

## **Angela Davis: Theorist of Transformative Struggle**

Making theory accessible so that it can transform society has also long been a major concern of Angela Davis. In a consistent and explicit manner Davis has always drawn openly on her grounding in Marxism, and her acquaintance – personally as well as theoretically – with figures in the critical theory tradition. In many ways she has remained one of the most prominent socialist-feminists, continually interpreting women's issues (housework, rape, abortion rights) in the light of capitalism's systematic suppression of women of color and poor women in general. It is clear to Davis that "there are forces in society that reap enormous benefits from the persistent, deepening oppression of women" (Davis, 1990, p. 13) but it is also clear that it is not men as an undifferentiated group that are responsible. Rather, it is particular men (and particular women) who constitute the subalterns of the ruling class. Davis writes that "within the existing class relations of capitalism, women in their vast majority are kept in a state of financial servitude and social inferiority not by men in general, but rather by the ruling class. Their oppression serves to maximize the efficacy of domination" (Davis, 1998a, p. 185). Hence, any feminist analysis she conducts starts from an understanding that "the structures of female oppression are inextricably tethered to capitalism" (ibid.).

Her early interest in Marx led Davis to become a student of Marcuse, as she saw how "he maintained a sense of the connectedness between emerging social movements and his larger philosophical project" (Davis, 1998b, p. 22). At his suggestion, Davis spent some time in Frankfurt, Germany where she attended lectures by Adorno and Habermas, amongst others. On her return to the United States she joined the Communist Party and became involved with the Black Panther movement. Whilst teaching philosophy at UCLA (and fighting to keep her job) she became increasingly involved with activism focused on prisoners' rights. As her public profile as a Black communist grew she began to receive death threats to the extent that campus security guards would check her car for bombs as she left work each day. To provide off-campus security for herself she legally purchased and registered two handguns, and accepted protection from a variety of bodyguards. One of these was Jonathan Jackson, the younger brother of George Jackson, one of the famous Soledad Brothers (Jackson, 1970).

In August 1970 Jonathan attempted to gain publicity for the Soledad Brothers by traveling to Marin County, north of San Francisco, entering a

courtroom and, along with the prisoners on trial, taking the judge, Harold Haley, the DA, and several jury members hostage. One of the guns he used was registered in Angela Davis' name. In the courtroom car park Jackson, the judge, and two prisoners were shot and killed while the DA, several jurors and a third prisoner were wounded. Davis (who was in Los Angeles at the time) was named as an accomplice and went underground for two months before being arrested in New York as one of the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" criminals. Whilst in prison Davis worked as co-counsel on her defense and produced her own prison writings (Davis 1971a). In February 1972 she was released on bail (after the California supreme court abolished the death penalty) and in June 1972 she was acquitted by a jury of all charges against her.

Her public notoriety – celebrated by the left, demonized by the right – has meant that, in Joy James' words "her writings are surpassed in the popular mind by her iconographic status" (1998, p. 19). Yet, after her acquittal she returned to activism, teaching and research, and for the last 30 years has published analyses that consistently link issues such as rape, female incarceration and women's blues to a larger context of social and political oppression. In James' words, Davis "radicalizes feminism through a class and antiracist analysis and offers new constructions" (ibid. p. 15) by exploring "intersectional analyses of Marxism, antiracism, and feminism" (ibid.). Davis herself argues that her use of the term 'feminist' is constantly evolving and that she rejects any single definition. For her "the most effective versions of feminism acknowledge the various ways gender, class, race, and sexual orientation inform each other" (Davis, 1998a, p. 304). Feminism is always linked in her mind with "substantive, radical institutional transformation" and specific political action such as "agendas for jobs, student funding, health care, childcare, housing, reproductive rights" (ibid.). She has never abandoned the perspective, grounded in critical theory, that personal relationships (including those that are abusive), feelings (of alienation, racial hatred or misogyny), cultural forms (blues songs, rap, TV sit-coms) and specific social structures (such as education or the prison system) must always be understood as part of a wider system of capitalist exploitation. Like hooks, Davis returns us again and again to Horkheimer's single existential judgment of the importance of abolishing the exchange dynamic of capitalism, but she does so with a contemporary focus on how that dynamic underscores racism and sexism.

Her autobiography, written immediately after her acquittal in the early 1970's, is full of descriptions of moments when critical theory illuminated the connections between capitalism and racism. Perhaps the most dramatic of these intellectual events was her reading of *The Communist Manifesto* which hit her "like a bolt of lightning" (Davis, 1974, p. 109). The vivid intellectual awakening this occasioned is worth quoting in her own words:-

"I began to see the problems of Black people within the context of a large working class movement. Like an expert surgeon, this document cut away cataracts from my eyes .... It all fell into place. What had seemed a personal hatred of me, an inexplicable refusal of Southern whites to confront their own emotions, and a stubborn willingness of Blacks to acquiesce, became the inevitable consequence of a ruthless system which kept itself alive and well by encouraging spite, competition and the oppression of one group by another. Profit was the word: the cold and constant motive for the behavior, the contempt, and the despair I had seen" (ibid. p. 110).

Nearly quarter of a century later she continued to acknowledge how the manifesto gave her some her basic conceptual tools for an analysis of "what we now call intersectionality, or the relationship between race and class" and for a way "to think about social change in a way that moved beyond an exclusive focus on race" (Davis, 1998b, p. 19). As well as using Marxist concepts of alienation (Davis 1971b) and ideology throughout her work Davis also exemplifies the Marxist notion of using philosophy to change the world. Like hooks, Gramsci, and others in the critical tradition Davis regards philosophizing as an activity open to all people, a normal part of daily reality. She speaks of her own philosophical practice as "a quotidian way of living in the world" (1998b, p. 17) and in an interview with George Yancy declares "the theme of my work, of my life, has been the attempt to use whatever knowledge, skills, and wisdom I may have acquired to advance emancipatory theory and practice" (ibid. p. 29). Such work is "part of a tradition of struggle ... connected with a collective effort to bring about radical social change" (ibid.).

For the past 3 decades Davis has been concerned to mount a critique of capitalism and to combat the ideologically convenient belief that the fall of the Berlin wall and collapse of Eastern Europe marks the triumph of capitalism. In her view capitalism has been frighteningly successful in spreading its own ideological justification, to the point where it is now seen as the 'natural' way of ordering economic affairs to billions of people across

the globe. Its crises and contradictions are veiled by people's readiness to view unemployment, homelessness, declining public services and an assault on welfare as events as much outside their control as are flash floods or hurricanes. Corporations relocate to countries where labor is cheap and non-unionized, and where pollution controls are non-existent. The communities left behind are left jobless, prey to the drug trade, and lacking the tax base to fund decent education or welfare systems. Their only growth industry is crime and, "in a horrifying and self-reproducing cycle" (Davis, 1998a, p. 67) the only jobs created to replace those that have left are in the prison sector.

Davis laments that "the vast expansion of the power of capitalist corporations over the lives of people of color and poor people in general has been accompanied by a waning anticapitalist consciousness" (1998a, p. 67). In a 1998 interview she stated her belief that "the expansive globalization of capital has led to a predicament in which the everyday lives of people are even more directly and intimately affected by capital than, say, twenty years ago" (1998b, p. 28). This is why, in her view, "the project of developing explicitly anticapitalist theories and practices is of greater importance now than ever before" (ibid.). Davis, own engagement in this project has focused on illuminating the ways racism and women's oppression are accepted as part of dominant ideology as creations of capitalism necessary to its own successful functioning.

In an anthology of prison writings produced while she was incarcerated Davis wrote of the "millions of Americans whose senses have been dulled and whose critical powers have been eroded by the continual onslaught of racist ideology" (1971a, p. 25). Sometimes this ideology is overt, but at other times "open, explicit racism has in many ways begun to be replaced by a secluded, camouflaged kind of racism" (1998a, p. 65). In particular, racism has been subtly strengthened by an "ideologically produced fear of crime" (ibid.) which has led to "the naturalization of black people as criminals" (ibid. p. 67). If Black people are successfully demonized as innately criminal, then the disproportionate numbers of them who are imprisoned ceases to be remarkable. As these numbers grow more and more, prisons become a source for capital investment, a true growth industry, so that "the ideological construction of crime is thus completed by the material construction of jails and prisons" (ibid. p. 69).

Davis' writings on women's issues also consistently place these within a broader critique of capitalism. In a collection of essays on *Women, Culture*

*and Politics* (1990) she traces “the parallels between sexual violence against individual women and neocolonial violence against people and nations” (pp. 36-37). In the same volume she argues that the fact that Black women’s health was so harmed in the 1980’s by reductions in Medicaid coverage, lack of pre-natal care, and the closure of abortion clinics due to loss of funding, is part and parcel of an ideology that believes that those in power always know best. She identifies a number of “political forces responsible for the violation of Black women’s health rights” (ibid. p. 62) such as the “increasing militarization of our economy” and the “general assault on democracy” (ibid.). In her words “it is no coincidence that a government that would sabotage the rights of every citizen of this country by permitting the development of a secret junta controlled by the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council also seriously infringed upon the health rights of Black women and all poor people” (ibid. p. 63). Her essay “Peace is a Sisters’ Issue Too” also argues that Black women’s liberation cannot just be understood as a battle against racist attitudes. Instead, it must be considered as part of a larger project of economic and social transformation. Given that “nuclear bombs do not know how to engage in racial discrimination” (ibid. p. 68) Davis argues that peace is not “a white folks issue” nor “an abstract state of affairs” but rather “inextricably connected with our ability to achieve racial, sexual and economic justice” (ibid. p. 69).

For adult educators some of the most provocative elements of Davis’ writings are her analyses of the liberatory power of education and in particular the need to build multiracial coalitions and alliances in the struggle to unmask and confront dominant ideology. She traces her own formation as an educator back to the behavior of her parents. By her own account her disposition toward a critical, philosophical stance was “a consequence of my parents’ encouragement to think critically about our social environment” (1998b, p. 17). Her parents taught her “not to assume that the appearances in our lives constituted ultimate realities” and “to look beyond appearances and to think about ways in which we would, with our own agency, intervene and transform the world” (ibid.). Central to this effort to penetrate the obfuscations of dominant ideology was a critically-inclined education. Davis declares that “I learned very early to value education and its liberatory potential . . . . Education and liberation were always bound together” (1998, p. 316).

Since Davis believed, that “liberation was not possible without education” (ibid.) it was only natural that she should become a powerful scholar-activist. One of her earliest involvements was in the Liberation School organized by the Los Angeles branch of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. In her 1974 autobiography she describes this as “a place where political understanding was forged and sharpened, where consciousness became explicit and was urged in a revolutionary direction” (1974, p. 183). The belief that education is inherently political has informed all her later work. It should give people the tools to critique capitalism, penetrate ideology, and help them realize that their individual situations can only be improved if they build alliances across race and gender identities. Transformative education can never be an individual process in David’s view, and neither can it be successful if it is restricted to a particular group. Over and over again she emphasizes the need to ally with others in the struggle for social transformation.

At the heart of Davis’ credo of transformative struggle is the phrase ‘lift as we climb’, the motto of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (founded in 1896). To ‘lift as we climb’ is to ensure that “we must climb in such a way as to guarantee that all of our sisters, regardless of social class, and indeed all of our brothers, climb with us” (Davis, 1990, p. 5). This effort to build a social movement across lines of race and gender, rather than one based on a single racial or gender identity, must, for Davis “be the essential dynamic of our quest for power – a principle that must not only determine our struggles as Afro-American women, but also govern all authentic struggles of dispossessed people” (ibid.). One of the most important dimensions of this struggle is the building of “a revolutionary, multi-racial women’s movement that seriously addresses the main issues affecting poor and working class women” (ibid. p. 7). Such a movement would involve Latina, Asian and also White women. Davis clearly sets out her belief that membership of a movement for struggle on behalf of one group is open to people of all groups, not just those immediately affected by an act of dispossession. Much as do West and hooks, Davis rejects the Africentric emphasis solely on African cultural values as those that should inform the struggle of Black people. She writes “we do not draw the color line. The only line we draw is one based on our political principles” (ibid.).

An insistence on building coalitions across race and gender springs partly from Davis’ suspicion of an uncritical espousal of the politics of race identity. In a provocative passage she warns of the dangers of ‘ethnic

solipsism', of focusing solely on one's racial and ethnic formation and the struggle to satisfy needs of members of one's cultural group: "ethnic solipsism is something we have always attributed to whiteness, Eurocentrism. Do we want to accept the notion that discourses about race are essentially about black/white relations? As if to suggest that if you are not either black or white, then you are dispensable?" (Davis, 1998a, p. 227). For Davis political commitments and beliefs are what unite people in collective struggle, not racial identity. She asks "how would you define 'one's own group'? For African-Americans, would that include every person who meets the requirements of physical appearance or every person who identifies as African-American, regardless of their phenotype? Would it include Republican African-Americans who are opposed to affirmative action?" (ibid. p. 229). She points out that "an African-American woman might find it easier to work together with a Chicana than with another black woman whose politics of race, class, gender, and sexuality would place her in an entirely different community" (ibid.). Hence, "what counts as black is not so important as our political commitment to engage in anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic work" (ibid. p. 229).

As a Marxist it is to be expected that Davis views identity as politically constructed, part of the ideological superstructure of capitalism. What is perhaps more surprising, is her criticism of those seeking a unique and distinctive theory of philosophy of African American woman-ness. As a prominent African American woman intellectual Davis is sometimes categorized as a Black feminist, yet this is a label she strenuously resists. In fact her own understanding of feminism is fluid: "my own conception of myself as a feminist constantly evolves as I learn more about the issues that women's movements need to address" (Davis, 1998a, p. 304). Feminism is a discourse with a range of positions, theories, categories and commitments and in her view "the most effective versions of feminism acknowledge the various ways gender, class, race, and sexual orientation inform each other. In her interview with George Yancy she argues that "there is no such thing as Black feminist theory" (Davis, 1998b, p. 25) if this is seen as a unitary body of work. There are Black feminist theories, representing a range of positions, but no one single shared perspective. Davis urges people "not to assume that racialized identities have always been there" and "not to adhere to rigid categories, to the idea that there is something called African-American woman-ness, some essence we can discover" (1998a, p. 300).

Equally, Davis is skeptical concerning claims of a shared women's unity. In common with hooks she realizes that one's gender position must always be understood in the light of one's race or class positions. Observing that in her view "there has been a rather naïve approach to women's unity, just as there has been a rather naïve approach to Black unity" (Davis 1998b, p. 25) she concludes that unity cannot be grounded solely in racial membership or gender. Skeptical on a focus of unity for unity's sake, she argues that "unity needs to be produced politically, around issues and political projects" (ibid.). There may be a generalized unity around the need to overthrow capitalism but this can only be realized in struggles around particular issues – health, rape, abortion rights, prison reform and so on. In this her position is close to Foucault's analysis of the need for intellectuals to locate themselves in specific sites around specific struggles, and also to the activist emphasis of Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual. However, activist intellectuals must be wary of reproducing the racial politics of the outside world in their own social movements. Thus, in the struggle for social justice "it will be imperative for whites to accept the leadership of Black people" (Davis, 1974, p. 182), in fact "for black people to provide the leadership for the total struggle" (ibid.).

What lessons can be drawn for the practice of adult education from Davis' analysis of collective struggle? It seems to me that first and foremost is the support she provides for the recognition that all adult educational practice is theoretically informed. Adult education discourse often distinguishes between theory and practice. There is an implication that some people (usually professors in graduate schools of adult education who publish a great deal in journals) are theoreticians while others (usually those who do not hold a graduate degree in adult education and publish little or nothing) are practitioners. Within this distinction is embedded an implicit hierarchy. Professor-theoreticians are responsible for the high-level cognitive process of theorizing, in which concepts (andragogy, critical reflection, transformative learning) are produced, insights (such as the social nature of transformative learning, the need for critically reflective mirrors, the importance of the adult educator's role modeling) are generated, and hypotheses (such as the prediction that placing learners into circles helps democratize discussion or that using learning journals builds learners' confidence to speak and write in their own voice) are produced. Practitioners such as basic education teachers, organizational trainers and community activists are then responsible for implementing in their daily work the theoretical insights produced by academics within their

universities. Implicitly such practitioners are held to work at much lower levels of generalization and abstraction.

If we accept Davis' argument that philosophizing and theorizing are quotidian activities – something we cannot help doing on a daily basis – then this distinction breaks down. Practice becomes inherently theoretical, something that either perpetuates or challenges dominant ideological beliefs and practices. From this viewpoint one is equally a theoretician whether one teaches philosophy in a university-sponsored, non-credit continuing education course or auto-repair at a community education center. The way we treat adult learners, how we address them, how we explain our teaching processes to them, the extent to which we encourage peer learning amongst them – these are all practice acts with strong theoretical underpinnings. We do these things based on predictive understandings of how we believe people will respond to our actions. Such assumptions are derived from the empirical data of our experiences, rather than from published texts, but they are theoretical nonetheless.

A second element of Davis work has particular resonance for those within adult education who see their practice as a force for democratic political change. If you believe, like Davis, that liberation is not possible without education, then adult education becomes, in her words, “a consciousness-raising vehicle ... imparting political education to the community” (1974, p. 183). Many adult educators would draw back from equating adult education wholly with political consciousness-raising, but for those who do Davis proposes several curricular tasks that bear examination. First and foremost the core curricular task of adult education interpreted through Davis' eyes focuses on understanding and critiquing capitalism. In this she is squarely in the mainstream of critical theory. For her the need to critique capitalism is even stronger in the twentieth century as the influence of transnational and global corporations becomes ever broader, and as the fall of Socialist regimes in Eastern Europe leads people to conclude that history proves capitalism to be the natural way of ordering the economic affairs of life. Much in the way that Fromm advocates teaching a structuralized worldview Davis urges that adults caught at the intersections of race, class and gender oppression be taught how to place their local problems within a broad socio-political framework. Racism, crime, incarceration, violence, and poor health are all experienced disproportionately by working class people of color. However, ideological mystification ensures that these economically and culturally created experiences are seen as natural and unavoidable

accompaniments of being born without a white skin on the wrong side of the tracks. Ideology causes people to believe that the side of the tracks on which they find themselves is a matter of pure chance over which there is no control, and that their innate abilities fit them for the specific social location in which they find themselves.

How can people be taught to recognize and challenge how dominant ideology persuades them to accept as unremarkable an inherently unequal state of affairs? I believe Davis' work contains two implicit pedagogic impulses. The first concerns the collectivist nature of teaching. Again and again Davis emphasizes the collective nature of transformative processes, whether these are concerned with learners transforming their consciousness, educators transforming their classrooms, or citizens transforming their communities. She believes that people need each other to make any significant change in the world, that those who see things more clearly have a duty to help others come to consciousness (we must lift as we climb) and that the most effective initiatives are those characterized by collective leadership. She is very consistent on the need for multi-racial alliances and for leadership in those alliances to be non-white. This position suggests that the methodologies of team teaching and cohort learning are best suited to the project of helping adults penetrate dominant ideology. In this (though she does not directly address any of the literature in adult education) she is very much in line with a tradition of thought and practice that values collective learning. From Lindeman (1926), through Horton and Freire (1990) and up to contemporary examinations of collaborative inquiry (Yorks and Kasl, 2002), adult cohort learning (Russo and Saltiel 2001), transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) and critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995) adult educators have consistently emphasized the fact that much crucial adult political education happens in groups and through engagement in collective struggle.

If transformative learning by adult students is a collective process, then we can legitimately infer that adult teachers must model their own engagement in this process. If we accept that adult learners are moved closer to engaging in learning that is potentially transformative by witnessing adult educators model their own public commitment to that process, then team teaching (as against solo teaching) is clearly called for. Team teaching properly conceived and implemented (that is, teaching in which teachers plan processes together, are present for all instruction whether or not they are leading the activity, and debrief their work collectively) models a strong

commitment to collective learning for adult students. Just as Davis believes that transformative struggle calls for multi-racial coalitions in which people of color assume leadership roles, so we can infer that teaching teams that have potentially the profoundest effect on adult learners are those that are multi-racial. In such teams, as in multi-racial coalitions, Davis' analysis suggests that senior leadership roles should be taken by non-white faculty. Of course team teaching itself is not without its own inherent contradictions, particularly when imbalances of power and status (real or perceived) exist amongst team members. If we accept Marcuse's admonitions about the ever-present danger of repressive tolerance, or Foucault's analysis of how superficially democratic or apparently collaborative practices can be experienced by learners as reconfigurations of oppression, then it is clear that the practice of team-teaching risks confirming the very inequities and injustices it purports to challenge. In my experience a good general rule is that in multi-racial adult teaching teams White faculty should speak last and least. On those occasions when White faculty do assume the lead teacher role, the non-white faculty should make it clear to learners that this is a team decision and that the White faculty member has been asked to assume temporary authority at the specific request of the faculty of color in the team.

One particular pedagogic emphasis implicit in Davis' work concerns the potential of art, particularly popular cultural art forms such as Blues songs (Davis, 1999), to trigger learning that can lead to revolutionary change. For her Blues performances are "an alternative site for recovering historical forms of working class women's consciousness" (Davis, 1998, p. 314) and, as evident in the work of 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday, they inform the development of a distinctive Black feminism (Davis, 1999). In this regard Davis echoes Gramsci's emphasis on the importance of popular culture to revolutionary movements and, perhaps more intentionally, follows in the footsteps of her mentor Marcuse. Marcuse believed strongly in the productively estranging nature of artistic experiences, attributing to these the power to encourage rebellious subjectivity in adults. Similarly, Davis believes that artistic experience is "a special form of social consciousness that can potentially awaken an urge in those affected by it to creatively transform their oppressive environments" (Davis, 1990, p. 199).

Her analysis contains some discernible differences from that of Marcuse, however, in that she takes more seriously the role of explicitly political art as a force for social change. Marcuse's emphasis on privacy, distance and isolation, on individual engagements with art, is missing. For Davis, the

most transformative art is created, and experienced, collectively. Also, Davis does not trace the revolutionary significance of art to the learner's being temporarily subjected to the rigors of a different aesthetic form, whether this be Shakespearean sonnets or cubism. Marcuse allows a much greater role for the transformative potential of 'high' cultural forms. Davis is much more concerned with populist expressions of deliberately political impulses. While Marcuse believes there is more revolutionary potential in the poetry of Baudelaire or Rimbaud than in the explicitly political plays of Brecht, I read Davis as much more inclined towards the political theater of Brecht or Boal, or towards the way Blues lyrics challenge racism, rape and patriarchy.

An important function of art for Davis is to be a "sensitizer and a catalyst, propelling people toward involvement in organized movements seeking to effect radical social change" (Davis, 1990, p. 200). Davis departs from Marcuse in allowing a role for explicitly political art. Indeed, she sees a symbiotic relationship between radical social movements and particular artistic impulses. To her "progressive and revolutionary art is inconceivable outside of the context of political movements for social change" (ibid. p. 216). Hence, in her analysis of the fight against slavery she sees spirituals as both "cause and evidence of an autonomous political consciousness" (1990, p. 201) and crucial to an emergent momentum of resistance. For Davis spirituals "always served, epistemologically and psychologically, to shape the consciousness of the masses of Black people, guaranteeing that the fires of freedom would burn within them" (ibid. p. 202). Work songs with their familiar call and response pattern, gospel, and the Blues are taken by her to comprise "an aesthetic community of resistance, which in turn encouraged and nurtured a political community of active struggle for freedom" (ibid.). A song like Bessie Smith's "Poor Man's Blues" had specific political intent in that it "evoked the exploitation and manipulation of working people by the wealthy and portrayed the rich as parasites accumulating their wealth and fighting their wars with the labor of the poor" (ibid. p. 203).

In the development of a curriculum for revolutionary learning, then, we can see a major role for aesthetic creation, according to Davis. This role is not to produce beauty, or induce an estrangement with reality, but to enable the creation of political momentum. An adult education program that has as its purpose the development of political consciousness, particularly consciousness regarding the exploitation of people of color, should involve more than the study of critical theory, or the analysis of activist tactics. It

should entail its participants writing songs, producing plays, filming dramatized vignettes of oppression, painting murals, rapping – using every aesthetic avenue to create the “strong bonds between art and the struggle for Black liberation” (ibid. p. 200) that Davis believes characterizes the history of African American culture. Art created explicitly in the service of political struggle, that addresses that struggle’s purpose directly and seeks deliberately to galvanize action, is crucial to political movements in her view.

As this paper shows, West’s, hooks’ and Davis’ explicit focus on transformative struggle connect them directly to adult education’s recent concern with transformative learning and education. All three place themselves squarely in the tradition of transformative learning as ideology critique. For them the purpose of transformation is to uncover and challenge dominant ideology. They see the necessity to critique the influence of capitalism in all spheres of life (intimate relationships, personal health, crime, housework, and so on) rather than limiting such a critique to the world of politics formally defined. They share an inclusive orientation in which people of different colors and genders unite around specific transformative initiatives. In their view the key to successful transformation is membership in a multi-racial alliance, an emphasis not especially prominent in adult educational treatments of this topic. They also exemplify the sort of willingness to engage in self-criticism that is often claimed as being as crucial to critical thinking. Much in the spirit of Herbert Marcuse’s, tenet that “critical theory is, last but not least, critical of itself and of the social forces that make up its own basis” (1989, p. 72), they are open to constant critical reappraisal of their own work. They all reject the conventional wisdom that the fall of Eastern European regimes means there is no longer any need for a critique of capitalism. Instead, they argue consistently and resolutely that racial advocacy and women’s liberation in an era of global capitalism must always be tied to a critique of capitalism. Those involved in the growth industry that is research and scholarship on transformative processes in adult learning and education can no longer afford to ignore the praxis of these and other African-American educators.