

L Á P I Z

N° 3

**DECOLONIAL EDUCATION
IN THE AMERICAS:
LESSONS ON RESISTANCE,
PEDAGOGIES OF HOPE**

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A NOTE FROM THE LÁPIZ EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

In a 2018 communique, speaking on behalf of the Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés offered the following reflection:

Aquí todo lo discutimos y lo acordamos en colectivo. Y por lo mismo a veces tardamos, pero lo que sale es de colectivo. Si sale bien, es de colectivo. Si sale mal, es de colectivo.¹ (Here, we discuss and agree on everything collectively. And because of this, sometimes we take longer, but what comes out is from the collective. If it goes well, it comes from the collective. If it goes wrong, it comes from the collective.)

Since its inception, The Latin American Philosophy of Education Society (LAPES) has been inspired by this type of commitment to collectivity. It runs through all of our work, and it shapes the way we organize our research group. Sometimes this commitment to collectivity slows us down, sometimes it leads to setbacks. More often than not, however, it leads to rich learning experiences and the production of

¹ Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, *Palabras del Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena-Comandancia General del Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, el 1 de enero del 2018. 24 Aniversario del inicio de la guerra contra el olvido*, 2018. <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2018/01/01/palabras-del-comite-clandestino-revolucionario-indigena-comandancia-general-del-ejercito-zapatista-de-liberacion-nacional-el-1-de-enero-del-2018-24-aniversario-del-inicio-de-la-guerra-contra-el-olvi/> (accessed March 5, 2018).

quality, communal work that belongs to no one and, we hope, is shared with everyone.

The final articles that appear in *Lápiz* No. 3 were edited by the newly formed LÁPIZ Editorial Collective. Originally, these pieces were presented at the Third Annual LAPES Symposium “Decolonial Education in the Americas: Lessons on Resistance, Pedagogies of Hope” held at the University of Miami in April 2016. This complex transformation took many conversations and the combined effort of the editorial collective. We believe we have found a way to bring to the reader the authors’ words, thoughts, and feelings, their radical hopes, needed critiques, and uncompromising courage. We thank the authors once more for their dedication and care in composing their articles.

If *Lápiz* No. 3 pleases the reader, it is, in part, because it has been edited collectively. If it does not, it has been edited collectively. ■

INTRODUCTION

Aleksandra Perisic
University of Miami

Two years ago, as we were preparing the publication of *Lápiz* no. 02, we decided to begin the journal on page 44, as a way of honoring the lives of 43 teachers kidnapped and disappeared in Ayotzinapa, Mexico. We wanted to mark the absence of those missing, who would have had a lot to say about Latin American philosophy of education yet were no longer able to. As I began writing the introduction to *Lápiz* no. 03 last summer, the struggle over education in Mexico was still ongoing. In their relentless fight to prevent the neoliberal dismantling of public education, the Oaxaca teachers faced brutal state violence, which has caused many innocent deaths. Further up north, in the United States, the death of Alton Sterling, a 37 year old black man, at the hands of the Baton Rouge police, provoked a new wave of national #BlackLivesMatter protests. The image of Ieshia Evans, a young woman standing calmly in front of two police officers covered in layers of armor, confronting the heavily militarized police with grace and poise, had gone viral as a metaphor of both unfettered state violence and the power of social movements.² Without conflating these two situations, I believe it is possible to say that from Ayotzinapa to Baton Rouge, individuals and groups are increasingly standing up against the violence of neoliberal governments.

Events occurring in Mexico are of course more directly linked to our group's main topic of investigation: Latin American Philosophy of Education. However, I consider education to be central to both situations. Following Jacques Rancière, I believe that the police mobilizes physical violence in order to delimit what can be seen, said, and thought. Its role is to control which bodies can access certain spaces and which encounters, relationships, and modes of being are allowed within a given system.³ The bodies of the Ayotzinapa teachers had to be disappeared because they claimed that students and teachers

² See, Ieshia Evans, "I wasn't afraid. I took a stand in Baton Rouge because enough is enough," *The Guardian*, (22 July 2016). <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/22/i-wasnt-afraid-i-took-a-stand-in-baton-rouge-because-enough-is-enough> (accessed July 31, 2017).

³ See Jacques Rancière and Steve Corcoran, *Hatred of Democracy* (London: Verso, 2007).

should have a say over education, thus stepping outside of permissible thought and action. The photo of Ieshia Evans is powerful precisely because the young woman refused to be told where her body can and cannot stand. The refusal of assigned places, assigned actions, thoughts, and feelings connects these two events. Collectively expanding the scope of what can be seen, thought, felt, and done, is, I would argue, education. Which is why, across the Americas, I find education to be at the center of current struggles.

The death of Alton Sterling (one of the many deaths at the hands of the U.S. police) occurred after our third LAPES symposium, which took place on April 14th-15th, 2016 at the University of Miami. However, when we picked the theme for our 2016 symposium—“Decolonial Education in the Americas: Lessons on Resistance, Pedagogies of Hope”—we did so looking towards the future. We were cognizant of the fact that social antagonisms were bound to intensify in the foreseeable future and that we needed to build bridges between academics, teachers, students, and organizers in order to fight a global repressive system that is no longer even trying to appear democratic. The characteristics of this system, roughly called neoliberalism, have been discussed and described in more detail during our second symposium and our second *Lápiz* issue. For the purposes of this introduction, it suffices to say that this system subdues every sphere of life to the logic of the market, and that it measures the value of human life through the profit it generates. Its power is furthermore strengthened by the pervasive belief that there are no alternatives. Which is why, during the Miami symposium, we wanted to consider alternatives, particularly in the field of education. What role can education serve aside from preparing students for the market and for entering the labor force? How can it expand the scope of what can be seen, thought, and felt? Ultimately, we wanted to position education—specifically decolonial education—as resistance to the police order.

I will not attempt to offer a single definition of decolonization. Doing so would delimit the multiplicity of ways in which decolonization has been practiced and theorized. I will let this plurality emerge out of the

conversations and exchanges that took place during the symposium. I will, however, introduce a few concepts that allow us to better follow the articles in this issue.

Over the past few decades, several decolonial theorists have argued that modernity, posited as the universal direction of history, contains a “darker side”: coloniality. As both Walter Dignolo and Enrique Dussel have argued, European modernity has always required the existence of a non-European other. It needed to both negate and preserve this “other,” so that it could exist in a dialectical relationship to him/her.⁴ In an article published in 1989 and reprinted in 1992, entitled “Colonialidad y modernidad-racionalidad,” Aníbal Quijano describes the mechanisms of coloniality. Colonial power in the political and economic spheres, he contends, is always accompanied by the colonization of knowledge. It furthermore relies on the creation of a racial hierarchy. Racial hierarchies are maintained precisely through the devaluation and destruction of the systems of knowledge, meaning, and cultural production of the colonized. Coloniality thus ensures the predominance of European modes of production, European modes of thinking, and European values. Within this framework, there can be no liberation without the decolonization of knowledge.⁵ Walter Dignolo has named this process of liberation “epistemic delinking.” Epistemic delinking “brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economies, other politics, other ethics.”⁶ Dignolo also foregrounds a difference between liberation and emancipation. Whereas emancipation calls for reforms and transformations within the colonial system of power, liberation requires

4 Walter Dignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Enrique Dussel, “Europe, Modernity and Eurocentrism,” *Nepantla. Views from South* vol. 1, no. 3 (2000) 465-478.

5 Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad,” in *Los conquistados 1492 y la población indígena de las Américas*, Heraclio Bonilla (ed) Ecuador: Libri Mundi, Tercer Mundo Editores, (1992): 437-448. An English version of the essay, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” was published in Göran Therborn and Lise-Lotte Wallenius, *Globalizations and Modernities: Experiences and Perspectives of Europe and Latin America* (Stockholm, Sweden: Forskningsrådsnämnden, 1999).

6 Walter Dignolo, “Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality,” *Globalization and De-Colonial Thinking*, special issue of *Cultural Studies* vol.2-3, no. 21, (2007) 453.

us to adopt different conceptual markers: “De-coloniality, then, means working toward a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ, which is what modernity/ coloniality does and, hence, where decolonization of the mind should begin. The struggle is for changing the terms in addition to the content of the conversation.”⁷

Without epistemic delinking, both Dussel and Quijano argue, there can be no real multiculturalism or “intercultural communication.” Intercultural dialogue begins with the voices from the exteriority: “In order to create something new, one must have a new word that bursts in from the exteriority. This exteriority is the people itself which, despite being oppressed by the system, is totally foreign to it.”⁸ The end goal of this process is pluriversality, the creation of “a world in which many worlds will co-exist.” As Mignolo explains: “Thus, the pluriversality of each local history and its narrative of decolonization can *connect* through that common experience and use it as the basis for a new common logic of knowing: border thinking. That is, the fact of having to imagine a future that is not the future that those in Washington, or London, or Paris, or Berlin would like the people of the world to have can bring together all those who have been contacted in various ways by them.”⁹

Dussel, Mignolo, and Quijano are probably the most widely read decolonial thinkers in the United States. They are, however, not the only ones to have written about decolonization. Their work has, it should be mentioned, also been criticized in some quarters for removing decolonization from Indigenous and Afro-Latin American communities and the realm of action, and enclosing it into U.S. academia and the realm of thought. For instance, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has been very critical of ways in which decolonial thinking has been practiced in the United States; mainly because it is reduced to a process of thinking. She insists on the fact that decolonial discourses are useless without

7 Ibid., 459.

8 Enrique Dussel, “Transmodernity and interculturality: an interpretation from the perspective of philosophy of liberation,” *Polígrafi* vol. 1, no. 41-42 (2006): 5-40. <http://enriquedussel.com/txt/Transmodernity%20and%20Interculturality.pdf> (accessed September 5, 2017).

9 Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, 497-498.

practices of decolonization. Any serious academic engagement with decolonization must also question (and not only question but also strive to change) academic hierarchies, inequalities, and privileges. It must dismantle what she calls the “political economy” of knowledge. She further rejects the adjective “decolonial” as a more passive, academic version of the verb “to decolonize.”¹⁰

Many of these questions, tensions, and debates were raised at the Miami symposium. In her presentation, Julieta Paredes equally insisted on the difference between “decolonial” and “descolonizar” (I use both terms in this introduction as an attempt to work with both). Our aim as LAPES was to gather people from different countries, different institutions, with different connections to social movements and community organizations, in order to dialogue about these questions. How can academics engage more meaningfully in practices of decolonization? How can we connect our work in the classroom to our work with our communities? As teachers, how can we support our students as they strive to decolonize their bodies and their minds? Many of the participants, including Juliana Merçon, Walter Kohan, and Charlotte Saenz discussed their attempts to bridge their work within and outside of the university. These questions are not easy to answer. But they are worth pursuing. Decolonization, I believe, can and should be pursued in all realms of our lives and work. Part of the work of decolonization is precisely to learn to collaborate and build—in ways that are mindful of our different positions in relation to power—across differences that have been put in place by colonial systems.

We chose decolonial education as our topic, because, beyond critique of the world-as-is, decolonial thought opens up possibilities for worlds-which-might-be. It calls for an imagination of futures where non-Eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies would predominate, and it invites the voices from the exteriority to lead the conversation. “Education, as the process by which we collectively introduce ourselves

10 Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, C h'ixinakax Utxiwa: *Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Retazos, 2010).

11 In his article, Walter Kohan rightly points to the fact that the discussions at the symposium were also highly influenced by Paulo Freire and his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, though the explicit reference doesn't appear often.

and others to critiques of the as-is, in order to give form to what-might-be, is inseparable from decolonization.¹² At the symposium, we wanted to gather a diverse group of people to participate in this process and attempt to answer the following questions: To what degree has decolonial thought penetrated philosophies of education in the United States and elsewhere, and how much has it helped (or not) form teachers and students capable of critiquing and resisting systems of oppression and acts of injustice? How can decolonial writings and actions from Latin America help us radically imagine education beyond the current borders and constraints the education field finds itself in? Questions of gender, vertical and horizontal transmission of knowledge, participatory action research, and global history animated the many conversations we had.

At the symposium, we thus engaged in a collective imagination of pluriversality. As Julieta Paredes said at one moment, we cannot offer models but we can offer examples of decolonial thought and practice. This difference between model and example, as stated by Julieta, requires an explanation. In fact, many decolonial thinkers insist on the importance of location. Linda Alcoff explains this very well in her contribution to *Lápiz* Vol. 1. She argues that Latin American philosophy, and by extension an education influenced by Latin American philosophy, must begin from “the everyday lived experience of the context within which we find ourselves.”¹³ In other words, the understanding of the world-which-is as well as the imagination of worlds-which-might-be has to be grounded in a specific geographic and historical context. A Latin American decolonial model (and there are many of these models within Latin America), one which could simply be applied in the United States, is thus impossible. However, this does not mean that we cannot learn across cultures. We can share examples and think collectively about the (im)possibility of their geographic and historical translation. At a moment where the belief in neoliberalism as the sole possible reality persists, we are certainly in need of more examples that point to other ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in the world.

¹² This definition of education was formulated by Jason Wozniak during one of our many collective thinking sessions.

¹³ Linda Alcoff, “Educating with a [de]colonial consciousness,” *Lápiz* no. 01 (2014).

Given the fact that our immediate, collective context involved the University of Miami, we discussed what it would entail to decolonize the very format of an academic conference. In fact, what constitutes knowledge, who constitutes it and for whom, are all questions central to decolonial practices. Those questions are particularly pertinent to us, as we speak about decolonial theory within an academic setting. The academy has, for a long time, been the keeper and the arbiter of knowledge. From its very inception, LAPES has tried to experiment with different ways of organizing these encounters, in order to move away from what Paulo Freire calls the “banking” model of education, where the university professor “with knowledge” transmits this knowledge to a passive, “unknowing” audience. For decolonial thinkers, as already mentioned, changing the terms of the conversation is as important as changing the content of the conversation. To the terms and the content, one could also add the format of the conversation. In our practice as LAPES, we have tried to encourage audience participation and position the speaker presentation as the basis for collective thinking, rather than an end in itself.

With this in mind, we began the Miami symposium with a graduate student roundtable where five graduate students from across the country presented their current work on decolonial education. That same day, Juliana Merçon led a workshop on participatory action research in Mexico and its relation to decolonial thought. Juliana pointed to ways in which academic research can be closely connected to and contribute to grassroots organizing. Julieta Paredes gave the opening keynote focusing on the concept and practices of *feminismo comunitario* in Bolivia. She discussed the role of knowledge in popular struggles and the need to think about decolonization through a gendered lens. She insisted on the need to think of *descolonizar* as a verb, as an action, directed at preserving, protecting, and building our communities.

The following day, Tracy Devine-Guzmán talked about the failures of “indigenizing” education in twentieth century Peru. This failure, Devine-Guzmán argues, is not an ultimate defeat. But as we think about future decolonial practices, we must also learn from past mistakes. Walter Kohan discussed the subjectivity of a decolonial teacher. According to

Kohan, the role of the teacher is not to transmit a specific knowledge to a student who is not yet in possession of said knowledge. Rather, it is to cultivate a dynamic relationship to learning as a collective process. During the closing keynote, Enrique Dussel presented global history from a decolonial perspective. Re-thinking history from a non-European perspective is central to both the philosophy and the pedagogics of liberation, Dussel argued. Each presentation was followed by an hour-long collective discussion. The audience was composed of academics, teachers, and education activists, which led to very productive dialogues and tensions. The need to continue these conversations outside of the university setting was reiterated.

The articles in this issue have developed out of the symposium presentations and debates. The collective discussions have not been transcribed, but they are included in the audio accompaniment to *Lápiz* no. 03. We would like to thank all of the symposium participants for contributing to this ongoing effort to expand the ways of theorizing and practicing education. We invite all of our readers to join us during our next encounter. ■

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) AND DECOLONIAL STUDIES: CRITICAL MIRRORS

Juliana Merçon

Universidad Veracruzana, México

PRESENTED

April 14, 2016 at 4:00 P.M.

ORIGINAL TITLE

Action Research and Decolonial Practices:
Necessities and Impossibilities

Participatory Action Research (PAR) and decolonial studies compose an ample set of Latin American theoretical-practical expressions, situated between academia and activism. In both cases, we find an explicit positioning against the dominant epistemic, political and cultural forms, as well as a field of thinking and action oriented towards the transformation of capitalist and colonialist structures of power. In the following lines, I will present some of the principal ideas that configure PAR and decolonial studies. I will succinctly indicate some complementary differences between the two, as well as the limits and the potential that springs from bringing these two together, both in discourse and practice. The length of this document does not permit me to go deeper into the ideas presented, hence I propose these ideas be utilized as clues for further critical reflection.

PAR AND DECOLONIAL STUDIES: A VERY BRIEF CONTEXT

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a political-epistemic approach that appeared in the 1960s from the critical review developed by Orlando Fals Borda.¹⁴ His criticism centered on the ways social knowledge was produced in Colombia. Five decades have passed, and today PAR constitutes an ample field of experiences marked by a diversity of perspectives and applications.¹⁵

In contrast with the foundations that sustain conventional academic

¹⁴ Orlando Fals-Borda, *Ciencia propia y colonialismo intelectual* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia, 1970).

¹⁵ Ezequiel Ander-Egg, *Metodología y práctica de la animación sociocultural* (Madrid: Marciego, 1981); Tomás Villasante, *La investigación social participativa. Construyendo ciudadanía* (Madrid: El Viejo Topo, 2002).

discourses and methods, PAR is based on the following principles:

- Academic implication: The researcher makes his ethical-political views of reality explicit and assumes his participation in collective practices oriented to social justice.
- Non-objectification: The subjects are not “objects of study.” The PAR approach generates a subject-subject relation between the researcher and the other people involved in the research process and social action.
- A common agenda: There are procedures set in place for listening to each individual as well as the collective. These procedures are structured as well as non-structured, and are used to identify local needs and to collectively create the agenda for research and action.
- A dialogue of knowledge: Knowledge and collective actions are built by way of direct participation of the people from different social sectors and classes, and/or different cultures.
- Social power: The objective is to alter power structures and transform social reality from collective action and knowledge.

Fals-Borda defines PAR as “a process open to life and work, a progressive evolution towards structural transformation of society and culture,” because of the way it marries academic work and social participation. ¹⁶Therefore, it is “a process that requires engagement, an ethical stance, and persistence at all levels.” ¹⁷The author states that as much as PAR is a methodological approach, it is also a “philosophy of life.” ¹⁸

Fals-Borda, inspired by the people of San Jorge, would say that to understand PAR as a philosophy of life can signify, among other things, the impossibility to establish rigid limits between what we do, what we think, and what we “think-feel,” and how we position ourselves ethically

¹⁶ Orlando Fals-Borda, *Acción y conocimiento: Cómo romper el monopolio con la investigación acción participativa* (Bogotá: CINEP, 1991), 5.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

and politically towards the world. ¹⁹In this sense, to do research with others is not reduced to an epistemological or methodological affair, since it is also about transforming unequal, competitive, and excluding relations in order to create new social realities. Academia, politics, and ethics are intertwined in the same collective construction process of power-knowledge, solidarity, creativity, and transformation.

The critical and constructive view of PAR finds in the decolonial perspective a great ally. These two Latin American perspectives have developed independently of each other, configuring different discursive and practical approaches, though both are committed to social movements and the transformation of power structures. Like PAR, decolonial studies are characterized by a diversity of current perspectives. ²⁰

In general, the decolonial approach states, colonialism works in all dimensions of individual and collective life. To understand colonialism’s *modus operandi*, and to create alternatives, Catherine Walsh proposed the analysis of four interconnected axis, which I present below, including other author’s voices: ²¹

- The coloniality of power: This concept refers to the system of social classification based on categories of race, class, and gender as criteria for the distribution of power, domination and exploitation of the population in a global capitalist structure. ²²
- The coloniality of knowledge: This concept positions eurocentrism as the exclusive order of reason, knowledge and thought, disqualifying or excluding other rationalities, other

¹⁹ Orlando Fals-Borda, *Resistencia en el San Jorge* (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia, 1984).

²⁰ Edgardo Lander, *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2000); Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina,” in *La colonialidad del ser: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas* (Buenos Aires, CLACSO). Walter Dignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs. Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press); Arturo Escobar, *Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia* (Medellín: Ediciones Unala, 2014).

²¹ Catherine Walsh, *Interculturalidad, Estado Y Sociedad: Luchas (De)Coloniales De Nuestra Época* (Ecuador: Absya-Ayala, 2009).

²² Aníbal Quijano, “Estado-nación y ‘movimientos indígenas’ en la región Andina. Cuestiones abiertas,” *Movimientos sociales y gobiernos en la región andina. Resistencias y alternativas, Lo político y lo social*. *Revista del Observatorio Social de América Latina* 8, no.19 (2006): 15-24.

types of knowledge and ways of knowing that are not those of the white European or Europeanized men.²³

- The coloniality of being: Power exercised by making others feel inferior and therefore dehumanized. This generates what Frantz Fanon calls “non-existence.”²⁴ It makes people doubt the value of colonized subjects, producing what Maldonado-Torres calls “racial dehumanization of modernity.”²⁵
- The coloniality of mother earth: This axis is based on the binary division nature/society, body/mind, emotions/thoughts. The planet gives us resources whose value can be reduced to the economic. It overlooks the sensitive and spiritual, it ignores the millennial relation between the geo-bio-physical, the human, and the intangible.²⁶

With these and other reflective frameworks, decolonial thought offers conceptual tools for action and transformation of the instituted powers. It also helps reestablish academic work from an ethical-political and self-critical perspective. In this sense, there are many points of convergence with PAR. Other similarities, differences, limits and potentialities that mark the relation between these two perspectives are explored in what follows.

MIRRORING: BUILDING COMPLEMENTARY CRITIQUE

I propose to start off by mirroring. One perspective can reflect the differences from the other in order to construct new possible images. To make myself clear, I do not wish to establish a detailed comparison,

²³ Boaventura S. Santos, *Descolonizar el saber, reinventar el poder* (Montevideo, Trilce Editorial, 2010).

²⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Los condenados de la tierra* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003).

²⁵ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “Sobre la colonialidad del ser: contribuciones al desarrollo de un concepto,” in *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*, ed. Santiago Castro-Gómez y Ramón Grosfoguel (Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre, 2007), 133.

²⁶ Arturo Escobar, *Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia* (Medellín: Ediciones Unaula, 2014).

but to identify closeness and distance between PAR and decolonial studies, signals and clues that operate more as points of departure, not final goals.

Before we start this game, we must admit at least three of the multiple problems and conditions of this proposal:

- 1 Generalization: Considering the diversity of variants in both perspectives, it is important to recognize that this exercise is based on general notions (like those explored in the first part of this text) and, therefore, the game will be marked by superficial and limited statements.
- 2 Partiality: This exercise will be partial in two ways. On the one hand, it refers to a small part of the whole, it is selective, without the pretense of going through all the ideas that emerge from the encounter between PAR and decolonial studies. On the other hand, it implies that I, the author, write from a particular and subjective stance, although not arbitrarily.
- 3 Fallibility: For the reasons already mentioned, it is probable that this comparative exercise is fragile and fallible, especially when examined through the lenses of our own concrete experiences.

I suggest that, being conscious of these and other difficulties and risks, we start the game of mirroring between these two perspectives to see one side and the other.

PAR USES DECOLONIAL STUDIES AS ITS MIRROR: WHAT DOES PAR SEE?

Does PAR see tyranny of participation and colonization through democracy? Decolonial studies help intensify an important tension between the ethical-political and methodological character of PAR. This tension veils, on the one hand, the non-conformity towards prevailing injustice and the subsequent decision to know-act in favor of social transformation, and, on the other hand, knowledge and respect of the diverse ways of life and social organization. In sum, this tension sheds

light on conceptual and material differences between political inequality and cultural diversity. From here the following queries: Can PAR act imposingly and insensibly towards different socio-cultural realities, even if it is essentially inclusive and participatory? Can PAR impose social organizational processes that annihilate social-cultural diversity through its participatory procedures? It is probable that these queries are not very present among the PAR participants that are dedicated to urban marginalized contexts where political inequality is not as marked by the diversity of traditional ways of collective life. However, these questions that interpolate participatory action research from a decolonial focus help feed a self-critical vigilance necessary in processes committed to social justice.

Critical-ethnography and Autoethnography's Contributions to PAR

Another important complement to PAR is the integration of ethnographic and autoethnographic processes derived from the anthropological (self) critical and decolonial tradition. Although PAR practitioners usually start with processes of listening to the involved actors in the context of study and action, ethnographic knowledge and training may result in processes of co-constructed knowledge and power. One of the hurdles in this case is the principle of non-objectification of the subjects collaborating in PAR processes. Ethnographic practice in this case would not be based on "informants" nor on the study of "subjects," but based on a process of common constructions of the individual-collective history and the context of reflective-action. Autoethnography offers PAR instruments for self-analysis that are necessary in order to explicitly self-critique the place that one occupies in social reality (culture, gender, class, occupation, age, range of power, etc.) and the tensions and contradictions that accompany the concept of place.

DECOLONIAL STUDIES USE PAR AS THEIR MIRROR: WHAT DOES DECOLONIAL STUDIES SEE?

A Certain Academic Posture that is Contradictorily Excluding

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Julieta Paredes²⁷ have denounced the academic or canonical character of decolonial studies. They have also called out the concept of decoloniality as a noun and not as a process (decolonization). The first author demonstrates her non-conformity to celebrated authors who consistently exclude indigenous intellectuals from their writing. Though we may genuinely criticize many productions of PAR for their lack of theory, it is also fitting that mirroring decolonial theory, PAR (with its experience in dialogues of knowledge and processes/products of collective writing) reflects the possible epistemic monopoly of the academic institution.

Little Action

As cited by a friend who does not remember the author's name: "there is nothing more practical than a good theory."²⁸ The concrete effects derived from theory can be many and diverse. Without ignoring the importance of theory, decolonial thinkers can find in PAR the invitation to practical experiences with other subjects and shared processes of decolonization. In fact, decolonial sensitivity and reflection articulated with collective processes of research for social transformation yield a potent set for action-reflection.

²⁷ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "La raíz: colonizadores y colonizados," in *Violencias encubiertas en Bolivia* (La Paz: CIPCA-ARUWIYIRI, 1993); Rivera Cusicanqui, J. Domingues, Arturo Escobar and Enrique Leff, "Debate sobre el colonialismo intelectual y los dilemas de la teoría social latinoamericana," *Cuestiones de Sociología*, 14, e009. Retrieved from <http://www.cuestionessociologia.fahce.unlp.edu.ar/article/view/CSn14a09>; and Julieta Paredes, *Despatriarcalización* (Bolivia: Bolivian Studies Journal, 2016).

²⁸ Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science: Selected Theoretical Papers* (London: Tavistock, 1952).

BY WAY OF (IN)CLUSIÓN: SHARED LIMITS AND POTENTIALITIES

There are many ways in which academia contributes to the capitalist-colonial system. It is characterized, in part, by the production of knowledge for the market, the power to render other epistemologies invisible, the power to limit intellectual work to the elite and to deterritorialize schooled subjects. Notwithstanding PAR's and decolonial studies' commitments to social anti-hegemonic processes, we cannot ignore that each also responds to disciplinary slants, demands and institutional/academic logics of which they are products. In this sense, the efforts to build an Other academia are necessarily skewed by contradictions, as well as by the risk of ingenuity and the instrumental use of social research.

Maybe another fundamental characteristic shared by practitioners of PAR and decolonial research is honesty (or at least the pursuit of honesty) in their reflective processes. Leyva and Speed suggest "both approaches struggle to exteriorize, admit and systematize the contradictions and tensions carried by the process of research, instead of hiding them, dissimulating them or ignoring them."²⁹ Additionally, Hale proposes that these tensions can turn into objects of collective analysis in collaborative research processes, in order to convert them into new sources of collective knowledge and new research relations—in the case of PAR, this becomes essential for the construction of an effective collective power.³⁰

In sum, notwithstanding the contradictions inherent in the academic practices of PAR and decolonial studies, to wager on these approaches marks a position that is open to self-critique, to shared critique, and, most importantly, to relations—with oneself, with other people, and with the world—where we experience ways of being other than those offered/ made possible by capitalism and colonialism. ■

²⁹ Xochitl Leyva Solano and Shannon Speed, "Hacia la investigación descolonizada: nuestra experiencia de co-labor," in *Gobernar (en) la diversidad: Experiencias indígenas desde América Latina*, ed. Xochitl Leyva Solano, Araceli Burguete y Shannon Speed (Mexico: La Casa Chata, 2008), 84.

³⁰ As cited in Leyva Solano and Speed, "Hacia la investigación descolonizada: nuestra experiencia de co-labor," 84.

FEMINISMO COMUNITARIO DE ABYA YALA

Julieta Paredes

Mujeres Creando Comunidad

TRANSLATED BY

Anita Juarez and David I. Backer

PRESENTED

April 14, 2016 at 5:30 P.M.

ORIGINAL TITLE

Mujeres Creando Comunidad-Feminismo Comunitario

Editors' note: The following text is a slightly revised transcription of the original talk, translated from Spanish. We present it as such to preserve Julieta Paredes' spirit as an activist-educator.

Good afternoon, sisters and brothers.

I give thanks to the energies of struggle in these territories—to the ocean guiding us here from below. What I will express today are not my words only; though I am responsible for what I will say, these words represent the road I have shared with my sisters, comrades, and most fundamentally, my *pueblo* [people].

Why is it necessary to come to these (northern) territories and speak? Why open your ears? Why open your hearts to listen, understand, and feel? Because there is a crisis. This crisis is not just an economic crisis. It is the crisis of a system. As Lenin said in 1917, *Imperialism (is) The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.³¹ Humanity let imperial capitalism live on and cultivate neoliberalism. It let capitalism become neoliberalism and it turned socialist and communist dreams—pardon my language—into shit. All those dreams for changing the world, those dreams the young people dreamed in '68 and throughout the 1970s—those dreams died.

So many sisters and brothers who believed in the possibility of change are not here anymore. *We* are here, sisters and brothers. We owe our very presence to those nobodies: those original Indian and Indigenous communities—Aymaras, Quechuas, Guaranis, Tzeltales, Tzotziles, and the thousands of Orinary *pueblos* of this hemisphere and continent. These nobodies died at the hands of what is called colonization, colonial invasion, when the Europeans, by coincidence and not by their investigation—though of course they had visionaries who imagined the world was round; the Europeans had the power of knowledge, power of wisdom, and political, military, and economic power, yes, and yet these visionaries did not have sway, what they said was unimportant and got them burned at the stake, remember?—not by design, not by virtue of knowing or having some enlightened knowledge, “discovered us.” In reality, they invaded us. They penetrated us.

³¹ Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (London: Penguin Classics, 2010).

It is what we call, in our community's terms, "colonial penetration." This colonial penetration does not only penetrate our territories but also our bodies. And not just the bodies of women, there was also penetration of the male body. Colonial penetration invades men's thoughts and body images. We can talk about our bodies, our coloring and so on. Our skin color is neither more beautiful nor better than the other skin colors in this room. And still our bodies were disparaged. We weren't considered people; we weren't even born with souls, right?!

And so, these bodies of ours, in our territories, from our ancestral knowledge and our deep memory, in the land that is now called Bolivia, took history into our own hands. The first thing we did was to take back the natural resources. We lived under capitalism, of course, and even though we had invoked decolonization, we did not come out and simply say, "We will decolonize and we will fight." No! The first thing out of our mouths was, "Neoliberalism is attacking us. We do not have food. We do not have clothing." Debt had kicked us out of our homes. Many women and children had poisoned themselves because they could not pay their debts. They could not pay back their bank's usury or their mortgage usuries (which are alive and well in Europe also, by the way). We did not have food. Healthcare and education were a luxury—public school, for what?

Individualism tightened its grip on us. In the seventies, we unionized and formed neighborhood councils—women, children, babies—everyone organized. But in the nineties, people asked, "Why are you going to organize? That is foolishness: go dialogue with your boss; go your own way; step on your neighbor; compete with your neighbor; show your prowess—winners, everyone." It happened to us too. So our first thought as a community, sisters and brothers, was: "We need money. We need capital. We need to get those natural resources back." Immediately, within forty-five days, in October 2003, our community accomplished an accelerated process of accumulation. That is why this morning at an earlier lecture I said: "The revolution is a pedagogical process—it is a way of learning in the streets." We held rallies. We had meetings. We made radio appearances (not television). The radio played an important role in this process. We communicated in a kind

of assembly through the radio, in the ether, sending out our opinions, making reports, denouncing the status quo. Forty-five days, October 2003. We moved past saying that "natural gas must not go to Chile because Chile is a thief who stole our ocean and so much else."

Now we understand that Chile was not the problem—it was our neo-liberal government, our president (Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada), who now lives in Miami. He lives right here, spending the riches he stole.³² This assassin, this genocidal maniac, lives here in the United States, in this land as we speak, right here in this very city. This murderer killed more than sixty-seven of our brothers during those forty-five days, pilfered our country's riches and gave our country and our natural resources away. Imagine! I will give you an example. For every hundred cubic meters [of gas], eighty to ninety went toward transnational wealth. How could this not have impoverished us, sisters and brothers? So, first we needed to take back the natural resources. However, at that time it was not the Chileans, it was our president! Yet, who elected that president? We did! (For the record, I did not vote.) In any case, the people had elected this president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, which is precisely the reason for the constitutional assembly. Our project became founding our country anew. Thus, began a journey.

I am the granddaughter of Natividad Peredo Camacho. These last names are Castilian. They are not our own. They were given to us by the foremen. My grandmother graduated from second grade. I remember her handwriting, it was very large and shaky. She concentrated so hard [*performs her grandmother's movements*] writing an "a," concentrating, drawing the "t." She is my heritage. I am the only one in my family who went to university. My grandfather told me: "Go, Julieta, go." (He used to call me Negrita.) "Negrita, go. Go and learn and then serve your community."

Let me ask you a question. Who do you think opened our primary and secondary schools back in the 1920s and 1930s? Who started

³² Bolivian President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada offered his resignation on October 17, 2003, following a series of violent confrontations between citizens and the Bolivian government, in what came to be known as the Bolivian gas conflict, or "Gas War." De Lozada retreated to the United States shortly after his resignation. See, e.g., Larry Rohter, "Bolivian Leader Resigns and His Vice President Steps in," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2003.

the Ayllu school Warisata?³³ It was grandfather Avelino Siñani. Avelino Siñani, an Indian. An Indian from Tiahuanaco, from Warisata, in the Omasuyus province. Imagine a school where Indigenous Aymara children—people who were prohibited from attending school—could learn to read and write. Indians invented the Ayllu school. Ayllu does not mean community. It means *comunidad*. The Spanish word is different than the English word. Community is not the same thing as *comunidad*. I will tell you why. You will see.

So this grandfather founded the Ayllu school and the Aymara boys and girls learned to read and write. Why? For what? To become doctors? To wear suits and ties and carry briefcases? It is not terrible to wear a suit and tie, of course. People dress how they like. But why did these children go to school? To defend themselves. To read and explain why they were stealing our lands. These symbols, these little worms, these little bugs on the page—the children learned to decipher them and understand them so that they could tell us why the white man had suddenly appropriated those lands from communal ownership. That is why we learned to read and write. I come from that *pueblo*. And that is why we ponder the role of knowledge in the people's struggle.

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That is the first point I want to articulate here: the role of knowledge in the people's struggle. You will forgive me sisters and brothers for not asking whether the university is necessary or not, whether to smash it or burn it. Well, the university has already been burned down. Our mothers and grandmothers did it in the sixties and seventies. We burned down the universities, took them over, and kicked out the professors. That has been done. Should this be done once more? Well, the problem is not actually whether we burn the universities or not. We ourselves are the problem. All of this, look at all the material things around us as we speak—the question is: How do we use the resources available to us?

33 See Manuel Valdivia Rodríguez, "La escuela boliviana de Ayllu de Warisata," Bolivia.com. <http://www.educando.edu.do/articulos/docente/la-escuela-boliviana-de-ayllu-de-warisata/> (accessed March 5, 2018).

Thus far, we have not. Are we going to take over something, again? We all saw Occupy Wall Street. We must analyze this. What was it? And I'm not disqualifying what was done in those movements. Rather, let us look at this in order to understand it. Let us think about our collective efforts. That is, with you over there (in The United States) and with us here (in Latin America). What are we going to do? What happened with Occupy? Where did Occupy go? Is it not around anymore? So what happened? And what is happening right now?

Let us get back to the role of knowledge in the people's struggle. One of our initial theoretical propositions is: "Everything is useful." Everything is useful! Well, everything that has to do with knowledge. Capitalism is not useful to us. Knowledge is completely different, it allows us to unveil the system and its accomplices.

Why are we not fighting? Sisters and brothers, the history of humanity—a humanity that perceives and feels that we must transform the world in which we live, the world we no longer want, the world we are not happy living in—we intuit that we ourselves can change it (of course, we do not always know how). This path that forms from revolution to revolution. Slavery, for instance. I am thinking of the movie *Spartacus*. There has been a path that humanity has walked for the freedom of slaves, other struggles as well. This much we know: In these lands right here under our feet, there have been struggles too. Right here in the Abya Yala territories there have been dominations, there have been wars.

It is not that we Indians are good savages, like they say, and have not ever really fought amongst ourselves, that we have never invaded or penetrated our lands, killed, or assassinated each other. Indians also know how to do it. Conquest is not a European privilege, and I say this ironically. Choosing to make ethical decisions contrary to life is not a uniquely European privilege. We make these decisions too. Indians can be scoundrels, too, because we are people. We are human. Thus, there is a path, the journey humanity has walked intuitively, knowing that change is possible. We have lived this truth and today I have seen it.

There are different concepts used in guiding the struggle. The sixties and seventies were the years of "class struggle," of conflict between "labor power" and "capital." If these concepts weren't properly used, if something was outside this mold, at that time, we ignored its

existence. We used what worked when it comes to concepts. Whatever is outside the mold we throw away in the garbage. No! This is not politically correct to say. And today, this term “decoloniality,” I believe, is attempting to substitute the concept of class struggle. (I say “believe” because I could be mistaken.)

Gender—which isn’t feminism, much less *feminismo comunitario*—gender has always been like a satellite. Right? It is always outside, like an add-on. People talk about it like this: “Let us do a class analysis,” and the revolutionaries try not to forget that we are also women and then, when they try not to forget, they do a gender analysis and think about gender equality. Now we say we are going to change the relations of coloniality. And of course, we must not forget about the women and address gender, we must focus on gender. The question of women is always approached like a satellite that we have to remember to include.

Therefore, I believe it is indispensable to critique the ways categories are used to explain, submit, and reduce, not objectivity, but reality. Reality is incommensurable. Objectivity is reducible because the subject defines the object. And, normally, it is powerful subjects that define what objectivity is in general. But reality is incommensurable. This is why I want to finish with the idea of community as a revolutionary approach.

“Unveil the system and its complicities”—this notion is an attempt to situate ourselves in a way that is not simple and “comfortable” (though the word comfortable is in quotation marks, we must also consider the role of victims and victimizers).

Easy, right? The *gringos* are tyrants. The *gringos*, as in, white males, because the *gringas* do not even exist. The *gringos* are tyrants, they are wicked people. Suddenly you go somewhere and you see them say, “I am a *gringo*.” And you wonder, what purpose does that serve us if we are not *gringos*? I mean, come on, please. What do we accomplish by positioning ourselves as victims or victimizers?

Or we come along, the Originary communities—you *gringos* have fucked us up so much already and are the ones responsible for our misfortunes—and do not recognize our own complicity and responsibilities in the oppressions that affect us. This is the moment when knowledge comes in handy. We investigate to make these distinctions. We read to parse them out. We learn other languages, learn about

technology and the internet. But this learning is not an individual and solitary act because, if reality is incommensurable, then, what can a little flea like me achieve in the face of all of this reality? We need to do it together. My community needs your community. Your community needs our community. We are indispensable to one another. We are necessary for one another.

“Unveil the system and its complicities.” Complicity, by negating our deep memory and heritage, makes us believe that the world begins at our birth and in this moment, as though we have not had sisters and brothers that have walked this path before us. We have to listen to these comrades from the past. One can critique them, and this is important to our ancestral communities. We do not see our female and male elders as gurus who will tell us great marvels. But we have to listen to them with respect. This complicity erases our memory sisters and brothers, the memory of struggles fought here in this territory, the ones your grandmother fought, your grandfather, and all the folks who lived in your neighborhood. I am not just talking about Bolivia here. I am talking about this place too: Miami.

It will not be the book, the library, or the internet that will give you that body-to-body connection, that warmth of your brother’s body. That gaze, that energy, will not come from a book. It is an instrument. This is why we must remain close and near each other, occupying spaces. This is why the system does not want us working together. This is why they make us afraid to touch one another. Do not touch him or he will contaminate you. He might desire something, they say. Complicity.

The other aspect is “self-consciousness and autonomy.” The power of knowledge in community struggle, your self-conscious and self-consciousness, is to say you are knowing yourself, you are feeling, you are becoming conscious of who we are. Identity is just one product of this process of self-consciousness. It positions us against the powerful. But it implies a political and pedagogical act: to look at oneself in the mirror, to look in the mirror and love what one is. And not in the sense that we all have to be “Black people” or “Indigenous people.” No. We are each our own.

Look at these flowers on this table. Here they are, white, yellow, green, orange, light yellow. Do you see these flowers fighting? Do the

white ones look down on the orange ones for being orange? Do they ask, "How could you be orange?" Do the white flowers tell the orange flowers they must stay at the lowest part of the hierarchy of flowers? Skin color hierarchies are just like this. But the flowers do not fight. They do not have relations of power perpetrated by the white flower. The white flower is just a flower! Skin color is just like the flowers. My color. And your color. White skin is beautiful. My color is beautiful. We are all beautiful. Of course this consciousness of color is *self-consciousness* of color. Loving what you are without using what you are as a privilege, like the color of your skin. This is precisely the matter at hand. Privilege. Autonomy. *Auto-nomy*. Revealing the system and its complicities implies autonomy.

We understand this in Bolivia, which is why we are now reflecting on territorial autonomy. But territorial autonomy is connected to the autonomy of our bodies and women's autonomy as well. We could go ahead and say, "Land autonomy and women, territorial body, we do not decide who to love, how to love, when to give birth or when not to give birth. Our bodies are colonized. Our bodies are occupied. We are alienated from our own bodies." Our Indigenous brothers' bodies are neither occupied nor invaded! No! The men make their own decisions.

In the matter of sexuality, for instance, the men ejaculate whenever they want, wherever they want, how they want. Nobody prohibits them from ejaculating irresponsibly either. But we women are controlled, and so are our bodies. Like, for example, if we want to have an abortion or not, or who we choose to love or not. Autonomy should thus have something to do with the capacity and possibility to name who we are, as a community, without anyone speaking for us.

Knowledge, having knowledge, helps us say who we are. Whoever is a researcher, great. You will have your own point of view, your own opinion, about who or what we are. But it is merely *what you say* about what we say. That is why now we, our daughters, and sons, say who we are. The way Julieta, I, say who I am, influences how as a community, we will claim autonomy. Who we are, what we want, what we desire will shape this claim as well. Self-naming is a political, educational, and pedagogical process. Here I am. I have imagined how we could graffiti this (though I know you can go to jail here for graffiti).

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"The necessity and urgency to change the world now" is the second point I want to develop. The graffiti could say, "It is necessary and urgent to change the world." From 1917 to 1920, and in the twenties, there was a movement against systems of oppression, until World War II started. Another moment came roughly fifty years later. The sixties and seventies had another moment where history was alive. And now is another moment. Sisters and brothers, ours is another moment where history lives. All of us here have the energy (I do not see anyone sleeping); we have the power, the interest, the impulse.

We are a community that, like other communities in Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay, is being isolated little by little. We have this thriving political Right as well as internal errors (on the Left) of our own making, errors of process. But processes are not pure. There is no pure revolutionary process. But because of all these actions, particularly the attacks from the international Right, today, Bolivia is being isolated. We are being isolated. Yet the struggle continues through the strength of those communities who are still fighting. Sisters and brothers, today is a moment. We have an economic crisis. But it is not just an economic crisis, as I have said. There are energies and struggles that are being nourished by these hopes. So it is urgent and necessary to change the world today.

And as I said to you earlier today, "It is an act of faith to believe in the *comunidad*." Look, in my *comunidad*, we have been talking about why we have the political schools we have made. I go to the one that meets on Wednesdays, but we have several others. In the Wednesday political school they've analyzed what is necessary, and they have found that we need better salaries, not better water. Different groups of comrades have written about this. I have told them we need faith. And everyone looks at me. "Damn it," they might think, I thought this woman was a *feminista comunitaria* but now she is out here talking about the church! No, that is not what I am saying. Sisters and brothers, no; we need faith in the *comunidad*. Faith. We need to believe that it is possible to change this world. Believe, sisters. Believe. Faith.

[Begins singing “The One-eyed and the Blind” by Charly Garcia.]³⁴

*Desnuda de frío y hermosa como ayer,
Naked in the cold and as beautiful as yesterday,
tan exacta como dos y dos son tres,
As exact as two plus two is three,
ella llegó a mí,
She came to me,
apenas la pude ver,
and I could barely see her,
aprendí a disimular mi estupidez.
So I learned how to hide away my stupidity.*

*Bienvenida Cassandra,
Welcome Cassandra,
bienvenida el sol y mi niñez
Welcome the sun and my childhood
sigue y sigue bailando alrededor,
keep and keep dancing around,
aunque siempre seamos pocos
although we are always a few
los que aún te podemos ver.
we who can, still see you.*

*Les contaste un cuento
You told them a story
sabiéndolo contar,
knowing how to tell it,
y creyeron que tu alma andaba mal.
And they believed your soul was doing badly.
La mediocridad para algunos es normal,
Mediocrity is normal for some,
la locura es poder ver más allá.
Insanity is the power to see beyond.*

³⁴ Charly Garcia, *The One-eyed and the Blind* (Argentina: Sony Music, 1974).

*Baila y baila, Cassandra,
Dance and dance, Cassandra,
digo bien, bien, bien la pude ver
I said good, good, good I saw her
No hablo yo de fantasmas ni de Dios,
I do not speak of ghosts or God,
solo te cuento las cosas
I'm only telling you of the things
que se te suelen perder.
you tend to lose.*

They think we are coming to invade—the women and the faith we speak about in our communities. That is what sounds insane. Therefore, to change the world we proposed some elements. Academics invented this damned idea of decoloniality. Let us critique it. As communities—Aymaras, Quechuas—we are talking about “decolonization.” Colonization as an action. At the same time, academics talk about decolonization. But we are talking about actions. Not theory. And definitely not from within the university, or as a field of study. (Nowadays it is a discipline. It even has its own section in libraries. It has its own offices.) “Decoloniality, decoloniality!” proclaim the professors, all experts in decoloniality. What have they decolonized recently? They have not decolonized their lives, have they? Their university buildings? But they are experts in decoloniality! Sisters and brothers, decolonization is a revolutionary action. It happens daily, and it is something that we are doing as a community. We have to take it out of these academic places that have appropriated it.

These academics are coming to us now, they are researching us, investigating us. They look at us and they ask, “What is decoloniality?” So then we have Mignolo, Lugones, and all these other experts. Damn it! There they are, sitting in their offices and classrooms! The colonial community, imperialist, invader, occupier of territories has not only been in our territories but in Colombia as well. The DEA and CIA have been in Bolivia. Just look at everything they are doing in the Syrian community and all over the Middle East. Every day, colonialists attempt to absolve themselves by asking, “What do the decolonialists

say?” Even CNN says the magic word! They ask, “What are the experts of coloniality saying?”

These academics come to our lands and look at the baby boys and girls running around carrying their lives on their backs (crying). This is happening right now. Sisters and brothers, this is happening as we speak. Our people carry the weight of everything in their knapsacks, grasping pieces of bread to eat as they go. And these academics come and they look and look and look. But what are they doing about it? What are they doing? What is this bullshit they spew with their decoloniality? Where is the strength, the energy, the consciousness? What happened to the power of the word? Where did it go? Why do we study? Why do we fill our mouths with these disciplines and library books if it does not serve the community, if it does not solve the suffering of our sisters and brothers, if we can not even use our theories and books to drive away our own fears?

We are afraid of the possibilities within our theories and books.

Class and gender, of course, continue to be valid categories, but capitalism is alive and well. It is essential. That is why decolonization is impossible, and why reflection on how our lives and bodies are colonized is also impossible. What we see has a place. It has a place. But so does class. Capitalist relations exist. Neoliberalism exists. They are killing us.

Machismo exists, too, though. And machismo is not just in gender relations. Neoliberalism has invented a form of it with postmodernity. Postmodernity is quite virulent, sisters and brothers. I hope at some point we can talk about all the damage that postmodernity has done, everything it has appropriated from valid critiques, and how it arranged them into a single chain, tightening its grip on the chain like a horse cart driver yanking on his horse. Valid? Sure. But it was not about destroying everything and relativizing everything. We were then all oppressors and oppressed. OK, but what happened to the transnational corporations? We got lost. Where are the powers and the responsibilities? Everything is power. Nothing is power. So we will go home and let the existing system keep governing. What postmodernity did is bullshit.

Inside postmodernity is another important project it brought: the depoliticization of a concept, a political category that is just as

important as gender, and that is the one that talks about male-female relations, the one that reveals machista thoughts, conducts, and behavior. But—and this is what *feminismo comunitario* says, which is very important to us—that machismo, which is a relation between men and women, is not patriarchy. This is a distinction we make as feministas comunitarias. A difference between our feminism and other feminisms is that we do not identify patriarchy with the relations between men and women, or with the hierarchical male-female relation, or as a system and relation within a system of men and women. Other feminisms tend to talk about patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism as if each were just one thing. We disagree. And we write about this in our book. We say that patriarchy is the total system of oppressions, discriminations, and violences that humanity lives under. By “humanity” we mean men, women, and intersexuals (because we are talking about the body). We are talking about gender.

Patriarchy, the total system of oppressions in which women, men, any LGBTQ person, and even nature itself live. But this totalizing system of oppressions has been constructed, historically, upon women’s bodies. It is a system that oppresses men, women, trans people, and nature, but that here, was historically constructed upon the body of women. This conception of patriarchy has helped us, in the struggle of our community, to uncover another form of feminism: *feminismo comunitario*.³⁵ This is a reflection that has been done in Bolivia. You might ask: “Fine, sister, but if you have redefined yourselves like this, why do you still call yourselves feminists?” And we respond, “Look, sisters and brothers, you have to craft a strategy—what the academics call epistemology.”

We live in a globalized world. We can call ourselves *Jamas Guarninanac*: “the force of women.” We can call ourselves everything

³⁵ Editors’ note: Charlotte Sáenz offers some salient and helpful remarks on *feminismo comunitario* in this number’s epilogue. For example, Sáenz writes, “*Feminismo comunitario* is not about rights: it is not a feminism of equality nor a feminism of difference. Rather, it is about rebuilding a community as a body of humans, of which one or several disenfranchised parts have been negated full participation. It is also not a theory, but an organization of men and women with political tasks building greater equity and participation for Indigenous women in Bolivia and other parts of Latin America.” See the “Epilogue” for a more in-depth interpretation of the term.

we are thinking about and arguing for. We can use the definition of patriarchy I just gave you as well. *Jamas Guarninanac*. Good? So we get here and there are feminists who say, “You all come from Bolivia. What do you call your group?” *Jamas Guarninanac*. “How beautiful! Take a seat. Feminist comrades, let us keep discussing. We will give you the floor soon. What did you say you call yourself, little comrade? *Jamas Guarninanac*, comrade, we will give you the floor soon.”

Right? The philosophers do the same thing. They get together in rooms just like the one we are in right now and they say “Yes, Latin American philosophy, philosophy of this, philosophy of that...” And what is it that the Indians have? A cosmovision! Yes, yes, yes, so there are philosophers, and then there are Indigenous cosmovisions. You heard me. There is a difference, supposedly, between a philosophy and an Indigenous worldview.

And when we sit down and talk with our fellow Indigenous comrades they tell us, “But why do you want to argue if we know that our Indigenous cosmovisions are more than mere philosophy?” Let us see, brother, who knows why? And who cares about that? When we have meetings in the centers of power, the hallowed halls of knowledge, we will always be the Indians with the Indigenous cosmovision. Why can’t we call it Aymara philosophy?

My friends, philosophers, I tell you that the strategy is the same one we have chosen. The whole world recognizes feminists and you are recognized here as well. But feminists are not always as regarded as philosophers. You could be a feminist from anywhere in the world, Europe or the United States, and people look at you with malice. It is because we are famous all over the world. But at least there is some (more) prestige to being a feminist in Europe and the United States than there is to being a *Jamasa Guarninanac* feminist.

In the middle of all this, we see the academics’ strategy—which is the same as colonization—to start calling what we do “Indigenous feminism.” They use this term now and that is extremely dangerous. “Of course, Indigenous feminism, right, yes, of course.” Here we have the Indigenous *feministas comunitarias* wondering what it is. So we say, “Well, we have never heard of Indigenous feminism.” That is because

the term was invented by some academic who wrote a book for UNAM called *Indigenous Feminism*. What is more, we read that we are the ones responsible for them having to correct the name of the book. Now it is called *Feminismos desde Abya Yala*³⁶, but originally it was to be called Indigenous Feminisms. You read it though, and that is what it talks about: Indigenous feminism.

Yet *feminismo comunitario*, which is what we are doing, is epistemic autonomy. It is a reflection of the autonomy of our bodies and the novelty and creativity that our process of change expresses. It is an autonomy that we as women, who are involved in this process of change, use to tell the world our proposal for life, for humanity. A proposal for the world is what *feminismo comunitario* is trying to promote. They pretend to reduce it to something, like colonists would, by calling it Indigenous feminism. Or they try to depoliticize *feminismo comunitario* by writing about it in a book and putting it “into conversation” with some author or another. But we are an organization of sisters, and this is the second part of what I want to say.

—

We do not divide theory and practice. We are organized. We are organic. We have spokeswomen and political partners. We are not a group that gets together to discuss things and then afterwards gets coffee or drinks and goes home. We do political work together. We are a social organization. We have a structure. And why have a horizontal dictatorship? We are all equal. We all put in work and then two or three of those people come out in photos. No, no, not that type of horizontal dictatorship. We are not a horizontal collective critiquing hierarchy. We are not hierarchical, but we have an organizational structure.

Our spokeswoman is the person who speaks for us. And when she speaks the rest of us are silent because we chose her as our spokeswoman. We complete political tasks. As *feministas comunitarias*, we have specific things we need to do and we get them done together. You can talk about dictators, fine. We are risking our lives. Imperialism,

³⁶ Francesca Gargallo Celentani, *Feminismos desde Abya Yala* (México: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2014).

the Right, their opposition kills us. What we are doing is not a hobby. Feminism is not a hobby. And we are not the only ones. I know feminists in the North. There is one in New York I am thinking of named Margarita Cerullo, from the sixties and seventies. This morning I spoke to Angela Davis. And what did she say to me? Your committed sister is still going, still winning, still going; with her greyish hair she keeps on winning, and keeps touring. These are our sisters. We organize with them. This is the kind of organized organic feminism that convenes us.

For this last point, I would like to make our ideas more concrete to make room for discussion. What is our proposal? I want to explain why our *feminismo* is *comunitario*. It is *comunitario* because, for us, it is important that *feminismo* propose. We differentiate ourselves from our feminist sisters, whom we respect, who claim that feminism is a space to say: “Look, sisters!” (These are socialist feminists or ecofeminists.) “I have brought some small points to make for our communist and socialist comrades! Please do not forget to include this for the women. I would like to recommend that you include these few points in your platform for struggle.” *Feminismo comunitario* permits us—we owe this audacity to our communities and our grandmothers—to think about our world from our perspective, for us, for our brothers, for nature, and for the world. And what is the proposal that comes from us? We propose a world. It does not include these little points for someone’s agenda or platform for struggle. It is community itself. That is the proposal: community to break individualism; community to philosophically, conceptually, and cognitively understand that you are just one little bug in this universe; community to show you that just as much as you need others, we are also in need of nature. This relation of humanity is necessary, but always in the context of nature, since humanity does not exist without nature. Community is our proposal. We did not invent this, nor did it come from our navels. It exists in our memory. And that is why when the brother asks, “Where does it come from?” We say, “In our territories, as in the territories of Europe, community existed.”

It was not matriarchy, by the way. Matriarchy never existed. It is a myth. There has never been a system where women dominated men. There is maternity, matrilocality, which puts women in the center of things. But a system of oppression where women oppress both men

and nature has never historically existed. The idea of matriarchy is an invention because it does not exist and it never has. Patriarchy does exist. Let us talk about patriarchy.

What has patriarchy done to women’s bodies? Upon women’s bodies it has constructed a system of oppression that actively attacks them. It attacks us whether we are equal or distinct. When one body submits itself to another, our community breaks. So what we propose, based on the process of change in Bolivia, and propose to the world, is the recuperation of that memory which stretches far back into the past. Who has been able to maintain it today? Women from the First Nations communities. This is why the nobodies, with whom I began, have instincts. We can nourish humanity—if humanity wants it, of course. We can nourish women in First Nations communities because we are nourishing that deep memory and the necessity to build up our communities with it. Building with unity is necessary.

Feminismo comunitario thus uses the body, which is something we learned with our sisters from the North and Europe. We learned how to use our bodies to make politics. We explain this in our assemblies at the workshops we lead, when they give us the floor to speak. We use our bodies to explain our dream, the world we want. When we talk about community, sisters and brothers, we talk about it like a body. This eye, that hand, this foot: they are all of us: women, sisters, transgender people. And we are in community with nature. To explain, to feel, we need the body. We all have a body. Nobody here is an idea, walking around and talking. Everyone here, right now, has a body. This eye, this hand, that foot: our brothers. This eye, this hand, that foot: our sisters. Due to patriarchy and machismo, today, the community is a body walking around like this [*walks aimlessly, imitating a zombie*] without force, without energy, without vision, action, or women’s footsteps. So it is not working with women, and this is why we need the work of *feminismo comunitario*; this is the work of women in transforming community. We must open our eyes, use our hands, use our feet to create this community and create energy, force, and our authentic identities and autonomy. One hand does not ask the other hand if it can grasp something. The other hand does not give it permission. One eye does not ask the other eye for permission to see. If the community wants to see, well—and

that is why we talk about living well— it absolutely and fundamentally requires the woman's eye. That's *feminismo comunitario*.

Again, with all due respect—other sisters have their own paths—this feminism is different from the feminism of equality, or the feminism of difference that puts women above men. The former says, “Ah, so the men have rights—we should have equal rights!” The latter says, “I want everyone to respect my differences!” These are different from our feminism. In our feminism we want community. It is not about one being in front of the other. It is not a discussion or argument with the other. Instead, we ask, what is community? What do we make together? And this depends on the circumstance.

I am a lesbian, for instance, in love, affect, sexuality, and I have my preference. My sexual prerogatives and sexual politics are both with women. But we are a community with the men of my *pueblo*, of my community, and of the world. That is how the world is. It includes them. And it was with them that we made the October revolution happen. But they are machistas. Terrible machistas. And yet, we are going to bring about the revolution with them. When neoliberalism attacks, we fight back with them. When we build roadblocks, we build with them. For our brothers who are now looking at us: We have taken care of you since you were little, baby boys. We helped you grow, fed you, nourished and supported you. In the revolutions, we have always been there. You might not see us, but we have always been there. We bring you food, keep you warm, give you our word, hear you out. We have always done this in every revolution. Always! We have been with you. If you end up in jail, who visits you? Your fathers? One or two, maybe. It is your mothers, sisters, girlfriends, female friends. If you get sick in the hospital or when you grow old, who takes care of you? Perhaps your child, it is possible. But fundamentally it is we women who are always there. We are there from the moment we give birth to them to the moment we bury them. When, brothers? When are you the ones with us? *When?*

When will *you* be there for *us*? When will we have reciprocity? When? What revolution will we be able to talk about? How could you write such beautiful books, talk with such passion, and express so much vehemence about revolution and yet not think about your sister sitting right next to you as your equal? Why do you laugh when she speaks? Why

do you not listen to her? Do you think we are talking about absurdities? And when we are building the roadblock, when we are making that barricade, the men molest us. They grope our breasts. They rape us. Members of revolutionary organizations! They tell dirty jokes and disrespectful stories at night with their friends. Why do I say this with such venom? BECAUSE IT OFFENDS US! You there, you are of African descent. You over there, you are Indigenous. Now someone tell a racist joke with a laughing voice. Tell a joke about Black people. Tell a joke about Indians. Tell a joke to pass the time. See who laughs. This is what I am asking for, what we are trying to create. When you are with us, there is a relation between us. There is no separation, right? It is theory-practice. There are theories without practice. They are the theories you learn in universities. But also, there is no practice without theory for us. There is no such thing as a practice where we do not know what we are doing. Our practices are, and have always been, theories of livelihood, with an explanation for why we do things. But there are theories without practice. And those are what we critique.

[Singing Jaime Junaro's song "Quiero Ser Libre Contigo" ³⁷]

No quiero sin tu mano caminar

I don't want to walk through life
por la vida sin razón.

senselessly without your hand.

Quiero crear un mundo de color

I want to create a world of color
entre los cielos y el mar

between the skies and sea.

Quiero sembrar en tu corazón

I want to sow in your heart
una esperanza de amor

a hope for love

No quiero ver más llanto ni dolor

37 Jaime Junaro, *Quiero ser libre contigo* (Bolivia: Discolandia Dueri & Cia, 1999)

I do not want to see more crying or pain

Quiero que tengas calor

I want you to be warm

Quiero ser libre contigo

I want to be free with you

Quiero a tu lado vivir

I want to live by your side

Quiero ser libre contigo

I want to be free with you

Quiero en tus brazos soñar

I want to dream in your arms

Quiero ser libre contigo

I want to be free with you

Quiero a tu lado crecer

I want to grow by your side

Quiero ser libre contigo

I want to be free with you

Quiero volver a creer

I want to believe once more

No quiero sin tu mano caminar

I do not want to walk without your hand

Quiero ser libre contigo

I want to be free with you

Quiero a tu lado vivir

I want to live by your side

Quiero ser libre contigo

I want to be free with you

Quiero en tus brazos soñar

I want to dream in your arms

Quiero a tu lado crecer

I want to grow by your side

Quiero entregarte mi amor

I want to give you my love

Thank you.

ON INDIGENIZING EDUCATION AND THE VIRTUES OF DECOLONIAL FAILURE

Tracy Devine Guzmán
University of Miami

PRESENTED
April 15, 2016 at 10:00 A.M.

ORIGINAL TITLE
Indigenizing Education? On the Virtues of Decolonial Failure

I. AYACUCHO, 2016

“Our individual and collective rights are not recognized,” argued nineteen-year-old Quechua activist, Gloria Quispe Girón, in January 2016, responding to my query about the merits and failures of Peruvian public policy and its multiculturalist goals of “diversity.” She elaborated: “[We lack] equal opportunity. [We cannot] feel part of the nation, nor accepted, nor recognized. The concept of Indigenous rights is a chimera in a country that acknowledges the conquest and the colonial period with pride, ... [a country] that *still* lacks awareness of, and fails to show solidarity with all of its peoples.”³⁸

Quispe’s statement offers a starting point from which to consider what it has meant historically for Indigenous peoples in Peru that the state’s intention to guarantee their national belonging in fact operates through a sociocultural paradigm that is grounded in the premise of their non-belonging, and that the dominant national society that has long laid claim to the fruits of their labor assumes the basic inadequacy of traditional Indigenous economies and forms of work. Per governing discourse and its accompanying public policies, these two problems could only ever be solved by dint of state tutelage, or what we might call more succinctly in the context of LAPES simply, “education.” In light of numerous colonizing pedagogies that have been formulated toward such ends since the declaration of Peruvian Independence in 1821, what have been, and what might be now, the possibilities for “indigenizing” education and decolonizing knowledge more broadly?

³⁸ The interview and related commentary on which I draw here appear in: Devine Guzmán, “Povos indígenas e ‘a diversidade cultural’: uma visão desde Austrália, Brasil, Índia e Peru,” *Revista Observatório* Vol. 20 (2016): 1-37. This translation and all others are my own.

As my title suggests, one possible answer to this question is: not many. After all, the socioeconomic conditions of Quechua, Aymara, and Amazonian peoples in Peru remain far worse than those of their non-Indigenous compatriots.³⁹ And yet, as I also wish to suggest—alongside Quispe and the many other Indigenous activists and scholars who refuse to accept marginalization and exclusion—instances of decolonial failure also present us with opportunities for seeking inspiration, for radical learning, and for collaborating transnationally towards shared political goals motivated by a desire to strengthen and expand social justice. Alas, Quispe’s observation that Peruvian society “still” runs short on awareness and solidarity also reveals her belief that both goals reside within the realm of possibility.

Although Quispe has national and international experience advocating for Indigenous rights in the Andes and across the Americas, the primary focus of her work has been in southern Peru, where like thousands of Indigenous and rural families, she was forced to migrate due to the intense political violence that overtook her country between 1980 and the 2000, when Sendero Luminoso and state forces battled for control of the country—together taking more than 69,000 lives.⁴⁰ Three out of every four people killed in that conflict was a Quechua-speaking peasant, and more than 40% of them came from Quispe’s home of Ayacucho.⁴¹

From this background and in this context, then, Quispe’s efforts on behalf of her youth advocacy group, *Ñuqanchik*, Organización para Niñ@s y Jóvenes Indígenas de Ayacucho, ⁴²have been inspired

39 Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, *En el Perú 221 Mil Peruanas y Peruanos Dejaron de Ser Pobres en los Años 2014 y 2015*, 2016. https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/cifras_de_pobreza/nota-de-prensa-n074_2016-inei.pdf (accessed February 1, 2017).

40 The Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission estimated that 46 percent of deaths were caused by Sendero Luminoso; 30 percent by state forces; and 23 percent by other actors, including paramilitaries, self-defense groups, and rural community defense organizations (*rondas campesinas*). See Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, “Anexo 2: Estimación Total de Víctimas,” in *Reporte final*, 2003. <http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/Tomo%20-%20ANEXOS/ANEXO%202.pdf> (accessed March 17, 2017).

41 Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, *Informe Final*, 53. [http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20I/Primera%20Parte%20E1%20Proceso-Los%20hechos-Las%20victimas/Seccion%20Primera-Panorama%20General/1.%20PERIODIZACION.pdf](http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ifinal/pdf/TOMO%20I/Primera%20Parte%20E1%20Proceso-Los%20hechos-Las%20v%20victimas/Seccion%20Primera-Panorama%20General/1.%20PERIODIZACION.pdf) (accessed March 15, 2017).

42 *Ñuqanchik* means “we” in Quechua—the most widely spoken Indigenous language in the

in large part by the discrimination she experienced personally upon being forced to leave her rural community and remake life in a distant, unfamiliar, and frequently hostile urban center. In the provincial city, she explained, she felt compelled by a continuous onslaught of racist, classist aggression to conceal her place of origin, her native Quechua language, and her most intimate and fundamental ways of being in and thinking about the world. In her communications with me, she asked, rhetorically: “How *not* to be part of the Indigenous movement? How *not* to help, if just like me, there are so many young people who live [...] in fear and shame? If they die of embarrassment because of our customs, music, and language?”⁴³ The rationale for a Peruvian “Indigenous movement,”⁴⁴ to engage with Quispe’s terminology, thus originates with the very notion of Indigenous rights that she finds lacking in mainstream Peruvian society. Grounded in a desire for self-preservation, as well as for collective Indigenous wellbeing, this rationale resonates with a long tradition of intellectual activism in the Andes, and runs counter to the colonialist renderings of Indigenous education that have long inhered in dominant sociocultural sensibilities and practices.

Discrimination of Indigenous migrants by Euro-descended and *mestizo* urbanites is of course an old story in the Andes—one that predates nationhood and is linked foundationally to the prevailing concept and practice of “Peruvianness” through a host of national ideas and the pedagogical institutions designed to impart them. As in other New World settler states, public schooling in Peru has served since the inception of nationhood as a primary mechanism through which intellectual and governing elites would aim to plant, cultivate, and harvest civic-mindedness to overcome the “backwardness” of Indigenous and other “underdeveloped” peoples. In short, education was imagined as a mechanism to foster a culture and ethos of homogeneity that could contribute to the overall “improvement” and perceived well-being of the nation.

Americas, with nearly seven million speakers in the Andes.

43 *Cómo no ser parte del movimiento indígena, ¿cómo no ayudar, si al igual que yo, hay muchos jóvenes que viven [...] miedo y vergüenza? ¿Si por nuestras costumbres, nuestra música y lengua se mueren de vergüenza?”*

44 Indigenous movement” was Quispe’s phrase and one of few affirmative uses of the term I have heard in the Peruvian context from a self-identifying Quechua woman in over two decades.

In light of these goals, it is unsurprising, perhaps, that state-backed education in the Peruvian Andes has been realized overwhelmingly in pursuit of “de-Indianization” and citizen-making as simultaneous processes designed to go hand-in-hand.⁴⁵ From racialized cultural movements to class-based literacy campaigns, and from social hygiene crusades to a wide range of religious dogmatism, programmatic efforts to edify Native peoples has over time revealed two common denominators: first, a perception of Indigenous deficiency; and second, the aspiration to “remedy” it, even at tremendous human cost. Developed out of nineteenth-century scientific racialism,⁴⁶ “improvement” efforts sought through education to remove Indigenous peoples from the present by transporting them through time: either back to a romanticized, pre-colonial past, or forward to a future of developmentalist modernization wherein traditional ways of being and thinking would belong mostly in museums.

In contraposition to the dominant educational goals and practices that sought to transform Native peoples into de-Indianized, exemplary citizens, Indigenous education practices by Indigenous peoples, whether in or outside the formal school system, have offered a compendium of decolonial strategies for navigating the violent assimilation of Republican rule, albeit with varied degrees of success. This paper examines the historical relationship between the colonizing and decolonizing imperatives of competing educational initiatives and their enduring implications for students and pedagogues alike. It is not solely because of their triumphs, I argue, but also because of their shortcomings and failures that decolonial learning initiatives and the ambition to indigenize education and other forms of sociocultural discourse can be valuable for confronting the political and environmental crises that Native peoples in Peru (and certainly elsewhere) inevitably share with the rest of humanity. To ground this argument, I shall consider some of the historical weight that Gloria Quispe Girón and her contemporaries in *Ñuqanchik* hold on their shoulders as they carry on their work in the face of great obstacles.

⁴⁵ For a similar situation in Bolivia, see Aurolyn Luykx, *The Citizen Factory* (New York: SUNY, 1999).

⁴⁶ See, for example, Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

II. CUSCO, 1920S

Early twentieth-century debates over the ideal physical and ideological place of Indigenous peoples in Peruvian society divided *indigenistas*—an assemblage of mostly elite, mostly male, mostly non-Indigenous intellectuals from the highlands and the coast—into several factions. While some indigenist thinkers advocated racial, social, and cultural *mestizaje* (mixing) as a positive and ultimately inevitable social force—the means by which a relatively homogenous nationhood might be eventually consolidated—others equated it with degeneration. Key among the latter school was one of Peru’s most zealous social thinkers, Luis Valcárcel, who was born in Moquegua in 1891, grew up in Cusco, and moved in 1930 to Lima, where he taught at the Universidad Mayor de San Marcos. He directed two major museums⁴⁷ as well as the Instituto Indigenista Peruano, serving as Minister of Education between 1945 and 1947. In the early 1960s he also helped found the still influential Instituto de Estudios Peruanos.⁴⁸

Although the tenor of his social and political advocacy for Indigenous peoples became progressively more moderate over a career spent travelling between the mostly Indigenous highlands and the predominantly Hispanist and *mestiza* coast, Valcárcel’s early political discourse was intractable during the early twentieth century, when a series of Indigenous uprisings against Cusqueñan *hacendados* (landowners) appeared to threaten the integrity and future of the Peruvian nation, then barely a century old.⁴⁹ From the context of that social and political upheaval, Valcárcel argued against the “perversion” of Andean peoples through contact with non-Indigenous society, contending that the proliferation of mixed-race peoples would lead to corruption, alcoholism, stupidity, and poverty among the general population.⁵⁰ His

⁴⁷ Valcárcel directed the Museo Bolivariano and Museo Arqueológico before uniting them into the Museo Nacional. He was the founding director of the Museum of Peruvian Culture until 1964.

⁴⁸ For a comparative study of Valcárcel’s work and an earlier take on some of these questions, see Devine Guzmán, “Indigenous Identity and Identification in Peru,” *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies* 8.1 (1999): 63-74.

⁴⁹ Carlos Arroyo Reyes, *Nuestros años diez* (Uppsala: Libros en Red, 2005).

⁵⁰ See Luis Valcárcel, *Tempestad en los Andes* (Lima: Populibros, 1927), 41-44; 91-93;

solution—now nearly a century old—was to insist instead, against the grain of dominant indigenist discourse, on a hyperbolic re-Indianization of Peru. As he put it: “Peru is Indian and will be while there are four million men who feel that is the case, and while there is still a fiber of Andean atmosphere, saturated with the legends of a hundred centuries.”⁵¹ In terms of policy, this position advocated relative seclusion for traditional Indigenous peoples. For non-Indigenous peoples, the implications would be less clear, but resulted frequently in performative celebrations of Indian essence and symbolic appropriations of Indian “spirit,” particularly among highland elites.⁵²

Counter to Valcárcel’s proselytizing, *anti-mestizo* rhetoric, the sway of Lamarckian genetics led other indigenist thinkers to defend the notion that physical and cultural modifications could be inherited, resulting in the eventual association of *mestizaje* with “improvement,” rather than degeneration. A renewed “Indigenous race,” such thinkers purported, could be forged through repeated exposure to positive sociocultural influences, including sporting activities, enhanced hygienic and health care practices, and augmented musical and artistic instruction. Because schooling would provide the primary medium for disseminating these positive forms of influence, faith in “racial improvement” permeated education policy, resulting in the proliferation of didactical materials designed for “the 80% of illiterate Indigenous people who constitute[d] the national soul...and live[d]...very distant from civilization, ...relegated to oblivion.”⁵³

99-100; 107-108; 116-120. Valcárcel wrote of “*mestizos*” and “*cholos*,” referring to the latter group as “parasites” eating off of the “rotten body” of society. While *mestizaje* would develop into a relatively neutral concept, *cholíficación* has maintained its mostly pejorative connotation into the twenty-first century, though the deprecatory meaning has long been called into question in both academia and popular culture. Whether or not these terms connote derision depends on the circumstances at hand, as the tendency to nickname based on ethno-cultural heritage and physical appearance is complicated by the fact that “racial” categories are also mediated by education, occupation, geography, language, and dress.

51 “El Perú es indio y lo será mientras haya cuatro millones de hombres que así lo sientan, y mientras haya una brizna de ambiente andino, saturado de las leyendas de cien siglos.” *Tempstad en los Andes*, 112.

52 On these questions see Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

53 “el 80% de analfabetos indígenas que constituyen el alma nacional [...] y que viven [...] muy

One primary school lesson from 1934 called, “El indio estudioso,” encapsulates this thinking succinctly:

Do you know this boy? Yes, I know him; it’s Anacleto. Everyone calls him ‘Indian,’ as if that word were an insult. But on the contrary, he feels proud, because his veins pulse with the blood of a valiant and heroic race: that of the Incas. The Indian Anacleto already knows how to read and write. Now we see him seated on a bench with his bare feet and his poncho, doing writing exercises [...]. He is also a hardworking boy. A few months ago he only spoke a few words. [...] In contrast, today he can read his book, recite some verses and ideas: flag, school, mother, work, etc. He’s learned a lot of things in a short time. Children! Be like Anacleto, because the Fatherland requires children who are useful to society! [...] **Now I know how to read. Now they won’t call me ‘stupid Indian.’**⁵⁴

Summoning Inca greatness to valorize the Native peoples of his day, the author of this passage hints at how Valcárcel and his adherents sought to “reform” Indigenous students without stripping away the desirable essence of their Indianness. Anacleto’s newly achieved literacy would make him beneficial to national society and ensure that he could no longer be disdained as “stupid,” for example, while his bare feet and traditional dress demonstrated that beneath the education he was still an authentic Quechua boy. In short, the social engineers wanted to have their cake and to eat it, too. As Valcárcel explained years later: “the indigenist crusade sought to remove the Indian from the amnesia that had made him forget his glorious past.”⁵⁵

distantes de la civilización y regalados al olvido.” Augusto Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer? - lectura y escritura simultáneas, ceñidas a las últimas orientaciones de la pedagogía*. 3^{ra} ed. (Lima: Instituto Pedagógico Nacional de Varones, 1934), 6.

54 “¿Conoces tú a este niño? Sí, lo conozco; es Anacleto. Todos le dicen indio como si esta palabra fuera un insulto. Antes bien, él se enorgullece porque sus venas sienten correr la sangre de una raza valiente y heroica: la de los Incas. El indio Anacleto ya sabe leer y escribir. Ahora lo vemos sentado en un banco con los pies descalzos, con su poncho, haciendo ejercicios de escritura sobre el poyo. Es un niño por demás trabajador. Hace meses hablaba apenas unas palabras. [...] En cambio, hoy puede leer su libro, recitar algunos versos y pensamientos: La Bandera, La escuela, La madre, El trabajo, etc. Muchas cosas ha aprendido en poco tiempo. ¡Niños! Sean como Anacleto porque la Patria exige niños útiles a la sociedad! [...] **Ya sé leer. Ya no me dirán indio bruto.**” Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 134-135; original emphasis.

55 “la cruzada indigenista quería sacar al indio de esa amnesia que le había hecho olvidar su pasado glorioso.” Luis Valcárcel, *Memorias* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1981), 217.



Figure 1: Anacleto: "The studious Indian" ⁵⁶

Images like the one of Anacleto (Figure 1), recurrent in textbooks from the first half of the twentieth century through the 1980s, illustrate how intellectual elites imagined the educational apparatus could reform Indigenous subjects, both inside and out. In a second example (Figure 2), an aimless, disheveled child wearing Native-looking attire appears in the background, while in the foreground—presumably meant to illustrate the social promise of schooling—the same child appears cleaned up, donning Westernized dress, and perhaps most importantly, carrying books. In all cases, some remnant of Inca greatness remains: for boys, a colorful poncho folded neatly over one shoulder, for example; for girls, long hair neatly arranged into braids (see Figure 3).

⁵⁶ Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 134.



Figure 2: Ministry of Education textbook (1950) ⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Junta Militar de Gobierno, *Pedro: Libro de lectura para las escuelas de concentración de comunidades y Núcleos Escolares* (Lima: Ministry of Education, 1950), np.



Figure 3: "Literate Indian girl" ⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 101.



Figure 4: Ministry of Education textbook for "Indigenous education" (1934) ⁵⁹

In addition to emphasizing superficial physical attributes, educational texts made frequent reference to the indispensability of good hygiene for social transformation and development. Another lesson (a poem) called "La limpieza" thus asks, for example:

Why is Juanito always so beautiful? / His house shines like the sun. / Why is it so beautiful? / Because it's clean. / Why do I see his hands so white? / and so soft like lilies? / It's because his skin is very clean. / His handsome suit is always magnificent. / Is it made of silk, like that of a rich man? / No...it is not silk. / But it is clean. ⁶⁰

While pointing out that the boy is "extremely tidy," and aptly dressed in a "beautiful outfit," the author of this passage also discloses the bleaching power of the educational process: Juanito's hands are not

⁵⁹ Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 100.

⁶⁰ "¿Por qué está bello siempre Juanito? / Su casa tiene del sol el brillo. / ¿Por qué está tan bello? / Porque está limpio. / ¿Por qué tan blancas sus manos miró / y son tan suaves como los lirios? / Es que su cutis está bien limpio. / Su hermoso traje siempre es lúcido. / ¿Será de seda como el de un rico? / No, no es de seda, pero está limpio." Cangahuala Rojas, *¿Sabes leer?*, 110.

just remarkably clean, alas, but also lily white. This racialized permutation is reiterated by textbooks that portray the skin of illiterate children as darker than that of reformed, literate ones.



Figure 5: The whitening effects of Indigenous education ⁶¹

By combining efforts at social whitening with the perfunctory valorization of select aspects of Indigenous traditions and cultural forms, thinkers like Valcárcel could portray state-backed education as a necessary undertaking to propel the country forward while simultaneously situating Indigenous peoples in an imagined context of pre-Columbian pristineness. “My ideal,” expressed the historian-anthropologist in his memoirs, “was to recover the resplendence of the Inca period.” ⁶²Valcárcel’s zeal to spread a renewed Indigenous culture through public education had an important linguistic component that he likened to an “orthographic revolution,” through which the vernacular languages of

⁶¹ Junta Militar de Gobierno, *Pedro*, 48.

⁶² Valcárcel, *Memorias*, 250.

Peru (by which he meant mostly Quechua) might throw off the “colonial yoke” of Spanish grammar. Pre-Columbian Quechua was thus favored over the adulterated, Hispanized versions spoken by those who had abandoned their traditional communities for the wretched settlements that he labeled “*poblachos mestizos*.” ⁶³He reasoned:

[I declare] war on the oppressive [Spanish] letters: on “b”; and on “v”; and on “d”; and on “z”; [...] Out with the bastard “y”, the exotic “x,” and the decadent and feminine “g”; and the specious, ambiguous “q.” Here’s to the manly “K” [...]. We shall write Inka and not Inca: new forms of writing will be a symbol of emancipation. [...] Let us purify the language of our fathers [...], the Children of the Sun: let their golden light shine, [...] recovered from five centuries of enslaving moss. Let us break the last link of the chain, even amidst the cries of those nostalgic for the yoke, those who defend Spain to the death, who sigh for the Golden Age of Castile, who perform their fanatic adoration of Calderon de la Barca, Tirso de Molina, Lope de Vega, with the reverent attitude of colonial servants. ⁶⁴

As this passionate interest in language indicates, Valcárcel circumscribed his harshest criticisms of *mestizaje* to the realm of symbolic and cultural forms, rather than to racialized or biological ones. Due to the perceived propensity for cultural *mestizaje* to cause social degradation, the idealized gradual change (“improvement”) would have to

⁶³ He complained: “Worms lost in the subcutaneous galleries of this rotting body that is the wretched *mestizo* community, the men sometimes surface; the sun drives them away, [and then] they go back into their holes. What do the troglodytes do? They do nothing. They are parasites, the woodworms of this garbage heap.” “*Gusanos perdidos en las galerías subcutáneas de este cuerpo en descomposición que es el poblacho mestizo, los hombres asoman a ratos a la superficie; el sol los ahuyenta, tornan as sus madrigueras. ¿Qué hacen los trogloditas? Nada hacen. Son los parásitos, son la carcoma de este pudridero.*” *Tempestad en los Andes*, 39-41.

⁶⁴ “*Guerra a las letras opresoras :a la b;y a la v; a l a d y a l a z; ... afuera la e bastarda y, la x exótica, y la g decadente y femenina; y la q equívoca, ambigua. Veng[á] la K varonil ...Inscribamos Inka y no inca: la nueva grafía será el símbolo de emancipación. ... purifiquemos la lengua de nuestros padres ..., los Hijos del Sol: que brille su áurea, ... recubierta por cinco siglos de mugre esclavista. Rompamos el último eslabón de la cadena, aunque giman los nostálgicos del yugo, los españolistas a ultranza que suspiran por el Siglo de Oro Castellano y rinden fanático culto a Calderón de la Barca, Tirso de Molina, Lope de la Vega, con la reverente actitud de los siervos coloniales.*” *Tempestad en los Andes*, 99-100.

occur in a controlled environment and under the supervision of suitable authorities. This idealized space would once again be the rural school,⁶⁵ which would bear the burden of the state's social and indigenist experiments until the end of the twentieth century—and arguably, in many ways, until the present day.

In the aftermath of the politically tumultuous 1920s and 30s, Valcárcel became Minister of Education in 1945 under the democratically elected government of José Luis Bustamante y Rivero. The scrutiny of ideological adversaries and allies alike (including, notably, that of novelist, anthropologist, and educator, José María Arguedas) coalesced around the critique that Valcárcel's vision for Indigenous peoples was quixotic, anachronistic, and unrealizable, leading eventually to a softening of his radical position of isolationism.⁶⁶ As Valcárcel's work became more policy oriented and less theoretical, his thinking came to reflect a more pragmatic stance on Indigenous education; including, remarkably, one that incorporated investment from and collaboration with the same United States that had “annihilated” its own Indigenous peoples.⁶⁷ Paradoxically, it was through the Servicio Cooperativo Peruano-Norteamericano (SECPANE), founded in 1946, that Valcárcel and his cohort would come to reimagine and reconfigure their nation-building task. Following the wartime establishment

⁶⁵ He explained: “In this process of cultural conflict, the school's mission was of primary importance. The educator would bear the responsibility for determining which aspects of the modern cultural archive merited admission into Indigenous culture. [...] Facing this delicate matter was not, therefore, merely a preoccupation of a single branch of administration, or of one sole Ministry, but of the entire administration of the State, including that of social sectors not directly implicated in the problem. “*En este proceso de enfrentamiento cultural, la misión de la escuela era de primera importancia. El educador se encargaría de discriminar los aspectos del acervo cultural moderno que merecían ser admitidos en la cultura indígena. [...] El encaramiento de tan delicado asunto no era, por lo tanto, preocupación de una sola rama de la administración o de un solo ministerio, sino de la administración entera del Estado e inclusive de los sectores sociales no comprometidos directamente con el problema.*” Valcárcel, *Memorias*, 350-51.

⁶⁶ Valcárcel's idealization of Indigenous purity remained intact during his stint in national politics, when he established the Instituto de Estudios Históricos, the Instituto de Estudios Etnológicos, and the Museo de la Cultura Peruana. In 1947, he became the inaugural director of the Instituto Indigenista Peruano—a research organization created by the national Congress in 1943 following Peru's participation in the First Inter-American Indigenist Congress, in Pátzcuaro, México. See Jorge P. Osterling and Héctor Martínez, “Notes for a History of Peruvian Social Anthropology,” *Current Anthropology* 23.3 (1983): 343-360.

⁶⁷ Valcárcel, *Tempestad en los Andes*, 147.

of the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIA) and the Inter-American Indigenist Institute (III)—both founded in 1940—SECPANE would extend the workings of the Good Neighbor Policy to rural and Indigenous education in Peru for years to come.

State-sponsored indigenism during Valcárcel's tenure as education minister perpetuated his old characterization of *mestizaje* as degeneration, but also sought to foster desirable sociocultural transformation through education. One major development of this period was the creation of the Núcleos Escolares Campesinos (NECs)—a rural education program inspired by a Bolivian model from the 1930s and funded by SECPANE with the collaboration of Indigenous communities who offered their land and labor in support of the initiative.⁶⁸ From starting points in Puno and Cusco, the NECs were expected to spread to other regions, where they would help reorganize rural life physically and conceptually around the institution and concept of the school. The program grew from some sixteen NECs in the late 1940s, to over seventy by the early 1960s, when they totaled enrollments of over 200,000 students, or approximately .02 percent of the national population.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ J. Zebedeo García and Leopoldo Díaz Montenegro, *Núcleos escolares: informe sobre el programa de educación rural* (Lima: Ministerio de Educación Pública—División de Educación Rural, 1949), 36.

⁶⁹ The national population at the time was approximately 10 million. For more on the schools, see G. Antonio Espinoza, “The origins of the *Núcleos Escolares Campesinos* or Clustered Schools for Peasants in Peru, 1945-1952,” *Naveg@mérica. Revista electrónica de la Asociación Española de Americanistas*. 2010, n. 4; <http://revistas.um.es/navegamerica> (accessed March 15, 2017); and Brooke Larson, “Capturing Indian Bodies, Hearths, and Minds,” in Andrew Canessa, ed. *Natives Making Nation* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), 32-59.

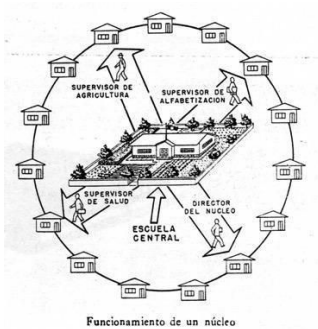


Figure 6: "Functions of a núcleo [escolar]"

Serving as a base for the "Nucleus Director," "Agricultural Supervisor," "Literacy Supervisor," and "Health Supervisor," the Central School is the heart of the new Indigenous community⁷⁰

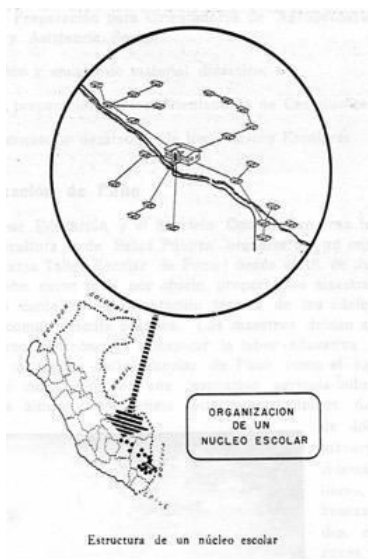


Figure 7: "Structure of the núcleo escolar"⁷¹

⁷⁰ García and Díaz Montenegro, *Núcleos escolares*, 35.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 27.



Figure 8: "Maps of the zones where núcleos escolares operate (departamentos of Puno and Cusco)"⁷²

III. MIAMI, 2017

So, why should this story matter to people residing in a time and place far removed from the Peruvian highlands of the mid-twentieth century? I offer as a tentative response that although Luis Valcárcel's tenure as Minister of Education was short lived, the impact of his work and of the educational ideas, institutions, and processes outlined here, was not. The legacy of his school of thought—progressive for its time relative to competing forms of social and cultural policy, albeit colonialist according to our own thinking, and certainly racist, if we sanction the anachronism—is indeed with us today. It manifests, for example, in the popular attribution of differentiated citizenship rights and divergent tenets of human worth (in Peru and elsewhere) depending on: 1) the way one looks; 2) the languages one speaks; 3) one's place of origin; 4) one's current place on the map; 5) one's level of formal education; 6) one's occupation; 7) one's engagement with particular

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8.

modes of production; 8) one's contribution to the local economy; 9) one's contribution to the national economy; and 10) one's contribution to the global economy. And it manifests in the disquieting possibility for dominant thinking to extrapolate from the first point to the tenth without any empirical basis for making such a verdict. In other words, does the vitriol and intolerance of prevailing political discourse at home and elsewhere not invite us to pass judgment on one another's potential contributions to the global economy—to surmise one another's conditions of belonging and overall state of worthiness—just by taking a quick glance? Considering the current onslaught of anti-indigenous developmentalist policy and political rhetoric represented, for example, by the revival of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines, are indigenous rights elsewhere in the Americas any less the “chime-ra” observed by Quispe Girón in her homeland? Does North America not share the lack of “awareness” and “solidarity” of which she speaks, even as its elected representatives lay claim to the “greatest country on God's green Earth” and preach the “shining example” of U.S. democracy to the rest of the world?⁷³

We might attribute different manifestations of this calamitous state of affairs to racism, classism, jingoism, anti-intellectualism, corporate greed, the disavowal of scientific knowledge, or to the confluence of several or all these things. In every case, we would probably be correct, and in every case, the specificity of the rationale and explanation would matter deeply. But to return to the Peru of Gloria Quispe Girón—to end with our feet on the ground—the legacy of racialized educational thinking and the importance of understanding, challenging, and decolonizing it might be delimited more specifically.

I shall close with two examples: First, Hatun Willakuy, the official report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, published in 2004 after a two-year investigation and systematic collection of more than 17,000 testimonies, found that perceptions of “racial difference” and the assumed “inferiority” attributed to that difference were two of the main sources of violence perpetrated during the war. As the

⁷³ Donald Trump, Inauguration speech, January 20, 2017. <http://www.npr.org/2017/01/20/510629447/watch-live-president-trumps-inauguration-ceremony> (accessed January 21, 2017).

President of that Commission explained:

[It is overwhelming...] to find among these testimonies, over and over again, the racial insult and verbal abuse suffered by the poor—an abominable refrain that precedes the beating, the sexual assault, the kidnapping, [...] the shot fired point blank by an agent of the Armed Forces or the police. It is equally exasperating to hear from the leaders of the subversive organizations strategic explanations about why it was convenient to annihilate this or that peasant community.⁷⁴

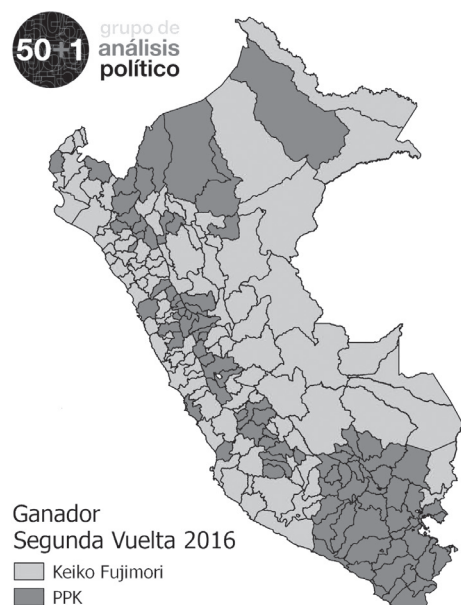
I submit, then, that one key antecedent of this atrocity—the logic that accompanied a twenty-year long genocide in which three out of four victims was a Quechua-speaking *campesino*—was the benevolent ethnocide that made erasing traditional Andean and Indigenous ways of being and thinking by dint of educational “improvements” not only a national priority, but as we have seen here, also a source of national pride.

My second example is the electoral map from the 2016 Peruvian presidential elections, in which 49.87% of the electorate chose as the next leader of their democratic country Keiko Fujimori—daughter of the authoritarian former president who was incarcerated from December 2007 to December 2017 for graft, fraud, bribery, corruption, illegal trafficking of drugs and arms, the forced sterilization of thousands of Indigenous women, targeted killings, and a series of forced disappearances during the final decade of the war.⁷⁵In a historically

⁷⁴ “[Agobia...] encontrar en esos testimonios, una y otra vez, el insulto racial, el agravio verbal a personas humildes, como un abominable estribillo que precede a la golpiza, la violación sexual, el secuestro, ... el disparo a quemarropa de parte de algún agente de las Fuerzas Armadas o la policía. Indigna, igualmente, oír de los dirigentes de las organizaciones subversivas explicaciones estratégicas sobre por qué era oportuno...aniquilar a ésta o aquélla comunidad campesina.” Salomón Lerner Febres, “Discurso de presentación del Informe Final de la Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación,” year? http://www.cverdad.org.pe/ingles/informacion/discursos/en_ceremonias05.php (accessed April 1, 2016).

⁷⁵ See Jo-Marie Burt, “Guilty as Charged: The Trial of Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori for Human Rights Violation,” *The International Journal of Transitional Justice*, Vol. 3 (2009): 384-405. Amidst controversy, accusations of corruption, and protest, President

controversial and close run-off vote, Quipe Girón's battered home region of Ayacucho indeed voted counter to the Peruvian majority and in support of Fujimori's painful legacy, creating a complex and indeed, contradictory national picture about the political impact of state-backed human rights abuses and the thresholds of "acceptable" moral cost for economic stability and protection from insurgent violence.



Fuente: Elaboración propia en base a información de ONPE.

Figure 9: Electoral map for the second round of 2016 presidential elections in Peru ⁷⁶

And so, despite all the evidence that one might stockpile to substantiate the argument against self-identifying in such a context as a

Pedro Paulo Kuczynski pardoned Fujimori on grounds of poor health on December 24, 2017. See "Indulto de Navidad para Fujimori y protestas en Perú, por pacto infame," *Telam*, 25 December 2017.

⁷⁶ Infolatam, "Perú elecciones: División exacta," June 19, 2016. <http://www.infolatam.com/2016/06/21/peru-elecciones-division-exacta/> (accessed March 15, 2017).

Quechua person—including the argument that doing so during the war might have come at the cost of life itself—we have again the example of Quispe Girón, her *compañeras y compañeros* in *Ñuqanchik*, and alongside them a relatively recent proliferation of NGOs, social movements, and organizations of young people who against all odds, and arguably even against their own self-interest, continue to identify from their individual communities with national and international juridical concepts of indigeneity. While it is fundamental to recognize the historical and conceptual limitations of this identification—its generic resonance for the sake of expediency, or *survivance*, to adopt (and adapt) the terminology of Anishanaabe scholar, Gerald Vizenor ⁷⁷—it is equally, if not more urgent in times of crisis and decolonial failure to recognize its emancipatory potential.

In 1938, José María Arguedas reflected thus on the possible (future) indigenization of Peru and its cultural and intellectual production:

The shame of being Indian created by the *encomenderos* [colonial landholders] and their descendants will be destroyed when those who run the country understand that the wall erected by egoism and self-interest to impede the achievement of Indigenous people—to block the free flow of their souls—must be demolished for the benefit of Peru. On that day, a great, national, Indigenous art, environment, and spirit will blossom to resound powerfully in music, poetry, painting, and literature—a great art that, due to its national genius, will have the purest and most definitive universal value. ⁷⁸

If our cup is half empty, Arguedas's words—to date, failed words—might sound like a strategic essentialism that never had its desired

⁷⁷ Gerald Vizenor, *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

⁷⁸ "La vergüenza a lo indio, creada por los encomenderos y mantenida por los herederos de estos hasta hoy, será quebrantada cuando los que dirigen el país comprendan que la muralla que el egoísmo y el interés han levantado para impedir la superación del pueblo indígena, el libre desborde de su alma, debe ser derrumbada en beneficio del Perú. Ese día aflorará, poderoso y arrollador, un gran arte nacional de tema, ambiente, y espíritu indígena, en música, en poesía, en pintura, en literatura, un gran arte, que, por su propio genio nacional tendrá el más puro y definitivo valor universal." *Canto kechwa*. (Lima: Horizonte, [1938] 2014), 18-19.

effect. If our cup is half full, on the other hand, we might hear the same prophecy as an interpellation into an old, but still expanding and changing transnational community that begins anew to realize its political potential through the ceaseless efforts of people like Gloria Quispe Girón, the Standing Rock protestors, and perhaps some of the people reading this essay—all of whom might refuse to equate failure with defeat. In these arduous times, we might find encouragement in the words of the tireless, if controversial Brazilian anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro, who summed up his life's work thus: "I failed at everything I tried. [...] But the failures are my victories. I would hate to be in the place of those who beat me." ⁷⁹ ■

⁷⁹ "Fracassei em tudo o que tentei na vida. [...] Mas os fracassos são minhas vitórias. Eu detestaria estar no lugar de quem me venceu." Darcy Ribeiro, *Mestiço é que é bom!* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Revan Ltd., 1996): 156-57.

LEARNING IN ORDER TO THINK; THINKING IN ORDER TO LEARN⁸⁰

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ORIGINAL TITLE

Between the Worlds of the University, the School,

and Those Outside: Making Visible Other Worlds

Through Philosophy and Infancy

This text is a written exercise of educational and philosophical friendship dedicated to the wonderful group that constitutes The Latin American Philosophy of Education Society (LAPES), to their work, and to the way they inhabit the academic world. What follows is a written exercise of thinking inspired by what I learned at the last LAPES symposium, celebrated at the University of Miami, from March 14–15, 2016, under the title of “Decolonial Education in the Americas: Lessons on Resistance, Pedagogies of Hope”.

I’ll split this text in two sections: The first section, “Lessons,” might constitute one perspective of a common framework, paradigm, or field of the philosophy of education movement emerging within LAPES; and “Thinking,” could be considered my own very modest contribution to this movement. I am aware that it is always difficult to separate what we think from what others think, especially when dialogue intersects our thinking, as it did at the LAPES symposium. This is why in this exercise I will not specifically refer to any other participant of the symposium, even though many of the ideas contained in the first section of this text emerge from interventions offered at different sessions and conversations of the symposium, particularly those interventions by Jason Wozniak, David Backer, Aleksandra Perisic, Juliana Merçon, Cecilia Diego, Maria Pardo, Sheeva Sabati, Gerardo López Amaro, Maximiliano Durán, among other academics and non-academics present. The division of this text in two sections may seem arbitrary, but it is made as an (im)possible attempt to help others and myself reflect on what is specific about LAPES, and about our own contributions to the group.

⁸⁰ I am aware that the use of the word “learning” might evoke the negative sense it has in recent works by scholars like Gert Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (New York: Routledge, 2006) and Jan Masschelein, *Defense of the School: A Public Issue* (Leuven: E-ducation, Culture and Society Publishers, 2013). Even though I am sensitive to their critiques of the contemporary neoliberal apparatus of what Biesta and others call “learnification,” I still feel there is a lot to think about before abandoning the word “learning.”

I. LESSONS

Even though the theme of the symposium shares a resonance with the title of one of Paulo Freire's most popular books, ⁸¹very few references—if any—were made to this book or even more broadly to the mythic figure from Pernambuco. This absence might help us understand one of the lines of action of LAPES. Despite the fact that rather prominent philosophers like Linda Martín Alcoff, Eduardo Mendieta, Enrique Dussel, and Julieta Paredes, the latter two who contribute to this volume of *Lápiz*, have participated in LAPES symposia and published in *Lápiz*—LAPES's annual journal—LAPES seems to privilege collective thinking, and draws on references so diverse that it makes it almost impossible to find individual references that would constitute the basis of a “prominent way of thinking” within the group. In this sense, LAPES seems to prioritize the construction of spaces that create the conditions for exercises of collective thinking, rather than focusing on specific educational, philosophical, or political platforms concerning Latin American society. Nonetheless, in a very real sense, these spaces host very philosophical and political collective thinking. LAPES has been able to open spaces to think and exercise power collectively by inviting people to philosophize and explore the political dimensions of their thinking, while simultaneously experimenting with a “new” politics of thinking.

As such, LAPES seems less interested in applying the ideas of any prominent thinker, or developing a given paradigm of thinking about the relationships between philosophy and education. Moreover, it resists putting into practice a given ideological agenda. Instead, LAPES is about co-inhabiting spaces open for collective thinking and praxis. For this reason, and this might be the first point to highlight, it could be said that LAPES is not properly a school of thought, but rather a movement that feeds itself from different schools, one of which might be Dussel's philosophy of liberation, and another, though even less prominent but still present, would be Paulo Freire's educational thought. By describing LAPES as a “movement” I mean to suggest a kind of open

⁸¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da esperança. Um reencontro com a Pedagogia do Oprimido* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1992).

framework where different voices and perspectives are welcome to find their place in a common philosophical, educational and political search. This framework is not fixed or static, but instead remains open and in flux, even when it turns to examining concepts with well-known traditions.

For instance, even though some words, such as “decolonization” and its derivations were prominently pronounced at the Symposium, it became abundantly clear that they were being used in such different contexts and paradigms that nothing conceptually unified or fixed could be taken from their use. Quite the contrary, it seemed that under the umbrella of decolonization, diverse conceptual frameworks or paradigms inhabited the participants of the Symposium.

a) The Privilege of the Collective Over the Individual

The first notable LAPES symposium phenomenon is how the collective, or the common, is privileged over the individual. Let me share a short anecdote to flesh out this claim. Born in Argentina, I have lived in Brazil since 1997, when I began what seemed to be a one-year Visiting Professor stay at the University of Brasilia. I arrived just some days after the death of Paulo Freire, May 2nd, 1997. In total, I remained in Brasilia for five years, eventually moving to Rio de Janeiro in 2002, where I currently live and teach. Recently, in a meeting of the research group I coordinate, The Center for the Philosophical Investigation of Infancies (NEFI) at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), a colleague of mine, Edna Olimpia da Cunha, recounted the final words of an intervention that Paulo Freire made at the State University of Rio de Janeiro a few weeks before his death: “*Não estejam sós. Por favor, não estejam sós. Estejam sempre juntos. Não se isolem. Fiquem juntos.*” (Do not be alone. Please, do not be alone. Be always together. Don't isolate yourselves. Stay together.)

The above could be read as a testimony: always privilege the collective over the individual dimension of life. In contemporary Latin America, this idea seems more prominent in Indigenous communities

across the region. Consider for example the Tojolabal and Tzotzil Mayan cultures in the southeast of Mexico. As the German philologist Carlos Lenkersdorf has shown, Tojolabal language does not have a first-person singular pronoun: the members of that community only speak in terms of “we,” and do not have a word to say “I” or “you”.⁸² Lenkersdorf has suggested that this linguistic characteristic does not mean that the individual is negated, but rather it marks a shared framework for the individual’s development and expansion.

The Spanish word for the first-person plural pronoun, “*nosotros*,” expresses beautifully how it is not even possible to think the self without others. “*Nos-otros*” contains a double plurality: in “we” and in “others,” because the others are already comprehended both in “we” (which means “I” and “others”) and also in “others”. Linguists might call this over characterization, supra emphasis or reinforcement, but it might also express something else, a trace of a form of collective life expressed through the very grammar of language.

This first common presupposition provokes clear tensions with prominent lines of the so-called Western tradition of philosophy which is, in its different modalities, centered on an individual ego. Two examples of this tension help flesh out the above point. In a book very familiar to LAPES members, Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, it is explicitly affirmed that emancipation is always individual, never social.⁸³ It is through a relationship between the will and the intelligence of two individuals, that of the teacher and the student, that this process occurs. In this text, Rancière confronts an entirely different tradition of Latin American pedagogy of liberation for which emancipation can only be social, never individual.⁸⁴ Another example of this tension between individual and social liberation might be seen in the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Certainly, they confront a subjectivist and ego-centered ontology through ideas like assembly, becoming-child or becoming-animal, body without organs, war machine, etc. Moreover,

⁸² Carlos Lenkersdorf, *Filosofar en clave tojolabal* (México: Porrúa, 2005).

⁸³ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, trans. by Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

⁸⁴ See for example, Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da esperança. Um reencontro com a Pedagogia do Oprimido*. (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1992).

their philosophical writing, for example *A Thousand Plateaus*, is an attempt to dissolve an ego perspective: “To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I.”⁸⁵ Nevertheless, while speaking about the task of a teacher, Deleuze affirms that the teacher’s main mission is to reconcile her students with their solitude,⁸⁶ quite the opposite from Freire’s appeal to collectivity. In sum, in the thinking and writing of prominent names of the so-called Western philosophical tradition, the individual continues to be the focus.⁸⁷

Within this framework, LAPES’s movement seems to be closer to a Latin American perspective of the collective over the particular, the community over the individual. In fact, I would argue that the most urgent LAPES questions, as these emerged in the symposium, are: “How can we create community through our educational thinking and practice?” and “How can we do this philosophically?” In other words, it seems to me that LAPES asks, “How can our educational and philosophical thinking and practice be in the service of building communities beyond the dominant competitive, capitalist form of life in our societies?” Or still, “What is the role of philosophical and educational thought in the transformation of our societies into more desirable forms of collective life?” Importantly, LAPES embodies this questioning not only explicitly through its program and documents but mainly through the structures of their practices. For example, their symposia feature non-hierarchical and dialogical sessions, foster collective questioning, give more time for discussions than to monologue speeches, equally integrate a variety of people, academics and non-academics alike, giving little or no attention to bureaucracy, etc.

⁸⁵ Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. trad. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

⁸⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, directed by Pierre-André Boutang (1996; Paris: Montparnasse, 1997).

⁸⁷ Contemporary paradigms like posthumanism are an exception in this tradition. See for example Karen Barad, “Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart,” *Parallax* 20, no. 3 (2014): 168-187.

b) A Monistic/Immanent/ Thinking Together

LAPES follows in the tradition of conceptualizing universities and schools not as reproductivist or classist sites where bodies are disciplined,⁸⁸ and controlled,⁸⁹ nor where bodies are made as instruments of capitalistic biopower,⁹⁰ but rather as flexible spaces for all sorts of collective experiences of non-productive time, of *scholé*, i.e., time liberated from the determinations of capital and the market. The emphasis on time here is crucial. There exists in philosophies of education a long tradition of questioning the temporality of schooling when it is delimited by the demands of capitalism. Recent work on the Greek etymology of the word school (*scholé*) by Rancière and Masschelein and Simons demonstrates that what makes school uniquely a school is not that it is a site of learning (because we learn elsewhere and not only in schools), but that it is a distinct space of free time, that is, time liberated from the productive demands of the labor market.⁹¹ In the Latin American tradition, Simón Rodríguez problematized the relation of *otium* (leisure time) and school by criticizing the colonization of school time by those who seek to reduce school to the site of a *negotium*, in Spanish *negocio*, the negation of *otium*.⁹² Along these lines, LAPES promotes activities of “unproductive” thinking, like art and philosophy, which create the conditions for artistic and philosophical education experiences that decolonize time from capitalist temporal pressures. Educational experiences of this kind cultivate non-quantitative, non-productive experiences of time. Importantly, such experiences necessarily require sharing time with others. Or, one might argue that education practices which decolonize time produce collective experiences of free-time.

Collective experiences of non-productive time, of *scholé*, as fostered by the LAPES Symposium, tend also to overcome the classic

88 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

89 Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” *October* 59 (1992): 3-7.

90 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2001)

91 Jacques Rancière, “Ecole, production, égalité” in *L'école de la démocratie*, ed. by Xavier Renou, (Paris: Edilig, Fondation Diderot, 1988); Jan Masschelein & Maarten Simons, *In Defense of the School: A Public Issue* (Leuven: KULeuven, 2013).

92 Simón Rodríguez, *Obras completas*, vol. I y II (Caracas: Presidencia de la República, 2001).

mind/body dualism and a consequent stress on immanence over the transcendent. LAPES simultaneously attempts to reinvigorate extensively neglected individual and collective bodies and to reconcile these devalued bodies with themselves in the form of new, embodied, affirmative free-time experiences of the self. The philosophical references drawn on here are multiple, from Spinoza, Nietzsche, and even Deleuze and his “body without organs” to the multiple epistemologies of the South and the voices emerging from the Indigenous, the *campesinos* (farmers), queer thinking, rural feminism, theories of infancy, and the different forms of knowledge emerging from subjects excluded by the dominant, Western epistemology. This immanent materialism draws on the voices of the earth and the different forms of resistance to the prominent rationality that threatens all life on the planet. It calls for new forms of relationships to knowledge—like the epistemologies of the South from Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who claims that resistance against capitalism, oppression and social injustice demands respect for life and plurality.⁹³ In sum, it calls for what we could denominate a new “school body”; new articulations in our educational practices, new materialities, new feelings, new sensibilities, new forms of respiration, new rhythms, new forms of relations amongst ourselves in reconstructed institutions. As briefly stated, I highlight the building of a materialistic and immanent ontology as a horizon for free time, school as *scholé*.

c) Equality as a Principle

A third common LAPES presupposition is equality as a principle. This principle gives sense to a new way of thinking and practicing different forms of community, of collective life, and of political action. As we have just suggested, the whole philosophical and educational movement of LAPES seems at its core to be political in that it recreates the meaning of politics, both theoretically and in praxis. Central to this reconfiguration of politics are practices of power. Two dimensions of

93 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South. Justice against Epistemicide* (Boulder/Londres: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

power deserve mention here. On the one hand, LAPES problematizes what it means to claim that every educational practice is political, or has political dimensions. In other words, LAPES seems to inscribe itself within the Freirean tradition that considers “an educator as a political agent,” but they do so by recreating the forms of this agency in a new way, in non-directive (non-hierarchical), non-intellectualist (not excluding the body), non-prescriptive (immanent) ways, similar to those found in the Zapatista movement and other experiences of “new forms of exercising power” (opposed to traditional forms where power is exercised to take it, to govern others).

Given its attempts at cultivating a communal educational organization, one could argue that LAPES makes the case for a horizontalist, rather than hierarchical, politics of education. Horizontality seems to function as a regulative ideal within LAPES. It is always a horizontality to come, one never achieved. To be sure, the group acknowledges that power exists in its framework, but it is power that they constantly seek to destabilize, not allowing it to congeal in one person or dominate through one practice.

The coloniality of power, the way power is exercised with colonial implications both in North America and in Latin American academic institutions, has to do not only, or not mainly, with a political way of conceiving power, but with the way power is concretely exercised in the living forms of organizations such as universities, schools, and other institutions.⁹⁴ It could be said that the LAPES movement is mainly a political movement in that it questions all sorts of educational practices that actually exercise power in unequal forms even in the name of the most noble words like freedom, democracy or citizenship. For this reason, this way of thinking rejects the idea of *conscientization* as a goal for education because of the hierarchy affirmed between those who have the “true consciousness” and the uneducated ones. At the same time, it does not accept political neutrality in educational practice because to do so would be a way of reproducing the hierarchies already established, a form of conservation of the status quo. In this respect, LAPES seems to nurture itself from a variety of sources like Rancière,

⁹⁴ Anibal Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” *Nepantla: Views From the South*. 1 (2000): 533–580.

Zapatista struggle and Hardt and Negri’s understanding of the politics of the multitude.⁹⁵

Even though I have stressed some dimensions of LAPES and not considered others, the three assumptions presented above seem to be at the same time ethical, political, and epistemological. They share a form of revolutionary educational action that might liberate the way we act, what we know, and how we organize our common life. They may lead to effective forms of rebellion: encouraging solidarity where competition is stimulated, sharing with others instead of appropriating from them, cultivating and nurturing different forms of collective life instead of accumulating goods for our individual lives, resisting imposition instead of obeying and reproducing it. They seem to be emerging from very concrete practices in the ways LAPES organizes itself and lives as an institution.

II. THINKING THE FIGURE OF THE TEACHER

Under the umbrella of this movement, in which I share and participate, I would like to present some elements that allow us to think about the role of a teacher within such educational practices that seek to produce a new politics of education. What is under investigation is the attempt to draw a politically, epistemologically, and ethically intriguing figure for those who, under the umbrella of the general features of the LAPES movement, wish to question who teaches or, at least, who is expected to do so in institutional or non-institutional contexts. Latin American pedagogy has seen a number of dogmas surrounding the figure of the teacher develop over the last several decades, despite the fact that numerous “new” pedagogies that reinforce learning over teaching have been popularized. Today in Latin America it is common in education circles to hear phrases like, “nobody teaches anybody,” “a teacher must learn from her students,” “a teacher should not transmit knowledge,” or “a teacher is a facilitator.” But such “learnification” educational discourse is potentially dangerous and naïve in that it: (a)

⁹⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude* (New York: Penguin Press, 2001).

makes the individual the center of the educational process through the image of an entrepreneur of herself stressing values like competition, meritocracy, and the like, and (b) reproduces inequality by separating those who know from those who don't know, the (more) capable from the (less) capable.⁹⁶ An enormous challenge in our countries is thus how to affirm a politically desirable educational thinking and practice that functions between the extremes of the hierarchical and authoritarian order on the one side, and the entrepreneur and individualistic, neoliberal, hegemonic state on the other. The following notes express an attempt to consider three characteristics of a teacher who might emerge out of the framework LAPES has been constructing, and which might allow us to reconsider possibilities for political, philosophical, and aesthetic education in our neoliberal era.

a) Ignorance

Even though during the LAPES symposium diverse traditions of local knowledge were constantly advocated for and reinforced in many different ways, I would like to suggest that it is politically and epistemologically important that the teacher poses herself or himself not in the position of the guarantor or distributor of any sacred knowledge, but rather as someone who demonstrates an open and dynamic relationship to knowledge, as someone who is open to the knowledge of others, and to other forms of knowledge. In other words, the main task of a teacher is not to transmit specific forms of knowledge, but instead she should nourish an open and dynamic relationship to knowledge. Such a disposition involves an important shift in pedagogical emphasis. What matters is not what the teacher knows; the emphasis instead falls on the position the teacher inhabits in relation to the knowledge surrounding her so that the teacher does not merely transmit knowledge, but rather shares and inspires a relationship to knowledge. This is to say that what matters most is not what the students learn, but rather that they develop a kind of relationship to learning: a non-competitive,

⁹⁶ Gert Biesta, *Beyond Learning: Democratic Education for a Human Future* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2015).

cooperative one, based on ignorance and desired relationships to knowledge. At this point, one clearly sees how philosophy emerges in pedagogical practice, not as a content to be taught but as a relationship to knowledge in pedagogical contexts. The etymological roots of the word philosophy are revealing here. The word philo-sophy etymologically means not wisdom (*sophia*) but a philo (affective, sensitive, passionate) relationship to wisdom. As Socrates shows in the *Apology* and elsewhere, a philosopher does not know anything except a relationship to ignorance. This wisdom of ignorance is her most enigmatic and powerful relationship to knowledge. In terms of content, a philosophical relationship to knowledge would mean not knowing, a suspension of what is known. This is the first form of ignorance affirmed by the philosophical teacher: ignorance as lack, or suspension, of a given knowledge presupposed as valid before the engagement in any specific pedagogical relationship.

But there are other forms of ignorance no less important for the teacher to affirm. To ignore does not only mean not to know. It can also mean a relationship between something—a matter, law, rule, whatever—we know but that we do not accept. This is the main kind of ignorance that Rancière argues in favor for in his *Ignorant Schoolmaster*. The schoolmaster, here presented in the figure of J. Jacotot, certainly ignores (does not know the content of) what a student will learn, but also ignores inequality in the sense that he does not accept the inequality of thinking and knowing that is at the basis of institutionalized education.⁹⁷ That is, the teacher acts as if this inequality does not exist at the base of the school. He or she simply does not accept it. The teacher instead believes and acts as if all students are equally intelligent, as if there were no qualitative difference between the knowledge of those who inhabit the school, no matter what the institution presupposes about them. This position of the teacher's affirms an interruption of the usual connection between teaching and knowing. This contrasts with the institutions we generally inhabit, in which a teacher is a teacher because she knows what she needs to teach to her students who do not know what she knows and need to learn it. In Rancière's formulation,

⁹⁷ Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, trans. by Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

the teacher is a political agent, occupying this position not because of expertise but because of a political commitment to the equality of intelligence as a principle of teaching. In this way, a teacher is not a teacher because of what she knows but because she (a) ignores what her students will learn, and (b) disobeys what keeps her students from engaging in an active process of thinking and knowing by themselves.

b) Invention

Teaching requires a position of openness to the other. Popular Latin American education is characterized by the predominance of the sensibility and hospitality to others, especially those who are “outsiders,” who have been excluded from the dominant social system, minorities who do not have a voice in the dominant speech that crosses academic institutions. A dictum from what many believe to be an important popular educator of Latin America, Simón Rodríguez, illustrates this point: “*inventamos o erramos*” which translates to, “we invent or we err.” To err here should be read with its ancient meaning in mind: to vagabond or travel with no fixed destination. The preposition “or” is not an exclusive disjunctive; rather it is an explicative conjunction, for a teacher erring is a way of inventing. But what does “invent” mean here? An inventive teacher is a teacher sensible to what comes from the outside (in-vention comes from the Latin *in-ventus*: arrived in, coming from). She is a master of attention, hospitality, listening, and of creating the conditions so that the other can come as she is to the world of the school. Rodríguez reveals the need for a teacher to invent a new school at school, to revolutionize school, to make a school really be a school in the already mentioned sense of *schole*, a place where all equally have the opportunity to experience free time to think about what kind of world they want to live in. ⁹⁸Rodríguez brought this dictum to life in 1826 through the creation of the First Popular and Philosophical School in the Americas, a Model School, invented in Chuquisaca, former

⁹⁸ Simón Rodríguez, *Obras completas*, vol. I y II (Caracas: Presidencia de la República, 2001).

capital of Bolivia. ⁹⁹This school was the first truly “public” school in Latin America in at least two senses: (a) it was open to all, with no social, cultural or political preconditions; (b) citizenship was not an aim of this school but instead was assumed from the beginning—“*escuela para todos porque todos son ciudadanos*”(school for all because all are citizens).¹⁰⁰ Rodríguez’s school was completely anachronistic and revolutionary for his time. The reaction from the ruling classes was hostile and immediate: it was destroyed after some months. The ideals of the school, however, still inspire popular Latin American education today.

In another sense, invention calls for the imagination both of educational practice and theory beyond the actual constraints of neoliberalism. It is an essential element of the struggle for other worlds that can be alternatives to the hegemonic, neoliberal form of life. A world, to put it in Zapatista terms, where all other worlds are possible, a world of difference, equality, solidarity.¹⁰¹ What is the educational dimension of this inventive project? What is the role of a teacher in it? It is clearly not the task of one individual alone. What kind of educational imagination can a teacher enact and foster in her students? Certainly not a technical or propagandistic imagination. Invention thus demands that a teacher be willing to practice errantry: a type of mobility with no predetermined destination in thinking. Teaching, then, would not entail the process of bringing or guiding others to one’s way of being, one’s knowledge, or one’s thinking but, instead, it would entail efforts to engage in a heuristically undetermined errantry with others. Again, Rodríguez is helpful here. He teaches us that teacher erring is a form of thinking inventively that opens thinking to those newly arrived. An inventive teacher is not static, nor does she seek to bring others to her position, but instead she is ready to move to the other’s position, to the other of her own position as she engages in collective journeying. She moves like an errant in that she cannot know the place where the encounter with her students will take her (first meaning of ignorance), and in that she does not

⁹⁹ Walter Kohan, *The Inventive Schoolmaster*, trans. by Vicki Jones and Jason Thomas Wozniak (Rotterdam: Sense, 2015).

¹⁰⁰ Simón Rodríguez, *Obras completas*, vol. I y II (Caracas: Presidencia de la República, 2001), 284.

¹⁰¹ Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), *Crónicas intergalácticas EZLN: I Encuentro Intercontinental por la Humanidad y Contra el Neoliberalismo* (Chiapas: EZLN, 1996).

try to take her students to a place she already knows (second meaning of ignorance). The inventive, errant teacher is open and ready to receive others and travel together with them in thinking, as long as the trip does not disregard her political principles of equality, openness, and hospitality. In this sense, an inventive teacher involves herself in an open collective traveling with others. There is no space for isolated or individual invention, for a leading pedagogical practice without an egalitarian space with those who share education as an open meaning-making practice.

c) Improvisation

Teaching is an art and not a technique. If philosophy is the highest form of music, education, too, is inspired by music and the teacher often acts like a musician.¹⁰² The metaphor of the teacher as a jazz player might illustrate this point, but other forms of popular Latin American culture could provide similarly inspiring images for teaching: capoeira, tango, payadas, samba circles, all are forms of art that involve intense preparation and openness to the unexpected.¹⁰³ In each of these art forms there seems to be a combination of preparation for, and willing openness to share in an unknown journey. It could be argued that in some of these practices there are some specific formulaic features—like the leading role of the masculine dancer in tango, or the master in Angolan capoeira—and that these characteristics contradict the idea of shared, errant invention and its political principles that have just been presented.

But in reality, these features emphasize a dimension of “invention” and “improvisation” that are commonly misunderstood. The improvising teacher is not simply a spontaneous teacher, or a teacher who does not prepare. Rather, an inventive or improvisational teacher is a teacher who prepares herself through strenuous effort in order to be attentive

¹⁰² Plato, *Phaedo* 61a.

¹⁰³ According to Marina Santi the main features of jazz are all inspiring because of their educational strength: jazz as jazzing, fusion, free, swing, groove, soul, cool, and, finally, improvisation. Marina Santi and Eleonora Zorzi, *Education as Jazz* (Napoli: Liguori, 2016).

to the unexpected, to what emerges in the class without having been expected. The preparation of an improvising teaching is a preparation with no aim other than itself: it is a preparation to be prepared. To teach, is to improvise; there is no method, no receipt, no warranty, but only a large and intense preparation (“*P comme Professeur*”).¹⁰⁴ Thus the main focus of teaching in this way involves the preparation to be prepared...to listen, to follow, to question, to imagine, to be attentive. This is again where philosophy can be found in education: not only—or mainly—as a discipline, as a content matter, but mainly as a relationship to thinking, as a dimension of our sensitivity towards thinking.

FINAL REMARKS

In the last Symposium, celebrated at the University of Miami, from March 14–15, 2016, under the title of “Decolonial Education in the Americas: Lessons on Resistance, Pedagogies of Hope,” LAPES proposed an open and democratic space to think and rethink the way we inhabit academic spaces. In this paper, I’ve tried to highlight some of the most particular features of this space. My aim has not been to give a phenomenological account of it, nor to make a thorough analysis of the practices shared, but instead to suggest some elements to inspire further inquiry about it. I’ve shown this space to be political as well as philosophical and educational. It is a space that offers a critique to white, male, dualistic forms of rationality, while affirming immanence, embodiment, and equality as principles of thinking. It insists on the collective dimension of life over the individual.

If one of the aims of LAPES is to reconceptualize new forms of teacher subjectivity, then the key concepts (ignorance, invention, improvisation) offered in the final section of this discussion are ways to imagine the type of teacher subjectivity that might come into being in LAPES projects. The path is under construction. Different voices and perspectives, like the ones that have emerged from feminist, post-human and decolonial philosophies, need to be heard in a shared philosophical,

¹⁰⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *L’Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, directed by Pierre-André Boutang (1996; Paris: Montparnasse, 1997).

educational, and political search. One occasionally encounters in this search gatherings like those hosted by LAPES. What is special about these types of encounters is that we leave them with more questions than we had when we arrived. In this way, a LAPES encounter is like a provocative reading, like a touching class, and it embodies what it means to live an educational and philosophical life. ■

A BRIEF NOTE ON PEDAGOGICS

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Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)

ORIGINALLY PRESENTED

April 15th, 2016 at 5:00 p.m.

ORIGINAL TITLE

Pedagogics of Latin American Liberation

Editors' note: With the permission of Enrique Dussel, the editorial team has produced an abbreviated version of Dussel's original talk. The transcription and translation were done by David I. Backer and Christopher Casuccio. Rafael Vizcaino edited the piece to center the topic of pedagogics and annotated it to help the reader navigate through the larger context of Dussel's oeuvre. Jason T. Wozniak and Fernando Villalovs offered editorial support.

After much thought on how to present, I said, "I will give a testimony." A type of special way of talking. It's not a "*lecture*", but a "*talk*."¹⁰⁵ I am part of a generation that needed to take many steps. And I would like to tell you how the path was taken, a path that is also a pedagogy. I wrote *La pedagógica latinoamericana* in 1972.¹⁰⁶ But I am not going to talk about that book. Instead I am going to situate it. What I want to talk about is how the path of liberation philosophy was born, and how *pedagogics* – which isn't the same as *pedagogy* – is part of liberation philosophy.¹⁰⁷ Pedagogics is a moment of a comprehension.¹⁰⁸

I was born in 1934, in a little village of 5,000 people in the middle of the Argentine desert. And why does pedagogics originate here, you may ask? In Argentina, we have a major pedagogical paradigm, the most influential in Argentina, which is represented by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. Sarmiento's major work was called *Facundo*.¹⁰⁹ Sarmiento had a *pedagogical ideal*: to transform Argentina into a

¹⁰⁵ English in the original.

¹⁰⁶ Enrique Dussel, *La Pedagógica Latinoamericana* (Bogotá: Editorial Nueva América, 1980).

¹⁰⁷ See "An Argentine Political Decade (1966-76) and the Origin of Liberation Philosophy" in Enrique Dussel, *Politics of Liberation: A Critical World History*, trans. Thia Cooper (London: Hymns Ancient & Modern, 2011).

¹⁰⁸ In the Translator's Preface to Dussel's *The Pedagogics of Liberation: A Latin American Philosophy of Education* (Punctum Books, forthcoming 2018), David I. Backer and Cecilia Diego write "'Pedagogics' should be considered as a type of philosophical inquiry alongside ethics, economics, and politics. Each of these words takes as its root a Greek term (like *ethos*), makes it an English compound adjective-noun ('ethic'), and then denotes a type of inquiry by turning the adjective-noun into a plural ('ethics'). The same goes for the Greek *paidegogos* in Dussel's lexicon, or *pedagógica*. Rendering this in English, we get a compound adjective-noun (pedagogic) and then a plural version of that term (pedagogics) to denote the corresponding philosophical field of inquiry. Reading 'pedagogics' should be like reading the word 'ethics,' or the other fields of inquiry just mentioned. Though this usage of 'pedagogics' is something of a neologism, it makes good sense given the scope of Dussel's inquiry and potentially provokes a new way of thinking about philosophy of education. As he says in the third sentence of 'Preliminary Words' in [his *Pedagogics of Liberation*]: 'pedagogics is different than pedagogy.' Pedagogy refers to the science of teaching and learning, while pedagogics 'is that part of philosophy which considers the face-to-face [encounter]'".

¹⁰⁹ Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Facundo: Or, Civilization and Barbarism*, trans. Mary Mann (New York: Penguin Classics, 1998).

modern, technological country modeled after the United States. For Sarmiento, it was necessary to develop Argentina. The worst thing Argentina had, was its colonial era, its Indigenous population, and the *gauchos*, which he even proposed to kill.¹¹⁰

There was an Argentine intellectual called Eduardo Mallea, who wrote a book titled *Historia de una pasión argentina*, who thought quite the opposite of Sarmiento.¹¹¹ He said the *gauchos* properly belong to Argentina, as do the *gaúchos* to Brazil and the *llaneros* to Colombia. Historically, however, they all came from Extremadura, the Maghreb, and the Arabian Desert. They were the *conquistadores* of the continent! Therefore, I said: to get to know my father (the patriarchal conquistador) I will need to travel to the Arabian Desert, and to get to know my mother (the Indigenous, *La Malinche*), I will need to go to Asia – the origin of our peoples is the far orient of the far orient!¹¹² In other words, I realized that to understand Latin America I needed to rewrite world history in its entirety.

So, in 1957 I had to start thinking about everything in a different manner. Leopoldo Zea argued that Latin America is outside of history.¹¹³ Zea and other intellectuals like Darcy Ribeiro and Francisco Romero problematized the idea of Latin America in a way that allowed me to begin to understand something about decolonization. Decolonization is above all epistemic. And if there is something we must start to reformulate, it is world history. Because the history that we teach is Eurocentric. This is already a fundamental pedagogical problem, a problem faced even by those who are talking about decolonization. The idea we have of history starts with Greece and Rome, and then moves to the Middle Ages

¹¹⁰ The *gauchos*, skilled horsemen of a racially mixed background, are one of the national symbols of Argentina. After Argentina consolidated itself independent from Imperial Spain, it continued the process of colonization by conquering the native inhabitants of South America that by then had been pushed to the desert regions. Thus, the fact that Dussel claims the origins of his pedagogics reside in the Argentine dessert is not merely anecdotal.

¹¹¹ Eduardo Mallea, *Historia de una pasión argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2001).

¹¹² Enrique Dussel, *El humanismo semita: Estructuras intencionales radicales del pueblo de Israel y otros semitas* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1969); Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of "the Other" and the Myth of Modernity*, trans. Michael D. Barber (New York: Continuum, 1995).

¹¹³ Leopoldo Zea. *The Role of the Americas in History*, ed. Amy A. Oliver, trans. Sonja Karsen (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991).

and Modernity. This is true in the history of philosophy, philosophy of education, and pedagogy.

The German Romantics invented this ideology. They thought China was the origin of world history (though infantile), while India, Persia, Hellenism, and Rome were antiquity. Where are our *pueblos originarios*¹¹⁴ of America? Outside of history! They did not exist! The Incan Empire, the Aztec world, the Mayans – they are all absent in Hegel's vision.¹¹⁵ And who ends up ensuring that our *pueblos originarios* are present in history? Columbus? Please, do not insult me! I have been in Madurai (India), Nigeria, Berlin, New York, and everywhere in Latin America, and this is the history that is taught in all the schools: primary, secondary and university. An invention which places the Europeans at the center. So, we can talk about decolonization. But if we do not start to break the sciences and colonial epistemes apart, then we will keep believing the subject of history as it is currently taught.

For me the first era of world history was the Neolithic, which starts in Mesopotamia, which is to say: Iraq. Now, the barbarians of the twenty first century have destroyed a sacred city, Baghdad, which was the center of the world-system for at least five hundred years, from 756-1250 A.D. From Mesopotamia we know the Hammurabi Code which is critical thinking *par excellence*. When it says: "I have done justice with the widow," this is the problem of gender, the erotic. When it says: "I have done justice with the orphan," there is pedagogics! "I have done justice with the poor," is the economic. And "I have done justice with the foreigner," is geopolitics. This is critical thought three millennia before the Greeks. History starts much earlier than Athens, as so does philosophy. According to the university, philosophy – say Herodotus, Plato, and Aristotle – started in Greece. Not true, it started in Egypt.

Starting to rewrite world history, I realized that there is a Latin American history that is not Eurocentric, where Latin America is part of world history – worldly, not "universal;" and we would call it "pluriversal"

¹¹⁴ This term refers to the indigenous communities of the Americas. While analogous, its connotations are different to those of "First Nations" or "Indigenous peoples," hence why the term is untranslated.

¹¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. Hugh Barr Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

later on.¹¹⁶This was the thesis of the first class I taught as a professor. It was in a small Argentine university called Resistencia, where once a cow stuck its head into the classroom! Columbus came to America and so we study our pueblos originarios in the context of the Conquest. But we do not understand that these great Neolithic cultures had significant developments: mathematics, astronomy—they were extraordinary. Mayan astronomy was more advanced than European, than the Spanish astronomy of its era. We must reconsider this history.

These questions brought us to Augusto Salazar Bondy's question: Is it possible to do philosophy in an underdeveloped country?¹¹⁷ Salazar Bondy answers "no," because we do not have self-consciousness of our own history. But a group of us, about ten professors, said: "Yes! It is possible to do philosophy!" But doing philosophy would mean to study one's own negativity. To be dominated would be the point of departure. Our own philosophy would be one that would fight for liberation from domination. Liberation philosophy was thus born in 1970 in Argentina. In 1975, we began to publish under this project.

A new metaphysics of liberation emerges. Parmenides says: "Being is. Nonbeing is not." Heraclitus says: "Logos (reason) reaches the city walls;" the barbarians are outside the city walls. Hence, being is to be Greek; and to nonbeing is to be Asian, the barbarians in Macedonia. This Hellenocentrism is the forefather of Eurocentrism.¹¹⁸ This realization was for us the beginning of a new philosophy. Reading this in 1970 we said: "All of us, the colonized, Latin America, we are the nonbeing."

But this did not happen very quickly. The encounter with Levinas's philosophy was critical for us early on. Levinas was a Jew, and Jews were the persecuted Europeans within Europe. The Jew was a victim, the Other of Europe in Europe. Levinas says that the world Heidegger writes about is "my world" in a very particular sense. But Levinas

¹¹⁶ See Dussel's forthcoming *Siete nuevos ensayos de filosofía de la liberación*. The concept of "pluriversal" has also been theorized, in collaboration with Dussel, by Walter Mignolo, Linda Alcoff, and Ramón Grosfoguel, among others.

¹¹⁷ Augusto Salazar Bondy, *¿Existe una filosofía de nuestra América?* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1969).

¹¹⁸ Enrique Dussel, *El humanismo helénico* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1976). See also Chapter one of Enrique Dussel, *Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Aquila Martínez and Christine Morkovsky (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985).

proposes a new category. If things manifest in my world (a chair, a microphone, etc), when someone else appears, this is not a thing like the others – it is *someone*. I can know [*conocer*] the other's race, weight, or height, but I do not know [*sé*] who they are: I do not know their story, or their project. I have to ask: What is your name? Where were you born? What do you think about doing? And the Other goes on to reveal *the exteriority of their being*. Nonbeing is real, the barbarian is human. This is the topic of *alterity*.

Now, some ideas on pedagogics. I think of pedagogics also as a world, a world of culture, a world of teaching, that closes in on itself. The pretension of every system is to encompass everything. The problem is when I think my interpretation of reality, in my world, is the only interpretation. And if I expect my particularity to be universal, I wipe out all the other particularities. (I am thinking of the critique of my *compañera* [Julieta Paredes] when she said that the word "totality" does not exist in Quechua or Aymara. I do think that the concept of *pacha* means totality. *Pacha*, as the universe is totality.) Such systems are pedagogical systems. And every system has a modern constitutive ego. *Ego cogito*, says Descartes. But before this *ego cogito*, Hernan Cortés utters *ego conquiro*. I conquer! It is a practical ego that situates the Other like a mediation, dominated and oppressed.¹¹⁹ In any system in the world, there is a constitutive I and a dominated I. It could be the system of gender or erotic love. For example, Freud says that sexuality is by nature masculine and women are its sexual objects. This is the problem of machismo.

What about pedagogics? The subject concerns generations, old and new. Humanity has always required that the preceding generation communicate its tradition and knowledge to the incoming generation. We must teach those who come, but we must teach them in a way related to what has been said above. Pedagogics works with the same categories outlined above. There is an ideological-pedagogical system of domination. That is what Paulo Freire calls banking education.¹²⁰ Why banking? Because it is like the bank, where I deposit my money

¹¹⁹ Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas*, 34.

¹²⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1993).

and it later gives me interest. I put into the student's head the prior generation's knowledge and the student just repeats it to conserve the same. It is the return of the same as domination.¹²¹

Against such pedagogy of domination, what would a pedagogics of liberation be like? The Other, which could be the people, the child or the youth, or popular culture, interpellates the system. The Other must then be given a space to speak. A Semitic text says, "may I wake every morning with the ear of a disciple."¹²² Who prays for this? The teacher. The teacher must be the disciple of the disciple.¹²³ Why? Because the teacher does not know how the new generation is inhabiting the world that is no longer his. The teacher must learn the content of the youth's new projects. I will add to that a critical thought. Thus, a community where the teacher knows exactly how to teach the student to be critical about what the student already is must be cultivated.

The teacher should not say to an Indian student: "You do not know how to speak. Learn how to speak Spanish [*castellano*]." The student in this instance goes home and lets her parents know the teacher is telling her she must learn to speak, because she does not know how to. Her mother says: "But we speak our language." "Yes," the student replies, "but my teacher says that does not count." That is domination! But if the teacher tells the student: "You speak Quechua, Aymara, Maya, Otomí! I do not speak that language. You are bilingual, you are wiser than I am," then the student goes back home to let her mother know the teacher thought she was wise.

Thus, we must give strength to the new generation, the teacher must be a disciple of the disciple, therefore putting the system of domination

¹²¹ Here the influence of Levinas on Dussel's pedagogics is evident. For Levinas, the ontological totality reduces the other into the same, and the otherness of the other (exteriority) guarantees that the system as a totality can never be truly closed. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1969).

¹²² Isaiah 50:4.

¹²³ For Dussel, the affirmation of the Other's exteriority "requires a pedagogical transformation, *knowing how to listen* to the 'revealing' word of this Other beyond the system, a lived face-to-face praxis that cannot be expressed through the language of the existing system." See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Rafael Vizcaino, Jasmine Wallace, and Jeong Eun Annabel We, "Decolonizing Philosophy," forthcoming in *Decolonising the University: Context and Practice*, edited by Gurminder K. Bhambra, Kerem Nisancioglu, and Dalia Gebrial (forthcoming, 2018); see also Enrique Dussel, *Método para una filosofía de la liberación: Superación analéctica de la dialéctica hegeliana* (Salamanca: Ediciones Sígueme, 1974).

in question so that a new system can be organized. The object of critique in liberation philosophy is a fetishized system that the oppressed questions with their interpellation, rupturing such system so as to pass to a new one.¹²⁴ That diachrony is missing in almost all social sciences. Politics, for instance, is a system that eventually transforms into oppression, which then the people erupt, as Walter Benjamin would say, messianically.¹²⁵ This is because the messiah, in Hebrew משיח, is the one who confronts the system and breaks it, the one who provides the rupture. Thus, when Evo Morales says: "I exercise an obedient power," this is a new politics where the representative listens to the people [*pueblo*]. The politician in this case is not dominating. He is a servant [*siervo*].¹²⁶ (But we still must rethink twenty-first century socialism!)

We need to develop new categories, at all levels. Our grand task now is intercultural dialogue: with the Muslim world, with the Afro world, with the Hindu world, Southeast Asia, China. We need to start to discuss the problems of the Global South. For that reason, my latest book is about the philosophies of the South, decolonization, and transmodernity.¹²⁷ We are against very interesting circumstances and we will no longer ask the U.S. or Europe for permission to speak. We are beyond what they think. Those in the North often think only about 15% of the world. We in the South think about 100% of it. In this sense, I am very optimistic about the critical capacity of a thought that emerges from the *pueblos originarios*.

The horizon of my generation was to liberate ourselves from within Eurocentric thought. But now, there are new generations emerging that are doing their dissertations and theses on Mayan or Aztec

¹²⁴ The concept of the fetishization of power is clearly developed in Enrique Dussel, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, trans. George Ciccarriello-Maher (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). Throughout his entire work, however, Dussel has developed what he calls the method of anti-fetishism. See his *Philosophy of Liberation* and Enrique Dussel, *The Underside of Modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor, and the Philosophy of Liberation*, trans. Eduardo Mendieta (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996).

¹²⁵ Walter Benjamin. "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 2007).

¹²⁶ See Enrique Dussel, *Política de la liberación. Vol II Arquitectónica* (Madrid: Trotta, 2009); and Dussel, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, 25.

¹²⁷ Enrique Dussel, *Filosofías del sur: Descolonización y Transmodernidad* (Mexico City: Akal, 2015).

thought, and I'm learning from these young people. I am learning. There are so many interesting myths within indigenous thought that can help us. These myths we must incorporate into the mestizo world, the white *criollo* world, and the urban world – we cannot isolate them in the countryside. For instance, we can learn from the Aymara community in the Bolivian countryside, or with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. The question is how to foster and nurture communities in cities that are plagued with crime, drugs, poverty, and corruption? This is a big problem that we cannot leave aside. We need to ask how pedagogy functions there. This is a struggle, but I believe we have a light that illuminates the path before us. ■

DECOLONIZING THE RELATION

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Revolution itself is a pedagogical process: a road of learning in the struggle itself on which we build our daily lives.

– Julieta Paredes

Decolonization is an epistemic project: we must begin to reformulate world history.

– Enrique Dussel

What does it mean to *decolonize* our mind, speech, and education—not just schools and other colonized institutions—but also our daily interactions, relationships, and knowledges?

To decolonize is a verb, an action in progress, a movement towards a horizon that seems to constantly shift. It is both a personal and collective process that intersects all facets of our lives, as acts of decolonization challenge and unravel deeply ingrained legacies of patriarchy and capitalism, among other relationships of domination and inequity.

How do we begin and sustain such work when different structural positions obscure understandings of what is held in common or not? How do these differing structural positions—whether inherited or made, whether static or shifting—affect our epistemologies and ontologies? Common sense or common knowledges seem not so common anymore. Maybe they never were, or perhaps these commons are only so amongst specific geographies and epochs. How to decolonize when different bodies are either granted or stripped of authority and power by just entering a space... by just being that specific incarnation?

Decolonization stands in marked contrast to the more static adjective of the *decolonial*, a theorization often critiqued for its elite origins in Academia by mostly white or mestizo academics. Reviewing the contributions to the 2016 LAPES symposium, one notes diverse definitions of and challenges to the *decolonial*. Both academic theory and

embodied practice were exemplified in the presentations and interactions present at the 2016 Miami LAPES symposium where participants gathered to philosophize on the topic of *Decolonial Education*. There were different ways of examining, or even conceiving of, the *decolonial*: Tracy Devine Guzmán traced pedagogical images of racist state education in Peru; Juliana Merçon's workshop proposed Fals-Borda's Participatory Action Research as an example of decolonial methodology; and from the perspective of *feminismo comunitario*, Julieta Paredes presented an embodied protest against the notion of *the decolonial* as a noun still held hostage by a primarily white, mestizo, and male academy.

These various approaches highlight the potentials and failures of *decolonial* education. They demonstrate the pervasiveness of dominant racist educational ideas and practices in modern constructions of identity and citizenship, still prevalent in Latin America and beyond. They also draw into sharp relief the continued contradictions of trying to challenge them from the academy itself. In her contribution, Tracy Devine offered some key images and markers of *decolonial* thought that are helpful to trace a problematic history of the centuries-old nation-state project of *mestizaje* carried out through institutionalized programs of schooling and health in many Latin American countries. Walter Omar Kohan forefronted the LAPES encounter itself as an example of attempted decolonial practices that self-consciously seek to question and undo the coloniality of power through education and its discourses. Enrique Dussel's broad historical sweep traced the actual non-western roots of Eurocentric knowledges back to Asia, demonstrating what traces have been lost in the travel to other geographies. It suggests that the task of decolonizing lies in liberating pedagogies from their myths—a liberation that involves rethinking the past, for as he attests, in order to understand Latin America, we need to rewrite the history of the world and develop ourselves as philosopher educators.

Part of that rewriting of history implies a continuous struggle to reconnect to the materiality of thought through our bodies, lands, and territories. Julieta Paredes' riveting presentation provided an example of body, mind and spirit working together to decolonize the way in which knowledge is usually shared at academic gatherings. Her

opening words acknowledged the struggles—past and present—of those territories on which we stood. She gave thanks to the ocean and those who guide us from below, from the underworld, our ancestors. In such way, she immediately established a decolonizing action and framework for the rest of her talk—a theorization from a body in close communion with the elements, rooted ancestral histories, and live spirits of struggle. Hers is an embodiment of body-mind-spirit in reflective action with anti-colonial past and present struggles. The form and content of Julieta Paredes' presentation came together as but one example of what a decolonizing pedagogy could look like in its delivery in an academic symposium.

In much of indigenous Latin America, the concept of territory connotes much more than just a section of physical land. It is used separately from the word for land to describe all the aspects of life that are intimately connected to it. *Tierra y Territorio* includes historical, cultural and spiritual legacies that are part of quotidian living and learning. The process of decolonization involves both a personal and collective process of self-liberation from colonial legacies including the privatization of land and all aspects of life. Territory also includes the bodies and daily lives of those who live on and with the land. Throughout her talk, Paredes used movement, song and speech to emphasize the centrality of our bodies in ongoing revolutionary struggle. At one point, in order to describe the inclusive aim of *feminismo comunitario*, she performed the metaphor of body as community: demonstrating with her own body what a lobotomized community might look like trying to walk. She thus illustrated lopsided community participation between men and women in the larger society. Thus, she made clear how *feminismo comunitario* is not about rights, it's about rebuilding a community as a body of humans, of which one or several disenfranchised parts, have been negated full participation. It is also not a theory, but an organization of men and women with political tasks building greater equity and participation for indigenous women in Bolivia and other parts of Latin America.

The body as *comunidad* is perhaps a stance reflected in Julieta Merçon's interpretation of Fals-Borda's Participatory Action Research as a "process open to life and work:" a methodology to counter separation and fragmentation, as well as a "philosophy of life." In this,

Fals-Borda's PAR would seem to mirror the process of reconnection between humans and environment to counter "the coloniality of mother earth," described by Arturo Escobar as "based on the binary division nature/society, body/mind, emotions/thoughts. The planet gives us resources whose value can be reduced to the economic. It overlooks the sensitive and spiritual, it ignores the millennial relation between the geo-bio-physical, the human, and the intangible."¹²⁸ Merçon further points us to exteriorize and embrace the contradictions and tensions of research so that they can become "objects of collective analysis in collaborative research processes." In this, Merçon is arguing for the new construction of a new research *comunidad*, one of collective knowledge building effective collective power. *Comunidad* is not the same thing as "community" in English. Rather, it is a concept rooted in quotidian mutual support and survival based on common struggle and ancestral memory. It proposes recuperation of the long memory held by indigenous women (*de los pueblos originarios*) who have from necessity maintained *comunidad* and continuously construct it anew. It involves the construction of new relations, as Merçon states, "with oneself, with other people, and with the world—where we experiment ways of being other than capitalism and colonialism."

Feminismo comunitario proposes thinking and using the body to do politics. This is what Lia Pinheiro Barbosa calls a liberatory pedagogy of "*senti-pensar*," of seeking an integrated knowledge rooted in our body's thoughts and feelings. It is a knowledge that carries the imprints of inter-generational history, marking both inherited oppressions, as well as carrying potential for liberation. Several of the LAPES presentations integrated heart, mind, and spirit to transmit complex histories: Dussel's long historical-memory tracing his own patrilineal (Argentinian/Peruvian) Gaucho roots back through the conquest to Extremadura, the Magreb, and even the Arabian Desert—while tracing his mother's indigenous roots to Asia; Paredes' recounts stories of her grandmother scripting trembling alphabet letters in second grade—the same grandmother who encouraged her to go to school,

¹²⁸ Arturo Escobar, *Sentipensar con la tierra. Nuevas lecturas sobre desarrollo, territorio y diferencia* (Medellín: Ediciones Unala, 2014), as quoted by Juliana Merçon in her contribution to this volume.

to gain knowledge previously forbidden to them as *negritas*, as indigenuous. Many questioned the historical purpose of schooling: for what larger (colonial, decolonial) purpose, are we embarking on these educational paths? The role and purpose of knowledge, several argued, is for collective struggle, *la lucha de los pueblos*. Dussel introduces the concept of *Pedagogics*, which he is careful to point out, is not the same as *pedagogy*. "It's a part of the philosophy of liberation; it's a moment of comprehension." It is our mutual co-liberating task to develop and then use knowledge to unmask our corrupt systems and reveal their/our complicities. Latin American activist scholars, such as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui¹²⁹, have called out the decolonial academy not only as a primarily theoretical activity, but as also obfuscating while perpetuating embedded (and embodied) racialized colonial dynamics within the *decolonial* discourse and practice itself. The difference between academic experts' theories of decoloniality and a practice of actual de-colonizing is in the latter being a revolutionary daily action of, and for, the people. The participants of the 2016 LAPES symposium in Miami, many of them scholar-activists, are part of this effort in venturing both personal, as well as collective, shifts of agency—both in and out of the academy.

In her book *Kuxlejal Politics*, Mariana Mora narrates how in the Zapatistas' political pedagogy, knowledge production emerges "not by extracting the student from daily life into a classroom setting but rather as the body moves through and acts within daily life. [...] It is this same low-volume experience that then holds the possibility for initiating substantial social change."¹³⁰ It is in the day-to-day actions and interactions that we either unlearn or reinforce dominant paradigms. Zapatista pedagogy is showing the world how a common doing can lead to a common sense. Mora refers to Mexican sociologist Pablo González Casanova's writings on what she calls a "decolonial multicultural action" explained as "a type of common sense through which there emerge different forms of thinking, expressing, acting,

¹²⁹ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Winter 2012, 95-109.

¹³⁰ Mariana Mora, *Kuxlejal Politics: Indigenous Autonomies, Race, and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities*, University of Texas Press, 2017, 236-7.

with the understanding that a necessary dialogue clarifies affinities and differences, allowing for more expansive common languages and consensus capable of multicultural actions for an alternative world.”¹³¹ Pedagogically speaking for those of us outside Zapatista communities, this seems to suggest that production of a liberatory “common sense” cannot occur without an interpersonal and intercultural building of listening skills that build the kind of humility that allows for the other’s dignity—including consideration and inclusion of different epistemologies and ontologies. For any decolonizing “common sense” to emerge between people inhabiting different embodiments of what Anibal Quijano calls “the coloniality of power,” a shift needs to occur. Both inherited or inhabited structural power relations need to be acknowledged in order for any actual decolonizing actions and/or communications to be possible. Otherwise, there is no learning taking place, but rather imposition of colonial (usually racialized and gendered) class power in the microcosm of interpersonal or group relations.

A common capitalist enemy does not erase the differences amongst ourselves. Simply declaring a prefigurative politics of equality does not erase the structural inequalities that govern our societies. Colonialism penetrated territories and bodies—men’s as well as women’s, with a patriarchal and racist capitalist modernity—a process that continues until today. It has not just been our bodies but also our *thought* that has been penetrated. As made evident by the images of Tracy Devine Guzmán’s presentation, pervasive dominant visual culture presented and mass media continues to prescribe devaluing imagery that imposes sexist and colonial hierarchies upon our notions of ourselves. It was with such iconographic violence that indigenous people were historically denied a soul, and still today, together with women and other genders, denied full personhood. It is from this denied personhood, that an indigenous woman will be viewed differently (and view herself differently) than a white or mestizo man—a point Paredes insisted upon during the Miami symposium.

What do we mean pedagogically when we speak of, and try to enact, a decolonial education in our relationality as teachers and learners?

¹³¹ Pablo González Casanova as quoted by Mariana Mora in *Kuxlejal Politics: Indigenous Autonomies, Race, and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities*, 237.

How can we decolonize interactions between differently abled, racialized, and gendered bodies which continuously enter and exit positions of power in relation to teach other depending on often shifting contexts? Summoning Rancière’s famous book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, there is the suggestion that perhaps what we are after in more equitable teaching and learning is a posture of “ignorance amongst equals”, of facilitating a process of learning, of learning how to research, think, and learn together. In his review of Rancière’s book¹³², Yves Citton suggests that it is the act of explaining itself that is problematic, as it confers expertise that perpetuates the dominant hierarchical norms of education to reproduce social categories. However, both Rancière and Citton neglect to address the possible different power-relations embodied amongst inheritors of patriarchal, colonial relations: the gendered, racialized incarnations that would render one body’s “ignorance” or “expertise” superior/inferior to that of the other based on structural social relations that automatically confer authority to one over the other, if not intentionally disrupted by the teacher/facilitator, however ignorant or expert the teacher may present or appear. This point may be obvious for some, and equally absurd to others—depending on the relative location to dominant power of their embodied differences as racialized, gendered bodies with colonial experience, one usually only mitigated by class. Such are the disjunctive cognitive dissonances that occur every day in colonial, patriarchal relations—interactions where some bodies are somebody and others are automatically, consciously or unconsciously, delegated to less than, or even nobodies.

Settings of differential structural power amongst those present, considering Dussel’s pedagogics as “that part of philosophy which considers the face-to-face,” requires extra willingness to listen from all participants. They can also require explicit self-awareness and explicit articulations of humility from us when we speak from places of greater structural (i.e. societally conferred in that particular context, which may vary) voice and power than another. Rancière’s “ignorant schoolmaster” calls for the realization—actualization of a personal potential or power whose source is located within the learner, and which the “teacher” is

¹³² Yves Citton, “The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Knowledge and Authority,” in Jacques Rancière: *Key Concepts*, 25-37.

but a facilitator, or to use the Zapatista version, “promoter of education” (or learning). Ranciére holds that we all have the intelligence, capacity, and power to learn; all we need is the will to use it for our own (common) good. However, his argument does not account for how that equality holds in a room where different people feel/enact different levels of agency and/or entitlement based on their different experiences as racialized and gendered bodies. The difference can prevent the “ignorant schoolmaster’s” prefigurative equality from actually manifesting within the personal interactions.

Dussel asks us to consider what a pedagogics of liberation might look like? It goes beyond granting the Other—which could be the community, the people’s culture, but might also be the child, young person—a chance to speak within the systems they interpolate (inclusion): they must philosophize! Starting with the first nations of the global south, developing our philosophers, our various feminisms, collaborating with others...the many philosophies of “the south” can (re) create “new” critical thought, says Dussel. Such pedagogics can help us complicate the notion of Eurocentric colonial “universality” and shift our notion of “university” to decolonized “pluriversities.”

Dussel’s recollection of the period of Moorish dominance in Spain¹³³ brings to mind Palestinian educator/philosopher Munir Fasheh’s writings on Al-Jame’ah () the Arabic word for university. Fasheh explains how the Arabic word gestures towards creating spaces and opportunities for learning as well as collective nurturance, enrichment, and growth. Similar to Ranciére, Fasheh holds that the idea behind al-jame’ah is that the basic ingredient in learning is a learner; everything else is there.

Any person who is doing something and wants to understand it more and do it better is a learner; automatically that person can be a student/learner in al-jame’ah; there are no other requirements for “admission”. And every person who can be helpful or inspiring to a learner and ready to open his/her heart and mind is part of the “faculty”. Every place

¹³³ From Dussel’s testimonio at the 2016 LAPES symposium: “...the most educated region of Europe, Spain, had regular contact with the Muslim world. And the Muslim world was the most advanced culture in the world at that time. They made their way all the way to Spain in the west and China in the east.”

where people can meet and learn, or that has resources, experiments etc that could be helpful to people in their search for understanding, knowledge, or for walking their own paths in life, is part of the “campus”. Obviously, every person can be a student in one setting and a teacher in another. There is neither full time students nor full time faculty. In other words, the campus literally is the whole world – any person, any thing, any place that the person needs and that s/he can reach and is hospitable and relevant for the learner is part of the campus.¹³⁴

The university described by Fasheh is comprised of both spaces and actions that resist the universalization of colonialism and its notion of world history. Such rooted, quotidian, autonomous spaces of knowledge production decolonize education through an accumulation of stories, experiences, understandings and knowledges that “are important in protecting the social majorities around the world from the destructive impact of the claim of universality and universal tools.”¹³⁵ After tracing the various ways in which the universalizing legacies of systemic colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy (now in their current incarnation of Neoliberalism) have historically inscribed themselves on the bodies of the subjugated, Paredes described how the presence or absence of an embodied autonomy, a self-naming, shapes the larger social body. *La autonomía del cuerpo es la autonomía del pueblo*, she declared, “the body’s autonomy is the people’s autonomy.” Revealing the system and its complicity requires autonomy: *auto-nomía*, a self-naming. Reclaiming indigenous autonomy means reclaiming control of lands, territories (including cultural territory) and bodies. This means the ability to *auto-nombrar*, to self-name who we are, to self-proclaim who we think and feel we are, as persons and as people, what we want and desire. This is a political, educational and pedagogical path of decolonization.

The knowledge we exchange in this political, educational and pedagogical path must be at the service of the people, several of this symposium’s presenters maintain, because changing the world is necessary

¹³⁴ Fasheh, Munir. “الجامعة” Al-Jame’ah ما يحسنه كل امرئ ما يحمسه “قيمة كل امرئ” جامعة “قيمة كل امرئ” The University of “*Qeematu Kullimri’en Ma Yuhseenoh*” (A personal statement).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

and urgent. Other than faith in *ourselves*, our people, and in possibility, it requires a rewriting of history and reconnection to our bodies and lands, both conceived as both *tierra y territorio*. Today's Neoliberalism further foments and instills a rampant individualism, pitting people, and individual identity groups, to compete against each other, while extracting our bodies, our labor, and territories. By revealing systemic inequities and the ways we are entangled in them historically and today, we can begin to recognize our common humanity and common existential vulnerability. Decolonizing our minds means recognizing the innate value of each entity, learning to listen to each other with respect for what it can teach us. Rewriting and reconnection happen when we listen to our elders, to history, to the people in our neighborhoods, cities, and fields—listening to how processes of colonization and decolonization unfold for each of us as well as collectively.

Education as an act of decolonization is a verb that describes an ongoing, and perpetually unfinished, process of challenge and becoming. As I wrap up these thoughts amidst the recent slew of natural/social disasters, from the various earthquakes in Mexico, hurricanes in Florida, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, to giant fires ravaging California... it occurs to me that in order to decolonize education at all levels in our thinking, we must shake the foundations of the assumptions we hold, but cannot see, and how we need each other for becoming aware of this. We are undoubtedly, better together. The Miami 2016 symposium, together with LAPES itself as an ongoing project surfacing diverse philosophies of education from Latin America, played an important role in the shaking of such foundations. Our collective emergencies can give way to new emergences, of different epistemic and ontologic orientations that further erode the crumbling dominant lenses that still cling to us, even in our professed decolonial and anti-capitalist claims. Our collective move must be towards a deeper decolonization of relationship: with our bodies, minds, and actions that match our words. ■

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