Democracy & Education

Educating for Social Justice

A Case for Teaching Civil Disobedience in Preparing Students to be Effective Activists. A Response to *Justice Citizens, Active Citizenship, and Critical Pedagogy: Reinvigorating Citizenship Education*

Barbara A. Peterson (Granite State College)

Abstract

Heggert and Flowers (2019) offer important insights into how social media provides students with important opportunities to engage in meaningful civic engagement and political activism. They argue that students are more politically active than some recent studies would have us believe because they are utilizing social media platforms, methods not accounted for by traditional measures. They further argue that if students are to alter the foundational causes of injustice, educators should adopt a critical pedagogical framework in teaching students to use social media as a means of becoming activists. I agree with the authors' main arguments but take issue with their suggestion that activism should be separated from notions of disobedience. On the contrary, I argue that activism that has as its fundamental goal to get at the roots of injustice must include civil disobedience. Educating for social justice, then, ought to include teaching students the history, theory, and techniques of civil disobedience.

Introduction

I N "JUSTICE CITIZENS, Active Citizenship, and Critical Pedagogy: Reinvigorating Citizenship Education," Heggert and Flowers (2019) pose a problem tackled by many in the literature on educating for democracy and civic responsibility: how to get students to be actively and effectively engaged in the political sphere so they may develop into emancipatory change agents. Their contribution to this body of work is in their insight into how students may currently be more engaged in civic actions than traditional measures would lead us to believe. Furthermore, they suggest adopting a Justice Pedagogy approach to move students beyond addressing the "symptoms" (p. 7) of oppression to understanding and communicating its root causes.

BARBARA A. PETERSON began her teaching career in 1992. In 2008 she earned her PhD in education. She founded a private school in New Hampshire and served as headmistress and lead teacher. Currently, she serves as an adjunct faculty member at Granite State College. She is the founder of Nonviolent Citizen Action, which educates people on becoming effective political activists. Her newsletter, *New Hampshire Citizen Action News*, profiles environmental sustainability, economic justice, and cultural equity work.

I take no issue with Heggert and Flowers's (2019) main premise and argument. Social media ought to be seen as a viable and serious mode of both civic engagement and activism. I agree that social media offers new and exciting opportunities for developing civic participation that have not yet been fully explored but ought to be if that is where most young people spend so much of their time. Social media has created entirely new ways for today's activists to promote particular ideals, narratives, and policies and to organize massive actions of protest. I also agree with their argument that students ought to be taught to critically evaluate root causes of injustice in order to make changes needed at the structural level of society. What I suggest is that we need to also teach students modes and methods of nonviolent action that go beyond what Heggert and Flowers promote. We need to instruct students in the history, theory, and methods of disruption, coercion, and noncompliance if we are to provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to make structural changes in our governing and social systems that are needed to promote more equitable and just relations, policies, and distribution of power.

Importance of Social Media Activism

Social media is a legitimate form of activism. If young people spend a vast amount of time on social media, then it makes sense to utilize these platforms for activist engagement. Heggert and Flowers (2019) argue that today's young people are not merely engaged in what has been termed "clicktivism" or "slacktivism." Instead, they claim, there are indications that today's youth are involved in civic matters, in some areas, to a higher degree than their predecessors. They are right to ask why these examples, among others, point to a high rate of activism among youth while more traditional indicators of civic participation show that their involvement in civic life is down. Their answer is that young people are "participating in civil society in ways that are not captured via traditional measures" (p. 3). Namely, young people are more involved in activism via social media in a manner that is meaningful and impactful.

Putnam's (2000) landmark study in *Bowling Alone* showed a dismal view of the significant downturn in civic participation. Since then, however, there seems to be an impressive increase. As Sander and Putnam (2010) noted, in the U.S., college student interest in political participation has been steadily increasing since 9/11. In an overview of social movements throughout the world since 2011, Davies, Ryan, and Peña (2016) observed that social media played a pivotal role in mobilizing activists during and after the Arab Spring. "Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp were seen as a game-changer, enabling oppressed and disorganized majorities to link with each other and with the outside world" (p. 6). Without the use of these platforms, the Tunisian Revolution would not have formed as quickly, and certainly news of their success would not have spread so rapidly, causing massive demonstrations throughout the Middle East, (Tufekci, 2017). "Activists with blogs, Facebook and Twitter have become key sources for, and disseminators of, information not unlike fellow demonstrators in the Arab Spring and activists in Gezi Park," (Ariemma & Brunside-Lawry, 2016, p. 159).

Social media can do more than advertise movements and express views. It can also be a form of protest itself. As Gould (2012) has pointed out, people can engage in "rhetorical coercion," a method whereby individuals promote an alternate narrative to those of governing officials, which takes away the government's "credible arguments in its own defense" (p. 123) of policies and laws that violate the interests of the people. When such activism is coupled with critical deliberation, students can learn to become engaged in civic life by communicating stories and experiences that speak to a truth too often ignored by politicians and power elites. These truths can counteract the narratives spun by media pundits and government officials who look to shape the hearts and minds of citizens in an effort to gain support for the policies that often act against the people's interests.

Hacktivism itself may also be a method of opposition. Aaron Swartz, for example, downloaded nearly 5 million articles from JSTOR (Journal Storage, a digital library of academic journals, books, and other primary-source material) for public use because he believed scholarly information should be free for everyone, not the privilege of those who have access to it through their university or with a paid prescription. Edyvane and Kulenovic (2017) argued that this type of "disruptive disobedience" is necessary and morally justified within a liberal conception of democracy because it "corrects a democratic deficit" (p. 1370): it affords equal access to information that should not be withheld from all who wish to access it. Social media is therefore both a tool in eliciting activism and activism itself.

Additionally, social media creates opportunities for students to learn how their municipal, state, and national governments work. Pathak-Shelat (2018) has contended that social media can foster civic engagement by collaborating with others in learning fundamentals of government operations. Methods like online games (such as Statecraft X), gathering information about issues, and opening spaces for free discussion can help students learn from each other about important issues and how they can lobby their legislature to make changes. As Heggert and Flowers (2019) state, new media platforms provide places for individuals to learn from each other and to author their own narratives and learning experiences, which can "strengthen community, social capital, and participatory democracy" (p. 3). In short, Heggert and Flowers argue that if an "increasing part of our lives take [sic] place in online spaces, then surely there is a necessity to teach young people to behave as active citizens in those spaces" (p. 4).

Importance of Critical Pedagogy

Within the critical pedagogy framework, Heggert and Flowers (2019) argue that schools are primary locations for promoting democratic capacities and habits. Students should be taught to see oppression in all its forms so they develop the awareness of oppression they need to address it systemically. They advocate for what they call "Justice Pedagogy": "a form of radical citizenship education that equips young people with the skills and values that will allow them to engage meaningfully and actively as citizens" (p. 5). Through digital organizing and online activism, for example, students learn about the injustices suffered by women across the

globe in the hundreds of thousands of stories shared as part of the #MeToo movement. In the U.S., Black Lives Matter is using social media to illustrate the unjustly violent treatment of Black men by law enforcement. And throughout the protests of the Arab Spring, people learned from others firsthand the sorts of oppression and injustices they were enduring and fighting against (Tufekci, 2017).

Educating students to question patterns of dominance and privilege is important if they are to work toward altering systems of injustice. Freire (1970) and Giroux (2001) argued freedom can only come through the work of the people themselves effectively opposing government restrictions and replacing oppressive systems with those that afford an empowered people to play a role in the decision-making processes. Critical pedagogy must open up spaces for students to question the oppression that often is normalized in society, including that which gets played and replayed in economic exploitative, capitalistic systems (Kumar, 2018). Taking things a step further, Westheimer (2015) asked what kind of citizen our schools should educate students to become and suggested that critical awareness comes through action. He argued that educating for democracy requires a critical pedagogy that examines root causes of inequity. He wrote that knowledge "does not necessarily lead to participation . . . In fact, we found that often it worked the other way around: Participation led to the quest for knowledge" (p. 90). When students begin engaging in advocacy or activism, they are more likely to develop the knowledge and skills needed to effectively oppose injustice.

Today we see the powerful role that social media has played in building what has come to be called the Resistance, an umbrella term for opposition efforts around the globe resisting neoliberal policies that benefit the wealthiest to the extreme cost of working people and policies that support oppressive attitudes to the detriment of all marginalized groups. Initially, it was a movement to oppose U.S. President Trump's agenda, but it became a much broader movement. It has become a force of opposition against the rise of authoritarianism, for the protection of human rights, and for immediate action to address the climate crisis. The January 2017 Women's March, for example, was largely organized via social media, as were the massive climate and science marches that followed.

For Heggert and Flowers (2019), citizenship education involves more than instruction on the structure and workings of a democratic government. Rather, to prepare students to organize and engage in, for example, such events as the Women's March and other recent Resistance actions, schools should be teaching students "to embrace activist and experiential notions of learning, with an emphasis placed on community and grassroots action and organizing" (p. 4). This more "maximal" (p. 4) form of citizenship education, they argue, helps students recognize and begin to actively oppose roots of unjust hierarchical relations in society. Their example of how students can participate in this "form of radical citizenship education" (p. 5) is instructive in highlighting the importance of students conducting a critical ethnographic study of various community groups to learn about citizenship in a democracy. The experience of conducting the research and communicating it to the public via a film they produced provided

them with a deeper understanding of what citizenship means, "including distributed decision making, critical literacy, and advocacy for systemic change" (p. 5) Students gained valuable capacities for looking at the world around them, studying hegemonic power structures and creating a meaningful expression of what they learned to teach others about existing injustices that should be opposed.

Educating students to effectively challenge systems of injustice and oppression is a key component of citizenship education for Heggert and Flowers (2019). Indeed, they argue that "it is not enough simply to encourage young people to take part in causes that only address the symptoms of oppression rather than the root causes of that oppression" (p. 7). If students are to be effective change agents in their communities and the larger society, they must learn to actively oppose the structures in society that perpetuate subjugation and dominance. While I wholeheartedly agree with their goals for civic education, I suggest that their approach does not develop a sufficiently fulsome program of knowledge and skills to equip students to successfully alter unjust power structures. The final section of this paper explains what is missing in Heggert and Flowers's conception of civic education and why it is essential to expand on their conception to include teaching students methods of activism that redistribute power throughout society.

The literature on civil resistance and nonviolent action is helpful here as it looks closely at the history of successful and unsuccessful activist campaigns throughout the world. The founder of this academic body of writing, Gene Sharp, developed a systematic analysis of what methods, tactics, and strategies work and in what situations when people fight nonviolently against those in positions of authority. Much of this section draws upon his work, as well as that of others who have contributed to this field, to show that efforts to effect sociopolitical structural improvements require organized nonviolent strategically planned campaigns that involve a wide variety of sequenced tactics that escalate over time from those that decry an injustice and demand change to those that undermine power holders' abilities to enact objectionable policies. For activists to be successful in accomplishing more than altering particular policies within an unjust system, if they are to change "the systems that perpetuate the racism, sexism, or other forms of oppression present within society today" (Heggert and Flowers, 2019, p. 7), they must learn to go beyond methods that educate the public about injustice and demand change. They must engage in disruptive, coercive, and even noncompliant methods of nonviolence.

Nonviolent Action and Civil Disobedience

Sharp and Raqib (2010) suggested that activists consider "whether they wish simply to condemn the oppression and protest against the system. Or, do they wish actually to end the oppression, and replace it with a system of greater freedom, democracy, and justice" (p. 1). They further warned us that many "have assumed that if they denounce the oppression strongly enough, and protest long enough, the desired change will somehow happen. That assumption is an error" (p. 1). Although voicing dissent is an

integral part of effecting systemic change, it is simply not enough. The students' media work is important to educate people on issues of injustice; however, its purpose is making more people aware of unjust distributive decisional authority, so they will, hopefully, be inspired to work for change. Its other purpose is to provide students with experience in researching and organizing in their communities. These are invaluable activist skills. What it does not do is sufficiently challenge the power that government officials have so it becomes less costly for them to comply with the activists' demands than continue to oppose them. If students are to learn what it really takes to make significant changes, especially those that alter the roots of oppression to promote a more just and humane governing and cultural system, they must learn how to leverage power and use it to effect change.

If educators are to "help young people learn to challenge those systems [of oppression and marginalization] rather than simply teaching them how to act within the systems" (Heggert and Flowers, 2019, p. 7), not only do we need to teach them to engage in actions that reveal to the public the injustices they should oppose, and to help them organize and mobilize the public into demanding improvements, but we need to teach them to undermine authority's ability to enact unjust policies. Sharp (1980) argued that for people to achieve freedom for themselves and more equitable social structures, they need to learn to challenge systems of oppression rather than cooperate with them. He wrote that if "even a majority dissent only in words, while refraining from any action the regime would have to take seriously, there is nothing that requires the regime even to consider the advisability of change" (p. 120). Without educating students to develop necessary capacities for wielding real power, I fear that schools will be setting students up for failure in their efforts to make positive and meaningful systemic changes. While I appreciate Heggert and Flowers's (2019) arguments to teach social media as a strong mode of activism within a critical pedagogical framework, I take issue with their concern that "*activism* is often seen as a word with connotations related to disobedience, violence, and disorder" (p. 7). I concur that activism should not be equated with violence. However, I argue that it does and should call to mind disruption and even disobedience.

Sharp has been credited with starting a field of scholarship on nonviolent action in large part due to his explication of the concept of political power (see his three-volume work: *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 1973). He defined political power as the ability of rulers to successfully implement their desired policies, laws, and practices and to have them carried out. This "consent theory of power" (Sharp, 1973a) is foundational in nonviolence theory. Gandhi based his views on civil disobedience and *satyagraha* on the idea that political power exists only to the extent that the ruled are willing to consent to the demands and wishes of the rulers (for more information on Gandhi's notion of *satyagraha*, see Brown, 1977; Copley, 1987; Gandhi, 2006; Hardiman, 2003; Nojeim, 2004; Sharp, 1979). When people withhold their consent, they take away the power of rulers to command compliance. Yet disobedience comes at a price. Students who disobey school policies can lose academic ranking (which may incur related costs). Citizens of a

democracy who break laws can be fined, fired from work, expelled from school, or even jailed. They may also be threatened and beaten by citizen opposition as we saw in 1960 with the Black American activists in Greensboro, North Carolina, who refused to leave the Whites-only lunch counters. In countries with harsher, more autocratic governments, activists may get beaten or even die, as we saw tragically in Tiananmen Square.

Rulers do not give up power willingly. That is, they will not readily concede material resources or access to them, nor do they want to do anything that will reduce their authority over others. Thus, when activists seek to make certain policy changes, government officials may support these changes if they either increase an official's power or, at the very least, do not lessen it. If the changes threaten their power, office holders will fight to keep what they have, using whatever means at their disposal, initially accessing those means that are the least costly. For example, it is much cheaper to convince activists to go away than to use force to stop them. Chomsky (2003) has claimed that democratic governments spend a great deal of effort and money "engineering" consent.

Governments can engineer consent by utilizing the vast resources at their disposal to publicize attitudes and narratives they want the public to accept, those that reject the goals and values of the activists. We see the effectiveness of this when the tobacco industry raised doubts in the public's minds on the medical research that concluded smoking cigarettes is a leading cause of lung cancer. This successful strategy was adopted decades later by the fossil fuel industry, which has managed to create enough doubt in people's minds about whether there is a climate crisis and, if there is, whether it was caused primarily by humans. As McIntyre (2018) stated: "Why search for scientific disagreement when it can be manufactured? Why bother with peer review when one's opinions can be spread by intimidating the media or through public relations? And why wait for government officials to come to the 'right' conclusion when you can influence them with industry money" (p. 25)? When pseudo-science is taken as a legitimate challenge to real science, Trump's tweets are taken as unquestioned fact by millions, and social media algorithms create an echo chamber where people are only exposed to what they want to believe, governments can manipulate people into cooperating without having to resort to violence or other harsh forms of repression.

Obedience through force is costly, often too costly, even for fascist governments. Thus, it behooves governments to convince their people to accept the authority of governors. While in more authoritarian, autocratic regimes, compliance can be achieved, if necessary, through force and threats of severe punishment (such as imprisonment, disappearances, and death), democracies must earn the cooperation of the people by persuading them that compliance is desirable. Sharp (1973a) explained that there are several reasons why people obey. One reason is that they perceive rulers to have a legitimate right to issue policies and have them followed. Many believe that we are all better off if we follow the rules of society, so we can avoid mass chaos. Another reason is that people's sense of morality derives from following the rules set by authority figures. Some obey because it is the norm in society, and

to do otherwise is to cast oneself as the "other," one who does not fit in, and must therefore pay the social costs for living outside the accepted norms. Others obey because they fear the repercussions of disobeying; they feel it is more personally costly to break the rules than follow them.

Disobedience, then, is not something that comes easily to most, and for good reasons. Teaching students to engage in nonviolent acts of disruption and noncompliance is risky because, as educators, our first duty is to protect the welfare of our students. Teaching them to break rules puts them in jeopardy of incurring significant costs, such as poor grades, being cut from a sports team or club, serving detentions or suspensions, and losing college scholarships or acceptances. They may also incur serious reprisals outside of school if they are disruptive in their communities as result of what they learned in school. Educating students to be effective change agents, therefore, must be done mindfully. And this is likely why most school programs that teach social justice advocate actions of legal and verbal dissent rather than civil disobedience or even nonviolent disruption.

Yet without going beyond dissent, people have little chance of making the sort of changes needed to address root causes of oppression. Leveraging people power is a necessary component of making real changes in the structural, foundational causes of injustice. It is therefore important to understand how this can be done. Peterson (2018) outlines four categories of methods activists must engage in to be successful in making institutional and systemic improvements in society. These categories—symbolic resistance, political involvement, disruption and coercion, and noncompliance—all play a vital role in forming a people's movement that will successfully challenge the power of rulers.

The first category, symbolic resistance, includes such methods as marches, rallies, memes, social media posts, letters to the editor, films, signs, theater, and mock funerals. The purpose of these methods is to illustrate and speak out against the injustices in order to develop a narrative compelling enough to get more people to participate. Its primary goal, then, is to build the movement. The 2016 Women's March was largely successful not primarily because millions attended worldwide. It was successful because it sparked the creation of tens of thousands of resistance groups around the globe. Symbolic methods are vitally important in any people's movement, but by themselves, they do not create change.

The second category also helps grow a movement by providing relatively safe ways to participate in activism and see real results in a democracy. Political involvement includes legislative lobbying, supporting political candidates, voting, running for office, working on voting laws and practices, and joining efforts to alter campaign laws. Other than marches and rallies, this is the most popular set of methods for activists in democratic countries because it is relatively safe, and people can see real changes, as when their candidates win, or when certain bills they oppose are defeated, or when politicians take up the new narratives promoted by activists. While these methods do lead to more beneficial laws being passed and harmful laws repealed, they do not, by themselves, alter unjust political and social structures and systems.

The third category is disruption and coercion. These include such methods as boycotts, legal strikes, and forming human chains to make it difficult for the opposition to carry out their tasks, sickouts, and foot dragging. The difference between disruption and coercion is in degree. Thus, if there is a relatively limited boycott against many of the sponsors of a particular news anchor's show, that anchor may need to apologize for the offending comment, as we saw when Laura Ingraham mocked David Hogg, Parkland School shooting survivor in Florida (Doubek 2018). This action caused a disruption of the Fox News Channel. Yet if the boycott was far more fulsome by going after all Fox News sponsors, the entire news show may have been coerced into radically altering how it does business. Disruption and coercion methods are used as a means of illustrating through actions that the power lies in the people's willingness to cooperate with the demands of the opposition. No news program can exist without sponsors. Take away the sponsors by threatening their income, and you force the supported program to make significant alterations.

The final category of methods is noncompliance. As the name implies, these methods include actions that violate a set of rules, policies, expectations, or laws. Examples include walkouts, illegal strikes, illegal boycotts, blocking traffic, occupying private-owned spaces, and refusing to register for selective service. For all intents and purposes, many of these are methods of civil disobedience, but the term *noncompliance* highlights the fact that the methods may violate unstated but implied rules, accepted norms, and policies at work, school, or organizations. It does not necessarily involve breaking laws. The purpose of these methods is to show the opposition that they can no longer count on the unquestioned cooperation or obedience of the people. These methods also show the public that it is the people who hold the power if they know how to wield it.

Despite its risks, civil disobedience is a "genuinely political and democratic practice of contestation" (Celikates, 2016, p. 43). For Dreamers, a name for U.S. immigrants who qualify as beneficiaries of the Development, Relief, Education for Alien Minors Act, civil disobedience is not only a way for them to fight against their marginalization in society; it also creates an alternate identity. In what is referred to as "coming-out demonstrations" (Galindo, 2017), Dreamers appear in public and openly declare their undocumented status, daring immigration agents to arrest and deport them. One famous example occurred in May 2010 when five immigrants, in their graduation caps and gowns, staged a sit-in protest in Senator John McCain's Tucson, Arizona, office, provoking officials to deport them. No one was called to arrest them, and the demonstration ended peacefully (Galindo, 2012). By openly defying the immigration laws, Dreamers were claiming their right to be in the U.S. As Butler (2015) explained, "No matter how 'universal' the right to appear [in public] claims to be, its universalism is undercut by differential forms of power that qualify who can and cannot appear" (p. 50). The very act of proclaiming themselves publicly to be present as undocumented immigrants transforms them from remaining silent and hidden to being part of a larger force for good, a force that enables them to control their own identities and narratives (Galindo, 2017). As Ganz (2009) stated,

"In our world of competition and cooperation, achieving our goals usually requires power" (p. 8). Civil disobedience is often used as the best way to leverage such power. Ganz noted that we see its effectiveness in labor struggles. For example, the 2012 Chicago Teacher's Strike successfully challenged the status quo of hierarchical, corporate dominance by bringing the entire city to a standstill. "It was a massive exercise of power" (McAlevey, 2016, p. 103).

Civil disobedience is nonviolent action that purposely breaks what is perceived to be an unjust rule, policy, or law in order to bring about a more just improvement. It is typically done thoughtfully and strategically with activists fully aware that they may need to pay the penalty for breaking established rules. Participation in civil disobedience does not imply disrespect for the rule of law. Rather, it adheres to the belief that persons have certain human rights and citizens have the right to be ruled by laws that are devised to serve their interests. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, citizens have the right to rebel against oppression and tyranny. Additionally, as Velasco (2016) pointed out, "civil disobedience is a clear exercise of public autonomy, that is, of putting into practice the citizen's capacity for self-determination" (p. 118). By engaging in periodic acts of mindful, strategic collective action that violates targeted laws, citizens are participating in revising the laws that shape society. Expressing dissent in this way, in a manner difficult to ignore, allows differing values and political views to be debated in the democratic marketplace of ideas. Thus, "in this context, civil disobedience can come to be an indispensable instrument" (p. 119).

Altering structures and relations of power as well as distribution of goods requires more than demanding our elected officials do so. Marches, rallies, contacting elected officials, changing the narrative, and organizing societal groups to speak out in protest against certain injustices build a necessary foundation for a nonviolent movement that must, if it is to succeed, also employ methods of disruption, coercion, and noncompliance. As Sharp (1973a) stated, "Obedience is at the heart of political power" (p. 16). The source of power for any ruler, argued Sharp, lies in the societal institutions that support the ruler. This "power relationship exists only when completed by the subordinates' obedience to the ruler's commands and compliance with his wishes" (p. 17). Withholding compliance to a ruler's demands is the greatest source of nonviolent people power.

We see with one example after another in history that governments need the cooperation of their people in order to maintain power and authority. Montgomery, Alabama, did not alter bus policies because of moral appeals to its leaders' better natures. Rather, the buses were desegregated because the people refused to comply with the rules by boycotting the buses. Gandhi did not win independence for India because he convinced the British government that withdrawing as colonial rulers was the right thing to do. The British withdrew because Gandhi and his followers made it too costly through their mass noncooperation for Britain to remain. Puerto Rican Governor Rosselló did not resign because he heard the masses and bowed to their expressed wishes. He stepped down because the people made the commonwealth ungovernable with noncooperative methods such as nationwide strikes. In Poland, following on the heels of success for control over their unions in Gdansk, workers along the Baltic coast achieved their goal of free and independent labor unions because they "gave the regime no other choice" (Ackerman & Duvall, 2000, p. 152). Massive, organized strikes crippled the regimes' ability to deny workers their rights to independent labor unions. Governments cannot rule without the cooperation of their people. When Russia's Tsar Nicholas II refused to compromise in the face of massive nonviolent civilian resistance, his interior minister resigned, saying to the tsar, "It is inconceivable to run the country without the support of societal forces" (Ackerman & Duvall, 2000, p. 23). As Ackerman and Duvall (2000) pointed out, "It was not enough to object to the autocracy; the opposition had to push the regime to change" (p. 23).

Nonviolent action leaders and experts argue that civil disobedience is the greatest weapon in a people's nonviolent arsenal. Goals of activists often go beyond the relatively narrow limits of altering laws or policies. Instead, they seek structural changes. We see this with Gandhi who sought complete political independence. Martin Luther King Jr. recognized the need for changes in civil rights laws as well as the practices of societal institutions and the attitudes and values of the people. Activists in Puerto Rico are calling for a "[t]otal transformation towards a free and independent nation" (Meyer, 2019). Power holders do not give up power unless they are forced to do so. Undermining their ability to maintain unjust structures of authority and distribution of wealth and power is necessary to achieve a more equitable and fair society.

Heggert and Flowers (2019) offer important insight into the vital role that social media plays in opposing injustice. They also rightly argue for the necessity of teaching students how to be social media activists within a critical pedagogical framework in order to alert them to the foundational causes of injustice. Without such a pedagogical approach, they point out, students will not learn to make needed changes at the institutional and systemic levels. Although it is certainly not a central focus of their article, they suggest it is important to teach students that activism is not synonymous with violence or disobedience. I do not take issue with separating activism from violent opposition. However, I do believe that if we do not teach students how to develop and participate in a fulsome people's movement, which includes methods of civil disobedience as a necessary part of that movement, we are unduly handicapping them in their ability to become successful change agents.

Teaching students such methods as civil disobedience, however, must be done very mindfully and skillfully so as not to jeopardize their education and their personal well-being. (Peterson, 2014). While I suggest it must include teaching students about nonviolent action—its history, theory, and methods—as well as providing them with guided opportunities to practice their developing capacities in their communities, how to go about doing that requires detailed explication and, therefore, is a subject for a different paper. For now, it is important to recognize that, particularly in this era where democracy is being threatened by neoliberal economic and political policies that promote more authoritarian regimes, we need to equip students with the tools to fight effectively against deeply entrenched systems of power. Notions of

activism do not need to be separated from civil disobedience. Rather, they must include it. Civil disobedience is an essential part of an activist's repertoire in leveraging enough power to hold leaders of governments and corporations accountable to the interests and needs of the people and to make institutional changes that get at the root causes of injustice.

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