Democratic Dialogue IN Education

TROUBLING Speech, DISTURBING Silence

Edited by MEGAN BOLER

PETER LANG
New York • Washington, D.C./Baltimore • Bern
Frankfurt am Main • Berlin • Brussels • Vienna • Oxford

2004

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Moral and Political Clarity and Education as a Practice of Freedom

Classrooms that embody education as a practice of freedom cannot be made entirely safe. These learning environments are unavoidably risky in terms of the intellectual regions they engage, the emotional experiences they engender, the verbal exchanges they facilitate, and the actions they endorse. The volatile issues explored in them are among the most explosive and divisive in the culture, unearthing major fault lines that shake the foundations of meaning for individuals and society as a whole. Cognitive and emotional dissidence are necessary features of the critical consciousness and limit-acts that are among the objectives of liberatory courses. If the dominant ideologies are to be confronted and to some degree overcome, a variety of conflicts will be integral to this process. Discovering and articulating the realities underlying those ideologies, and questioning their effects within the identities and everyday practices of students, is often uncomfortable and even painful. Liberatory educators cannot promise a learning environment that protects everyone, and in fact, even after every precaution, they must themselves sometimes be the proximate cause of harms to students.

Thus, numerous moral and political issues emerge for liberatory educators in their classroom practices, and these are made even more urgent in the context of teacher education programs because the understandings and habits developed within them extend to impacts affecting countless numbers of children and youths. In addition, liberatory teacher educators face similar moral and political issues in relation to their faculty colleagues and the general climate of the colleges and universities. Proclamations of good intent cannot stop dominant ideologies from infecting even the most intimate recesses of learning environments from preschool through graduate school, and education as a practice of freedom entails

constant vigilance, questioning, and challenging in the effort to make schools and universities positive forces in the struggle for justice and democracy.

This essay examines some moral and political dimensions of education as a practice of freedom in the context of confrontations with dominant ideologies as they manifest in the classrooms, hallways, offices, and meeting rooms of educational environments. In particular, it critiques certain misunderstandings of dialogue as it relates to those struggles and to liberatory classroom practices, and then articulates a more politically robust conception. This analysis lays the groundwork for an argument that moral and political clarity, not certainty, is required to understand the necessary actions and the obligatory relations entailed in these struggles, and also is required of every citizen actively engaged in the formation of a just democracy.

Dialogue, Limit-Situations, and Limit-Acts

Education cannot do everything, but still it can do something in the struggle for liberation (Freire, 1994, p. 91). Certain classrooms can be engines of liberation in unusual historical moments, such as during the late 1960s when university students in North America and Europe formed the leading edge of a global confrontation with the dominant military-industrial powers. Too often, however, the necessary linkage between these struggles and classrooms hoping to be liberating is overlooked. Paulo Freire, in his path setting *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/1994), developed a conception of education as a practice of freedom in which dialogue plays a central role. Many North American interpreters of Freire's theory mistakenly focused on dialogue as a method of conversation or discussion that could be applied in classrooms to make them liberating spaces (Aronowitz, 1993). They assumed that inclusion of student voices was necessarily empowering, and that a critical reading of oppressive features of reality was a cognitive achievement.

Freirean dialogue thus gets reduced to having students take turns speaking and insuring that each student participates, while the teacher avoids direct instruction for fear of reproducing oppressive relationships with the students. The misapprehension of the significance of discussion modalities is often linked to a similar conflation that occurs around content. Educators believe that reconstructing the curriculum to focus on counterhegemonic perspectives, discourses, and social realities will empower students, especially those represented within such perspectives, such as students of color and women. Once again, while these curricular transformations are important and offer some support for emancipatory projects, they alone, or in conjunction with a participatory approach to classroom discussion, can still easily miss the aim of education as a practice of freedom when they are not articulated to the struggles and limit-acts that secure freedom. This missed aim also clouds some of the recent discussion of ethical issues in classrooms hoping to contribute to counterhegemonic purposes.

The efforts of these teachers were certainly humanizing and a welcome advance over the predominant banking modes of education. However, they often amounted to a domestication of Freire's theory, overlooking the praxis that is essential to dialogue and the struggle for freedom (Glass, 2001a). Dialogue, when it is a liberatory praxis, is comprised of limit-acts that transcend, transform, or overcome limit-situations. Education as a practice of freedom is about conscious actions aimed at challenging ways of thinking and living that prevent people from realizing their own capacities for producing history, culture, and ways of life. A key to this praxis is the recognition of our situationality because it reveals "the very condition of existence" (Freire, 1970/1994, p. 90). In other words, it reveals the human power to make history and culture at the same time that historical and cultural realities shape human experience. People are submerged in realities that they have not necessarily consciously created with others, yet situations are not simply fated. They have specific concrete antecedents and always contain some recourse or room for free action within them. Critical reflection on the forces and entities that shape the situation uncover the obstacles, barriers, or boundaries (limit-situations) to that free action (self/class/group-defining/realizing action). Oppression is then overcome "by way of a breach with the real, concrete economic, political, social, ideological . . . order . . ." (Freire, 1994, p. 99). By getting some distance from experience, or emerging from our unconscious submersion within the dominant ideology, it is possible to uncover the *raison d'être* of the situation, recast its limits as problems open to transformative interventions, and identify "untested feasibilities" (realizable futures) beyond the present horizons that can be brought into being through struggle and effort.

Neither a critical knowledge of reality (especially socioeconomic structures and other major elements of the dominant ideology), nor language and speech that redefine that reality, are sufficient to change that reality without their being linked to the concrete struggle to transform the given situation. Frederick Douglass noted that "if there is no struggle, there is no progress" in regard to freedom and justice (Douglass, 1985, p. 204). It is crucially important that liberatory educators pay attention to the relationship between "political lucidity in a reading of the world, and the various levels of engagement in the process of mobilization and organization for the struggle for the defense of rights, for laying claim to justice" (Freire, 1994, p. 40). Dialogue, then, encompasses a wide array of methods that mediate the analysis of limit-situations and support the actions that comprise the struggle to transform that situation. Depending on the context and the political project at hand, lectures can be as emancipatory as a participatory discussion, and reactionary

texts can be as illuminating and instrumental as revolutionary ones. What is crucial is moral and political clarity about the aims and methods so that the broader struggle for justice and democracy is served without moral and political inconsistency.

Dialogue and Silence

It should be clear by now that from the perspective of education as a practice of freedom, dialogue is not a conversation in which there is give and take among interlocutors in order to conduct an inquiry or debate, nor is it merely a pedagogical communicative relationship or a game played for the purpose of teaching and learning (Burbules, 1993). Teachers indeed employ dialogue in these various other forms, in the context of either conservative or progressive aims, and in addition, any or all of these conversational methods can be integrated to the dialogical praxis of education for liberation. In a similar vein, silence enfolds a range of meanings and significance that can embody contradictory political and pedagogical relationships, and that can vary by cultural contexts (Li, 2001). Silence can be a form of resistance to domination (and in this mode even be regarded as speech), and conversely it can be a manifestation of domination. The silence that is structured by economic, social, and political domination has been the particular concern of education as a practice of freedom, and in this context, a key transformative limit-act is the validation, empowerment, and amplification of the voices of the oppressed.

Some have raised questions about whether, for liberatory educators, a commitment to democratic dialogue also entails a commitment to tolerate voices in the classroom that give expression to the dominant ideology. This tolerance in effect resilences subaltern or counterhegemonic voices that have already been silenced by ideological structures imposed on the poor and working class, people of color, and women, for example. Thus, the question becomes whether an "affirmative action pedagogy" permits (and even requires) the silencing of these dominant voices/students (Boler, 2000). In assessing such questions, it must be kept in mind that these acts of silencing particular students or dominant ideologies in the classroom differ from one another in important moral and political ways, and, more pointedly, they have quite different substantive relationships with ideologically structured silence. Some of the force of this contrast can be brought out by analogy to the difference between a white person calling a black person "nigger" and a black person calling a white person "honky" or "cracker." While both insults are morally blameworthy, only the epithet "nigger" carries the force of a violent history of oppression that reinforces the threat and aggravates the harm done. Ideologically structured silence is pervasive, reinforced by a network of cultural practices and social institutions, and it maintains unjust economic, social, and political relations. Of course, the concern is precisely not to abet this structure of silence, allowing it to be reproduced in

the liberatory classroom just at the moment when students disadvantaged by ideological silencing are being given space to find their voices.

The fact that the dominant voice in the classroom reinforces the structured silence of oppressive social conditions marks an important contrast to the silencing of that dominant voice. Even so, often only the silencing of the dominant voice is regarded as out of alignment with the democratic standards and norms of the society and of the supposedly fair equal opportunity of schools. The structural silencing of the poor, people of color, and women is not seen as such, and the pernicious effects of the dominant voice functions in an unspoken way within the background dynamics of the classroom. Either foregrounding these dynamics or silencing the dominant voice can then appear to uncritical eyes to be inconsistent with the articulated standards of democratic dialogue (all voices should be included) and also inconsistent with the formal and informal rules of classroom behavior of the educational institution. Students whose dominant voices are thus silenced may "get even" with faculty by assigning them unduly low scores on course evaluations, or by filing grievances that can lead to disciplinary action against those faculty. These threats can have chilling effects, especially on vulnerable faculty without tenure.

The moral and political differences associated with structural silences versus silencing particular students interconnect with others of significance in classrooms. Educators routinely silence certain voices and amplify others through the selection of the curriculum, the design of assignments and assessments, and the structure of the classroom social relations and learning environment. Each of these seeming pedagogical choices embeds ideological commitments that have real social, economic, and political consequences. Whereas the concrete content of these choices distinguish the liberatory from the reactionary or conservative educator/classroom to some degree, what most differentiates the liberatory educator/classroom is that these choices and actions are made subject to explicit critical examination rather than being left within hidden hegemonic practices. This includes making overt the moral and political commitments underlying the choices and shaping the intentions of study. In other words, the various forms of silencing that inhere within the dynamics of the classroom get identified as constituting elements of the limit-situation that require analysis and intervention in order to promote more just and more democratic educational and social institutions.

The political differences in these forms of silence and silencing have some bearing on the moral meaning and significance of the actions of the liberatory educator. The silences created in the structure of the class or by the individual educator's direct intervention in response to comments made by students cannot stand alone; the moral grounds of these choices must themselves be subject to critique. More specifically, the reasons for the choices must be given and analyzed. Neither moral nor political authoritarianism can be consistent with education as a practice of

freedom. Silencing is not the problem, per se, but rather the issue is why and how it is achieved. After all, every dutiful parent at some moment silences a child in the child's own best interests or in order to meet the parental obligations to nurture, protect, and train the child, and so long as this is done nonviolently, selectively, and in ways supportive of the child's development, few would raise moral objections (Ruddick, 1989). Similar considerations bear on classrooms. Thus, even with sufficient grounds for some silencing in order to make space for nondominant perspectives, liberatory educators do not have license to silence students completely. Each student, regardless of his or her political views, is entitled to respect and to a voice within his or her educational experience. A liberatory educator in fact would want to insure that even the voice of the dominant has some place in the class if only to subject it to searching ideological critique. Perhaps it is thus better to think of the selective silencing of certain dominant discourses as a muting more than as a total elimination of that voice; and, after all, the dominant ideology blares from every corner of the culture, so there is no danger of it being utterly without expression even in a course in which each student embraced emancipatory politics and occupied a counterhegemonic identity position.

When it comes time to analyze the grounds for muting dominant voices and amplifying the voices of those silenced by the ideological structures of society, it is imperative that these actions not provide an excuse to hijack the agenda of the class. Often in these situations, students who embody dominant identity positions or who are committed to conservative political perspectives insist that the grounds for regulating discourse must satisfy their own criteria before they will agree to mute their voice and allow discussion to proceed along counterhegemonic lines. If, after thorough explanation and discussion, questions continue to be raised in good faith, these students can be provided with alternative means of extending their critique of the instructor's political and moral choices, such as by writing position papers or meeting with the instructor in an office hour outside class. Obstructive questioning must be clearly revealed as a tactical ploy aimed at reinforcing the same structure of silence that liberatory classes are attempting to subvert. Further, the instructor's authority can rightfully be exerted to prevent this obstruction to learning, just as with many other sorts of disruptive or threatening behavior that may occur in a classroom.

The muting of students cannot be dismissive of them or their learning and must occur within continuing moral, political, and pedagogical relationships and commitments. The tasks associated with these relationships and commitments constitute a portion of the struggle for justice within educational institutions and no doubt place substantive burdens on liberatory educators. However, education as a practice of freedom demands a sustained engagement with both ally and opponent in order to construct the kind of just and democratic community that animates dreams of a better future. Liberatory educators bear these burdens buoyed by

moral and political clarity about the strategies and tactics of the struggle and their role within it. Their own lives must embody an ongoing effort at self-realization as they strive to demonstrate, however imperfectly, the modes of relation they hope for (hooks, 1994). Their own willingness to make these efforts transparent and subject to assessment announces a new context for teaching and learning that also supports the muting, criticism, and denunciations that are a necessary part of the struggle for justice. While any pedagogical approach results in some harms to some students, these are left unexamined except in education as a practice of freedom, where public reflection and deliberation locate them within larger moral and political frames.

Moral Clarity, Struggle, and Dirty Hands

Few people, whether conservative or progressive, will acknowledge the ways in which they manifest dominant ideologies, and even fewer graciously accept being criticized for it. Even so, it is impossible for anyone born into and raised within our society not to in some degree inhabit, and be inhabited by, the dominant ideologies (Glass, 2000). Racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, and ability-ism each mark our habits of mind and body, infusing the most intimate and sacred just as surely as the most public and profane. Thus, liberatory educators cannot claim some position of righteousness in regard to the dominant ideologies of the day any more than they can claim a kind of perfection that escapes the ordinary vices that preoccupy most everyday moral discourse (Shklar, 1984). In fact, even to aspire to a moral purity that is beyond racism, sexism, and so forth, is to hope for the wrong thing. The best one can hope for is to become more effective and committed in the struggle against racism, sexism, classism, and so on, and in the struggle for justice and democracy. Moral clarity enables teachers and learners to grasp that each of us is inextricably implicated in both what we struggle against and what we struggle for, and thus to criticize others with more understanding and compassion, and with a greater capacity to engage them in their own ongoing quest for moral betterment. Humility is thus not an attribute of a saint or of a sinner, but rather it should be a consequence of political insight into the structure of oppression, the processes of ideological formation, and the challenges of realizing justice and democracy. The degree to which any of us is innocent is often more a matter of moral luck than it is a matter of discreet choices (Williams, 1981), and even in the most extreme situations of violence and oppression, such as the Nazi concentration camps, a moral gray zone predominates over stark contrasts of good and evil, right and wrong (Levi, 1988).

Persistent moral ambiguities and inescapable moral and political contradictions within both society and individual lives thus entail cautious judgments. Competing

moral conceptions and their diverse goods, aims, and judgments contribute additional weight to such caution. This diversity is found not only across cultural differences that span the globe, but also within the pluralistic dynamics of western societies, and even more so among those aspiring to democratic and just arrangements. In fact, there is good reason to regard moralities as akin to natural languages, defying easy or certain translation from one to another, and without the possibility of an ultimate arbiter among them or the ways of life tied to each (Hampshire, 1983).

Caution need not become paralysis, with judgment confined to a despairing nihilism that either denies the possibility of any substantive moral grounding or asserts the moral equivalence of all views or actions. Moral clarity is not moral certainty, but it still carries sufficient force to overcome relativistic positions and orient liberatory practices that criticize or condemn oppression's surface appearances and deep structures. "Of course, the element of punishment, penalty, correction—the punitive element in the struggle we wage in our hope, in our conviction of its ethical and historical rightness—belongs to the pedagogical nature of the political process of which struggle is an expression" (Freire, 1994, p. 9). If justice is to mean anything at all, it must be made concrete in relation to specific abuses and injustices that are named as such and corrected or overcome on the basis of consistent and explicit principles and rationales. Tolerance and empathy for people who manifest dominant ideologies or who oppose a critical reading of the world do not require passivity. In addition, moral and caring relationships do not supercede the need for a radical commitment to the political struggle that challenges those ideologies and the unjust privileges conferred on some while disadvantages are heaped on others. Liberatory classrooms can never be neutral, and by facilitating searching investigations of the ideological formations inhabiting common sense and the habitual ways of being of everyone in schools and colleges, they "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable" in the effort to build democratic movements for justice. Civility blocks needed critiques and can be a barrier to change since the underlying structures of good manners themselves favor the powerful (Mayo, 2001, 2002). To call attention to the underlying dominant ideologies gets labeled as provocative by those who benefit from the silence (Thompson, 2001). However, just such provocations are necessary to open transformative possibilities within situations.

Without a settled account of a universal moral calculus, moral and political conflicts will be endemic to a pluralistic society, placing a premium on rules of procedural justice that minimally insure free speech and the opportunity to make a case for particular conceptions of the good (Hampshire, 1983). In fact, established mechanisms for nonviolently handling such disagreements through deliberative processes are precisely what distinguish healthy democracies from other forms of political arrangements (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). Thus, a capacity for active

participation in these moral and political conflicts and deliberations is both central to democratic citizenship and to the aims of education as a practice of freedom. These conflicts and deliberations can be decidedly messy. Therefore, liberatory educators' moral and political clarity about these dynamics must undergird their denunciations of dominant ideologies and insure their efforts to make judgments transparent and open to criticism. Nonetheless, because education as a practice of freedom entails direct action to challenge dominant ideologies and to support the formation of more just and democratic institutions, the moral dilemmas in these struggles are not merely matters of debate and discussion. When we make certain choices and act in accord with them, positive harms can befall those who are not precisely blameworthy.

For example, through no fault of their own, students embody and proclaim dominant ideologies that have inhabited them unawares. When liberatory educators silence or correct these students, even though for a good cause and with care, the students may experience this negatively. Those students' sense of efficacy or moral agency or their stature with other students may be diminished, at least temporarily. More generally, all students in the class may be harmed to some degree if a seeming display of ends justifying inconsistent means reinforces a sense of moral cynicism. These moral harms are certainly relatively minor and have limited social, economic, and political scope when compared with the ill effects resulting from other educational and political decisions or from the outcomes and logics of the dominant ideologies. Nonetheless, the transgressions that produce harms in the course of education as a practice of freedom dirty the hands of liberatory educators and carry their own particular burdens (Glass, 2001b). When action is taken in the broader public arenas of power and politics, negative effects grow commensurately more serious. For those who struggle for justice and democracy, innocence has no place.

Some have hoped that the moral burdens that come with the dirty hands acquired in striking blows against injustices and dominant ideologies are to some degree cleansed by duties that command stronger allegiance and justify transgressions against individuals. It might be argued that liberatory educators are acting toward paramount goals that serve the common good, and that they have a professional responsibility to make decisions about the curriculum and its implementation and to shape the behavior of students through coercive measures that assess and grade their performance. If students are harmed as a secondary "double effect" of such actions after due precautions, then no moral blame accrues to the educator, whose conscience can be clear. This reasoning seems to absolve blame by means of a utilitarian discounting of the harms done to some students, whereas other approaches achieve the same effect by other routes. For example, realists in the Machiavellian tradition argue that decisions lack substantive moral content when taken within situations amenable only to calculations of utility, and therefore they should be

judged solely by practical results and not morally. In such cases, they argue, moral considerations apply only to the character of the person making the choices or exercising power. In other words, it is necessary to make sure that the educator has reliable moral habits and inflicts harm only as necessary to secure the best possible lives for all the students taken together. In this view, individual students harmed once again have no special claim on the conscience of the educator.

These justifications of harms done while advancing the cause of justice in liberatory classrooms—whether by way of universal principles in line with the highest duties, or of a utilitarian calculus seeking the greatest good, or of the amoral pragmatics of the realist—share an assumption that accepts a split between public and private virtue. That is, these views hold that otherwise good people who are the proximate cause of harms done to innocents bear no moral burdens for those actions so long as they acted conscientiously, and thus their personal virtue remains unsullied by their public sin. Some have sought to mend this rift between public and private virtue by suggesting two alternative outlooks (see Walzer, 1974). One perspective is that good people who commit harms in order to do good should be anguished by their choices and transgressions, and suffer from understanding that neither worthy reasons nor beneficial results can prevent a tragic "loss of soul" as their fate. In this case, repentance salves the soul without fully healing it or restoring lost innocence, so the agony of this loss is deepened by recognition of its permanence. This moral tragedy remains largely private, although a second, more heroic, possibility is available. In this latter case, private anguish is augmented by public acknowledgment of the wrong done and acceptance of judgment and perhaps even punishment. Whereas these moral psychologies provide greater consistency in coping with the problem of dirty hands, they still fall short of the radical commitments necessary for education as a practice of freedom (Glass, 2001b).

At the same time that education as a practice of freedom recognizes that perfection is impossible, it requires neither tragic suffering nor heroism. In the context of multiple conceptions of the good, each with distinctive ways of life adhering to a diversity of competing principles and methods of moral calculation, it does not seek moral certainty. Rather, education as a practice of freedom seeks to create conditions that reveal both public and private moral life as continually negotiated compromises and that support the formation of citizens actively involved in those negotiations. Such citizens are also committed to struggle for justice and democracy against the weight of ideological forces that skew moral deliberations. Liberatory actions in classrooms and society do not have the luxury of having their associated moral burdens washed away by rationalized justifications. Instead they are grounded within genuine moral dilemmas that result in harm to innocents. All educators inevitably mute or silence some while amplifying and giving voice to others in line with their moral, political, and educational choices. Liberatory educators try to make their choices in favor of justice, democracy, and the oppressed, and

in opposition to inequity and dominant ideologies. Such choices cannot avoid harm one way or another, and because those harmed have moral standing as persons regardless of their views or behaviors, liberatory educators are challenged to recognize them and give their experience its own measure of moral weight. The dilemmas of political and moral action leave unfinished remainders (see Gowans, 1987) that obligate liberatory educators to remain connected with allies and opponents alike in the ongoing deliberations, negotiations, and struggles that literally comprise moral and political life within pluralistic democracies.

Moral and political clarity is the understanding of these dilemmas and obligations, which provides a strategic foundation for actions that challenge the situational limits that prevent every person from fulfilling their human capacity to make history and culture. Within the struggle to build the just, democratic society necessary to insure that this capacity is concretely realized for everyone, liberatory educators try to construct transformative relationships with those students, faculty, and staff with whom they agree and are in political solidarity, but also those with whom they disagree or with whom they are in conflict. The precariousness of the dominant ideology (despite its bedrock power) and the persistent possibility of the conversion of opponents to the cause of justice are features of every situation, and they sustain a radical hope and militancy. To truly transform oppressive ways of life and the people and institutions that animate and support them, liberatory educators and their allies have no other consistent strategic choice but to remain in relation with the dominant classes and institutions that are enemies of justice and democracy so as to understand and challenge them. These relationships are certainly very difficult, emotionally and politically. They are a kind of spiritual task taken on in light of a clear understanding of the difficulty of making present a more just and democratic future. This approach to liberatory education reinvents power without moral righteousness about the certainty of the best path to reach the dream that draws us forward. There is no finish to such work; the struggle for a just democracy is a way of life, that of the citizen.

Struggle and Citizenship

Students coming from and heading toward all walks of life need to understand their "own selves as historical, political, social, cultural beings" and in doing so thus comprehend "how society works" (Freire, 1994, p. 133). This "route to the invention of citizenship" (Freire, 1994, p. 39) cannot be taken through training, but rather must be achieved by education that embodies the ongoing critique of reality, empowers the voices, hopes, and aims of formerly silenced groups, and encourages systematic conjectures toward and anticipations of justice and democracy. To become strong and active citizens able to resist the dominant ideology and build a

more just and democratic future, students must be enabled to overcome the "existential weariness" and "historical anesthesia" that undermines their efficacy and keeps them immersed in "personal problems and concerns of the moment, unable to glimpse the 'untested feasibility' that lies beyond the 'limit-situation'" (Freire, 1994, p. 137). When students discern the boundaries of their existence and their transcending power to make history and culture, they can engage the struggle for the future strategically and responsibly.

In a liberatory classroom, as students come to understand how oppression and the dominant ideologies shape their lives (whether they enjoy the privileges or suffer the consequences of that dominant order), oppression passes from being simply a weight to bear to becoming an opportunity, a challenge, a situation calling for creative insight and response. A classroom committed to collaborative ongoing criticism of the totality of life uncovers the dynamics of culture and history, revealing the given situation or what has come down through tradition as processes in which everyone continues to play a role. That role is subject to some personal and collective control, so the dominant ideology can be countered, blocked, and resisted, while at the same time new meanings and ways of being are constructed, drawing on the struggles of the past to build up already present possibilities. Liberatory classrooms must facilitate students' actual lived production of a more just and democratic society, "created, politically produced, worked on, in the sweat of one's brow, in concrete history" (Freire, 1994, p. 157).

In other words, education as a practice of freedom links learning to the "political process of the battle for citizenship" (Freire, 1994, p. 199). It establishes forms of ethics and politics that will not defeat justice and democracy on the way toward their realization. The directive and political nature of this education accentuates a need for an ethics of respect geared into the fight for justice. Respect for differences and for those who oppose the liberation of the oppressed can be maintained even as liberatory educators testify for and defend their political choices and challenge the limiting conditions of their situation. We can respect opponents who reinforce the dominant ideologies, even as we combat their positions and powers "earnestly and with passion" (Freire, 1994, p. 79).

Given present historical circumstances, the direct engagement in the struggle against dominant ideologies and in the construction of a more democratic and just society inevitably leads citizens to violate state laws and public conventional standards in order to serve moral and political interests. Education as a practice of freedom consequently requires preparation for the transgressions integral to active citizenship. In order to overcome the structures, standards, and forms of power articulated with institutionalized dominant ideologies, yet without reproducing those ideologies and modes of relation (merely replacing the old oppressor with the formerly oppressed), it is best if liberation struggles practice militant nonviolence (Glass, 1996). This strategic approach to social change has animated twentieth-

century campaigns in countries that span the globe and includes confrontations with regimes backed by some of the largest armies in the world (Powers & Vogele, 1997; Zunes, Kurtz, & Asher, 1997). The limit-acts that challenge injustice and still embody principles of respect, care, and justice can be developed along a strategic continuum; moral considerations need not disable forceful political action (King, 1963). From myriad forms of noncooperation with injustice that open the struggle to participation, even by children, to more confrontational tactics that include strikes, boycotts, and direct actions that prevent business as usual, militant nonviolence offers an array of options to counter dominant ideologies, to build democratic institutions, and to provide for national security (Sharp, 1973, 1985).

Given the inequities and injustices of the day as reflected in dominant ideologies such as racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, and ability-ism, education as a practice of freedom must foster the capacity to participate in militant nonviolent campaigns. Civil disobedience that challenges governmental authority can be expected as part of the healthy functioning of democratic and nearly just societies (Rawls, 1971). In fact, this capacity for struggle should be regarded as one of the foundational skills of citizenship. However, citizens who embody these practices cannot wrap themselves in flags of righteousness or be armored with moral certainty. Even with right on the side of overcoming oppression and promoting just, democratic ways of life, these struggles cannot lay claim to infallible knowledge and understanding and cannot avoid at least some harm to innocents. Dirty hands come with conscientious citizenship. Therefore, education as a practice of freedom must do more than hone moral sensibilities and reason and more than heighten commitment to moral action. Citizenship in the service of justice and democracy requires the open bearing of moral burdens coupled with unrelenting struggle to create a future now only imagined.

Alone among strategies for the radical transformation of unjust societies, militant nonviolence embraces the uncertainties and varieties of reason in knowledge, respects the plural compelling conceptions of the good that can shape democracy, and recognizes the malleability and contradictions of identity (Glass, 2000). The cultural and historical praxis that is at the heart of human existence provides the "opportunity of setting ourselves free" insofar as we join the "political struggle for transformation of the world" (Freire, 1994, p. 100). When this political and ideological fight is wedded to militant nonviolence, it becomes a strategy that makes more credible the demand that citizenship entail a permanent radical struggle for justice and democracy because it preserves to all equally the power to seek self-determined hopes and dreams. Education as a practice of freedom both engenders and draws upon this understanding of citizenship. It gears itself into these struggles and makes sure that schools and classrooms that pursue it become sites of personal and social change, and contribute to the embodiment of greater justice and democracy.

Classroom Practices

Perhaps a brief discussion of my own current classroom practices can illuminate the meaning of linking education as a practice of freedom with the formation of citizens committed to the struggle for justice and democracy. I, like most faculty members in colleges of education, teach far from the front lines and under the gaze of unsympathetic authorities. In my university, students are primarily working-class white adults who are the first members of their families to be obtaining a university degree. For the most part, they reflect the rightist political ideologies of the state's long-ruling Republican party and the evangelical conservative Christian theology of the dominant local religions. If my courses were not required for graduation with bachelor's or master's degrees in education, it would be safe to bet that enrollment would be a tiny fraction of what it is. In this context, it is liberating merely to crack the certainty of the meanings that define their everyday world and self-understandings while, at the same time, enabling their sense of wonder about and engagement with the issues at hand. Nonetheless, I expect more, despite the fact that these required core courses cannot be structured strictly in alignment with the principles of education as a practice of freedom due to institutional constraints.

My "ground rules" for discussion and interaction point immediately toward a transformative agenda: the importance of separating views from persons and an insistence on respect for all persons; a recognition that ideological purity or complete goodness are impossible, and that every student and teacher, regardless of how long they have struggled against the dominant ideologies, is still shaped and infected by those ideologies; a commitment not to focus on blame but rather to take responsibility for the reality and limit-situations investigated in the class; a willingness to examine issues deeply, following ideological traces into hidden or obscure areas of both public and private life; an understanding of the uncertainties of interpreting ideological markers in situations, and a commitment to the rigors of study and modes of investigation that warrant knowledge; and, an openness to taking actions that can lead to transforming one's self and the situation. I do not expect students to agree with me, or with each other, but I do expect them to be moved in some profound way by what we discover and do together in the process of investigating the course topics. I explicitly tell students on the first day of class that insofar as they participate fully in the class, they will never be the same. This substantive objective may seem grandiose for a mere 45 hours or less of class time, but it puts students on notice about the difficult and sometimes scary process ahead, and it begins to open up the possibility of irrevocable change.

I use an assortment of readings and films that contain autobiographical accounts of ordinary people grappling with dominant ideologies, thus challenging students to think about what they might do with their own lives. In class discussions and written assignments, I pose questions that defy set or easy answers, that uncover hidden structures behind surface appearances, and that provoke uncertainty in students' understandings of what they take for granted. To foster this critical reading of the world, popular culture can often provide a starting place to reveal the underlying contradictions within their identities and their world. I encourage multiple, even antagonistic, interpretations and analyses in order to disclose the ideological forces at work in constructing everyday experience. I steadfastly oppose dogmatism and certainties, and instead encourage and support students' curiosity so that they can become active investigators of themselves and their reality, always engaged in an ongoing quest for the "why?" of the world.

Saul Alinsky famously remarked that effective community organizers had to "rub raw the resentments of the people of the community" (Alinsky, 1989, p. 116). In other words, he knew that the wounds inflicted by injustice produced injuries that could not be healed without first opening them up and then cleaning them so healing could begin. I, too, expose the sore points in the culture, knowing that without an explicit recognition that many people are suffering from the current political, social, economic, and cultural orders, people will be little likely to undertake the additional suffering required to transform that reality. I acknowledge the pain that comes with recognition of one's ignorance and implicit contribution to evil, and identify these experiences in my own life. I widen the breach with the everyday commonsense understandings of self and society that leave students feeling vulnerable, because these breaches and vulnerabilities are needed for them to see reality more clearly. By fostering the strangeness that emerges with the first glimmerings of critical insight, I provoke significant anxiety and cause tensions in students' close relationships. However, only in the space of this strangeness and anxious tension can an understanding develop of the mechanisms and forces that produce reality and of the new possibilities that fill the situation. Only by helping students pass through this sense of alienation from who they were and what they knew before, can I assist them to free their imaginations to see how things might be otherwise. By providing detailed examples of movements that have transformed the society they now take as a given, I encourage students to grasp the actions within their own reach that can bring the future into the present. In their efforts to embody this new reality, they learn that the changes must be forged in the crucible of struggle.

The hard, even grueling, work entailed in these courses imposes a special obligation on me to make myself extraordinarily available for office hours to support students as they wrestle with the challenges of becoming more consistent with their intentions and dreams. The revelation of reality is not necessarily motivation to transform reality. Not only do the fear of freedom and the outright denial of ordinary people's power to make history and culture block a critical understanding of the dynamics of self-class-race-gender-reality formation, they also block an ability

to commit to the struggle. Additional psychological factors bear on the fruitfulness of courses based on education as a practice of freedom, and these are often best addressed one-on-one in extended office hours. The truth of oppression and the power of the dominant ideology in our lives can be humiliating and reinforce a sense of incompetence, fostering even overwhelming feelings of guilt and shame at being thus dominated or controlled by forces beyond us. These feelings of humiliation, guilt, shame, and weakness must themselves become objects of critical reflection and be linked to the reality that must be denounced and actively resisted. At the same time, students' personal histories must be linked to the long public history of struggle and sacrifice inherited from an ongoing community of freedom fighters to which students can become connected. As they begin to understand critically the mechanisms of social conflict, they can participate in their own way in the ongoing battles that mark their age and generation.

Beyond the classroom, I make my own life an example of commitment to the tasks necessary to transform the climate and structures of the college, university, and community. I build community and leadership through organizing social activities as well as political actions, through networking and connecting like-minded people, and through mentoring young talented students and supporting them into significant volunteer and employment opportunities. I engage in almost daily resistance activities that press themselves into my schedule regardless of how burdened I may be. These are things that give no choice about time and place for action, but require immediate response. The force of the dominant ideology assaults vulnerable people in small and large ways, and given that I enjoy the benefits of race, class, and gender privileges, it is especially incumbent on me to intervene in a wide variety of both public and private ways as necessary to protect people and principles. I take public stands on the issues of the day, even if only to reiterate principles of justice in the face of defeat, or to refuse cooperation with policies or actions that are affronts to fairness. I attend meetings, serve on committees, write letters, make phone calls, sign petitions, and monitor the actions of opponents. As I have aged and to some degree grown wiser, I have gained greater effectiveness by balancing my relentless practice of resistance and critique with similarly everyday practices that embody justice and democracy. Often these practices take the personal form of spiritual work to reduce my negativity and cynicism, to increase my kindness and compassion, to be more forgiving, and to be more mindful of my family. In addition, I try to embody the changes I seek by joining with others who are like-minded in organizations and communities that are actively making a difference. By trying my best, not deterred by always falling short, I hope to demonstrate another way to lead a life that takes citizenship seriously and struggles toward the realization of the just democracy that is our nation's promise.

Concluding Comments

It is easy to slip into despair in the face of the tremendous challenges that inhibit the realization of a just democracy. Each of us individually can seem so small in comparison to the size of the task. The relentless press of the dominant ideologies leaves no space for respite. The burdens of liberatory work weigh on our emotions and sap our energy. The temptations to forget the struggle and lose oneself in the oblivions of consumerism and escapism flood the mass media. The righteous demands and needs of our loved ones and friends are sufficient to occupy us without the added responsibilities of repairing the world. The calls to study other important matters pervade schools and colleges, and assessments that foretell our future opportunities pay scant attention to the issues of justice and democracy.

Each of us must first realize that just as we are not responsible for the entire task of liberation, of building a just democratic society, so we are nonetheless obligated to do something. When our aim is large, no task is too small. When so much is to be done, every effort makes some contribution. As more and more people take up the challenge to press the limits of their particular situations, and as these efforts are linked in broader struggle, the wheel of history can be turned to realize the ancient dream of justice for all. Few callings, if any, are higher than to be a citizen who forces such movement, and few aims, if any, are as worthy of directing education.

Note

This essay was substantively improved by comments on an earlier draft that were provided by Pia Lindquist Wong; all remaining deficiencies and obscurities remain my sole responsibility. Portions of this essay in the section entitled "Moral Clarity, Struggle and Dirty Hands" draw from an earlier work: On transgression, Moral Education, and Education as a Practice of Freedom, *Philosophy of Education 2001* [S. Rice (Ed.), Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign], pp. 120–128.

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