INTRODUCTION

SCHOOLING IN THE CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICA: REPRODUCTION, RESISTANCE, REVOLUTION

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"What is the relationship between schools and society?" The discussion that ensues from this question too often takes the form of a vicious circle: Do we need better schools for a better society? Or do we need a better society for better schools?

Liberal education theories in the United States—the geographic position from which we write—maintain that to improve society we must first improve schools. Better schooling will increase social mobility, incomes, and equality. This approach reflects US education reformer Horace Mann's balance wheel of society: school as the Great Equalizer. By contrast, French philosopher Louis Althusser, US economists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, as well as some within the US radical left maintain that to better our schools, we must first better society. From this view, schools currently reproduce the racist, heteropatriarchal, classist societies of which they are part. Any attempt to address social injustice only through schooling will at best ameliorate injustice just enough so that unjust social structures perpetuate themselves by staving off revolutionary change. These familiar questions remain: Do schools actively *produce* society or do they merely *reproduce* it? Are schools institutions of change or sites of passivity?

We at LAPES ask if these enduring questions may risk oversimplification at the expense of assessing the more intricate dynamics of learning through specific place-based struggles. In our March 2018 symposium, "Schooling in Latin America: Reproduction, Resistance, Revolution," we sought to dramatically expand the terrain of inquiry: Is school the foremost modern educational institution in the Caribbean and Latin America? Is schooling different from education? What is school from a Caribbean and Latin American perspective? What has it been? How have Caribbean and Latin American schools reproduced their societies' ideologies or social relations, and how do they continue to do so? How have Caribbean and Latin American schools been sites of resistance against the reproduction of social injustices? What role have schools in the Caribbean and Latin America played during revolutionary moments when new ideologies, social relations, and apparatuses replace older ones? How have they served as counter-revolutionary apparatuses? How have conceptions

and practices of schooling in the United States influenced Caribbean and Latin American schooling, and vice versa?[1]

Across two days, we learned about a broad spectrum of examples that complicated our understanding of how *social movements in society* relate to schooling. The four contributions to *LÁPIZ* N˚5, first presented at the 2018 symposium, elaborate how Caribbean and Latin American movements practice deschooling, transform schools to practice dual power co-governance against existing state powers, and create alternative sites of learning through care and mutual aid, while avoiding essentialized or romanticized notions of pre-colonial Indigenous learning histories. Our hope is that reading across these varied case studies can help ferment and foment a more vibrant ecosystem of pedagogically focused struggles for liberation in the Caribbean and Latin America. Furthermore, we offer that those based in the United States can evolve our inquiring paths in closer relationship with these hard-won epiphanies in our own hemisphere.

In "Existence (De)schooled*,*" Catherine Walsh attends to the disciplining of subjectivities in formal educational spaces in service of the co-imbricated projects of modernization, progress, and global capitalism. Although she focuses on this problem in the context of Latin America's "left" governments of the Pink Tide, her conclusions also resonate beyond the continent. Walsh begins by asking readers to remember the massacre and disappearance of educators from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teacher-Training School of Iguala, Mexico in September 2014, a meditation that foregrounds how revolutionary thought has been made to—literally— disappear. Walsh considers her's and others' *gritos* or "existence-based cries. . . .against the lived realities of violence in its multiple forms and exacerbated proportions"

1 → We distinguish the Caribbean and Latin America to explicitly open up a critical discussion on the continentality of Latin Americanist discourses. Even though the only Caribbean example covered in this issue (Puerto Rico) is linguistic kin to Spanish-speaking Latin America, we wish to dedicate more attention to the Caribbean's distinct geographic and inter-cultural histories, pedagogies, and struggles. The Caribbean is a complex region entangled with Spanish, Portuguese, French, British, and Dutch colonial legacies, and thus our engagement with Puerto Rico is only an initial opening towards future conversations between Latin American and Caribbean pedagogies. The archipelagic nature of the Caribbean should not be subsumed by Latin America's continentality. We welcome readers' feedback to deepen these discussions and to strengthen our collective critical engagements by attending to the specificities of these varying contexts.

in contexts that are claimed by both the “Right” and “self-identified Left.”[2] In doing so, Walsh reminds readers of the very real-life stakes of these discussions; these are no mere theoretical ruminations.

Walsh’s piece traverses geopolitical contexts to think through struggles within the matrix of modernity/coloniality, schooling and civilization. For example, she analyzes the use of reactionary “gender ideology” discourses by religious and political leaders across the political spectrum to disrupt feminist organizing for gender and sexual diversity across the continent. Walsh also considers the ways in which communities and collectives in *Abya Yala* (Latin America) engage in practices of deschooling, cultivating *existence otherwise* against the entangled matrices of the coloniality of power. Walsh is interested in educational spaces that have been created beyond the formal educational system as well as “pedagogies and praxis of existence otherwise present and emergent in the system’s margins and cracks.”[3] Ultimately, Walsh complicates the left/right divide, and demonstrates the significance of deschooling in whatever tight spaces of possibility we might create.

Rebecca Tarlau challenges us to think of schools as more than just sites of ideological reproduction. The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra) (MST) proves that, despite their reliance on the liberal capitalist state, schools can, if designated as sites of ideological struggle, be places for fostering alternative visions of non-capitalist societies. In “Prefigurative Politics with, in, and against the State,” Tarlau describes how the MST creates new schools, and transforms existing ones from within by cultivating what she calls “contentious co-governance” with local and federal authorities and institutions in Brazil.[4]

Tarlau holds up the MST as an example of how social movements express the dialectical unity between prefigurative and state struggles. According to Tarlau, the MST disproves the leftist dichotomy between autonomous organizing and social movements that work within state

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2 → Catherine Walsh, “Existence (De)Schooled,” 8.

3 → Walsh, “Existence (De)Schooled,” 30.

4 → Rebecca Tarlau, “Prefigurative Politics with, in, and against the State: The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement and Latin American Philosophies of Education,” 5.

institutions to transform them. In Tarlau's view, the MST's political education activities both inside and outside of schools demonstrate that it *is* possible to unify prefigurative and institutional strategies that seek to liberate us from capitalist exploitation. Tarlau maintains that "the dichotomy between prefigurative and institutional politics does not map on to most social movement organizing in Latin America, where there is a tradition of integrating autonomist practices with institutional transformation."[5]

To drive her point home, she "draws on the case of the MST's educational struggle to explore the relationship between prefigurative politics and occupying state power in the particular realm of public education."[6] Reading this piece, we learn how the MST's political struggle illustrates that achieving state transformation "is more likely if the means involves strategically occupying public schools. In other words, not only can social movements build counter-institutions and prefigure democratic practices within their own ranks, they can also begin to prefigure socialist ideals in the very capitalist, bourgeois institutions that they are simultaneously fighting against."[7] Engaging with Tarlau's contribution to *LÁPIZ* N°5, the reader must seriously ponder the extent to which "contentious co-governance," as both a pedagogical tool and political strategy, might be adopted within movements and classrooms that advance anticapitalist struggles.

Ana Cecilia Diego places the previous works by Walsh and Tarlau in a deep historical perspective by reviewing Aztec teaching-and-learning practices. She is careful to remind the reader that these practices do not always stand in easy analogic relationships to the conceptions of "schooling" and "education" in the colonial era, let alone our own neocolonial era. In "Intercultural Interpretations," Cecilia Diego draws from multiple sources—but especially the superb scholarship of Miguel León-Portilla and Alfredo López Austin—to interpret the Mendocino and Florentine Codices, as well as the chronicles of Motolinia, Sahagún, Durán, Mendieta, Torquemada, and Ixtlixochitl. In particular, she focuses on two Aztec institutions of teaching-and-learning, the *calmecac* and the *telpochcalli*, in order to illustrate Julieta

5 → Tarlau, "Prefigurative Politics," 16.

6 → Tarlau, "Prefigurative Politics," 16.

7 → Tarlau, "Prefigurative Politics," 17.

Paredes's assertion that "conquest is not a European privilege."[8] As Cecilia Diego notes, the Aztec empire was "built upon the conquest of the Valley of Mexico." As such, any understanding of these Nahua people's institutions and practices of teaching-and-learning must place the reality of empire and conquest squarely in view, just as critical education theory seeks to illuminate the relations among empire, schooling, capital, and education.

Cecilia Diego walks a tightrope throughout her article. She balances, on the one hand, a sensitivity to the epistemic injustices perpetuated by scholars who "impose intercultural interpretations of a European episteme on the Mexican Prehispanic reality at the time of the conquest" with, on the other hand, the conviction that comparing our teaching-and-learning practices to those of the Aztecs is not only intelligible but will reveal something valuable and useful for us in the present day.[9] At the risk of committing an interpretive fallacy, Cecilia Diego's discussion shows us just how difficult it is to read opportunities for resistance and revolution in imperial practices and institutions of teaching-and-learning. Along the way, she opens the door to a provocative question: Given that two of the five Aztec words for "teacher" (*teixtlamachtiani* and *netlacaneco*) carry connotations of making others wise and "humanizing" our love, to what extent did the wisdom and love taught in the *calmecac* and the *telpochcalli* result in resistance against imperial conquest rather than its mere reproduction?

The final work in this number reproduces a dialogue between a Puerto Rican and a Diasporican—Kique Cubero García and Ariana González Stokas—on how the history and practices of Centros de Apoyo Mutuo (Mutual Aid Centers) reveal the role of decolonial learning through place-based direct solidarity initiatives on the island. One part "serve the people" programs, like those sponsored by the Black Panther and Young Lords Parties in the late 1960s and 70s, and one part *autogestión* (self-management), like the factory recuperations after Argentina's 2001 crisis, these projects are also a contemporary innovation born out of the University of Puerto Rico student strikes and recovery efforts after Hurricanes Maria

8 → Cecilia Diego, "Intercultural Interpretations: Pondering the Aztec Houses of the Gods," 2; see also, LÁPIZ N˚3.

9 → Diego, "Intercultural Interpretations," 4.

and Irma, under the enduring context of vicious United States neocolonialism. The CAMs offer a distinct organizing model that redefines political participation not as a commitment to a pre-packaged ideology, but as meeting people's immediate needs while transforming their relationships to care, labor, the land, and each other.

This conversation offers lessons on anticolonial community autonomy in dialogue with other anti-state movements in the Caribbean and Latin America, such as the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico and the MST across Brazil. Cubero García affirms, "The aim of the CAMs is not to negotiate a political space with the state. We are interested in working with people, with the political subjects, the people who will make a revolution. . . . You have to allow for people to create themselves in order to build a new society, not the other way."[10] Drawing on the work of Édouard Glissant, Eve Tuck, and K. Wayne Yang, González Stokas cautions that this work is context-specific and thus not tidily replicable: "our interest in possibilities of the [CAMs] in Puerto Rico as sites of an emergent decolonial pedagogy of relation is not in order to create a metaphor to be extracted and applied to other places."[11] Nevertheless, in a context where imposed debt, hurricanes, earthquakes, and government corruption has activated Puerto Ricans to reinvent their futures, the LÁPIZ Editorial Collective urges readers to learn from this island that is transforming itself into a veritable freedom school for our time.

The global health crisis of 2020 and social uprisings in the United States have cast in stark relief the ugly truths of our deeply unequal and iniquitous (settler) colonial societies: their anti-Black racism, misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia, and classism. But in order to build on this moment within the long arch of revolutionary struggles, we must be able to sustain it, to make the crisis a pedagogical experience, to grow a forest from this crack in the asphalt. Students who have been forced out of school or asked to study remotely might learn that schooling is a disciplinary apparatus that obscures the always autodidactic act of learning; or they may rediscover that

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10 → Kique Cubero García and Ariana González Stokas, "Centros de Apoyo Mutuales: An Emergent Decolonial Pedagogy of Relation?" 5.

11 → Cubero and González, "Centros de Apoyo Mutuales," 5.

the value of the school is less schooling than the educational community it gathers together. Individuals who have lost their livelihoods may discover in mutual aid the physical and spiritual sustenance to carry on in spite of the mandate to sell one's labor or one's product and the broken contract of "just" compensation. Denizens and workers who are once again called to sacrifice for the continued enrichment of their masters may occupy the institutions of their subjugation—the churches, the courthouses, the police stations, the schools—in order to reclaim their right to co-governance. These institutions for the (re)production of society may then be made to prefigure new ones. In different ways, the contributions to *LÁPIZ* N˚5 exhort us to find within ourselves our innate capacity for collective autonomous (re)production. From behind the back of capitalist (neo)colonial modernity, we will stalk it to its untimely end. We enjoin readers to engage their imaginations in how we might take up these questions and these pressing tasks.