Standing against the coloniality of power: Claiming the right to democratic participation in the globalized neoliberal state

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Abstract

Public schools are spaces where multiple local and global struggles are played out. Racism and xenophobia, for instance, are not simply manifestations of local hierarchies of oppression; these are key elements of the coloniality of power, the living legacy of colonialism around the globe. This legacy is reproduced and contested in the struggle for meaningful public education for marginalized groups. The globalization of neoliberal education policies geared towards the decentralization of public school systems has resulted in increased transfer of responsibility for the administration and academic outcomes to marginalized school communities while control over the content of education, the power structure and funding remains out of their hands (Fine, 1993; Spring, 1993). It is in this context where thousands of disenfranchised communities strive to transform their public schools reclaiming public education as a social right and a public good, a place for alternative political and democratic socialization (FLAPE, 2007; Peschard, 2006). In this paper I look through the conceptual lenses of colonialiity of power (e.g., Quijano, Mignolo), social, cultural and political capital (e.g., Bourdieu, Chronic Poverty Research Centre) to examine ethnographic material from an action research project that aims to promote collective participation on education policy matters at a historically marginalized black and immigrant community in Puerto Rico.

Have you heard that slogan "Think globally, act locally", the one that began to catch the imagination of environmentalist and other activists in the United States and elsewhere in the late '60's. The slogan signals the importance of engaging immediate social concerns within a global framework, suggesting the uniquely transformative meaning local actions can have when they depart from a critical understanding of the connections between local struggles and world-wide realities. I thought about that slogan as I was mulling over how to articulate the interconnectedness between concepts rarely put together in community psychology research literature, that is, power, political culture, cultural capital and coloniality. If placing power at the center of our praxis has proven challenging, seeing sociopolitical dynamics in their complexity and interrelatedness is even harder (epistemologically, ontologically and

methodologically speaking). However, the dynamics of most interest to us are by nature complex and experientially indivisible.

For several years I have been developing strategies to integrate critical ethnography (e.g., Trueba & McLaren, 2000) with community action (e.g., Alinsky, Freirre), becoming a witness/actor of ground-up social change processes as they unfold. This transdisciplinary weaving is useful for crafting stories of oppression and liberation highlighting lived complexities and possibilities. In this paper I attempt to connect multiple levels of analysis to expose how politics and power manifest in ways that reproduce and contest the hegemonic political culture which maintains cultural capital under the control of the beneficiaries of colonial arrangements.

The paper is written in four sections. The first, lays the conceptual ground for understanding politics and power from a shared global history of coloniality. The following two sections narrate how coloniality is manifested in four school meeting two in a small school district in the United States where Mexican immigrants collectively advocate for school changes; and other two in Puerto Rico, one of the oldest colonies, where a group of community residents are working to reclaim their neighborhood public school. At the end I point out the contributions transdiscplinary multi-level approaches could make to an emerging critical community psychology that is long overdue.

Coloniality, Cultural Capital, Political Culture and Power: Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries to Grapple with Oppression and Liberation in Everyday Life

Although we are yet to agree on what we mean by power and what impact does it have in our field, it is clear that community psychologists have argued for placing power at the center of our theories and actions for decades (Rappaport, 1977; Serrano García, 1994; Fisher & Sonn, 2008; Smail, 1994, 2001). Recent special issues on power in the Journal of Community Psychology (2008) and the Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology (2007) attest to our continuing struggle to collectively integrate our social values with our theories and practice.

Rappaport (2000, as cited by Smail, 2001) has reasoned this problem in terms of the field's "attachment to individualistic psychological concepts and victim-blaming practices." Fisher, Sonn and Evans (2007) argue that it's the hegemonic scientist-practitioner model itself that "emphasizes individualistic, internal states and objective, value-free empirical research." I want to argue here that part of

the difficulty in giving power its rightful place in community psychology (or as Fisher and colleagues, 2007, call it the field's raison d'être), comes from our collective institutionalized incapacity to deal squarely with the coloniality of power and knowledge. Social scientists and humanists like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Anibal Quijano, Edgardo Lander, Edward Said, would advise us to place analysis of power within a deeper understanding of the continuing legacy of colonization. The ways in which power is leveraged to maintain racialized conditions of inequality, oppression and exploitation is part of a global political culture that has been in the making since the invasion and conquest of the Americas.

Quijano (2007), a Peruvian sociologist, explains the continuing legacy of colonialism (or what he terms "coloniality") in this way:

> With the conquest of the societies and the cultures which inhabit what today is called Latin America, began the constitution of a new world order culminating, five hundred years later, in a global power covering the whole planet. This process implied a violent concentration of the world's resources under the control and for the benefit of a small European minority – and above all, of its ruling classes...[1]

> This domination is known as a specific Eurocentered colonialism... this colonial domination has been defeated in the large majority of the cases... Its successor, Western imperialism, is an association of social interests between the dominant groups ('social classes' and/or 'ethnies') of countries with unequally articulated power, rather than an imposition from the outside...

> However, that specific colonial structure of power produced the specific social discriminations which later were codified as 'racial', 'ethnic', 'anthropological', or 'national', according to the times, agents, and populations involved. These intersubjective constructions, product of Eurocentered colonial domination were even assumed to be 'objective', 'scientific', categories... That is, as natural phenomena, [rather than] referring to the history of power. This power structure was, and still is, the framework within which operate the other social relations of classes or estates.

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[1] See Eduardo Galeano (1971) Las Venas Abiertas de América Latina to learn about how Europe benefited from the colonization of The Americas

The colonizers also imposed a mystified image of their own patterns of producing knowledge and meaning. At first, they placed these patterns far out of reach of the dominated. Later, they taught them in a partial and selective way, in order to co-opt some of the dominated into their own power institutions. Then European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power. After all, beyond repression, the main instrument of all power is its seduction. Cultural Europeanisation was transformed into an aspiration. It was a way of participating and later to reach the same material benefits and the same power as Europeans" (p. 168-169).

Although in this excerpt Quijano narrates the history of coloniality in past tense, the point is that the coloniality of power has persisted colonial rule and it is being enacted over and over again in contemporary life. Nandy (1989), as cited in Smith (1999/2005)

... discusses the different phases of colonization, from 'rapacious bandit-kings' intent on exploitation, to 'well-meaning middle class liberals' intent on salvation as a legitimation of different forms of colonization... Nandy ... describe colonization as a 'shared culture' for those who have been colonized and for those who have colonized.' (p. 44-45)

In separate works, Edgardo Lander and Linda Tuhiwai Smith both show how this shared culture was built upon multiple separations and naturalization processes: separation of humans from nature in ways that justify its exploitation, and naturalization of certain Euro-centered worldviews. Today many around the planet continue struggling to stand against the coloniality of power, as suspicious Euro-centered and imperialist ideas of what constitute development, modernity, good government, good science, "ethnic culture" and so on continue to be imposed as the criteria for evaluating what is accepted, funded, published, marketed (think about the impact that funding programs from, let's say, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, U.S. Aid or NIMH have on how struggling communities define and address their problems).

The concept of cultural capital, developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, is rather useful for linking macro and micro-levels of analysis. Cultural capital encompasses the ways of knowing, knowledge and practices of the dominant classes who are capable of imposing their norms as the criteria for evaluation (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Implied here is that those norms are not fixed or "good" in an essentialist way but rather serve the interest of the dominant classes

and thus, can and do continuously change (e.g., what does it take to "make it" in the U.S. economy now vs. 30 years, 50 years ago).

Let's now return to our field's concern with power. From this recognition/understanding of the coloniality of power, it seems to me that rather than focusing on a decontextualized and interpersonal approach to power as, for instance, Prilleltensky (2008) does (see Fryer; Fisher & Sonn; Reich, Pinkard & Davidson in the same special issue), we need to confront (and deconstruct) how coloniality is inscribed in societal structures of domination/exploitation/oppression (see Quijano, 2000). Or as Fryer (2008) puts it

rather than seeking to engage with power as such... we should be engaging with the way societal hierarchies are set up and maintained through wealth, class, labor market position, ethnic dominance (majority/minority status), gender, etc., and the way societal structures impact on people both objectively and through their subjective understanding of them (p. 242).

Fryer (2008) argues that "the apparent 'power of individuals' is better understood as subjective manifestations of the societal distribution of power."

An understanding of the coloniality of power challenges us to think beyond narrow/localized ways in which unequal distributions of power and cultural capital create "individual" and/or "community"[2] suffering, and move us towards questions about politics and political culture. Analyses of power devoid of a critical understanding of politics run the risk of decontextualizing and essentializing social dynamics as issues of poor/rich, black/white, immigrant/non-immigrant.

Montero (2001) defines politics as matters about how public life is organized and the ways in which power to [3] is claimed define "lines of action"[4]. Political

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[2] The concept of "community" should be interrogated as it has and is used by the state and its institutions to regulate the poor and marginalized in an effort to quiet discontent.

[3] I disagree with notions of power that suggest some have it and other do not, but rather see power as a means and a medium for domination/exploitation/oppression/resistance/liberation. If we think about the struggles to resist the coloniality of power and knowledge we can also think that what is at stake is a profound deconstruction (or questioning) of hegemonic political culture, not power as an essentialized/reified entity

[4] It would be important to introduce here some of the issues raised by Dussel in *20 Tesis de Política*

culture here refers to shared (and contested) meanings of politics that guide how people understand/engage/act upon how power is organized in a society (traditions, institutions, relations, structures).

Leticia Heras Gómez (2004), a Mexican political scientist, explains the challenges Latin American countries face towards achieving democratic[5] societies from an analysis of the coloniality of our political cultures. She points out Latin America's colonial history is much longer than its "democratic" history and it is that colonial history that has shaped our political cultures. She sees this legacy in the ways in which, for example, the hegemonic political culture in Latin American societies places more importance on the figure of the politician (who is he/she, how one may access him/her, what he/she can give me/us) than on the institutions of the State, a dynamic present since Spanish colonial rule where the figure of the virray was absolute and the laws of the Crown "mandated but were not obeyed" by the local authorities. She also locates the largely impermeability of the racial/class social hierarchy to the way social relations were organized by the Spanish rulers.[6] Heras Gómez sustains that without acknowledging and challenging the ways in which we understand political life, attempts at deepening our democracies will undoubtedly fail.

In sum, the question that I'm posing is whether we can work8[7] towards balancing power without boldly challenging the enduring legacy of coloniality in our political culture? As Aníbal Quijano (2000) points out,

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[6] Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, the notions of "democratic government" and "democracy" also need to be subjected to critical reflection. For instance, 1) the terms refer to ideals that emerged from rather problematic social arrangements (not all living in the polis were considered legitimate actors in so called democratic processes); 2) there are other ways of conceptualizing political arrangements other than democratic governments as we know them that could lead to socially just and sustainable societies (see for example, François Houtart (2006) Un socialismo para el siglo 21); and 3) it has been argued that contemporary notions of democracy are sociopolitical ideals not quite fulfilled yet by any society (just as with socialism and communism).

[6] What the author describes for Latin America rings true for other ex-colonies like the United States, at least for those who suffer the brunt of this hegemonic cultural system.

[7] By "we" and "work" I mean a work that has to be done by necessity collectively.

the history of colonization is the history of power as we know it: hodomination/oppression/exploitation and liberation are enacted is very much linked to our shared colonial legacy. As Smith carefully argues, what we claim as valid knowledge for public policy purposes or within academic circles is tied to that shared colonial history. Regardless of whether we figure out if/how to deal with power explicitly, the enduring legacy of our colonial history will continue to shape politics and power in the public sphere. Unless we joint other efforts to not just redistribute the cake or teach people how to eat it, but come up with a different kind of flour.

One Meeting and Five Hundred Years of Coloniality of Power and Knowledge

For the last seven years I have joined neighborhood-based efforts to promote democratic participation in school politics and reclaim public schools as a public matter. As a beginner critical ethnographer and ally, I first worked four years with Mexican immigrant in the U.S. vying to make their schools accountable to them (Reyes Cruz, 2008). Later I returned to my country, Puerto Rico, where I have been engaged in similar efforts for over a year, this time working with other Puerto Ricans to reclaim a neighborhood elementary school as a vital piece in a larger community development project. Although there are substantial differences between the two settings some things seemed quite familiar; the way politics and power were enacted revealed the continuing legacy of colonization.

Public schools galvanize multiple stakeholders toward actions that reflect common, collective, and conflictive interest. Thus, schools cannot be understood without grappling with politics and power. Here I scenes from ethnographic work in Illinois to show the ways in which the coloniality of power and knowledge is manifested in the exercise of cultural capital. The first is a meeting between Laura, a light-skinned Mexican immigrant mother, and school staff. She had summon the principal, her daughter's teacher (both White U.S. Americans), the bilingual teacher (a light-skinned woman of Mexican descent) and myself (the brown Puerto Rican ally-translator) to discuss some of her concerns regarding her child's schooling. The school was located in a predominately poor and African American neighborhood. Its students were mostly African Americans and immigrants from Latin America.

> At a school meeting organized by Laura to discuss her daughter's performance, the regular classroom teacher started by cheerfully declaring, "Your daughter has made a lot of progress!" He

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showed Laura the child's scores in a district-wide math and vocabulary test. The child had gone from a score of 1-20 on a previous test to a score of 40-60. Laura asked, "What's the maximum score they could get?" The teacher responded, "A 100."

[Laura stared at him.] … The child was showing signs of improvement on test scores. But compared to the standard Laura's daughter was measured against, the teacher was portraying a distorted image of the student's academic progress. Hers was not the kind of achievement associated with college-bound students. What parents like Laura really wanted to know was if their children were making the kind of academic progress that would lead them to a college education.

[Laura then] expressed her concerned with what she described as "lack of respect in the school," [specifically] between teachers and students, and among students. She had seen staff mistreating children, particularly African American students. Her child was also being mistreated by other children and the adults were not intervening. The regular classroom teacher responded, "The staff works very hard at encouraging respect among students. Look at the messages about respect posted on the classroom walls. The school pledge, recited every morning, also speaks about respect. Children are told all the time they have to keep their hands to themselves." The principal explained that not all parents had the same vision as Laura, they were not interested in getting involved in the school or what their children do, they didn't teach their children respect, and that was what the school had to deal with.

Laura insisted the issue was a school-wide problem. She suggested that the staff work on the staff end and she could work with other parents to try to get parents involved on this issue. No one from the staff said anything about it. The principal broke the silence, "You should encourage your daughter to come to the staff when others are bothering her and we will deal with the situation."

Laura responded that her daughter, "No les tiene confianza," which I translated as "Her daughter does not trust you." The ESL teacher corrected me saying that what Laura said was that her daughter "Didn't feel comfortable" talking with them about her troubles. I replied that "confiar" was not the same as "sentirse cómoda." The teacher then asked Laura in Spanish what she

meant and Laura responded her daughter didn't trust the staff would actually listen to her.

On our way out of the room …Laura said to me, "No pueden ver más allá (They can't see beyond their noses), they do not want to address the issue of respect at the school level, they want to make it about my child."[8]

Coloniality is working at different levels here: from the racialized/ethnicized way in which cultural capital is enacted (who has the power to decide what counts as valid knowledge claims), to the ways in which the school staff promote child-center individualistic parent participation separating the personal from the collective/public and quieting potential claims of collective discontent. These notions, as the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano would say, are 500 years on the making.

The second scene narrates a moment in which the coloniality of power and knowledge was crystallized at a public meeting when the group of Mexican parents mobilizing for school change confronted head the limits of their "democratic participation" in school-decision making.

During their first year [the group] recruited and collaborated with bilingual/bicultural Latinos (including myself)[34] who had access to information and resources… With the support of their allies the parents organized and facilitated meetings with district staff, including the superintendent himself, to address concerns and monitor progress; participated in the hiring of bilingual staff; influenced the creation of new positions and changes in current positions; pressed for the establishment of the most effective program for second language learners; and influenced the removal of staff.

One of the areas of contention during committee meetings was the structure of programs for Spanish speakers learning English. The coordinator and the bilingual staff were adamant about the benefits of bilingual education. The coordinator wanted to make sure parents had an understanding of the theory and research that supported bilingual education, hoping this would bring parents and staff to a shared understanding of the importance of the program and its needs. The district indicated they wanted parent input on what types of programs would be implemented in the upcoming years and the coordinator wanted to make sure parents made informed decisions.

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[8] Reyes Cruz (2008)

For several meetings district staff described different models and their effectiveness… to the parents. During the discussions it became evident that parents understood some programs were better than others… and that the district was offering the program shown to be less effective… Lucero [one of the Mexican mothers] highlighted how [her preferred program] would facilitate the students' bilingualism, support parent-child relationships by strengthening the children's knowledge of the home language, and equalize the academic-racial hierarchy of the schools.

When parents and staff finally met to decide what program they wanted implemented at Dubois, district staff presented models that had not been discussed before and not the models presented as the most effective. A mother asked … "What do you know about the effectiveness of these program options?" The district staff replied those were the options other districts were implementing; although they did not know how effective the programs were they believed it would be better than what the schools currently had.[9]

Two Days and a Year Standing Against the Coloniality of Power to Reclaim a Public School for its Public

When I left Illinois, the advocacy group formed by the Mexican parents was dissolving. It seemed like much was accomplished and things were still the same. Moreover, the group was struggling with different "needs and wants" that greatly reflected the same separations inherited from our colonial history: personal/individual vs. common/public interests, power in numbers vs. the power of ethics.

For the last year I have been engaged in education organizing efforts with community residents and their organizations to rescue one of their schools. After decades of administrative negligence, blatant corruption and generalized disaffection River Elementary School was slowly dying before everyone's eyes. This neighborhood elementary school with its hundred students is comfortably nestled in a historically black and poor community of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, right next door to Puerto Rico's financial district. The school is just one of the many serving eight communities engaged in an unprecedented development project. With the first Commonwealth of the Land those communities aim to revitalize their neighborhoods and protect themselves from gentrification.

Early in 2007, concerned staff, local residents, their organizations and allies decided to mobilize to rescue River school. Concerns included dwindling registration, dilapidated infrastructure, lack of educational materials, administrative inefficiency and neglect, low academic achievement, racism, xenophobia, misappropriation and fraud (from getting paid for hours that were not worked, stealing food from the school's cafeteria to manipulating standardized academic achievement tests). The River School Committee held multiple school meetings that generated interest from dozens of parents and local officials. After a year of mobilizing and advocacy activities, the Committee's most resounding achievement was the removal of the principal who had been at River for over a decade.

In the process the committee had been advocating for a democratic selection process to hire the new principal that would work collaboratively with all sectors of the school community. The Department of Education's first response was to send and interim principal whose idea of community participation was to ask them for resources when she needed them. After taking our concerns directly to the Secretary of Education, again, his office ended up inviting us to attend the interview process for the new principal and present our concerns to the candidates. Actually, we did not know what that meeting was about or what role we were expected to play until we arrived to the meeting place.

The meeting was at one in the afternoon. It was real hot, we were running late, and we had no idea where the Regional Office of the Department of Education was. Esperanza, a long time community resident and leader, received a last minute call from the Secretary of Education[10]'s Office asking the River School Committee to attend today's meeting. Unknown to us, it was going to be the first time in the Regional Office's history that a group of community advocates would be present during the evaluation of candidates for their school's principal.

After informal greetings and small talk, the representative of the Secretary of Education welcomed everyone saying,

"The Secretary is deeply committed to River School and the community development process taking place there. He wants to hire a school

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[9] Reyes Cruz (2008)

[10] Puerto Rico has a local Department of Education. A significant amount of its funding comes from the Unites States Department of Education.

principal that will work in close alliance with the community leaders and their organizations to develop an integrated educational project".

The chair of the evaluation committee added

"This is an unusual meeting. For the first time in this office's history we have a community group attending the interview process. The group was instrumental in opening the principal's position at River School. They will present to you their concerns regarding the school and listen to what you have to say. The task of the evaluation committee is only to make recommendations to the Secretary. This should be clear to everybody: although we make recommendations, it is the Secretary who has the last word".

This introduction did not get lost on us the "outsiders". After all, as most people in the room knew, the committee had been holding meetings with school staff, parents, other neighborhood residents, the Secretary of Education himself, his assistants, the local district representative to the Legislature, and the Governor's advisor on education issues. The goal was to address the problems identified by the school community, including changing the principal. Without such high profile advocacy effort we would not have been invited to that meeting in the first place. The committee was building public accountability for the school and it seemed to be working.

But the administrators' opening words were not lost on the candidates either. One by one, they turned around to face us directly and addressed Esperanza, Marcos, Carmen and I as if it all depended on getting on our good side.

One of the candidates seemed to have all going for her. She was a long time River teacher who participated actively in the committee in its beginning. One of her close coworkers was there seating at the evaluators side. And, as we were later told, she had access to the interview questions before hand. However, to everyone's surprise, during her interview the woman choked. I was writing away taking note of the question and answer session when all of a sudden I felt that I had to look up. There was a question in the air and the woman could not speak. She mumbled a couple of things without addressing the question. The chair challenged her to respond from her knowledge and experience at the school. She could only gasp and look at Esperanza and me with trembling eyes.

The next day the Secretary of Education brought his staff to River where school staff, the interim principal, a few mothers and the River School Committee awaited. The Secretary thanked the principal for bringing the school up to speed administratively and making some needed infrastructural changes. He said that the interview process for a new principal was in progress.

"The new principal has to have the approval of the community and his or her performance should be evaluated at the end of the first year by the community and my office. If things are not working out we'll look for another person."

One of the teachers said that they all agreed the interim principal had done a great job and proposed that her contract be extended. The Secretary simply said it could not be done. She had retired and could not be hired officially as the full time principal. Then the teacher began raising questions about the emphasis on community participation. He argued that most parents didn't care about what was happening at the school. "Most don't work and never respond when we call on them to attend to issues with their children". The teacher beside him nodded. (Never mind that the school has 100 students and in a period of three months 45 five parents attended the meetings coordinated by the River School Development Committee).

The next day Esperanza told me that rumors of a challenge to the validity of the selection process for the new principal were spreading wild. Some school staff (which included community residents and the interim principal) were upset about the presence of community representatives at the interviews and were challenging the process. (Never mind two strong candidates were being considered for recommendation andit was apparent that the evaluation team had reached consensus about who was best qualified. Only the River teacher on the evaluators' side did not agree. She was adamant about her coworker being the best candidate despite evidence to the contrary.)

Gubernatorial elections are six months away. The Secretary of Education is nominated by the Governor. The current Governor has been indicted for corruption charges by the federal government. The committee knew we had to call the Secretary and let him know the process to select the new principal was being challenged. The struggle had barely begun.

Undoubtedly there are substantial differences between the experiences of the Mexican immigrants group and the River School Committee. For example, unlike the Mexican immigrants who were legitimate but not legal residents, the people engaged in the education organizing effort in Puerto Rico are all legal historical residents of the Island. The River school community (including staff and parents) is mostly black Puerto Rican and Dominican while Mexicans constitute a racialized minority in the United States. And while the Mexican parent group was numerically larger, the River Committee had a multisectorial effort in community development giving them legitimizing their authority vis-à-vis the school staff and the Department of Education, having a share of political and cultural capital.

On the other hand, Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States where people can vote for their favorite candidate in a presidential primary but cannot vote in the presidential election. Our economy is also suffering the effects of the recession but we have little room to make decisions about which country or multinational we buy gasoline or rice from, who or how much we pay to import and export goods.

However, in Illinois and San Juan school districts are bounded by U.S. federal education policies that call for parent and community participation in school decision making. Such policies have been part of the World Bank's strategies for decentralizing public education systems for over a decade, placing increasing responsibility for school outcomes on their historically disadvantaged immediate communities. However, as Anderson (1998), Fine (1993), Sarasson (1996) and Fullan and Watson (2000) have shown, hegemonic school culture is contrary to authentic democratic participation. Marginalized communities without the "right" cultural and political capital stand to fail in their efforts to secure more autonomy over their schools.

Some Notes from/for the Resistance

I depart from the premise that in order to enact critical community psychology for social justice we have to deal squarely with the coloniality of power and knowledge. This praxis must lead to collectively crafting explicit analyses of the dominant political culture integrating micro and macro levels of analyses of domination/oppression/ exploitation in every day life and how that is challenged from the ground-up. As an applied social science discipline, a critical community psychology has a distinct contribution to make to scientific understandings of politics and power as we work on "the ground" with social actors engaged in both social reproduction and contestation.

Perhaps different from other ethically akin fields and disciplines, we can be simultaneously engaged in developing deeper understandings of complex social relationships and processes while working towards a just and sustainable world.

We have a lot to learn from multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary academic activist (like

those who have joined efforts to see Social Forums happen across the planet). We have much to do and learn about participatory action research and other forms of critical research such as discourse analyses, political surveys, and critical ethnography that could open our range of action and levels of understanding. But more immediately, we have a long and hopeful road to travel together to battle the negative impact of what some have termed academic capitalism and create the institutional spaces for graduate students and non-tenured-yet academics doing trabajo de frontera, who take great risks in precarious institutional circumstances. We need creative ways of supporting each other and our work to secure the field's relevance and survival by fostering the critical mass necessary for a transformative praxis.

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