

# Life affirming teaching

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



How can we as a people introduce a life affirming way of teaching?

A liberating and human freedom approach. I will attempt to show you that it can be a more excellent way of teaching. Through liberation, accountability, creativity, critical consciousness and human freedom. In the Webster's dictionary it says that "Life-Affirming means to indicate that life is valuable: positive and optimistic. And Albert Einstein has been quoted as saying, "The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day." ("NOVA| Einstein Quotes| PBS" 2018)

It is said that "Liberation is a praxis; the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 79). Learning can bring a liberating experience for a student. It can open up one's imagination to recognize that they, the student, as they learn, can teach also. In Paulo Freire's book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" it is mentioned that the way that we have been taught is more of the banking system. It has a narrating "subject" which is the teacher and the "object" which is the student.

The teacher's task is to "fill" the students with the content of the teacher's "narrative". (Freire, 71) In a way that exemplifies empty words as one teaches, with no dramatic change or power behind them. Education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. (Freire, 72) This reminds me of the hierarchy way of thinking, because the way the banking concept of education according to

Freire is that " knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (Freire, 72)

When the educator can minimize the educated it can bring a sense of pervasive insecurity to the student, which can produce more of an oppression. ED Darlene Hooks Spring/2018 2 Gain ing an education has been one of the most forced way of being in our society. One is not able to gain employment without a certain certificate or masters. It is said that an education can make you rich, while others without an education have become wealthy . Education be it, Christian or secular has played a huge role in reproducing people who have not or will not think for themselves. It's almost as if they are based in fear, because according to society, one cannot obtain wealth without an education. According to Entrepreneur website, an education can either be a stepping stone or a road block on the path to achievement. (Smale) We must then approach education in a way to liberate one's mind and replace an oppressive way of thinking to educate others that they too can be creative. The solution is not to " integrate" them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become " beings for themselves". (Freire, 74)

Our responsibility as educators should be to engage our students into partnership to help them have a sense of security. " Feelings of insecurity bring chaos in one's life and with them a shift in perspective which leads to a decrease in quality of life and ability to experience happiness. In fact, feeling insecure affects all aspects of oneself: decision making, relationships,

self-view, creativity, etc." (Pitaru) If insecurity is capable of effecting all aspects of our lives then we need to attempt to make the learning experiences as secure as possible for the students. Learning takes place within the interrelatedness of all aspects of human experience. (Miller, 1995) Our human experience or so me might say human freedom is something we all have a legitimate right to.

As Groom says, People who suffer a lack of freedom knows it, in its absence. (Groom, 83) He also states that " The starting point for affirming our possibility for freedom is the biblical claim that we are created by a free creator. (Groome, 84) We are created in the image and likeness of a divine being that has showed us how to live in freedom. We are free primarily for ED Darlene Hooks Sring/2018 3 God because it is only by saying yes to the image of whom we are a reflection that we can say yes to our own authentic selves, and only as our own true selves can we be free. (Groome, 84) With freedom comes a beautiful thing called liberty.

Liberation requires critical consciousness and creative thought. The most important reason for liberation in education lies in its drive towards reconciliation. (Freire, 72) The banking system will not work in a liberated education setting because that system mirrors oppression. Oppression can be a controlling mechanism that can stifle one's growth and can cause death to one's being. Oppression - overwhelming control - is necrophilic; it is nourished by love of death, not life. (Freire, 77) Once a person learns this there is no going back to the old way of thinking. There is a stretching of sorts, in a person's mind and one recognizes that they will not be oppressed

any longer. There is a freedom in knowledge and it is there to set the oppressed free.

" To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. (Hooks, 13) It is attainable for anyone of us, and anyone can teach it, with an open heart, mind and a sense for changeability. According to Groom in the three dimensions of human freedom, we have, in our freedom for God the capacity to " know" good (rational freedom), to freely " choose" the good, (freedom for choice, freedom for inner compulsion), and to " do" the good (freedom for action, freedom from external constraint or servitude). (My emphasis) (Groome, 85) If we know then we can choose and then we can move with action and do. That's how we can move forward in recognizing that we can learn as well as teach in a way that can bring us liberation. We can eventually teach with a life -affirming way.

According to Groome, the rational of our freedom is rooted in our ability for self -reflection, which expresses the transcendent aspects of being human. This can give us the capacity to know the good with sufficient clarity to be held responsible. (Groome, 85) Without this accountability ED Darlene Hooks Spring/2018 4 freedom would be non -existent. In other words, we have freedom of choice even to the point of being able to choose unfreedom. (Groome, 86) Action is the next phase of freedom, how do we act out our true freedom? Well, according to Groome, our freedom for God and thus for ourselves is realized in our freedom for others. (Groome, 86)

We want to be free but we are not truly free until we live in a way of thinking that we are to be of service to others. That is a beautiful definition of giving

back to our communities and students. True freedom is " Freedom for God is a possibility of authentic freedom for oneself". (Groome, 87) How do we live out this " freedom" we have been generously given? According to Groome its through Jesus Christ, with a Christian perspective. (Groome, 88) In James 1: 25 (NRSV) " But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act — they will be blessed in their doing" .

We can and will be blessed when we make the conscious decision to help others. The freedom we gain is not for us alone but for those whose lives we touch. Those who we can share our truth with and show that God's freedom is an everlasting one, not a superficial one. 1 Peter 2: 16 , it says, " As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil". To be faithful, is a choice and to serve is a way we can thrive in freedom. Freedom is not just a self -serving freedom of " I can do whatever I want, when I want" True freedom in Christ is being free to free others.

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(Groome, 87) In Christ we can now be free from anything that is attempting to stop our freedom. For those of us who are of the Christian faith we believe that we have a freedom in our belief system, however, for those who are not believers. I have found out that they too have a freedom in or if they have a spiritual encounter. One can say my way is truth yet another personED Darlene Hooks Spring/2018 5 might say, " but no, my way is truth". I have found that whoever or whatever we believe, we can come to a place of

freedom and live a life affirming way of being. To live a life -affirming way of being, we must teach that it is possible.

Christian faith and human freedom can be hand in hand, if it is being taught without manipulation or judgment. According to Groome, " Any form of manipulation or indoctrination is both bad education and blatantly counterproductive to the purposes of Christian education" (Groome, 98) That's why we must make a difference when we teach. My using a life affirming way of teaching, we are helping the student to think for themselves and to trust themselves in their learning process. It's a responsibility that some might not want to take but if we want society to be a more loving and compassionate one we must be patient and teach in a loving environment and not with a controlling way of being.

" Our intentions must be to sponsor people toward a lived Christian faith that is both free and freeing". (Groome, 99) We must be intentional in helping others when we teach. We must be aware of their lives and cultures and be authentic and show a genuine love and care for them. We should meet them at their individual needs, not mirror superiority over them. We can show as we learn more about our own freedom in our humanism. " Human freedom within history will always be an ongoing journey rather than a point of arrival". (Groome, 99) According to Nurten Gokalp, " Education can be defined as the process of developing and completing of human being". " The purpose of education is to provide the appropriate conditions to people for maintaining themselves as a whole". (Gokalp, 2012) Education should be a way of helping others meet their own personal potential and not make them

into robots or people who have no way of thinking or creating their own way of being.

There should always be a freedomED Darlene Hooks Sring/2018 6 in education to allow the person to help create their own guidance in themselves. There is a wholeness in a life affirming way of teaching that can usher the person into their own greatness. " Freedom is an important factor in t he process of determining one's self and others". " Freedom in this sense is usually regarded as a presupposition of moral responsibility: the actions for which I may be praised or blamed, rewarded or punished, are just those which I perform freely". (Gokal p, 2012) . Now that's human freedom in a life affirming way, in every sense of the word. " Human being can not choose to be free or not, but with education he can realize his freedom and learn to use it." And finally, " real freedom is to choose to comply with the enlightened mind" (Gokalp, 2012)

This is what Freire calls problem -posing education and that is the education we need to flourish in, in these days and times. " Problem -posing involves a constant unveiling of reality" he says it, " strives for the emerge nce of consciousness and critical intervention in reality". He mentions that students will meet the challenges of the world and instead of running from them they will run into it. (my interpretation) He says, " Their response to the challenge evokes new cha llenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed. Education as the practice of freedom -as opposed to the education as the practice of domination -denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, a nd



unattached to the world." (Freire, 81) I'd like to say that we all should want to live a life of freedom and liberty. It is something that comes naturally to some and is very hard for others.

If we being the part of the education system, can help to shape a person's perspective on life then we should attempt to do it in a holistic approach. There should be an authentic liberation and freedom that emanates from us intoED Darlene Hooks Spring/2018 7 our students, so we can draw out their talents and abilities so that we can make a more peaceful and compassionate way of being in this world. The banking system will not work for this generation. We have too many minds that won't just sit and be still and take it, like other generations before us did. We will ask questions and we will express our differences. There is a self-justice that is beginning in our society and its used in self-expression and in all the ways of communication.

Education is a praxis of freedom and a way for people to practice their rights in learning and contributing to society. We are an awake society and live in a more conscious frame of mind. We won't go back to sleep, we won't lay down and roll over every time someone wants us to. We will be a positive contributing factor to our world and be conscious of it. We will teach others to love the earth and to more kind in its evolving. Education is a beautiful example of liberation, especially in one's way of giving back. We will fight for our freedom from oppression. We will make others recognize that we are humans and that we will not have anything less than, full humanity.

We won't live in a dehumanizing way of being any longer. Because once you've tasted freedom, one can never go back. We won't go back to laying down and allowing others to speak violence into our beings. " Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects. (Freire, 85) We will not be objects any more. We can't any more, especially when we have an open consciousness and revelation that we don't have to live this way any longer. Now we have a mandate to live out and bring life to our students.

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