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## Emotional Labor: Re/membering Juan

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## Emotional Labor: Re/membering Juan

### Abstract

This paper finds its home in a graduate student's essay which led to the realization that teaching for social justice in a foundations course cannot ignore the emotional labor of teachers. Critical concepts such as ideology, hegemony and domination must be considered as cognitive frameworks and emotional management systems that delimit and prescribe proper "feelings" for teachers as well. Current educational discourses serve a similar emotional management function. Schools are thus considered battlegrounds for dominance and control of teachers' emotional lives. Recovering the emotional world of teachers thus serves as a counter-discourse to the current technical-rationalist educational discourse. We conclude with suggestions for eliciting and nurturing teacher narratives that speak to their emotional labor.

### Keywords

social justice, critical theory, discourse, narrative, re-membering

### Author Statement

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## **Emotional Labor: Re/membering Juan**

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This paper finds its home in a graduate student's essay which led to the realization that teaching for social justice in a foundations course cannot ignore the emotional labor of teachers. Critical concepts such as ideology, hegemony and domination must be considered as cognitive frameworks and emotional management systems that delimit and prescribe proper "feelings" for teachers as well. Current educational discourses serve a similar emotional management function. Schools are thus considered battlegrounds for dominance and control of teachers' emotional lives. Recovering the emotional world of teachers thus serves as a counter-discourse to the current technical-rationalist educational discourse. We conclude with suggestions for eliciting and nurturing teacher narratives that speak to their emotional labor.

Kathryn, a veteran teacher, stood in front of the class, hands shaking, in tears, as she presented her philosophy of education entwined with the tragic death of a former student—Juan (pseudonym) xxx years ago. Kathryn's philosophy was a re-collection of emotional, grief-filled fragments set aside in the exigencies of the moment; a salvage operation. It seemed the Foundations in Education class (EDUC 605) provided her with much needed time to re-experience the grievous wound of a student's life and tragic death. I speculate as I write that her thoughtful essay signaled her student's return to her pedagogic community, a re/membering (Hedtke & Winslade, 2004) when at this historical juncture "forgetting" children is commonplace as teachers focus on accountability issues, standardized tests and yearly improvement scores. Her paper/presentation pulled back the curtain for me: Classrooms are emotionally charged venues and social justice issues in education are not only problems to be solved (cognitively); they are matters of the heart.

Recently teachers have been under siege by an NCLB technical-rationalist risk discourse (Wright & Sullivan, 2005) that quietly smothers the lived experiences of teachers in favor of risk reduction and control, and barely if ever, recognizes emotions as central to teachers' professional identity (O'Connor, 2008). The highly qualified teacher positioned by the NCLB discourse is not one who speaks the language of care, compassion and empathy. Under the current educational regime, teachers are positioned as technicians who disseminate discrete pieces of knowledge. Students "bank" this information to prepare for standardized testing. A pervasive scientism imbues our thinking. Scientism is the belief "that reality is or can be rationally controlled by man and that such an ordering implies predictability through the empirical testing of phenomena by methods designed to secure objectivity and control." (Zeichner & Liston, 1991, quoted in Henderson, 2001, p.198) Nowadays, prediction, control and risk reduction are prescribed as remedies for a "failing" educational system. Schools, teachers and students are labeled successful or failing based on the outcomes; teaching becomes a means to a narrowly prescribed end. And so, schools and classroom

are emotional battlegrounds; teachers struggle with issues of care, empathy, compassion when they encounter macro level interests and processes that deny their experiences.

From a social justice perspective, the trick is to describe how micro and macro level social processes are entwined (North, 2006)—in this case how the emotional lives and practices of teachers are articulated by pervasive or hegemonic, structures, processes and discourses. Reddy's (1999) proposal for an anthropology of emotions borrows from the work of communication scholar Raymond Williams who coined the term "structures of feeling," to suggest how feelings are not only personal but arise out of

(1) a given state of the productive forces and relations of production, (2) the pursuit of hegemonic cultural configuration to justify and organize these forces and relations, and (3) the resistance against this configuration that draws its resources from the very hegemonic values themselves and the contradictions they give rise to....Like Williams, present-day researchers on emotions ought to aim at a theory that has a place for ambivalence and diversity, that shows the relation between feeling on the one hand and personal and institutional concentrations of authority, resources, and coercion on the other—a theory, finally, that is capable of asking the question whether and how feeling changes over time, in tandem with projects of hegemony or liberation. (p. 2)

Emotional variation is not merely a personal phenomenon; it "cannot be explained unless one concedes a large role to cultural or collective practical determination" (Reddy, 1999, p.2). From a social justice perspective "...emotions constitute a site where power is expressed and also, through its expression, maintained..." (p. 2). Emancipation is not simply a rational matter (as Enlightenment philosophers believed). We must, he believes, attend to a "history of feeling and a form of liberty that matches our capacity to feel, instead of aiming at the emancipation of a spurious rationality from 'backward' tyrannies and psychic forces. (p.2)

Hochschild's (1979, 1983) sociology of emotions speaks to the issues of the macro and micro level processes. She writes: "Significant links emerge among social structure, feeling rules, emotion management, and emotive experience... (Hochschild, 1979, p.551). She describes how emotions are not merely personal expressions but are governed by the "imperial scope" of social rules. These rules lead to the management of emotion or as she eloquently puts it: A managed heart. Like Reddy, she reframes the "traditional" critical theoretic social justice framework making the case, for instance, that ideology should not be "constructed as a flatly cognitive framework, lacking systematic implications for how we manage feelings, or, indeed, for how we feel." (Hochschild, 1979, p.566). Ideologies should also be considered as emotional management systems that limit and prescribe "access to the means of emotion production" (Hochschild, 1979, p. 567).

Institutions such as schools prescribe and shape the feeling rules that apply. Institutions through their managers (principals) establish "illusions that foster the desired feelings in workers

when they have placed parameters around a worker's emotion memories." (Hochschild, 1983, p. 49). Reminiscent of Orwell's 1984, managers control emotion memories in the past so as to control the future; they limit the horizons of possibility and potentially social imagination—"a workers use of as if" (Hochschild, 1983, p.49). From a social justice perspective, we should focus on what emotional rules are in play.

A good place to start might be the current debates about teacher "professionalism" (and dispositions) in teaching from a sociology of emotions perspective provides some clarity with regard to the present state of affairs. In any teaching situation, there is an inevitable, unresolved dialectical tension of attachment and detachment towards students experienced by teachers. This unresolved relational tension cannot be prescribed; it must be negotiated contextually, in the classroom. Yet, the rules of emotions are laid out in advance. Before the teacher sets foot inside the classroom, they have been introduced to a professional bias that underscores detachment from students; "teachers are socialized to regard students through this lens." (Otto, 2004, p.370) Out of practical necessity, some "relational mean" (Wright, 2004) between engagement and detachment from students is necessary. We are concerned that the current hegemonic, discourse of scientism supports and positions teachers as detached and clinical knowledge makers who are taught to keep their emotional distance: Otto (2004) cites Giroux (1992) in this regard:

In the practice of medicine, this move between the doctor and patient is necessary to distinguish authority. Professional distance sets a code of conduct for players. Such a code clearly signals who possessed the power in the relationship. It goes on to intimate who knows best for whom. Similarly, this is the case in pedagogical relationships, as pedagogy is always related to power.

Curricular guides, teaching methods, classroom management techniques, and forms of evaluation can be read as part of the emotional regime of the classroom, privileging as they do technique, certainty, regularity, uniformity, prediction and control. Implicitly, the highly qualified teachers keep their emotional distance if they are permitted to recognize teaching as emotion work at all, in order to convey the prescribed content in preparation for standardized tests. Some, like bell hooks (2003), are on to this game:

To speak of love in relation to teaching is to engage in a dialogue that is taboo. When we speak of love and teaching the connections that matter most are the relationship between teacher and subject taught, and the teacher-student relationship. When as professors we care deeply about our subject matter, when we profess to love what we teach and the process of teaching, that declaration of emotional connection tends to be viewed favorably by administrators and colleagues. When we talk

about loving our students, these same voices usually talk about exercising caution. They warn us of the dangers of getting “too close.” Emotional connections tend to be suspect in a world where the mind is valued above all else, where the idea that one should be and can be objective is paramount. Both during my student years and throughout my career as a teacher I have been criticized for having too much passion, for being ‘too’ emotional. (p. 127)

The “pathologically narcissistic” (hooks, p. 128) classroom teacher who values objectivity and distance is in a state of pedagogical dissociation that denies the subjectivities, emotional presence and wholeness of students—their differences—as they becomes empty vessels for the teachers’ (unacknowledged gendered and racial) knowledge, experience, their habitus. Teachers who connect emotionally with their students have an impact whereas “no one gives testimony about how much they learned from professors who were disassociated, unable to connect, and self-obsessed.” (hooks, p.129) This is part of the cultural hegemony and local ideology of schools: “Dominant culture promotes a calculated objectivism that is dehumanizing.” (hooks, p.131 ) For love to be love, she writes, a “combination of care, commitment, knowledge, respect, and trust” (hooks, p. 131) must be present in the classroom.

Kathryn’s personal/political story illustrates how the current climate of educational scientism denies, for good practical reasons, the relationships between teacher and student. The inability to relate to, care for, or empathize with others raises the important issue of social justice issue of recognition—especially the recognition and appreciation of difference (North, 2006). Privileging detachment over connection is a social justice affair: Teachers cannot recognize their students.

The term ‘recognition’ encapsulates a process of consideration and judgment, in which the identity or attributes of an object, person or relationship are first noticed, and then acknowledged and affirmed, as belonging to one category or another. As has been noted by all those reflecting on the topic, the activity of recognizing people or things is practically ubiquitous. In order to think, to converse, or to love we must first recognize the object of our thoughts or affections. (Connolly, Leach & Walsh, 2007)

It is difficult to imagine the recognition of another without first overcoming detachment one feels towards them. In other words, emotional bonding of some sort is necessary before the social justice issues of difference and identity can be addressed. (North, 2006). There are not only philosophical and political or even epistemological issues implied here. Recognition of others, establishing caring social relationships with students has implications for academic achievement. Deborah Stipek (2006) writes:

Could our preoccupation with test scores be producing classroom conditions that actually undermine student learning? When tests become high stakes, teachers naturally focus their attention on the knowledge and skills the tests measure—leaving less time to engage students in conversation about personal issues or make them feel valued and supported. ....Learning requires effort and one of the best predictors of students' effort and engagement in school is the relationship they have with their teachers. (p. 46)

Recasting traditional critical social justice concepts in emotional terms, we might consider how “workers” may be equally alienated from their physical and emotional labor because of the institutionally driven frameworks (feeling rules) imposed on them. We have to wonder which “emotion memories” (Hochschild, 1983) get buried beneath institutionally prescribed rules and how we might recover them. This recovery might be a dimension of ideological critique or an articulation of a counter-discourse that has implications for personal and social transformation. Kathryn's efforts to understand her philosophy of education in the savage inequalities of the American system of education provided the social/personal /professional space to remember the death of a student which is central to her critique of the standards movement.

We acknowledge there is a decidedly therapeutic overtone in our suggestion to consider emotional “counter memory” as social critique. We would advise caution as we develop what Leonardo, a social justice theorist of education, describes as sociotherapy (Leonardo, 2004) in our graduate classrooms. Nevertheless, his term helps us conceptualize once again, the desire to relate the personal and the political in social analysis which is a hallmark of social justice literature. Just how might we proceed? Following Hochschild's (1983) example, we might begin, as she did in her seminal work, with the questions: “Describe a real [teaching] situation that was important in which you experienced a deep emotion.” And, “Describe as fully and concretely as possible a real [teaching] situation that was important to you in which you either changed the situation to fit your feelings or changed your feelings to fit the situation.” (p.13)

These questions might generate emotional social stories to be shared discretely and even read anonymously in the graduate classroom with this caveat: Teachers' stories should be respected for what they say—before we speak of power, dominance, authority, ideology and hegemony and other social justice issues—and only if they arise naturally from the teachers' stories or narratives. Narratives are defined as “...retrospective meaning making—the shaping and ordering of past experience” It is a way “of understanding one's own and others' actions, of organizing events into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over

time....” The narrative “communicates the narrator’s point of view, including why the narrative is worth telling in the first place....[it] also expresses emotions (emphasis mine), thoughts and interpretations. (Chase, 2005, p. )

Narratives inquiry in the graduate classroom seems particularly suited for teaching from a social justice perspective because this form of inquiry bridges biography, history and society (Chase, 2005). As a critical interdisciplinary qualitative research strategy, narrative inquiry draws upon insights from sociology, anthropology, feminist theory, and sociolinguistics to examine the intimate and personal lives of the subjects; these lives are understood as performed and produced locally as well as socially.

Engaging teachers in narrative inquiry\* into their own emotional narratives and those of other students by asking them to reconstruct and share with others a particularly significant emotional event associated with teaching might serve a social change agenda for a number of reasons. Narrating significant events often facilitates positive change for the narrator: The “wounded storyteller” reclaims the capacity to tell her/his own story thereby “resisting narrative surrender” to other pervasive, hegemonic discourses (Chase, 2005, p.667). Describing problems of repression, or poverty or marginality (“emergency narratives”) may “promote empathy across different social locations.” (Chase, 2005, p.668) Evocations of empathy for “outsiders” by readers may be particularly transformative if they have been subjected to the feeling rules of powerful interests that deny the difference and identity of others. (This is the issue of recognition mentioned earlier.) The personalization of complex moral and practical issues may disrupt oppressive metanarratives and abstract discourses that objectify individuals and groups. Reading the stories of other teachers, they may gain insights into their own narratives—they might learn how to tell their own stories differently. In these smaller localized stories, dialogue may produce a third space or critical “public sphere.” (Chase, 2005, p.)

Winslade and Monk (1999) outline some of the assumptions of narrative therapy for school children that may apply equally well to our consideration of teacher narratives. They make the case that all human beings live their lives according to stories that are both personally and socially constructed. These stories may be twisted or distorted by socially and culturally produced discourses regarding what is normal or natural in the world. (In this regard, discourses and ideologies are somewhat similar, through discourse analysis does not make the same truth claims.) Discourses, embedded in the stories we tell, are constituted by alignments of power and knowledge—the knowledge that produces knowledge about subjects such as teachers and students—also becomes a opportunity to keep them under greater surveillance and control. Similarly, power enables knowledge production. Narrative therapy enables counselors and students to uncover contradictory or alternative discourses; it generates resistances to the power/knowledge complex and the limits of



these discourses circulated. New stories and story lines are shaped as experiences are articulated jointly in the counseling session. (pp. 22-27)

Kathryn's story of the death of a student, of her philosophy of education and of the current climate is an illustration of a narrative that critically bridges the personal and political within a framework initiated by an educational foundations class. Her paper may be read as an emotional counter-memory to incursions of the state by legislative fiat, into her classroom. Her narrative is simultaneously one of location and dislocation (dis/location) that speaks to her alienation from the classroom and her centering of self as she remembered the death of her student; here she appears anchored again, in the emotional dimension of her work. Kathryn expresses her emotional alienation from the classroom: "Because of the pacing schedule dictated by the central office, I no longer had time to teach for mastery. Worse, I no longer felt connected to my students or colleagues." Elsewhere she writes how the "physical and emotional costs of teaching were becoming too great." Stories like hers seem to ground social justice issues in the personal, political and emotional worlds of teachers. It seems like a good place to begin a foundations class.

### Kathryn's Voice

The poet Dylan Thomas (1951) wrote, "Do not go gentle into that good night/Old age should burn and rage at close of day/ Rage, rage against the dying of the light." Light dies by degrees. As the sun disappears a rosy glow lingers, softening the harsh contrasts, obscuring the angular buildings. Yet even as we marvel over the sunset, darkness comes. My own journey into the heart of darkness began with a death. Four days into the new school year, word came from the local high school that a student died in P.E., drowned in a swimming class with 60 other students, 40 of whom were in the pool. No one noticed as he struggled and slipped beneath the water for the final time. Nobody was aware that he was gone, until someone jumped in and found a body at the bottom. The name was withheld, pending investigation and notification, etc. I thought, "What a shame. How could that happen? Where were the teachers? Why were there so many students in one class? I'm outraged." Then I turned the page and went on with my life.

Only life wouldn't accept my indifference. The next day's paper brought the name, Juan \_\_\_\_\_. I felt a twinge. Hadn't I once taught a Juan? Wasn't there a family with that last name whose children had gone to our school? It wasn't until Juan's photograph was printed that I felt the stab at my heart. Not that Juan! Not my Juan! Not the Juan with laughing eyes and a ready smile. Not the Juan with the ancient and wise soul contained in a small body.

A lot had changed since Juan sat in my classroom. That was before No Child Left Behind entered the equation. At the university, I had been taught how to create a learner-centered, constructivist classroom. Language arts, science, math, and social studies standards were integrated throughout the curriculum. I was able to draw upon the students' natural curiosity about the world they live in to involve and motivate them.

However, NCLB changed that, especially in the year that our school made our API goal overall, but missed the "Minority" API" goal by one point and entered program improvement.

Suddenly the district became "big brother;" everything was prescribed from the posters on the walls to the books on the shelves. The school had adopted a new science and social studies curricula. Those books sat untouched when word came down from the district that teachers were to focus exclusively on language arts and math, and were not to teach science and social studies. We were also commanded not to read aloud any stories except those from the state-approved curriculum. And students were not to read any books in the classroom except those from the authorized list. I wondered: "Since when did *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *Sideways Stories from Wayside School* become banned books? How subversive was it to let my students choose a book to read after they finished their seatwork?" In this new world that Kafka foresaw, colleagues were reprimanded when they attempted to integrate science and social studies into language arts and math. Several very effective teachers retired early rather than face another year. Younger teachers left the profession.

My class last year had an unusually high number of students with major social, academic, and emotional problems, yet the system allowed only a "one size fits all approach." As page after page of worksheets passed before their eyes, the students became bored, then sullen, then openly resistant. I tried very conscientiously to carry out the mandates of program improvement, yet I felt de-skilled, because my education and years of experience were not valued. I no longer had to make significant decisions in my classroom about curriculum or methodology. Because of the pacing schedule dictated by the central office, I no longer had time to teach for mastery. Worse, I no longer felt connected to my students or colleagues.

My emotions turned into depression the following year when the test scores came back. Despite our efforts, we slipped six points. I began to feel, “What’s the use? I’m in a no-win situation. Nobody values what I do, including the kids and the families.” The physical and emotional costs of teaching were becoming too great. The news of Juan’s death magnified my despair. Juan came from a time when my classroom was a happy place, where school was safe for students and the teachers. Now I felt that both physical and emotional safety were illusions.

I was nervous as I prepared to go to the funeral. Would the family even remember me? I had a little speech all prepared, “I’m Kathryn Schofield, Juan’s third grade teacher from NM School.” The service was beautiful. People spoke of the things I remembered: Juan’s happy smile, his social nature, the way he was tuned in to the needs of other people, and his unusually mature ability to converse with adults.

As the mourners filed past the parents, I rehearsed my little introduction again in my mind. But when Juan’s mom saw me, she jumped to her feet, threw her arms around me, burst into tears and said, “Oh Mrs. Schofield, Juan loved you so much!” With those kind words she wrought my redemption.

What is my philosophy of education? Juan’s mother helped me find it. My philosophy is simple; my philosophy is love. I love the young children who come in innocence with a pure desire to learn; a desire so strong that it takes four or five years for us to deaden it with our drills and worksheets. I love knowledge burning like a flame, like the Olympic torch to be passed from one generation to another. I love being a torchbearer in a chain that reaches back to Dewey, to Jefferson, to Rousseau, to Christ, to Socrates and even to Moses.

Can I define this philosophy within the confines of contemporary educational thought? I can. Knowledge starts with skills and spreads out like ripples from a pebble thrown in a pond. So in the sense of building basic skills and passing the torch of civilization, I am an essentialist. Above all, students need to have a foundation from which to construct their house of knowledge.

How does the essentialist philosophy translate into practice within my classroom? It’s where I make a weary kind of peace with No Child Left Behind. While abhorring some of the draconian measures taken to implement the program, I do see the validity at the third grade level of focusing

on the essentials: reading, writing, and arithmetic. I use state standards to plan my lessons, to determine where to spend my valuable classroom time, and how and what to assess.

I am an essentialist, but I am also an existentialist, with this caveat: I reject that element of existentialism that holds life is a meaningless void. I take a “leap of faith” along with Kierkegaard. I believe that the ultimate goal of education is to give students the tools to construct meaning in their own lives, to find a purpose that goes beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic. In that sense I find a kindred spirit in Maxine Greene.

In “From Jagged Landscapes to Possibility,” Greene (2006) spoke of the dispossessed, the victims, and the losers in the struggle to survive. She claimed:

Without knowing it, we have become ‘Social Darwinists,’ and that frees us to pay little, if any attention to those lost in the freezing mountains, to the women of Darfur, to the victims of the Rwanda massacres, to those thrust into a mass in a New Orleans astrodome. (p. 5)

Like my Juan , who was literally ignored while he died, our classrooms contain many of the dispossessed, those who find no home in our curriculum, our classrooms, or our hearts. Yet Greene (2006) pleaded:

And yet, it seems to me, the crucial demand of our time is to attend, to pay heed. Only as we do attend to those pressed into invisibility by disaster can we save ourselves from the corruption of indifference. Only as we notice—intentionally notice—the person...can we avoid becoming objects ourselves...The problem today (one of the manifold problems) is to enable the young to develop a sense of agency through learning to learn, to imagine, to empathize. Only through that feeling of agency, even in the face of the uncontrollable, can young people collaborate to develop some mode of making a difference, even without a promise of completion or success. (p. 5)

How does such a cosmic view come into my classroom? I’m just beginning to understand. It begins by truly seeing each student, by trying to learn about the context of each life. I’m not really good at that, but I find that as I remember Juan it gives me patience and courage to make the attempt. I take the cosmic view when I teach the students to care and respect for each other. I help them learn to make a difference when I model empathy, patience, respectful behavior, and how to deal with

frustration. I expand their horizons when I encourage imagination. As I make even small, imperfect attempts to improve, I model what it means to be human.

As a mature adult, I am responsible to the next generation. I have to help them find themselves in a safe place. I began to do that when I cease to merely acquiesce to edicts from the hegemony above, and instead actively modify and adapt them to the context of my classroom

So I come back to where I began, with Dylan Thomas (1951), “Do not go gentle into that good night. Old age should ...rage against the dying of the light.” As educators, we should rage as the light goes out for the education system, for our society, for our students. We owe that to Juan .

Maladies of the Soul: Kathryn's Response (to an Earlier Draft of this Paper)

Dr. Wright,

Great title and quote to begin the article.... You are exploring some powerful issues here. Indeed “classrooms are emotionally charged venues.” To me, the essence of teaching, especially for elementary students, lies in the emotional relationship between teacher and students. I have found that most young children naturally seek that connection, and develop bonds of attachment just from being in the classroom. (If they don't attach, they are in psychological trouble.) The most disturbing aspect of education's current direction is the total disregard of that relationship.

The teachers I know have suffered a kind of psychological rape, in the sense that they are asked to negate their inner core of beliefs about what being a teacher means. While attempting to become

wise, compassionate, informed practitioners of educational pedagogy, they are being disenfranchised and made powerless. The emotional toll is unbelievable. I know several effective teachers who chose to retire early and on less income than they had planned in order to alleviate the emotional havoc they experienced.

There is a bitter irony in the disconnect between the university and the classroom as shaped by NCLB. You professors have done a pretty good job in the methods classes. Most teachers know the importance of a learner-centered, constructivist classroom, and how to shape that practice. Yet, at least in my own “performance improvement” school, teachers who attempt to implement that practice have been reprimanded. Any deviation from the language arts/math core is not tolerated. “Susan” (another teacher, and student in the Foundations class), was criticized by the administrator for teaching science.

The most heartbreaking effect of all this is the impact on the children. I naively thought that the purpose of education was to develop the “whole person,” Jameson’s schizo-fragmentation frightened me. I can see this developing. My own students, when asked to write, find it hard to produce personal narratives, relying instead on patterns from T.V. They don’t have meaningful personal experiences, or at least, know how to make meaning out of their experiences. Teachers used to provide time for discussion, for contemplation. Not any more. Too much to “cover.” Without meaningful content, the students are bored, frustrated, and much more difficult to manage. (Or maybe it’s just that I’m bored, frustrated, and much more difficult to manage.)

Anyway, you already know all of this.

You were right about the act of remembering Juan. I was in tears as I wrote it, but it was therapeutic.

Postscript by Randall Wright

Teaching for social justice commits us to the emotional lives of teachers. We must simply acknowledge or recognize these dimensions of experience. But we must also consider mourning,

loss and melancholia as indicators of social processes gone astray. The emotional labors of teachers are local and experiential indicators of macro level processes that threaten to overpower ways of teaching and being and feeling in the classroom: they point out contradictions of system and life-world. Ironically and sadly, the teacher's despair and loss are generative emotional fields which help us understand and resist system driven, instrumental implosions into schools and the emotional lives of teachers. As so one "might well wonder if mourning and grieving for the past is in fact, politically progressive." (Elliott, 2003, p.120)

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