Handbook of Public Pedagogy
Education and Learning Beyond Schooling
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Oaths

Publication details
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Published online on: 09 Dec 2009

How to cite :- Sarah Lucia Hoagland. 09 Dec 2009, Oaths from: Handbook of Public Pedagogy, Education and Learning Beyond Schooling Routledge
Accessed on: 15 Nov 2023

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They were offered the choice between becoming kings or the couriers of kings. The way children would, they all wanted to be couriers. Therefore there are only couriers who hurry about the world, shouting to each other—since there are no kings—messages that have become meaningless. They would like to put an end to this miserable life of theirs but they dare not because of their oaths of service. —Franz Kafka

Well Franz Kafka must not have thought much of children, and neither do many educators. But let’s talk about our oaths of service.¹

I.

Women’s Studies began because of omissions, distortions, secrets, silences, and lies in the academy and in society, bringing critical analyses to challenge pedagogical stasis. I and others helped start programs in the excitement of creating new educational territory. At the time, the struggle against not only bureaucracy and the old boy network, but against coercive consensus; the efforts to take what was dismissed as nonsense and construct against-the-grain meaning; the excitement of discovering erased women, of developing theoretical new bases; all this and more made our academic lives relevant, intense, dangerous, vibrant, and meaningful. For example, cunning linguist Julia Penelope exposed the overt celebration of male supremacy of English syntax and semantics. Academic activists flocking to conferences such as the National Women’s Studies Association or the Society for Women in Philosophy were also community activists in some form or another, and we found that our practice informed our theory which then came back to our practice.

But an overwhelming array of pressure valves were deployed—appropriation, assimilation, and mystification, not to mention disciplinary culling—the moment it was clear Women’s Studies and feminist theorizing weren’t going away. Many feminist academics responsible for the creation and development of courses and programs lost our jobs while newly degreed women were asked to teach a feminist course simply because they were women. A class of academic feminists arose who insisted that theory was best left to the academics, practice to activists. Feminist theorists shifted from liberation to equality to care, and from socialism to psychoanalysis to pepsi generation multiculturalism. Women began to look to their disciplines for legitimacy, shifting from using feminist theorizing in order to challenge their disciplines to using their disciplines
in order to challenge feminist theorizing. And though many were challenging racial, class, and gender structures, our oaths of service won out in the end. bell hooks writes:

The shift from early conceptualizations of feminist theory (which insisted that it was most vital when it encouraged and enabled feminist practice) begins to occur or at least becomes most obvious with the segregation and institutionalization of the feminist theorizing process in the academy, with the privileging of written feminist thought/theory over oral narratives. Concurrently, the efforts of black women and women of color to challenge and deconstruct the category “woman”—the insistence on recognition that gender is not the sole factor determining constructions of femaleness—was a critical intervention, one which led to a profound revolution in feminist thought and truly interrogated and disrupted the hegemonic feminist theory produced primarily by academic women, most of whom were white.

In the wake of this disruption, the assault on white supremacy made manifest in alliances between white women academics and white male peers seems to have been formed and nurtured around common efforts to formulate and impose standards of critical evaluation that would be used to define what is theoretical and what is not. These standards often led to appropriation and/or devaluation of work that did not “fit,” that was suddenly deemed not theoretical—or not theoretical enough. In some circles, there seems to be a direct connection between white feminist scholars turning toward critical work and theory by white men, and the turning away of white feminist scholars from fully respecting and valuing the critical insights and theoretical offerings by black women or women of color. (hooks, 1994, p. 63)

This facile co-optation, occurring with breathtaking speed but nevertheless undetectable to many, took place also among community activists. For example, the shelter movement began underground, but quickly went in search of state funding: Abusing men tracked their wives to sheltering homes, beating up both wife and hostess. Safe houses were needed away from individual homes and money was needed for that. Lawyers savvy enough to develop techniques to thwart dominant logic about women and abuse in the courtroom were needed. Cops willing to go against their brotherhoods were needed. Soon requirements for state and federal funding included pro family management techniques which involved getting rid of out lesbians working at the shelters as they were offering, by example and by professing, alternatives to disastrous heterosexual structures. And as several women of color argued at the INCITE, Women of Color Against Violence Conference in 2000, workers went from community activists to social service providers. Indeed, agencies were forced to hire those with the proper social service degrees regardless of whether they had any experience with or understanding of violence against women. As cooperation with state and federal agencies grew, some shelters even began cooperating with Immigration and Naturalization “Services” (INS). That is, the shelter movement went from underground activism to soliciting state agencies to cooperation with immigration enforcement. Indeed, Anannya Bhattacharjee suggests tensions between mainstream white feminists and feminists of color are not so much a question of who is “included,” but how progressive movements understand the role of the state—mainstream activists have come to rely on the state and negotiate safety through it, ignoring interrelationships between domestic, state, and global violence against women (Bhattacharjee, 2002).

And that was just one of many arenas. The abortion movement went from underground organizations like JANE, to letting the Hyde Amendment—gutting Roe v. Wade—pass without protest, to reliance on the state, ignoring women activists of color who were calling attention to
sterilization abuse, long-term and unsafe contraceptives forced on communities of color, welfare reform, immigration policies, medical experimentation, coercive and intrusive family planning policies and programs, and more (Silliman, Fried, Ross, & Gutiérrez, 2004).

Civil Rights work went from demanding equal funding for schools in communities of color to busing. Affirmative action went from offsetting white and male incompetence to quotas. Lesbian politics went from community building and economic self-sufficiency to marriage and the military. And so on. I know, I know, I’m collapsing decades here, but the co-optations really were that quick and dirty. This is not nostalgia, but is a point about where needed criticism journeyed. Navigating the waters between the public and the academic, developing critical analyses of and interventions within those waters, public pedagogy advocates and practitioners must not underestimate the ability of Western neoliberal thought to finesse and assimilate radical activity, aided in large part because of our oaths of service—to the state, to racial and class and gender formations, and to our disciplinary alignments. The problem is not that there are no kings but that academics and pedagogues, among others, continue with king thinking—going for hierarchy that will legitimate us and practices that assure us of our centrality, affirming our role as epistemic gatekeepers...practices that are our colonial inheritance, heritage, legacy.

II.

Decolonial theorists such as Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, and Aníbal Quijano argue that those practices of colonization, enslavement, and genocide, begun with the Spanish conquest of what is now called the Americas and continued through heterogeneous practices during the next centuries of Anglo-European formation and development, are not accidental to or even oppositional to, but formative of European Modernity and Enlightenment ideals; Descartes’ cogito (“I think, I exist”) was in practice and theory preceded by “I conquer.” They argue there is no “post” to colonialism: the complete restructuring of cultures—economically, politically, historically, socially, linguistically, spiritually, and epistemically, stands the varied Modern Ibero-Anglo-European colonialisms apart from earlier practices. And although many, but certainly not all, areas colonized have achieved political independence, economic, social, epistemic and political structures developed through the practices of colonization remain; moreover the restructuring of cultures continues unchecked (today in the name of development or democracy), including gendered and racialized codification of difference (Dussel, 1995; Mignolo, 1995; Quijano & Ennis, 2000). Public pedagogues are no less a part of this than others.

Within Western intellectual practice, the coloniality of knowledge is a process of translating and rewriting other cultures, other knowledges, other ways of being, presuming commensurability through Western rationality (Dussel, 1995; Mignolo, 1995). That is, our disciplinary practices are colonizing practices. Those of us who are educated in and inhabit the academy are trained to use our disciplines to render distinct cultural notions intelligible (“made to be presented to a Western audience” [Said, 1978, p. 293]) through processes of interpellation into Anglo-European cultural productions—Western concepts, that through our oaths of service, we hold to be universal. This practice is part of our Enlightenment heritage, and is one reason co-optation was so facile.

Liberal presumptions of transparency and translation strategically function to leave the observer’s worldview unscathed and our oaths of service intact. There is no “post” to colonialism: the intrusion and reorganization of cultures, within and outside of the U.S., continues unabated, and Western feminist and other progressive critical analyses and intellectual and cultural interventions within mass culture—radical, socialist or liberal—are part of that (Hoagland, forthcoming).
III.

What does it mean to think and act with? How does an educator develop the competency to hear an other? How does a public pedagogue engage an Other? The competency I am concerned with involves a responsibility not as obligation to respond but as our ability to respond; it involves an ability to be open to hearing things unfamiliar, things that will challenge normalcy, even our place in its reproduction. Western educational disciplinary practice positions educators as judges of credibility and gatekeepers for its authority thereby maintaining the coloniality of knowledge (Hoagland, forthcoming 2). And because of our oaths of service, it is easy to maintain this attitude as we engage in critical analysis and intervention, even in radical political locations.

That is why I ask, what does it mean to think and act with? I am interested in radical participatory research as a location of public pedagogy and a site of critical analysis and intervention, work that is by, for, and about the people involved, and where the community, not a researcher, company, or the state, is owner of knowledge. My thinking about this has been deeply informed by my participation in a popular education school, La Escuela Popular Norteña, founded by María Lugones and Geoff Bryce after the Highlander School. At Highlander, people whose lives will be affected by a study participate in the design, in the development of methodologies, and in the research itself, and they have control over it. Critical to this practice is that everyone is a student and everyone is a teacher. The work utilizes forms of knowledge people have that are not recognized or are erased by standard social science such as storytelling, theater, drawing, popular knowledge, so-called folk wisdom. The process and goals of the study are to empower people. Group discussions are used to design the project while academic research methods and “expert knowledge” are seen with distrust as they place those to be studied in a passive position and are driven by requirements of tenure and publishing. The knowledge gained needs to offer the people not only knowledge of their situation but knowledge of how to change it (La Escuela Popular Norteña, 2006, summarizing Lewis & Gaventa, 1991; note also, La Escuela Popular Norteña, 2000).

One of Highlander’s projects, the Appalachian Participatory Education and Grassroots Development Project, addressed rural poverty in the Appalachian region, made worse by President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” Through this initiative, development was done to and for local communities. “The economy” became something external to everyday experience, something to be dependent upon, not acted upon—the province of experts—while communities were made ready to receive and serve business. In response and in contrast, Highlander’s community organizing involved exploring and uncovering knowledge members had about the economy including oral histories and community surveys and mappings; collecting information that might not be available through people’s own work histories in order to share, gather, and build knowledge about the community; doing community economic analysis, and subsequently planning community development through participatory strategies. The project emphasized peoples’ research and analysis and de-emphasized expert knowledge. It was used to create change, empowering people to address economic issues and inequalities themselves, reversing dependence on external economic forces (Lewis & Gaventa, 1991; Lutrell, 1998).

What does it mean to think and act with? What relationships do those practicing public pedagogy animate, enact? In a very different project of popular education, Claudine O’Leary worked with girls in the sex trade in Chicago, pimped as small children by their families. Invoking outsiders to work as allies, not experts authorized by oaths of service, she challenges the rescue trope, often lodged in a medical model—disciplined narratives of post traumatic stress disorder, the Stockholm syndrome, and/or brainwashing—used to counter the blaming the victim trope of the criminalization model. And while her focus concerns the Salvation Army and
other institutions taking funding away from community projects, the rescue narrative is present in progressive thought as well. For while these were analyses developed as academic activists worked together to understand and critique hegemonic framings, they have devolved into disciplinary narratives which professional knowers impose on women seen as victims to characterize them and devise tools to research “their nature.”

Countering the media image of youth as criminals, rescuers understandably substitute an image of them as victims. But the rescue model regards adults as experts and the girls as “damaged,” a concept, as Claudine O’Leary notes, functioning to indicate something about the girls’ reliability to act in their own best interests, particularly if they decide to remain involved in the sex trade. So much of our moral and political judgment involves either blaming the victim or victimism. As Kathleen Barry shows us, blaming the victim involves holding a person accountable not only for her choice in a situation but for the situation itself. Victimism, on the other hand, completely ignores a victim/survivor’s choices, denies her moral agency, portraying victims of acknowledged social injustice as passive objects of injustice (Barry, 1979). As Claudine O’Leary notes, “while youth workers are well aware that youth have a range of experiences from youth who have sex for money once for survival needs to youth who are held for years by a man who defines himself as a pimp—it’s the latter story that gets the press.” Rescuers work to translate every story into that model, focusing on “younger, whiter, less urban and more clearly controlled youth” such that “the rescue philosophy covers up more than it reveals” (O’Leary, 2006).

She argues that many hold on to the rescue narrative because it is a lens that allows adults to focus on the melodrama of individual kittens to be rescued. As a result, rescuers tend not to question their oaths of service, affiliations with and use of law enforcement tactics, social service systems, and medical and law-related strategies—practices that undermine community building and people’s ability to collectively organize to stop violence. Instead they vest that power in the state, resulting in programs of containment and management of victims of abuse—a form of state violence for many victims: “I would further offer that any ally should avoid reporting youth to the child protection system as a form of civil disobedience against a state system that has been proven to disrupt communities instead of supporting them and harm children instead of helping them” (O’Leary, 2006; note Golden, 1997; also Males, 1996). She argues that the rescue narrative limits thinking to individual remedies rather than the context. It ignores, for example, legal jobs unavailable to youth, particularly poor youth and youth of color; it ignores racial, class, and gendered structural inequalities; and it ignores ways the state and society benefit from the sex trade. That is, the rescue narrative allows rescuers to maintain their own worldviews intact.

“Listening to the hardest and most complicated of situations means opening up to information and life histories that can traumatize an ally,” shake their worldview (O’Leary, 2006).

Rather than using a rescue/medical narrative to counter the blaming/criminal narrative, Claudine O’Leary worked with the girls developing programs of harm reduction. She invites allies to put youth ideas at center, and embed ourselves in the contradictions and tensions, rather than trying to transcend them through assumptions of adult expertise. “Harm reduction…is much deeper than a set of health strategies. It recognizes people as experts of their own lives. It encourages people to see themselves as whole and deserving without having to conform to standards of sobriety or purity.” It approaches everyone as teachers and simultaneously as learners. And allies must be clear about their goals so youth can make informed decisions. Moreover, she argues that “because harm reduction based resources are so rare, allies will have to build trust so youth can actually believe they don’t need to promise you they want to stop or say what they think you want to hear” (O’Leary, 2006).

Indeed, the rescue mentality will always fail in the end because it does not re-cognize the agency of the girls on the street—the competencies they’ve developed, the skills with which they
negotiate their environments, the resistances they devise, the strategies of survival they develop. She writes, “Many youth who are or have been in the sex trade have been trusted with large amounts of cash, responsibility and goals, and to take away that sense of power and self-efficacy is a mistake for any effective youth worker.... This is not uncomplicated as youth need a great deal of assistance and adult support. But as partners, we can be far more successful than going it alone” (O’Leary, 2006).

“Allies must look for the wholeness in girls’ lives. Ask what they like to do for fun, who is important to them, what makes a good day. Recognize the fullness and complexity in girls’ lives no matter how difficult or terrible the circumstances.” And, Claudine O’Leary goes on to explain that allies must see the girls’ resistances: how they refuse adult designations of them, how they build family on the street, being loud and obnoxious or tuning everyone out with headphones, having some pretend to be pimps in order to confuse real pimps, stealing wallets, creating a meaningful life inside and outside involvement with the sex trade. “In the end, being an ally is about sharing power with youth and letting go of control” (O’Leary, 2006).

In the end, the competency of engaging is about not being an expert, not being a gatekeeper, it is about letting go of institutional framings, letting go of our oaths of service.

IV.

What might a public pedagogue imagine s/he is doing? Rescue? Charity? Charitably carrying expertise to the raw-with-potential-but-unenlightened masses, helping them emerge from caves where authorized knowers understand them as shadows needing to be extracted, illuminated, clarified, blanched by the sun? Are we miners, positioned to impact marginalized people by extracting them from their unprivileged locations, bringing them, unprivileged, to the disciplines? Or jewelers/mentors, shaping, cutting a gem to fit a particular setting, designing the setting for the best display of the gem? I want to suggest that our job as educators is not about illumination, extraction, or display, not about pulling a gem from what surrounds it, bringing it to a jewelry store or museum (conversation, Anne Leighton). For what helped that gem grow is precisely its surroundings, its community; when extracted gems cease to grow.

Many people not framed as the center are embedded in locations that fertilize them, give them their possibilities and from which they think and speak complexly. Many are also crossing borders, inhabiting more than one cultural context, living on the hyphen. The abilities they’ve/we’ve developed in negotiating this multiplicity include skills they have to teach us, skills pedagogues need for competent and critical engagement when meeting others, when moving to think and act with, along with the ability to re-cognize resistant logics.

Aníbal Quijano argues that the coloniality of knowledge keeps us from accepting the idea of knowing subjects outside the confines of modern epistemic rationality (Mignolo, 2000, p. 60, citing Quijano, 1992, p. 442). For example, while one wouldn’t know it from science’s own reports, racialized academic scientific production was highly contested terrain. Nancy Leys Stepan and Sander Gilman describe strategies used by African Americans and Jews in responding to and resisting nineteenth scientific racism: (1) refusing to separate moral and political issues from scientific ones; (2) using wit, irony, and parody in challenging scientific pronouncements; (3) accepting the terms set by the dominant discourse but reversing the valuation; (4) re-contextualizing; and (5) creating alternative ideology outside the terms of the discourse of scientific racism (Stepan & Gilman, 1993).

“I struggle more with anger and rage at not having my thoughts respected. I do feel that there are things transparent to me that I don’t understand why they aren’t transparent to others. Not because I think I’m right, but because I can’t engage when they don’t get it” (conversation, Jackie Anderson).
There is Rigoberta Menchú’s refusal that might be an invitation (Menchú, 1984; note Sommer, 1996). There is Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s “lie” that exposes the truth (Fusco, 1995). There is Leslie Marmon Silko’s and Susan Glaspell’s truth that power can’t afford to understand (Silko, 1981; note Trinh, 1989; Glaspell, 1916). There is Jason Mohaghegh’s shadow figure drawing us always into unknowing (Mohaghegh, 2009). There is Gloria Anzaldúa’s writing in red and black ink (Anzaldúa, 1987).

But this is not about finding those existing in the crevices of hegemony and rendering difference consumable, not about rendering dark/obscure spaces and particulates (reductively) transparent. As Édouard Glissant declares of those inhabiting difference, “we demand the right to opacity,” to not be made consumable (Glissant, 1989, p. 189). Rather, the work for public pedagogues includes re-cognizing and resisting official, professional institutional prescriptions/rules of engagement, state formations, and racialized, gendered, and classed constructions involved in maintaining a colonial fabric. Public pedagogues have an advantage when we traverse terrain, traveling to different spaces. Possibilities lie in taking up knowledge from other locations and working for these knowledges to engage each other. But such work can, and often does, result in making territorial claims—in looting, appropriating, telling secrets to power—activities decreed by our oaths of service, activities that maintain a colonial fabric (e.g., Smith, 1999).

In his book, Impossible Witness, Dwight McBride analyzes the rhetorical strategies used by slaves to negotiate the “discursive terrain” of abolition. That terrain, the language about slavery, preexisted “the telling of the slave narrator’s experience” and created the “codes through which those who would be readers of the slave narrative understand the experience of slavery.” That is, it made the narratives possible, while *ipso facto* limiting them. Among other things, he draws our attention to the discursive terrain slave witnesses had to fit to be intelligible (to whites), the competency of the abolitionists to hear the narratives, means by which slaves constructed their narratives to meet the white imaginary, and strategies slaves used to remain the testifying authority, for example, how slave witnesses rhetorically kept white abolitionists at a distance precisely so abolitionists could not position themselves to speak for slaves, so slaves remained the “experts” (McBride, 2001).

As Édouard Glissant writes, “Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics. To understand these one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of the components” (Glissant, 1989).

In a very different context, Susan Brison writes how many approached the report of her attempted murder and rape in ways that would keep their worldview intact. She explores the various narratives she constructed, shaped by what the listener needed to know most urgently, for example, the narrative she told the police and courts, the one told to her family and friends, the one told to her therapist, and the one she will tell her infant son when he grows up (Brison, 2002). Giving up the idea of one truth.

The denseness and opacity of meanings elaborated in the midst of this multitude gives me a sense of my own and other’s concreteness and of the perils of abstraction in this negotiation. (Lugones, 2003, p. 196)

The work for public pedagogues involves understanding how our own histories, particularly our racialized and gendered legacies, continue to affect our subjectivities today, understanding ourselves constructed in relation to Others and framed by dominant structures and our oaths of service, taking up the concrete imprint of the proper on each of us, and struggling across barriers to meet others outside the proper without abstraction or translation. Thus this is not a call for inclusion but for re-valuation and re-alignment—the textures of the weave.
The technologies, tactics, tantrums of academy pedagogy. As Anne Leighton notes, I hear something and am impacted at the moment, I get an inkling of another space, a call to another direction, a path to pursue, and then, perhaps in a distracted moment, as I try to re-transmit it, ink the inklings, my oaths of service take me in a different direction, and I prepare it for official or general consumption (Conversation, Anne Leighton).

Our colonial oaths of service leave us figuring out how anomalies fit into a Western order of things/explanations, keeping our worldview intact, figuring out how a girl pimped on the streets can be explained, contained, by the medical model, ignoring our inter-relational subjectivity, leaving us trying not to see how her movement destroys our models.

V.

Public pedagogues could let go our territorial orientations, not try to hold on to certain ground, for academic discourse can suck you in like quicksand. I want to think instead of a poetics of relation, where one approaches not with the fiction of autonomy and the stance of authority, but where identity is extended through relation with others (Glissant, 1989); where one experiences how identity changes, how we change by our relating, how identity mutates in relation, the texture of the weave. For public pedagogues will change as we travel in different locations and engage other interlocutors...unless we refuse change by remaining loyal to our oaths of service, unless we practice the “I conquer” of “I think.”

What takes me to other places, leads me to venture away from the comfortable and familiar? First and foremost, it’s a story, always the story. But, when rehearsed over and over stories become stale, not capable of adaptation, adjustment, innovation. And when appropriated by the academy, they become colonized. “The West is where this movement becomes fixed as nations declare themselves. The idea of the root takes on the intolerant sense” (Glissant, 1989, p. 14). Instead, moving without territorial rooting, but aware, always, of the institutional framings we bring to relation, we can find that crossing boundaries, entering different spaces, and engaging inspire, conspire, change the possibilities. Such movement involves embracing ambiguity and contradiction, confounding reason so another can whisper to our imagination, letting go not of belief but of disbelief, negotiating multi-centered heterogeneous grounds of meaning. The task for public pedagogues is to help destabilize colonial homogenization that persists today. Indeed, as Édouard Glissant writes, “the thought of opacity distracts me from absolute truths whose guardian I might believe myself to be. It relativizes every possibility of every action within me” (Glissant 1989, pp. 189-192).

And there are tactics, techniques, technologies developed by those who transverse terrain, cross borders, inhabit more than one world; skills I admire and work to learn, practice, refine in myself as I inhabit a poetics of relation: playing with associative principles (Glissant, 1989), double consciousness (DuBois, 1986), playful world travel (Lugones, 2003), streetwalker theorizing (Lugones, 2003), complexity in translation (Wing, 1989), complex communication (Lugones, 2006), shifts in practices of knowing—not grasping/conquering, but extending with generosity: donner-avec, “gives on and with” (Glissant, 1989). And admiring strategies I encounter: “Rights discourse provided the ideological mechanisms through which the conflicts of federalism, the power of the presidency, and the legitimacy of the courts could be orchestrated against Jim Crow. Movement leaders used these tactics to force an open conflict between whites, which eventually benefited black people” (Crenshaw, 1995, p. 117).

Possibly public pedagogues could work to come up with new meanings, new weaves, something like the development of Women’s Studies and Black Studies, creating new ground we walk
on. But remember, always remember, facile co-optation, knowing it (whatever it is) will ultimately be tamed—if it can find emergence—made proper, respectable, used to shore up the status quo as it morphs into purity or righteousness or even truth. Knowing you will have to abandon it as a tool and move on as you struggle in the belly of the beast. Because whatever you create, if it survives, will turn to stasis and someone will want to own it, legitimize it, protect it; someone will want to become an expert, a gatekeeper, a courier.

… But what if, in that belly,
what if you let go,
what if you let go your oaths of service?

Notes

1. I am deeply indebted to critical conversations I have had with my interlocutors: Jackie Anderson, Anne Leighton, Maria Lugones, Jason Mohaghegh; each aids me navigating unaccustomed terrain.
2. And of course, many youth cannot be counted on to promote hegemonic worldviews. Why would they? They know better. “The thousands of youth I’ve talked with over the years perceive the sex trade as pervasive and endemic in every community and most responses as weak or nonexistent” (O’Leary).
3. Claudine O’Leary worked with the girls to design their own programs and structures, and after several years, ultimately left the developing organization in the hands of the girls and young women (Young Women’s Empowerment Project, http://www.youarepriceless.org/).
4. I am writing to those who might regard themselves public pedagogues—anyone who might imagine themselves an educator or public intellectual, thinking that most will be academics who have or have had academic training and who also might imagine themselves as activists of some sort, as progressive in some way. I am writing to ask those of us who understand ourselves to be educators or pedagogues or “public intellectuals,” who have been trained in some way as educators, or who wish, for whatever reason, to take up the title educator, disciplinarily trained or not, to think about what we carry with us into the field, and the attitude we bring, when we approach others while understanding ourselves to be teachers or intellectuals.

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