Wide-Awakeness: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Imagination, Humanism, Agency, and Becoming

by
Cara Rautins and Awad Ibrahim

Poetically framed around Maxine Greene's notion of *wide-awakeness* and Paulo Freire's *conscientization*, this paper elucidates a critical pedagogy that seeks enlightenment towards a democratic classroom community of creative imaginings, pluralism, and hope. By delving into the praxis of these two "strong poets," among others, a critical pedagogy of imagination, humanism, agency and becoming is organically discussed and considered to 'dialogue' with new spaces of teaching and learning ("outside the box"), thus moving students from a mechanized (oppressive) curriculum to a more humanized curriculum of *wide-awakeness*. As the paper concludes, it is proposed that a democratic pedagogy which seeks to harmonize the tension between freedom and authority is necessary to foster *wide-awakeness* and move students toward creative possibilities for a promising future.

Introduction: Becoming "Strong Poet," Or Daring to Teach in "Times like These"

In his wonderful discussion with Sophie, the protagonist Alberto in *Sophie's World* reminds the fourteen-year old Sophie about the meaning of life and our roles in it. As humans, argues Alberto, "We are condemned to improvise. We are like actors dragged onto the stage without having learned our lines, with no script and no prompter to whisper stage directions to us. We must decide for ourselves how to

live" (Gaarder, 1996, p. 457). Thus, as philosophers, educators and humans, we are left with this question: In this improvised theatre that we call life (or education), which direction and/or destination should we take and *how* do we get there? We propose that once in awhile, someone comes in with strong conviction, clear mind and convincing articulation to show us the way. Their articulation, ideas and the totality of their scripts are so freshly new that one finds oneself mesmerized by the texts as much as by the ideas. This is (the power of) the "strong poet."

The "strong poet," according to Richard Rorty (1989) - does not simply write verses. The "poet" is a broad, generic term used to refer to someone who not only has the language but also the vision to tell us something new, or invent the known in an unknown language. The strong poet, Rorty (1989) explains, is horrified at simply being "a copy or a replica"; s/he has the courage and audacity to engage, look for and think through the "blind impresses," the gaps and the blind spots of thoughts, ideas and practices (p. 43). The blind impresses are the difficult knowledges – problems, if you like – that society prefers not to face, be it racism, sexism, xenophobia, ethno-supremacy or homophobia. In the face of formidable pressure, the strong poet will choose to walk through these "problems," so to speak, and deal with them at the individual, national and global level.

We believe that both Maxine Greene and Paulo Freire fall under this umbrella of strong poets, and that their ideas are exceptionally visionary, and thus helpful as we chart what we call a *critical pedagogy* of *imagination, humanism* and *becoming*. This is a pragmatist pedagogy that begins by acknowledging the historical moment in which we live: a startling world of uncertainty, a world saturated by unknown complexities of future sustainability, interdependence, and human possibility (Greene, 1995; see also O'Hara, 2006). A world where the educational landscape is shifting as it attempts to grapple with global issues, and where we, as critical pedagogues, provoke global citizenship and wakefulness in our students (O'Hara, 2006).[1] Clearly, perturbing social conditions (terrorism, poverty, violence, and economic and environmental crises) and educational challenges (standardized testing, discipline/punishment, and oppressive pedagogy) are now especially profound. Yet, Greene (2008) dares to ask: "How can we commit ourselves to [teaching and] learning in times like these?" (p. 18).

For precisely these challenges, the concept of *wide-awakeness*—"awareness of what it is to be in the world" (Greene, 1995, p. 35)—remains fundamental to a critical pedagogy of possibility, imagination, and social change. According to Leistyna & Woodrum (1999), critical pedagogy (a term first coined by Giroux (1983)) "challenges us to recognize, engage, and critique (so as to transform) any existing undemocratic social practices and institutional structures that pro-

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1   Here, the work of Westheimer & Kane (2003) is noteworthy as they call attention to the process of how educational discourse surrounding democracy and civics is expanding away from narrow conceptions (e.g. charity, community service, patriotism) to underscore the importance of dialogue, critical inquiry, and social analysis.

duce and sustain inequalities and oppressive social identities and relations" (p. 2). Therefore, as we conceive it, a critical pedagogy of *wide-awakeness* empowers learners to be mindful of oneself and others, opening up space for conscious deliberation of how the world is constructed in terms of knowledge, power, and inequality (Greene, 1995; 2000; 2005). As Greene (2005) articulates, educators are entrusted with a consequential task:

> The… educator must be awake, critical, open to the world. It is an honor and a responsibility to be a teacher in such dark times—and to imagine, and to act on what we imagine, what we believe ought to at last be (p. 80).

If not, we will fall into the trap of silencing our students and impeding the positive processes of critical pedagogy of *wide-awakeness*. This silencing, Greene (2005) writes, "may be like that of being in a closed room with the windows shut against the "world" others are seeing and accepting" (p. 78). Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to unbar the "doors" and "windows" of their classrooms and accompany students on the road to consciousness, imagination, pluralism, and the meaningful pursuit of knowledge and discovery.

Historically preceding Greene's (1995) discourse of *wide-awakeness* is Freire's (1998) critical consciousness or *conscientization*, related to raising consciousness in students to unmask oppression and liberate the capacity to learn, imagine, act and openly dialogue with the world. Freire (1998) defined *conscientization* as an unfinished "requirement of the human condition…as a road we have to follow to deepen our awareness of the world, of facts, of events, of the demands of human consciousness to develop our capacity for epistemological curiosity" (p. 55). Freire's critical pedagogy is also premised on reflecting on one's place, and a transformative praxis centered on literacy to engage students to be capable of "reading the world" through relevant textual encounters (see also Greene, 1995, p. 190). In the subsequent sections, we will carefully consider a pedagogy of imagination, humanism, praxis, agency, and becoming to expand the notion of *wide-awakeness* and *consciousness* into purposeful discourse for students, learners, and pedagogues.

Before proceeding, however, it is worth noting that this paper itself is an exemplary demonstration of what we call for. It is a labour of engagement, commitment and dialogue; and of how one can accompany one's students into the journey of wide-awakeness. The paper was first conceived in a graduate course offered by the second author. In the course, we read the work of Greene, Freire, Giroux and Ayers, among many others. For the first author, reading these strong poets and discussing their work in class instigated poetic moments of *wide-awakeness* and *conscientization*. We, as authors, then had intense discussion about the pedagogical implication of *why* we teach *what* we teach and *how* we teach it (at least differently). The result of this discussion is this conceptual paper, which we offer to the reader – with humility – as a dialogic moment of hope, imagination

and becoming. In this sense, the most 'practical' thing the second author offered in the course was not a lesson plan, a unit or a classroom 'practice,' but the very philosophical, theoretical, and conceptual ground upon which *any* lesson plan or unit would stand. Thus, the paper in its final analysis is a refutation--a 'talking back' to the critics of critical pedagogy that it is not practical enough. Oddly enough, one of the strongest notions in critical pedagogy is 'praxis,' that is, the link between theory and practice. This is why, one may venture to argue, (some) critics are not objecting to critical pedagogy but to its radical politics, especially when it comes to imaging ourselves and others otherwise.

Critical Pedagogy of Imagination

> Imagination is the capacity to invent new realities, perhaps new worlds. (Greene, 2007, p. 1)

Imagination embodies voice, consciousness, community, pluralism, and the human condition. A critical pedagogy opens up spaces for imaginative possibilities and a caring, unconditional dialogue, within the bureaucracy of schooling. The invigorating spaces of imagination also provide learners with the capacity to reach beyond conventional ideology to engage in free, unpredictable and internalized thought, while also building on lived experience (Egan, 2005; Eisner, 2005). Nevertheless, a pedagogy of imagination may appear arduous within the boundaries of a standardized and seemingly mechanized curriculum, and becomes even further detached by the market economy, social injustice, high-stakes testing, and disciplinary management. Therefore, what conditions are necessary to revive a pedagogy of imagination which will foster new beginnings and *wide-awakeness* in students?

A curriculum of imagination is exemplified by innovative and creative renderings of arts-based pedagogy and exploration (Greene, 1995). Decades ago, Maslow (1971) fervently proposed that intrinsic learning and arts in education could provide meaningful discovery into oneself and foster growth of consciousness and "becoming fully human" (p. 150). Furthermore, as Hanna (2008) conveys:

> Curriculum theorists have provided a knowledge base concerning aesthetics, agency, creativity, lived experience, transcendence, learning through the body, and the power of the arts to engender visions of alternative possibilities in culture, politics, and the environment (p. 491).

Through various mediums of arts-based pedagogy, such as poetry, story-telling, illustration, imagery, music, film and dance, students engage in imaginative learning which serves to release creativity and convey originality and free expression (Greene, 1995). Moreover, Irwin (2005) features how learning *in*, *through*, and *from* art by means of holistic encounters can offer students rich learning op-

portunities to construct meaning, and imagine and open up possibilities for new interpretations and understandings. Kind (2005) further adds to the discussion of arts-based pedagogy by signifying how art is predominantly "an engaging, embodied, sensory, sensual, tactile, kinaesthetic, communicative, critically reflective, culturally negotiated, private and social endeavour" (p. 13). This is powerfully conveyed in the following example, depicting a humanistic and imaginative interchange between a child and his father while riding a subway:

> The train was very crowded and there was only enough room for the boy to sit down, so the father stood in front of him. He put the child in the seat and gave him some paper and a pen to draw. The child look around and then finally began drawing. The father asked the child what he was drawing and he said he was drawing the father riding the subway. The father replied, "But I'm standing, not sitting down. The child then said, "Not on this train, the train in my drawing has seats for everyone to sit down." This child has used some very important critical literacy through his imagination and his art (Quintero, 2007, p. 207).

Thus, the role of provoking imagination through a rich environment of artistic expression and dialogue may be critical in preparing students for an unforeseeable future (Quintero, 2009).

To follow with another example, a Toronto based theatre/play titled *Danny, King of the Basement*, provides a concrete representation of how imagination through arts can foster critical thinking, empathy, and social responsibility. As Giles (2008) describes, "a great deal of research shows that live theatre touches the children's imagination with an immediacy that is real and emotional and that it's complexities engage students' critical thinking" (p. 36). Perhaps this is why imagination engrossed the works of Greene (1995), and brought forth her assertion that "imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible" (p. 3). In the award-winning play, *Danny, King of the Basement*, children become engaged in the story of an eleven-year-old boy whose imagination cultivates resiliency and community in the face of poverty, hunger, and homelessness. The play also provoked awareness and empathy about important social issues, allowing students to creatively and critically think about how their actions can contribute to a more hopeful and just future (Giles, 2008).

With these developments in mind, we must question: Does the arts developed curriculum provide enough space for students' imaginative possibilities? And do teachers prioritize classroom time in consideration of arts-based learning? We focus on the arts not because it is the only space to develop imagination, but because a) it is a particular area of interest to us, b) it is the first area of curriculum to be cut in a budget crisis (the result of which is a technocratic notion of curriculum), and c) it is a proven research area for developing imaginative consciousness (Greene, 2007). Finally, we think the arts are a kernel space in what we call a *critical pedagogy of imagination*. To further develop our point, we examine the

Ontario curriculum. Ontario is the largest province in Canada with the most diverse population compared to other provinces and territories.

The revised Ontario curriculum Arts document (Grades 1-8) exemplifies how the "arts nourish and stimulate the imagination, and provide students with an expanded range of tools, techniques, and skills to help them gain insights into the world around them and to represent their understandings in various ways" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5). Through a critical lens, arts-based pedagogy is thus vital to supporting how students come to know, perceive, and act on their surroundings. This organic practice of curriculum integration with respect to the arts is demonstrated by Wiebe and coauthors (2007):

> Supporting and extending the research that integrative arts practices lead to imaginative, flexible, and embodied pedagogical praxis, a rhizomatic integration of the arts values complicated and disruptive possibilities that enliven the imagination toward more socially just ways of living and learning (p. 263).

Through integrated and enriching practice, teachers can enable students to embrace diversity, transform, and broaden ways of knowing and coming to understand the unfolding global issues around them (Wiebe et al., 2007). Moreover, to further problematize arts-based pedagogy, Egan (2003) questions whether one should "start with what the student knows or with what the student can imagine" (p. 443). Egan (2003) suggests how reducing artistic exploration to content and knowledge within a prescribed curriculum can suppress the imaginative lives of students and disengage meaningful expression.

As educators, to restore imaginative possibilities in learners, it is critical to unleash our own repression and delve into forgotten realms of creativity and imaginings. As Freire (1995) purposefully reveals—we cannot teach what we do not know (p. 89). For some, this may stir the opening of Pandora's box, to "break through the crusts of the conventional and the routine, to light the slow fuse of possibility" (Greene, 2007, p. 1). Reviving the pedagogy of imagination demands imaginative action shared by teachers and students, to reach beyond what is and what should be in a fragile world. Greene (1995) puts it best: "Imagination may be a new way of decentering ourselves, of breaking out of the confinements of privatism and self-regard into a space where we can come face to face with others and call out, "Here we are"" (p. 31). Then, as teachers, we must be willing to awaken new perspectives and balance the tension between a curriculum of imagination and *consciousness* and one of banking knowledge (e.g. Freire, 1998) and the strain of efficiency, accountability, and bureaucracy. If educators are to release the social imaginations of students, a pedagogy of unconditional and open dialogue, attuned to the social realities of the class and/or community is necessary to initiate meaning-making, humanism and *consciousness* (Freire, 1998; Greene, 1995). Thus, at the heart of imagination, is the work of building an open, endless, and unfinished bridge between the possible and impossible, to restore our capacity to dream, reach, and fully *be* in a challenging world (Freire, 2007).

Critical Pedagogy of Humanism

On becoming *wide-awake*, a deep-seated precondition entails critical conscious-ness of the human condition and understanding of oneself as a coexisting entity in the world. To be conscious of one's existence as an intertwined "body in the body of world" (McIntosh, 2005, p. 24), affirms integrity in human solidarity and voice (Freire, 1995). Noteworthy to education is teaching as "a human act" (Freire, 1998, p. 85), a concept which positions teachers as a driving force of "care, concern, and connection" with humanity (McIntosh, 2005, p. 34). Thus, a critical pedagogy of humanism provokes *wide-awakeness* as a possible response to the question: How might one inspire a fuller humanity (Ayers, 2004)? What is our collective purpose in the world? What is our unfulfilled human potential? And what role does education serve in cultivating student capabilities of acting in and changing the world? In an endeavour to address these meaningful questions, a critical pedagogy of humanism, focused on pluralistic dialogue, the "living" cur-riculum, and a humane climate of learning is considered below.

According to Greene (1995): ""Plurality" is "the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (pp. 155-156). As well, Noddings (2005) describes pluralism as a binding component of human survival, valuing social, cultural, and religious diversity and seeking to promote inclusion, peace, voice, and community. Thus, the notion of *wide-awakeness* actualizes the pluralistic reality encircling students to uncover the unconditional nature of ac-cepting oneself and others in the world. For teachers, this translates into fostering a nurturing classroom climate of pluralistic dialogue and meaningful curricu-lar experience. This was the explicit philosophy of/in the course offered by the second author. The course was Socratic in nature, where the most banal was the most difficult and where our questions as a class determined our answers. The instructor was there to ask questions as much as anyone else in class without imposing his answers. This is because *wide-awakeness* and consciousness-raising are described in the course as "unfinishedness" and "the open-minded teacher," and therefore, "cannot afford to ignore anything that concerns the human person" (Freire, 1998, p. 127). Although teachers are entrusted to "develop the plural capacities and the wide-ranging awareness" (McIntosh, 2005, p. 39) of students, we argued in class that this humane objective often gets overlooked, resulting in a spectator approach or the reduction of social and global problems to distant concern (see especially Freire, 1998; Giroux; 2005).

Greene (1995) depicts the ideals of a pluralistic classroom: "We want our classrooms to be just and caring, full of conceptions of the good. We want them to be articulate, with the dialogue involving as many persons as possible, open-ing to one another, opening to the world" (p. 167). To consider the role of caring, Noddings (2005) identifies how teachers need to be mindful of the overwhelming needs of students, and how a curriculum of intentional caring can offer rich pos-

sibilities for meeting these needs. Through this "caring relation," teachers may become conscious of the inferred and expressed needs of students, and find a delicate balance in negotiating, uncovering, and attending to such needs (Noddings, 2005, p. 148). Thus, to bring pluralism to fruition in education, teachers must themselves be *wide-awake* and conscious of *knowing*, so that students are entitled to multiple voices and perspectives. This also translates to providing students with an active and liberating space to voice their human rights and responsibilities. Open classroom dialogue is a precondition to pluralism, and Freire (1998) underscores the necessity for teachers to learn to "speak by listening" (p. 104), and to be "open to the word of the other" (p. 107), so as not to induce silence or devalue the voices of our students. Providing an inclusive space for open and accepting dialogue is central to democratic education, fortifying belongingness and voice among students (Stanley, 2003). Hence, pluralism calls attention toward a multifaceted and perhaps "living" curriculum of social issues, multiculturalism, global citizenship, and diverse forms of knowing and being—to render *wide-awakeness* in students for a more hopeful future (Carlsson-Paige & Lantieri, 2005).

Awakening Praxis and Agency

In an increasingly complex and problematic world, education faces the heavy burden of reclaiming hope and the possibilities, for change. Encumbered with political, ethical, economic and social problems, the educational system is seemingly clouded, which obstrucs possibilities for a meaningful curriculum of imagination and learning. It is vital to step away from an orderly, predictable and mechanized curriculum into one premised upon critical content, a dialogic and student-centered process, a democratic climate of shared participation and critical self-reflection (Martin, 2008). By confronting praxis and agency, educators can seek to collectively transform and act on existing educational conditions to restore purpose and democracy in education (Giroux, 2009). To what extent does awakening praxis and agency contribute to *wide-awakeness* and social transformation?

'Praxis' is an ongoing process enabling the intersection of theory and practice. In education, praxis acts as a site of social transformation—through informed *conscientization* and committed action toward humanity and the world (Freire, 2000). Antecedent to praxis, according to Alexander (2005), is agency: the embodiment of human self-entitlement to values, beliefs, actions, and choices. For Alexander (2005), fulfillment of human agency in the curriculum must be premised upon three conditions: free will, moral intelligence, and fallibility. Thoughtful consideration of each condition of human agency delivers a meaningful curriculum to students by enabling self-determined choices, moral understanding, and freedom of expression. However, as powerful social agents, it is teachers who make the choice of what to teach our students and ultimately dictate the visibility of the implicit, explicit, or null curriculum (Alexander, 2005).

A pedagogy of praxis and agency requires working between the messy spaces of conservative and radical educational theory and practice. The possibilities for enabling *wide-awakeness* require a progressive and critical pedagogy which seeks to prepare students for an "unknowable future" and reform educational efforts to enhance the future capacity of our students (Eisner, 2004, p. 6). Moreover, the progressive teacher does not necessarily need to be radical to transform education, but needs to question, challenge and work *with* the system, in an endeavour to restore democracy. In the wise words of the late pedagogue Frank McCourt (2005), teachers must persistently engage in a tug-of-war with tension, in an effort to move students from fear to freedom. Moreover, Freire (1998) contended that "practice and theory, authority and freedom, ignorance and knowledge, respect for the teacher and respect for the students, and teaching and learning" work powerfully in concert with one another and cannot be separated (p. 88). Therefore, by deconstructing the tensions between authority and freedom, teachers can encourage a reciprocal student-teacher interchange of fearlessness and authentic learning experiences (Freire, 2000). Thus, the making and re/making of oneself as a teacher seeks to open up new spaces for a critical pedagogy of democratic ideology and purpose.

Again, we turn to the metaphor of opening Pandora's box, whereby chaos, oppressive regimes, and fear may need to be encountered in order to truly become *wide-awake* and liberate oneself and others within the context of education. It is only then, that we can find our voice and place, alongside our students, and strive to find middle ground between administrative/governmental control and our own creativity and free will.

For us, this paper is a humble demonstration of how to work through the messy spaces of conservative and radical praxis, of how true dialogue and reflection can come about. Critical reflection of pedagogic praxis, we thus argue, is imperative to social transformation. Teachers need to perpetually question: To what extent is the content I am teaching meaningful to students? To what regard am I valuing certain perspectives and ways of *knowing* over others? How am I am learning *from* and *with* my students to engage and transform? As Freire (1998) aptly phrased: "Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning" (p. 31). Thus, if we consider our agency as educators, we must also carefully consider how our decisions and actions will affect how our students think and perceive the world (Thayer-Bacon & Bacon, 1997). Thus, through thoughtful interrogation of our pedagogy and praxis, we have the capacity to transform education and seize further awareness of what it means to be and act in a shared world (Greene, 1995).

Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Becoming

> It is *dreaming* and *existing* that "allows" us to keep making ourselves into beings who fight for liberation, *Being More*   (Freire, 2007, p. XI).

The capacity for *wide-awakeness* challenges the psyche to dream, reflect, and encounter the possibilities of becoming in the world (Freire, 1998; 2007; Giroux, 2009; Greene, 1995). As Freire (2007) avowed, it is "impossible to live without dreams" (p. 3) and we must embrace the "unfinishedness of our human condition" (Freire, 1998, p. 66). Thus, a critical consciousness of hope and becoming can transform pedagogy and awaken new beginnings for students (Freire, 2007; Giroux, 2005; Greene, 1995). At the heart of becoming is confronting what is possible by our capacity to teach and open ourselves and our students to imagination, curiosity, and dialogue (Greene, 1995; 2000; 2007). As eloquently expressed by Greene (2000)—"if we keep our own questions open and take intentional action against what stands in the way of learner's becoming, of our becoming, the spaces for freedom do enlarge" (p. 13). Also critical, is the underlying objective of social transformation—through conscious deliberation of freedom, community, and pluralism (Freire, 2007; Greene, 1995). Through this process—of dreaming and becoming—we engage in a critical pedagogy of the now and of tomorrow (Freire, 2007).

In reworking some of Freire's (2007) ponderings into pedagogical discourse, one might question: How do I see myself as a teacher in the world; at *whose* service; and at what capacity (p. 62)? And how might pursuit of educational change render imaginative possibilities for learners? As teachers, we must be *wide-awake* to the complexities facing our students, moving beyond the systematic transmission of knowledge, to reinvent and expand the space for a becoming discourse (Freire, 2007). As progressive "provocateurs," one can liberate dreams and possibilities of a better education for our students (Giroux, 2009, p. 17). We must discard conventional notions of the "*training* and *taming*" of learners (Freire, 2007, p. 26), and comprehend our intrinsic responsibility to respect, captivate, and inspire all students within a democratic and caring classroom community. To Carlsson-Paige & Lantieri (2005), the nurturing of a classroom community, modelling of social responsibility, fostering of perspective-taking skills and confrontation of social injustice is analogous to the planting of seeds to nourish student consciousness of global belonging. Thus, as the seeds in the garden cultivate, so too, are *wide-awake* teachers—who not only grow with students, but reflect on their "gardening" while desperately trying to unearth weeds of oppression in the process.

A critical pedagogy of becoming confronts tension, transforms, and critically reflects on doing and what has been done (Freire, 1998; Greene, 1995; 2007). It questions, reinterprets, renews, reinvents, and informs critical pedagogy and centers on making students visibly engaged in the process. Ayers (2001) further illustrates how teaching demands reflection:

> Thoughtfulness requires time and focus and wide-awakeness—a willingness to look at the conditions of our teaching lives, to consider alternatives and different possibilities, to challenge received wisdom and what is taken for granted, and to link our conduct with our consciousness—to think about what we are doing (p. 6).

As teachers, we must strive toward what is humanly possible, while recognizing our own shortcomings of reaching *wide-awakeness* within a classroom community of authentic learning. Thus, a critical pedagogy of becoming "involves a dynamic and dialectical movement between "doing" and "reflecting on doing" (Freire, 1998, p. 43) to open oneself and allow more spaces for change and transformation. Freire (1998) accentuated the need for reflective practice: "Thinking critically about practice, of today or yesterday, makes possible the improvement of tomorrow's practice" (p. 44). Thus, our capacity to teach demands openness and transformation to restore space for invigorated imaginings and a deepening discourse. Moreover, we need to look for enigmatic openings in our teaching, as new beginnings and freedom can only be restored in the process. In the compelling words of Greene (2005): "The… educator can be initiator of new beginnings; and to act at a beginning is to move towards possibilities, to live and teach in a world of incompleteness, of what we all are but are not yet" (p. 80). Finally, we need to critically ask ourselves: What is the purpose of education? What is my place in it? And how do my intentions influence my capacity to *become*?

Conclusion: Our Becoming, Daring to Teach

In this paper, a critical pedagogy of imagination, humanism, agency and praxis and becoming was considered to dialogue with new spaces of teaching and learning. In awakening a critical pedagogy, a curriculum of *wide-awakeness* and *conscientization* provokes the necessity of a democratic classroom community of imaginings, pluralism, and hope (Freire, 1998; Greene, 1995). Thus, to address Greene's (2008) aforementioned question, "How can we commit ourselves to [teaching and] learning in times like these?" (p. 18), we can respond in the promising words of Giroux (2005): "Everything is possible...but it can only happen if you imagine the unimaginable, think differently in order to act differently," and "give imaginative shape to humanity's hope for a better and more inclusive future" (p. 217). As teachers, we need to believe that we can commit ourselves to learning in times like these and inspire our students to make a difference in the world. We are also fully aware that hopeful reality has to be imagined first before it becomes real, but it needs – desperately – a pedagogy of *conscientization* and *wide-awakeness*. Only then can we both motivate and empower our students – as the second author hoped to have done in his course – and enable them to locate themselves in time and history, *and* at the same time, critically interrogate the adequacy of that location. Only then will we hear the trumpet of joy, smell the clean scent of mint, and be able to mouthfully say:

> For she who hope,
> Tell her the journey has begun
> For she who love,
> Tell her love is around the corner.

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