

Educational Foundations

An Anthology

Edited by

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Activities and Projects

1. Identify some aspect of educational practice that you think is either absurd, irrational, or in need of some rethinking, perhaps something you personally suffered with as a student. Then create a simple story in which you use as your vehicle for critiquing either sarcasm or a satirical allegory similar to *Saber-Tooth Curriculum* or another vehicle that grabs the reader's attention, possibly an editorial cartoon. Share your critique with your peers and possibly with others who may benefit from your perspective.
2. Read the comics section of the newspaper every day for at least a week. Likely you will find there some comic strips in which the cartoonist has satirized some aspect of education. Share your findings and interpret and discuss them with your peers. Why do you think the cartoonists chose to raise certain issues?
3. With such different perspectives on curriculum as portrayed by the "radicals" and the "wise old men," how is it possible that teachers ever reach an agreement on what and how to teach? Interview teachers in your school or a school in the area about how they reach decisions on curriculum.

2.3 A Break of Consciousness (1997)

Jose Calderon

The Internet has revolutionized communication and provided instant access to resources one might never encounter otherwise. Such is the case with this poem by Jose Calderon. As a participant in the Diversity Web Information Providers, sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), this editor visited the Diversity web site (<http://www.inform.umd.edu/diversityweb>) and discovered some original and useful products including this poem available in the Diversity Works Leader's Guide. The poem clearly conveys Jose Calderon's philosophy of education, one that bears some resemblance to some of those philosophies listed in this chapter's introduction. Calderon is associate professor of Sociology and Chicano Studies at Pitzer College in California and is on the Board of the AAC&U.

Read the poem silently, then out loud. What do you see and what do you learn from this poem and its imagery? What does it mean to you? Are there other poems you know of that also convey a perspective on what is worth learning and on how learning can be achieved?

Reprinted with permission of Jose Calderon.

There comes a moment
When there is the connection
Between what is academic
And what is exhilarating experience

The moment of light
Between the silence of expression
And the bursting of critical consciousness

A glimpse of institutionalization
Without the loss of values
A foundation of a movement
Still fighting Goliath

The rain pattering on foreheads
Turning into a raging river
Taking everything in its way

The sounds of shovels on concrete
Of saws on fallen trees
And branches

Reaching everywhere

From the grave site
Of Cesar Chavez
To the streets of Delano
To the air waves

To Claremont
And Connection
Alongside the tired hands
But living spirit of Abayani
With Brother Pete
And rose cuttings
Planted like ideas
To grow, To grow

Alongside Magdaleno, Maria Elena,
Arturo, Paul, Abe, Rebecca, Socorro,
Helen, and so many others
Whose lives
Became a living piece

Of what was read
As history, as legend,
As a moment in time

Delano-La Paz

Clouds on hilltops
Blanketed by green
With blue sky
Breaking through

An idea of De Colores
Made a reality
With circles of song
And chains of hands,
Hearts, Minds

Never to be broken

The wisdom of leaders
Men and Women
Of Generations
From the fields
Shared with young
Open minds
Absorbing like the ground
To raindrops

Little streams
Can make a sea
To the streets of Delano
A train passing by
Making the ground shake
Giving warning
To those up ahead

The sun hides behind the clouds
But reappears—

It is always there
If one seeks to find it

The moment, I mean—
The connection, I mean—

When what is academic
 Becomes the lived experience
 Outside the shadows of the classroom
 To that moment of light
 Between the silence of expression
 And the bursting of critical consciousness.

Questions for Discussion and Debate

1. In your own words, what do you think Calderon is saying? What does he believe?
2. Find the lines that are repeated. Interpret them with your peers, then discuss which philosophy/theory of education is reflected in those lines.
3. One of Calderon's implied beliefs about curriculum is that it must in some way reveal to the student aspects of his or her heritage. Find the lines where he establishes that position. Why do you think he believes it is important for curriculum to provide a connection between students and their cultural heritage?

Activities and Projects

1. Jose Calderon makes references to real people and places, for example, Cesar Chavez and the streets of Delano. Who is Chavez? Where is Delano? Try to find out through discussion or research. Then discuss why Calderon refers to them in the context of his poem.
2. Try by yourself or with a partner to add another stanza to this poem that is in keeping with Calderon's references and philosophy.
3. As noted in question 3, Calderon implies that he believes that a curriculum should provide a connection between students and their cultural heritage. A noted educator, Eliot Wigginton, created *Foxfire* (1985), a curriculum constructed with precisely that belief in mind. This interdisciplinary curriculum became very famous as a result of the *Foxfire* magazine, which his students researched, wrote, edited, laid out, and published. At this point, there are over 10 hard-bound compilations of these magazines which are based on interviews and field research done by Wigginton's English students at Rabun Gap (Georgia) High School in their own community and related to their local culture. Though Wigginton, a recipient of the McArthur Foundation Award ("The Genius Award") was, after many years, found to have sexually abused several of his students, a crime for which he served time in prison, his legacy remains intact. He inspired hundreds of teachers in many disadvantaged areas of America and abroad to create similar curricula to fit their students' heritage and geographical location. Do research on the *Foxfire* approach to curriculum and then with others design a curriculum along the same lines but related to the area in which *you* are now teaching or student teaching.