This chapter is a manifesto of sorts. Performance ethnography within the field of educational ethnography is at a crossroads. While the performance turn in ethnography is well established in communication studies, this is less the case in educational research (see Denzin, 2003, 2008, 2009; Madison & Hamera, 2006). Bagley (2008) and others make the case for treating educational ethnography, on a global stage, as performance. But moving into a thoroughgoing performance space remains a challenge for mainstream ethnographic methodology (Hammersley, 2008, pp. 134–136). Yet, as Madison and Hamera (2006, p. xx) argue, performance and globality are intertwined; that is, performances have become the enactment of stories that literally bleed across national borders. Being a U.S. citizen is to be a “enmeshed in the facts of U.S. foreign policy, world trade, civil society and war” (p. xx).

More deeply, in a globalized, post-9/11/01 world, race and the staging and performance of racialized identities within the minstrelsy framework remains, as W. E. B. DuBois (1901/1978) would remind us, “the problem of the twenty-first century” (p. 281). Modern democracies cannot succeed “unless peoples of different races and religions are also integrated into the democratic whole” (DuBois, 1901/1978, p. 281). Postmodern democracy cannot succeed unless critical qualitative scholars are able to adopt methodologies that transcend the limitations and constraints of a lingering, politically, and racially conservative postpositivism. This framework attaches itself to state organized auditing systems and regulatory laws like No Child Left Behind. These links and these historical educational connections must be broken. Never before has there been a greater need for a militant utopianism that will help us imagine a world free of conflict, terror and death, a world that is caring, loving, truly compassionate, a world that honors healing.

To these ends, I locate performance ethnography within a racialized, spectacle pedagogy. Drawing on Garoian and Gaudelius’s concept of an embodied pedagogy of war (2008), I contend that the most important events of the last decade follow from the 9/11/01 attacks, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the global war in terror, and the institutionalization of a new surveillance regime that affects every traveling body entering or leaving the United States. Traveling bodies embody and absorb these vicarious impacts of the war. To ignore these effects is to deny the truth of this historical moment (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 2). A critical performance ethnography must locate itself in these historical spaces, which now encompass surveillance regimes in virtually every educational setting—school, college, daycare—in the United States today.
My text is fractured, a mosaic of sorts (Williams, 2008), a layered text, a montage, part theory, part performance, multiple voices, a performance with speaking parts.¹

**Terry Tempest Williams** (2008, p. 2):

We watched the towers collapse. We watched America choose war. The peace in our hearts shattered.

How to pick up the pieces?

What do with the pieces?

***


The current historical moment requires morally informed disciplines and interventions that will help people recover meaning in the shadows of a post-9/11 world, in a world after George Bush.² There is a deep desire to transcend and overcome the psychological despair fostered by wars, economic disaster, and divisive sexual and cultural politics. As global citizens we have lived through eight long years of cynicism, fraud, and deceit.

**Critical Performance Studies**

We need a performance studies paradigm capable of moving through action research, and case study to queer studies, from the modern to the postmodern, the global to the local, from the real to the hyperreal, to the liminal in-between performance spaces of culture, politics and pedagogy (Ellis, 2009; Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 1; Kaufman, 2001). This performance paradigm travels from theories of critical pedagogy to views of performance as intervention, interruption, and resistance. It understands performance as a form of inquiry. It views performance as a form of activism, as critique, as critical citizenship. It seeks a form of performative praxis that inspires and empowers persons to act on their utopian impulses. These moments are etched in history and popular memory.

On this point Moises Kaufman and his play, *The Laramie Project* (2001)³ are helpful. He observes:

There are moments in history when a particular event brings the various ideologies and beliefs prevailing in a culture into deep focus. At these junctures the event becomes a lightning rod of sorts, attracting and distilling the essence of these philosophies and convictions. By paying careful attention in moments like this to people’s words, one is able to hear the way these prevailing ideas affect not only individual lives but also the culture at large.

The trials of Oscar Wilde were such an event...The Brutal murder of Matthew Shepard was another event of this kind. (p. vi)
As was 09/11/01. Spectacle pedagogy addresses these moments, those lightening rod occasions when power and politics come crushing down on ordinary people and their lives. It does so by staging and re-staging performances that interrogate the cultural logics of the spectacle itself. These re-stagings raise a series of questions asking always, “How did this happen? What does it mean? How could it have been prevented? What are its consequences for the lives of ordinary people?”

Critical indigenous performance theatre contributes to utopian discourses by staging doubly inverted minstrel performances. Using ventriloquized discourse, and the apparatuses of minstrel theatre, white- and black-face performers force spectators to confront themselves “mirrored in the white (and black) face minstrel mask” (Gilbert, 2003, p. 693). Native Canadian white-face performers in Daniel David Moses's play, *Almighty Voice and His Wife* (1992) use these devices to turn the tables on whites. Just before the play’s finale, the Interlocutor, dressed in top hat and tails, along with white gloves and studded white boots turns and taunts the audience:

**Interlocutor:**
You're the redskin! You're the wagon burner! That feather Head, Chief Bullshit. No, Chief Shitting Bull! Oh, no, no. Bloodthirsty savage. Yes, you're the primitive. Uncivilized A cantankerous cannibal...You are the alcoholic, diseased, dirty...degenerate. (Moses, 1992, in Gilbert, 2003, p. 693)

This resistance model can be used to create utopian performance spaces within our public institutions. It can operate at multiple levels throughout the academy, in classrooms, hallways, and athletic fields. Sometimes it fails.

Stockholm, summer of 2008: A young scholar from India presents a paper at a conference on international terrorism and violence toward women (Dutta, 2008). She is traveling back to the United States. As she moves through airport security the following exchange was recorded.

**Security:** Step forward. What is this? Open this up.
**Traveler:** It is my laptop. There is nothing in here.
**Security:** Open it up. Hurry up.
**Traveler:** I'm sorry. I have been traveling for 24 hours.
**Security:** Open your suitcase.

Performance [Auto] Ethnography

**Terms**

[Auto] Ethnography: That space where the personal intersects with the political, the historical and the cultural. Radical performance [auto] ethnography explicitly critiques the structures of everyday life. Autoethnography intersects with the mystory.

Mystory as Montage: The mystory is simultaneously a personal mythology, a public story, a personal narrative and a performance that critiques. In making sense of its current
historical moments, the mystery also consists of a series of quotations, documents and
texts, placed side-by-side, producing a de-centered, multi-voiced text with voices and
speakers speaking back and forth. Quoting the present back to itself exposes the con-
tradictions in official history (see Denzin, 2008).

Dramaturgical Insert: Remembering Not to Forget

18 September 2001/1 December, 2002, Champaign, Illinois: Flags in the Window:
Within a week of 9/11/01, in response to the terrorist attacks, flags, in all forms and sizes,
began appearing in the windows of schools, private homes, automobiles, pick-ups, 18
wheelers, gas stations, K-Mart and Wal-Mart superstores, IGA grocery stores, clothing
stores, shoe stores, book stores, and other public establishments. In Champaign, Illinois,
the flags appeared in window after window of Central High School, the large public high
school I ride by everyday on my bicycle on the way to campus.

In the weeks after 9/11/01 everywhere I looked, I saw flags of every type, size and
shape: flag-pens, flag mousepads, flag-stickers, flags on poles that waved in the wind,
flags on coffee cups, flags on radio antennas, big, little, and medium-sized flags. Flags so
big they covered football fields. Songs about the flags became popular, songs with lines
like, “Red, White and Blue, these colors don’t run.” It reminded me of the lines from a
John Prine song, “Your flag decals won’t get you into heaven anymore.”

Last spring a women in Urbana, Illinois, made-up a questionnaire and asked store-
keepers why they still had flags in their windows. “I was just curious,” she replied, when
asked why she had done this. Store owners reacted in anger and accused her of being a
trouble-maker. People called the local talk radio station and wrote letters to the editor of
our local paper. They said she was being unpatriotic.

***

Now it is getting close to Christmas time 2008, and the flags are still here. Flags have taken over
Christmas. Flags have taken over Santa Claus and his Reindeer and sled. At Market Place Mall
Santa’s suit is a flag, red, white, and blue. His sled has flags on each side, and his Reindeer wear
little hats made of flags. Flags are still sprouting up. The man across the street put his up for
Thanksgiving weekend. Is it an aftermath of the 2008 election? Is it one of Bush’s last gift s to us?
And this so-called “just war” against evil and terror continues. I wonder what Obama will do.

Dateline 27 November 2008: Thanksgiving Day Parade, St. Louis, Missouri. The flags are here,
on Farm All and John Deere tractors, on fire engines and floats, on those funny little cars the
Shriners drive, stuck in hats, on balloons, not everywhere, but they are here. Parades always
have flags, it is un-American not to! But somehow in post-9/11/01 America, the flag has taken on
new meanings. But just what are the meanings anymore? Can we have these public spectacles
without the flags? What would we forget if we did not have them? What do we remember by
having them?

***

Flags and Inspections to Remember By

The Thomas Jefferson National Expansion memorial museum is underground, beneath the 630-
foot stainless steel Gateway Arch that was designed to reflect St. Louis’ role as the gateway to the
West.
Dateline 26 November 2008, St. Louis: Outer doors to Jefferson Museum. Park visitors approach the entrance to the Museum:

**Park Service Officer:** Sir, please step forward. What do you have in your bag? Please open it for me.

**Observer (to wife):** So now the Park Service operates as an arm of Bush’s Security Administration!

**Wife:** Be quiet.

**Park Service Officer (inside museum door) (to 8-year-old grandson):** Son, walk through now. (buzzer goes off)

Step back. Empty your pockets. What do you have with you?

**Grandson:** Just my transformer. See, it is a toy.

**Park Service Officer:** Hand it to me, take it apart.

**Grandson (looks at mother):** What should I do mommy?

**Park Service Officer:** You can go on ahead now.

**Observer (aside to self):** Another Bush legacy. Seven years and counting. Every visitor to this park is searched!

***

Dramaturgical Insert

**Newscaster (November 2007):**

Breaking news. A 25-year-old Islamic woman was pushed over the railing and fell to her death in a shopping mall in Boston today.

**Narrator:**

Ever since they found out that Islamic terrorists were to blame for 9/11, it has been hell to pay for us. Dear God when is it going to end? When will everyone come to their senses and realize that not every Arab is to blame for what’s going on.

**Uninvited Guest (knocks on door):**

You FUCKING Camel Jockey, piece of SHIT Sand Nigger. We let you into the most beautiful country in the world and you fly your planes into our buildings. You kill innocent women and children. You attack us. You rag head! You are a FUCKING terrorist! (Hakim, 2008, p. 1)

***

Within education we must find a space for a critical performance studies that moves from classical textual ethnography to performative autoethnography. This entails the examination of four interrelated issues: the study of personal troubles, epiphanies, and turning point moments in the lives of interacting individuals; the connection of these moments to the liminal, ritual structures of daily life; the intersection and articulation of racial, class and sexual oppressions with turning point experiences; the production of critical pedagogical performance texts which critique these structures of oppression while presenting a politics of possibility that imagines how things could be different (see below).

Conquergood (1998, p. 26) is correct. Performance is a way of knowing, a way of showing, a way of interpreting, a method for building shared understanding. Performance is immediate, partial, always incomplete, always processual. To repeat, in our postcolonial, 9/11 world, performance, hybridity, globality, and transnational racialized identities are intertwined.
Dramaturgical Insert

Cut: Stage left to a live performance in Central Park, time, the present—a scene from the movie *The Visitor* (McCarthy, 2008)

Walter Vale, a middle-aged Connecticut College economics professor, and Tarik, a drummer from Syria, join an international drumming circle in Central Park. Tarik is teaching Walter, who is dressed in a suit, how to play the African hand drum called a Djembe. Uncomfortable, embarrassed, Walter cautiously embraces the moment, soon drumming along with the other drummers, some of whom seem to be from Africa.

Narrator (to audience): So this is what you mean? A local performance of the global, identities bleeding across national boundaries.

Walter Vale (Stepping out of film, addressing the audience): You see I learned that playing the Djembe is more important than writing scientific articles. I’ve taken to drumming in Union Station. I feel connected in a way I never did before. I’ve become a public performer. I’m here two hours everyday, at morning rush hour.

Garoian and Gaudelius (2008): A critical pedagogy of collage, and the performance event cuts to the heart of the postmodern. Remember Walter’s Djembe teacher, Tarik, gets deported and sent back to Syria because he violated IMMIGRATION LAWS. HE WAS A victim of HOMELAND SECURITY!

Narrator: Is this what Garoian and Gaudelius (2008, p. 1) mean by an “Embodied Pedagogy of War”? You mean Walter’s story is a story about war?

Narrator One: How long will the Iraq War last? Are we winning? Who are the terrorists these days? When did the 24-7 media coverage of the war stop? Who is the enemy again?

Narrator Two (to Narrator One): So where are you going next?

Garoian and Gaudelius (2008): Take your pick: Iraq, round-the-clock media coverage, Abu Ghraib, Katrina, disaster tourism, pathologizing pedagogies, Drill Baby Drill, Wall Street Bailout, Bye Bye Mr. Bush!

***

This performative approach to spectacle pedagogy examines, narrates and performs the complex ways in which persons experience themselves within the shifting spaces of today’s global world economy and its pedagogies of deceit and destruction.

Critical Spectacle Pedagogy

Terms

**Spectacle:** An interactive relationship between people, and events, mediated by images. Images define the spectacle, showing us how to believe and act; that is, images are forms of pedagogy (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 24), as in the images of the two United Airlines airplanes hitting the Twin Towers on Tuesday, September 11, 2001.
Spectacle Pedagogy: The performative visual cultural codes of the media, fueled by corporate, global capitalism, which manufacture our desires and determine our political choices. This is an insidious, ever-present form of propaganda in the service of cultural imperialism (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 24).

Critical Spectacle Pedagogy: A form of radical democratic practice that enables a reflexive media literacy which aspires to critical citizenship and cultural democracy (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 24). A critique of theatricality, as in the staged photographs of torture at Abu Ghraib (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 75).

Critical spectacle pedagogy and critical performance pedagogy are forms of critical public pedagogy. Each politicizes performance [auto] ethnography.

The project is clear. We are no longer called to just interpret the world, which was the mandate of traditional ethnography. Today we are called to change the world, and to change it in ways that resist injustice while celebrating freedom, and full, inclusive, participatory democracy.

Critical performance pedagogy moves from the global to the local, the political to the personal, the pedagogical to the performative. The political is made visible through the performance of scenes of liberation and oppression, as in The Visitor when Walter visits the detention center, failing in his attempt to free Tarik, who has already been deported to Syria.

***

Abu Ghraib

Narrator One: Let's get graphic:

“Stand still—hold it.
Smile for the Camera!
Say ‘cheese’!
FLASH!
OK, Fantastic!” (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 74).

Smiling, smug faces, looking into the camera, gesturing with their thumbs-up, two U.S. military guards in Abu Ghraib prison pose proudly next to a pyramid, an architecture of contorted naked bodies that they have erected using several Iraqi prison detainees after concealing their identities by covering their heads with a sand bag (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 74).

Narrator Two: Hold it right there!

Smile—say ‘cheese’ again!
FLASH!

Great! (Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 74)

One more Time. This time one of the guards, cigarette in corner of mouth, smiles, and with an index finger points at the penis of a detainee:

Hold it—hold it.
FLASH!

A perfect picture! (p. 74).

In still another photo, naked detainees in humiliating poses, are forced to masturbate, and simulate sexual acts with one another (p. 75).

Spectacle Pedagogy! An obscene theatrical display, beyond Baudrillard’s pornography of the visible. This is not an innocent frat house hazing as Rush Limbaugh would have it:

Rush Limbaugh: Why what is the fuss? This is no different than what happens at the Skull and Bones initiation, like at President Bush’s college fraternity and we’re going to ruin
people’s lives over it, and we’re going to hamper our military effort.... You know these people are being fired at everyday...You ever heard of emotional release...give ‘em a break (quoted in Garoian & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 76).

War-making and picture-taking, images turned into spectacles. This is how we fought the war in Iraq. These sexual spectacles, these spectacles of torture sent an approved U.S. military message. Physical coercion and sexual humiliation of Iraqi soldiers were approved methods for generating intelligence about the insurgency in Iraq (p. 77).

***

By focusing on the body, and the experiences of the writer, critical performance pedagogy brings a reflective, embodied presence to autoethnography. It leads to an examination of the ways in which everyday language and the ideologies of culture are used to instill compliance with the needs of global capital. The intent is to produce spectacles of resistance that challenge the local power structures that circulate in the media, in schools, and in the market place. The goal is to create a critical consciousness that leads empowered citizens to take action in their neighborhoods and communities.

Critical performance pedagogy reflexively critiques those cultural practices that reproduce oppression. At the performative level this pedagogy locates performances within these repressive practices, creating discourses that make the struggles of democracy more visible. In their performances, artists, teachers, students and other cultural workers “invoke their personal memories and histories...they engage in storytelling” (Garoian, 1999, p. 5). They perform testimonios. They “remember, misremember, interpret and passionately revisit...[the] past and [the] present” (Diamond, 1996, p. 1). In so doing they invoke a “continuum of past performances, a history...juxtaposed...with existential experiences” (Diamond, 1996, p. 1). Through their coproductions cultural workers critique and evaluate culture, turning history back in upon itself, creating possibilities for new historical ideas, images, new subjectivities, new cultural practices (Diamond, 1996, p. 2; Garoian, 1999, p. 6).

As pedagogical practices, performances make sites of oppression visible. In the process, they affirm an oppositional politics that reasserts the value of self-determination and mutual solidarity. This pedagogy of hope rescues radical democracy from the conservative politics of neoliberalism (Giroux, 2001, p. 115). A militant utopianism offers a new language of resistance in the public and private spheres. Thus performance pedagogy energizes a radical participatory democratic vision for this new century.

What Will the Children Be Told?

On September 11, 2001, hours after the bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Laurel Richardson (2002, p. 25) wrote the following words:

Laurel Richardson: September 11, 2001:

When I hear of the airplanes and the towers, my first thoughts are—the children... What will the children be told?... And then I see that the children are being told, as the adults are, through television cameras and media voices. The children are seeing the airplane and the second tower, and the airplane/tower, airplane/tower over and over until it’s All Fall Down. And All Fall Down again and again.
I call my children. I call my stepchildren. I call my grandchildren...My heart breaks for the children whose lives are broken...What can I say? What can anyone say? My email Listservs are repositories for quick fixes, ideological purity...I can't join the discussion. I refuse to intellectualize, analyze, or academize. I don't have any answers...

I call my grandson’s mother to see how Akiva is doing. She tells me that he was afraid an airplane would hit his school...On Rosh Hashanah the rabbi said “Choose Life.” I meditate on our small world. I pray. I write this piece.

As a performance autoethnographer Richardson anchors her narrative in an on-going moral dialogue with the members of her local community, including family, neighbors, and colleagues. Troubling the usual distinctions between self and other, she folds her reflections into the stories of others. This is a performance event, a brief scene in an as yet unwritten play by Moises Kaufman.

**Spectacle Pedagogy and a Politics of Resistance**


Performance autoethnography, blended with critical, spectacle pedagogy, becomes a civic, participatory, collaborative project. It is a project centered around an on-going moral dialogue involving the shared ownership of the performance-project itself. Together, members of the community, as cultural workers and co-performers in theatres of resistance, create empowering performance texts and performance event.

Kaufman’s (2001) Laramie Project enlisted the help of Laramie citizens in the production of the play’s script:

**Kaufman:** We devoted two years of our lives to this Project. We returned to Laramie many times over the course a year and a half and conducted more than two hundred interviews (2001, p. vii).

*When the project was completed, a member of the community reflected on the Shepard death and the play:*

**Jonas Slonaker:** Change is not an easy thing, and I don’t think people were up to it here. They got what they wanted. Those two boys got what they deserve and we look good now. Justice has been served...You know it has been a year since Matthew Shepard died, and they haven’t passed shit in Wyoming...at a state level, any town, nobody anywhere, as passed any kind of laws or hate crime legislation.... What’s come out of it? (p. 99).

A community member replies:

**Doc O'Connor:** I been up to that site (where he was killed). I remembered to myself the night he and I drove around together, he said to me, ‘Laramie sparkles, doesn’t it?’... I can just picture what he was seeing. The last thing he saw in this earth was the sparkling lights (p. 99).

*And as Kaufman’ little theatre group left Laramie, for the last time, a member commented:*

**Andy Paris:** And in the distance I could see the sparkling lights of Laramie, Wyoming (p. 101).

Mathew’s legacy, the pure, sparkling lights of Laramie, what a town could be.
Laramie, Wyoming, 10 Years Later

Kaufman and the members of the Tectonic Theater Project returned to Laramie, Wyoming, on the 10th anniversary of Mr. Shepard’s death (Healy, 2008, p. A1). They re-interviewed town members, intending to use the new interviews in an epilogue to the play. They were disappointed to learn that nothing had been done to commemorate the anniversary of Matthew’s death. Mr. Kaufman was angry that there were as yet no hate-crimes laws in Wyoming. But the city had changed.

**Local Citizen:** Laramie has changed in some ways. The city council passed a bias crimes ordinance that tracks such crimes, but it does not include penalties for them. There is an AIDS Walk now. Several residents have come out publicly as gay, in their churches or on campus, in part to honor Mr. Shepard’s memory. The university hosts a four-day Shepard Symposium for Social Justice each spring, and there is talk of creating a degree minor in gay and lesbian studies. But there is no memorial to Mr. Shepard here in town. The log fence has been torn down where he lay dying for 18 hours on Oct. 7, 1998. There is no marker. Wild grass blows in the wind. You can see the lights of Laramie from the spot where he died.

Performance ethnography disguised as spectacle theater in the service of memory, social change, and social justice.

***

Effects like these in Laramie represent, at some deep level, an emancipatory commitment to community action that performs social change, even if change is only an idea whose time has yet to come. This form of performance inquiry helps people recover, and release themselves from the repressive constraints embedded in the repressive racist and homophobic structures of the OK Corral, and other forms of Western mythology.

In these performances of resistance, the personal is always political. This happens precisely at that moment when the personal intersects with the historical. Here is where identity construction is made problematic, as when Walter performs his drumming in a public setting. In this moment he claims a positive utopian space where a politics of hope is imagined. And Doc O’Connor imagines in his mind’s eye that last scene of liberation that Matthew saw before he died.

This performance ethic asks that interpretive work provide the foundations for social criticism by subjecting specific programs and polices to concrete analysis. Performers show how specific policies and practices affect and effect their lives. The autoethnographer, the spectacle pedagogy playwright, invites members of the community to become co-performers in a drama of social resistance and social critique. Acting from an informed ethical position, offering emotional support to one another, co-performers bear witness to the need for social change (Langellier, 1998, pp. 210–211). As members of an involved social citizenship, they enact a politics of possibility, like the citizens of Laramie, a politics that “mobilizes memories, fantasies and desires” (Madison, 1998, p. 277). These are pedagogical performances that matter. They do something in the world. They move people to action.

More than Baraka (1998, p. 1502), who said,

we want poems that wrestle cops into alleys and take their weapons…

We want plays and dramas that imagine what social justice would look like.
Clearly, spectacle pedagogical performances have artistic, moral, political and material consequences (Madison, 1998, pp. 283–284). The Laramie Project brought long-standing homophobic fears and prejudices in the Laramie community out into the open. The play, as a performance of possibilities, produced an “active intervention to...a break through, an opening for new possibilities” (Madison, 1998, p. 284, italics in original).

This kind of political theatre, a Boalian theatre of the oppressed, of desire, Brechtian theatre of resistance moves in three directions at the same time: it shapes subjects, audiences and performers. In honoring subjects who have been mistreated, such performances contribute to a more “Enlightened and involved citizenship” (Madison, 1998, p. 281). These performances interrogate and evaluate specific social, educational, economic and political processes. This form of praxis can shape a cultural politics of change. It can help create a progressive and involved citizenship. The performance becomes the vehicle for moving persons, subjects, performers, and audience members, into new, critical, political spaces. The performance gives the audience, and the performers, “equipment for [this] journey: empathy and intellect, passion and critique” (Madison, 1998, p. 282).

These performances and plays enact a performance-centered evaluation pedagogy. This fusion of critical spectacle pedagogy and performance praxis uses performance as a mode of inquiry, a lever, as a method of doing evaluation ethnography, as a path to understanding, as a tool for engaging collaboratively the meanings of experience, as a means to mobilize persons to take action in the world, as a way of evocating experiential understanding (Bagley, 2008, p. 55).

This form of critical, collaborative, performance pedagogy privileges experience, the concept of voice, and the importance of turning spectacle sites into democratic public spheres. On this, Worley (1998, p. 139) observes that critical performance pedagogy informs practice. This, in turn, supports the pedagogical conditions for an emancipatory politics (Worley, 1998, p. 139).

**Boal and Performing Spectacle Pedagogy**

For an emancipatory politics to be created, the following elements need to be present. Scholars must have the energy, imagination, courage, and commitment to create these texts (see Conquergood, 1985, p. 10). Audiences must be drawn to the sites where these performances take place, and they must be willing to suspend normal aesthetic frameworks, so that co-participatory performances can be produced. Boal (1995) is clear on this, “In the Theatre of the Oppressed we try to...make the dialogue between stage and audience totally transitive” (p. 42). In these sites a shared field of emotional experience is created, and in these moments of sharing, critical cultural awareness is awakened. Critical spectacle pedagogical theatre creates dialogical performances that follow these directives from Augusto Boal (1995, p. 42):

**Directives from Boal: Show How**

1. Every oppressed person is a subjugated subversive.
2. The Cop in our Head represents our submission to this oppression.
3. Each person possesses the ability to be subversive.
4. Critical Pedagogical Theatre can empower persons to be subversive, while making their submission to oppression disappear.

The co-performed text aims to enact a *feminist communitarian moral ethic*. This ethic assumes a dialogical view of the self and its performances. It seeks narratives that ennoble human
experience, performances that facilitate civic transformations in the public and private spheres. This ethic ratifies the dignities of the self and honors personal struggle. It understands cultural criticism to be a form of empowerment, arguing that empowerment begins in that ethical moment when individuals are led into the troubling spaces occupied by others. In the moment of co-performance, lives are joined and struggle begins anew.

**Ethical Injunctions: Does this Performance**

1. Nurture critical race and gender consciousness?
2. Use historical restagings and traditional texts to subvert and critique official ideology?
3. Heal? Empower?
4. Enact a feminist, communitarian, socially contingent ethic?
5. Enact a *pedagogy of hope*?

**Hope, and Spectacle Pedagogy**

The critical imagination is radically democratic, pedagogical, and interventionist. Building on Freire (1998, p. 91) this imagination inserts itself into the world, provoking conflict, curiosity, criticism, and reflection. Extending Freire (1998), performance autoethnography contributes to a conception of education and democracy as pedagogies of freedom and hope. To repeat, performance ethnography is a way of acting on the world in order to change it. The purpose “of research ought to be enhancing…moral agency” (Christians, 2002, p. 409), moral discernment, critical consciousness, and a radical politics of empowerment and change.

The critical democratic imagination is pedagogical in four ways. First, as a form of instruction, it helps persons think critically, historically, sociologically. Second, as critical pedagogy, it exposes the pedagogies of oppression that produce and reproduce oppression and injustice (see Freire, 2001, p. 54). Third, it contributes to an ethical self-consciousness that is critical and reflexive. It gives people a language and a set of pedagogical practices that turn oppression into freedom, despair into hope, hatred into love, doubt into trust. Fourth, in turn, this self-consciousness shapes a critical racial self-awareness. This awareness contributes to utopian dreams of racial equality and racial justice.

Within this framework, extending Freire (1982, 1998, 1999, 2001) and Boal (1995), performance ethnography enters the service of freedom by showing how, in concrete situations, persons produce history and culture, “even as history and culture produce them” (Glass, 2001, p. 17). Performance texts provide the grounds for liberation practice by opening up concrete situations that are being transformed through acts of resistance. In this way, performance ethnography can be used to advance the causes of liberation and critical awareness.

As an interventionist ideology the critical imagination is hopeful of change. Hope is peaceful and non-violent. Hope is grounded in concrete performative practices, in struggles and interventions that espouse the sacred values of love, care, community, trust and well-being (Freire, 1999, p. 9). Hope, as a form of pedagogy, confronts and interrogates cynicism, the belief that change is not possible, or is too costly. Hope works from rage to love. It articulates a progressive politics that rejects “conservative, neoliberal postmodernity” (Freire, 1999, p. 10). Hope rejects terrorism and the spectacles of fear and terror, which have become part of daily life since 9/11/01. Hope rejects the claim that peace comes at any cost.

Thus does an enlightened spectacle pedagogy map pathways of praxis that help create a progressive citizenship. The critical, ethnographic imagination becomes the vehicle for helping persons realize a politics of possibility.
At the same time, critical performance inquiry can strengthen the capacity of research groups to implement qualitative research as a solution to public health, social welfare, and education problems. Inquiry that matters can be used as a tool for establishing and strengthening interdisciplinary formations and interpretive communities within the academy, as well as between researchers and research groups from universities in different countries.

The development of training programs in qualitative research can also strengthen the capacity of health, social welfare, and public health research groups, as well as researchers themselves, to generate critical knowledge necessary for tackling social problems within approaches based on social justice and empowerment ethics. Such programs can also help participants take part in exchanges with other researchers and research groups. This can foster networks committed to the development of academic exchanges, and joint research projects between scholars in different disciplines and academic settings. These initiatives can improve the pedagogical capacity of qualitative research teachers as they mentor the next generation of students.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have argued that interpretive performance ethnography is at a crossroads. I have suggested that we need to craft an emancipatory discourse that speaks to the issues of racial inequality under post-9/11/01 forms of democracy and neo-liberalism. This discourse requires a performance-based approach to politics and spectacle pedagogy. We need to explore performance autoethnography and critical pedagogy as vehicles for enacting a politics of hope.

I started this chapter with Terry Tempest Williams. Standing on a rocky point in Maine, she asked, “How do we pick up the pieces after the towers have collapsed?”

*Terry Tempest Williams (2008, pp. 2–3):

What to do with the pieces?

Looking east toward the horizon at dusk,
I faced the ocean. “Give me one wild word.” It was all
I asked of the sea.

The tide was out. The mudflats exposed. A gull picked
up a large white clam, hovered high above the rocks,
then dropped it. The clam broke open, and the gull
swooped down to eat the fleshy animal inside.

“Give me one word to follow…”
And the word the sea rolled back to me
was ‘mosaic.’

And I, Norman K. Denzin, replied, give me one more wild word to follow:

And the word was hope,
the end.
Notes

1. Speaking parts, marked by named persons (Terry Tempest Williams, interlocutor, security, traveler, park service officer, observer, wife, grandson, etc.) and indented texts, rotate through speakers.

2. These words are written on November 7, 2008, two days after the U. S. presidential election of Barack Obama.

3. The play has been performed over 2000 times. The Tectonic Theater Project collaborated with HBO to make a film based on the play. It starred Peter Fonda, Laura Linney, Christina Ricci, and Steve Buscemi. It opened the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, and was nominated for four Emmys.

4. It can be deployed in specific disciplines, from social welfare, health care, nursing, medicine, public health, social welfare, counseling, communications, to anthropology, sociology, and the humanities. It can underlie social policy discourse.

5. This text draws from a performance by Urmitapa Duta, a doctoral student in my advanced interpretive methods seminar, fall 2008.


7. John Prine, “Your Flag Decal Won’t Get You into Heaven Anymore” 1971, Atlantic label. I thank Jennifer Sandlin for reminding me of these lines from the Prine song.

8. After Paulo Freire, and Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal’s theatre of the oppressed promotes political awareness and critical consciousness.

9. This paragraph draws from a draft document for training qualitative researchers in public health prepared by Fernando Penaranda, Universidad de Antioquia.

References


