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## Occupy Education: Living and Learning Sustainably

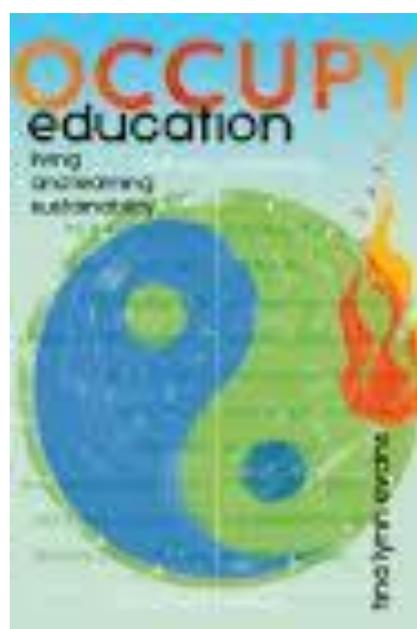
by

Tina Lynn Evans

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Tina Lynn Evans has been an educator for socio-ecological sustainability for many years and currently holds the position of professor in higher education. In addition she was founding member for the *Journal of Sustainability Education*, and thus brings rich experiences and understandings to her writing.

Her book, *Occupy Education*, will speak particularly to those who teach at the senior high-school level and in post-secondary education as it offers complex, and oft times dense, passages for consideration. In addition, curriculum theorists in environmental and science education are likely to find her

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proposal for a Critical Pedagogy of Sustainability conceptual framework intriguing.

In the opening pages, Evans asks, *What does one need to know and do to create a better society?* She situates her question amid the increasingly desperate crises of socio-ecological degradation occurring around the globe. While the question is not new, it is urgent, and is being urgently addressed by many educators and scholars seeking ways to interrupt a seemingly blind march towards environmental and social self-destruction. Evans' contribution to educating for sustainability is detailed in her three part book.

Part One, *Looking Back and Looking Around at an Unsustainable World: How did we get here and why?*, is an in depth analysis of the politics, economics and social critical theories that underlie Evans' assertions that growth-oriented industrial economies are incompatible with socio-environmental sustainability. Evans carefully reasons her position that, as resources are finally and fully exhausted, the current combination of globalization and economic growth are leading us to the brink of environmental and social collapse. She calls this the *socio-ecological crisis of 'late capitalism'*, and points to a hegemony that is so powerful that even the oppressed think that they have agreed to participate. This becomes an important point later in the book where she introduces students unfamiliar with, or disturbed by, a critique of their comfortable world view.

One of her central foci is the *enforced dependency* that has been pushed by the West's globalization agenda, and that reaps profits mainly for those already wealthy and powerful. However, Evans believes that people can transform the world, but only if first they undergo a transformation of consciousness; they must recognize that they have been manipulated into serving industrial and capitalist interest - the very interests that are driving socio-ecological ruination. Evans draws on concepts from eco-psychology, deep ecology, critical theory, and indigenous world views and systems theory to begin the work of developing a framework for counter-hegemonic transformation.

In Part Two, *The Road Ahead: Setting Guideposts for Living and Learning Sustainably*, Evans draws on the work of Indigenous life-ways and Western sustainability theorists in her discussions of (re)inhabitation of place and (re)localization of benefits to meet the needs of small, local communities. She examines *servant leadership* as a way to build capacity rather than accrue power - again a concept that is revisited when she discusses her role as teacher in a later chapter.

Evans focuses considerable scrutiny on global dependence on food systems, identifying the many problems associated with large-scale food production, such as: pollution, non-local inputs like pesticides, price instability and the fostering of competition amongst farmers, rather than cooperation. In contrast, agricultural practices in Cuba and Thailand are presented as antitheses to globalized food production.

Finally, in Part Three, *The Critical Role of Sustainability Education*, Evans speaks directly to the topic that is the namesake of her book: education. In contrast to industrialized education which creates dependence rather than self-sufficiency and which perpetuates destructive world views and practices, sustainability-oriented education is discursive, reflexive and critical of the world capitalist system; it is transformative, place-based and holistic. Evans counters industrialized, globalized education with a conceptual framework that she calls the *Critical Pedagogy of Sustainability*. In fact, the first two parts of the book have been paving the way for this framework which provides an infrastructure for transformative, counter-hegemonic education. The keystones of the framework are: understanding Enforced Dependency; learning to act in ways that are Decolonizing and (Re)inhabiting; understanding the Contradictory Notions of Sustainability as Education; and, practicing servant leadership as part of Sustainability Education in the Classroom.

In the closing chapters of the book Evans makes it very clear that her focus is on higher education and she limits her conversation of specific classroom practices to her experiences with her End of Oil Course. She

details her facilitation of her students' understanding of the enforced dependency of the oppressed, and her challenge to students to participate in action projects that counter those dependencies. Evans describes coursework based on discussions, essays and projects rather than tests, and a teaching style that honors and empowers the learning process of her students. In the closing chapters she also creates a space in which her students speak about their experiences, all of which describe the eye-opening nature of their learning. Evans offers some reflections of how well the course works; she realizes that as a single experience, the 'End Of Oil' course may not be enough for students to make sweeping transformative changes in their lives. Yet she is hopeful that it serves as a beginning.

Parts One and Two of the book are tightly argued, and are most suitable for scholarly consideration; they furnish persuasive and compelling arguments that support her counterhegemonic position. In Part Three, the educator in me would have liked to have seen more of the specifics of course content (perhaps in appendices) that would help me bridge the gap between theory and practice, as promised by the book descriptor. But for those pieces we are redirected to Evans' website and her other publications. I also would have liked her to speak in more explicit terms, rather than generally, about how the basic concepts in her course could be infused or embedded in other college/university courses, but she leaves this entirely to the reader.

Nonetheless, Evans' theorizing to develop the conceptual framework which she calls Critical Pedagogy of Sustainability is an important step in the continuing evolution of environmental education. The basic tenets of her framework contribute valuable perspectives for designing and implementing curricula at many levels. And more importantly, she speaks without hesitation in an informed and impassioned voice in support of education that interrupts, challenges and transforms our social and ecological consciousness.