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## **Critical thinking and embodied learning for a Puerto Rican student movement pedagogy**

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Student activism has been a recurrent phenomenon in the history of the University of Puerto Rico since 1920 (Negrón, 1976). Several waves of student mobilization emerged at different periods with specific claims. Historically, students fought against the (North)Americanization of education, reorientated higher education towards community development, ensured multisectoral democratic participation in university governance, prevented the privatization of programs, buildings, and campuses, and ensured access to marginalized groups.

This article discusses the student mobilizations of the 21st century in the only public state university on the Puerto Rican archipelago, the University of Puerto Rico (UPR). The UPR has its first and main campus in San Juan, the campus of Río Piedras, and another ten campuses distributed throughout the island, offering specific areas of expertise. This article's primary purpose is to explore the strikes of 2005, 2010, and 2017, as instances, spaces, and periods of learning.

As former student activists, members of the Honors Students Program, we have researched from and for social movements for the last decade. As a political sociologist, Fernando focuses on identity politics, intersectionality, social policy, and how movements cope with internal division and exert political influence. As a social worker and adult educator, Kamil focused on the right to housing, cooperatives, capacity building, and popular education. Our scholarly paths crossed when we researched the student movement experience we had shared as student movement participants. Together, we will approach each mobilization period from our own lived experience, along with post-experience alumni reflections and archival documents emerging from each period of student mobilization from 2005 to 2017. We place our analysis of these strike waves within the growing body of research on adult education and social movement learning (SML) theories. We argue that the problematization of the uses, meanings, and strategies around the concepts of conscientization, critical thinking, and the integration of embodied learning into student activism serves as a basis for a movement pedagogy.

We will begin our analysis by describing each strike. While there are similarities, the most marked differences between each strike are participation structures, the articulation of common interests, decision-making processes, strategies of representation of student diversity, and political education activities. Next, we will discuss each strike's context, demands, and student mobilization and highlight how each strike represents a learning space, either because of the lessons learned or educational activities. Finally, we will follow with an analysis of the uses, meanings, and strategies of the concepts of conscientization, critical thinking, and embodied learning and how their problematization supports the construction of a student movement pedagogy.

### **The 2005 strike**

The implementation of neoliberal policies in Puerto Rico provoked notable moments of student mobilization (Atilas-Osoria, 2013; Brusi, 2011). Participants of the 2005 strike framed their campaign as a struggle against an imminent 33% increase in tuition costs. Giovanni Roberto, currently a member of the *Centro para el Desarrollo Político, Educativo y Cultural* (CDPECPR, acronym in Spanish), reflects on the 2015 strike experience as a student activist during that time. Some student activists mobilized around the student assembly in 2015 as a response to the tuition hike and hoping to garner support within the student body for a unified response to this policy. His organization recalls that most students in the assembly, activists, and non-activists, considered voting against the strike because they understood that the strike had not been adequately prepared (CDPECPR, 2017). CDPECCPR (2017) states that most students understood that something had to be done immediately, and they could only think of the strike as that immediate logical tactic. Therefore, student activists presented the motion to go on strike and to create a negotiating committee that would provide organized students greater organizational autonomy when compared to the limited powers granted by the official student council. The student body favored the motion and created the *Comité Universitario Contra el Alza* (or University Committee Against Tuition Raise, hereinafter referred to as the Comité). The Comité emphasized a class analysis of the situation. It crafted an opposition to the tuition hike to keep the cost of university down to foster the

access of working families (Tormos-Aponte, 2019). The 2005 strike provided lessons, progress, and setbacks. Regardless, organizers recognize that "that process was ours—of the two hundred and a half students who went on strike. Hence the pride we still feel today by that rebellious student movement. The process had been a school" (CDEPECPR, 2017, para. 3). It has been common to acknowledge strikes as schools (Fontáñez, 2010; Picó, 1982), challenging or provoking us to explore the extent to which the process of strikes become instances of learning and their legacy in student activists' lives.

Although the administration managed to impose the tuition hike, CDEPECPR (2017) argues that the major victory was learning, staying organized, gaining spaces, and advancing movement claims. They also claim that it was only from looking back that they could see that the primary victory was to prepare the movement for the 2010 strike. This approach captures a process of reflection that invites questions about what these learnings were and the virtues behind organizational sustainability to win spaces in later strikes. When we look at internal power dynamics, Tormos-Aponte (2019) states that the 2005 movement was criticized for its patriarchal, homophobic, and sexist positions, which ultimately led to a lack of support from feminist groups and the LGBTT community. To avoid more internal ruptures, the Comité's leaders skipped crucial democratic deliberation processes. They approved a unilateral agreement with the administration, without bringing it to the plenary bodies that elected them or expected participatory student representation. Their unilaterality had the unintended consequence of diminishing support for the strike within the student body and generating the very ruptures that they sought to avoid. The Comité ended resorting to undemocratic decision-making, and the strike ended after 26 days, with the implementation of a phased tuition hike. The decision-making process did not advance the movement's cause but represented a lesson that helped strengthen the movement later on, as it did in the strike of 2010.

### **The 2010 strike**

We met in the strike of 2010. Since 2008, student activists had been organizing against the administration's attempt to shrink the university budget. Certification 98 was a university policy initiative

that would eliminate the tuition exemption for honor students, athletes, work-study program students, and university employees' children, leaving thousands of students without access to education. On April 13 of that year, 3,000 students gathered in an assembly and deliberated on a strike vote to oppose the university measures. We offered the university administration one week to drop Certification 98 before beginning a two-day stoppage followed by an indefinite strike. While awaiting the response, we organized the stoppage and prepared the needed infrastructure to start the strike. The administration refused to grant us any concessions. On April 19, at 4:00 AM, several students arrived at the campus to close the institution with locks and chains. We used desks and everything within reach to block the gates throughout the morning to force the administration to withdraw Certification 98.

Between 2008 and 2010, college-based organizing challenged the representative organizational structure of the student council by distributed participation through different action committees in each college of the main campus. Inspired by the organizational processes of 1981 and 2005, participation in the action committees challenged the notion of representative democracy whereby only one student at each college participated in general student council meetings. The action committees' sessions included more members than each college student body council, and there was no hierarchical organization of positions or responsibilities. This experience allowed many to build a sense of co-responsibility with the university's future and question this public institution's role at the national level. The advantage of this new form of student agency was that it attracted students not affiliated with political organizations and allowed them a space to organize, deliberate, and engage with aspects of mobilization (Tormos-Aponte, 2020).

The slogan for a free and quality public education emphasized the importance of public investment in university education, multisectoral participation as a guarantor of democratic processes, control of tuition costs, and flexibility of admission standards to promote access to the most marginalized populations, as well as scrutiny of academic offerings and pedagogical methodologies to ensure the relevance of content and utility of education delivery and learning. The mobilizing efforts of action committees built a sense of belonging and gained adherents to the student movement. When the strike was declared, each college

committee took over the gate's defense closest to its buildings, resulting in the fragmentation of students according to their disciplines of study (law, natural sciences, arts, education and communications, humanities, and social sciences). That strike lasted 62 days. Contrary to 2005, we held deliberative decision-making processes inside each gate, in each campus, and between campuses, along with artistic and cultural programs, community-based efforts outside the campuses to gather the people's support, and created a community radio station (Reyes, 2021) and a student press committee. Also, each gate served as the setting for outdoor classes offered by teachers supporting the cause, workshops, and opportunities to strengthen or build organizing skills. For this reason, it was common to hear people say that the most authentic education happened at the gates.

As in 2005, we recognized the organization process as a learning instance. We identified learning through the people's solidarity, who approached the gates to offer resources and food and participated in picket lines and marches. We also learned from student activists, veterans of previous struggles, and teachers who facilitated discussion, training, and conferences at the gates. Finally, we learned from nights of poetry, performance, theatre of the oppressed, and film forums, all of which kept students inside the gates and consolidated their political learning process.

The opportunity to problematize racial power dynamics came in the 2010 strike when the university's provost hired Capitol Security, an external security company, to confront students. Capitol Security had temporarily hired young black men from one of the most populated African-descendant communities as security guards, in order to confront the student movement (LeBrón 2019; Tormos-Aponte, 2020). The situation led us to analyze how the administration deployed a population, whose access to education we intended to defend, against student activists. The problem led student organizers to weave bonds of solidarity with the guards and confront the segregation and institutional racism that the guards experienced while highlighting how this had put us against each other (Luna, 2010). Further reflections from this experience helped shape the political work around race relations of subsequent organizations under the leadership of former student movement organizers. The private security company withdrew some of its guards from the gates. The experience became a great lesson for

the student movement about the lengths the State would go to, and about the importance of recognizing opportunities for open dialogues.

### **The 2017 strike**

In complicity with the fiscal oversight board, a new university budget cut by the State was the preamble to the 2017 strikes (Cortes, 2017). Since February 2017, the newly constituted National Student Confederation had called a march involving more than 5,000 students. Compared to previous years, student participation increased, even though the number of students enrolled in the system declined over the years (Oficina de Planificación Estratégica y Presupuesto, 2019). Beginning on March 28, 2017, students from the Río Piedras campus approved a one-week stoppage from March 28 to April 5 (Pacheco, 2017) at the student assembly. At the end of this stoppage, the National Student Assembly, consisting of representatives of ten of the eleven campuses of the UPR system, would take place. The assembly approved an indefinite strike that was set to start on April 6, 2017 (Meléndez, 2017). Contrary to previous assemblies, high school students from the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music and the School of Plastic Arts joined us.

Compared to the 2010 strike, it was shorter and ended on June 7, 2017, when the last of the campuses voted to end it. Among the memorable moments of what has been recognized as "the big strike" was an interruption of the governing board meeting, where a group of students went to the central administration to prevent the approval of a multi-millionaire funds cut (*Estudiantes Que Irrumpieron Reunión de Junta de Gobierno Podrían Ser Arrestados*, 2017). The students surrounded the governing board members and did not leave the room until the board president signed a paper pledging not to approve the fiscal plan. The assault on central administrations created a national debate on the legitimacy of force and violence exerted by students to advance their claims. This debate escalated on 1 May 2017, International Workers' Day. During the march, activists rebelled against the structures of the Golden Mile, the country's central banking area. As a result, the federal prosecutor's office charged a young student for lighting up part of the Banco Popular building; this and 13 other students suffered a filing of mutiny charges, assaults, and aggravated damage (*Justicia Confirma Que Arrestados Son Estudiantes de La UPR*, 2017).

It has been remarkable how, in the development of this last mobilization, student activists' critiques regarding diversity in representation were incorporated and attended to. It has become increasingly common to elect Black and queer organizers as leaders of the movement, rather than representatives of long-term student political organizations in the compound. Representation gains also took place in the movement's leadership composition and in adopting measures that have addressed the gendered and racialized dimensions of austerity measures (Ferrer-Núñez 2017; Tormos-Aponte 2019). Indeed, before the 2017 strike declaration, gender-based education became one of the agenda's first items. Several internal processes on different occasions threatened the sustainability of the movement from within. In the 2017 strike, it was common to hear claims about sexist behaviors from the male student leadership.

Similarly, the LGBTTTQIA+ community was against exclusive language and the lack of openness for trans and non-binary identities. The Activism Committee's consolidation allowed a space to introduce social education processes endorsed by student activists through different activities inside and outside the university community. The experiences designed by the committee led student leaders on many occasions to question their leadership practices, how they prevented the participation of new members of the movement, and the discourse of conviction in surrounding communities. On the other hand, the committee's processes focused on community organizations and schools in different parts of the island, aiming to add to the conversation the different sectors distanced from the student process, such as middle and high school students, teachers, and marginalized communities. The education strategies implemented followed a critical pedagogy, which connected student processes with the colonial and capitalist national context. The goal of the committee was not about "carrying a message." The goal was to build an interest in the cause through the value that each sector could assign to the defense of public education.

The various experiences led to questioning the level of organization achieved and the use of strike action to organize a national resistance movement in the face of budget cuts to the public university and austerity measures implemented in the country. In this sense, the student movement transcends the university context to collect popular demands for resistance and give mobilization lessons to workers' unions and community organizations. This process is not unidirectional but reciprocal; during the strike,



labor unions and other groups showed up at the gates, teaching us the importance of solidarity among struggles that appear to be disconnected, connecting us with broader struggles and their agendas.

The 2017 strike ended with some ideas floating around, such as creating a Student Federation, rescuing spaces within the enclosures or in adjacent areas, organizing a multisectoral congress against austerity, among others (CDPECPR, 2017). These pending plans conceive the possibility of a student movement which goes beyond the strike to integrate organizations and training strategies aimed at people who are not yet part of the movement. The credibility to do so lies in the public recognition that students have given a lesson in terms of organization and resistance. Therefore, it is appropriate to go a little deeper into what these lessons consist of: how, when, and where the educational process takes place; who learns and from whom; and through what processes does education take place.

### **Weaving the lessons from the strikes: The role of conscientization and political education**

We want to think that a strike, in and of itself, is an inherent space of learning. Yet, this approach may overgeneralize and underestimate the specific conditions under which learning occurs, is legitimized, and translated into future organizational experiences. As researchers, we wonder, what were those lessons? The strike of 2005 shaped perceptions about the relevance of diversity to sustain a movement, motivated the need for participatory democracy and inspired us to seek support among community-based groups inside and outside the UPR. Students would talk of these lessons, and this conversation continued in 2010. Continuing dialogues beyond the strike represented opportunities to harvest lessons. The discussions were informal, yet carried significant value for those leaders who kept them alive between strike periods. The participatory strategies implemented in 2010 and 2017 proved that the analysis sharpened as years passed, and that some of the learnings lead to new organizational processes and structures. This process ignited our curiosity about the learning potential behind strikes. What can be learned about strikes? How do we learn through strike action? We argue that a theoretical framework for the learning that emerges in struggle can help address these questions. This article is an attempt to advance such a framework.

In all the strikes, it was common to hear that the strike was the perfect opportunity for conscientization. Conscientization "is a structuring concept of the conception and practice of liberating education" (Souza, 2015, p. 105) discussed by Paulo Freire. Freire was convinced that education as a practice of freedom is an act of knowledge that implies a critical approximation of reality.

Conscientization requires the commitment of a transformative action that does not stoically stop in the pure recognition of the subjective nature of the situation but, on the contrary, prepares humans at the level of action to combat the obstacles to their humanization (P. Freire, 1987). The concept of conscientization has been developed through critical theory. Carpenter and Mojab (2017) claim that the transformation of consciousness is an essential objective of education's historical legacy of social movement mobilization, popular education, and worker union organizing.

While sporadic popular education has been present in various student organizing processes, there have been no structured attempts to forge a pedagogy to build popular power as a fighting strategy. For student activists, popular education comes in handy for conscientization, which is associated with "raising awareness" and "gaining" critical thinking. Typically, they would recognize teach-ins and workshops as examples of consciousness-raising efforts where they update non-activist students, new student activists, and the general population about the problems and oppressions at the university. This approach is consonant with the observation that conscientization is treated as a pedagogical object of intervention, where phrases like critical consciousness, awareness-raising, waking up, and conscientization are seen as results, processes, methods, or goals (Carpenter & Mojab, 2017). This approach has often resulted in the use of conscientization as a strategy of persuasion or conviction; "the result of this practice is to disconnect consciousness from its theoretical roots and to radicalize the purpose of speaking of consciousness in the first place" (Carpenter & Mojab, 2017, p. 46). The notion of a raised consciousness is reserved for popular sectors that demonstrate their support for the student movement. Yet, this has made us see their support as an expression of solidarity rather than a political positioning as affected subjects who claim access to the university as a struggle that is also theirs. In the end, conscientization, often misunderstood as a strategy of persuasion, is acknowledged as the biggest achievement.

Participation in student movements has marked the political formation and education of students and activists in Puerto Rico. The strike experience has represented a rite that initiates participation in left-wing political processes (Tormos-Aponte, 2020) and other causes for social justice that have led to strengthening activists' political commitment. Fernando Picó elaborated the idea that the strike is a pedagogical space itself in his reflection on the 1981 UPR strike, when he argued that "a university without walls, without guards, without bureaucracy, without fixed schedules perhaps provided more enduring lessons than the one we have tried giving for years within the limits of an academic calendar" (Picó, 1982, p. 34). This statement led us to conceive the strikes as pedagogical platforms.

### **Framing the strikes from adult education, social movement learning and critical pedagogy**

In the field of adult education, the idea of a pedagogy of strike is provocative. On the one hand, it brings us closer to discussing its educational potential and the conditions necessary for this learning to follow. On the other hand, it invites us to question whether inherent learning can only occur through the processes of organization and resistance. Distancing ourselves from an instrumental notion of pedagogy, which would limit pedagogical activity to gain know-how, we turn to think about our doings. Thinking about educational work gives importance to reflecting on events to improve practices (know-how). It attaches importance to educational activities' problematization (thinking about our doings), accounting for our curiosity, and the questioning of social reality, ethics, and values. The educational and learning processes of the strikes of 2005, 2010 and 2017, led us to harvest a pedagogy from and for the student movement. This pedagogy could prepare the student movement for future processes, strengthen their mobilization capacity and sustainability. It is possible and necessary to plant the seed for a pedagogical and methodological framework. However, its relevance cannot be built from our academic reflection as former student activists alone but through constant and sustained communication with the present student movements.

Striking is a form of resistance that goes beyond its demands and reorganizes social relations (Tormos-Aponte, 2019). As such, "it becomes a commoning act when it produces new practices of sharing, knowledge generation, and the development of solidarities that capitalism must constrain in order

to reproduce itself” (Tormos-Aponte, 2019, p.16). Striking imparts lessons on the value and urgency of fighting for common spaces and resources; thus, “the university becomes a site for building alternative and emancipatory futures (Tormos-Aponte, 2019, p.17). The Puerto Rican student movement has generated hope and open possibilities for change through the struggle for common aims. Activists have sought to expand educational spaces beyond university confines, developing critical thinking. Studying the strikes as a practice of commoning is helpful to evaluate the teachings and lessons broadly offered by mobilization processes. However, a pedagogy of the strike can limit the development of a critical movement pedagogy that fosters the struggle beyond the strike's immediacy.

Adult education helps us frame everyday life learnings. Adult education consists of intentionally designed activities to learn with those whose social roles or self-perception define them as adults (Smith, 1999). University students are perceived as young adults going through crucial learning experiences. La Belle (1982) helps us approach the nature of each learning experience. Being exposed to a mobilization environment confers informal learning beyond the academic programs and credentials offered by the UPR. For the students, “the university is something more than the classroom, it transcends its walls” (Fontáñez, 2010, para. 3). The alma mater is conceived as a school of life. This phrase goes beyond teachings in the classroom to integrate the lessons, frustrations, feelings, and emotions experienced throughout university life, strikes included. Non-formal learning is experienced through educational activities coordinated by the student movement, such as workshops and impromptu teach-ins. The difference between informal and non-formal learning is the intention to learn around specific content and predisposed conditions.

We separate these educational instances and learning for analysis purposes, but they complement each other and happen simultaneously in practice. For example, the student movement reacted to oppressive circumstances stemming from formal education after non-formal educational experiences, facilitated by various student political organizations, raised awareness or recruited new activists. Similarly, non-formal learning has been enriched by informal life experiences in the university context that, being shared or reflected on, have generated a spark to articulate a movement or disassociate ourselves from it. The value

of informal learning is that it allows for the educational potential to transcend from individual and personal experiences to collective knowledge and commonality. There, the education of young people and adults plays a key role. It can respond to the needs and aspirations of those who believe that there is something to gain by building a counter-hegemonic education, but it can also reproduce the worst of the world's conditions a-critically and indiscriminately (Bierema, 2010). The more visibility and study of these informal learning experiences by student activists themselves, the more chances of incorporating and maximizing the struggle's educational potential through non-formal learning opportunities.

The student movement acts collectively to prosecute claims and achieve results in political, social, and economic matters. No one can deny that within the spaces of social mobilization, one learns something. However, someone would hardly accept that the purpose of their participation is solely to learn to organize and mobilize. Education is not seen as an end in itself, but as an inevitable or surprising part of the process. Taking learning for granted or as an unintentional occurrence shrouds the value of a systematic approach that could help students to organize and mobilize more successfully. Also, the fast-paced nature of activism barely allows for time to embrace each mobilization from a philosophical angle. It has made more sense to harvest the lessons after the strike experiences have been lived. We hope to revert this process by proposing a pedagogical framework as part of the student movement strategies to foster subjective conditions for any chosen tactic, strikes included. We do not want to surprise the student movement with an educational reading of our previous experiences. Our hope is to interact with the student movement of the present to help strengthen their struggles by prioritizing the attention given to social movement learning. For that to happen, we need to fight the stereotype of informal and non-formal learning as casual or less rigorous than formal education.

Opposition learning emerging from left-wing movements, workers, and women has been silenced alongside educational agendas for critical consciousness development and collective action (Welton, 2010). The popular construction of knowledge is more commonly associated with informal or non-formal learning, and its virtues or defects are harshly judged from the lens of formal education. While there are advances in the value and characteristics of education through struggle (Almeida, 2019; Choudry, 2015;

De Sousa Santos, 2020; Foley, 1999; Paulo Freire, 2002; Mündel & Shugurensky, 2008; Peery, 2002), undervaluation of informally achieved wisdom persists by those who only assign value to formal learning. On the activists' side, non-formal learning efforts are cooked in the heat of these tensions. When we don't know what we've learned before, the chances of improvising and repeating mistakes increase. Thus, harvesting these lessons is a matter of survival and movement sustainability. Knowing and trusting popular wisdom is key when drafting strategies and tactics. This lesson was clear in CDPECPR (2017), which states that the strike invited us to understand what we have learned and what we want to build. Ignoring these learnings may lead us to reinvent the wheel at every opportunity to mobilize.

A strike is a fighting tactic carrying the values and processes that are deployed in it. Picó (1982) observed that one of the most lasting results of the student movement was the political formation and alternative pedagogical experience of students immersed in practice. We can confirm that the most successful student strikes have taken place thanks to conditions built before, during, and after they ended. Some of the experiences in 2005, 2010, and 2017 provided the basis for a pedagogy of the student movement. Strikes have been the benchmarks that allow us to attest to the political learnings acquired before and during mass mobilization processes. Adult education offers frameworks to explore the nature of education and learning in social movements, enhance them, and aim for collective social justice to achieve social transformations (Bierema, 2010). The sociocultural approach in education seeks to interrogate systems of domination of power and privilege. Freire's well-known work emerged from a process of radical social change through empowerment and transformation as two inseparable processes (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Human liberation or emancipation has become the horizon for critical thinking and revolutionary praxis. Critical pedagogy focuses on relations of domination, and on how capitalist society, culture, ideology, and power are interconnected. It involves questioning how knowledge and meanings are produced, mediated, and legitimized. This pedagogy aims to challenge hegemonic meanings and practices and identify, celebrate, criticize, and build democratic cultures (Fooley, 2000). It exposes everyday life, offering questions and preserving dialogue as a mechanism for analyzing and discussing reality and how to change it. These dialogues call for the disruption of banking education to

foster critical participatory democracy from and for those engaged in movement activities. The task then is to feed a curiosity for learning, learn about our mobilizing practice, and foster the passion for generating the questions we need to ask ourselves at different junctures. Embracing the political dimension of conscientization is key, along with careful consideration of the aesthetic dimension provided by intuition, emotion, pleasure, amorosity, and joy, among other necessary wisdoms (P. Freire & Shor, 2014). The goals of critical pedagogy are connected to the goals and strategies of the student movement. Some of the student movement educational activities of 2010 and 2017 pursued systemic and relational transformations. To sharpen such goals, a problematization of how we conceived critical thinking is convenient.

### **Problematizing critical thinking and integrating embodied learning for a student movement pedagogy**

While critical theory has strengthened critical pedagogies, it has sometimes been accused of being impractical, elitist, non-action-oriented, complicated, inaccessible, and irrelevant (Bierema, 2010). This is a problem when creating a practical, theoretical framework for education in social justice movements. To the extent that the theory available to explain these processes is assumed to be inaccessible, knowledge can hardly be built to maximize movements' educational potential. On the other hand, various traditions of critical thinking support the basis for a pedagogy for the student movement. Problematizing these traditions enables new ways of understanding, thinking, and feeling the student movement experiences.

The first tradition of critical thinking is the critique of dominant or hegemonic ideology; it originates in the Frankfurt School and describes how people learn to recognize what accepted dominant ideologies are and how they are established in everyday life (Brookfield, 2000). From this perspective, critical reflection helps people develop an awareness of how capitalism, patriarchy, and racism are conditioning social relations (De Sousa Santos, 2020) and articulating belief systems that justify and maintain inequality (Cintrón, 2010). This tradition has been prevalent in left-wing student organizations attached to Marxist, Freirian, or Gramscian philosophies. According to militants of these organizations, forums, conversations,

conferences, and talks, especially with student leadership or participants of other strikes, allow us to read how the system operates, is unjust, and must be reversed. However, although these educational activities aimed to build resistance and radicalize the higher educational system, they tend to follow banking education strategies. For example, one of the action committee's activities in 2010 was to interrupt classes by dropping into classrooms to explain why students should fight and how to join. "Spreading the message" to convince other students to join is seen as a radical educational task. The message may be radical, but the delivery has not been so. As students, being radical consisted of deepening our political education about the class struggle while denouncing the country's colonial capitalist exploitation. We would urge non-activist students to resist and mobilize through mass media, leaflets, pamphlets, film forums, slogans, and revolutionary songs. A critical praxis involves an assessment of these tactics and educational materials. Student activists could re-evaluate their critical thinking by building efforts against the dominant ideology. The educational practices should be coherent with the movement aspirations for transformation, methodologically and didactically speaking..

The second tradition of critical thinking is the psychoanalytic or psychotherapeutic one; it emphasizes critical reflection of life-long inhibitions that left trauma (Brookfield, 2000). While this tradition appears to be linked to individualism, neo-Marxists like Erich Fromm have suggested that individual and social transformation cannot be separated. The psychoanalytic or psychotherapeutic tradition helps conceive spaces of reflection where individual transformation processes relate to the social transformations aspired by the movement. For example, in the 2017 strike, feminist comrades, pursuing a common North of social transformation in the university context, close ranks on gender-based violence in the movement. They would not allow this violence to condition their participation or enjoy impunity. In the same way, we harvested the Capitol security issue to have conversations about movement racism. Other tactics to promote individual and social transformation have included the use of forum theatre as a mirror of behaviors, reflection activities based on popular education, such as dialogical board games on the development of the movement, the organization of social eateries that became spaces of collective care, ensuring that each person had a task and way of feeling a part of, the nourishment of creativity as a way to



recreate but also to add more and more voices, realistic planning anchored in the capacity and availability of the movement, mediation processes, and spaces of personal and collective self-care. A student movement pedagogy should prioritize collective care and tactics to deal with disruptions of relationships, emotional conflicts, frustration, depression, differences, ego struggles, improvisation based on impulses and passions, individual behaviors affecting collective campaigns, stimulation, anxiety, and uncertainty, internal divisions, exhaustion, burn-out, constant fights over strategies and trust issues. These situations can be expected as obstacles or opportunities to strengthen the movement and allow the design thinking strategies to resolve personal and political conflicts that impact the spirit and decision-making of the movement. Untreated, they become informal learning instances that demotivate participation and the sense of belonging to the movement.

The third tradition of critical thinking is linked to philosophy and logic, where critical reflection becomes a process through which we have more skills of argumentation and analysis (Brookfield, 2000). It has become an indispensable mechanism for students to distinguish fallacies, opinions, facts, biases, evidence, judgment, and prejudice and articulate or attack forms of reasoning that contradict the social justice pursued. We can devise educational activities to develop more and better argumentation strategies. For example, student deliberation processes were hands-on experiences of coping with debate and discussion for long hours. Few people can say that they enjoyed the whole experience. Building horizontal power meant that all people, not just leadership, sharpened skills in this direction. A student movement pedagogy would help students to assess their argumentation processes, meditate over tactics, avoid muddy debates, identify false progress, prevent co-optation, consider better ways to respond to media attacks, mockery, political bribery, and the rise of conservative attacks from local business, lobbyists, academics, politicians, lawyers defending the system and reactionary movements within the student movement itself.

The final tradition is constructivist pragmatism that concentrates on building and deconstructing one's own experiences and meanings. In the past, activists such as Myles Horton aligned this perspective with ideology critique to help activists visit their own experiences as an invaluable resource in fighting for

social justice. We can identify talks with previous student activists invited to review their lived experiences. As students, we did not have the opportunity to distinguish all these dimensions of critical thinking, which led to incoherent praxis, power imposition, and the delegitimization of other forms of critical thinking, such as collective self-care. Also, it led us to put our personal life experiences and ways of knowing in a second place in the face of the radicalized knowledge we were trying to build. Other tactics to make room for a diversity of experiences could be to exchange life experiences as we relate in the struggle, systematizing experiences, sharing experiences with student movements from other countries, welcoming other social movements, inviting community organizers to develop popular power-building strategies, and intentional distribution of roles according to the strengths that each person brings to the movement. The promotion of dialogical educational experiences also strengthens interpersonal relationships. Opening the way to diversity increases participation and builds respectful subjectivities that seek to generate more and better participation processes from humbleness and genuine interest in transcending the hermetic homogeneity of a movement.

The connection to emotions is as important as critical thinking for us. A critical embodiment involves paying attention to what we can learn from feelings and emotions and the role of the body in social activism. Lawrence (2012) argues that the body plays a significant role in social activist work. Mobilization and choreographed resistance “offers an opportunity to confront their moral codes and principles behind their spontaneous bodily responses, thus providing another avenue for learning” (Lawrence, 2012, p. 11). Facilitating embodied activities opens the door to movement, dance, or popular theater to communicate and connect in ways that may be less threatening when compared to verbal expressions. Student activists can be less than enthusiastic about engaging in body movement and theater activities, deeming them a waste of time away from the knowledge that books, conferences, and rational processes may provide. Embodied learning approaches the emotional aspects of being an activist. For example, student marches are acts of encouragement. Putting the body on the line is uncomfortable, full of tension, and sometimes physically painful. Her invitation is to explore the discomfort from an emotional angle, to tap into emotions and vulnerability as a road towards empathy. Compassion is of the

essence when welcoming new student activists and their tensions. Embodied learning is key to read collective behavior, strengthen internal dynamics, and foster movement engagement. Opening the door to embodied learning reveals the need to explore how the ways we are learning are as important as what we are learning in the student movement.

## **Conclusion**

In this article, we walked through the student strikes of 2005, 2010, and 2017 at the University of Puerto Rico. The commoning act of striking invited a pedagogical reading of organizing to reappropriate spaces and institutions. We argued that a pedagogy for the movement needed to transcend the educational dimension of the strikes by considering non-formal and informal learning experiences. Critical thinking is seen as a recurrent ambition, gain, and objective of political resistance processes in the student movement educational activities. However, critical thinking is loosely defined and often confused with a misconception of conscientization as a strategy of persuasion. We categorized movement activities and learning processes under four specific traditions of critical thinking that could help the movement pay attention to different praxis fronts and rescue experiences to offer future student movements toolboxes. Finally, we emphasized the aesthetic dimension of education through embodied learning. Critical thinking and embodied learning provided us with a foundational basis to conceive a movement pedagogy. Perhaps in the future, when it comes to the lessons students might teach us, we will be able to say that students reinvented how they learn.

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