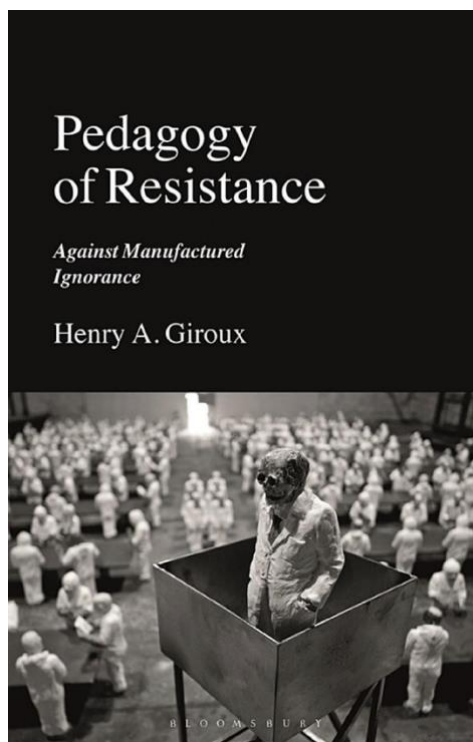


PEDAGOGY OF RESISTANCE: AGAINST MANUFACTURED IGNORANCE

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Giroux, Henry A (2022) *Pedagogy of Resistance: Against Manufactured Ignorance*, London: Bloomsbury, Academic.



Giroux's *Pedagogy of Resistance: Against Manufactured Ignorance* (2022) offers a compelling argument about the growing threat of fascism under neoliberal capitalist regimes, building on his lifetime's work as an educator, theorist and activist. He offers a detailed analysis of how the current economic, political and social climate of neoliberalism has been exacerbated by the political regime of Trump's presidency and the continued rise of gangster capitalism. The book focuses primarily on the context and events in North America but has widespread relevance due to the global impact of capitalism.

Giroux's overall manifesto about the critical role and transformative potential of education to rebuild democratic values offers an introduction for readers new to the political critique and the transformative theory offered by critical education. It also offers a more sustained analysis for readers familiar with Giroux's work of how culture and education have evolved in the context of the increasingly neoliberal and conservative regime of North American capitalism. For development educators, it offers a sharp reminder of the need for critical analysis of the politicised context of education, the intersectional nature of inequalities and the need for a collective pedagogy of resistance rooted in the ideals of freedom, democracy and social justice.

This argument is outlined in three parts moving from an analysis of the crisis in democracy, exploring the crisis of pedagogy to a focus on hope and resistance. This is preceded by a foreword by Brad Evans which reminds us of the wider context, and full corpus and development of Henry Giroux's work and writings, and his tireless activism and courage. This acknowledges the shift in Giroux's analysis from one on the politicised nature of education to a greater recognition of the importance of cultural forces and 'the demand to speak with multiple grammars' (2022: ix).

The introductory chapter reminds us of the significance of education as a politicised force, as it has become a key site of struggle for the reproduction of anti-democratic, corporatised and managerial cultures that are part of neoliberalism. Crucial within this is Giroux's emphasis on how these forces create an instrumental logic that 'sweeps matters of political and moral responsibility under the carpet' (Ibid: 5). It also outlines his core argument about language and the forces of terror, where 'people become too fearful to develop a language in which they can both understand and challenge the world in which they live' (Ibid: 13). This is a vital part of the value of Giroux's book for development education, reminding us not only of how repressive regimes operate in cultural guises but of our collective responsibility to develop possibilities of hope and resistance.

Part one of the book outlines the crisis in democracy and traces the deep roots of racial terror in three opening chapters that explore ‘the dictatorship of ignorance and the crisis in the public imagination’ (page number missing). These remind us of the importance of historical remembrance, of rethinking with the ghosts of the past and how the terrors of the past are always evident in the present. Giroux not only analyses the emptying of American culture and politics but its profound impact in terms of normalisation of high levels of individualism, atomisation, historical amnesia, the crisis in public imagination, violence as performative and the lack of a collective consciousness. Giroux systemically documents the ‘long legacy of manufactured ignorance that informs the political and media culture of the US’ (Ibid: 38). This offers a powerful analysis of how culture including education can deploy and reflect power, normalising and creating conditions for the ‘unthinkable’.

Chapter two roots this analysis in an insightful and detailed account of ‘America’s Nazi problem and the plague of violence’ (page number missing). This is a very deliberate naming and locating of this crisis in a fascist and Nazi context by Giroux which highlights its deep roots in racial hierarchies and terror. This enables Giroux to reveal how the politics of disposability pick off the most vulnerable in society and create power dynamics whereby ‘habits of thought reinforce and sustain habits of power’ (James Baldwin, 2007: 87 cited in Giroux, 2022: 63). This type of in-depth cultural and political analysis is key for development education to understand the impact of education and thinking in the struggle over relations of power and the potential for social change. Chapter three continues this analysis by documenting the impact of ‘Trumpism and its afterlife’ as a form of ‘turbo-charged militarized power... [that empties] politics of any substance by turning it into a spectacle’ (Giroux, 2022: 106). This provides an in-depth analysis of American society during this period and its negative impact for the many groups disenfranchised from the brutality of this ideology.

Part two analyses the challenges and crisis of pedagogy as it increasingly becomes a tool for domination as part of the rise of a ‘Fascist

Culture’ and the ‘Scourge of Apartheid Pedagogy’. Giroux has traced the growing influence of neoliberalism and marketisation on the consequent decline of education as a democratic and social good. In this book, he explores further how it works on a cultural level in the types of knowledge permitted and what it silences, especially critical race theory and critical pedagogy. He analyses how language and discourse has been used as a brutalising force through ‘manufactured ignorance ... the refusal to think hard about an issue, to engage in language in the pursuit of justice’ (Ibid: 140). This is evident throughout what Giroux gives as the title of chapter five, ‘The Scourge of Apartheid Pedagogy’ that normalises racism, class inequities, and economic inequalities and silences any attempts to tackle them. Giroux issues a call for us to reclaim education as a force for critical consciousness and to create modes of analysis which supports people to ‘rethink the conditions that shape their lives’ (Ibid: 143). He offers a vital discussion on critical pedagogy’s role in analysing power, knowledge, ideas and transforming greater agency which is key for development education, reminding us that ‘Agency is the condition of struggle and hope is the condition of agency’ (Ibid: 147).

Part three reflects Giroux’s insistence as a critical educator on hope, possibility and a pedagogy of resistance. This outlines a vital and insightful analysis of how we move from hope to resistance in the ‘Age of Plagues’ which draws on Freire’s *Pedagogy of Hope* (2014). It allows us to counteract the despair and understand how education is always political and key in creating the conditions for a pedagogy of resistance and change. Giroux has a keen sense of the politicalised nature of Freire’s work and also how knowledge and learning are formed in ‘particular relations of material and symbolic power’ (Giroux, 2002: 182). The significance of education in supporting people to become critical and knowledgeable actors who can make power visible, build solidarity and challenge oppressive effects is clearly outlined. Key to this is how ‘hope had to be approached as a political project and an ethical ideal... rooted in both a historical consciousness and the concrete realities of the time’ (Ibid: 184). In the final chapter, Giroux draws together the intersectional nature of this struggle towards a pedagogy of resistance, evident in movements like Black Lives Matter and Indigenous rights movements worldwide. This allows

Giroux to name and learn from what has happened in United States, outlining how ‘politics follows culture’ in terms of what is allowed to be thinkable and what and who are silenced. Education is key in rethinking the future and a developing a pedagogy of resistance that can rebuild critical democracy.

This book enables Giroux to offer a powerful analysis of how culture is used as ‘the primary vehicle through which people engage and understand the material conditions that affect their lives’ (Ibid: 109). In so doing, it provides key learning for development educators to consider in terms of what this might mean for the types of development education that allow us to recreate our futures on a sustainable global level.

References

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