

Preface

In Search of Peace in a Culture of War

Antonia Darder

*In the name of peace
They waged the wars
Ain't they got no shame*

—Nikki Giovanni¹

INTRODUCTION

Throughout my lifetime, the US government has been in a permanent state of war. Over a hundred overt military campaigns of varying degrees have been undertaken in the name of peace; and who knows how many covert operations have been launched. As a Puerto Rican child, my very identity, from the beginning, has been intimately intertwined with a legacy of war. My citizenship is the direct result of the Spanish-American War, which converted my country into a colony of the US. The year I was born, 1952, the US was embroiled in both the Cold War and the Korean War. As a preteen, reports about the Cuban missile crisis and the action at the Bay of Pigs were interspersed with fears of nuclear war on the evening news. During my teen years, civil-rights conflicts erupted on the domestic arena; I watched Black Panthers being shot in their home, on television. Growing up in Los Angeles, I also found myself in the midst of the Watts Riots, and, later, as a witness to violent police attacks on Chicana and Chicano activists, who had congregated at Laguna Park, after a peaceful march along Whittier Boulevard. As a young mother, radio reports of the Vietnam War commingled with the lullabies I sang my babies.

Beyond these war campaigns, US military actions over the last 60 years have also included participation in the First Indochina War, the Lebanon Crisis, the Cambodian Civil War, the Invasion of the Dominican Republic, the Invasion of Grenada, the Lebanese Civil War, the action in the Gulf of Sidra, the Contras (Counterinsurgency) attack of Nicaragua, the bombing of Libya, the Iran-Iraq War, the invasion of Panama, the Gulf War, the Somali Civil War, the Bosnian War, Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti, the bombing of Afghanistan and Sudan, the Kosovo War, the War on Terror, the War in Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom in the

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1 Philippines, Horn of Africa, Trans-Sahara, the Iraq War, War in North-
 2 West Pakistan, Yemeni al-Qaeda Operations, the second Liberian War, the
 3 Haitian Rebellion, the Libyan Civil War, the Lord's Resistance Army Insur-
 4 gency in Uganda and the Southern Sudan, and, just days ago, an attack
 5 in Mohmand Province near the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. In
 6 each instance, the toll to working and poor populations of these regions
 7 has been staggering, while the elite filled their coffers as US forces bombed
 8 their people—bringing to mind Sartre's words, *Quand les riches se font la*
 9 *guerre, ce sont les pauvres qui meurent.* (*When the rich wage war, it's the*
 10 *poor who die*).²

13 THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF VIOLENCE

15 *Our schoolbooks glorify war and conceal its horrors. They indoctri-*
 16 *nate children with hatred.*

17 —Albert Einstein³

19 Most of these military offensives remain obscured or unknown to the major-
 20 ity of US citizens—although not to the working-class men and women in
 21 the US military, who soldiered these offensives, and the families who lost
 22 their children on foreign soil. Yet, despite this history of permanent war,
 23 students attending public schools are socialized to be deeply ignorant and
 24 detached from the realities of war through a discourse that rationalizes mili-
 25 tary aggression in the name of victory, freedom, and security at home. These
 26 veiled and fragmented perspectives of war (and thus, peace) are carried out
 27 through both a hidden curriculum within schools that claims to be apoliti-
 28 cal, neutral, and objective and a public pedagogy of the media that glorifies
 29 violence and conquest as virtuous human production. Negated, of course, is
 30 the obvious, namely wholesale, human destruction in the interest of capital.

31 In the process of public schooling, students—particularly working-class
 32 students, who are both objectified and instrumentalized as reserved armies
 33 of the elite—are exposed to a hidden curriculum that effectively alienates
 34 them from the suffering of others. Moreover, schools, as agents of the war
 35 industry, also function effectively to block critical engagement with the
 36 dehumanizing brutality of aggression and the grand profits it affords the
 37 ruling class. Similarly, the media function as pedagogical venues that con-
 38 veniently normalize and reinforce the necessity of war. Hence, the violence
 39 becomes twofold, in that the judgment of students is swayed against their
 40 own best interests. Instead, they are initiated into a culture of permanent
 41 war, which simultaneously obscures and underhandedly perpetuates con-
 42 servative patriotic discourses and patriarchal exultations of hypermasculi-
 43 nity and military aggression—in both men and women—as equivalent to
 44 invincible power, sexual prowess, and homeland protection.

Or, at least, this is the case until the brutal casualties of young US soldiers begin to cross the class and color divide of affluence, suddenly disrupting the Disneyland veneer of “middle-class” existence. Such was the case during the Vietnam War, when televised body bags rolling down a conveyor belt held not only the children of the urban ghettos and barrios but also the bodies of “red-blooded American boys” of the suburbs. This was a historical moment in which people, across class and color lines, finally began to take to the streets in an effort to end the war in Southeast Asia. We see aspects of this phenomenon also at work today in the Occupy movements, as formerly “middle-class” or well-established people, who lost their jobs and homes in the last decade, have taken to the streets to shout in unison, “We are the 99 percent!”

PEACE: A CRITICAL MORAL IMPERATIVE

We must have research for peace . . . It would embrace the outstanding problems of morality. The time has come for [our] intellect . . . to win over the immoral brutality and irrationality of war and militarism.

—Linus Pauling⁴

On the other side of the equation is often found a liberal formulation of peace education, detached from conditions of human suffering and the gross inequalities that are experienced by the majority of the world’s population. As such, a critical discourse of peace seldom finds its way into the mainstream public-school classroom, despite the presence of a Peace Movement in the US that has persisted for over 30 years. This is the case because central to a critical politics of peace is a radical moral imperative—the transformation of contemporary structures of inequality and social exclusions that rationalize war through a contradictory rhetoric that embraces militarism essential to peace.

Accordingly, what often blocks critical peace-education efforts is precisely its uncompromising commitment to the establishment of social, economic, and political relationships that support a deeply communal ethics of justice, liberty, and human dignity—all essential to a *dialectical* exercise of peace in our personal and public lives, as both educators and cultural citizens of the world. This constitutes radical peace initiatives that extend our political reasoning beyond simplistic idealism or dematerialized intellectual refrains in order to unearth those critical questions of morality buried by the “free-market” logic of neoliberalism. In contrast, the focus of a critical peace education must be repositioned to contend with the tough moral questions, through which we can move closer toward humanizing strategies and political solutions that confront the exploitation and domination that underlie the structural roots of violence.

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1 Toward this end, critical approaches to peace education must unfailingly
2 retain a dialectic connection in their interrogations of peace and violence.
3 This is particularly important in that mainstream peace studies, although
4 well-meaning and correct in many instances, often fail to acknowledge in
5 substantive ways the historical, cultural, political, and economic asymme-
6 tries that persist and give rise to violent outbreaks and military aggression
7 in this country and around the globe. Not all actions of violence, therefore,
8 can be homogenized and distilled to make simple the cause of peace, par-
9 ticularly where meanings protect the power and privilege of the status quo.

10 This dynamic, Freire contends, is well evidenced where “The dominant
11 elites consider the remedy [for dissent] to be more domination and repres-
12 sion, carried out in the name of freedom, order, and social peace (that is,
13 the peace of the elites).” Thus, they can condemn—logically, from their
14 point of view—the violence of a strike by workers and can call upon the
15 state in the same breath to use violence in putting down the strike (Freire
16 2006, p. 78). Most recently, again, we have witnessed this positivist logic of
17 peace at work in state efforts to dismantle the Occupy movement’s encamp-
18 ments within cities and on university campuses. The use of pepper spray
19 against students at the University of California Davis and the incarceration
20 of hundreds of occupiers in New York and California, alone, were justified
21 by rhetorical claims to ensure security of the streets and peace on the cam-
22 pus, messages carefully spun in unison by police and university officials.

23 Hence, without thoughtful and grounded engagement with those moral
24 questions that surround the social and material conditions at work in the
25 lives of oppressed communities, traditional Western notions of peace falsely
26 obfuscate gross inequalities by prescribing to a definition of peace that is
27 apolitical, absolute, universal, and devoid of concern for the existing struc-
28 tures, policies, and practices within education, labor, housing, and, beyond
29 that, inform the manifestations of violence. Without interrogating discus-
30 sions of peace and war through a critical lens, the essential truth—that
31 oppressed populations are often thrust into dynamics of war and violence
32 not of their own making but rather by the oppressive structures and prac-
33 tices that dehumanize and strip them of their dignity as individuals and as
34 a people—remains hidden.

35 MAKING A PEACEFULLY JUST WORLD POSSIBLE

36 *When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will*
37 *know peace.*

38 —Jimi Hendrix⁵

39 In order to support the development of critical peace education, educators
40 must be willing to speak of the silenced histories of violence and oppres-
41 sion that have remained shrouded by the powerful agents of the capitalist
42 system.

state. Unveiling the world requires us to acknowledge the crimes against humanity—genocide, slavery, colonization, incarceration, and impoverishment—so that we might labor toward reparations, and, importantly, so that a genuine politics and practice of peace can be forged. This entails a critical pedagogy of peace that acknowledges openly that all power relationships among human beings are forged within terrains of struggle, and, thus, requires a fundamental political commitment to a revolutionary love, anchored in an ethics of self-vigilance, a commitment to global human rights, the exercise of dignity and respect, and an embodied solidarity across our differences. More specifically, as suggested above, a fundamental intent of critical peace education constitutes the integration of curricular content, classroom structures, and pedagogical approaches that challenge the individual, collective, and structural forms of violence at the heart of unbridled militarism, racism, class warfare, gender and sexual oppression, and the exercise of aggression as the ultimate solution to domestic and international disputes.

Educating for Peace in a Time of “Permanent War” raises complex questions and controversial notions about war and peace that are generally marginalized within the field of education. As such, the authors grapple with the permanent realities of war in the US (and elsewhere) and the ideological and structural policies and practices that inform this condition. But the contributors do not stop there. In most instances, they also provide necessary critical rethinking of peace-education issues within US schools and across global contexts, anchored in both critical philosophical principles *and* important empirical research that offer groundbreaking insights into long-standing concerns in the field.

The authors also make key connection between the dominant ideology of US schools and a culture of militarism that privileges the sensibilities of the hegemonic culture and class. This point is made in a variety of ways throughout but especially where discussions raise central concerns for the manner in which policies and practices within public schools—particularly within working-class and racialized communities—are increasingly utilized as convenient venues for military recruitment. This is clearly visible in the increasing establishment of Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) programs in public schools, where the military curriculum readily cultivates allegiances to an imperialist vision while it thwarts critical interrogations of promilitary views and their negative impact on both individuals and the larger society. As discussed in the text, critical peace educators can employ counterrecruitment strategies within these communities to challenge ideologies and epistemologies of war and violence as they surface in the everyday lives of students while they also work to halt the long-standing US military occupation of public-school campuses as recruitment sites. Similarly, the critical analyses contained in this volume make important connections and offer useful critiques regarding the intellectual work of scholars within the corporatized university, which

1 functions as an extension of the military-industrial complex. This inter-
2 rogation considers rightly the ways in which neoliberal university policies
3 actively sustain the culture of violence and, thus, a permanent economy
4 of war. With thoughtful insight, university struggles during the Vietnam
5 War are resurrected to reveal essential lessons about the use of collec-
6 tive responsibility as a means for working toward peace-centered reforms
7 within higher education.

8 Moreover, any critical volume on peace education would be incomplete
9 without providing a global reading of these important questions. Paul R.
10 Carr and Brad Porfilio here skillfully weave these concerns in their intro-
11 duction and their inclusion of several essays that engage international con-
12 cerns, and, more specifically, address lessons garnered from educational
13 peace struggles within both Turkey and Mexico. Moving across these dif-
14 ferent educational contexts, what is made evident is the manner in which
15 students are socialized, from very early in their educational formation, to
16 attach ideologically specific meanings to narratives of peace and war, given
17 the power relations, cultural differences, and class distinctions that shape
18 their location within their own communities and the larger social sphere.

19 Throughout the pages of the book, we are encouraged to uncover the
20 unexpected ways in which discourses on peace and war are inextricably
21 linked to ideologies of power and, thus, to engage with greater complexity
22 in what it means to work for peace, within domestic and global regions
23 where suffering and poverty persist and values of dignity, liberty, and criti-
24 cal democratic life remain distant. Given the difficulties under which we
25 must labor to realize a critical peace education in public schools, the editors
26 of this volume have accomplished a brilliant feat in bringing together a set
27 of writings that passionately invite us to embrace a revolutionary under-
28 standing of peace and war—taking us on a critical journey, beyond pre-
29 scription, into the complex and murky waters of domination that disrupt
30 peace and from whence violence is born.

31 But more importantly, *Education for Peace in a Time of “Permanent*
32 *War”* provides educators with a range of policy, curricular, pedagogical,
33 and sociological interpretations aimed at generating a robust critical dia-
34 logue about peace education locally, nationally, and internationally. This
35 promotes a notion of peace education that can effectively dismantle the
36 existing paradigm of war, where violence is the predominant solution for
37 resolving conflict; and, in its place, embrace a critical paradigm of peace,
38 where issues of human rights, social justice, and ecological concerns
39 guide domestic and international solutions. Inherent in such a transfor-
40 mative paradigm of peace is also an important political and pedagogical
41 message—one that calls forth civic courage, uncompromising commit-
42 ment, and revolutionary action, so that we, as educators and cultural
43 workers, may work both philosophically *and* practically on the ground
44 to dismantle the existing culture of war and usher in a genuine culture of
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peace—a culture where policies and practices aligned with social justice, human rights, and economic democracy can flourish in our schools, our communities, and the world. Underlying this timely call is the recognition that through the power of collective political commitment, critical consciousness, and the *power of love*, we, together, can make a peacefully just world possible.

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