

10-31-2010

# Social Justice and Democracy in Marginalized Urban Settings

Lucia Buttarò  
*Adelphi University*

R. J. Jailall  
*PS 28*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://opus.ipfw.edu/spe>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

## Opus Citation

Buttarò, Lucia and Jailall, R. J. (2009) "Social Justice and Democracy in Marginalized Urban Settings," *scholarlypartnersedu*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 5.  
Available at: <http://opus.ipfw.edu/spe/vol4/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW. It has been accepted for inclusion in scholarlypartnersedu by an authorized administrator of Opus: Research & Creativity at IPFW. For more information, please contact [admin@lib.ipfw.edu](mailto:admin@lib.ipfw.edu).

# Social Justice and Democracy in Marginalized Urban Settings

Lucia Buttarò, *Adelphi University*, &  
R. J. Jailall, *PS 28*

## Abstract

The decolonizing pedagogy proposed in this article sets out to assist students to actively reflect, critique, and work against the existing forms of discrimination and exploitation in the United States while simultaneously preparing them for the concrete exigencies of its educational and professional spaces. This is a pedagogical approach that is anticapitalist, antiracist, antisexist, anticolonial, and antihomophobic. It understands that the dominant curricular design, instructional practice, and forms of assessment in schools function to sustain and reproduce neocolonial domination, capitalist exploitation, a difference of domination, and the ideological frameworks that sustain these. It argues for a pedagogy that challenges the dominant practices of schooling and makes schools concrete sites for the developing of critical consciousness in the interests of working class, indigenous, and nonwhite peoples.

## Introduction

The view that every child has a right to quality education and that schools must ensure access and quality is essential to discourse on rights-based democracy and social justice (Leder, 2006; Rogers & Oakes, 2005). Dei et al. state, “It has been documented that in North American schooling contexts, resources are unevenly distributed related to race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic class such that social inequities are continually reproduced” (2000, p.3). Thus, for a large number of people, “participating in today’s mainstream schooling is not only problematic, it is impossible” (2000, p.2). It is crucial to consider the many challenges identified by youth — the hours that schools operate are not flexible enough, there are too many students per classroom, there are too many restrictions, the effort required is intimidating, course content does not connect to their lives, they feel labeled and unable to get the support they need with their studies.

Community issues of poverty, hunger, drug use/abuse, homelessness/unstable housing, and isolation from family comprise another intersecting tapestry equally crucial to youth disengagement from school.

In spring and fall 2006, I spent some time with the students and teachers at PS 28, a K–5 school in the Bronx, where we introduced the topic of digital storytelling to a few fourth-grade classes. I would meet with the teachers after school every other week on Friday afternoons for our CLC (Collaborative Learning Communities). One teacher in particular, R. J. Jailall, who at the time was teaching a fourth-grade class, seemed genuinely interested in the idea of digital storytelling to his students. This prompted him to learn a lot about computers and technology. I mentored him, and he presented the initial findings at the NYSABE (New York State Association of Bilingual Education) conference in March 2007. After this, the school quickly adopted smart boards and purchased new computers for a computer lab on the third floor of PS 28. Jailall is now the literacy coach, and he mentors his colleagues on how to improve instruction via the use of technology since visual literacy has enabled students to increase their overall performance on their test scores.

The demographics of PS 28 during the 2006–07 academic year were 76.5 percent Latino children, 0.6 percent white Anglo Saxon, and 22.4 percent African (specifically from Ghana and Senegal). Furthermore, 172 students were in transitional bilingual classes and 165 receiving English as a second language services, while the poverty rate school wide was at 84.8 percent. In an effort to celebrate and enrich the writing unit to follow while celebrating the diversity that PS 28 offered, I suggested that the teachers develop a digital story. The children responded quite enthusiastically to this “new” project, simply because they became empowered, they were at the center of the project. They told their stories, they told them in English, Spanish, and a variety of African languages. They brought in artifacts that were representative of who they were and what they loved: pictures of their families, their homes, their pets, and also their home towns. Prior to the unit of study, students were instructed in using a variety of software; consequently, they became quite comfortable using the computer. To celebrate their work and validate their effort, students showed their presentations to their younger classmates from grades K–four and also to their parents, their teachers, and their assistant principals and principal as well. It was a very emotional journey. As the months went by and they took charge of their own learning, the teacher noticed less “behavior issues.” Students also used their lunch hour to continue to work on the project. Occasionally, some stayed after school, enthusiastic to utilize technology to polish off their pieces. Most importantly for me, as the researcher, was the excitement displayed by the teacher who took a chance, who felt excited about “thinking outside the box,” while providing opportunities for his students to challenge themselves and validate their culture.

### Literature Review: Participatory Democracy and Social Justice

A construct of democracy to include within educational discourse is the need for “authentic democracy” as opposed to “false democracy” (Loder, 2006). The distinction stems from notions to explore democracy more broadly as “a way of life” and a “moral way of living” as articulated by educators like John Dewey. Some central notions are “how we live and work and talk together ... [is]... embedded in and builds upon how we develop and practice skills of making everyday decisions, communicating our interests and listening to others, and respecting differences of perspectives and peoples” (Effrat & Schimmel, 2003, p. 4). Concepts of “inclusive” and “deliberative democracy” assert the value of difference and the importance of constructing our individual and collective lives from dialogue and decision-making as influenced by multiple perspectives and social issues.

Lacking real democratic engagement are schools that identify youth by deficit-based labels such as “at risk,” “drop out,” and “juvenile delinquent.” Schools that concentrate on youth behavior modification, personal-social rehabilitation, conformity, curriculum “basics,” rote learning, skills-based approaches, and job readiness programs also lack deep democratic engagement (Schutz & Harris, 2001; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001; McGee, 2001; Raywid, 1995). When youth become positioned as diverse learners and knowledge constructors who are given authentic voice and agency to shape their learning experiences, deeper notions of democracy become possible. We saw this at PS 28.

A basic premise for the call for a decolonizing pedagogy is that the dominant economic, cultural, political, judicial, and educational arrangements in contemporary “American society” are those of an internal neocolonialism produced by the mutually reinforcing systems of colonial domination and capitalist exploitation that have organized social relations throughout the history of the United States.

The dominant condition characterizing social existence in the United States is defined as a colonial one because there continues to be a structured relationship of cultural, political, and economic domination and subordination between Europeans, on the one hand, and the indigenous and nonwhite peoples, on the other. What’s more, this relationship continues to serve primarily the interests of a dominant white, English-speaking, and Christian population. From this perspective, it is understood that working-class children live in internal domination and capitalist exploitation because they engage in and instantiate in the very production and reproduction of their material existence and its cultural expression. The past, present, and future condition of the differing groups in the United States is materialized through the labor and mundane displacements of their very bodies (the children whose parents who continue to work two and three minimum-wage jobs, perform jobs that are considered “unwanted” by most Americans, etc.). People do not simply choose to engage in processes and practices that make and remake their condition; they engage in everyday activity and relate to others in the production and

reproduction of their social existence with the weight of a colonial and capitalist past. The very idea that social reality can be transformed **through praxis** — guided action aimed at transforming individuals and their world that is reflected on and leads to further action — is very important to the conception of a **decolonizing pedagogy** (Freire, 1990).

An important goal is to get the students to understand that action in the world is largely determined by the way we see ourselves within it, and a complete perception necessitates an ongoing reflection on our world and our positioning within it. This understanding of the malleability of social reality and the transformative potential of human practice finds clear expression in Freire's (1990) pedagogy of the oppressed:

Just as objective social reality exists not by chance, but as the product of action, so it is not transformed by chance. If men [/women] produce social reality (which in the “inversion of praxis” turns back upon them and conditions them), then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for men [/women]. [...] The latter, whose task it is to struggle for their liberation together with those who show true solidarity, must acquire a critical awareness of oppression through the praxis of this struggle. One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge men's [/women's] consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (p. 36).

Although history and social science courses (together with technology) are seemingly ideal and most immediately relevant for addressing the history and current manifestations of internal neocolonialism, a call for decolonizing pedagogical praxis across the curriculum is necessary. All curricular subject matter (social sciences, the humanities, and the natural sciences, are used to examine neocolonial conditions or can be engaged in a manner that addresses the neocolonial production, utilization, and/or effects of its related bodies of knowledge. Whether we engage students in the learning of mathematics, history/social studies, language arts (**in the native tongue and in English**), chemistry, arts, physics, or vocational skills, the content of a decolonizing pedagogy examines, highlights, and discusses the mutually reinforcing systems of neocolonial and **capitalist domination** and exploitation in the United States. The proposed pedagogy necessarily addresses how working-class indigenous and nonwhite teachers and students are assaulted by multiple and mutually constitutive forms of violence in the various dimensions of their daily lives. In this way, a decolonizing praxis seeks to provide students a very rich theoretical, analytical, and pragmatic toolkit for both individual and social transformation.

## Social Justice and Democracy

Backlash politics and pedagogies in California, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona, and New York remind us that the effects and institutional arrangements of yesterday's colonialism persist and are clearly manifest in the social, cultural, and linguistic domination of millions in American society — who are forced to divest their accents, identities, and knowledge in pursuit of educational opportunity, and for whom a cultural holocaust continues as they struggle for social justice and equality. The challenge is to interrogate the narratives and power structures that commemorate Euro-supremacy in the Americas, to resist the current conservative politics and pedagogies by historicizing and exposing their origins, intents, and effects in order to construct a pedagogy that assists students from dominated groups to cross from the times and spaces of corporal genocides and cultural holocaust in the past, through the times and spaces of social, cultural, and linguistic domination in the present, to a time and space of social justice in the future. Such pedagogy is possible and can flourish in the academic programs we can develop for students from migrant farm workers' backgrounds and other poor children in schools influenced by social justice pedagogy and our after-school programs. This decolonizing perspective ruptures the status quo of inequality and makes room for social justice in the present.

Although our decolonizing perspective acknowledges that the past isn't the present, it understands that the former past can neither exist nor be understood outside of the present. It is impossible for social subjects to be disconnected from time and space; their being in the world can not be detached from and unaffected by the chronologies of their cultural-historical (Cole, 1996) existence — an existence in which the present is directly born from and sustained through cultural practices inherited from the past. My colleagues and I, of course, do not argue that we are living the actual colonial domination or capitalist exploitation of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Many of the practices and processes of early colonial domination and capitalist exploitation have been altered, abandoned, or legally terminated, but essential features of that domination and exploitation continue to structure the economic, social, political, and cultural relations between differing groups in contemporary "American" society. What's more, the corporal genocide and cultural annihilation of indigenous and nonwhite peoples is far from over. Although the sounds of the dismantling of educational and linguistic rights implied by aforementioned propositions loudly remind us of the ongoing annihilation, the sight and smell of decomposing corpses along the United States-Mexico border force us to recall the continuing genocide (Eschbach, 1999).

In contemporary times, brown bodies die at the altars of Western colonialism's economic, political, and cultural arrangements in smaller proportions and from different causes than in past centuries, but they continue to be sacrificed nonetheless. It is in response to the sacrificial slaughters in the social spaces of the border, the workplace,

the classroom, and in the mind that we call for a decolonized existence. In response to the backlash pedagogies we currently encounter, we specifically propose the politics and praxis of decolonizing pedagogy.

Research has shown that standardized models of public education do not effectively address the needs of many students, particularly those who face forms of social marginalization. Studies relate a host of complex inter-related personal-familial, school-related, and societal variables contributing to the lack of fit between students and schools (Spruck & Powrie, 2005; Stringfield & Land, 2002; Audus & Williams, 2002; Manning & Baruth, 1995). It is crucial to address the needs of disenfranchised students who leave school due to multiple social and educational barriers (De la Rosa, 2005; Jeffires & Singer, 2003; Saunders & Saunders, 2002; Kallis & Saunders, 1999; Kellmayer, 1995; Manning & Baruth, 1995; Rayurd, 1995).

The social condition in the United States is defined as a socially unjust colonial one because there continues to be a structured relationship of cultural, political, and economic domination and subordination. This relationship continues to serve primarily the interests of a dominant white, English speaking, and Christian population. It is an internal colonial condition because the colonizing/dominant and colonized/subordinate populations coexist and are often integrated, and even share citizenship within the same national borders. This internal colonial condition is perpetuated by capitalism and capitalist social relations — a capitalism that Almaguer discussed as advanced monopoly capitalism, and we currently see as global capitalism (McLaren & Frahmndpur, 2000; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000).

Our action in the world is largely determined by the way we see ourselves within it, and a correct perception necessitates an ongoing reflection on our world and our positioning within it. Freire (1990) argues for an educational practice that engages with the oppressed in a reflection that leads to action on their concrete reality. He calls for a pedagogy that makes oppression and its causes the objects of a reflection that will allow the oppressed to develop a consciousness of “their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation” (1990, p. 33). Building on Freire, we argue that “critical consciousness is developed through the struggle against internal neocolonialism in the spaces of both the classroom and the larger social context” (p. 20). Educators bear a responsibility to initiate, assist, and nurture the development of this consciousness. The decolonizing pedagogy we call for is informed by a theoretical heteroglossia that utilizes theorizations and understandings from various fields and conceptual frameworks to unmask the logics, workings, and effects of internal colonial domination, oppression, and exploitation in our contemporary contexts. At the moment the most significant have been postcolonial studies, spatial theory, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and cultural-historical activity theory of learning and human development.

## **Social Justice and Democracy**

The great majority of working class children, whether recent immigrants, second generation, or later, could be considered as either working class or poor, and very likely to remain that way (Lopez, Popkin, & Tellez, 1996; Ortiz, 1996; Treiman & Lee, 1996). The Latino/a population nationally is also overwhelmingly working class and low income. Considering just two national indicators: In 2002, 28 percent of Latino/ children younger than 18 (school age) lived below the poverty line level (compared to 9.5 percent for whites), and 21.4 percent of Latinos were living in poverty (7.8 percent for whites) (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002). In a study done on Latinos in Los Angeles by Ortiz (1996), this sociologist concluded that, given existing structural and economic conditions, this population would remain permanently in the low working class. Whether her prediction is right or not, the point is that this low social class status is more or less stable, a more or less “fixed” structural condition of Latinos in urban settings. This socioeconomic standing, as is well known, has major implications for the schooling of children (Lee & Burkman, 2002).

The rapid spread of new technologies in the home and workplace, and as the basis for economic development, has had a differential impact on the wealthy vs. the poor. The use of computers in schools reflects the stratification of the system, with the wealthier schools doing the most interesting intellectual work with the technology. Similarly, the use of the Internet, for example, is mostly a middle class phenomenon, hardly influencing working class life and work; and even when social class is taken into account, there are differential uses of this resource by different ethnic groups. Few studies are available that analyze successful applications of technological solutions to the schooling of Latino/a children. The issue remains not how to adapt the technology to existing circumstances but, rather, how to use the technology to create fundamentally new circumstances for the children’s schooling.

Students’ cultural worlds and their structural position must be fully apprehended, with school-based adults deliberately bringing issues of race, difference, and power into central focus. This approach necessitates the abandonment of color-blind curriculum’s neutral stance towards economic power structures, and a neutral assimilation process. The practice of individualizing collective problems must also be relinquished. A more profound and involved understanding of the socioeconomic, linguistic, sociocultural, and structural barriers that obstruct the mobility of Mexican youth needs to inform all caring relationships (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Phelan et al, 1993; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). “Authentic caring cannot exist unless it is imbued with and motivated by such political clarity” (p. 109).

### **The Introduction of the Three New Texts**

Having worked as a consultant throughout the Bronx, I developed an excellent rapport with the principal of the school, Edvige Mancuso, who has always had an open

door policy with me as the staff developer, workshop organizer, teacher mentor, and curriculum developer. Though the idea started out as an experiment, the findings would surpass my expectations. Every month, she would order texts for the entire school. All children had access to a variety of books. I was even invited on Read Aloud Day. My text of choice was *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by C. Collodi. I had just returned from a conference in Italy, and I decided to share with these children my passion for reading, my passion for culture, and my passion for languages. They each received a miniature Pinocchio pencil, and they learned that Pinocchio originated in Firenze, Italy.

I stumbled upon a conference that sparked the idea of advocacy for migrant farm workers with my colleagues from Adelphi University and I approached Mancuso with the idea of introducing some new texts in her building. I met with the teachers after school one Friday afternoon and ran the idea by them. They were all very supportive and that is how Mancuso purchased *My Diary from Here to There, A Day in Grapes*, and *Voices from the Fields*. The beauty of *My Diary from Here to There* is that it is written in two languages, Spanish and English. The children at PS 28 are mostly of Latino background so it made sense to introduce this book. The pictures were very colorful and the children could relate to the characters, since they or their families had migrated from Central and South America. The story tells the journey of what it is like to move from one place to another, the concepts of “culture shock” and “language stress” were brought to the surface, and the children expressed their feelings about moving, about what it was like to make new friends, go to a new school, and live in a city where there were not many trees (as one boy pointed out). Pages eight and nine in the book show examples of packing, of things people decide to take with them. The images reflected beautiful brown-skinned people that looked just like they did. The children then went on to describe what they missed the most, what they could bring, what they left behind. It was an emotional component that is rarely seen in the curriculum since so many teachers are forced to follow a pacing chart and move to the next activity without giving the children the chance to process or digest what is given to them. To quote Alfie Kohn (2004), “schools have become glorified test prep centers,” and everyone teaches to the test. This is especially prevalent in low-income urban schools. As teachers, literacy professionals, and educational leaders, we are most concerned with reaching all students with relevant and socially useful skills and information. However, poor and working class students are more likely to be in schools in which restricted school literacy (Miller & Borowicz, 2007) is the preferred mode of instruction that limits conceptions of literacy learning toward a print bias and traditional practice of chalk and talk.

The teachers were delighted to finally be able to do something different, something meaningful, something exciting and fun. The writing activities did not have to have a rubric, children got to see how exciting it can be to have a “journal,” to write your

## Social Justice and Democracy

secrets, your feelings, but above all, to write them in any language you want! Having Spanish being put at the same level of English brought a sense of pride to their lives, we were on the way to bringing Spanish back to life in a society where monolingualism is still the norm. By having the children do digital storytelling, the teachers became facilitators, coaches, not the “sage on stage” anymore. The kids got to tell their stories via the use of technology, by learning how to create PowerPoints. They brought in pictures of their families, their pets, their home towns from their native countries, etc. The stories were genuine, emotional, and most of all “their stories.” The books were the platform that led them to use their creativity, their imagination. Teachers also learned to respect the children’s privacy. Many stories were quite painful to hear; we all agreed to be nonjudgmental. Many children were here illegally, some of their parents were here illegally. We heard stories about crossing the border, how long it took, what it was like, etc. According to Sonia Nieto (in Wade, 2007), “Because a social justice education teaches youngsters to value and model dignity and decency, using social justice as a framework for the curriculum will in the long run make a greater difference in the lives of children, teachers, and the nation than passing a test or mastering the latest science experiment” (p. xi.). We take Nieto’s endorsement of social justice in the curriculum as an indication that we are on the right track — that recognizing the contribution of labor, and in fact to frame labor as the prime mover of events throughout history, is socially healthy and will result in the “greater difference in the lives of children, teachers, and the nation,” according to Nieto.

In the case of the *First Day in Grapes*, the common themes that kept popping up were self esteem issues, bullying (which in today’s terms also includes cyberbullying), courage, family pride, migrant families, making friends, and the Latino/Hispanic contributions to our society from the east to the west and from the north of Central America to the southern part of the United States. Culturally and linguistically diverse learners were reintroduced to key characters and events from the labor movement while immersed in a standards-based instructional program in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing. Focusing on immigrants’ experiences and working class consciousness connects foundational literacy strategy instruction in the processes of making learning personally meaningful. The children I worked with in the Bronx come from homes where the parents receive low wages and do not remain in one place long enough to qualify for government aid such as food stamps or disability payments. They are not protected by federal laws resulting in long hours or low salaries, and migrant families often live in substandard housing (otherwise known as the projects). Many of them lack adequate health care as well.

Many of the children are ELL (English language learners) so these texts are a useful way to help them transition to a very difficult language to master. The story can be a stepping

stone for a program that incorporates content area while mastering English. For example, in nutrition the children at PS 28 had cooking classes where they were exposed to a variety of vegetables and healthy eating. They would learn about where the vegetables were grown, their nutritional value, and the number of servings per day that are recommended in a healthy diet. They learned how to measure so words like tablespoon and teaspoon were not only displayed on word charts, they also manipulated these utensils while using TPR (total physical response) to actually cook in class and eat what they had produced! This was a very creative way to include mathematics in the curriculum. In the area of civics, or citizenship, role plays proved to be very effective. The teachers had the children pretend to be Chico (the character in the book) and how he had to find ways to defend himself against the bullying at the school. The children were in charge of coming up with solutions to these problems. There was a decrease in fighting in the school yard during lunch and/or recess. One child told of how he courageously defended a boy from being picked on. He told the boy it was not worth getting into a fight since then his mom would be called to school and he ran the risk of getting suspended.

**Table 1**

<b>Data</b>	<b>Where Found</b>
Self esteem	PowerPoint presentations
Bullying	Lunch periods
Family pride	Digital storytelling
Making friends	Digital storytelling
Courage	After-school sessions of rewriting
Migrant families	Lunch periods

### **Teachers' Introduction to the Concepts of Culture Shock and Language Stress**

A report by Rosen and Ortego (1969) indicated that inexperienced teachers with unawareness of cultural biases and language acquisition theories are responsible for attitudes that denigrate migrant farm workers' rich and varied life experiences. In many classrooms, immigrant laborer's cultural and family "funds of knowledge" are not recognized or valued at all since "they've only seen the world from the back of a migrant worker's truck." Unfortunately, this view is still prevalent in today's schools in and around New York City as well as in the suburban communities of Long Island, where a great majority of the student population, whether recent immigrants, second generation, or later, are considered working class or poor and are very likely to remain that way (Lopez, Popkin, & Telelz, 1996; Ortiz, 1996; Treiman & Lee, 1996).

The last text that was used is entitled *Voices from the Fields*. It's about the children of farm workers who tell their stories. It has poems in both English and Spanish and the pictures are all in black and white. The children were all able to relate to a variety of

## Social Justice and Democracy

components in the book. My home on page 28 illustrates the image of a young boy with his little sister. Children in the Bronx related to this and how at times they would get into trouble at school for being late. It was not done intentionally; as one student put it, “I had to take my little sister to school,” or “I had to go to the doctor with my mom because she doesn’t speak English.” Imagine a child going to a gynecologist with his mother and having the doctor tell the child that the mom has a yeast infection. First of all, the child does not know what this is in English — how would he know how to translate it into Spanish?

Page 36 of the text is entitled “Fitting in.” We learned through our observations that fitting in for these children meant joining gangs or at least being initiated into gang activity. I learned a “gang handshake” from a fifth-grade child! We also learned that living in the projects is quite scary for them. Many slept with their lights on, many admitted to sleeping with their parents, sharing their parents’ beds. In American culture this would seem inappropriate due to the taboos we have regarding sex and sexual abuse. In the Latino culture, this is not so. Jailall also learned what to do in case of a drive-by shooting: A child told us that the best place to hide is the bathtub. Below is the poem that we read and worked with at the school:

Tú, con tu alma sweet and sincera,  
Tú, que dentro de ti hay un niño que llora  
And needs to be calmed

De ti dicen varias cosas, but they don’t  
Know you,  
You are not mean, ese, yo lo sé  
Tú eres especial,  
Disculpa si algun día te he ofendido,  
Pues ignoraba la sencillez que existe  
En tu Corazón.

You fight por tu bienestar  
Así como un águila pelea por su libertad  
Eres bueno, eres romántico, y cuando tú  
Expresas  
Lo haces from the bottom of your heart.

He descubierto que ahora te admiro,  
Que eres tan alto como una estrella,  
Y tan brillante como una de ellas.

Para mi significas dulzura,  
 You mean peligro to me,  
 Pero también significas dulzura.

Eres mi cholo admirado ese,  
 Your sweetness makes me feel  
 “Chiquita” de Corazón.  
 I hope one day tú entiendas  
 Que soy una amiga que te admira  
 Y además te da la razón.

You may wonder why we decided to include this particular poem in this article. Well, for a variety of reasons: First of all, it is written in two languages, it is a perfect example of code switching, which many consider to be “Spanglish” or bad use of both languages. However, it takes a high level of skill to do this. The parts of speech in either language are exactly where they belong. The speaker understands where to place a noun, an adverb, and an adjective, etc. It flows naturally, beautifully. How ironic is it that Ricky Martin can go around singing about “Livin’ la Vida Loca,” but when the children do it, it is seen as being linguistically deficient?! The second reason we decided to include it is because it is representative of what the children can relate to, something they are familiar with: the protection offered by being in a gang. It’s about belonging, it’s about “la familia.” I am not trying to glorify gang life; however, it is important to understand how easy it is to get “recruited.” The last component is page 76, “Teen Mother.” Young teenagers are getting pregnant and being forced to drop out of school because they find it very difficult to be single mothers at such a young age. If they have lives of poverty, their children will most likely have similar lives as well.

Freire’s (1970) ideas of consciousness of social class and social justice literary education and Moll’s conception of cultural funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2004) were introduced at PS 28. Low socioeconomic status has major negative consequences for success in most schools, where poor and working class students are more likely to be found, and in which restricted school literacy (Miller & Borowicz, 2007) is the preferred mode of instruction, with limited conceptions of literacy learning, a print bias, and the dominant practice of chalk and talk. Additionally, teachers and educational leaders are often resistant to bringing working class issues into their educational programs, as it is related to their self-identification as professionals rather than as part of labor (Hurd, 2000).

### Telling Their Stories Through the World of Digital Storytelling

Through creating electronic personal narratives, students become active creators rather than passive consumers of multimedia. Imagine you are watching the story that Carlitos, a fifth grader, has created for a language arts assignment. As the story opens, the computer screen slowly fills with photographs of Carlitos' parents, one from when they were young and another taken more recently. Instrumental music plays in the background as family pictures appear on the screen. We hear Carlitos' voice telling the story of how his parents came to the United States from rural Dominican Republic. They worked long hours, saved their money, and eventually created a good life for their family. Carlitos' narration explains that although he loved his parents, his relationship with them was often strained because they considered him unresourceful and unappreciative of his good fortune. Carlitos was tired of hearing how hard life was for his parents as children.

Suddenly, Carlitos' story shifts to the fire that nearly destroyed his family's house. Somber music plays and photographs from the fire scroll by as Carlitos narrates details about the tragedy. Interspersed among the photos are Carlitos' original pencil drawings of his family standing by a smoldering house.

However, the mood does not last long. The music becomes upbeat as Carlitos describes how his parents' tradition of hard work helped rally the family and restore the house. The screen shows before and after pictures of a room that Carlitos helped rebuild. His narration reflects on how the experience changed family members' perceptions of one another. Carlitos developed new admiration for his parents, and his parents were surprised and proud at how much he had helped the family.

Carlitos' digital story is evocative and crafted with care. It's personal, yet it touches a universal chord. His story incorporates authentic voice, problem-resolution, narrative tension, a transforming realization, and other elements most of us expect from a serious story or movie. It is both a story and a documentary, incorporating real events from Carlitos' life and his reflection on those events. Carlitos plans to post his digital story on the Internet so that all his relatives, including those in the Dominican Republic, can watch it.

Carlitos created practically every element of this digital story. He took most of the photographs and scanned in older ones, created artwork, mapped and storyboarded the story, wrote the script, narrated the story, and created titles and credits. He even produced the soundtrack, using music composition software geared towards nonmusicians.

Ten years ago, a project like this would have been too complex and expensive to be within the reach of most fourth graders. But media-based stories are now everyone's to create. And within the Internet as an international stage, they are everyone's to watch and enjoy.

Alan Davis (2004) defines a digital story as "a form of short narrative, usually a personal narrative told in the first person, presented as a short movie for display on a television or computer monitor or projected onto a screen" (2004, p.1).

As with any art form, digital storytelling continues to evolve to accommodate new technologies, purposes, and creative visions. The important question for educators to ask is, “What does digital storytelling offer education?” The answer is “a great deal,” if we do two things: focus on the story first and the digital medium later; and use digital storytelling to enhance students’ skills in critical thinking, expository writing, and media literacy.

### ***Story First***

Like many other teachers of digital storytelling, we welcome the advent of multimedia technologies. Such technologies give voice to a number of otherwise quiet students and to students whose skills don’t fit the usual academic mold. Yet many students lack an intuitive grasp of how to use digital technology to enhance their stories. As the technology becomes more powerful, their stories become weaker, illustrating the truth of the saying, “What happens when you give a bad guitar player a bigger amplifier?”

The problem for many students is their focus on the power of the technology rather than the power of their stories. Some students are engaging the medium at the expense of the message, producing a technical event rather than a story. Part of our task as digital storytelling educators is to teach students how to be storytellers. Two important components of our approach to teaching storytelling are story mapping and practicing written and oral storytelling before bringing in digital elements.

### ***Story Mapping***

Most approaches to creating a story that will eventually have elements of a film go directly from idea to storyboard development. A storyboard, used commonly in the movie and TV industry, is an ordered presentation of drawings or photos that each summarize a major story event. Looking over the pictures should provide an overall sense of what will happen in the story.

I recommended that teachers use storyboards as a way to help students plan the events of a story. But storyboards do not capture a story’s central conflict, structure, and elements of transformation, which we must help students identify if they are to write stories with depth. For that, we have students complete a story map before the storyboard. A story map is a one-page diagram showing how the essential components of a story are incorporated into the overall flow of the narrative. In addition to helping students think about stories in terms of theme and character development rather than simply as a series of events, story maps enable teachers to quickly assess the strength of a story while it is still in the planning stage and to challenge students to strengthen weak story elements.

Although the nature and structure of stories vary for personal, artistic, and cultural reasons, we initially discuss stories as most of our students experience them through popular media. Such stories are typically made up of the following essential components:

## Social Justice and Democracy

- *A call to adventure.* Normal life is interrupted by a significant event, initiating a physical, emotional, intellectual, or spiritual journey for the main character.
- *Problem-solution involving transformation.* Characters encounter problems that are solved through a personal transformation of some kind. Transformation can happen in a number of ways, including skill acquisition, maturation, learning, and self-discovery.
- *Closure.* The story comes to a meaningful conclusion, not necessarily through a happy ending. Often, closure involves the main character's realization of something significant, a moral, or evidence that something or someone has changed.

A compelling digital story must incorporate all these components, as Carlitos' story does. His struggle to understand the tragedy of the fire and his relationship with his parents gives his story authentic voice and makes it engaging for the audience. Had he left his own voice out and simply reported about the fire and his family's experience in the United States, he would have created an informative but very flat report.

There are many story mapping techniques. We tend to use the Visual Portrait of a Story Diagram, which we adapted from the work of storytelling expert Brett Dillingham (2005). This diagram graphically outlines how a story moves through different elements from beginning to end and helps students visualize the progression of their stories — from the call to adventure, through development of the central problem and accompanying tension, to a solution involving character transformation, and finally to closure. As they plan their characters and action, students fill in how each element on the story map will be reflected in their story. The teacher can look over the story map and help a student strengthen weak story elements before the student starts writing.

The Visual Portrait of a Story is an excellent way to begin using story maps, and it continues to be one of our favorite story planning tools. We have found that there is no single right way to map a story; each student may come up with his or her own way of graphically mapping the narrative for each storytelling project. A story map is not a box that a story needs to fit into, but a flexible guide aimed to help storytellers understand their stories and tell them in compelling, memorable ways.

### *Written and Oral Storytelling*

We involve students in as much writing and oral storytelling as time allows before they begin incorporating their story into a computerized presentation with images and sound.

Writing is key. Even though students' final products are media-based, the most important tool used in the creation of a digital story is writing scripts and story

treatments. The saying “If it ain’t on the page, then it ain’t on the stage,” is as true for digital storytelling as it is for productions on Broadway. The written component of a digital story can take various forms, depending on whether the strongest curricular focus is on digital, oral, or writing skills. The final written form could be well-crafted bullets, a complete narrative, or a finely edited script, depending on which kind of writing the teacher wants to teach and assess.

Telling stories in traditional, oral fashion is also an important part of the preproduction process, and I make sure students have chances to do so before they work on the digital presentation. Oral storytelling is a powerful way for students to develop their own voices and discover what events and details are essential to their stories. Oral presentation is also an important way to prepare for the future. As video becomes cheaper and easier to use, it will become more commonplace for students to appear on film as they narrate a digital presentation.

Once you begin helping students craft their stories into multimedia presentations, they will need guidance in such skills as photography, scanning, and working with photos digitally. Teachers who are less experienced with multimedia technology — whom Peter Premsky (2001) calls “digital immigrants” — need not be intimidated. Most software provides tutorials, and a little coaching from a media-savvy colleague or older student should provide enough starting knowledge.

You’ll need to get a few relatively inexpensive yet powerful tools and familiarize yourself with them. The hub of a digital storytelling station is a computer running software that can blend photos, titles, voices, music, and possibly video and animation. For a Macintosh computer it is recommended to use iMovie software, for a PC, Moviemaker is recommended. Both are free or inexpensive and easy to learn. One note of warning: Digital stories tend to take up a lot of file space and computer memory, particularly if you incorporate video. Simple stories that use still photos, titling, and voice-over narration can be just as effective as video without overtaxing your computer.

You will also need some peripheral tools, especially a digital camera, microphones, a flatbed scanner, and a video camera if you plan to add video. The scanner is crucial. Using a scanner creatively opens up a world of content because you can photograph and import into a digital story any object you can place on a scanning bed: medals, locks of hair, a doll — you name it.

### ***Media Literacy***

Creating digital stories is a perfect opportunity to engage students in media literacy, in learning about how the media influence our perceptions of the world (Goodman, 2003; Tyner, 1998). Stories are enjoyable because we give ourselves over to them; this is also what makes them dangerous (Kay, 1996). By their very nature, stories require us to suspend our

## **Social Justice and Democracy**

disbelief and be swept away by their narrative. Yet students need critical media skills in a world overwhelmed by story-based media, much of which views their age group in terms of commercial market share. We want students to understand that the difference between a successful digital story and an effective advertisement is largely one of purpose.

Digital stories provide powerful media literacy learning opportunities because students are involved in the creation and analysis of the media in which they are immersed. When students do the hard work of marrying story and technology to express themselves to others, they can more clearly see the persuasive nature of the electronic culture in which they live. Such a met perspective of media does not develop naturally however. It is hard for students immersed in a project to “zoom out” and see the larger picture of media impact. Teachers who want to include a media literacy component in a digital storytelling project need to do so deliberately at the project’s outset.

### ***Tapping Dorman Skills***

As digital storytelling enters the academic mainstream, the technique shows great promise. Creating a digital story taps skills and talents — in art, media production, storytelling, project development, and so on — that might otherwise lie dormant within many students but that will serve them well in school, at work, and in expressing themselves personally. In addition, digital stories develop a number of digital, oral, and written literacies in an integrated fashion. This technique takes advantage of the fact that students are comfortable with narratives (Egan, 1986) and attracted to digital enhancements that sharpen their critical thinking, research, and writing skills. Through creating narratives, students develop the power of their own voices and become heroes of their own learning stories. Most important, digital storytelling helps students become active participants rather than passive consumers in a society saturated with media.

## **Equality and Social Justice**

Scholars of color and those interested in social justice and equity need to challenge several mainstream assumptions about our youth and schools in order to impact action, social justice, and equity sooner rather than later. Educationally based assumptions needing challenge include: (1) the United States as a meritocratic system, (2) the notion that racism has been “solved,” (3) educational tracking as neutral, and (4) the purpose of schooling as assimilation (Cochran – Smith, 2003).

Schools can be tools of social reproduction, replicating the inequitable social structures in society (Willis, 1977). Similarly, they often promote assimilation with narrow assumptions of Anglo-conformity embedded in the processes of schooling (Spring, 1994). Conversely, however, schools also can be loci of change wherein inequitable social and cultural structures and practices are challenged, resisted, refused, co-opted, and altered (Levinson & Holland, 1996).

Additive schooling is about seeing language and ethnic identity as assets that “figure precisely in what it means to be educated in U.S. society” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 270). It is about the maintenance of community and culture and at the same time expanding one’s ability to engage fully in additional cultures and communities. In contrast, subtractive schooling, the most common historical practice imposed on Latinos in American public schools, promotes an assimilative process wherein minority children abandon their first languages and cultures as they acquire the dominant language and culture. This practice thereby cuts off Latinos’ ability to communicate and participate across cultural and language boundaries. Furthermore, it prevents the possibilities of building on the strengths of one’s first culture and language. This was evident as PS 28.

Ogbu (1978) explains why some groups achieve more success in our schools, according to one’s membership in cultural groups that are either “involuntary” or “voluntary” minorities. The former include African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans; the latter include most Asian immigrant groups and Cubans (among others). Voluntary minorities came to the United States voluntarily and have maintained a dual frame of reference (to the United States as well as to their country of origin) and are better able to react to discrimination and develop or maintain a sense of independence from U.S. cultural and social dynamics. Involuntary minorities are American by virtue of conquest or involuntary migration such as slavery. Their cultural identity is developed in opposition to mainstream U.S. cultural norms, including a stance toward the relevance, or irrelevance, of schooling. In many ways Ogbu’s model helps us to understand why Cuban Americans do so well in school whereas Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans do less well.

### **Dropouts or Push Outs?**

The conversations I have had with youth in the South Bronx showed recurring themes. Youth felt excluded in the current educational system; there was a lack of understanding in the school system of the complexities of youth’s lives, and youth who felt marginalized were over-represented in the number of “dropouts.” Informal discussions with youth expanded these concerns. Youth talked about feeling overwhelmed with school work and many had been socially promoted without “learning” the concepts. These students felt pushed through, and they commonly reported “feeling stupid” when describing their educational experience. Youth expressed being labeled and marginalized based on aspects of their backgrounds, identities, and lifestyles. They also alluded to the educational structure as not suited to their reality.

Youth learn in different ways, have different needs, thrive in different environments, or respond differently to various approaches. There should be no judgment placed on the issues that youth face or on the youth themselves. Rather than think, “How can we

## **Social Justice and Democracy**

provide an educational option that would help ‘fix’ these issues/youth?”, the teachers and I took the approach that youth who have complex life worlds require educational options that reflect the reality of their lives.

Youth who were involved became researchers during the second half of the 2006–07 academic year. Not only did the youth experience the empowerment and voice as leaders, but we also witnessed the power of their social justice and democratic principles being lived in practice — youth serving as educational change makers and experts in their own lives.

Educators in their everyday practice come face-to-face with the challenges of youth who leave school before completing high school (De Broucker, 2006; Willms, 2003; Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001; Manning & Baruth, 1995; Bernard, 1997). Many factors impact students’ ability to stay and succeed in school, factors that span individual, familial, peer, and school and sociocultural contexts. Economic hardships, family challenges, student disinterest in curriculum, mental health issues, forms of social discrimination, peer challenges, ineffective pedagogical practices, disconnection to school culture, interpersonal conflict, and lack of classroom supports are some of the variables linked to lack of student engagement and success in school (Wrigley & Powrie, 2005; Stringfield & Land, 2002; McGee, 2001; Manning & Baruth, 1995; Donmeyer & Kos, 1993; Hixson & Tinzman, 1990). We must resist and continue to right all the wrongs; we must prevail and plant seeds for the generations to come; we must unite in our efforts to construct and maintain a just society; we must act or we will perish by our own lack of courage; but our own collusion, or by our own will to remain as part of the status quo.

### **Spanish-Speaking Students as Deficit?**

Migrant education needs to be created in some schools to expand the school’s responsibilities. High absenteeism and transient behavior characterize the migrant Latino child. The itinerant lifestyle is not compatible with conventional school expectations. The itinerant patterns that characterize our nation’s migrant workers, the essential gatherers of fresh fruit and vegetables, has supposedly shortchanged their children’s life experiences. The school, at times, neither understands nor accepts these workers’ lifestyles. Usually travel is associated with broadening one’s knowledge of the world; however, a migrant farm worker’s traveling experiences and knowledge are not recognized or valued. “They’ve only seen the world from the back of a migrant worker’s truck,” said one report. Most school programs adopted a clinical view; that is, they viewed the child as without any strengths, inflicted with a sickness to be cured, with only symptoms of weakness and with deficiencies that need to be compensated for. Nobody denies the fact that immigrants to this country need to learn English, but must they be humiliated and dehumanized because of their language and culture? A child comes to school willingly and ready to learn. She/he comes with a wealth of knowledge based on his/her cultural and linguistic

assets. So to continually “blame the victim” is a one-sided argument. Rosen and Ortego (1969) reported that poorly trained and unsophisticated teachers with cultural biases and profoundly ignorant notions concerning how language is learned were tragically too common in the schools. This is still seen today in 2009 in many schools around New York City and the suburbs as well. Prior to the 1960s, and unbeknownst to many, the education of Latinos consisted primarily of district segregated schools with limited human and material resources, where discrimination was rampant, teachers held low expectations of Latino/a students, schools were saturated with exclusionary policies and practices, and the curriculum was irrelevant to their lives (Arias, 1986; Carter & Segura, 1979; Donato, 1999; Romero, Hondagneu-Sotelo, & Ortiz, 1997; San Miguel, 1987).

### **Blending Diversity with Language and Unity: Social Justice and Democracy in Education**

It is reasonable to accept the idea that social unity is an important concern for any society. The question is: Can social unity be attained only through monoculturalism and monolingualism? Those who adhere to the “melting pot” view of the United States would appear to answer this question with a “YES.” According to this view, everyone should reject “foreign” cultural characteristics and quickly assimilate into the majority culture (Rodriguez, 1999). For the assimilationists, one culture fits all. There have been many voices raised against this monolithic view of U.S. culture (Banks, 2002; Banks & McGee Banks, 2001; Garcia, 2001; Ovando & Collier, 1998). The multiculturalists believe that pluralism is an inherent feature of U.S. society from its very founding to the present. For the multiculturalists, *E Pluribus Unum* is not merely a slogan to be placed on the currency of the nation but a logo that aptly describes a basic feature of the nation in all its historic and contemporary diversity.

Those people who are seen as not susceptible to assimilation are regarded as targets for destruction, enslavement, or erasure (Menchaca, 1997). Teaching in this context adopts a subtractive stance (Valenzuela, 1999). The goal is to extract and subtract from students all “foreign” language and cultural elements and replace them with “superior” elliptic Euro-Anglo language and culture. The curriculum is infused with Euro-Anglo American history and culture and there is the systematic erasure of the histories, languages, and cultures of all other groups across the land (Macedo, 1994; Menchaca, 1999; Padilla, 1995; Perez, 1999).

### **Youth as Experts of Their Own Lives**

Reframed as “the experts in their own lives” rather than as mere recipients of educational goods, youth facing forms of systemic marginalization know how these inequalities shape their daily lives (both in and out of school) and what is required to break down these systemic marginalization practices. We all understood that full participation in their own

## **Social Justice and Democracy**

learning would enable youth to respond creatively, in partnership with educators and the community, to their lives as learners.

Participatory perspectives view learning as a relational process rather than as something that is given or done to students (Daloz, 1986) thereby positioning teachers and students as collaborators in knowledge construction (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Bray, Lee, Smith & Yorks, 2000; Heron & Reason, 1997). With youth situated as experts in their lives, learning becomes a political act “where dominant knowledge is deconstructed and new knowledge is constructed” (Berry, 1998, p. 45). Youth strengths, resilience, resources, agency, voice and lived knowledge, moreover, become centralized in the learning process (Kim, 2006; Cassidy & Bates, 2005; Pasco, 2003; Fine, 1991). An alternative learning environment that, to use Berry’s phrase, immerses youth “in an epistemological world ... of their [own] making” rather than one that is predominately upheld by the authority of “teachers and textbooks” (1998, p. 42).

While alternative schools began in the 1960s as a progressive, democratic movement (Schutz and Harris, 2001; Kellmayer, 1995; Raywid, 1995), many alternative schools designed for marginalized students (increasingly prevalent in the 1990s) have fallen short in centering themselves within participatory democratic and social justice educational discourse (McGee, 2001; Schutz and Harris, 201; Dunbar, 1999; Raywid, 1995). Others have failed to make clear how their programs are explicitly attempting to engage rights-based, representation, and participatory democratic educational principles and practices.

### **Democracy in Education as a Community Issue**

As learning comes to be viewed “as life” and pedagogy as a “complex conversation,” the boundaries separating education and the community (i.e., life) become blurred. Investing meaningful time and resources in fostering meaningful connections with youth, and in supporting their voices, are central aspects of teachers’ work. What youth portray to the school community is often very different than what they are willing to reveal to university professors. For example, many youth would share with me that they acted out and skipped school as a mechanism to protect themselves because they were seeking to hide the reality that they don’t understand what’s happening in the classroom. We were, moreover, explicitly engaged with the challenges of poverty, drugs, violence, homelessness, and sexual exploitation, which were the “norm” in the lives of many youth.

### **Conclusion**

How can educators and community members address the complex life, worlds, and educational needs of marginalized youth without positioning the principles and practices of democracy and social justice at the center of these efforts? This is a question that must be addressed when developing innovative educational alternatives. In this article, we have

examined how those engaged in a democratic participatory process create educational context and curriculum. In this innovation, youth were recognized as experts and offered the opportunity to engage in their own voice in ways that are essential to their empowerment and success as learners. In promoting the full participation of relevant groups, we discovered the significance of framing education within the context of culture and community. We engaged in a diversity of democratic and social justice process including rights-based, representational, and participatory perspectives and practices. Alternative programs that center youths' voices and complex life worlds offer innovative opportunities to engage justice and democracy.

The stigma of “disabled” or “low IQ” or “lower socioeconomic class” too frequently forces young people to become the recipients of “treatment” or “training,” sometimes from the most benevolent motives on the part of those hoping “to help.” Far too seldom are such young people looked upon as beings capable of imagining, of choosing, and of acting from their own vantage points on perceived possibility. Instead, they are subjected to outside pressures, manipulations, and predictions. The supporting structures that exist are not used to sustain a sense of agency among those they shelter; instead, they legitimize treatment, remediation, control — anything but difference and release.

This is one of the reasons we should argue strenuously for the presence of the arts in the classroom. We are finding out how storytelling helps, how drawing helps; but we need to go further to create situations in which something new can be added each day to a learner's life. Postmodern thinking does not conceive the human subject as either predetermined or finally defined. It thinks of people in process, in pursuit of themselves, and, it is to be hoped, of possibilities for themselves. Attending concretely to these children in their difference and their connectedness, feeling called on truly to attend — to read the child's word, to look at the child's sketch — teachers may find themselves responding imaginatively and, at length, ethically to these children. To respond to those once called at risk, once carelessly marginalized, as living beings capable of choosing for themselves is, we believe, to be principled. Attending that way, we may be more likely to initiate normative communities, illuminated by principle and informed by responsibility and care.

We understand that it may be difficult to affirm the values of plurality and difference while working to build a community of people who have a feeling of agency, who are ready to speak for themselves. Yet once the distinctiveness of the many voices in a classroom is attended to, the importance of identifying shared beliefs will be heightened. Again, these beliefs can only emerge out of dialogue and regard for others in their freedom, in their possibility. Through offering experiences of the arts and storytelling, teachers can keep seeking connection points among their personal histories and the histories of those they teach. Students can be offered more and more time for telling their stories, or dancing or singing them. Students can be provoked to imaginatively transmute

## Social Justice and Democracy

some of their stories into media that can be shared in such a fashion that friends can begin looking together and moving together in a forever expanding space in their little world. Given their expanding sense of diversity, their storytelling and their joining together may be informed now and then by outrage too — outrage at injustices and reifications and violations. Not only do teachers and learners together need to tell and choose, they also have to look toward untapped possibility — to light the fuse, to explore what it might mean to transform that possibility.

In taking up this opportunity, we moved from educational reform to educational transformation, and at the front are brave teachers who challenge the mediocrity of institutionalized education. From our experiences in the Bronx, we all learned to listen more and speak less and experience the need to do more, to better educate ourselves, and serve justice. We learned to value the powerful voices trapped in the bodies of children. We are fully aware of the limitations of this study. It was just a pilot study that we experimented with in the fourth grade class. If the opportunity presents itself, we would like to see what kind of results such a approach would garner in the lower grades of the same school. At the same time, we would like to add more teachers so we can create a “collaborative learning community” for future projects. Accordingly, we would like to compare/contrast the results/findings with other low income/urban schools of East Harlem and Far Rockaway in New York so as to correlate our findings that are at the heart of learning, the child, the individual.

## References

- Acuna, R. (1981). *Occupied America: A history of Chicanos*. 2nd ed. New York: Harper and Row.
- Alarcon, N., Castro, R., Perez, E., Pesquera, B., Sosa, Riddell, A., & Zavalla, P. (1993). *Chicana critical issues*. Berkeley, CA: Third Woman Press.
- Apple, M. W. (1982). *Education and power*. Boston: Ark paperbacks.
- Apple, M. W. (1990). *Ideology and curriculum*. (2nd ed.) New York: Teachers College Press.
- Arias, B. (1986). The context of education for Hispanic students: An overview. *American Journal of Education*, 3, 25-56.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (Eds.). (1995). *The post-colonial studies reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Audus, R., & Willms, J. D. (2002). *Engagement and dropping out of school: A life-course perspective*. Applied Research Branch Strategic Policy Human Resources Development Canada. Hull, Quebec: HRDC Publication Center.
- Banks, J. A. (2002). *An introduction to multicultural education*. Boston: MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Banks, J. A. & McGee Banks, C. A. (Eds.), (2001). *Handbook of research on multicultural education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bernard, B. (1997). *Turning it around for all youth: From risk to resilience*. ERIC/CUE Digest, No. 126, 1-7 (ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, ED412309).
- Berry, K. S. (1998). Nurturing the imagination of resistance: Young adults as creators of knowledge. In J. L. Kincheloe & S. R. Steinberg (Eds.), *Unauthorized methods: Strategies for critical teaching* (pp. 43-55). New York: Routledge.

- Bonilla-Santiago, G. (1992). *Breaking ground and barriers: Hispanic women developing effective leadership*. San Diego, CA: Marin Publications.
- Bray, K. S., Lee, J., Smith, L., & Yorks, L. (2000). *Collaborative inquiry in practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Capella Noya, G. (1992). Proyecto aurora: Building a community of women. *Education and Urban Society*, 30(1), 75-89.
- Carter, T. P. & Segura, R. D. (1979). *Mexican Americans in school: A decade of change*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board.
- Cassidy, W. & Bates, A. (2005, November). "Dropout" and "push-outs": Finding hope at a school that actualizes the ethic of care. *American Journal of Education*, 66-102.
- Castaneda, L. (1997). Alternative to failure: A community-based school program for Latino teens. *Education and Urban Society*, 30(1), 90-106.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2003, April). Equity and accountability issues in teacher education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Chairs), *Diversity, accountability and equity. Findings and insights from the second edition of the Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*. Presidential invited session at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Cole, M. & Engestrom, Y. (1993). A cultural-historical approach to distributed cognition. In G. Salomon (Ed), *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations* (pp. 1-46). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1995). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and the violence against women of color. In N. G. Kimberley Crenshaw, G. Peller, & K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: New Press.
- Daniels, S., & Lee, R. (1996). *Exploring human geography: A reader*. New York: Halstead Press.
- Daloz, L. (1986). *Effective teaching and mentoring: Realizing the transformative power of adult learning experiences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Davis, A. (2004). Co-authoring identity: Digital storytelling in an urban middle school. *THEN: Technology, Humanities, Education, & Narrative*, 1(1), 1. <http://thenjournal.org/feature/61>
- De Broucker, P. (2005). *Without a paddle: What to do about Canada's young dropouts*. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks.
- Delgado, R. (1995). The imperial scholar: Reflections on a review of civil rights literature. In N. G. Kimberley Crenshaw, G. Peller, & K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: New Press.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C., & Trueba, H. (1991). *Crossing cultural borders: Education for immigrant families in America*. New York: Falmer Press.
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (Eds.). (1997). *Critical white studies: Looking behind the mirror*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- De la Ossa, P. (2005). Hear my voice: Alternative high school students' perceptions and implications for school change. *American Secondary Education*, 34(1), 24-39.
- Dillingham, B. (2005). Performance literacy. *The Reading Teacher*, 59(1), 72-75.
- Donato, R. (1999). Hispano education and the implications of autonomy: Four school systems in southern Colorado, 1920-1963. *Harvard Educational Review*, 69, 117-149.
- Dunbar, C. (1999). African American males and participation: Promising inclusion, practicing exclusion. *Theory into Practice*, 38(4), 241-246.

## Social Justice and Democracy

- Effrat, A. & Schimmel, D. (2003). Walking the democratic talk: Introduction to a special issue on collaborative rule-making as preparation for democratic citizenship. *American Secondary Education*, 31(3), 3-15.
- Egan, K. (1986). *Teaching as storytelling*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Engestrom, Y., Miettinen, R., & Punamaki, R. (Eds.). (1999). *Perspectives on activity theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Eschbach, K. (1999). Death at the border. *International Migration Review*, 33(2).
- Fine, M. (1991). *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban high school*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. (Colin Gordon, Ed.). Pantheon Books: New York.
- Foucault, M. (1986). Of other spaces. *Diacritics*, 16, 22-27.
- Freire, P. (1990). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.
- Gandhi, L. (1988). *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Garcia, E. (2001). *Hispanic education in the United States: Raices y alas*. New York: Rowan and Littlefield.
- Giroux, H. A. (1981). *Ideology, culture, and the process of schooling*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Giroux, H. A. (1983). *Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy opposition*. New York: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.
- Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Schooling and the struggle for public life: Critical pedagogy in the modern age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Goldstein, T. & Selby, D. (2000). Introduction. In T. Goldstein & D. Selby. (Eds.), *Weaving Connections: Educating for Peace, Social and Environmental Justice*. Toronto: Sumach Press, 11-26.
- Goodman, S. (2003). *Teaching youth media: A critical guide to literacy, video production & social change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gutierrez, K. (2000). Teaching and learning in the 21st century. *English Education*, 32(4), 290-298.
- Gutierrez, K., Baquedano-Lopez, P., & Tejada, C. (2000). Rethinking diversity: Hybridity and hybrid language practices in the third space. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 6(4), 286-303.
- Hamnett, C. (1996). *Social geography: A reader*. New York: Arnold.
- Heron, J. & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 274-294.
- Haron, P. & King, D. (1985). *Expert systems*. New York: Wiley.
- Hurtado, A. (1989). Relating to privilege: Seduction and reflection in the subordination of white women and women of color. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41(41), 833-855.
- Jeffries, R. B. & Singer, L. C. (2003). Successfully educating urban American Indian students: An alternative school format. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 42(3), 40-57.
- Kallio, B. R., & Sanders, E. T. W. (1999). An alternative school collaboration model. *American Secondary Education*, 28(2), 27-36.
- Kay, A. (1996). Revealing the elephant: The use and misuse of computers in education. *Sequence*, 31(4), 1-2.
- Keith, M. & Pile, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Place and the politics of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Kellmayer, J. (1995). *How to establish an alternative school*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

- Kim, J. (2006). *A narrative inquiry into the lives of at risk students in an alternative high school: The experienced curriculum and the hidden curriculum*. Proquest.
- Lee, V. & Burkam, D. (2002). *Inequality at the starting gate: Social background differences in achievement as children begin school*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Cambridge: Blackwell. (Original work published in 1974).
- Leistyna, P., Woodrum, A., & Sherblom, S. A. (Eds.). (1996). *Breaking Free: The transformative power of critical pedagogy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review, Reprint Series No. 27.
- Levinson, B. A. & Holland, D. (1996). The cultural production of the educated person: An introduction. In Bradley A. Levinson, Douglas E. Foley, and Dorothy C. Holland (Eds.), *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Liggett, H. & Perry, D. C. (Eds.). (1995). *Spatial Practices: Critical explorations in social/spatial theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd edition). London: Sage Publications, 163-188.
- Loder, T. (2006). Why can't we leave public schools behind: The inseparable legacy of public education and American democracy? *Educational Researcher* 35(5), 30-35.
- Lopez, D., Popkin, E., & Tellez, E. (1996). Central Americans: At the bottom, struggling to get ahead. In R. Waldinger & M. Bozorgmehr (Eds.), *Ethnic Los Angeles* (pp. 279-304). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Macedo, D. (1994). *Literacies of power: What Americans are not allowed to know*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Manning, M. L. & Baruth, L. G. (1995). *Students at risk*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- McGee, J. (2001). Reflection of an alternative school administrator. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(8), 588-591.
- McLaren, P. (1988). On ideology and education: Critical pedagogy and the politics of education. *Social Text* (19&20), 153-185.
- McLaren, P. (1995). *Critical pedagogy and predatory culture: Oppositional politics in a postmodern era*. New York: Routledge.
- McLaren, P. (1997). *Revolutionary multiculturalism: Pedagogies of dissent for the new millennium*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- McLaren, P. (1998). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education*. 3rd ed. New York: Longman.
- McLaren, P. & Frahmndpur, R. (2000). Critical multiculturalism and globalization: Transgressive pedagogies in gringolandia. In C. Tejada, C. Martinez, & Z. Leonardo, (Eds.), *Charting new terrains of Chicana(o)/Latina(o) education*. Cresskill: Hampton Press.
- Menchaca, M. (1997). Early racist discourses: Roots of deficit thinking. In R. Valencia (Ed.), *The evolution of deficit thinking*. New York: Falmer Press.
- Menchaca, M. (1999). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the racialization of the Mexican population. In Jose F. Moreno (Ed.), *The elusive quest for equality: 150 years of Chicano/Latina education* (pp. 3-29). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review.
- Moll, L. (2000). Inspired by Vygotsky: Ethnographic experiments in education. In C. Lee & P. Smagorinsky (Eds.), *Vygotskian perspectives on literacy research: Constructing meaning through collaborative inquiry* (pp. 256-268). New York: Cambridge University Press.

## Social Justice and Democracy

- Mongia, P. (Ed.). (1996). *Contemporary postcolonial theory: A reader*. New York: Arnold.
- Moore-Gilbert, B. (1997). *Postcolonial theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. New York: Verso.
- Nevarez la Torre, A. (1997). Influencing Latino Education: Church-based community programs. *Education and Urban Society*, 30(1), 58-74.
- Ogbu, J. (1978). Understanding cultural diversity and learning. *Educational Researcher* 21, 8, 5-14, and 24.
- Olson, M. (2000). Curriculum as a multistoried process. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 25(3), 169-187.
- Ortiz, V. (1996). The Mexican-origin population: Permanent working class or emerging middle class? In R. Waldinger & M. Bozorgmehr (Eds.), *Ethnic Los Angeles* (pp. 247-278). New York: Russell Sage.
- Ovando, C. J. & Collier, V. P. (1988). *Bilingual and ESL classrooms: Teaching in multicultural contexts* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Padilla, A. M. (1995). *The new second generation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pardo, M. (1990). Mexican American women grassroots community activists: "Mothers of East Los Angeles." *Frontiers*, 11(1), 1-7.
- Pasco, R. J. (2003). *Capital and opportunity: A critical ethnography of students at risk*. Lanham MD: University of Press of America.
- Perez, E. (1999). *The decolonial imaginary: Writing Chicanas into history*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Phelan, P., Davidson, A. L., & Yu, H. C. (1993). Students' multiple worlds: Navigating the borders of family, peer, and school cultures. In P. Phelan & A. L. Davidson (Eds.), *Renegotiating cultural diversity in American schools* (pp. 52-88). New York: Teachers College.
- Pizarro, M. (1999). "Adelante!" Toward social justice and empowerment in Chicano/a studies. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is ... race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education* (pp. 53-82). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Prenskly, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1-2.
- Raywid, M. A. (1995). Alternatives and marginal students. In M. Wang & M. Reynolds. (Eds.), *Making a difference for students at risk: Trends and alternatives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 119-155.
- Ramirez, R. & de la Cruz, P. G. (2002). *The Hispanic population in the United States: March 2002*, Current Population Reports, P20-545. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau.
- Rivera, K. (1999). Popular research and social transformation: A community-based approach to critical pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 485-500.
- Rodriguez, R. J. (1999). *In search of high academic achievement: The policy drive to end social promotion*. Washington, DC: National Council of La raza, 1-5. (<http://nclr.policy.net/proactive>).
- Romero, M., Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. & Ortiz, V. (Eds.). (1997). *Challenging fronteras: Structuring Latina and Latino lives in the U.S.* New York: Routledge.
- Rose, G. (1993). *Feminism and geography: The limits of geographical knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rosen, C. L. & Ortego, P. D. (1969). *Problems and strategies in teaching the language arts to Spanish speaking Mexican Americans*. ERIC (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED025368).
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin.

- San Miguel, G. (1987). The status of historical research on Chicano education. *Review of Educational Research*, 57(4), 467-480.
- Saunders, J. A. & Saunders, E. J. (2002). Alternative school students' perceptions of past [traditional] and current [alternative] school environments. *The High School Journal*, 85(2), 12-23.
- Schutz, A. & Harris, I. (2001). The fragility of community and function: A snapshot of an alternative school in crisis. *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 14(1), 39-53.
- Singh, A. & Schmidt, P. (2000). *Postcolonial theory and the United States: Race ethnicity and literature*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.
- Soja, E. (1989). *Postmodern geographies: The reassertion of space in critical and imagined places*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Soja, E. (1996). *Third space: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real and imagined places*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Solorzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 24, 5-19.
- Solorzano, D. (1998). Critical race theory, racial and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11, 121-136.
- Solorzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2000). Toward a critical race theory of Chicana and Chicano education. In C. Tejeda, C. Martinez, & Z. Leonardo (Eds.), *Charting new terrains of Chicana(o)/Latina(o) education*. Cresskill: Hampton Press.
- Spain, D. (1992). *Gendered spaces*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Spring, J. (1994). *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in the United States*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Spruck, H., & Powrie, J. (2005). "Finally, I'm getting it": Report on the national youth literacy demonstration project. Literacy BC 2005.
- Stanton-Salazar, R. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review*, 67(1), 1-40.
- Stringfield, S. & Land, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Educating at-risk students: One hundred-first yearbook of the national society for the study of education, Part II*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Stromquist, N. P. & Monkman, K. (Eds.). (2000). *Globalization and education: Integration and contestation across cultures*. Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlehead.
- Treimen, D. & Lee, H. (1996). Income differences among 31 ethnic groups in Los Angeles. In J. Baron, D. Grusky, & D. Treiman (Eds.), *Social differentiation and social inequality: Essays in Honor of John Pock* (pp. 37-82). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Tyner, K. (1998). *Literacy in a digital world: Teaching and learning in the age of information*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Vega, W. (1995). *The study of Latino families: A point of departure*. In R. Zambrana (Ed.), *Understanding Latino families* (pp. 3-17). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. M. Cole & U. J. Steiner (Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wertsch, J. (1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

## Social Justice and Democracy

- Wertsch, J. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs*. Franborough, England: Saxon House.
- Willms, J. (2003). *Student engagement at school: A sense of belonging and participation*. Report for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Wink, J. (1997). *Critical pedagogy: Notes from the real world*. New York: Longman.
- Wotherspoon, T. & Schissel, B. (2001). The business of placing Canadian children and youth “at risk.” *Canadian Journal of Education*, 26(3), 321-339.