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Rethinking Higher Education in a Time of Tyranny?

¿REPENSANDO LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EN UN TIEMPO DE TIRANÍA?

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ABSTRACT

Rethink higher education as a crucial democratic public sphere in times of tyranny and authoritarianism is the main goal of this article. Tyranny and authoritarianism are not just the product of state violence and repression, but also thrive on popular docility, mass apathy, and a flight from moral responsibility. Moreover, democracy is being voted down and aggressively dismantled in many countries around the world. Critical public spheres from public radio to the public schools have been defunded, commercialized, and privatized transforming them from spheres of critical analysis to dumbed-down workstations for a deregulated and commodified culture. In this context, many institutions of higher education are more than willing to name buildings after corporate donors, accept gifts, and allow conservative and corporate funded research centers on their campuses. This paper also provides an overview about what is happening in Trump's America, where democratic governance is required to combat civic illiteracy promoted by so many medias. In conclusion, this work makes recommendations that provide an alternative to some of the oppressive conditions now shaping institutions of higher learning.

Keywords: Higher Education, Democracy, Governance, Critical Thinking.

RESUMEN

El objetivo principal de este artículo es repensar la educación superior como una esfera pública democrática crucial en tiempos de tiranía y el autoritarismo. La tiranía y el autoritarismo no son solo el producto de la violencia y la represión estatal, sino que también prosperan en la docilidad popular, la apatía masiva y la huida de la responsabilidad moral. Además, la democracia se está rechazando y se está desmantelando agresivamente en muchos países del mundo. Las esferas públicas críticas de la radio pública a las escuelas públicas se han desfinanciado, comercializado y privatizado, transformándolas de esferas de análisis crítico a estaciones de trabajo aburridas para una cultura desregulada y mercantilizada. En este contexto, muchas instituciones de educación superior están nombrando edificios acorde a sus donantes corporativos, aceptando regalos y permitiendo centros conservadores de investigación financiados por empresas en sus campus. Este artículo también proporciona una visión general de lo que está sucediendo en la América de Trump, donde se requiere una gobernabilidad democrática para combatir el analfabetismo cívico promovido por los medios de comunicación. Para concluir, este trabajo hace recomendaciones que proporcionan una

alternativa a algunas de las condiciones opresivas que ahora conforman las instituciones de educación superior.

Palabras Clave: Educación Superior, Democracia, Gobernabilidad, Pensamiento Crítico.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the great peace activists of the 20th century extending from Mahatma Gandhi and Paulo Freire to Jane Addams and Martin Luther King Jr. shared a passion for education not as a methodology but as a democratic project. They emphasized producing individuals who believed in education as both a public good and a practice of freedom for inspiring and energizing people to assume a degree of civic courage, social responsibility, and informed agency. Refusing to view education as neutral or reducing it to the instrumental practice of training, they sought to reclaim education as part of a wider struggle to deepen and extend the values, social relations, and institutions of a substantive democracy.

They argued passionately that in the merging of politics and education there was a moment of truth in which education could not be removed from the demand for justice and progressive social change. They understood that tyranny and authoritarianism are not just the product of state violence and repression, but also thrive on popular docility, mass apathy, and a flight from moral responsibility. Each wrote during times of momentous political revolutions when democracy was under siege. In doing so, they recognized and made real a moment of truth about education and its ability to transform how people understand themselves, their relations to others, and the larger world. In the face of massive injustice and indignity, these prophetic voices refused to look away from human suffering, and embraced the possibility for resistance fueled by courage, compassion, and the ability to think otherwise in order to act otherwise.

One of Martin Luther King's great insights lies in his recognition that education provided a bulwark against both ignorance and indifference in the face of injustice. Like Gandhi, he warned people over and over again not to remain silent in the face of racism, militarism, and extreme materialism and argued that "He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it." Of the civil rights era, King warned that "History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.… In the End,

we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends" (Gasman, 2011, parr. 1). These advocates of civic courage and compassion echoed in their words and actions what King called the "fierce urgency of now," reminding us that "tomorrow is today" and that "there is such a thing as being too late" (King, 1967). Let us hope that in the midst of our witness to the current revolt against democracy across the globe, higher education will neither remain silent nor be too late.

Echoing King's belief that American innocence was neither tenable nor forgivable, the great novelist James Baldwin (1985) filled in the missing language of fear and terrorism at the heart of a racist society. His famed "Talk to Teachers," began with an impassioned warning about the times in which he lived, a warning more relevant now than it was when he delivered the speech in 1963. He said: "Let's begin by saying that we are living through a very dangerous time. Everyone in this room is in one way or another aware of that. We are in a revolutionary situation, no matter how unpopular that word has become in this country. The society in which we live is desperately menaced… from within. To any citizen of this country who figures himself as responsible – and particularly those of you who deal with the minds and hearts of young people – must be prepared to "go for broke" (Balswwin, 1985, p. 325).

THE CONTEXT OF AUTHORITARIANISM AND THE ELECTION OF TRUMP

In the context of a worldwide rebellion currently taking place against democracy, dissent, human rights, and justice, I think we need "to go for broke." Authoritarianism is on the rise once again, emerging in countries in which such a politics, in light of the past, has appeared unthinkable and unspeakable. In Hungary, Russia, India, Turkey, and Poland, among other countries, democracy is being voted down and aggressively dismantled. In addition, a new and dangerous moment has emerged in the United States as it becomes clear that an American-style authoritarianism is no longer the stuff of fantasy, fiction, or hysterical paranoia. This summer, in Charlottesville, Virginia hundreds of neo-Nazis marched brandishing torches reminiscent of Hitler's Germany while shouting anti-Semitic, racist and white nationalist slogans such as Heil Trump, and later unleashing an orgy of violence that led to the deaths of three people. Donald Trump, the President of the United States, stated there were good people on both sides of that rally as if good people march with white supremacists and neo-Nazis who revel in hate and bigotry and offer no apologies

for mimicking the actions that resulted in the slaughter of millions during the fascist nightmare of the 1930s and forties.

What does the election of Donald Trump and the rise of illiberal democracies all over the globe suggest about the role of higher education in a time of tyranny? What does the authoritarianism that is emerging in the United States suggest about the need for higher education to "go for broke?" When does silence betray complicity and inaction a moral and intellectual failing? What does it mean to rethink higher education as a crucial democratic public sphere in dangerous times? Clearly such questions have to first address what is happening in Trump's America, a country often seen as, and imagines, itself to be a beacon of freedom and democracy throughout the world.

Donald Trump's ascendancy to the Presidency speaks not only to a profound political crisis but also a tragedy for democracy (Giroux, 2018). His rise to power echoes not only a moral blind spot in the collective American psyche, but also a refusal to recognize how past totalitarian ideas, values, and practices can and have reappeared in different forms in the present. The crystallization of totalitarian elements such as anti-Semitism, ultra-nationalism, militarism, racism, white supremacy, and the return of the demagogue who couples the language of fear, decline, and hate with illusions of national grandiosity have found their apotheosis in the figure of Donald Trump. Trump is the living symbol and embodiment of a political catastrophe made visible in the plague of a growing culture of unbridled and naked selfishness, the systemic erosion of public goods, the collapse of civic institutions, and a ruinous anti-intellectualism that both supports a corrupt political system and exhibits a contempt for facts evidence, and reason that has been decades in the making. There is nothing natural or inevitable about these changes. They are learned behaviors. As shared fears replace any sense of shared responsibility, the American public is witnessing how a politics of racism and hate is transformed into a spectacle of fear, divisiveness, and disinformation.

While numerous forces have led to the election of Donald Trump, it is crucial to ask how a poisonous form of education developed in the larger society that helped produce the toxic formative culture that both legitimated Trump and encouraged so many millions of people to follow him. Part of the answer lies in the right-wing control of the media with its vast propaganda machines such as Fox News, the rise of conservative foundations such as the Koch brothers' various institutes, the ongoing production of anti-public intellectuals, and a

visual culture increasingly dominated by the spectacle of violence and reality TV, all of which provide the swindle of public space. On a more political note, it is crucial to ask how the educative force of the wider culture goes unchallenged in creating a public that embraced Trump's bigotry, narcissism, lies, public history of sexual groping and racism, all the while transforming the citizen as a critical political agent into a consumer of hate and anti-intellectualism.

The institutions that work to free and strengthen the imagination and the capacity to think and act critically have been under assault in the United States long before the rise of Donald Trump. Over the last fifty years, language as an ethical, political, and cultural tool has been denigrated as the democratic institutions that make up civic culture have come under a massive assault by the financial elite who drive the commanding political and cultural forces of neoliberalism. Critical public spheres from public radio to the public schools have been defunded, commercialized, and privatized transforming them from spheres of critical analysis to dumbed-down workstations for a deregulated and commodified culture. News morphs into entertainment as thoughtlessness increases ratings, violence feeds the spectacle, and serious journalism is replaced by empty cosmetic stenographers. Language is pillaged as meaningful ideas, knowledge, and narratives are replaced "by information broken into bits and bytes [along with] the growing emphasis on immediacy and real time responses" (Kakutani, 2010,p?). In the face of this dumbing down of meaning, culture, historical memory, and ethics, critical thinking and the institutions that promote a thoughtful and informed polity disappear into the vast abyss of what might called a disimagination machine. Nuance is transformed into state-sanctioned vulgarity. How else to explain the popularity and credibility of terms such post-truth, fake news, and alternative facts? Masha Gessen (2017) is right in arguing that in the Trump era, language that is used to lie and "validate incomprehensible drivel" not only destroys any vestige of civic literacy, it also "threatens the basic survival of the public sphere."

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN DIGITAL TIMES

We live in a moment of digital time, a time of relentless immediacy, when experience no longer has the chance to crystalize into mature and informed thought. Communication is now reduced to a form of public relations and a political rhetoric that is over heated and over-exaggerated and always over the top. Opinion and sanctioned illiteracy now undermine reason and evidence based arguments. News becomes spectacle and echoes demagoguery rather than

question it. Thinking is disdained and is viewed as dangerous. The mainstream media, with few exceptions, has become an adjunct to power rather than a force for holding it accountable. The obsession with the bottom line and ratings has brought much of the media into line with Trump's disimagination machine wedded to producing endless spectacles and the mind-numbing investment in the cult of celebrity and reality TV (Evans & Giroux, 2016). What kind of democracy is possible when the institutions that are crucial to a vibrant civil society and the notion of the social are vanishing?

As public sector supports also vanish, many institutions of higher education have been left to mimic the private sector, transforming knowledge into a commodity while also eliminating those courses and departments that do not align themselves with a robust bottom line. In addition, as I have mentioned elsewhere, faculty are increasingly treated like Wal-Mart workers and labor relations are increasingly designed "to reduce labor costs and to increase labor servility" (Chomsky, 2015,p?). Under such circumstances, power is concentrated in the hands of a managerial class that too often views education simply through the lens of a market-driven culture that harnesses both matters of governance and teaching and learning to the instrumental needs of the economy. Consequently, democratic and creative visions and the ethical imagination collapse into calls for efficiency, increasing the bottom-line, and a deadening conformity at odds with any viable notion of leadership.

Under this market-driven notion of governance not only do faculty lose their power and autonomy but students are often relegated to the status of customers and clients saddled with high tuition rates and a future predicated on ongoing political uncertainty, economic instability, and ecological peril. In addition, as democratic visions are removed from higher education they are replaced by an obsession with a narrow notion of job-readiness and a cost accounting instrumental rationality. This bespeaks to the rise of what theorists such as the late Stuart Hall called an audit or corporate culture, which serves to demoralize and depoliticize both faculty and students, often relieving them of any larger values other than those that reinforce their own self-interest and retreat from any sense of moral and social responsibility. More specifically, as higher education both denies and actively abandons its role as a democratic public sphere, it tends to provide an education in which the citizen is transformed into a consumer, laying the foundation for the development of self-seeking agents, who inhabit crippling orbits of privatization and are indifferent to the growth of despotic power around them.

RETHINKING HIGHER EDUCATION TO COMBAT CIVIC ILLITERACY

Civic illiteracy has become both a virtue and spectacle in the age of Trump used primarily as a political tool designed to make war on language, meaning, dissent, thinking, and the capacity for critical thought. In an age of information overload, a banal celebrity culture, a society driven by a survival-of-the-fittest ethic, and the concentration of power in the hands of financial and political elite for whom truth and justice are the objects of irrelevance, anti-intellectualism provides a pretense of community and solidarity for those who celebrate ignorance and disdain democracy. This new form of illiteracy does not simply constitute an absence of learning, ideas, or knowledge. Nor can it be solely attributed to what has been called the "smartphone society" (Aschoff, 2015, p?). On the contrary, it is a willful practice and goal used to actively depoliticize people and make them complicit with the forces that impose misery and suffering upon their lives. How else to explain the widespread support for the billionaire populist Donald Trump who proclaims himself a champion of "the poorly educated!" (Stuart, 2016, p?). Trump's endless proliferation of peddled falsehoods, dismissal of scientific evidence, and scorn for any form of criticism as fake news constitutes the bait that fuels his appeal to those who hold intellect, reason, and truth in contempt.

Illiteracy now parades as a virtue rather than a liability and provides both a legitimation and practice for reinforcing what Hannah Arendt has called a "widespread fear of judging" furthering the retreat from any sense of moral and political responsibility (Arendt, 2003, p?). The flight from reason in the new Trump-sanctioned regime of manufactured illiteracy and "alternative facts" is not merely about a retreat from politics, it is also a form of depoliticization and the death of critical agency, particularly in light of the inability to judge rationally in the face of tyranny and authoritarianism.

What happens to democracy when the President of the United States consistently lies? What happens to a society when the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Ben Carson, claims that Obamacare is worse than slavery and 9/ll and often subjects the poor to a culture of shaming? What happens to a society in which 400 families own as much wealth has half the population? What happens to a society that has only 5% of the world's population, but has more than 25% of the world's prison population, making it the world's largest jailer? What kind of society burdens students with thousands of dollars in

debt? What are we to make of a society in which school children as young as 7 years-old are put in hand cuffs and ushered into the criminal justice system for acting out, doodling on a desk, or violating a dress code? (Crunden, 2017). Under such circumstances, democracy withers and dies under the weight of its growing lawlessness and anti-democratic tendencies.

If critical reflection, the powers of discernment, informed judgment, and a range of competencies "in matters of truth and goodness and beauty" are essential to create individual and social agents, what visions should guide higher education and what pedagogical work should educators perform at a time when the United States and many other liberal democracies are tipping over into the deep abyss of authoritarianism (Wieseltier, 2015). What work do educators have to do to create the economic, political, and ethical conditions necessary to endow young people and the general public with the capacities to think, question, doubt, imagine the unimaginable, and defend education as essential for inspiring and energizing the citizens necessary for the existence of a robust democracy? What kind of language is necessary for educators to teach young people to challenge a Trump- inspired discourse that is not only vulgar and dehumanizing, but flattens and empties words and sentences of any viable and noble meaning? By subordinating education to the market based ideology, values and practices of casino capitalism, higher education has turned in on itself replicating its worse features and in doing has pillaged its most noble democratic ideals and visions.

If Trump's maligning of language has polluted the public sphere, higher education has done too little to teach its students how to resist this assault on their humanity, dignity, and democracy itself. Recovering words, values, and ideals that have real meaning for a democracy will demand that higher education reclaim its mission as a democratic public sphere, one that enables faculty students to imagine a different future than one that echoes the present, to confront the unspeakable, to recognize themselves as critical agents rather than victims, and to muster up the courage to act in the service of a substantive and inclusive democracy? In a world in which there is an increasing retreat from democracy and social responsibility, what will it take to educate young people to challenge authority, hold power accountable and be willing to challenge the growing authoritarianism in the United States and elsewhere?

Under the regime of Donald Trump, there is a deepening crisis of agency, memory, and justice. At the same time, as E.J. Dionne Jr., Norman J. Ornstein,

and Thomas E. Mann (2017, p. 288) argue, one "of the most disturbing aspects of Trumpism…is its dark pessimism about liberal democracy, an open society and the achievements of the American Experiment." As the most crucial institutions of civil society are downsized, education loses its power to prepare students and others to learn the skills, knowledge, and values necessary form they to both influence the conditions that bear down on their lives and are vital for a democracy. As public spaces lose their meaning, language is stripped down and unable to provide the norms that give substance and meaning to democratic public spheres. Under such circumstances, commercial values replace public values, unbridled self-interest becomes more important than the common good, and sensation seeking and a culture of immediacy becomes more important than compassion and long term investments in others, especially youth. As Paul Gilroy (2000, p. 216) has pointed out, one foundation for a fascist society is that "the motif of withdrawal—civic and interpersonal-" becomes the template for all social life.

Higher education must reject a model of governance, research, teaching and service in which commercial culture replaces public culture and the language of the market becomes a substitute for the language of democracy. Educators cannot allow consumerism to be the only kind of citizenship being offered to students. Confusing democracy with the market does more than hollow out those public spheres whose deepest roots are moral rather than merely commercial, it also fails to heed an important insight expressed by Federico Mayor, the former director general of UNESCO, who argued rightly that "You cannot expect anything from uneducated citizens except unstable democracy" (Bollag, 1998, p. A76). At issue here is the need for educators to recognize the power of education in creating the formative cultures necessary to both challenge the various threats being mobilized against the ideas of justice and democracy while also fighting for those public spheres, ideals, values, and policies that offer alternative modes of identity, thinking, social relations, and values. Students must learn how to be responsible to themselves, others, and to the best ideals of the larger society. They deserve an education that allows them to write and act from a position of agency and empowerment.

THE ONGOING CORPORATIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

It is important to note that education can easily operate to promote ideas, values, and social relations that reinforce passivity, kill the imagination, and imbue

students with a number of anti-democratic values such as racism, misogyny, and a deep rooted anti-intellectualism. As higher education increasingly subordinates itself to market driven values and modes of accountability, there is a greater emphasis on research that benefits the corporate world, the military, and rich conservative ideologues such as the Koch brothers who have pumped over $200 million into higher education activities since the 1980s in order to shape faculty hires and promote academic research centres, and shape courses that reinforce a conservative market-driven ideological and value system (Mayer and Money, 2017). At the same time, many institutions of higher education are more than willing to name buildings after corporate donors, accept gifts, and allow conservative and corporate funded research centers on their campuses. One consequence is what David B. Johnson (2017) calls the return of universities to "the patron-client model of the Renaissance" which undermines "the very foundation of higher education in the United States."

These are policies, pedagogies, and social relations are largely instrumental and fail to do the bridging work necessary in a democracy between schools and the wider society, between the self and others, between the private and the public. There is a real violence at work in the ongoing corporatization of higher education. The neoliberal university has no regard for critical thinking, faculty governance, empowering students as engaged citizens, or connecting teaching and research to addressing real social problems. Under such circumstances, education defaults on its democratic obligations and dampens a critical sensibility and culture of questioning desperately needed in the age of populist authoritarianism. This corporate based mode of governance and teaching deadens the capacity for students to take risks, disrupts their own habits of thinking, and undermines their ability to question, imagine the unimaginable, and make connections with others.

In such a moment, it should come as no surprise that many governments consider any notion of critical education dangerous because it creates the conditions for teachers, students, and researchers to exercise their intellectual capacities, cultivate the ethical imagination, hold power accountable, and embrace a sense of social responsibility.

Democracy and politics itself are impoverished in the absence of those vital public spheres such as public and higher education that provide the conditions for a students and others to recognize how to use the knowledge they gain both to critique the world in which they live and, when necessary, to intervene in

socially responsible ways in order to change it. What might it mean for educators to take seriously the notion that democracy should be a way of thinking about education-- one that thrives on connecting equity to excellence, learning to ethics, and agency to the imperatives of social responsibility and the public good.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I will point to several recommendations that provide an alternative to some of the oppressive conditions now shaping institutions of higher learning. **First**, higher education needs to reassert its mission as a public good in order to reclaim its egalitarian and democratic impulses. Educators need to initiate and expand a national conversation in which higher education can be defended as a democratic public sphere and the classroom as a site of deliberative inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking, a site that makes a claim on the radical imagination and a sense of civic courage. At the same time, the discourse on defining higher education as a democratic public sphere can provide the platform for a more expressive commitment in developing a social movement in defense of public goods. What is crucial to recognize here is that higher education has lost its way under the influence of corporate forces allowing the culture of business to become culture of higher education. In doing so, it has mimicked the worse dimensions of the market viewing education largely as a commodity to be bought and sold for private advantage while undermining the power of faculty and students to live up to and resurrect the demands of global citizenship.

Second, educators need to acknowledge and make good on the claim that a critically literate citizen is indispensable to a democracy. This suggests placing ethics, civic literacy, social responsibility, and compassion at the forefront of learning so as to combine knowledge, teaching, and research with the rudiments of what might be called the grammar of an ethical and social imagination. This would imply taking seriously those values, traditions, histories, and pedagogies that would promote a sense of dignity, self-reflection, and compassion at the heart of a real democracy. Students need to learn to understand how power works across social, cultural, and political institutions so that they can learn how to govern rather than merely be governed. They should be able to recognize the violence that works to dismantle the individual's capacity think, act, and live with a sense of dignity. Education should be a place where students realize themselves primarily as critically engaged and informed citizens contributing not simply to their own self-interest but to the well-being of society.

Third, higher education needs to be viewed as a right, as it is in many countries such as Germany, France, Norway, Finland, and Brazil, rather than a privilege for a limited few, as it is in the United States and the United Kingdom**.** Rather than burden young people with almost insurmountable debt, it should call people to think, question, doubt, and be willing to engage in dialogue that is both unsettling to common sense and supportive of a culture of questioning. In addition, it should shift not only the way people think but also encourage them to help shape for the better the world in which they find themselves. Pedagogy should not be confused with therapy or reduced to zones of emotional safety. The classroom should be a space that disturbs, a space of difficulty-- a space that challenges complacent thinking. Such pedagogical practices should enable students to interrogate commonsense understandings of the world, take risks in their thinking, however troubling, and be willing to take a stand for free inquiry in the pursuit of truth, multiple ways of knowing, mutual respect, and civic values in the pursuit of social justice. Students need to learn how to think dangerously, or as Baldwin argued, go for broke, in order to push at the frontiers of knowledge while recognizing that the search for justice is never finished and that no society is ever just enough. These are not merely methodical considerations but also moral and political practices because they presuppose the creation of students who can imagine a future in which justice, equality, freedom, and democracy matter and are attainable.

Fourth, in a world driven by data, metrics, and the replacement of knowledge by the over abundance of information, educators need to enable students to engage in multiple literacies extending from print and visual culture to digital culture. They need to become border crossers, who can think dialectically, and learn not only how to consume culture but also produce it. This presupposes learning how to situate ideas, facts, and knowledge historically and relationally. Not only does history become a consequential resource for thinking and acting, but it also enables students to connect isolated issues to the development of a comprehensive vision of society that does not rely on banking modes of education, technical issues, insular disciplinary narratives, and deadening forms of instrumental learning. At stake here is the ability to perform a crucial act of thinking, that is, the ability to translate private issues into larger systemic concerns.

Fifth, there is a plague haunting higher education, especially in the United States, which has become the model for its unjust treatment of faculty. The American Association of University Professors points out that 70 percent

of all part and full time instructional positions are filled with contingent or non-tenure track faculty. In addition, more than 50 percent of faculty now occupy contingent full-time positions (Guida, Savino and Stephens, 2017). Many of these faculty barely make enough money to afford basic necessities, have no or little health insurance, and are reluctant to speak out and be critical for fear of losing their jobs. Many adjuncts are part of what are called the working poor. Jordan Weissmann, writing for *Slate*, points to an analysis by the University of California–Berkeley's Center for Labor Research and Education which states that "25 percent of part-time college faculty and their families now receive some sort public assistance, such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, food stamps, cash welfare, or the Earned Income Tax Credit" (Weissmann, 2014). This is an abomination and one consequence of the increasing corporatization of higher education. These faculty positions must be transferred into full-time positions with a path towards tenure and full benefits and security.

Sixth, another serious challenge facing educators is the need to develop both a discourse of critique and possibility. Critical analysis is necessary to break through the fog of ignorance, be able to hold power accountable, and reveal the workings and effects of oppressive and unequal relations of power. But critique without hope is a prescription for cynicism, despair, or civic fatigue. A culture of questioning is crucial to any viable notion of teaching and learning, but it is not enough. Students also need to stretch their imagination to be able to think beyond commonsense, the limits of their own experience, and the disparaging notion that the future is nothing more than a mirror image of the present. In this instance, I am not referring to a romanticized and empty notion of hope. Hope means living without illusions and being fully aware of the practical difficulties and risks involved in meaningful struggles for real change, while at the same time being radically optimistic. The political challenge of hope is to recognize that history is open and that the ethical job of education, as the poet Robert Hass has argued, is "to refresh the idea of justice going dead in us all the time" (Pollock, 1997, p?).

The late world-renowned sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman (2001) insisted that the bleakness and dystopian politics of our times necessitates the ability to dream otherwise, to imagine a society "which thinks it is not just enough, which questions the sufficiency of any achieved level of justice and considers justice always to be a step or more ahead. Above all, it is a society which reacts angrily to any case of injustice and promptly sets about correcting it" (Bauman, 2001, p. 19). It is precisely such a collective spirit informing a resurgent politics that is

being rewritten by many young people today in the discourses of critique and hope, emancipation and transformation. The inimitable James Baldwin captures the depth which both burdens hope and inspires it. In *The Fire Next Time*, he writes: "The impossible is the least that one can demand. …Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them…. the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out" (Baldwin, 1992, p. 104). It is one of tasks of educators and higher education to keep the lights burning with a feverish intensity.

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