of the cartel, Jose de Jesus Mendez Vargas, also known as “The Monkey.”) During the shootout, in an attempt to prevent reinforcements from arriving in Apatzingán from Morelia, they surrounded the city, using burning vehicles as barricades. There was no way that I could leave the city. *El Más Loco* appears to have been influenced by the “open theism” movement, and especially the work of Christian writer, John Eldredge. Open theism advocates a personal God who can be influenced by prayer and the actions of people. Before launching his own Ransomed Heart Ministries, Eldredge worked with James Dobson’s

evangelical mega-church movement, Focus on the Family, in Colorado Springs, an influential right-wing organization that promotes Christian family counseling as well as a socially conservative public policy. In his bestselling book, *Wild at Heart* (not to be confused with David Lynch’s film, based on Barry Gifford’s novel of the same title), Eldredge criticizes Christian men for refusing to pay attention to their deepest desires. *El Más Loco* of La Familia had made Eldredge’s book, *Salvaje de Corazón (Wild at Heart)*, required reading for La Familia gang members and allegedly paid rural teachers and National Development Education members to circulate Eldredge’s writings throughout the countryside of Michoacán. I knew La Familia was one of Mexico’s fastest growing drug cartels, operated “superlabs,” and had become a major supplier of methamphetamines to the United States. I had also read that in Uruapan, in 2006, some cartel members tossed five decapitated heads onto the dance floor of the *Sol y Sombra* nightclub along with the chilling message: “The Family doesn’t kill for money. It doesn’t kill women. It doesn’t kill innocent people, only those who deserve to die. Know that this is divine justice.”

I wasn’t sure what La Familia Michoacana might make of critical pedagogy, and I wondered if any members or sympathizers of La Familia might be sitting in the audience taking notes. I began to think of how social justice as a political agenda can be corrupted by quasi-religious justifications for violence, and how charismatic leaders can provoke heinous acts in the name of creating a better future for the poor and the powerless. It made me think about my recent visit to Peru, and my discussions with teachers on the work of José Carlos Mariátegui, a brilliant Peruvian journalist, political philosopher and activist who died in 1930 and was the original founder of the *Partido Comunista del Perú*. However, in the 1980s, the *Partido Comunista del Perú* more commonly known as the *Sendero Luminoso*, or *Shining Path*, used Mariátegui’s maxim in their publications: “El Marxismo-Leninismo abrirá el sendero luminoso hacia la revolución” (“Marxism-Leninism will open the shining path to revolution”) to legitimate their violent tactics. And while this guerrilla group was admittedly fighting a corrupt and repressive Peruvian government in the 1980s, they had little support among the people, and used brutal tactics of violence against the military and also against those peasants who would not cooperate with them, including indiscriminate bombing campaigns, ambushes, and selective assassinations. It was almost as if they had given their violence a sacred and spiritual justification. I began to think of how so many revolutionary ideals can turn into their opposite. Critical pedagogy, I reasoned, needs to address issues pertaining to spirituality, resistance, and social justice and sound a caution against any social justice agenda advocating “divine violence” or claiming to speak with a mystical or supernatural authority. I began to think of

what was happening in my adopted country of the United States, where some prominent Christian leaders are denouncing the separation of religion and the state, and are endorsing an all out Holy War against Islam. These are the leaders who supported the war in Iraq and who currently support the war in Afghanistan on a religious basis, and whose constituents, who are daily consumers of Fox News, believe President Obama is really a Muslim using his office in a clandestine way to bring about the defeat of Christianity.

While automatic weapons firing throughout the night kept some of us sleepless, the conference continued and as the fires in the passenger buses burned themselves out, the conference participants produced a document called *Declaracion de Morelia*. We held a press conference and presented the declaration to the local media. I met with leaders of the Otomi, Nahuatl, P'urhepecha, and Nhanu groups, and was invited to participate in the creation of 30 indigenous schools.

The Declaration de Morelia (n.d.) reaffirmed the conviction of the participants that Marxism is a living and humanistic theory, not a militant dogma, essential not only to understand the complexity of today's capitalist world, but to provide the theoretical tools to transform it. During one of the sessions devoted to drafting the document, in which critical pedagogy was discussed as a model for education throughout Michoacán, several workers asked that WikiLeaks be mentioned for its important role in speaking truth to power. I couldn't help but recall the demand from some U.S. politicians that Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, be executed. WikiLeaks is a form of activist journalism that we need to cultivate today. In a talk I gave years ago with Daniel Ellsberg, I remember how vehemently he decried the selling out of journalism to the dictates of the corporate media bosses. It made it seem all the more perversely hypocritical that on the very day that Wikileaks posted U.S. State Department cables showing that the Obama administration was aware of and complicit in Mubarak's use of torture and murder against his political opponents, President Obama criticized Mubarak about Egypt's human rights record. Meanwhile, criticism of Assange continues apace. Republican Rep. Peter King of New York called for Assange to be charged under the Espionage Act and asked whether WikiLeaks could be designated a terrorist organization. Tom Flanagan, a former aide to Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, called for Assange's assassination, while Sarah Palin described Assange as an "anti-American operative with blood on his hands" in a Facebook message. Mike Huckabee, like Palin, a potential Republican presidential candidate, also said the person who leaked the information to Assange should be tried for treason and executed.

It is not surprising that those who most benefit from keeping the public in the dark about the historical

machinations of "democracies" such as ours would be the most vigorous voices calling for the death of those who dare to pull back the curtain in front of the world and expose the odious machinations of the wizard. For my own part, I tried to articulate a position that would distance us from both casuism and pro-Zhdanovist voices of the ultra-left, and the culturalist perspectives of the new left that situates culture as autonomous from social relationships of production. Here, I suggested that we view culture, politics, and economic relationships as inseparable elements of a whole linked to a ruling class that uses economic power to preserve their dominion over workers in a class-divided society.

It occurred to me that La Familia Michoacana is not that much different than the U.S. Cult of Divine Violence. Americans accept violence as part of the providential history that their Christian god has bequeathed to them. The blood of its imperial victims is America's baptismal waters. Vietnam, Korea, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, stealing the lands of the original indigenous populations of the United States, all of the violence exercised in these campaigns of bloodshed was blessed, sacred violence carried out as part of a civilizing mission to bring democracy to an uncivilized world. In an important sense, the real First Family of the United States is not Barack and Michelle Obama (or Bill and Hillary, or George W. and Barbara) and their children but rather the Corleone family. But perhaps this is an unfair comparison. As Michael Parenti (2011) notes, "What the mafia bosses stole from the public was a pittance compared to the hundreds of billions of dollars that Corporate America regularly plundered from workers, consumers, small investors, and taxpayers." As Parenti notes, the real heavy hitters of organized crime are the bankers, not the gangsters.

Bill Blum (2011) writes:

But war can be seen as America's religion—most recently Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Yemen, and many more in the past—all nonbelievers in Washington's Church of Our Lady of Eternal Invasion, Sacred Bombing, and Immaculate Torture, all condemned to death for blasphemy, as each day the United States unleashes blessed robotic death machines called Predators flying over their lands to send "Hellfire" (*sic*) missiles screaming into wedding parties, funerals, homes, not knowing who the victims are, not caring who the victims are, thousands of them by now, as long as Washington can claim each time—whether correctly or not—that among their number was a prominent blasphemer, call him Taliban, or al Qaeda, or insurgent, or militant. How can we reason with such people, the ones in the CIA who operate these drone bombers? What is the difference between them and Mumtaz Qadri [who murdered the governor

of Punjab province, Salman Taseer, because of the governor's outspoken opposition to Pakistan's harsh blasphemy law, which makes it a capital crime to criticize the prophet Muhammad, and who had condemned the death sentence against a Christian peasant woman accused of insulting the prophet]. Qadri was smiling in satisfaction after carrying out his holy mission. The CIA man sits comfortably in a room in Nevada and plays his holy video game, then goes out to a satisfying dinner while his victims lay dying. Mumtaz Qadri believes passionately in something called Paradise. The CIA man believes passionately in something called American Exceptionalism.

As do the great majority of Americans. Our drone operator is not necessarily an "extremist."

Our prophets are the arms dealers who worship at the altars of Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Boeing, and Raytheon, corporations that produce all kinds of conventional weapons of death—and it is the conventional weapons such as tanks, drones, fighter jets, and missiles, that are the real weapons of mass destruction, especially in the hands of Washington's oil-first "realists" and military imperialists. Those who worship the prophets (or profits) of blood are not going to be inclined to listen to those who want to repair the violence that our cult of violence has spawned.

The New Left, with its pedagogy of pleasure (a preoccupation with identity politics rather than identity in politics) replacing the pedagogy of class struggle, did not put much stock in labor initiatives in the 1960s and 1970s. It did very little to keep the Democratic Party loyal to the interests of the working class. When, in the 1970s (when private sector union density was more than 25%) the Democratic Party all but abandoned the working class, betraying an attempt by unions to bolster existing labor laws, the long march toward the enfeeblement of union power had begun. By this time, the Democratic Party began its retreat from minimum wage laws and health care, replacing initiatives that would see wages go up, health benefits expanded, private pensions rise, and vacations made more prevalent, with a focus on antiwar campaigns and civil rights and abortion and environmental struggles. This focus on civil rights issues, while important, shifted the focus away from economic rights, effectively sounding the death knell for the countervailing power of unions in mainstream U.S. politics. This, combined with the Republicans' infamous Southern Strategy, saw the Democratic Party lose its institutional base as it increasingly looked to the corporate sector for support (Drum, 2011) and had to move to the political center to compete with the Republican Party. In education, this opened the floodgates

for the privatization of public schooling and made social justice education and critical pedagogy a threat to the increasingly corporatized nation state.

When the commissioner of the New York State Department of Education, David M. Steiner, warned Henry Giroux at the Nexus Conference in Amsterdam in 2007 that "social justice promotes hatred—hatred for the established order," it became clearer what the internal ideological compass was that guided the Right—that the object of attack of many establishment leaders in education, such as Steiner, is critical thought itself. Steiner's remarks are a prime example of heaping ideological mystification upon distortion. But the real pathos is neither the mystification nor the distortion of the truth, it is the fact that critique itself is now seen as a major enemy of education. What we are facing are not only retrograde positivists who champion instrumental rationality, but also, as Giroux notes, conservative ideologues who promote authoritarian forms of pedagogy that are in direct conflict with the concept of an open, participatory democracy.

Critical pedagogy advocates self-education by accessing independent media, by learning how to identify and analyze social injustice. While the sedulousness of the Left has never been in doubt, it needs to be accompanied by a detailed vision of what a social universe outside the value form of labor might look like. If we accomplish that task, then we can move from discussions of redistributing the wealth within the existing capitalist system to changing the system of value production itself.

In a world facing ecosystemic breakdown, we clearly need to approach teaching through the optic of an ecosocialist pedagogy grounded in the notion of sustainability, and as socialists we need to recognize that socialist developmentalism has often co-opted indigenous movements. Clearly, we need to bring to our teaching practices a pedagogy of looking beyond Western/Euro/U.S.-centric ways of knowing the world that are based on capitalist wastefulness and a lack of regard for the planet, in order to consider alternative and oppositional ways of thinking about and acting toward/against the imperialism of free-market neoliberal capital. I am talking about seeking solidarity with nondominant groups—in particular silenced groups, marginalized groups, indigenous groups—so as to bring together the collective imaginaries of all peoples who seek freedom from necessity and dignity for themselves and their communities. We cannot afford to ignore epistemologies of empire and the destructive and genocidal practices of Western imperial regimes and their deceptive narratives of historical innocence. Critical pedagogy can provide us with the necessary distance to examine self-reflexively of our own epistemological and ontological formation, but not too much distance that we become quietists ill-prepared to challenge the hydra-headed beast of

capital and its razor-toothed companions—racism, sexism, imperialism, and colonialism.

It is becoming increasingly clear that teachers are not content with playing the part of compliant ideological servants of structural injustice. Critical pedagogy creates spaces where the laws of estrangement do not dominate. Needed are pedagogies of the kind that are being banned in Arizona, and others that can deepen the organization and development of popular fronts, so that educators can work within and against the state from a war of position in which self-interested individuals understand that they need the support of other people, as in trade union consciousness. We can move from here to developing solidarity with others who have a shared economic interest—in other words, we can move from trade union consciousness and a class-in-itself, to revolutionary consciousness, and a class-for-itself. This requires coming together as a class of individuals conscious of sharing a common social situation and uniting to pursue common interests. In other words, it requires a revolutionary critical pedagogy (see McLaren, 2005; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005; McLaren & Jaramillo, 2007; McLaren & Souranta, 2009) that is able to struggle against the existing capitalist hegemony which relies heavily on ideological consent-building, that is, on actively selling its fraudulent vision to the subordinate classes. Here, revolutionary critical educators employ a Gramscian analysis to analyze how modern ruling classes incorporate the ideas and interests of working classes and other subordinate groups into a hegemonic commonsense that advances the leadership of the transnational capitalist class and the domination of capital.

Revolutionary pedagogy uses a pluritemporal and plurispatial dialectical approach to analyze the relationship among individual agency, social structure, culture, and social relationships of production and approaches hegemonic formations in terms of historical blocs where base and superstructure are dialectically entangled in a perennial process of reciprocal constitution. Here, models of pedagogical praxis grounded in dialectical thinking within a framework of social justice are employed to break through life's encrusted surface and explore the stream-crossed valleys, rolling hills and palisaded plains of the revolutionary imagination. Such approaches create for students opportunities to understand how everything changes, but remains the same, like a long journey on the luminescent eye of a moth's wing that takes you back to the forest clearing where you first began your journey, where before you lies the world as you have always known it, but which you now apprehend for the first time in the radiance of both its wonder and its horror.

But how is this accomplished? First, we can begin to conceive of critical pedagogy as a social movement, actively promoting what Henry Giroux calls public pedagogy, as a means of democratizing the public sphere and creating forms

of transnational activism and Social Movement Unionism. We should definitely learn from the labor movement of the past, from the literature and theater of the 1920s and 1930s that shed public light on the struggles of working families. For the past 20 years, I have been showing my students a National Endowment for the Humanities film by Suzanne Bauman and Rita Heller called *Women of Summer*. The film captures a prodigious moment in our history when unionists, educators and feminists joined in a collective project from 1921 to 1938. It was during this time that 1,700 blue-collar women participated in a great educational experiment known as *The Bryn Mawr Summer School of Women Workers*. Here was labor education at its best. Utilizing both leftist principles and theories and a progressive educational philosophy indebted to the work of John Dewey, the teachers at Bryn Mawr believed that workers education should reflect workers' practical experience in the production process, as a way of developing a pedagogical approach that would lead to transformative social change. We could, for instance, bring back labor colleges and groups modeled on the examples of Brookwood and the Worker Education Bureau. And we should develop more organizations like the still-surviving Highlander Folk School. But most of all, we need a feasible alternative to existing forms of societal organization that reproduce labor's value form. And that will require educators, economists, philosophers, rural and urban planners, critical geographers, anthropologists and sociologists, technology specialists, communication experts, social theorists and social activists coming together to work jointly on a solution that moves beyond a petite bourgeois spirit of social democracy, that respects craftsmanship, fosters socialist human development, and bridges the aberrant divide between mental and manual labor in prefiguring the shape of human society to come. And where is the best place to find all of these individuals in one place—the university. However, the increasing privatization and corporatization of higher education is more likely to lead to a resocialization of the perceptions of the population into the dominant legitimizing myths of capitalism than finding an alternative to value's labor form.

In the meantime, the world's greatest democracy gathers political momentum, as former Republican Senator and presidential hopeful, Rick Santorum, chimes "onward American soldiers" while defending the Christian Crusades in the Middle Ages as an historical example of American values (forgetting the massacres of Muslims, Jews and other groups by Christian "patriots") and advocates greater U.S. involvement in the Middle East. Indiana's Deputy Attorney General argues for the use of live ammunition and deadly force against the union protestors in Wisconsin whom he describes as "political enemies" and "thugs." And an officer in the U.S. military exposes the use of "psychological operations" (the infamous Psy-Ops now named MISO, or Military Information Support Operations) by military

personnel in targeting visiting U.S. senators with the goal of manipulating their compliance with increased military funding. This use of information operatives to create psychological leverage points that would help to influence the behavior of U.S. politicians (or any U.S. citizen, for that matter) is strictly prohibited by federal law and is something right out of the film, the Manchurian Candidate. And newly elected Tea Party lawmakers from Montana are recommending bills that would create an armed citizen militia, put FBI agents under the authority of local sheriffs, make it illegal to enforce some federal gun laws, establish state authority over federal regulation of greenhouse gases, and declare that global warming is good for business. Perhaps they will come up with a 21st-century equivalent to the *Malleus Maleficarium* published in Germany in 1487 and used by the Catholic Inquisition as a means of ferreting out witches and convicting them. After all, we need some kind of litmus test for weeding out the fifth column of America-haters or, in the words of our former beloved President George W. Bush, “evil-doers.”

Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman (2011) describe this political momentum as “fighting the five fascisms” plaguing the contemporary U.S. political scene. They argue that fascism is largely the corporate control of the state. Achieving this control depends on union busting as a way of crushing the bulwark of modern democracy; transferring the wealth from those on the bottom to those on the top; destroying social resources through a war budget; controlling the media through corporations, including the Internet; and rejecting federal funds for rebuilding the U.S. infrastructure, such as funds for rail services and renewable energy which would threaten the power of the oil and auto lobbies.

The American Mind, even in its death rattle, has an unacceptably cavalier attitude to the living conditions of the poor and the ebb and flow of their daily lives. The logic of capital is surreptitiously present even in the most sophisticated and sensitive bourgeois thinkers, as they rush headlong into their quest for both epistemic and material privilege over the unthinkable aberration of the working-class. Like a horse galloping at breakneck speed through a prairie dog town, it is only a matter of time before they fall. But we can't let them take us down in the process. Which is why we must intensify our multi-pronged fight against an obscenely wealthy transnational capitalist plutocracy that has been given the freedom to pursue their self-enrichment and impose their imperial leadership and odiously reactionary social agenda in whatever way they deem necessary. The American Mind is a stubborn Methuselah. Should we abandon the American Mind its final imperial moments? Or is there still something worthwhile to learn from the Faustian aspects of its consciousness that are still repressed, but in deep retreat, far inside?

These questions should occupy critical educators in the United States, as we continue to develop our socialist

imagination. Unlike Benjamin's Angel of History who is facing backward into the future, blown forward by the dusty winds of time, the agent of revolutionary critical pedagogy faces directly into the future she has created, taking her bearings from the Red Star like some ancient wayfarer, pondering the leitmotifs of bygone eras and the zeitgeist of the current one. Taking a deep breath with lungs as unfillable as Gothic cathedrals, she is never at rest in the world. She remains alert, vigilant, and condemned to victory.

While she is certain of her direction, she remains inwardly uncertain of the future. Socialism, she believes, cannot be subjected to the deranged dictates of certainty and in its essence is radically unpredictable. Socialists cannot ordain a new Jerusalem by revolutionary fiat or decree. They cannot determine, in advance, what should survive and what should perish. Nor can they be held accountable in advance for a future that is essentially unknowable. It is in this uncertainty that the seeds of liberation are sown. The only sin she finds unforgivable is the abandonment of the unthinkable.

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