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Citation Details

McLaren, P. and Farahmandpur, R. (1999). Critical Multiculturalism and the Globalization of Capital: Some Implications for a Politics of Resistance. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 15(4), 27-46.

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Critical Multiculturalism and the Globalization of Capital: Some Implications for a Politics of Resistance

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Liberation is a historical act and not a mental act, and it is brought about by historical conditions.

—Karl Marx & Frederick Engels (1995, p. 61)

Capital is a controlling force, you cannot control capital, you can do away with it only through the transformation of the whole complex metabolic relationships of society, you cannot just fiddle with it. It either controls you or you do away with it, there is no halfway house between....

—István Mészáros (1996, 55)

Revolution, then, is the way out through history.

—E. San Juan, Jr. (1997, 21)

*It is 1992, and Los Angeles is on fire. Half a millennium after the arrival of Columbus, the Mesoamerican prophecies are being fulfilled. The enslaved have taken to the streets, burning down the conqueror's golden cities. A decade-long plague that attacks the very immune system upon which our survival depends assumes pandemic proportions. There is famine and worldwide dislocation. People are living in refrigerator boxes on the streets of Aztlán. Earthquakes jolt the California coastline with increasing regularity. And with such violent movement, our ancient codices have predicted, this era—"El Quinto Sol"—will be destroyed. The temple has been toppled and is falling into flames. This is the American destiny. **There is a dark patch on the faces of the children. They are crying.***

—Cherríe Moraga (1992, 20)

Despite the historic defeat of Marxism and constant attempts by so-called progressive educators to exorcize any residual Marxist discourse from the literature on multiculturalism, the contradictions of capital playing themselves out in the theater of contemporary social relations are beckoning Marx's spectre to return and further trouble those theories proclaiming that the "end of ideology" is upon us and that all we need to do in order to rescue humanity is to heed the clarion call of diversity.

Too often overlooked in the debates over multiculturalism at present engulfing the academy are the myriad ways in which globalization is shaping how race, class, gender, and sexuality are being defined and lived. This is especially true in an era in which the global marketplace is becoming alarmingly depoliticized. We wish to sketch out in broad strokes some of the implications that result from challenging the disarticulation of capitalism from its position in the discourse of traditional multiculturalism, and transcoding it within an approach we call "revolutionary multiculturalism," by re-posing the issue of globalization and capitalist exploitation in relation to the debates over identity and difference.

The Limits of Global Capitalism

As the twentieth century slouches towards the dawn of the second millennium, concluding yet another tumultuous and chaotic chapter in the history of class struggle, we are once again confronted with escalating social, economic, political, and environmental crises causing an unimaginable and immeasurable degree of human pain and suffering. The retreat of socialism and the fragmentation of multi-racial, multi-party, anti-capitalistic struggles in the 1980s and 1990s have led to the bitter yet triumphant revival of capitalism from the economic crisis of the 1970s to the social and economic inequalities and disparities in the 1990s that followed from the dismantling of the welfare state under Presidents Reagan, Bush, and Clinton. We must question whether the inherently contradictory social and economic relations of production within capitalism are sustainable much longer, before we experience a deepening global crisis with tragically irreversible consequences. Some would argue that, with NATO forces currently bombing Yugoslavia "back to the stone age," it is already too late.

The United States has no large-scale platform for resisting or even daring to imagine resistance to the steady onslaught of capital accumulation and its concomitant ideology of neo-liberalism. As Ostendorf (1996) remarks: "With the disappearance of Socialism as a political inspiration or as a combative alternative, the laws of capitalism have become part of nature again" (p. 41). Yet this situation has not prevented what remains of the U.S. left from analyzing how capitalism's social and economic system unwittingly contradicts that which it claims in such lofty cadences to defend: freedom, democracy, peace, and social equality. It is becoming quite clear to liberals and radicals alike that capitalism's "expanding power and reach—geographical, cultural, psychological—bring it into collision with human drives for autonomy and meaning, creating a hunger for understanding and alternatives" (Resnick, 1997, p. 12). Capitalism's survival depends upon the reproduction of the asymmetrical social relations of production through the barbaric over-accumulation of wealth, and the economic and cultural exploitation of working-class and minority groups in Third World countries as well as in Western industrialized and post-industrialized nations, forcing a deepening moral and ethical decadence on a global scale. It is worth quoting Dalla Costa (1996) at length:

Social reproduction today is more beset and overwhelmed than ever by the laws of capitalist accumulation: the continual and progressive expropriation (from the "primitive" expropriation of the land as a means of production, which dates from the 16th century in England to the expropriation, then as now, of all the individual and collective rights that ensure subsistence); the continual *division* of society into *conflictual hierarchies* (of class, sex, race, and nationality, which pit the free waged worker against the unfree waged worker, against unemployed worker, and the slave laborer); the constant production of *inequality and uncertainty*; the continual *polarization* of the production of *wealth* (which is more and more concentrated) and the production of *poverty* (which is increasingly widespread). (111-112)

In an unpredictable and unstable global market economy, the future of billions of men, women, and children is currently at the mercy of transnational corporations which, in an unstoppable feeding frenzy, suck the very marrow out of the bones of society's most vulnerable populations, and continue the polarization and proletarianization of the working-class. István Mészáros (1998) argues that

[b]y reducing and degrading human beings to the status of mere "cost of production" as "necessary labor power," capital could treat even living labor as nothing more than a "marketable commodity," just like another, subjecting it to the dehumanizing determination of economic compulsion. (p. 28)

Multinational corporations such as General Electric, Disney, Nike, McDonalds, Microsoft, and Intel are among the new robber barons of the informational age, having replaced the Rockefellers, Morgans, Fords, and Vanderbilts of the early twentieth century. The globalization of capital has re-created conditions similar to the social and cultural crises at the turn of the twentieth century when monopoly capitalism, imperialism, and Fordism emerged as the dominant social and economic modes of production in Western industrialized nations. Social, economic, and political boundaries are shifting at a time when "Western bourgeois democracies are fragmenting in an orgy of rampant postmodernization" and when the neo-liberalization of social, economic, and political organization is occurring on a global scale (Ostendorf, 1997, p. 45).

The globalization of capitalism is also causing profound structural readjustments in Third World nations that are mirroring the changes in more developed countries. Giri (1995) notes that

...contemporary economic restructuring, which has emerged in advanced industrial societies in the context of economic and political crises, is now in a phase of global diffusion. Facilitated by the revolutionary manifestation of new technologies in the wake of a post-industrial transformation, it is characterized by the breakdown of the standardized regime of mass production and the rise of "flexible specialization," by a fundamental stress on increasing production and enhancing efficiency, and by globalization of production, distribution, and exchange. (p. 194)

Characterized by a neo-liberal ideology of privatization, "outsourcing" and "downsizing," the relationships between human capital and citizenship practices are

now orchestrated in the executive boardrooms of transnational corporations as much as they are by the regulative mechanisms of the state. Corporations are viciously attacking public education, social security, and welfare programs for poor working class Americans, immigrants, and minorities. And the movement of capital beyond national boundaries has created a scenario where multinational corporations are increasingly dictating the social, political, and economic policies of state governments; capital has in some sense become stateless and boundary-less.

With the advent of new deregulatory policies of free marketization and the orgy of corporate mergers that has taken place during the 1980s and 1990s, capital frantically seeks cheap labor and new consumer markets. Since the late 1970s hundreds of thousands of jobs in the manufacturing industry have been relocated to Third World countries as part of a corporate downsizing trend. In exchange, many Americans in the 1980s and 1990s are working in the retail/service industries with lower wages and benefits than in the previous two decades. As Resnick (1996) remarks: "all of us live and experience a central paradox on a global scale: vastly expanding technological and productive power, great riches being produced, yet most people getting poorer, less secure, more anxious, and the environment more threatened" (p. 12). In addition, the gradual integration of the economic markets of Eastern European countries and the former Soviet Union into the world capitalist economy has been followed by the evolution of a new capitalist class in Russia, China, and Eastern Europe and the frenetic growth of organized crime. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the clarion calls of freedom and democracy are sounding in unison with Western values and beliefs in individualism, mass consumption, and privatization.

But the economic, political, and social upheavals in the former communist countries are by no means a manifestation of the demise of revolutionary movements and popular struggles around the world, nor of the arrival of the end of ideology as predicted by conservative intellectuals such as Francis Fukuyama. The economic and cultural transition towards globalization has been met by local, national, and international resistance. The emergence of new revolutionary movements around the world, such as the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico; the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Army in Peru; the Intifada in the occupied territories of Palestine, and the continuing working-class labor struggles in South Korea, is testimony to the persistence of liberationist and anti-capitalist movements fighting against neo-liberalism and globalization.

We do not believe that the free-market system enables the pursuit of democracy, nor do we hold that globalization is innocent of political machinations. Neo-liberalism barely exceeds a robber-baron mentality and works in the interest of eviscerating the public sphere and civil society, and shredding the social fabric of solidarity and community. We follow Wood (1997), who calls for class unity and coalition-building by arguing that "in the face of a 'totalizing' capitalist system, the main organizational energies of the left must more than ever before be devoted to constructing a unified class politics on the local and national level" (p. 28). We also follow Mézáros' suggestion (1995) that our social and political struggle for social equality must

not only be directed at the eradication of capitalism, but at the very foundation by which capitalism rests upon—capital itself!

Globalization and Institutional Multiculturalism

During the last three decades, the expanding economic, political, and cultural phenomenon of globalization has signified the "transnationalization of capitalism, the breakdown of national economies, and the creation of a more interconnected world economic system" (Jusdanis, 1996, p. 141). The breakdown of social and cultural boundaries has been facilitated by the movement of ideas, information, capital, and commodities and their development into a distinct global culture (Jusdanis, 1996). The global consumer market under the leadership of multi-national corporations has helped to further the creation of cultural homogeneity by identifying the values and beliefs of specific cultures with commodities and brand names. The paradoxical nature of consumer culture is that

...on the one hand consumer culture offers its products as the source for overcoming alienation and social fragmentation, and...it thrives by perpetuating an unmirroring phase wherein the consuming subject is fated only to (mis)recognize his or her insufficiency, his or her noncorrespondence with the idealized image. (Brown, 1997, p. 30)

Institutional multicultural ideology plays a part in the production of a unified national identity by fusing diverse cultures into one common national culture (Davies & Guppy, 1997; Giroux, 1996; Mitchell, 1993; Lassalle & Perez, 1997).

Schools serve as companions to the process of globalization in their attempts to foster compliant citizen-consumers who identify with discourses and practices of nationalism, patriotism, and individualism. Both national and local school reform efforts are for the most part aimed at developing a monocentric school curriculum emphasizing skills and knowledge that can provide society with efficient, productive, and replaceable workers. As Davies and Guppy (1997) argue: "Educational homogeneity is leading to a 'monolithic structure of education' (p.449) propagating dominant ideologies and cultural values instrumental in reproducing social and economic inequalities.

The Neo-Conservative Restoration and the Backlash against Multiculturalism

In the 1980s and 1990s, right wing and conservative organizations, working on behalf of corporate interests, developed a highly complex web of financially powerful political institutions aimed at attacking social programs designed for poor ethnic minorities and working class United States citizens. The attacks on welfare programs, bilingual education, affirmative action, multicultural education, and civil rights—to

name only a few—have functioned to revise history and delete our historical memories of racism, discrimination, prejudice, oppression, and atrocities committed by the guardians of U.S. global interests putatively on behalf of democracy, freedom, and individualism.

More than a century and a half ago, Marx and Engels (1995) noted that the ruling class maintains economic privilege by creating a universal ideology linked to its control of the means of production:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. (p. 64)

In his recent book, *The Disuniting of America* (1991), Schlesinger calls for the furious creation of “unifying ideals” that will foster in America a “common culture” and a national identity without which “an individual is deprived of and memory becomes disoriented and lost” (p. 45). He notes that “history becomes a means of shaping history” (p. 46), and further states: “The purpose of history is to promote not group self-esteem, but understanding of the world and the past, dispassionate analysis, judgment, and perspective, respect for divergent cultures and traditions, and unflinching protection for those unifying ideas of tolerance, democracy, and human rights that make free historical inquiry possible” (p. 99). Yet in his patrician advocacy of history as the preservation of values, he attempts to sanitize the historical exploitation and oppression of marginalized social groups by foregrounding the American ideals of “tolerance,” “democracy,” and “freedom” and concealing past and present economic and social inequalities. He attacks radicals by labeling them *militants* who are attempting to revise and rewrite history in order to selfishly attain their own political goals, as if somehow Schlesinger is miraculously able to write about history in a heroically disinterested manner.

Schlesinger believes that we should “teach history for its own sake” (p. 137). However, we believe that history does not have an independent existence from its present actors. We are not talking about platonic shadows on the wall or abstract Kantian universals. History is produced in the act of daily human struggle, not in a domed stadium on top of Mount Olympus, and as a “civilizing mission” it must be inclusive of the lived experiences of oppressed people.

Schlesinger also attacks bilingual education, since it threatens traditional American values and beliefs. He believes bilingualism “nourishes self-ghettoization, and ghettoization nourishes racial antagonisms” (p. 108). He further suggests that, “[m]onolingual education opens doors to the larger society” (p. 108) while bilingualism inhibits the education of minority students. He does not appear to be aware that in today’s global society, multilingualism is a necessary tool for communicating ideas, values, and beliefs. Schlesinger’s unwavering belief in a “common American

identity” which is equivalent to equal opportunity and the right to the ownership of private property, contrasts dramatically with Marx’s stress on economic equality and the abolition of private means of production which is the source of the economic and cultural exploitation of the working-class.

Conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh (1996, 1997), who closely echoes the political sentiments of the McCarthy era of the 1950s, is pushing a platform to transform the education system in order to meet the economic interests of large corporations. Limbaugh associates multiculturalism with “anti-American victimology,” and stands in firm agreement with one of the architects of neo-liberal economies, Milton Friedman. Limbaugh (1997) attacks public education by stating that “schools teach socialist values, because the educational system is a socialist system. Which is why they are naturally anti-capitalist, anti-business, anti-achievement. If we want schools...to reflect traditional American values, we need to introduce educational competition. The solution: school choice.” (p. 15)

Attacks on multiculturalism by right-wing conservatives are politically calculated and motivated strategies for promoting a uniform American culture linked to the ascendancy of capital. This ideology of “Americanization” guarantees the preservation of the power and privilege of the dominant social classes. Giroux (1994) reminds us that “the deadly paradox in the conservative offensive is constructed around a politics of difference that attempts to depoliticize politics while simultaneously politicizing culture” (p. 58). The persistent onslaught against multiculturalism by neo-conservatives is also articulated by James (1997) who warns that the “conservative backlash against multiculturalism is tied to an attempt to salvage Eurocentrism’s hegemony as part of the general campaign against anti-racist and multicultural society” (p. 199).

Neo-conservatives wish to preserve racial differences because, as Marable (1994) explains, “racial-identity politics essentially serve to reinforce conservative solutions to poverty, employment and social problems” (1996, p. xviii). Dinish D’Souza’s recent book, *The End of Racism* (1995), is a clear yet cunning attempt to neutralize race as a political and social issue by blatantly rewriting history. His book, funded by the John M. Olin Foundation, a branch of the Olin Chemical and Munitions Company and a frequent supporter of right-wing organizations such as the American Enterprise Institute, argues that racism no longer exists in American society, and states that multiculturalism is a “liberal” species of anti-racism which has its deepest roots in cultural relativism. He further suggests that slavery cannot be considered a racist institution because it has existed all over the world in various periods; he legitimizes slavery by stating that not all blacks were slaves, and that Africans and Indian tribes also owned slaves. D’Souza retains the image of the United States as a harmonious society, where democracy is synonymous with equal opportunity, individual pursuit of freedom, happiness, and property. His discourse of democracy privileges individual rights by refusing to reveal how these rights are inherited through class and racial privileges.

De-Centering Whiteness

Institutional racism has helped to historically diffuse and fragment the political efficacy of various ethnic groups, preventing them from successfully forging a multi-ethnic political front against capitalist exploitation. On this point Hamilton (1996) argues that "racism obscures class distinctions and similarities and at the same time provides a source of cultural belonging for Europeans whose culture has been lost" (p. 173).

Marable (1996) describes "whiteness" as "a power relationship, a statement of authority, a social construct which is perpetuated by systems of privilege, the consolidation of property and status" (p. 6). Winant (1997) uncovers the constituent characteristics of whiteness by arguing that it may not be a legitimate cultural identity in the sense of having a discrete, "positive" content, but it is certainly an overdetermined political and cultural identity nevertheless, having to do with socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, ideologies of individualism, opportunity, and citizenship, nationalism, etc." (p. 48). In short, the construction of whiteness as a racialized discourse and set of material practices preserves the political and economic privilege and power of the capitalist class.

The concept of whiteness was introduced in modern history beginning with the Spanish conquest of the "New World" in the early sixteenth century, and later reinforced with the practice of slavery in the United States. We need to remember that racial concepts are historically embedded in the specificity of social relations of capitalist production, a point Schiller (1997) articulates clearly, stating that "the construction of race is the product of particular relations of domination in particular places, periods of time, and social locations" (p. 449). Complementing Schiller's position, Winant (1997) suggests that "like any other complex beliefs and practices, whiteness is imbedded in a highly articulated social structure and system of signification; rather than trying to repudiate it, we shall have to rearticulate it" (p. 48). However, the question still remains: how can a racial category be re-articulated?

We believe that the re-articulation of the concept of whiteness can only be attained by its eradication (McLaren, 1997), which can itself occur only if accompanied coterminously by the transformation of those capitalist social relations on which the concept is premised (McLaren, 1997). This is because the social construction of whiteness is always articulated from a position of privilege and power in relation to marginalized ethnic groups. Schiller (1997) asserts that the abolition of the concept of race is a necessary first step towards the eradication of racism(s):

Race is a construction that is lived, structuring society and the daily experiences, possibilities, perceptions, and identity of each individual; it is not about people socially defined as black or of color. To the extent that race structures society, all people are "raced," and there is no blackness without the construction and experiences of whiteness, no Indian without a white man, no mulatto without a system of deciding who is truly white. (p. 449)

Following Theodore W. Allen (1994; 1997), Jonathan Scott (1998), and McLaren and Muñoz (in press), we support the claim that whiteness is, first and foremost, a "sociogenic" (having to do with social forces and relations) rather than a "phylogenic" (having to do with phenotype or skin color) phenomenon, and is fundamentally linked to the practice of Anglo-European and United States colonialism. For instance, in colonial Virginia, roughly between 1676 and 1705, there existed no distinction in status between "black" and "white" bond-laborers. Whiteness was a status position introduced by the seventeenth century Anglo-American and United States ruling class—largely the oligarchy of owners of large colonial plantations—who for purely political and economic purposes endowed indentured Europeans (at the time *de facto* slaves) with civil and social privileges that greatly exceeded those of their fellow African bondsmen.

New England's progressive system of equitably distributed small land holdings, with freedom for bond-laborers (six thousand Europeans and two thousand African Americans), would have effectively ended the southern plantocracy's super-exploitation of the African and European bond laborers and transformed the colony into a diversified smallholder economy. This would have been ultimately disastrous for the tobacco monoculture, which essentially depended upon chattel or bond labor. However, the small landholders of colonial Virginia had begun to oppose changes in Virginia land policy, and more and more landless laborers began to fight against their chattel bond-servitude. In the Bacon Rebellion, Africans and Europeans fought side by side against the plantation bourgeoisie who would routinely punish runaway laborers by adding years to their servitude, and who ordered severe restrictions on corn planting and a ban on hunting for food in the forests so that the rebelling chattel bond-laborers would starve to death.

The aim of the Anglo-American continental plantation bourgeoisie was to prepare the ground for a system of lifetime hereditary bond-servitude. But the "confederation" of African-American and European bond-laborers possessed a military power too strong for the bourgeoisie to defeat with its small force of only 500 fighters. The white race had thus to be invented by the colonial bourgeoisie in order to diffuse the potential threat to ruling class hegemony; indentured Anglo-Americans—who had no social mobility and were thus a constant threat to the plantocracy—were recruited into the middle classes through anomalous white-skin privileges which acknowledged their loyalty to the colonial land and property-owning class.

In summary, the invention of the white race was a political and economic manoeuvre designed to secure control of the plantocracy by homogenizing the social statuses of Anglo-European tenants, merchants, and planters. Later, with the rise of the abolitionist movement, racial typologies, classification systems, and criteriologies favoring whiteness and demonizing blackness became widespread in order to justify and legitimize the slavery of Africans and ensure the continuation of lifetime chattel bond-servitude. Today, "whiteness" has become naturalized as part of our "common-sense" reality.

Beyond Whiteness: Towards a Critical Multiculturalism

The dominant ideology of multiculturalism, associated with liberal—and in some instances, left-liberal—political positions, participates in acknowledging, tolerating, and in some cases celebrating marginalized cultures. However, we believe that such inclusiveness should imply not only *recognition* of the historical contribution of minority cultures in the building of American society, but also *active participation* in the reconstruction of American culture and history. Critical multicultural education recognizes both the contributions of marginalized groups and the importance of their political participation in the production of social and cultural meaning. Critical multiculturalism is an oppositional multiculturalism designed to challenge and transform the “authorizing” forces of monocentric American culture. As McLaren (1993) argues:

A critical multiculturalism as part of a pedagogy of difference seeks not simply to invert dependent hierarchies of domination but rather to inflect the central categories and assumptions of western rationality towards a displacement of their oppressive political effects. Conflict is not described as a monolinear struggle between the oppressed and the oppressors but as a struggle for spaces of hegemonic rupture out of which new democratizing possibilities may be won and new articulations of identity may be constructed. Since hegemony is not seamless, we must ask: What is the stuff of agency that escapes the act of interpolation? Is it the subject of history? And, if so, whose history is being written and for whose benefit? (p. 286)

Cultures consist of negotiated, contested, and socially constructed spaces of meaning-making activities as well as structured silences. They are conflictual arenas where meanings produced within economic, political and social relations are constantly struggled over. Cultures not only produce constitutive possibilities for the production of tradition, but also create spaces for the remembrance and renewal of the roots of a people's history, customs, beliefs, symbols, spiritual values, and practices. A social group without culture is one without a deepening awareness of its own history, frozen in time and space, unable to challenge or change the oppressive conditions in which it finds itself. For Turner, “Remembering is not merely restoring some past intact but setting it in living relationship to the present” (cited in Mermain, 1997, p. 49). Unlike Eurocentric ideology which perceives and produces culture as static, unchanging, dissonant, and wholly dependent upon the past, critical multiculturalists view culture as changing, dynamic and reciprocal: shared among individuals and groups of people. Critical multiculturalism is politically committed to social and economic justice (Segal & Handler, 1995; Sleeper, 1991; De La Torre, 1996; McLaren, 1995) and the abolition of asymmetrical social relations embedded in class, race, and gender inequalities; as Phillips (1997) asserts, it deals with “different ways of thinking about morality and religion, different traditions of resolving political conflict, different assumptions about the roles of men and women” (p. 58).

Critical multiculturalism struggles against cultural homogeneity, advocating instead a cultural heterogeneity uniting people of different classes, ethnicities, and genders. It battles the commodification of values and beliefs of subordinate cultures in a consumer-driven society, re-focusing on issues related to social inequality (Davis, 1996; McLaren, 1995, 1997) by encouraging the formation of multi-racial, trans-ethnic alliances. By creating conditions in classrooms for minority groups to question the social, economic, and political relations in which they have been historically situated, critical multiculturalism threatens the social and economic interests of the privileged classes who retain their status and power through ideologies which ensure their reproduction. McLaren (1995) asserts that “multiculturalism and multilingualism are seen as threats to the social, political, and cultural stability of this country. In these times of economic crises, as support for the wave of anti-immigrant legislation increases, it becomes even more critical to understand how these sentiments manifest themselves in school policies and practices, in classroom instruction” (p. 157).

We believe that in order to mount any effective social, political, and economic struggle against capital, we must first locate, identify, interrogate, and transform the ideological sites of oppression in the form of a unified multi-racial/ethnic oppositional politics. This suggests making ideology critique a fundamental component of multicultural education. As Harris (1994) suggests, “the first move towards countering or demystifying ideological construction would be to recognize the nature, and then to begin to pick out the details, of one's own (and other's) constitution as an ideological subject living within the experiential context of such construction” (p. 61).

The social and economic inequalities reproduced by privileged social groups, who attempt to preserve them in the past and relive them in the present, so as to secure their reproduction in the future, can best be challenged through critical pedagogical practices and political activism. This underscores why we believe that any “official” U.S. history must be de-centered and ideologically ruptured, thereby opening social and political spaces for marginalized groups to reconstruct their own histories—histories not bleached of oppositional power and tailored to be European-friendly and accommodating to the power elite, but rather written from below to break the structured silence surrounding the determinate causes of exploitation and to challenge those responsible for it. The struggle must encourage multiracial and transcultural political alliances, for unless a multiracial counter-hegemonic political coalition consisting of feminist groups, workers, environmental groups, and other progressive sectors is able to develop sufficient power to contest the power of existing repressive and ideological state apparatuses, the public sphere will continue to diminish in spectacular fashion under the attack of right-wing and conservative forces. And along with the dramatic erosion of the public sphere, we will continue to witness an exacerbation of race, gender, and class antagonisms.

Polycentric social and political spaces can be created by deconstructing the center/periphery and dominant/marginalized dichotomies that underwrite many

critical approaches to social reform. The idea is not to move marginalized voices from the periphery to the center, since behind this marginalized voices are no more "authentic" than dominant voices, and are vulnerable to reinscription into the "centrist" ideologies of the neo-liberal capitalist state. And while the view of marginalized groups is fundamental in providing the initial counter-statement to the dominant ideology, it is not necessarily less distorted than the view of those who occupy the center. Yet a political commitment to social change and equality gives marginalized groups more political urgency and saliency. Flores and McPhail (1997) explain:

By simply replacing "dominant" voices with "marginalized" voices, critics can perpetuate notions of identity that presume an essential authenticity, subscribe to monolithic notions of race, gender, or ethnicity, or privilege a particular position with "the community." These voices can become as constraining and as counter-productive as those they are intended to replace, often even excluding people within those communities whose voices are ostensibly represented, but who are not being heard. Such voices can also shut down any move toward empathic dialogue. We therefore cannot assume that the marginalized voice is the liberatory voice. (p. 115)

What is required in order to move towards an emancipatory and transformative framework is a critical consciousness accompanied by critical self-reflexivity (McLaren, 1997b). Self-reflexivity is a process that identifies the source of oppression, both from the outside and from within, through participation in a dialectical critique of one's own positionality in the oppression and the silencing of others. Again it is worth quoting Flores and McPhail (1997) in detail:

While self reflection is an important step in the process of liberation, of asserting and affirming one's own identity, it is insufficient in-and-of-itself for moving from the deconstruction of domination and oppression of social intercourse and interaction. The next step, which is profoundly more difficult, entails the recognition of one's implication in oppression. If we refuse to take this second step and choose to ignore our implicature, emancipatory and reconstructive efforts will quickly reach a dead end. (p. 116-117)

McCarthy (1995) makes two important arguments with respect to the development of a critical multiculturalism. First, he underscores the fact that unless multiculturalists engage in a systematic critique of Western culture, the strategy of adding diversity to the dominant school curriculum only serves to reproduce hegemony. He writes:

The multiculturalist strategy of adding diversity to the dominant school curriculum serves paradoxically, to legitimate the dominance of Western culture in educational arrangements in the United States. Multiculturalists have simply failed to provide a systematic critique of the ideology of "Westernness" that is ascendant in curriculum and pedagogical practices in education. Instead, proponents articulate a language of inclusion. (p. 294)

McCarthy also notes that a critical multiculturalism must be inherently relational.

For instance, they must begin to understand how the differential and asymmetrical construction of social groups in the United States is linked to global relations of development and underdevelopment, including relations of imperialism and capitalist exploitation in Latin America, Asia, and elsewhere. McCarthy remarks:

A critical approach to multiculturalism must insist not only on the cultural diversity of school knowledge but on its inherent relationality. School knowledge is socially produced, deeply imbued with human interests, and deeply implicated in the unequal social relations outside the school door. A critical multiculturalism should therefore be more reflexive with respect to the relationship between different social groups in the United States and the relationship of developments in the United States to the rest of the world. This would mean, for instance, that we begin to see the issue of racial inequality in global and relational terms.... (p. 295)

Mestizaje Multiculturalism

As McLaren (1997), has argued, some members of the educational left have championed the term "*mestizaje*" as a metaphor for underscoring the complexity of identity (as distinguished from modernist conceptions of the self as static, monolithic and fixed) and as a means of constructing an ideal image of the democratic, self-reflexive citizen or cultural worker as a "border-crosser." To be a *mestizo* is to live a de-essentialized identity of many cultural, linguistic, and geopolitical contexts. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Cherrie Moraga (1992), Emily Hicks (1991), and Jose David Saldivar (1998), as well as educators such as Giroux and McLaren, have offered in-depth discussions of *mestizaje* identity, drawing attention to its potential for rupturing the static, Anglocentric concept of a unified, monocentric identity. *Mestizaje* identity relies as much on the idea of a "bridge consciousness," that allows individuals to utilize a double vision as both insider and outsider, as it does on the concept of a displaced subject who inhabits the borderlands of multiple discourses that exist along the extended U.S.-Mexico *frontera*. *Mestizo* cultural identity is composed of the fragments, tropes, pastiche, and conceits: the *culturas híbridas* of the borderlands. Here we see the importance of what Saldivar (1997) calls a "transfrontera contact zone" for developing oppositional identities, whether based on *veteranos* preserving more traditional forms of *Chicanismo* or the forging of new spaces of cross-hatched subjectivities resulting from the intersection of many "standpoint" positionalitys.

We believe that a counterpraxis capable of challenging both local and globalized forms of white supremacist patriarchal capitalism needs to be linked to what Anzaldúa has called "*la conciencia de la mestiza*." Sandoval (1998) has refined and extended such a notion in new discussions of *oppositional mestizaje*. Sandoval notes that *oppositional mestizaje* relies on *la facultad*—"a set of principled conversions...that requires differential movement through, over, and within any dominant system of resistance, identity, race, gender, sex, class, or national meanings: The differential

strategy is directed, but it is also a "diasporic immigration" in consciousness and politics enacted to ensure that ethical commitment to egalitarian social relations enters into the everyday political sphere of culture" (p. 360). Sandoval's concept of oppositional *mestizaje* is both a tactical form of U.S. third world feminist practice and a differential strategy driven "by the imperatives of social justice that can engage a hermeneutics of love in the postmodern world" (p. 361). Organized around five points of resistance to U.S. social hierarchy—the assimilationist or liberal mode; the revolutionary or insurgent mode; the supremacist or cultural-nationalist mode; the separatist mode; and the *mestiza* or "third force" mode—Sandoval has developed a form of oppositional *mestizaje* that is useful for intervening in and transforming social relations. She emphasizes that neocolonial forces that organize postmodern global economies now require a "fluidity of identity." Yet this fluidity of identity must be made oppositional in the service of creating a new utopian and coalitional postcolonial state. The development of a coalitional consciousness is central to Sandoval's (1998) oppositional practice. She writes:

Oppositional *mestizaje* occurs when the unexplored affinities inside difference attract, combine, and relate new constituencies into a coalition of resistance. Any such generalized and politicized coalitional consciousness, however, can only occur on the site of a social movement that was once overlooked because it was perceived as limited, restricted by gender, sex, or race identity: U.S. third world feminism; a feminism developed by U.S. women of color and by Chicana feminists under the sign of "*la conciencia de la mestiza*." That is, coalition can only take place through the recognition and practice of a "U.S. third world feminist" form of resistance that is capable of renegotiating technologies of power through an ethically guided, skilled, and differential deployment - a methodology of the oppressed that is only made possible through *la conciencia de la mestiza*. (p. 362).

In addition to the multidimensional typography of subjectivity emphasized by Sandoval—one that we believe is in keeping with Stuart Hall's (1996) "diasporization"—we need to recognize that we can see the world collectively without claiming to be each other. And while Sandoval argues that it is imperative to rely on differently situated knowledges and to conjoin perspectives from different positionalities as a basic principle of oppositional practice, we must be careful not to lose sight of the reality of the accumulation of capital in terms of the ways in which situated knowledges get defined and framed. *Mestizaje* practices and their renegotiation of technologies are linked to the global material technologies of the laws of motion of capital. This can be more clearly understood if we see the relationship among the social relations of production, the consumer ethos driving U.S. culture, and the struggle for identity as one that is linked to the production of subjectivity. As we argued at the beginning of this essay, in the current historical interregnum—that deadening lull between the modernist quest for certainty and the postmodern celebration of uncertainty—we face a seismic shift in global capitalist relations. Capital acceleration and the social transformation that has followed in its wake have

had devastating consequences for the poor. The self-propelling character of contemporary goon-squad capitalism has been dramatically enhanced by neo-liberal policies that have savaged those already vulnerable and powerless. It is in the context of the historical development of capitalism that one of the most urgent struggles over subjectivity takes place. It is in this context that we have to examine the pressing question of a generation who is asking: What has society made of me that I no longer want to be?

Subjectivities are framed by—not dominated by—capital. In a manner of speaking, they constitute the fingerprints of capitalism, a place where capitalism leaves its identifying marks in ways unique to each person and society. Subjectivity is not "a mere internal template of economic process" (Kovel, 1998, p. 107). It occurs in the dialectical interplay of internal and external worlds. Subjectivities are produced conjuncturally, structurally, institutionally, and interpersonally. They are produced *conjuncturally* in that they are related to specific times and places in rapidly changing and unstable geopolitical arenas not of our own making, where racialized nationalisms proliferate and neo-colonial formations interlock as part of a globalizing fortification and symbiosis of capitalism and imperialism. They are produced *structurally*, within the theater of transnational capitalism and under the control of global carpetbaggers and corporate gangsters. They do not escape the devastating social consequences of the free market that create complex and uneven dispersals of power within the larger social field of capitalist social relations.

Subjectivities are also produced *institutionally*, through the imperializing racist formations that make up our government institutions and administrations where democracy has become an impossible possibility, an empty signifier for a range of attributes by which the oppressed measure their own disempowerment socially, culturally, and politically. And, finally, subjectivities are also formed *interpersonally*, at the faultline that separates needs and desire, through the tenacious colonial tropologies that mystify the history of social relations in which they have been produced and that direct the terrified gaze of the Euro-American towards bodies with brown and black skin who occupy the frayed margins of social life. All of these registers of subjectivity share common articulations.

Subjectivities cannot escape the narratives and rhetorics of Western systems of intelligibility that are displaced onto a non-white ontological Other. They cannot escape the propensity of the capitalist class to adduce reasons why the poor and powerless in our communities should be held responsible for their own poverty and powerlessness. While anything can be made to bear witness to the promise of diversity, no manner of celebrating diversity or hybridity in a no-holds-barred global economic order can bring about a post-border culture; there are always political borders that barricade against transgression. Dismantling these borders that can only be accomplished with the dismantling of capitalist relations of exploitation and the systems of racial, sexual and gender classification that promote them.

By focussing on the margins rather than the hegemonic center of white

supremacist capitalist patriarchy, mainstream multiculturalists have airbrushed the most vexing dilemmas in the liberal humanist call for diversity and have left uncontested the ever-present discourses of liberal democracy and the workability of capital—discourses that naturalize events so that their outcome no longer seems open to debate. By championing the values of a well-tempered democracy, liberal multiculturalists have also left unchallenged the social relations of production. Latent in the spectrality that has been disclosed by the discursive and representational practices of mainstream multiculturalism is the continuing advance of white supremacist logic and social practices. Ghosted into the ideas of mainstream multiculturalists is a promiscuous fascination with difference and epistemological exoticisms and the return of the erstwhile eclipsed Other. Mainstream multiculturalism remains permeated by the capitalist mode of production through structures of class, race, gender, and sexual domination.

Critical multiculturalism emphasizes the collective experiences of marginalized people in the context of their political activism and social mobilization. We distinguish critical multiculturalism from the dominant ideologies of multiculturalism which seek to legitimize the social order through racial harmony and a national identity based on the “Americanization” of marginalized cultures. As a framework for developing a pedagogical *praxis*, critical multiculturalism opens up social and political spaces for the oppressed to challenge the various forms of class, race, and gender oppression that are produced and reproduced by dominant social relations. We believe that by using their lived experiences, histories, and narratives as tools for social struggle (McLaren, 1995), subaltern groups can interpret and reconstruct their oppressive social conditions into meaningful social and political action (McLaren, 1995; 1997). Critical multicultural pedagogy encourages marginalized groups and communities to forge political alliances, and in so doing to eradicate cultural homogeneity by interpreting and (re)constructing their own history (McLaren, 1995). As part of a concerted effort of anti-capitalist struggle, critical multiculturalism seeks to establish social and economic equality in contrast to the conservative and liberal ideology of “equal opportunity” that masks the existing unequal distribution of power and wealth.

A democratic multicultural curriculum in the classroom encourages students to interrogate the multiple meanings of race, class, gender, and sexuality in a society which playfully and seductively inverts and reverses the true meaning of social equality. In our view, critical multiculturalism has the potential of pressuring democracy to live up to its name by putting bourgeois liberal egalitarianism on the witness stand of history. Cruz (1996) argues that we must refuse the entrapment of the empty promises of bourgeois democracy by

...bringing into political discourse the promises dangled in the ideology of a longer equality enshrined at the core of bourgeois liberal democracy, by giving groups a sense of place in society and in history, by offering the comfort that comes (tendentiously) in being able to say something about who they are, by attempting to rethink morally and reconstruct institutionally the meanings behind egalitarian-

ism, and by insisting that social power be truly empowering, enhancing, and protecting for all. (pp. 32-33)

Here, we follow Joel Kovel in struggling not only against economic conditions but also against the delimiting of the self by capital’s conversion of labor power into a commodity: the adherence to bureaucratic rationalization, possessive individualism, and consumerist desire. As Kovel notes: “It follows that capital must be fought and overcome, not simply at the micro level but as it inhabits and infests everyday life through the structures of bureaucratic rationalization and consumerist desire. However, capital can not be overcome unless it is replaced, at the level of the subject, with an alternative notion” (1998, p. 109). We suggest one move in an alternative direction would be a subject unburdened by innocence and engaged by difference, in the manner discussed by Stuart Hall (1996). Hall calls for rethinking ethnicity in a more diverse and less coercive way, decoupled from its equivalence with nationalism, imperialism, and the state. In short, he refers to an ethnicity that has not been transcendently stabilized to confer an essential guarantee to identity.

In summary, we must continue to wage new struggles of liberation, creating new class, race, and gendered identities—both global and local—along the way. To this end, critical pedagogy must become a scandal of the political imagination, a set of discursive and material practices designed to transform mass lethargy into political activism against the corporatist and neo-liberal practices of the ruling class. As Hall (1997) and others remind us, we must begin to rethink identity more in terms of what we can do for each other (a question of ethics) rather than who we are (a question of epistemology). Both issues are important, certainly, but we believe that coalition-building in the service of anti-capitalist struggle requires us to begin our struggle with an ethical commitment to each other and a political commitment to collectively challenge social relations of production under the current crises of globalism. Such a commitment is born not out of a pre-given set of first principles of social justice, but rather out of a dialectical and self-reflexive understanding of how our own humanity is implicated in both local and global relations of suffering and capitalist exploitation.

In this essay we have stressed a number of new currents for the development of a critical multiculturalism centered around the current reign of the depoliticized global market. In our move towards a radical re-politicization of the global marketplace, and a re-activation of the presence of Marx in current history in relation to recent attempts at the de-ideologization of the multicultural agent, a retreat from active civil society, a lack of civic courage and an enthrallment in passive, apolitical consumerism, we have challenged the privatization of subjectivity and the role of globalization in the de-formation of political agency. We have also sounded a warning against the dethronement of class as a pivotal issue in current debates over multicultural identity and agency.

The question that poses a powerful challenge for critical multicultural educators is: How can the left protagonize a process of structural change that goes beyond state

intervention to achieve internal redistribution and a tacit acceptance of the neoliberal model of free-market integration, not the global economy? While we cannot ignore the important contributions of organized left parties such as the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua, the Workers Party of the Democratic Revolution in Mexico, the Broad Front in Uruguay, the National Solidarity in Argentina, the Lavalas Party in Cuba, and the Communist Party in Chile, we must also recognize and emphasize the importance of grassroots social movements operating outside of state structures and organized parties, such as Christian communities, solidarity groups, the Landless Workers of Brazil, and revolutionary groups such as the Mexican Zapatistas (Robinson, 1998). How can these new social movements mediate between the state and the masses? Within the transnational space, how can these struggles contest the hegemony of the transnational elite and their local counterparts? How can a transnationalism from below—from the civil society as distinct from the political society—challenge the power of the global elite?

We join with our *compañeros/as* in Latinoamerica and North America—workers, women, environmentalists, students, peasants, indigenous groups, associations of the urban poor, and other sectors of society—to forge a counterhegemonic bloc against global capitalism and the state repression that is directed against those neoliberal structural adjustments. We do so with the hope that from the rubble of the historical imagination will emerge a revolutionary multiculturalist pedagogy will be better able to guide us through the necessary transformation of the next millennium.

Note

A shortened version of this introduction will appear as a chapter in: *Charting new terrains of Chicano(a)/Latina(o) education*, published by Hampton Press, 1999.

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