

Guiding White Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers toward Critical Pedagogy: Utilizing Counter-Cultures in Teacher Education

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This essay documents a few key examples of the critical pedagogy and curriculum that we employ to challenge pre-service and in-service teachers to consider the concrete and theoretical contexts of taking on a social-activist-teacher persona. Our vision of social justice is rooted firmly in the critical tradition, as it is anchored in excavating unjust social and economic formations that imperil the vast majority of the world's population, while concomitantly empowering the economic elite. Not only do we believe that teacher educators must take the lead in helping their students recognize the social, political, and economic forces creating injustice in schools and in the wider society, but they must help current and future teachers develop emancipatory visions of how to develop instructional designs, collaborate with educators, and engage in activist initiatives which have the potential to eliminate social inequalities and build institutional

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structures based on democracy, equity, and fairness (McLaren, 2005). Like many teacher educators, we have worked in institutions where almost 95% of the teacher education students have self-identified as “White.” Because of the difficulties of working with this nearly ubiquitous at-risk group (at risk for acting as oppressors), we focus our attention in this essay on the challenges White in-service and pre-service teachers pose to practicing critical pedagogy.

Although some of our former students have come to take a critical stance toward North America’s social and economic systems that operate to privilege the few at the expense of many, and promote equity and social justice across the various elementary and secondary content areas, we, like many critical teacher educators, find the task of educating White pre-service and in-service teachers—echoing Freire (2005)—to “read the word and the world” and create socially-just educational projects that play an active role in building an equalitarian society rewarding even as it is often daunting (Cross, 2005; Porfilio & Yu, 2006; Sleeter, 2002). Schools of education are still very traditional in their approach to preparing K-12 teachers, (Cochran-Smith, 2004) as they (mis)inform students that “schooling is unequivocally a good thing serving the best interests of individual students, marginalized students, and the culture in general” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 4). They often remain silent on how the larger structures of power are bent on generating asymmetrical social and economic relationships.

Moreover, as neoliberal policies, logics, and practices have infiltrated the way in which we prepare schoolteachers, over the past decade, more of them, echoing Macedo (1994), have become “stupefied” (Macedo as cited in Kincheloe, 2004). For example, corporatist teaching preparation has churned out and continues to prepare a sizable amount of pre-service teachers. The preparation is characterized by fast-track alternative programs, some of which do not require teacher candidates to take one course in the field of education. Several corporately-sponsored programs have also been designed by clinical “educational” conglomerates, such as Sylvan Education and Kaplan Inc, which attract mid-career changers and post-baccalaureate students who yearn to gain their teaching credentials as quickly as possible.¹ There are also several alternate route programs,² such as Troops for Teachers, Transition to Teaching, Passport to Teaching, and Teach for America, that allow future teachers to bypass some of the “burdensome requirements” associated with traditional forms of teacher certification (Kumashiro, 2008). The chief aims of commercialized and alternative teacher education are to maximize profits and/or to inculcate pre-service teachers to embrace beliefs, ideals, and teaching methods in line with perpetuating the status quo in schools and society, rather than helping them understand the “complexities of educational practice and an understanding of and commitment to a socially just, democratic notion of schooling” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 50).

When critical scholars are provided the outlet to nudge White pre-service and in-service teachers to critically examine the power they accrue due to their racial class status, to guide them to examine the social institutions, unjust practices, and policies that are responsible for breeding social inequalities in schools and in soci-

ety, and to provide them pedagogical blueprints in which schoolteachers pass their critical understanding of the world to K-12 students (Fasbinder 2007, p. 6), they often face resistance or downright hostility from their students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Sleeter, 2002). For some White students, critical scholarship that focuses on what fuels social and educational inequalities and on how they are afforded unearned entitlements and privileges due to their racial status may never stir them to go beyond seeing events unfolding in their lives, in schools, and across the globe on an individual level (Marx, 2004; McIntyre, 1997; Sleeter, 1992, 2002). They hold firmly to salutary discourses, generated in schools, the media, and other social contexts, which collectively reify the notion that North America's social systems are open, fair, and democratic. Consequently, they tend to "blame the victim" for performing poorly in school or for debilitating conditions permeating racialized apartheid schools and their surrounding communities (Kozol, 2005).

On the other hand, some students abandon becoming critical pedagogues because they fear facing reprisals from parents, administrators, and colleagues for going against the "official knowledge" taught in most elementary and secondary classrooms or for employing "controversial" teaching methods that are designed to liberate students rather than control them (Apple, 2004). In any event, many anti-oppressive scholars document that some White pre-service teachers "consistently resist, reject, and obscure notions of their own privileged positions" and adhere to their entrenched notions of the purposes of schooling, functions of society, and role of educators, despite enrolling in courses that promote social justice and equity in schools and in the globalized world (Butin 2005, p. 110).

Two Critical Pedagogues in a Commercialized Environment: Our Motivation for This Pedagogical Approach

Exposing White pre-service teachers to the lyrics and cultural work generated by hip-hop and punk pedagogues became a central focus in our current issues and trends in education course only after we became cognizant three years ago that the theoretical scholarship, along with fieldwork opportunities provided to students within K-12 schools, did not help them develop the skills, knowledge, and courage to teach for personal and social transformation. The fast-track and clinical nature of our program means that pre-service teachers enroll in 36 graduate hours of coursework, complete 150 hours of field observations in K-12 classrooms, and simultaneously work part-time or full-time jobs and become certified teachers in just two academic semesters. Consequently, our students have little time to critically reflect upon the theoretical scholarship proffered by several transformative scholars, such as Giroux (2004), Kincheloe (2004), Kozol (2005), McLaren (2005), and Sleeter (2002), that we incorporate to help them understand the sorting function of schooling, recognize the unearned privileges they accrue from their racial status, and detect the constitutive forces and social actors responsible for breeding poverty and oppression within the urban context in which they mentor and tutor K-12 chil-

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dren. With the little amount of time students had to reflect upon the coursework, we found they would prioritize focusing on “practical” knowledge. They believed this would best prepare them to “survive” in K-12 classrooms (Porfilio & Yu, 2006).

Unlike social theorists who often use language that is inaccessible to some pre-service teachers when pinpointing the policies, practices, and social actors responsible for oppression in schools and in society, hip-hop and punk artists generally convey similar critical insights in a style that is accessible for these future educators. The pedagogues’ cultural texts often reflect the lived realities of youth who have dealt with systemic oppression, marginalization, and discrimination on an everyday basis within schools and in the wider society. Their alternative narratives appeal to students who have not been exposed to social justice literature or who have not experienced oppression, since the authors call for the audience to “see injustices and their consequences through the eyes of real people” (Hyttén & Bettez, this volume). Since our students are more apt to incorporate knowledge in classrooms that has been “proven” to foster the intellectual and social growth of K-12 students, we also decided to document specific ways in which schoolteachers have used alternative youth cultures to aid youths in their understanding of what causes racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia, while concomitantly improving students’ reading and writing skills, increasing student test scores and attendance, and producing “well-rounded, civic minded community members” (Runell, 2006).

In the pages that follow, we detail our use of alternative countercultural formations—specifically, hip hop and punk—with predominately White pre-service teachers—to capture the strengths and limitations of this pedagogical approach in relation to helping them become cognizant of the socially mediated nature of their identities and experiences, of what larger forces create institutional forms of oppression in schools and in society, and of what ingredients are needed to build pedagogical projects that instill a “passion to know” in their students, subvert unjust social formations, and help build an egalitarian society (Freire, 2005). Certainly, we do not provide this pedagogical approach as a “magic bullet” to teacher educators and other university scholar-practitioners that will necessarily guide White prospective teachers to possess the critical insight and desire to teach for personal and social transformation. There exists “no single method” to help White students understand the relationship between power and knowledge and “the extent of their privilege,” as there is “no single pedagogical mechanism that is sufficient in helping teachers meet the challenges of working with culturally diverse students” (Hill, 2007). However, we agree with Weiler (2002) that critiquing various forms of youth cultural manifestations, along with treating students as subjects rather than objects in classrooms and “analyzing social inequality,” are central components in preparing current and future teachers to become stewards of cultural and social transformation inside and outside of their classrooms.

**Our First Attempt:
The Early Punk and Hip-Hop Movements
and Promoting Critical Understanding of the Social World**

At the outset of our critical issues and trends in education course, we begin preparing students to think about how larger macro-level economic and social forces impact developments in schools, in other social contexts, and in their own lived worlds. The examination unfolds by capturing how transnational capitalists and Western government officials implemented policies and practices as well as harnessed various forms of speed technologies to spread their ideologies, logics, and relationships to so-called ‘Third World’ regions from the 1970s until the present. The pernicious impact of deindustrialization, the globalization of capital, and neoliberalism was felt in working-class communities across the globe. Specifically, in the U.S., the Reagan administration further amplified the suffering of working-class families who dealt with bouts of joblessness or lost jobs permanently. This administration instituted drastic cuts in social services, increased the amount of police surveillance, and put into place “get tough” strategies against crime in urban communities (Elias, 1994; Devine, 1996; Giroux, 1998). Furthermore, corporate and political leaders created mean-spirited discourses to lull the public to place blame on minoritized citizens for the deterioration of their communities, instead of highlighting their complicity in enacting policies and supporting institutional arrangements tied to breeding “more crime, more fear of crime, more racism, and sexism, and more desperation” (Elias, 1994). The growing police presence also was designed to quell dissent by citizens who held the critical insight to recognize the policies enacted by Reagan, Thatcher, and pro-capitalists economists, such as Friedrich August von Hayek and Milton Freedman, signaled the beginning of the transnational elite’s plan to commodify all social life (McLaren, 2005).

Next, students learn that punk and hip hop were formulated by youths at this socio-historical moment, largely as an intuitive response to the downsizing of their futures and struggles they often confronted on the streets by police officials. Hip hop drew breath in New York City’s Afro-American, Latin, and Afro-Caribbean working-class communities during 1970s and 1980s, while punk rock was simultaneously born out of the rubble of Los Angeles’ “White” and Latina/o barrios (Cohen, 1980; Dancis, 1978; Dimitriadis, 1996; Malott & Peña, 2004; Prier, 2009). By examining the lyrics of hip-hop and punk artists, our students gain a better sense of how the larger constitutive forces wrought social and economic dislocation for urban youths during this time period. For instance, in “Kill the Poor,” the San Francisco punk band, the Dead Kennedys, speak to how Western politicians and business leaders became fixated on perpetuating a nuclear arms race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and on rolling back social entitlements for working-class citizens during the late-1970s. Over a decade later, New York hip-hop artists PE’s (Public Enemy) music shows how the state’s policies of over-policing, gutting of

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social provisions for the poor, and elimination of blue-collar jobs further oppressed African Americans. In “Night of the Living Baseheads,” the group suggests the dire economic conditions, militant forms of policing, draconian get “tough on crime” measures were linked to the proliferation of urban residents selling crack cocaine in the late-1980s; in turn, many residents became addicted to the drug, while urban communities became further decimated (Capper, 2006; Prier, 2009). PE and other rap artists such as KRS-ONE created additional tracks which help White future teachers see the “realities of Reaganism such as the phenomenon of (minoritized) youth moving from overcrowded and under-funded schools to overcrowded and well-funded prisons” (Viola, 2006a).

We also illustrate how the neoliberal agenda impacted social contexts outside of the U.S. and how minoritized youth responded similarly to the unjust realities sundering their social worlds. For instance, we document how the social and economic conditions during the 1980s deteriorated in France, when large-scale corporations outsourced permanent blue-collar work and other low-income jobs to so-called “Third-World” regions. An environment of “depressed sterility” became further magnified, especially for youth who lived in housing projects in the *banlieues*, when the French government pushed the youth and their families on the margins of society (Silverstein, 2002, p. 50). The elite ironically blamed them for the very deleterious economic and social conditions that they themselves created through instituting neoliberal policies in France and across former French colonies. Some *banlieue* youth responded to their social and economic marginalization by forging a countercultural movement that not only appropriated some of the critical elements of U.S. hip-hop culture, but also reflected their own critical insights of how the state’s economic and social policies were the source of their marginalization and alienation (Porfilio & Porfilio, 2009). In fact, by 1985, French hip-hop artists began to incorporate rap into their repertoire of expressing themselves. Artists, such as Suprême NTM, Assassin, Ministère AMER, and A.L.A.R.M.E., who view themselves as “hardcore,” released albums to denounce what they saw as “the social and economic exploitation of marginal groups and individuals in French society” (Bocquet & Pierre-Adolphe as cited in Prevos, 2002, p. 9).

We also make it clear to our students that many of the early hip-hop and punk artists believed that their cultural expressions were somewhat limited in trying to confront the institutions and social actors responsible for their marginalization. They felt that they had to work actively with artists, activists, and other youth in their communities and across other social contexts so as to build cultural movements that would be capable of overturning oppressive social relationships across the globe. For instance, punk artists implemented a pedagogical approach that has come to be known as DIY, or Do It Yourself, that is, creating something new within the remains of the old, such as small fanzines, record labels, bands, styles, modes of analysis, and ultimately a movement and way of life. DIY has, therefore, served as a rallying cry for those punk rockers who take pride in surviving against an economic social structure that does not serve their own interests (Haworth,

2009; Malott & Peña, 2004). In juxtaposition, hip-hop artists rallied collectively against police brutality, denounced black-on-black crime, and spoke freely on topics ranging “from ethnic studies to racism in education to affirmative action to college admissions” (Woodson, 2006).

Our students react very differently too often to their first critical examination of Western social and economic institutions, and to witnessing how disaffected youths react intelligently against the structures of power responsible for generating unjust policies and practices that debilitate their lives as well as the lives of other global citizens. Nevertheless, at this point in the course, nearly every semester, we find that there are some common ways in which students respond to our pedagogy. For some students, it is arduous for them to conceptualize how the discussions and the examination of the artists’ cultural artifacts are linked to being effective schoolteachers. They tend to view the role of a teacher as a “neutral” mediator, one who lacks the right to take a stand in the classroom about salient issues impacting the globe, let alone detail how concerned citizens work actively to combat oppressive practices instituted by social and economic institutions. Some of them start to reevaluate their position when we detail how every curriculum is politically motivated and has “certain convictions about the world” (Bigelow & Peterson 2002, p. 5). Therefore, they learn that teachers never develop a “neutral” curriculum, as it is either for changing the world or keeping the same institutional arrangements in place (p. 5).

Some of our students focus on the oppressive elements within the countercultural movements. They point to music, within the subcultures, that is misogynistic, homophobic, promotes violence and drug use, and benefits many White corporate executives who sell the cultural texts to the public. They overlook the socially-conscious ideals located within music and the progressive actions taken by some hip-hop and punk pedagogues for the purpose of building a better world. In response, we encourage students to interrogate the value of all cultural texts and countercultural movements. We have open discussions on “how much of (these movements) perpetuate dominant values both today and yesterday” (Malott & Pena, 2004, p. 54). In fact, by focusing on how elements of punk rock and hip hop have become commodified and co-opted by the economic elite, our students generate a critical lens to understand how large-scale corporations have historically usurped the power of progressive countercultural formations, movements that can lead to progressive social change. We also encourage them to use hip-hop and punk music to engage youths in similar discussions, which focus on issues and concerns pervading their lives, such as drug use, violence, homophobia, sexism, social and economic disparities, racial and class tensions, and the “deferment of the American dream” (Kitwana as cited in Kincheloe, 2004). Additionally, we show students throughout the course (as discussed below), there are several critically-minded artists who serve as beacons for critical enlightenment for schoolteachers and youths at today’s historical moment.

Finally, there tends to be a group of students who question whether some of the same social and economic problems that existed during the 1970s and 1980s are alive and well today. This is where we direct students to how the globalization

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of capital, along with the implementation of neo-liberal policies and practices, has become hyper-intensified in the course of the past 15 years. Here, we use the music of hip-hop and punk artists as well as the intellectual efforts of critical pedagogues to illustrate how the neoliberal age has ushered more poverty, pollution, greed, violence and hopelessness across the globe. We also pay special attention to how schools in North America have been altered by the corporatization and militarization of classroom life. For instance, neoliberalism has bludgeoned the humanizing nature of schooling in K-12 public schools in the U.S. in favor of corporatists and militaristic practices, such as high-stakes examinations and scripted-curricula, zero-tolerance policies, military officials within schools who prey upon economically and socially vulnerable youths, and the implementation of business advertisements, arrangements, programs, discourses, and vocational classes. Collectively, they have positioned more working-class students to drop out of schools, to fill dead-end, service oriented jobs, and perpetuate the growing school-to-prison pipeline (Anyon & Nolan, 2004; Casella, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Kozol, 2005).

The Movement Continues: Hip-Hop and Punk Pedagogues' Music for Personal and Cultural Transformation

Contemporary artists such as Brooklyn's Dead Prez (DP), who has emerged as one of the leading voices in hip-hop's cultural and material revolution, have pushed our students to get beyond seeing educational structures through the prism of Whiteness—as institutions where students succeed solely by merit and effort (Sleeter, 2002). Through the group's music, students come to recognize how North American schools are set up to “support the interest of the people who have wealth and power” (Chomsky, 2000, pp. 17-18) at the expense of minoritized students and working-class students from the dominant culture. The group's song “They School” has been particularly poignant in illustrating how neoliberal policies and militaristic practices have braided together to perpetuate the sorting function of schooling. Many urban schools in the U.S. are unsafe institutions, which lack resources to hire well-educated teachers, let alone have supplies, textbooks, and space for students. As noted above, the pedagogy in many urban schools is based on silence and control, where teachers are forced to implement corporately-produced curricula and assessments. As a result, they produce “good test takers” and compliant citizens by regulating students' behavior with handheld timers, private security guards, surveillance equipment, and “drill and kill” instruction (Casella, 2008; Kozol, 2005). Consider the words:

School is like a 12 step brainwash camp
They make you think if you drop out you aint got a chance
To advance in life, they try to make you pull your pants up
Students fight the teachers and get took away in handcuffs
And if that wasnt enough, then they expel yall

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Your peoples understand it but to them, you a failure
Observation and participation, my favorite teachers
When they beat us in the head with them books, it dont reach us
—Dead Prez 2000, “They Schools,” Lets Get Free

Outside the context of schooling, many hip-hop and punk artists have focused on bringing awareness to the constitutive forces fueling social inequalities across the planet. For instance, the Coup, coming from California, is the quintessential model of today’s African American revolutionary West Coast U.S. hip hop. Although many of the themes in their music, like Public Enemy, Poor Righteous Teachers, and X Clan, offer pro-Black counter-hegemonic messages, their music lends a more-class based perspective in relation to what causes systemic forms of oppression, such as racism, poverty, classism, sexism, and xenophobia. In “We are the Ones,” the group captures how capitalist relations of production are inextricably tied to breeding oppression and alienation for working-class citizens.

We are born from the mildew, the rust, the heathenous lust
The dreams in the dust, the evidence flushed
The grieving is just, they’re thieving from us
Insulted and cussed, this evening we bust
Appears unstable and under the table

They also call on the working-class to unite against the institutions and leaders responsible for social decay, alienation, and economic dislocation.

We - we are the ones
We’ll seal your fate, tear down your state, go get yo’ guns
We - we came to fight
It’s yo’ disgrace, smash up your place, that’s just polite
—The Coup, 2006, “We are the Ones,” Pick a Bigger Weapon

Similarly, the music offered by contemporary punk pedagogues provides our students a critical commentary in relation to how the corporate-military complex usurps both the labor power and physical bodies of working people as cannon fodder. For instance, Anti Flag’s “911 for Peace” is a rallying cry against the U.S.’s push to “turn the carnage inflicted by the world’s most fearsome military machine into a mass graveyard for evil-doers and those who have been deemed enemies of (North American) civilization” (McLaren 2005, p. 2). They state:

Isn’t everybody tired of the fighting?
Isn’t everybody tired of the killing?
Isn’t everybody tired of the dying?
Isn’t everybody tired of the hatred?
—Anti Flag, 2002, “911 for Peace,” Mobilize

New York City’s Leftover Crack provides a similar theoretical perspective as Anti-Flag and the Dead Kennedys, as to what fuels unjust social formations. However, the band connects the current neoliberal policies and practices instituted

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by transnational corporations and political leaders to the system of colonialism put into operation by European powers over 500 years, which was predicated on conquering territories and resources of the Other (Malott, 2008).

It aint a mystery
That U.S. history
Was built upon the graves
Of Native ways and beaten slaves...

The World Bank and the IMF have created a system of modern day colonialism that make the people of the developing world poorer and the multi-national corporations richer and take the power away from all of us.

—Leftover Crack 2004, “Super Tuesday,” Fuck World Trade

Native Guns, a Filipino-American rap group, also provides an important critique of how the globalization of capital and neoliberalism are creating a dire situation for peoples in so called ‘Third World’ regions. The group sings about how neoliberalism has fueled “social conditions that have left” many communities in these regions devastated, as well as document the harsh realities faced by many U.S. immigrants. Many cultural groups are positioned to migrate to the U.S. because of the aforesaid forces so as to procure economic resources for themselves and their communities (Viola, 2006a). They also call for oppressed peoples across the globe to formulate a revolutionary movement in response to an out of control transnational elite, a united front which is predicated on love, freedom and justice. They state:

We want freedom
We want something to be proud of.
When it comes down to it,
Revolution’s all about love.
The kind of love that one would give up their life for,
So that their family won’t ever die poor

—Native Guns as cited in Viola, 2006a

After examining some of the socially-conscious music produced by punk and hip-hop pedagogues, some students reflect honestly about how they, unlike the critical artists across the globe, accrue unearned privileges based upon their skin color and class status. For instance, students commonly remark how their race and skin color shield them from attending militarized, dilapidated, and prison-like educational structures. Being from privileged backgrounds also ensured that their teachers held high academic expectations for them, that they were not blamed for their “schools’ failure on standardized exams, and that they had the opportunity to enroll in classes that prepared them for college. Our students also talk candidly about how their skin color and class status—rather than their effort or intellect—were the chief factors why they were never homeless, never faced over-policing of their communities, never encountered police brutality, never faced reprisals for being an “immigrant,” or never felt compelled to join the US military.

Despite many students’ newfound awareness that the dominant narratives of color-blindness and meritocracy have been designed to keep in place the institutional

arrangements that marginalize many of the world's citizens, while affording them and their family members' unearned privileges, some students raise concerns in relation to using hip hop and punk as a form of revolutionary pedagogy in K-12 classrooms. They believe that if they embrace this pedagogy, they will not be able to secure employment. Or, they may be socially ostracized by their peers or face reprisals from parents, guardians or administrators. On the other side of the spectrum, some students become quite enthused about the prospect of implementing both countercultures. For instance, they have shared with us and their peers some "underground" bands who write songs about similar themes as the artists mentioned above. They also start thinking of ways of weaving the musicians' cultural texts into K-12 content areas. They develop lesson plans containing music of artists that lends understanding of what gives rise to systemic forms of oppression as well as documents how to build collective acts of resistance against unjust social and economic formations.

However, we do not feel that sharing the emancipatory music of the artists is sufficient for positioning pre-service and in-service teachers to rid schools and the wider world of hate, violence, and discrimination. Therefore, it is here where we illustrate to our students how they and their students can contribute, outside of classrooms, to excavating institutional arrangements and unjust practices that are responsible for our increasingly morally bankrupt world. We examine the community activism of hip-hop and punk artists as guideposts for possible paths of dissent (Viola, 2006b). They are actions that can lead us beyond the current social and economic malaise, to build a world predicated on the foundations of justice, equity, and democracy (McLaren, 2005).

Going Beyond the Lyrics:

Hip Hop and Punk Artists Living and Working as Activists

For instance, the Coup's Boots Riley has joined forces with an activist organization Music for America (MFA) to "urge young people to get involved in the political process" (Epitaph, 2006). The hip-hop artist holds various speaking engagements, where he highlights policies and practices that foster corporate and militaristic imperatives at the expense of urban youths and communities. For instance, he has critiqued the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) 2001 Act which "requires schools to grant access to student information and to school ground activities" (Jordan, 2003). He tells students that they are entitled to sign the opt-out provision of the act, which prevents the military from garnering their personal information. He also highlights the problematic nature of U.S. foreign policy and the military's power to use institutions of learning to cajole disaffected youths into battle. He states, "Public schools can't out of one side of their mouth, tell students that they want them to have a bright future after high school and out of the other side of their mouth tell them it's okay for them to go kill and die for a profit-making war machine." Riley has also conversed with youths about the growing need to have militant unions in

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North America, as service-oriented, dead-end jobs keep people struggling across urban and rural communities in “their everyday existence,” unable to provide food, clothing, medical care or shelter for their families (Epitaph, 2006).

Public Enemy is continuing in their quest to “fight the power” for the sake of forging a democratic society. PE founder, Chuck D, has utilized the radio and television airwaves to condemn the US’s involvement in Iraq. His talk show (co-hosted with Gia’na Garell) *On the Real* also serves as a forum to discuss salient social and political issues with people who embrace the progressive spirit associated with early transformative hip-hop artists. For instance, the show helped to educate youths about the inherent racism and classism in Washington’s response (or lack thereof) to one of the worst tragedies—Hurricane Katrina—faced by impoverished and working-class Black citizens in the U.S. He also linked the tragedy to the Bush administration’s desire to rollback social entitlements for the millions of whom they considers “disposable” citizens.

Along with providing a space for listeners to voice their concerns and ideas on the crisis, Chuck D composed a poem for his listeners, which was eventually turned into the band’s song “Hell No We Ain’t Right.” Here, the band expresses their outrage at the U.S. government, the world’s fixation on commodities, and stark conditions facing working-class people across the globe. The band aptly labels today’s socially, politically, and economically toxic environment the “new whirl order”:

New Orleans in the morning, afternoon, and night
Hell No We Ain’t Alright
Now all these press conferences breaking news alerts
This just in while your government looks for a war to win...
Who ain’t even overseas but here on our knees
Forget the plasma TV-ain’t no electricity
New worlds upside down-and out of order
Shelter? Food? Wasssup, where’s the water?
No answers from disaster/ them masses hurtin’
So who the fuck we call?—Halliburton?
—Public Enemy 2005, “Hello Now We Ain’t Alright,” Beats and Places

Chuck D has also shared his insight in relation to social issues at college campuses across North America. In his discussion, “Race, Rap, and Reality,” he has “lambasted America’s anti-intellectualism and its obsession with celebrity. He criticized the lack of substance in today’s rap music and suggested that technology distances us from our fellow man” (Rivers, 2006). Other hip-hop pedagogues have also followed suit by using college campuses to spotlight salient social and political issues impacting life across the globe. Harlem Native, Immortal Technique, held a benefit concert in the Bronx to raise money to pay the court cost and legal fees for the Jena 6—the six Black Louisianan teenage students who were charged for attempted murder after their altercation with a White student. The boy merely “suffered cuts and bruises but was treated and released from a local hospital” (Witt, 2007). The criminal justice system in Louisiana, however, failed to take into account

that the White students who instituted a series of attacks against the six students “escaped serious charges” (Witt, 2007). Citizens in Louisiana also failed to consider the racist environment within the youths’ high school, where White students hung nooses from a tree in the school’s courtyard. They also overlooked the historical roots of racism in this social context, which produced numerous hate crimes against various members of the Black community. Immortal Technique applauds people who march and rally to support the Jena 6. Yet, he feels the public must “speak by enforcing the necessary channels for legal action” (McDowell, 2007).

Pittsburgh’s punk artists Anti-Flag feel it is their ethical obligation to “play the role of educator to fans” about the U.S. government and business leaders’ ‘current war on terrorism’ (Usinger, 2004). Unlike many artists who have taken part on the Warped Tour, Anti-Flag has openly denounced the U.S.’s involvement in Iraq. They have also spoken out (the group’s song “Depleted Uranium Is a War Crime” also confronts the issue) with various activists about how the U.S. government’s use of depleted uranium (DU) is linked to many unexplained illnesses experienced by Gulf War veterans. The band’s guitarist, Justin Sane’s comments capture how the structures of power in North America typically function to secure the interests of capital over the spiritual, intellectual, and material development of humanity. He states, “people who hold power” in the U.S. “act in a manner that is beneficial to large weapons manufacturers, construction firms, etc, but not good for the American people—military or civilian” (Caldwell, 2007).

Not only were the punk band’s shows geared to raise the youths’ consciousness about 9/11, terrorism, and U.S. imperialism, but they were designed to encourage them to take an activist stance against policies and practices that wrought oppression or injustice. In 2004, the band joined other punk activist artists and concerned individuals across the U.S. to create the organization Punk Voter, which provided information to youths about the policies promulgated by the Bush administration and encouraged all citizens to understand the interworkings of the political process (Mushett, 2004; Powers, 2006). The group has been actively involved in several endeavors that they feel will bring about a more just and humane society: They have taken part in Anti-War demonstrations in Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh, backed PETA’s stance for humane treatment of animals by bringing members from the organization to its shows as well as taking part in interviews surrounding animal rights, and joined forces with Rep. Jim McDermott to create an Underground Action Alliance.³ This organization seeks to end military recruitment in public schools in the US.

Former Dead Kennedy’s lead singer, Jello Biafra, remains active in the struggle to dismantle the corporate hegemony over the production of knowledge and control of the world’s resources. In 1999, he organized protests and formed a band (No WTO Combo) to stop the corporate elite’s ubiquitous quest to reap more profits by moving their organizations and relationships across the globe through institutions as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Based on his commitment to civil rights, social justice, anti-globalization, the New York State Green Party drafted him as a candidate for the U.S. Presidency (Jello Biafra, 2007). Despite a few missed opportunities, he speaks

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regularly to youths across the U.S. about the effects of living in a world predicated on consumption and greed. His activism is also reflected in his organization—Alternative Tentacles. The intellectual unit signs punk artists committed to social activism, distributes books and DVDs by well-known transformative intellectuals, such as Angela Davis, Howard Zinn, and Noam Chomsky. Alternative Tentacles also provides information on current political issues, and builds political networks that expose the corruption tied to corporate conglomerates and to mass media outlets.

Final Assessment:

Alternative Cultural Formations and Their Ability to Guide Current and Future K-12 Teachers to Change the World

As our current issues and trends in education course winds down each term, we reflect collectively on the value of employing the cultural artifacts, along with the emancipatory actions, of hip-hop and punk rock pedagogues for the purposes of helping our White students become cognizant of the political, social, and economic dimensions of schooling, of the larger constitutive forces that are responsible for generating institutional forms of oppression across the planet, and of the power and privileges they accrue in their web of daily affairs due to their racial class status. We also question whether our students continue to examine the hip-hop and punk artists' alternative texts and actions so that they gain a better understanding of how youths' perceive the world. As we believe, an ongoing reflexive process of the cultural formations will help them use hip hop and punk as part of a culturally relevant and engaging education for students.

Overall, we feel hip-hop and punk pedagogy has been instrumental in helping our students uncover how the current social and political realities across the globe and life inside international classrooms are mediated by corporate and military imperatives predicated on commercializing all aspects of our social life (McLaren, 2005). The cultural texts of hip-hop artists have been particularly poignant in nudging our students to view social stratification as a byproduct of economic and social systems that operate to serve the interests of the political and economic elite, rather than as a consequence of an individual's lack of effort or a cultural group's deficiency. They also help them unpack the unearned privileges the larger systems of power confer to them and other White citizens a priori in various social contexts, such as schools, the media, the business world, and various other public spaces in North America.

Consequently, some of our students recognize that they must become school-teachers who are active in the struggle to transform the existing economic and social structures that are constituted to oppress humanity (McLaren, 2005). They also become inspired by the cultural and intellectual work put forth by the aforementioned artists. They feel that through hard work and collective dreaming and effort, it is possible to build democratic schools and an equalitarian society. They also now realize that fighting for freedom is a "process and not as an endpoint" and view themselves as agents of change and hope (Freire 2005, p.70).

For many of our White students, the cultural and intellectual efforts put forth by youths to stamp out injustice in their communities and the globe help them see beyond how larger media outlets continually vilify youths as inherently “violent, dangerous, and pathological,” and frame them as the “source of most of society’s problems” (Giroux, 2004). Not only does the social and political commentary provided by hip-hop and punk artists help them recognize that corporate greed and the growing indifference held towards North America’s young people are at the root of youths’ social problems, it helps them view youths in a newfound light, as individuals who are intelligent, passionate, and concerned about excavating social problems endemic in their schools and in the wider society. In fact, many students find the critical commentary constructed by hip-hop and punk pedagogues on Western imperialism, neoliberalism, and commercialization of schooling more passionate, compelling and just as nuanced as the criticism generated by the educational and social theorists they concomitantly examine in this course.

However, there is a major barrier that prevents many of our students from enacting this brand of revolutionary pedagogy in K-12 classrooms. The dire economic situation that is present in the U.S. has blocked many of our students from landing full-time jobs. Like U.S. companies who have decided to lay off employees or institute hiring freezes, school districts across the U.S. have implements similar cost-effective measures (Walsh, 2009). As a result, many of our former students are serving as contingent labor in some schools, teaching one or two days a week as substitute teachers. Because they hold a marginal role in schools, which affords them little control over what they teach, they currently lack either the power or motivation to incorporate elements of this pedagogy in K-12 classrooms. More problematic is the fact that some of our students have given up their dream to be teachers and are working dead-end, service-oriented jobs.

To be sure, a minority of students resist our pedagogical approach to culture and social change. They hold steadfastly to the traditional conceptions of literacy, knowledge, and pedagogy, which are typically propagated by most professors in schools of education, and hold firmly to the ideals that schools and other social institutions function as fair and democratic contexts, where success is defined by one’s merit and effort. While we give them their fair share of our time as well as attempt to broaden their understanding of how popular culture can empower teachers and students, we refuse to let them dominate our classes by taking away from the democratic impulses that characterize the majority of our students.

Yet, several of our former students have been motivated by this coursework to revamp our society inside and outside K-12 classrooms. For example, some of our students have begun with actions such as writing letters to record companies and politicians. While such actions, it can be argued, are ultimately ineffective in their attempts to convince the powers that be to change their policies, they are effective at providing students with the first step at seeing themselves as participants rather than observers. This step is fundamental in their development as critically literate global citizens. Other examples of their activism include, but are not limited to,

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joining activist organizations and groups, attending demonstrations, publishing critical work, becoming radical scholars, and developing progressive curricula.

In addition, several of our in-service teachers have used hip-hop and punk pedagogy to aid their students in their struggles for self-understanding and social justice. Some have also shared their success stories in our graduate seminars. Their work has motivated future teachers to implement similar pedagogies in their classrooms.

Given current trends in privatization and standardization, which, together, have gutted progressive and democratic dimensions of teacher education, and higher education in general, we believe, that it is more vital than ever to have teacher educators adopt hip-hop and punk artists' cultural artifacts and their activists' endeavors in schools of education, if White pre-service and in-service teachers are to develop a social-activist persona. As we have demonstrated, hip-hop and punk pedagogues have helped many of our students understand the social, political and historical dimensions of schooling, recognize how neoliberal globalization is the chief culprit behind the growing intensity of human suffering, misery, and environmental destruction pervading the planet, unpack the unearned privileges they themselves and other members of the dominant society accrue from their racial class status, and yearn to join other concern citizens in a pro-social movement earmarked to build a more just and humane society. Hopefully, our pedagogical approach, in a small way, will assist other teacher educators and university faculty to guide the next generation of schoolteachers to become stewards of social and personal transformation inside and outside of their classrooms, rather than function as passive workers who get paid to obediently teach in ways that keep in place hegemonic social relationships in schools and in the wider society.

Notes

¹ To further examine the deleterious impact of corporatized arrangements in teacher education, please see P. Hinchey & K. Cadiero-Kaplan. (2005). The future of teacher education and teaching: Another piece of the privatization puzzle. *The Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 3(2).

² Recent data indicates that by the end of 2005, approximately one-third of new teachers in the US were hired "through alternative routes to teacher certification" (Feistritzer, 2006).

³ For more information on the Underground Action Alliance, please examine <http://militaryfreezone.org>

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