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Critical Theory, Pedagogy, and Literacy:

Making Classrooms as Democratic Public Spheres and Teachers as Cultural Workers for Martial Law Conversations

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Introduction

(Written with Heidi Strikwerda, Adjunct Faculty, School of Education, University of Redlands, California)

The rationale for the discussion of critical theory, pedagogy, and literacy, and teachers as cultural workers for Martial Law conversations is the urgent need to demonstrate both sides of the arguments. We want to present the controversial political issue of Martial Law as a topic for teachers to engage in as cultural workers because we believe that classrooms are democratic public spheres, where "teachers are key public figures in the making of meaning for young people" (Saltman 2018, 4). As cultural workers, educators must understand the politics of recognition, which is to be practiced, not just a form of "courtesy, but vital to human need" (Taylor 1992, 25, quoted in Fraser 1997, 14).

The lecture started with audience participation in understanding the meaning of two Filipino "protest" songs from the 1970s. The two songs presented, *Araw na Lubhang Mapanglaw* and *Mendiola*, provide contexts for the discussion on the dynamic meaning-making process. Presenting the two songs that were composed during the height of the protest movements in the Philippines before and during the

Martial Law days demonstrate the dimensions of making meaning about the political conditions of the tumultuous period, including representation or telling yourself, communication or telling others, and interpretation or telling yourself what you think others mean.

The presentation also covers the prevalence of politics in education and reflects about whose interests schools serve. Cultural politics is an inevitable meaning-making practice as competing human identities and ideologies struggle for recognition and domination. It is the role of teachers to affirm or contest these ideologies that complicate the discussions of the arguments for and against Martial Law. The role of critical theory is to facilitate the development of critical awareness for the purpose of unmasking power, contesting hegemony, reclaiming reason, and practicing democracy as they relate to conditions under Martial Law. At the same time, it provides the vital process of critical thinking through the use of open rational conversation and critical reflection (Brookfield 2005). The presentation also highlights the notion that those who are already in power have received class privilege through the transmission of social, cultural, and economic capitals. In addition, children who are excluded from the reproduction of social and cultural benefits suffer from 'symbolic violence,' a condition where the threat of physical violence is manifested through hurtful symbolic manipulation that continues the oppressive systems of domination within society (Bourdieu 1986). The author closes with the warning that if one really wants to put forth critical theory, pedagogy, and literacy in discussing Martial Law in the classroom, s/he will:

(1) Experience anxiety and discomfort, and sometimes fear, but one should have no fear and instead be hopeful and agentic;

(2) Expect cultural politics and engage in civil conversations;

(3) Allow dialogues, dissents, and critical questions;

(4) Tell stories related to freedom, oppression, and critical consciousness; and

(5) Expect and accept that conversations about justice and civil liberties do not lead to immediate closure.

In the past, students and faculty from the University of the Philippines (UP) and members of the progressive movement participated in rallies and marches against oppressive conditions under the Martial Law regime in the Philippines and engaged in bold actions to make the historically silenced voices of the masses heard by the people in power. Many even paid the ultimate price by laying down their lives. We have to honor and give our utmost respect and admiration for those who died advocating for systemic social, economic, and political changes in the country. Recently, we experienced a tragedy as Randy Malayao, an active member of the UP Beta Sigma Fraternity, was murdered inside the bus on his way to his hometown. He was a peace negotiator, activist, and a public intellectual who connected with the national democratic movement for change and demonstrated his trust on the power of ordinary people to take risks and improve their livelihoods, to advocate for what they believe in, and to become a force for social and political change.

More than ever and in the face of the current political and economic conditions of the Philippines, we have to be open, critical, and engaged in a rational civil discourse surrounding the arguments for and against Martial Law. While progress under Martial Law has been claimed, we should take explicit notice of acts against humanity and the atrocities that were and are being committed against the voiceless masses. Should we allow the disintegration of the cultural, social, and moral fiber of Philippine society in the hands of leaders who may be more interested in self-enrichment and personal progress than the amelioration of the lives of many who are in poverty? As cultural workers, we cannot divorce ourselves from the responsibility of making meaning for our youth in search of truth, justice, and democracy through involvement and active advocacy as agents of hope.

Transcribed Presentation

(Delivered at the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), 30 October 2018)

I was walking around earlier and asked some of you, "What brought you here this morning?" I heard many different answers. Let me just ask you again: Are you here because of the key words—critical pedagogy, critical theory, and critical literacy? How about Martial Law as the key word? It is pretty interesting that the title can really draw a lot of impressions. I carefully framed it, so that what I am going to preach or talk to you about in terms of critical pedagogy is open to everyone, whether you are a supporter or non-supporter of Martial Law. There is always room for diversity of ideas—to be able to deliver, debate, discuss, and so on.

Critical Theory, Pedagogy and Literacy: Making Classrooms as Democratic Public Spheres and Teachers as Cultural Workers for Martial Law Conversations is a very heavy topic. I taught a class on critical theory and educational leadership. We examined all kinds of critical theories—from Karl Marx to [Pierre] Bourdieu—to some of the more contemporary research on critical theory and apply those types of theories in terms of doing administrative work in schools.

I teach administrators who are trying to become principals, head counselors, and superintendents. We have covered critical theory in educational administration. When I was planning for the class, I hesitated to use the work of Marx because the United States is a capitalist country. The best thing that I can do to make people comfortable is to tell them that I have tenure. I have been in the University for sixteen years. I took the risk and one of my students said, "Dr. Lalas, has the president talked to you already?" That is okay, I am good. I am protected by the tenure system. We had a very good semester covering many controversial critical theories. I got bolder in using those ideas and even my fellow faculty and students are starting to talk freely about it. We reviewed Karl Marx and we reviewed Bourdieu and other contemporary critical theorists and studied the theoretical connections and applications to administering schools. We have that background but I might not be able to share all of them with you, given our time limitation. That is the limitation

of this presentation, but we are going to discuss many of them, and hopefully, through today's discussion and reflection, we are going to gain insights from those theories.

In terms of critical pedagogy, I have been doing many readings on the work of [Paulo] Freire, Donaldo Macedo, [Henry] Giroux, and other theorists on critical pedagogy. And of course, critical literacy. Since I taught in public elementary and junior high school as a reading specialist, I have the practical experience of working with K-12 students who are struggling readers. I have that range of experiences. Today, my presentation will include discussion, enumeration of some definitions, authentic conversations, and critical reflection.

I thought this might be a good idea that I ask you to be involved. As a teacher-educator, I always ask my students to be involved, to interact, and to discuss in class. Here is a song and what I want you to do is to fill in the blanks. You may share and work with each other, if you want.

> *Araw na lubhang _____ / Lipos ng kadiliman / Nasadlak ang kanyang _____ / Dahil sa iyo _____ / Ang kanyang _____ / _____ ng dugo't luha / Ay dapat nating _____ / Hanggang sa wakas.*

Who wants to give it a try? What's the first word? *Araw na lubhang _____*. *Araw na lubhang marahas*. Wonderful! Another guess. *Araw na*? In reading, we call it a cloze test, right? Every blank that you fill in will help you figure out the next series of blanks. There is a guess. *Araw na lubhang marahas*. Give me another word. That is a good guess. It fits, but that is not the exact word.

Araw na lubhang masakit? Could be, semantically acceptable, but that is not the right word. *Mapanglaw*? Right! We got one correct answer. *Araw na lubhang mapanglaw. Lupos ng kadiliman. Nasadlak ang kanyang? Pagkatao? Kinabukasan? Pangarap? Nasadlak ang kaniyang … buhay. Araw na lubhang mapanglaw. Lupos ng kadiliman. Nasadlak ang kanyang buhay. Dahil sa iyo _____. Bayan?* Is that right? *Araw na lubhang mapanglaw. Lupos ng kadiliman. Nasadlak ang kanyang buhay. Dahil sa iyo bayan.*

Ang kanyang _____. Ang kanyang kalayaan. _____ ng dugo't luha. Nabalot ng kanyang luha. Ang kanyang simulain. Nabalot ng dugo't luha. Ay dapat nating _____. Pahalagahan. Itaguyod. Hanggang sa wakas.

I am using this [song] because it is important. The song represents something, it is meaningful, and it is communicated to you. You have your interpretation, which may or may not be exactly the content of the song itself. But you have your own interpretation, right? This is really the process of meaning-making. This is a very important process when we start the Martial Law discussion. See, it is all meaning-making. How do you view Martial Law? What kind of symbolisms and signs do you attach to Martial Law? It will depend on your meaning-making as a human practice.

The representation of this song or what the song is about—was about one student named Francis Santillano. Francis was killed during one big demonstration in the '60s or early '70s in front of Far Eastern University. That is really the intent of the song. It is a very sad song. Your representations are different because you were not there. But many student activists in the '60s and early '70s can relate to this song very much. Santillano participated in one of the big demonstrations in front of Far Eastern University when he was killed.

We do the second one as a group. *Inang bayan, bakit may piring ang _____? Ang mata. May busal ang bibig, may takip ang _____? Tainga. May galos ang _____, kamay ng lumang kadena. Hanap ang … paglaya. Hanap ang paglaya sa daang Mendiola. Taas ang kamao, tanda ng … paglaban? Daang libong anak pagtutol ang? Sigaw. Putok ng armalite sagot ng kaaway. Ang akala yata'y uurong ang bayan.*

Do you feel the passion inside the song? Look at the representation that was conveyed to you. Think about the message of the song as it captures the conditions during the time of Martial Law. At that time, the passion was so high. There were feverish activities going on. There was demonstration after demonstration, almost on a weekly basis. There were hundreds and thousands of people marching, doing long marches towards Mendiola and the University Belt. Actually, this

song was dedicated to that day when the First Quarter Storm started. 'First Quarter Storm' is the term used to describe the beginning of student political and social consciousness that was expressed through stormy protests and marches, often, with turbulent encounters with state police.

In the '70s, there were many big rallies. The issues were related either to police brutality or with tuition hike or high prices. There was one big demonstration from the University of the Philippines where we went to Mendiola to rally and voice our protests. This started the big swell of demonstrations. Four days after that, another big demonstration happened. There were a lot of UP students, like me. I was a student, I was a young second-year student here at the University of the Philippines. I remember many UP students riding on red buses going to Mendiola from here to there. Thousands of students like me went to Mendiola. There was a big unrest that I saw for the first time. The police, Metrocom, used their truncheons against the marchers and it was really a big fight. I ran as fast as I can with my cousin. We got up to the walls of Fort Santiago and that was the end of it. The following day, four kids were reported to have been killed. I know Ricardo Alcantara was one. There was also Fernando Catabay, Felicisimo Roldan, and Bernardo Tausa. As I have said, that was called the First Quarter Storm because it started the awakening of nationalism that might have led to the declaration of Martial Law later. Socially and culturally, things have changed in the Philippines. This mentality of students getting politicized, aroused, mobilized, and so on, [and] singing of protest songs were common occurrences.

The challenge is how to communicate this historical and political period to young students. The process of meaning-making for teachers and students starts with representation or what do you make of Martial Law, followed by *communication*, that is communicating what it is about to others. Some people would say [that] Martial Law is an event, but before Martial Law, there were many events that were associated with it. This is the essence of the practice of meaning-making. We communicate, you represent something, and you convey it. This is what we do in education. We all have representation. When you communicate with someone, it is subject to [the] interpretation of

that person. Meaning-making is key. I think that in this presentation on critical theory and pedagogy, the real focus is on meaning-making as we attempt to understand the pros and cons of Martial Law.

For one thing, we tended to think that economics is always important, right? Everything revolves around economics. Fight for money. But then an aspect of meaning-making is not related to economics or money-making. It is really the struggle for cultural dominance. For example, how do you teach reading in the Philippines? How do you teach reading in the U[nited] S[tates]? We are not fighting for survival. We are really fighting for cultural dominance in society in general, and in schools in particular. Do you believe in teaching phonics? Do you believe in teaching [the] whole language? Thus there is that struggle for meaning-making pedagogies or ideologies on how to teach reading to children better.

When you translate and analyze that kind of human educational activity, they always involve some meaning-making. Contexts play a big role. Making sense of what the objects or events are about gets converted into or influenced by many different contexts, different social contexts, including topics such as Martial Law or [President] Duterte, right? Do you sense politics in those? How are these representations political?

Let's turn our attention to politics and education. What does politics in education mean? Do we have politics in education? I thought we are just teachers that could teach kids how to read, how to do math, or to understand connections of dates and events in social studies? Or health, human emancipation, [and] progress. But is thinking political? Why is it political? You represent something, right? You convey something to your audience, interpret what the meanings are for them, as the audience attempts to interpret what you mean as well. Signs, symbols, and representations do not make meaning in isolation for themselves.

I have a group of friends in UP who sent me a picture with this sign (fist bump). But for my understanding, I ask this question, "My friends, what are you doing? That's a very serious sign you're doing. I saw you on Facebook." They replied, "No, no, no, we're just having

fun." I continued to respond, "No, no, you're saying something there. With all the controversies going on, you have to be very careful about the meaning of the sign that you're trying to convey. We're from UP, we're assertive." I shared my interpretation that those are signs and symbols are not innocent signs. Like the sign that represents white power in the US. You can see them in pictures. You know white power? Those are signs and you make sense of them and you interpret them. They are not innocent signs. There is politics in everything people do.

In our field, politics in education happens each time that there are competing ideas; each time that there are competing meanings, competing interests, and competing power relations which are manifested inside the classroom. There is politics there, there is politics in everything we do, and politics is a good thing, right? The sad thing that is happening right now in the Philippines, and in the US too, is that politics has become a very bad word. It has become a very bad word because of our politicians, both in US and in the Philippines. But politics has its positive side, too.

Dr. [Dina] Ocampo mentioned that I was a school board member in Corona–Norco. That is an elected position, just like a city council [member]. I was elected by the three cities of Corona, Norco, and Eastvale in California to be a policymaker in the school district. Every time there are good ideas, I would say, "They are all good ideas, but is there a political support? Is there political drive to implement these ideas? If there's no political drive or political support, those good ideas are not going anywhere." Politics is used here in a positive sense. Politics means you have [ ] to determine the competing ideas and then either affirm or contest them, talk to people, meet with people at coffee shops like Starbucks and have coffee, and discuss and solve problems. These are ways of engaging in healthy and positive political conversations.

Politics is good. Whose interest do schools serve? That is a political question right away. What makes that a political question? Whose interest do schools serve? Do they serve the teachers only? Or do they serve the interest of the students? Do they serve the interests of the

rich? Do they serve the interests of students in special education? All of these are valid political questions. These are political questions that can be discussed in a civil manner. Not in a bad way, but you debate, you disagree, you agree to disagree. You contest or affirm each other's positions as you employ critical thinking. Critical thinking is at work here and a very important element of the meaning-making process in politics.

We talked about critical thinking. Are you using critical thinking from [the view of] analytic philosophy and logic? That means you can differentiate reasoned from [un]reasoned facts. But there is another side of critical thinking. We call it the constructivist view, a kind of socially-situated perspective. The question is, what is critical thinking? It could be critical too, if you are looking at whose interest you are serving. For instance, thinking of those kids being bullied in squatter areas and how to improve their social treatment is a use critical thinking, too. Paying attention to the needs of all students, including those in special education and non-native speakers of English who live in urban low-cost areas, is a form of critical cognitive engagement when it becomes a part of political conversation and discussion.

Authority is not only vital to social systems as a construct because when there is authority, opposition to the authority will happen (Schneiderman 2018). And the engine of change drives through. We need the authority to make things happen. What is the takeaway? These are what those current books on critical theory that I read, such as the book [ ] *Engagement and Disengagement* (ibid.) say. What are presented in those books are two competing areas: engagement and disengagement.

In UP, when I was a student here, I learned that if there is a thesis, then there is what? Antithesis and synthesis. You learn those things and processes as an undergraduate. But what is important in our conversation here is what you know when you start talking about cultural politics. This is what I am talking about. Let me explain.

Cultural politics is a struggle to make meaning among competing parties and the recognition of the inevitable meaning-making dimensions of human practices (Saltman 2018). It is natural. There is

cultural politics. As I have said, we are not talking about economics, we are not talking about money, but we are talking about culture and cultural politics in school.

Which is a more dominant approach in teaching reading or math? In the US, we have a struggle between integrated math and traditional math. That is an example of [a] cultural politics discussion, and we talk about [it] in the school board room. We have these approaches called 'Singapore math,' the label [that] I hear a lot here because Singapore is always scoring very high in those international [math] tests. In our district, we adopted a somewhat similar approach we called 'Integrated Math.' We do not call it Singapore math, but integrated. It is a different approach in teaching math, and parents are complaining. Parents complain—they come to the school board meeting, they voice their concerns, and sit with us to talk about how this particular mathematics curriculum was adopted. [This is] cultural politics. This type of conversation is an example of cultural politics in education.

Now, let me talk about the notion of *recognition*. We recognize everybody's point of view. The work of Charles Taylor, from a Hegelian perspective, says that nonrecognition or misrecognition is a form of oppression (Fraser 1997). When you are not recognized, what do you feel? When I contributed some program ideas to my university and that contribution was not acknowledged, I felt ignored and marginalized. This is an example of nonrecognition and misrecognition as a form of oppression. The quote continues by saying that it is not a matter of courtesy, but it is vital for human beings to be recognized (ibid.). You want to be recognized, especially when you did an appropriate, relevant, [and] rightful thing in the program. You want to be recognized for your achievement.

In summary, meaning-making or semiotics—the study of meaning-making—is a dynamic process. First of all, you deliver the use of available resources and tools for representation and other expressive materials. That is called 'design.' Everybody has a design or owns a set of resources and tools that represent who they are. And the second one is called 'designing'—that is, when you make sense of

something that is being communicated; you make use of your design, which represents you as the listener. Those are the representations that you have. It is similar to being asked to write a paper or doing this presentation. In doing this presentation, I have extracted my resources and other materials available to me such as books, articles, historical documents, and many others, read them, and made them part of my [ ] presentation. And then for these materials to make sense for my presentation, I wrote an outline and created a PowerPoint [slideshow]. That is part two or the step of 'designing.' The last part of the meaning-making process is 'redesign'—that is, when transformation that equates to learning happens as you are interpreting the new information you are receiving, combining it with your representation, and making your own meaning. In my case of preparing for this lecture, this means I got transformed, I learned more, I have been "redesigned." In other words, when you start writing your paper, you are manifesting the step of "design." Then you read and synthesize the research, as the second step called "designing." Once you have finished the paper, you have become an expert with that paper because you improved your knowledge. This the third step called 'redesign' because you have been transformed. This is the very essence of learning (Kalantzis et al. 2016)

As an educator in the classroom, you give students assignments and you assess their competence. You make them feel that they belong in that classroom. You value and nurture their interests. You accommodate and you present them with meaningful activities. These are motivational ideas in teaching students in the classroom, which can facilitate and elicit the processes of design, designing, and redesign. And that is very important.

Let us come to teachers' responsibility in the politics of education (Saltman 2018). We are all teachers. We are all exposed to these ideas, knowledge, and so on. I think our role is to affirm or contest public discourses and existing values, knowledge, dispositions, and ideologies. You can affirm, you can be passive and not contest, or you can just implement what is coming from the top. That is okay too. But one of our jobs as teachers is to affirm or contest existing paradigms. There is no escape. In a traditional bureaucracy, we have

someone in authority such as a department head, who may make all the decisions—probably with some input from others—for us teachers. We either affirm or contest those decisions. We also affirm or contest existing and established institutional practices.

As teachers, professors, or faculty, we are producers of pedagogies and identities for students. We shape and influence the identities of our students as we provide them with classroom activities and ample opportunities for social and cultural conversations. If you ask your students to do simple tasks in school or engage them in low-level thinking activities, you are creating or producing that identity in them, that they are low-level achievers who can only do low-level thinking tasks. All those low-level activities (I am not putting any school down) are putting a limit to learners and their abilities. Watch it!

In more relatively well-to-do schools, those low-level activities are not happening, especially in big, affluent schools. They are doing project-based learning, completing research papers, and doing all kinds of creative projects. As I have mentioned, as a teacher, professor, or faculty, we really are producers and shapers of students' identities. Here is what I mean by hidden curriculum (Anyon 1980) in working-class schools—for example, when we are intentionally teaching low-level skills based on the belief that our students are not capable of reaching higher-level thinking because of their social class and the social class of their school.

Let me provide an explicit example in California, where I work. In inner cities, you will see relatively poor African-American and Latino students doing some low-level thinking activities. My two grown-up children are both teachers in urban schools, so I know [this]. The student work, which is being produced in these inner-city neighborhoods, is relatively very simple. However, when you look at schools around the communities of [University of California, Los Angeles] (UCLA) or Stanford [University] areas, the students there are expected to do creative, challenging, reflective, and evaluative school tasks. This demonstrates that we have the tendency to prepare students in inner cities to do easy, routine jobs and yet we train students in

the UCLA or Stanford areas or from affluent school communities to be leaders, managers, thinkers, creators, and innovators for the future generations.

As educators, we are influencing the development of our students' identities, whether we like it or not. Reflect and observe this in your class. If you deal with these students with care and passion and trust their competence, they will respond. In UP, the expectation for student achievement is so high. I have many friends who were having problems academically in the beginning because of the University's high expectations and the cultural practice and climate on campus. And yet, my friends have developed this grit and they have become really smart and resourceful by using resources available to them, talking to influential people as role models, and developing their own social capital or connections in order to succeed (Bourdieu 1986). This is an example of how educators and the cultural climate of educational institution are factors in shaping one's identity.

Another responsibility of the teacher is to help students produce and interpret experiences in social situations, while engaging in exchanging meanings. For example, if you are having a discussion in one of your classes: What will be the role of the teacher? I know some textbooks—they are good textbooks, but I saw them as very didactic in their approaches. The textbooks tell you the stories, about what happened here, what happened there, [and include] as well some activities that ask students to make a sketch, or even to dramatize [stories]. These are good activities; however, we have to find a way to help students co-create social situations and engage in exchanging meaning with us. It is hard to do, right? Because we are teachers, we want to be in command of classroom situations. On the contrary, I really think we have to give up some authority and control and to trust our students to deliberate, discuss, and make meaning with us. This is politics in education. Teaching is political, whether we like it or not. But it is political in a positive sense.

Teachers are cultural workers. I am citing Saltman (2018) here, although Freire (1998) used the term as well to describe the important role of teachers in the classroom. I use Saltman's *The Politics of*

Education: A Critical Introduction (2018) in my critical theory class where the role of teachers as cultural workers is discussed. The word 'culture' has a broader meaning and I used the work of Bourdieu to explain about culture or cultural capital. Incidentally, I was driven to learn more about the work of Bourdieu by a UP professor [ ] named Gerry Lanuza. I was in my sabbatical in the Philippines in 2009, when I had an opportunity to have a conversation with him over coffee, and he asked me straightforwardly, "Do you know anything about symbolic violence?" He suggested to me some readings on the topic, including other works by Bourdieu on cultural and social capital.

Culture has three elements. I am going to do didactic teaching. One is *embodied cultural capital*. That is embedded in yourself. It is embedded in you. It is your characteristics, what has been given to you. You embody it; it is who you are and how you think. The second one is objectified. *Objectified capital* means the objects that you like and activities that you participate in, your ownership, or how much money you have in the bank, what type of car you drive, if you go to the museum or like art, or if you enjoy particular genre of music—classical, pop, or love songs. The last one is called *institutionalized capital*. What is your degree? What is your certificate? How do you compare yourself with others? How do you differentiate your degree or your areas of expertise? So we have those capitals, which form your characteristics as cultural workers. That means you are imparting all those social and cultural capital that you have to the children or young people you work with. We, as teachers, become cultural workers, and by definition, "[c]ultural workers are those people who are engaged in public meaning-making activities, and teachers are key public figures in the making of meaning for young people" (Saltman 2018, 4; Freire 1998).

We have a very big role when we are in front of our students because we are making meaning for them. But if we want their input, we can engage them too in the conversation so the meaning-making process is not just coming from the teacher. However, meaning-making is a collaborative process. Interactive, right? When you choose a pedagogy, or when you choose a theory, make [a] lesson plan, and

when you teach, you are definitely engaged in meaning-making activities. You are making meaning for these young people.

How do you do that? Is there a thing that we can share to teachers and instructors? What can teachers do to create conducive contexts and classroom conditions that could facilitate engagement with their students? I did a little review of research literature and found something that I have been using in my class. I teach in the doctoral program, and in my social and educational justice foundation classes, I use three pedagogical strategies, namely rational discourse, critical reflection, and praxis (Brown 2004). In a rational discourse, you engage your students in open conversations of new ideas and in assessing reasons and evidence, while understanding each other's biases.

I will share with you the way I do it with my class. I am not a trained counselor, but in that class, I started an extended conversation on selected topics with my doctoral students. Say, for example, in the US, we talk about racism. We have African-Americans or Blacks, Whites, Latinos, Chinese, Filipinos, and many others. In my class alone, I have a mixed group of students with different collective identities that makes my job of facilitating the conversation really very interesting. During one of my class sessions with a group of students, I engaged them in rational discourse or extended conversation. I didn't tell them what to do but just asked them to share any of their interaction with people who are different from their racial identities. One student shared, "I hated Blacks because when I was growing up, my dad was mugged by a Black person. Since then, I really don't want to do anything with them." In my class, you can talk about social issues and everybody in the class just chose to be supportive of these conversations. And then she said, "One day, my daughter came home with the partner that she would bring [to] her senior prom: a Black kid." My student narrated that she was really upset. Then, with teary eyes, she then shared how her perspective got transformed. She explained that the only time she became comfortable with African-Americans was when she met a professor who is Black in the university. He helped her deal with her prejudicial feelings against Blacks. My student said that the Black professor held her hand and

he helped her. With that experience and other interactions with that professor, her whole view changed. Rational discourse is a way of engaging students in an extended conversation. After my class that evening, I shared with the faculty that I had a group counseling therapy in my class and it worked!

Then we go to critical reflection, which includes the examination of one's personal beliefs and values and how these are used to examine many educational issues. With critical reflection, I ask my students to write a five-page reflective essay on several assigned readings on particular topics. Usually, I assign three or four readings a week. Before they come to my class, they will read those articles, write their reflections, and weave the articles into a critical paper. Therefore, students come to my class prepared and ready to discuss because they have read and they have written their reactions on their typewritten reflective paper. That is how I do critical reflection.

And then the other one is praxis. Praxis is putting what we have talked about and reflected upon into practice. Every time we meet—and we meet once a week—I would say, "To share with you my praxis, I'm going to report to you my political encounters in my role as a school board member and my experiences in creating the exciting culture of collaboration in my school district." Sometimes, I would ask my students questions about achievement gap, the phenomenon which shows that Whites, Asians, and Filipinos are scoring high in standardized achievement tests, while at the bottom are the African-Americans and Latinos. The achievement gap has been continuous in America for the last twenty years. In my district, I ask the district administrators this question in an open public meeting: "I understand there is an achievement gap, but can you explain why there is a gap?" I already have some research-based ideas about the answer, but I want to engage them in a conversation to really unpack the issue of achievement gap. Usually the issue of race will come about, even though the administrators really try to avoid the conversations about this topic. Why is there an achievement gap? How will people remedy that gap? I believe that if we do not know why there is an achievement gap, there will be a disconnect between the remedy and the root causes of the gap. Discussions like this at the school board

level is as an example of applying the strategies of rational discourse, critical reflection, and praxis. If you want to read more about it, read Kathleen Brown (2004).

I want you think of a young person—[could be your] niece, nephew, your sons and daughters, your neighbor, your friend. I want you to think about what kind of values, knowledge, and disposition would you wish for that young person to have now or in the future. Think about that person. I am not a pessimist, but I always ask my students: "How will you cope with what's going on in school? How's everybody coping?"

In the US, there are Democrats, Republicans, there is Trump, and so on. However, when I raise political questions in class, students are not too eager to talk. Perhaps, [they are] very careful. But some would volunteer to discuss what they believe in but [would be] respectful of other students' ideas. How is everybody coping? There is respect. We can talk about it. We practice democracy and civic mindedness. So going back to my initial question: what kind of person are you thinking of? Can you pair-share it with the person sitting next to you? What would that person be? Give me an example.

You know what, I learned a new word yesterday, a Tagalog word—*malingap*. I have not used that word for a long time. Do you know what the word means? *Malingap?* Do you want your kids to be *malingap? Mabait?*

(*Audience member: A socially responsible person.*)

Socially responsible? What do you mean by that?

(*Audience member: A person may be kind or intelligent.*)

Okay, so you may be kind, intelligent, but if you are not socially responsible… Is that a good thing? How about the others?

(*Audience member: Respect for diversity.*)

Respect for diversity. Why is that important?

(*Audience member: Because we live in a world wherein people are different and we have to collaborate. We have to work with one another.*)

What else?

(*Audience member: Intellectual and gifted but grounded in values.*)

Good. I am going back now. There are three main types of political persuasions. For some of the things you have mentioned here, and some of the things you are thinking about, would anyone of them fall into the area of being liberal? Conservative? Critical? How do you differentiate these three political perspectives? From your experience, when do people exhibit being liberal educators versus conservative educators, or versus critical educators?

(*Audience member: A conservative educator is one who follows the status quo, a liberal educator is open to ideas, while a critical educator is one who allows people to question.*)

First, let's talk about these types of political orientation. For the conservative educator, they could be fiscal conservatives, cultural conservatives, or those who believe in the status quo. What about a critical educator? Basically, they want to transform the society, they want to change policies and programs that don't work, they want to take action. What is critical theory? Critical theory is to learn and understand some crucial tasks, such as how to perceive and challenge dominant ideologies, unmask power, reclaim reason, and practice democracy. There is critical theory in educational administration. We need to apply critical theory in discussing, understanding, and analyzing Martial Law as teachers [and] as cultural workers.

The word 'theory' is a serious word and it is also a very dangerous word as it relates to how one views the world and guides their actions [towards] the world. Wars can happen because of some misguided, misinformed, and narrow views of the world. For example, in 2015, in Charleston, South Carolina, a 21-year-old white supremacist murdered nine African-Americans during a prayer service at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The perpetrator of the

crime confessed and admitted that he committed this shooting in the hope of igniting a race war. This shows how a misguided view of the world can lead to horrible consequences. As teachers, when we talk about Martial Law in the Philippines or the current political, social, and economic situations in the Philippines, it is important to consider one's paradigm or theory in viewing its impact in the country. Depending on your view of the world, you can view Martial Law as beneficial for the country or repressive because of its violations of human rights. To assist our critical thinking about the topic, we study events, we examine the social and political conditions, and we gain insights in the process. I always explain that to my students. Insights! I-N-S-I-G-H-T-S. We gain meaning, we gain insights, and we put critical theory and critical thinking to use. Look at the insights. [We p]erceive and challenge dominant ideology. We read some of those critical theories [and] ideology, and we interpret the world [and] events such as the perception of a dominant ideology, unmasking of power, reclaiming reason, and practicing democracy or repressing people's democratic rights and freedom. Under Martial Law, we have to examine all of these implications. Many times, we are struggling on how to interpret an event or situation and we need a theory or an explanation to make sense of what it is all about. We need a theory because we cannot explain what is going on. Theory helps us understand what is going on, it helps us to provide an explanation, for example, about how power is being unmasked as false generosity, how reasons and expressions are being repressed, and how democratic rights are being stifled.

The work of Antonio Gramsci (1971) helped us understand and overcome alienation. Reclaim reason? I am sure you can think of a theory or information that provides you with the insights on how to reclaim reason.

Lastly, we need to practice democracy as one of our crucial tasks. When we read Freire's *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998), we would be challenged to consider how we are to practice democracy. Pursuing liberation, contesting hegemony, reclaiming reasons—these are crucial tasks pertaining to critical theory that serve as reminders to us about the important role and purpose of critical theories in our

lives. We use critical theory to facilitate the development of social and political awareness through insights. As a faculty for thirty years and a school member for twenty-three years, I try very hard to apply this perspective in my own world because I am committed to social justice and the principles of the pedagogy of freedom.

When we talk about liberal educators, we are referring to educators who agree with new ideas and with experimentation, while also accepting that there is a gap in achievement among racial and ethnic groups as measured in different test scores. Like critical educators, liberal educators support any new ideas, new efforts, and so on. Looking at the conservative modes of conduct, conservative educators promote a common set of knowledge based on the traditional Western canon. They may even have a list of cultural works that everyone should learn, like that of the most well-known education cultural conservative E. D. Hirsch. Also, there is what we call fiscal conservatives who are very status quo-oriented and who support the idea of eradicating public schooling by implementing it as a private service. The role of our educational system in preparing our students as workers for big companies, big corporations, and other businesses has influenced the vision and mission of cultural and fiscal conservative educators. For critical educators, social context is important and identity is important. However, all the three political perspectives are important to understand and evaluate the educational system. We need to study various educational theories and to connect theories to our practices. By understanding these perspectives, we are able to connect our own social capital and cultural capital, values, and beliefs. In general, the liberal and the conservative educators want social accommodation, whereas the critical educators desire social transformation.

As I have said, theory may be dangerous, but we need it because it is informative, inspiring, and insightful. We have to be really careful. But at the same time, we have to realize that theory does not belong to only those who work at the university level. Everybody has a theory; even a gardener has a theory. Theories are not just for intellectuals, professors, writers of a peer-reviewed paper, and people doing some experiment. No, everybody has a theory! Your paraprofessionals,

helpers—all kinds of people from different walks of life have theories. And in our situation, in education, the issue is not whether or not theory matters, but whether or not individuals have developed the ability to understand the values, assumptions, and ideologies behind what they do. Well, we do all kinds of activities in the classroom, right? We are not saying that theory matters all the time. What matters most is the teachers' awareness of how these theories explain and guide teachers in what they do in the classroom. Teachers need to understand and know the values, the assumptions, the ideas, and ideologies behind the practices they engage in (Saltman 2018). Otherwise, the pedagogical practices they use become something like using a recipe. You follow the recipe; you collect recipes from your colleagues. You do not recreate, you do not re-engage, and you do not re-imagine by applying all kinds of theories or theories applied to research. From a critical perspective, theories are good, research is good, and research-based practices are vital for effective student engagement and learning.

Theory also tells us about things that are not in our making. It is dangerous in a way because we might say, "Well, it is a failure because we do not apply theory well." But there are contexts of learning that are not necessarily our own making. For example, academic failure of students in school is not all our fault as teachers. Academic failure or success can also be attributed to what David Berliner (2009) calls "non-school factors" or "out-of-school factors." Berliner talks about inequality and poverty. There are things that we do not create. We have students in school with very diverse backgrounds, social problems, and cultural challenges. For example, the achievement gap in our public schools is prevalent even though we want all students to succeed and achieve. We have to recognize that fact that there are other factors outside the school that cause some of these challenges. There is the context of race, economics, culture, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as the context of abilities and disabilities. All these contexts of learning must be considered in providing the explanation of why inequality of students in the classroom exists. We want equality, but because of the different contexts or categories of difference among the students, inequality happens. I believe that inequality is inevitable and the categories of difference and how the

educational system addresses these differences may be valid factors in explaining why students perform differently in doing their academic tasks. I think that we need to consider the impact of differences and other out-of-school factors on student achievement. If we do not address the inevitable inequalities, what happens? Inequities are bound to occur.

Many of you are familiar with the work of Freire, and I am showing it here, so we can gain or draw out some insights. We can think about our philosophy of teaching and we can look openly at our pedagogical practices. From Freire's perspective (1970), there is the notion of what he calls "banking concept" or banking model of teaching, where it is like opening the head of the student and pouring in some materials there. The information is categorized, stored, and filed away. Teachers view students as empty vessels.

Let me try to compare the banking model and the problem-posing model of teaching. In the banking model, teachers see the students as objects. They alienate students, expound on topic, resist dialogues, conceal some facts, inhibit creativity, immobilize, and see students as passive, and teaching in a fatalistic note.

On the other hand, teachers who are problem-posing see students as people. There is a teacher-student alliance. There is criticality and reflection. Problem-posing teachers encourage dialogue, reveal, mythologize, include creative assignments, encourage understanding of background and historicity, and transform into an emancipatory tone. It is a challenging concept because one way or another, we switch back and forth. One day we are a banking concept teacher and on another day, you become a problem-posing teacher. It could be a blend, but by looking at the work of Freire on the banking model of teaching, it gives us some insights as to what is effective and affective and what is not. What is more people-oriented and what is not?

(*Audience: In banking, who withdraws? Is it the teacher or is it the students who withdraws?*)

So the teacher deposits, right? Your question is who withdraws? Are you getting something in return?

(*Audience: Yeah, cause in the banking, it seems to think that the student is your own, right? And so you deposit.*)

An empty vessel.

(*Audience: And then, do you withdraw? Do you say something in the future that "he was my student in the past and therefore this is my product"? He has become the president of the Philippines? Is there a banking flow?*)

Well, let us think about it for a moment and apply Freire's view in talking about teaching reading or literacy. How do you teach reading in the banking concept model? I can predict that it goes like this: You kind of open the brain metaphorically to deposit the letters of the alphabet, you deposit all the minimal pairs, the sounds, the blends, the consonants and vowels with the assumption that children learn how to read by understanding those skills-based set of information. On the other hand, when you teach reading not in a banking concept model, you are not just depositing, but you are engaging students. There is more discussion, more creativity, more reading of literature, and more discussion. Whether or not you can withdraw from this or that, it could be predictable. Where can you withdraw more? Where could it be more successful? Where could it have more achievement?

There are research studies from literacy experts who teach reading from an authentic literacy pedagogy such as the work of Goodman (2014) on whole language and other holistic approaches. There are those who teach reading from a functional literacy pedagogy who are content area teachers. There are those who teach reading from a critical perspective and there are others who teach reading using the more traditional didactic literacy pedagogy. From there, you can almost weigh the arguments for and against the various literacy pedagogies. Where do you think students learn better or engage better and become more successful readers? Hypothetically, if we conduct the experiment now comparing the banking concept model of teaching reading, which can be considered a didactic literacy pedagogy and the authentic, functional, or critical literacy pedagogies, where would you predict there will be more successful readers who can think critically and creatively? If you are interested in the possible

results of studies similar to my hypothetical case, look them up. I predict that there have been comparative studies done to demonstrate the differences in reading achievements.

Not all schools are equal, as I have said, in my discussion about the "hidden curriculum." Jean Anyon, who has often been described as a Marxist professor, wrote the book *Marx and Education* (2011). Before she passed away, I had a wonderful chance of having a breakfast with her, and just as what usually a good professor does, she kept asking me, "Have you read this book, have you read that book?" I was taking notes as fast as I could. She was recognized as a Marxist professor and was honored by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) for her contribution of elevating Marxism as a philosophy in the field of education. Her classic research in 1980 is still cited in current research studies and recent publications. The very latest [that] I read is the one with the title *Is Everyone Really Equal?: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education* by Oslem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo. This is the chart from that book in 2017 (*see* Table 1 below), where it shows how "not all schools are equal" as a finding in Jean Anyon's (1980) classic qualitative study.

TABLE 1 Elementary-aged students' responses to questions on knowledge

Questions	Responses		
	Students from working-class schools	**Students from middle-class schools**	**Students from affluent professional schools**
What is knowledge?	• "To know stuff" • "Doing pages in our books and things" • "Worksheets" • "You answer questions" • "To remember things"	• "To remember" • "You learn facts and history" • "It's smartness" • "Knowledge is something you learn"	• "You think up ideas and then find things wrong with those ideas" • "It's when you know something really well" • "A way of learning, of finding out things" • "Figuring out stuff"

TABLE 1 Elementary-aged students' responses to questions on knowledge *(continued)*

Questions	Responses		
	Students from working-class schools	**Students from middle-class schools**	**Students from affluent professional schools**
Where does knowledge come from?	• "Teachers" • "Books" • "The Board of Ed[ucation]" • "Scientists"	• "Teachers" • "From old books" • "From scientists" • "Knowledge comes from everywhere" • "You hear other people talk with the big words"	• "People and computers" • "Your head" • "People—what they do" • "Something you learn" • "From going places"
Could you make knowledge, and if so, how?	• No (15) • Yes (1) • Don't know (4) • One girl said, "No, because the Board of Ed makes knowledge."	• No (9) • Yes (11) • "I'd look it up." • "You can make knowledge by listening and doing what you're told." • "I'd go to the library." • "By doing extra credit."	• No (4) • Yes (16) • "You can make knowledge if you invent something." • "I'd think of something to discover, then I'd make it." • "You can go explore for new things."

Source: Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017

In this research, schools were divided into three types. We have working-class schools, middle-class schools, and affluent professional schools. Knowledge developed differently depending on the social context of the particular school (Anyon 1981). For example, just to this question, "What is knowledge?" may have varied responses of the students or research participants according to the social classes of their schools. From working-class schools, it says knowledge is "to know stuff," "doing pages in our books and things," "worksheets," and "to remember things." And when students from the middle-class schools were asked, "What is knowledge?," the responses included

"to remember," "you learn facts and history," "it's smartness," and "knowledge is something you learn." In affluent professional schools, students' responses included "it's when you know something really well," "a way of learning, of finding out things," "figuring out stuff," and "you think up ideas and then find things wrong with those ideas." As a result, you see different things, different beliefs, and different knowledge depending on the school contexts that are based in social class. The findings in this research resulted in the generalization that not all schools are equal (Anyon 1980). This classic research has always been cited to show the impact of social class on school curriculum and school knowledge.

What is the takeaway there? What are the insights that we learned from her work? How do we apply the findings of her classic research, in terms of its implications in our school in discussing critical social, political, and economic issues? What could we predict in terms of teachers' and students' openness in discussing controversial issues? Do you think that the students who attend more affluent schools are more open, creative, articulate, and assertive in discussing controversial issues, such as the pros and cons of Martial Law in the Philippines? Will the students from working-class schools versus students from affluent schools respond to your questions differently when asked about challenging topics such as Martial Law, capitalism, or communism? What is your prediction? Who will have a better answer or better interaction?

I can only predict that perhaps, those students who go to affluent schools, where teachers interact with their students actively and where students are actively engaged in doing problem-solving-based activities or projects might do better than the students who attend working-class schools. Just be cognizant that the "hidden curriculum of school work is tacit preparation for relating to the process of production in a particular way" (Anyon 1980, 89–90). What can we do about it?

Let me share with you the overview of research I did a few years ago.

When I had my sabbatical in 2009–2010, I decided to spend one semester in UP Diliman College of Education teaching courses and

conducting research. The following year after my sabbatical, I came back to conduct a qualitative research in collaboration with thirteen graduate students from UP College of Education. We went out to interview 70 people in different schools. We went to Krus na Ligas, Antipolo, and we went to private schools. We have a big collection of qualitative data that captured the ideas, sentiments, and passion of teachers and students from working-class schools and affluent schools. What we found as the common denominator between working-class and affluent private schools is how the teachers, administrators, and students love their schools, regardless of their school challenges and social class. Very interesting. They were doing well in those schools and seemed to be happy about the situations they are in.

Given this, maybe test scores are only one measure of school quality? Maybe there should be other measures? As we evaluate and talk about the quality of schooling in particular schools that we visited, we saw differences and they are not all equal of course, based on social class, consistent with Jean Anyon's research. However, we found out that what was more interesting was the fact that the research participants we interviewed all loved their schools. Principals especially expressed love for their schools regardless of the neighborhoods' social class and despite the challenges they face because of that very social class, diverse social contexts of learning, and cultural settings.

We also talked about Bourdieu and his social and cultural capital and reproduction theory (1986; 1998). The basic implication of these notions is that if our schools do not pay attention and do not do something about the categories of difference of students, our schools will continue to reproduce inequality. As we conduct the business of educating students and leading and managing schools, we have the power to focus on knowing who our students are and how they learn, and the optimum learning conditions needed for meaning-making. Otherwise, we are just reproducing the inequalities among schools and students based on social class and other out-of-school factors. That is my big summary of the link between Bourdieu and reproduction theory in educating students.

Those who are empowered based on issues related to social class or some other diverse backgrounds already have the privilege through money, social capital, and cultural capital. You can think about many schools here in our community. We know we have privileged students on the basis of their economic, cultural, and social capital, which is enough to make them successful. On the other hand, what happens to those students who are less fortunate? They have very limited economic resources and symbolic capital.

Children who are excluded from the reproduction of social and cultural benefits suffer from "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). We may not be hitting students physically, but it is not all about physical or economic treatments. There are things that are just symbolic and equally devastating. Let me give you an example that could be construed as an occurrence of "symbolic violence" in the state of California.

One out of four students in the state of California speaks English as their secondary language, or is an English language learner. We have to make sure that as we take care of the majority of all the students, we also take care of those English language learners. There is inequality right away because of their language situations, cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic status. If we do not take care of those inequalities, inequities happen. That is what is happening in California. Rumberger and Gandara (2004) identified the conditions that include inequitable access to appropriately trained teachers, inadequate professional development opportunities for teachers, inequitable access to appropriate assessment, and inequitable access to instructional materials and curriculum among others. There are inequities in terms of our services to English language learners. For one thing, they use English textbooks. If you do not know English, and you use English textbooks, no matter what you say, it is not going to be understood. There has to be some instructional adaptations or modifications that teachers have to do to accommodate both native and non-native English speakers.

As I have mentioned, there is inequity in the use of language and inadequacy in professional development opportunities for teachers. In

my own praxis, I have asked my administrators to give a copy of the professional development (PD) offerings. Almost 70% to 80% of the PD or the professional development workshops are on topics such as Mathematics, Reading, Social Studies, motivation, learning, and so on. However, less than 20% to 30% of the PD offerings are on English language learners, and yet, our district is 52% Hispanic. Many of our Hispanic students have limited English proficiency in reading and language arts and do not speak English as their first language.

By not attending to the instructional and program needs of our diverse students and English learners, we create inequities. That means we are inflicting the pain of "symbolic violence" to diverse students and English language learners because we are not preparing them for college effectively as reflected in their low academic achievement. I believe that it is not because they cannot think critically, but because we are not properly recognizing who they are and what their needs are, giving them services, and redistributing resources to meet their needs.

In addition, we have advanced placement (AP) classes. Students who know English, majority of which come from middle class, professional families, take advantage of the opportunity to take AP classes. Many Asian students and Filipino students also take AP classes. AP is important because that is a pivotal factor in admission to prestigious research institutions such as University of California, Los Angeles or UCLA, UC Berkeley, and Stanford. If you do not have the rigorous academic background through AP classes in high school, that means you will either go to community college or do some other things. There is the manifestation of inequality right away.

What can we do? Of course, there is hope. There are ideas that can be tapped into to make sure that we are not only taking care of our native English-speaking students but also others who are not native speakers. "Equality of conditions is possible, but inequality is inevitable" (Schneiderman 2018, 4). Inequality is there. Observe your students, watch your own classroom. Predictably, you will notice inequity. But you can address this by creating equitable conditions.

Power and authority spell the difference between inequality and inequity. You may think that this may or may not have anything to do with controversial topics such as Martial Law in the Philippines, but I think it does. Generally, those students who need assistance academically and have limited use of language as a tool for discussion and argumentation are disadvantaged in participating actively in democratic extended conversations. This is because of language difference, academic ability, and social class mobility. Students who have more social and cultural resources and enriched academic backgrounds are able to maximize their potential by asking questions and leading the discussion because of their built-in confidence and competence. That's the reason why we need to promote education that puts equity at the center and achieve an education that is more inclusive.

(*Audience: Is it okay to conclude that Filipinos who are pro-Duterte are not faced with the possibility of him declaring Martial Law because they feel that the change in their community helps them accept Duterte's apparent dictatorship at present? On the other hand, affluent people have much more evaluative thinking about the possibility of Martial Law in the Philippines, again, because they are more professional in their thinking.*)

Good question. Realistically, it is my opinion based on existing research literature that affluent schools are able to provide their students with learning conditions and curriculum and instruction that foster deeper analysis, autonomous thinking, problem-solving, and attention to social and political issues. Students in affluent schools are more privileged in terms of social connections and rigorous academic content because they have more time and effort to engage in discussing broader societal problems. Because of these exposures, the students in affluent schools have more political insights. Although in practice, students in working-class schools have more direct concrete experiences in dealing with poverty, violence (economic and symbolic), and less rigorous school offerings, in general.

What does our school system need to attend to? We want all our students to be engaged in social, cultural, and political conversations,

regardless of social class and schools where they attend. Teachers, professors, and instructors must teach their students to be critical thinkers. Is that happening? Is critical teaching teachable? I think it is. There are many theories that are related or connected to teaching, how to employ critical thinking and critical meaning-making in our schools. Critical thinking is key in talking about the arguments for or against Martial Law. We can engage our students, including our fellow teachers, in rational discourse and critical reflection about Martial Law, but not without the theoretical framework or set of critical lenses that has been agreed upon to use. Agreeing to disagree is fine, but we need to be open to well-documented information and critical analysis and insights.

In discussing any controversial topic, including Martial Law, we can have opinions. But from what insights? From whose interests? Are there supporting documentations, quantitatively and/or qualitatively? Equity is a good concept to use as a framework. The notions of social and cultural capital, and social class are good sets of critical lenses to employ. We may be biased in our belief that the poor have less social and cultural capital to understand what is going on. However, we may be underestimating the power of the community or the "funds of knowledge" of low-income communities (Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti 2005). Maybe students from low-income communities and schools know what's going and have social consciousness, but may not have the courage and confidence, and political drive, all because of the deleterious impact of poverty, economic, and symbolic oppression.

We want people to think critically. Here is a textbook definition by Scriven and Paul (1987). It is the "disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and action." You need to use your brain to engage in all these functions and process all of the information, which I think is part of the analytical philosophy and the logical side of critical thinking. Aside from this angle of critical thinking, there is another angle as well that is not too explicit in terms of definition, but which is embedded in constructivism—the practical ability of individuals who

disengage themselves from the assumption of discursive practices and power relations in order to exert more conscious control over their everyday lives.

We should think critically, look at power relations, and recognize power dynamics. Who does that? Is critical thinking teachable? Can teachers, instructors, and faculty teach critical thinking to our students? What set of lenses are we going to wear when we teach critical thinking? Is it a psycho-analytical way of cause and effect, problem-solving and solution, or can we talk about criticality in terms of critical thinking that relates to awareness and action based on social situations, poverty, social class, lack of cultural experiences, and lack of courage and confidence as a predictable negative impact of poverty?

Young school-aged children who live in poor urban areas, I think, are critical thinkers. They are survivors. I have volunteered teaching that group of kids at Interactive Children's Literacy Program (iCLIP) program, an after-school literacy program where many students from UP volunteer. When I met these young boys and girls for the first time, I was really taken aback. These kids stayed outside all day long searching of scraps and food in different areas of the cities. They were mostly barefooted. After 38 years of not being here, I came back and volunteered and saw these kids—dirty, no shoes, no slippers—and I was supposed to read-aloud some stories to them. I asked myself, "Well, how can they concentrate?" I was really humbled and honored to work with these survivors. They are critical thinkers. The educational system is not making use of the critical strengths that these young children possess. They are thinkers and survivors. These kids are very theoretical because they think all the time on how to survive.

When we talk about critical thinking, we have to make sure that we not only look at it as an analytical process. It is also culturally and socially situated. As you can see in this slide, "Do not overestimate the power of the person and underestimate the power of the situation." These are books that I found in a bookstore—Grit, Mindfulness, Resilient, Mindset—that focus on the importance of personal

attributes. I would say that those kids that I am talking to you about, who live in squatter, poor areas, have critical thinking skills. They have strong personal attributes as survivors and critical thinkers to be alive and help their low-income families, but their social and cultural situations, and learning conditions do not develop their skills. Poverty precludes them from receiving recognition, attention, and redistribution of resources to meet their educational needs.

In conducting my research on poverty and funds of knowledge, I visited several homes located in squatter communities and interviewed the parents. There was one family that I visited with several members afflicted with tuberculosis. I was really scared because I did not know that when I entered the makeshift home. I interviewed them and they said they have tuberculosis. For a while, I was really scared because the young children were hugging me as I talked to their parents. These were the same children who asked me after my reading-aloud to them, "Can I have that book? Can I have this? Can I have that?" There was a time when I brought a bucket of Kentucky fried chicken to iCLIP to feed the young children, but the program director said, "Don't do that because when you leave, they cannot maintain or sustain that kind of gift giving."

The closest I could get to the discussion of Martial Law are these photos where you can see the political and social situations that are portrayed in this slide. This tense encounter between students and the State Police happened many years ago. For some of us who lived through these experiences in UP, as portrayed in this photo in front of UP Administration Building, we would remember the shooting of one UP student who died there. His name was Pastor Mesina. He was the victim of gunshots from a Mathematics professor who directed his gun to the big group of UP student demonstrators.

Social and political situations are important to understand. What does the title of this slide "Reading the word, reading the world" essentially mean?

You read the word by teaching them how to read. You and the students read the literature, and you expand their thinking by reading the world. What is critical about critical thinking? Well, if

you are social studies classroom teachers, you can develop a thematic unit using fiction and nonfiction literature by examining multiple perspectives. We, as individuals, think differently. Young students think differently based on their social and cultural backgrounds. It is a good idea to provide students with literature that would allow them the opportunity to read diverse materials and examine multiple perspectives. Engage students in finding the authentic voices of characters in literature. Let them hear authentic voices, real voices that they can understand. Voices are not just a linguistic item. When a student hears a voice, they must understand that an authentic voice, from anyone of us, or from characters in the book, reflects cultural, historical, social, and economic experiences.

How about these other themes: recognizing the social barriers, stereotypes, social class, and poor neighborhoods? Or these: finding one's identity, call to service, and so on. Teachers must use democratic-minded pedagogies that may include civic citizenry, how to be involved in the community, how to think critically, how to recognize power dynamics, examine our current political system, and such.

What can educators do? I remember one of my doctoral students saying, "Doctor Lalas, don't give us a to-do list." Again, what can we do? You're giving us a list. Can we just do something about it? Access to knowledge, curriculum, and textbooks is really not enough. There has to be a process where you engage students in political debate or dialogue. Give them books to read on a variety of topics such as these about Martial Law in the Philippines. Providing students access to knowledge, access to curriculum and resources, and access to process is a good start. But is providing access enough? How do you engage them?

We need to go beyond access by engaging students—through the kind of engagement that connects with them and values who they are. As teachers, some of us teach rigorously. We follow the standards, the competencies, and so on. Some of us teach in a very playful way: singing, dancing, playing, making and using scripts for role-playing and dramatization. But the best method, according to empirical

research by Cooper (2014) in his research on *Eliciting Engagement in the High School Classroom: A Mixed-Methods of Examination of Teaching Practices*, is to connect with students to develop their identity. Students and teachers have to be involved in conversations about Martial Law. For students to be critical, teachers have to reach out to them, teachers need to know who they are, students have to be comfortable, but active and not just learn didactically. Students have to learn authentically and be able to express their opinion. Teachers, professors, and faculty have a lot to do with that. Teachers must be well-informed theoretically and empirically to know and be able to articulate the rationale of the meaningful activities that they do in the classroom. By connecting them with the teacher, connective instruction acknowledges who students are as people. Such instruction honors who the students are—acknowledging that they are particular people with particular interests, points of view, personalities, and experiences.

Do you really want to apply critical theory, pedagogy, and literacy in discussing Martial Law in your classrooms? Well, if you do, you might be prepared to experience anxiety, discomfort, and sometimes fear. However, have no fear. Be hopeful and agentic. Expect cultural politics and engage in extended civil conversations.

We do not talk about money, but we talk about cultural politics in terms of what ideas are more dominant than others, and we either affirm or contest them. That is really the culture of politics that should happen. Allow dialogues, dissent, and critical questions. I do not know how dissent is viewed in UP now, but during the '60s and early '70s, it was viewed as honorable. We either held classes outside the classroom with professors to discuss social issues or had small discussion groups in our classes. Leaving the classroom, going outside, dissenting, discussing, and dialoguing are common cultural practices and social contexts of my time here in UP. At this modern peace time, these democratic practices could be done as well. Tell stories related to freedom, oppression, and critical consciousness. Tell your stories. Be critical. Do counter-storytelling. Tell stories that are not told. Let your students speak out. It is not a one-side discussion. It has to be interactive.

Expect and accept that conversations about justice and civil liberties rarely lead to closure. It is an ongoing process for us teachers. We have to be healthy, we have to jog, we have to walk around the academic circle, and be ready for this long-protracted struggle of elevating the political and social consciousness of students.

I want to end with an Aesop fable. Do you know the story about the mouse and the lion? The lion met the mouse and he held the mouse, and the lion was about to eat the mouse. The mouse said, "No, I'm too small. You will receive no honor in eating me. I'm too small. Let me go! I have nothing to offer. I'm just a small mouse. Let me go! Maybe in the future I can help you." The lion said, "Okay, I'm so big. You're useless to me. Go." But then one day, there were some lion hunters who came. They captured the lion in a net. He roared for help and the mouse heard it. He came and asked, "You need any help?" The lion responded "Well, you're so small. How can you help me?" Slowly, the mouse used his little teeth to bite, little by little, the net, and the lion got away.

You may think of yourselves as powerless because we are distractors, we are teachers in the classrooms. When the bell rings, you close the door, you work with your kids, your young students. The powers are out there among the senators, congressmen, and many politicians. They are powerful, and they are the rich people. We are committed to teaching not to become rich, but because we have the passion to shape young minds, create meanings for students, facilitate meaning-making for children, and be change agents. For many of us, becoming teachers is not just a vocation, it is a calling. We want to work with young people. When we work with them, little by little, slowly, patiently, and passionately, we become really just like the mouse. Maybe in the future, the hope is with us, it is upon us to instill it. I hope that you think this way. We are really the unsung, sometimes unrecognized do-gooders, and heroes for those kids.

Remember, non-recognition is a form of oppression. You have got to tell your stories. Tell it to the public. Share our good stories in those classrooms because recognition is a vital human need. And so, like the little mouse, let us go on, do our work, and be unlikely heroes

in the end. Advance educational justice and democratic advocacy for all students!

Open Forum

In the open forum, **Beaujorne Sirad A. Ramirez (UP College of Social Sciences and Philosophy)** stated that in the context of the Philippines, correcting students who are for Martial Law results in bullying because you are forcing your own view to these students. The irony is that the teacher also becomes a dictator. He asked how we should manage heated arguments among Filipinos, especially when it comes to debates. If one person cannot totally agree with you, sometimes it is no longer a civil discourse but more of a personal issue.

Dr. Jose W. Lalas answered that Paulo Freire's work on humanization states that when someone is bullied, that person is dehumanized. Freire further said that if you are dehumanizing somebody, you are also dehumanizing yourself because, at the end of the day, you realize that you have dehumanized someone. With the discussion in the Philippines, one has to be careful and treat everybody as humans. There should be no dehumanization.

Dr. Dina Ocampo (Convenor, UP CIDS Education Research Program) added that one of the ways to address difficulties in arguments is to show information. For example, there is a center in the Ateneo De Manila University that has put together the information on Martial Law times. Teachers can derive examples for their lesson there. She added that her biggest takeaway from the forum is that our emphasis today in education is centered in competency, but there is a need to look with equal emphasis on the contents of what teachers put into their lessons. For example, drawing data from the time of Martial Law, the education budget continuously dwindled. She inferred that there is enough information to have a critical discussion on the effects of Martial Law and the subsequent behavior of those who are enforcing it.

Iyra S. Buenrostro-Cabbab (UP School of Library and Information Studies (UP SLIS)) asked Dr. Lalas about his view on inequality and the effectivity in teaching and using different resources. She added that librarians and archivists were trained to be neutral, not biased, and be objective in their analysis. As librarians practice critical pedagogy, they are expected to give the other side of the narrative to offer new perspectives. In gathering resources on Martial Law, they are having this kind of bias. Should librarians and archivists maintain a balance between being critical and objective and at the same time being more critical and showing the different side of Martial Law?

Dr. Jose W. Lalas answered that while he believes in being balanced in presenting information, academics eventually get into deeper conversations, such as "what is freedom, what is human rights, [and] freedom of the press," and use all those evidence and connect that to the theoretical concept being talked about. This might go beyond the bias because there is no question that if you do not speak out, or if you cannot gather together and discuss, that is really oppression. There is a need to have a deeper conversation before one can say "is Martial Law good or bad?" Here are both sides. People have opinions. Beyond opinions are evidences and reasons. There is a need for rational discourse, to elevate conversations. Upon analyzing the information gathered, there is a need to make the appropriate and relevant decision whether it is bad or good.

Iyra S. Buenrostro-Cabbab (UP SLIS) shared that for librarians and archivists, it is a challenge to gather these materials on Martial Law, especially from those who survived. There were times that they were afraid to share, probably traumatized. She added that if the audience have materials available, they should maximize their use of them because it is not easy to gather these materials. It is even more difficult to find people who are willing to speak up and tell the truth. For the librarians and archivists, it is a challenge to have these materials to be stored in their archives.

Dr. Jose W. Lalas shared that when he left the Philippines, one of the things that they did as a project, which got published,

was on political prisoners in the Philippines. They gathered all the data, interviewed those who were tortured, and laid out the facts. A group, which included Walden Bello, a former congressman, did that research and presented that to congress. There was another publication called *Logistics of Repression* (Bello 1978). Walden Bello and Rivera asked Dr. Lalas' group to do the ground work and the research where they gathered the amount of money pouring in to the [Marcos] regime, coming from the United States. They gathered all information, and Walden Bello put them together as a book called *Logistics of Repression* and presented it to the US congress, to cut the USAID to the Philippines. It was successful. He added that if there are facts or evidence, people will understand. If one just says stop USAID to the Philippines without the data, that is just a communist slogan. But if one has the data, then they will be able to convince those congressmen and senators in the US to cut [support]. And they did. Research speaks and the research part is important. It is cultural politics. The dominance of ideas and your ideas become dominant if you do a careful presentation of information, including research.

Dale Aldrinn Pradel (Ateneo De Manila University) stated that teachers are expected to have a set of values to impart to their students. Sometimes the values that students hold may not necessarily be the same as those of the teachers even if they do give them data. He further asked on whether it is alright under the critical theory that students question what teachers perceive is right. He added that while Martial Law was a bad time, for these students whose parents were not oppressed during Martial Law, their lives were okay, because they benefited. So, their children will question what they are taught. How would that be a good avenue for dialogue?

Dr. Jose W. Lalas stated that the issue can divide families and people as a whole. It is the same with kids coming from the Philippines to US. When we talk about Martial Law, these kids were not born yet and do not know what it was like. He noted that children be presented with facts from research. That when you say the regime was oppressive, what does that mean? There are so many people who are still around us that experienced the ills of Martial Law and

can give us some qualitative data. He highlighted the importance of research.

Zenaib Moran (UP College of Education) shared that one proof that students are critical thinkers is how they know how to question what is happening in society, and in schools, not only about Martial Law, but whatever is happening in the government. They question simple rules and regulations in the school. For example, in a Catholic school, an exclusive school for girls, they ask questions about why they are not allowed to cut their hair short, not allowed to have tattoos, when it will not define who they are. They would say, "We are still capable of learning even if our hair is short." It is a challenge for teachers to explain to students how important these rules and these systems are, especially if they are teachers from a functionalist school. The fact that students are questioning whether it is okay as long as they explain their point and they give facts.

She added that one way we can teach students on how to be critical thinkers is to have a debate in the classroom where the teacher presents their facts. Students should do that in the classroom as well. They may prove a point which might eventually change the system of the school. When they graduate, they may also say something and prove something that will change not only the school but the society. If that happens, the school will have produced a critical thinker, who is also a game-changer.

Dr. Jose W. Lalas replied that there is a need to be careful with the use of facts. There is a need to consider whose perspective we are looking with and how facts are framed. Dr. Lalas added that facts would look different for someone who just looked at them as facts, just like the achievement gap are facts. What is your theoretical frame? How do you analyze it? There has got to be a theoretical framework that you use in analyzing those facts.

Ailene L. Omadto (Lagro High School) shared that as a teacher, she would want her students to think in terms of being liberal, conservative, and critical, and for these ideas to meet. Teachers have to be liberal. But how can teachers be liberal, conservative, and critical at the same time? Teachers cannot turn students or learners

into liberal or conservative, yet critical, if teachers do not have that stand. Teachers cannot give someone something that they do not have or teach something that they do not know. It is a challenge for every teacher to be liberal, conservative, and at the same time thinking or critical.

Ms. Omadto shared that she was teaching 21st-century Literature, but never actually knew how to teach the 21st-century literature because she was actually teaching Grade 10 English. There was one time where she had a lesson on *Apo on the Wall*. It gave a background about Martial Law. She had a negative stand about Martial Law, has seen videos of Filipino raging against Martial Law, and saw a theater play titled *Desaparecidos*. Her negativity came from her readings. Instead of sharing her negativity to her students, she asked them, "How do millennials view Martial Law?" She was surprised because there were varied views about it and most of them were positive. She tried to be objective. She was happy about the way she asked. She added that there is a need to be critical about the questions that teachers pose. To raise critical learners, teachers have to be critical themselves.

Sr. Jessica B. Quirante (Claret School of Quezon City) shared that for her, to teach Martial Law is perceived by the students as biased, because she is wearing a full habit. She presented different research, different videos through the viewpoint of a socialist person, who is in the church, is political, and in psychology. She also shared that then even her parents and families suffered greatly [during Martial Law]. She stated that there is a need to encourage students to read and that research will help them to be critical.

She added that she asked her students to go to the slums and experience what kind of life they live there. There was a student who was very critical and just told her, "Sister, give me more books so that I can have that stand that I will say no to Martial Law." Sr. Quirante brought him to [University of Santo Tomas], asked him to go to the UP library, and Ateneo.

John Michael Lejano (Ernesto Rondon High School) also shared that while he was pro-Martial Law before, he had a change of heart

because he started to care [for people]. He added that even if people were liberal, conservative, or critical, if they do not care about life, democracy, and rights of other people, nothing will happen. He added that when he developed that caring capacity and thinking, he then realized the bad experiences that wreak havoc towards many people, especially the victims. People will not care even if you give them facts. He stated that people support the current administration despite the killings because they feel safe, and that is what they value.

Dr. Jose W. Lalas agreed and replied that there is ethical critique, ethical theory, the ethics of justice, and the ethics of care. There is a book written on how to make decisions using ethical thinking and those types of ethics. The concept of care is also in research. He asked if care is teachable. Can we teach people how to care? As educators, everything is possible. Justice can be taught, so as critical thinking. Kids can be taught how to care, how to be kind, how to be passionate. And it all boils down to perspective, meaning-making activities, and we have the power to influence kids in that classroom.

[Teachers/adults] make meaning for the youth. It is different from just convincing them or giving a hidden curriculum. It is making them think for themselves. If they are provided that space, justice, criticality, and care, everyone can be teachable. He asked if teachers are teaching that or if they are still focused on the didactic way of teaching. On the other hand, have they gone beyond that border and gone into critical thinking and adapted a more authentic way of teaching? That is a big question for all of us.

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About the Author

Jose W. Lalas, Ph.D. has been involved in teacher education for 29 years, as a faculty in both public and private universities. He has been a junior high school teacher, an associate dean, director of teacher education, and a coordinator of credential program. He taught at California State University (CSU) Dominguez Hills for 14 years and has been teaching at the University of Redlands for 15 years up to present.

As a member of the academe, Dr. Lalas' research interests include student engagement, social and educational justice, critical theory, pedagogy, and literacy, adaptation pedagogy, achievement gap, second language acquisition, and mentoring of diverse faculty.

He co-authored four published books, namely: *A Teaching and Learning Framework for Social Justice* (2006); *Instructional Adaptation as an Equity Solution for English Learners and Special Needs Students* (2007); *Who We Are and How We Learn: Educational Engagement and Justice for Diverse Learners* (2016); and *Challenges Associated with Cross-cultural and At-risk Student Engagement* (2017).

His most current research focuses on student engagement and the achievement gap, and the influence of social and cultural capital,

social class, funds of knowledge, and language in dual language immersion programs.

Currently, Dr. Lalas is a professor of Literacy and Teacher Education; directs the University of Redlands' Center for Educational Justice; and is an elected school board member of the Corona–Norco Unified School District (CNUSD) for 22 years. As a member of the board, he introduced the creation of the district's think-tank to study the issue of achievement gap, equity, and ways to address the disparity in achievement among diverse groups of students. Dr. Lalas also initiated the implementation of the dual language immersion program to meet the needs of the English learners and foster the use of two languages for non-Spanish speaking students, focusing his attention on improving the District's curriculum and instruction including professional development.

The collaborative mode of bargaining, focus on equity and closing the achievement gap, and dual language immersion programs are still operational and contribute to the quality of education in CNUSD.

Dr. Lalas is an awardee of Merit from the California School Board Association/Asian Pacific Caucus.

Author photo from the Corona–Norco Unified School District (CNUSD) website

Front row (left to right): Kathrina Lorraine Lucasan (UP CIDS ERP), Keven Lee P. Galanida (UP CIDS ERP), Dr. Dina Ocampo (Convenor, UP CIDS ERP), and Dr. Jose W. Lalas (University of Redlands)

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