

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PLACE:

CRITICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES

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Introduction

This special issue began life in an unexpected way. After an initial meeting with Leila Villaverde while revisiting Greensboro, North Carolina, during an overseas sojourn from my homeland of Aotearoa New Zealand, the opportunity arose to collaborate with and co-edit this special journal issue, *The Significance of Place: Critical and Pedagogical Perspectives and Practices*. As a result, a meeting was arranged between me, Leila, and a Ph.D. student, Caitlin Spencer. Thus, over a cup of coffee I met with Caitlin and together we mulled over the possibilities of what this special edition of the journal could effectively look like. In an effort to capture a diverse collection of scholarship, and with a further two co-editors, Diti Hill-Denee and Stephanie Hudson, we sent out a call recognizing that place and its significance in people's lives has been a topic in educational research over several decades. However, we also acknowledged that more recently, there has been a significant focus on *place* as educative about critical concerns from multiple vantage points, and, importantly, from differently recognized or so-called marginalized areas, people, and practices. As a consequence, this special edition

of *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* hopes to support and call attention to perspectives that have been termed “marginal,” or “occupied,” deemed voiceless, silenced and/or choosing silence on purpose, and/or excluded from *a place* in conversations, or in education as knowledge. These perspectives give rise to conditions of change that increasingly frame a “world” as one that is “shared” via the rhetoric of “globalization.” This special issue provides a platform for a range of methods, approaches, and entry points to questions related to the (in)significance of place in everyday lives. As indicated by Shirley Steinberg (2013, p. 3): Each place has multiple facets and contradictions. “Place is more than just a place ... that place is integral to one’s being and one’s story. ... Place defines us as we define place.”

Realizing the enormity that the responsibility to edit such a journal posed and the important legacy Joe Kincheloe bestowed when he started this journal over a decade ago, the articles in this journal needed to reflect Joe’s belief in the power of critical pedagogy and the deeper nuances of social justice that are tucked into the nooks and crannies of the lives of the authors who grace these pages. Although I personally never met Joe, I have always been enamored by his relentless pursuit of social justice and his proliferation of scholarship, because, as once stated by Shirley Steinberg, Joe’s quest was that he lived to write, rather than writing to live.

During one of my encounters with Joe’s writing I came across some of his work related to place in *Keywords in Critical Pedagogy: Joe L. Kincheloe* (Steinberg & Steinberg, 2011, pp. 49-52). This writing epitomized Joe’s continual critique of everything that surrounded his life and the lives of others and, in particular, his relationship with place.

As a Southerner with a contradictory love for the South, Joe Kincheloe offers some insightful perspectives about the South; the following are some excerpts of Joe’s writing:

The South is a place where people maintain a closeness to the land and a feel for the rhythms of nature.

The South is a place where people gain a special sensitivity to the struggle of our national experience through the medium of strained racial relations.

Though the instrumental ethos of the industrialized New South is subverting the effort, Southerners control time better than many. Those long and heavy southern afternoons with nothing doing, the mystical twilights when one is comforted by the appearance of old friend Venus in the western sky as it oversees the fading of the oranges, violets, mauves, roses and lavenders below it, the humid evening when the crickets and frogs provide a musical concert for the patient porch sitter all contribute to an appreciation of the preciousness of time.

The South is a place where people love storytelling and believe that this tradition builds community by linking us to our past.

Each of these excerpts from Kincheloe resonate with my experiences of being in North Carolina, yet, at the same time, jingle and jar with the undertones of being in the South that I began to encounter in areas related to race, sexuality, gender, class, and religion.

It is the essence of these jarring encounters with place that the authors in this special edition have captured and also told their stories bringing to life topics such as finding a place for voice (Sansom & Hill-Denee), autoethnographical accounts of place and belonging (Zilonka, Cai, Carvajal Medina, & Young Chung), superdiversity and indigeneity (Chan & Ritchie), migration and migrating pedagogies (Anttila), intercultural dance and visual arts (Samuels & Svendler Nielsen), living loving praxis (Dominguez), landscape literacy and living roominations (Perez), archival stories of place (Colonna & Lawrimore), piracy and resistance (Fitzpatrick & Freebody), and battling educational determinism (Livingston). In the tradition left by Joe, this special edition continues to encourage and promote critical transnational and diverse voices of scholarship.

REFERENCES

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