We make the road by walking: conversations on education and social change

Type: Book
Author: Myles Horton
Contributor: Brenda Bell
Contributor: John Gaventa
Contributor: John Marshall Peters
Place: Philadelphia
Publisher: Temple University Press
ISBN: 0877227713
Date: 1990
Call Number: LB885.H64
Library Catalog: Primo
Language: eng
Abstract: Introduction: "We make the road by walking" -- Formative years. -- "I was always getting in trouble for reading in school" -- "Reading has to be a loving event" -- "I couldn't use all this book learning" -- "I always am in the beginning, as you" -- "Pockets of hope": literacy and citizenship -- Ideas. -- "Without practice there's no knowledge" -- "Is it possible just to teach biology" -- "I've always been ambivalent about charismatic leaders" -- "The difference between education and organizing" -- "My expertise is in knowing not to be an expert" -- "My respect for the soul of the culture" -- "I learned a lot from being a father" -- Educational practice. -- "The more the people become themselves, the better the democracy" -- "Highlander is a weaving of many colors" -- "Conflicts are the midwife of consciousness" -- Education and social change. -- "You have to bootleg education" -- "The people begin to get their history into their hands, and then the role of education changes" -- Reflections. -- "Peaks and valleys and hills and hollers" -- "It's necessary to laugh with the people" -- Epilogue.

Short Title: We make the road by walking
# of Pages: 256
Date Added: 12/1/2014, 10:49:00 AM
Modified: 12/1/2014, 10:49:00 AM

Tags:

Notes:
1a) "A dialogue is as the life that comes from the earth's springs. It is as if the book's life were doing that and being transformed into words, written words through our speaking, and afterward the speech comes into written speech, but it loses some of the power of life" (p. 8).

- Rather than writing by hand the entire book, having the book in the format of a dialogue between Horton and Freire gives the book direction while having it be fluent in the language used, easier to read in a way.
- It may be different to hear the book, rather than to read it on paper, because through paper it becomes a bit depersonalized and somewhat less organic.

**Tags:** dialogue, speech, spoken, talk, talking book

1b) "Education is before, is during, and is after. It's a process, a permanent process. It has to do with the human existence and curiosity" (p. 119).

- Education is constantly changing, and is at the same time a constant. As long as human curiosity exists, education will exist.
- Education should not be looked at as one singular thing; it should be seen as a process, not just something one teaches to others.

**Tags:** change, curiosity, education, humanistic, process

1c) "In order for us to be more and more critical we need to recognize some naiveties. But when we look at the history of human beings, we see how we in the world are still having to walk a lot in order to become more human" (p. 91).

- Education is a process, and although people have come a long way towards improving education, much work still needs to be done.
- It is crucial to recognize shortcomings and naiveties, for in doing so we can see how as a society we can continue to improve and become more humanistic in the way we treat others.

**Tags:** Critical pedagogy, education, human, humanistic, naivety, process

1d) "So I was influenced by the thinking, the clarification that went into the book--that it's the structures of society that we've got to change. We don't change men's hearts...it doesn't make a great deal of difference what the people are; if they're in the system, they're going to function like the system dictates that they function" (p. 103).

- It doesn't do much good to say that individuals are the problem, because the system will mold societies, and thus in turn they will mold the system, and so on.
- What can be done to change whole systems? Or, contrary to the quote, should the emphasis be on changing individuals who will change the system?
1e) "That is, the emphasis now, in the process of transition of revolution, is to create an education that enlarges and amplifies the horizon of critical understanding of the people, to create an education devoted to freedom" (p. 219).

- Education should be a pursuit in freedom, so that people could recognize boundaries and strive to push beyond them if they deem it necessary.
- Teaching is political in this regard: to work to change societies.

2) Refer to "Tags" after each section for the key concepts.

3) Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, through the series of conversations they have with one another, discuss their backgrounds in education and social change, and how they helped to change and influence their practices and work with others. They give their opinions on education in relation to society, and their own outlooks on what could be done and how society as a whole could be changed through revolutionary work.
4a) Myles Horton stated, "...I was interested in going as far as I could in helping people develop the capacity to make decisions and to take responsibility, which is what I think is the role of an educator" (p. 125). Teachers have the responsibility to make decisions on how to teach, what to teach, and why to teach; state standards and guidelines would require teachers to cover material within a specific subject area, yet it is up to them to find the best, most constructive ways to convey this information to their students. They are responsible for providing students with a lens of the world itself, whether the subject matter they teach is math, science, or social studies. As the authors have stated, one cannot simply separate biology from society; students must understand how everything is interrelated.

In turn, Paulo Freire stated, "I am sure that the duty and right of the teachers, because they have to be serious teachers, is to organize themselves in order to fight against discrimination and low wages from many kinds of governments" (p. 60). Discrimination still exists in this day and age, yet teachers have the power to create environments of tolerance and understanding so that their students understand more of the world they are living in, and whether or not it promotes or hinders advancement of the human condition. Additionally, Freire observed that teachers are not always paid well and are oftentimes overworked, and because of this they are tired and not able to further their understanding through reading. Freire would state that the best way for a teacher to refine his/her craft is by constantly reading and researching. If teachers are treated well, they in turn will be better able to work.

**Tags:** pay, responsibilities, roles, social change, teaching

4b) Horton and Freire would possibly agree with both Vygotsky and H. Richard Milner, in stating, "We cannot educate if we don't start--and I said start and not stay--from the levels in which the people perceive themselves, their relationships with the others and with reality, because this is precisely what makes their knowledge" (p. 66). Horton and Freire would claim that it is important for educators to recognize where people are, and thus teach according to the Vygotskian model of ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development). People are each at different stages, and it would be foolish to assume that everyone learns the same way, at the same rate.

Additionally, Horton and Freire claim, "To me, it's essential that you start where people are. But if you're going to start where they are and they don't change, then there's no point in starting because you're not going anywhere. So while I insist on starting where people are, that's the only place they could start" (p. 99-100). In other words, the point of recognizing where people are is to see in what direction a person will go from there. The starting point should not be the same as the ending point; there is a process involved, a journey in which the individual grows and, hopefully, is improved in some way. Milner himself claims that it is important to recognize where people are, without necessarily stating that it is merely an "academic gap". Gaps, such as socioeconomic and racial ones, can be narrowed through education and understanding, yet one of the worst things an educator can do would be to not move from where one started, and to not recognize or acknowledge how much of the road is left. Milner himself would challenge Horton and Freire by asking how they themselves have addressed the so-called "academic gap", how they go about addressing this issue while simultaneously targeting race and social class. Do they merely fight for social justice of the working class, or do they also strive to narrow these gaps by educating the upper classes that have the power to change society?

**Tags:** milner, race, responsibilities, roles, sociocultural, Vygotsky
5) I have learned that the road to social justice is a long one filled with struggle and strife. Horton and Freire have dedicated almost their entire lives towards social justice and education, and still there are problems in the United States and Brazil. Thinking about changing the world from an individual perspective is exhausting and almost hopeless, yet it makes more sense when I consider that one person has the power to influence another person, who influences another person, and so forth. In explaining the origins of the Citizenship Schools within the Gullah community, Horton noted that the project began with only three or four people—which in turn expanded to include hundreds of educators and thousands of students across the United States. Highlander has done much work towards the advancement of social justice in America, yet it may not have been possible without the ideas and drive of the people to enact change. More than simply taking action, what matters in the road to social change is the internal drive and desire to envision a different, "better" society. I myself may not ever be a social justice educator, unless I myself begin to envision what a different society looks like, and thus encourage my students to do the same while noting that it takes time and patience for change to come. As the authors have stated, social change is a slow process that is much more difficult than simply moving furniture: "It would be just a question of muscular power, no? That is, I can take this chair and put it over there. We could change everything here in ten minutes. History is not like this. It takes time in history to make history" (p. 217).

Tags: change, learning experiences, reflection, social, society