

Learning from Students as Agents of Social Change: Toward an Emancipatory Vision of the University

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ABSTRACT *This article draws from over two decades of qualitative studies of student activism conducted by the author, mostly in the United States, but also in Argentina and Mexico. This research ranges from rich ethnographic work lasting nearly two years to more ‘fly-by’ case studies encompassing a few days. In all, close to 400 interviews were conducted and they offer a rich understanding of the ways in which grassroots student organizers struggle to forge more democratic conceptions of universities and societies. Many of the studies conducted, such as the student strike at the National Autonomous University of Mexico in 1999, the Chicano Studies movement at UCLA in 1993, the Mills College strike of 1990, and graduate student unionization during the early 2000s, relate to fundamental issues of power and privilege and whose voices matter in shaping the nature of contemporary universities and their missions. In revisiting his data, the author imposes upon it a critical lens grounded in the work of Paulo Freire and Boaventura de Sousa Santos. In the end, he identifies some key ideas for grassroots leaders to consider as they work to advance more emancipatory universities.*

KEY WORDS: Student activism, grassroots organizing, social change, emancipatory university, university reform, critical social science

Introduction

The central aim of this article is to examine student activism as a source of learning potentially beneficial to grassroots leaders interested in advancing a more emancipatory vision of the modern university. By adopting the term ‘emancipatory,’ I argue that universities ought to actively apply knowledge of inequality

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and social change for the purpose of enhancing societies in more democratic ways.¹ This vision situates the university as an agent of social transformation (Newson and Buchbinder, 1988), and suggests, as Daniel Schugurensky argued, that the university has ‘an obligation to contribute not only to the equalization of educational opportunities but also to collective projects that promote social and environmental justice and ultimately alter existing social, economic, and political relationships’ (Schugurensky, 2006, p. 303).

Empirically speaking, I draw from extensive qualitative research on student activism that I have conducted over the past two decades, primarily in the United States but also in Argentina and Mexico. I see research on student activism as an important source of knowledge for better understanding the potentiality of grassroots leadership, primarily because of commonalities shared in working beyond traditional organizational structures and processes as a means to achieving change. In essence, by better understanding how college students have organized and struggled to achieve emancipatory change from the ground up, we may also learn a good deal about how other university actors might also succeed as grassroots leaders committed to advancing similar emancipatory aims. Additionally, my analysis of empirical data is framed by a particular vision of university grassroots leadership grounded in the institution’s transformative potential to contribute to democratic social change (Santos, 2006; Rhoads, 2007; Slocum and Rhoads, 2009; Rhoads and Liu, 2009). By this I suggest that universities and their actors are in key positions, especially with regard to their access to knowledge production and its application, to use their talent and capacities to challenge broader social structures contributing to inequality.

A more specific outcome of this article is to delineate a set of ideas for advancing the American university as an institution committed to addressing social injustice and engaged in advancing more participatory forms of democracy. Although not all grassroots organizing at the university level is drawn to such emancipatory aims, there is nonetheless a good deal that is. So it is for them, and for those who research or encourage their work, that I offer the ideas and thoughts contained herein.

Theoretical Orientation

I approach my work on student activism – which I also discussed at times as ‘grassroots student organizing’ – from a critical social science perspective. By critical social science, I refer to a scholarly tradition committed to challenging inequality and oppression, articulated nicely by Brian Fay (1987) over two decades ago, but captured most pointedly for my purposes by Paulo Freire and Boaventura de Sousa Santos. In terms of Freire (1970), I draw from his notion of *conscientização*, or critical consciousness, and a belief that education ought to serve the purpose of helping students to understand inequality and oppression in the world so as to ‘better transform it’ (Freire, 1970, p. 24). From Freire’s liberatory perspective, education must resist positioning the teacher as all-knowing and authoritative, whose job it is to convey facts and information to students in the form of a ‘banking’ model of education. Instead, Freire described compassionate and caring dialogues as the core of a liberatory pedagogy aimed at creating

conditions whereby students become self-empowered and see themselves as agents of social change.

Santos (2006) adopted a praxis-oriented institutional view, arguing that universities ought to have a democratic and socially transformative agenda, applying what he described as ‘pluriversity knowledge’ to address forms of inequality and injustice in the broader society. He defined pluriversity knowledge as contextualized within society, wherein the ‘organizing principle of its construction is its application’ to social problems (Santos, 2006, p. 74). Many contemporary universities have embraced a form of pluriversity knowledge but have allowed such processes to be driven to a great extent by forms of ‘academic capitalism’ – the idea that the university produces knowledge as a marketable commodity (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). However, as Santos maintained, pluriversity knowledge can have far greater impact on society when we see the democratic and transformative potential of the university to apply its resources toward emancipatory aims, by embracing the ideals of extension and action research constructed in partnership with communities in need. It is this vision of the university – the university as an agent of emancipation, founded on a liberatory pedagogy and a commitment to praxis – that I use to frame my research on grassroots student organizing. Such a vision suggests a university deeply tied to the broader society and fundamentally committed to social change.²

Empirical Studies of Student Activism

This article is based on a synthesis of separate studies of student activism, beginning in the early 1990s and continuing to the present.³ All of the studies forming the body of data were conducted using qualitative methods, ranging in depth and intensity from a 2–3 day case study to an ethnography nearly two years in duration. Data collection typically included the use of key informants, formal structured interviews (close to 400 formal structured interviews are included in my database), informal interviews, participation observation, and document gathering and analysis. The studies focused on a range of issues, including multicultural student movements, student engagement in community service, student-initiated retention projects, graduate student unionization, student strikes and protests, and student involvement in broader social movements. In what follows I briefly describe the nature and context of these studies.

Queer Student Movement

My foray into student activism came out of a dissertation focused on the coming-out experiences of gay and bisexual male students at Pennsylvania State University. This rich ethnographic study centered to a great extent on a group of activist students struggling to redefine themselves and elements of the gay student community as queer, in part, by engaging in the politics of language to challenge the campus climate and the broader marginalization of lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities (Rhoads, 1994, 1995).

Multicultural Movements of the 1990s

Several studies were highlighted in my book, *Freedom's Web: Student Activism in an Age of Cultural Diversity* (Rhoads, 1998a) and included the following: the Mills College strike of 1990 in which students fought to preserve the institution as an all-women's college; the Chicano Studies movement at UCLA in the early 1990s when students struggled to elevate the Chicano Studies interdisciplinary program to departmental status; student protests at Rutgers University in 1995 in response to racist comments made by then Rutgers president Francis Lawrence about the 'genetic, hereditary background' of African Americans; and protests by Native American students at Michigan State University in the mid-1990s in response to Republican Governor John Engler's attempt to end the Michigan Indian Tuition Waiver Program. Subsequent to publishing *Freedom's Web*, I conducted a study of Asian American student activism at Michigan State, including efforts to advance pan-ethnic identity and politics (Rhoads *et al.*, 2002). With the exception of the two studies conducted at Michigan State (focused on Native Americans and Asian Americans), which took place while I was a professor there, empirical inquiry relied on retrospective case studies.

Free Burma Coalition

This international movement was initially organized by a group of graduate students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and included a key student leader in exile from Myanmar (formerly Burma). Primarily through the use of the Internet, the Free Burma Coalition (FBC) was able to unify students and grassroots activists around the world in support of a more democratic Myanmar and in opposition to the military regime that ran the country and which imprisoned the democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Following the strategies of the divestment movement of the 1980s, the FBC launched a successful boycott of PepsiCo as a consequence of the company's involvement in Myanmar. The FBC was inspired by the Ethiopian proverb that came to symbolize the movement's capacity and strength: 'When spiders unite they can tie down a lion' (Rhoads, 1998a, p. 237).

Graduate Student Unionization

During the early part of the present decade, I collected extensive data on union organizing by graduate student employees I conducted case studies at four universities: the University of California, Los Angeles, Michigan State University, New York University and the University of Michigan. In collaboration with Professor Gary Rhoades of the University of Arizona, a central concern of the project focused on ideology, most notably the degree to which graduate student organizers defined themselves in opposition to the corporatization of the American university (Rhoads and Rhoades, 2005).

Student Strike at UNAM

In reaction to proposed fee increases, student organizers took over key facilities at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) during the academic year

1999–2000 and effectively closed the campus. Several important political issues contributed to the strike, but one notable concern was the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in pushing the Mexican government to reduce support for higher education, including funding for UNAM (Rhoads and Mina, 2001; Rhoads, 2003).

Argentine Grassroots Rebellion

From 2002–2005 I conducted analyses of what came to be known as the Argentine grassroots rebellion. Most specifically, I studied the ways in which faculty and students at the University of Buenos Aires were involved in various social movements to challenge Argentine economic policies, including the role of the IMF in advancing neoliberal forms of globalization. This research was used to advance a more emancipatory vision of the university (a theme I pursue further in this article), through an understanding of grassroots engagement by faculty and students (Slocum and Rhoads, 2009).

Student-Initiated Retention Movement

From 2003–2004, and with the support of the Spencer Foundation, I studied ‘student-initiated retention projects’ (SIRPs) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of California, Berkeley. SIRPs are essentially student-initiated, student-run, and student-funded academic support interventions aimed primarily at increasing the academic success of underrepresented students of color. A central goal of the research project was to develop a theory of student retention grounded in student self-empowerment (Maldonado *et al.*, 2005).

Community Service Studies

During the course of several years, and spanning my time as a doctoral student and then visiting assistant professor at Pennsylvania State University, and then as an assistant and associate professor at Michigan State University, I collected extensive interview and observational data of student engagement in community service projects, including their participation in Alternative Spring Breaks (ASBs). The essence of this project centered on the role service plays in challenging students’ conceptions of self (including the self as citizen), as well as how critical pedagogy might inform service and service-learning so as to better ensure its socially transformative potential (Neururer and Rhoads, 1998; Rhoads, 1997; Rhoads, 1998b; Rhoads and Howard, 1998).

Reconceptualizing the University in Terms of an Emancipatory Agenda

Given the aforementioned studies, what key ideas can be drawn from student activists that may be helpful in guiding the work of grassroots leaders committed to advancing a more socially transformative university? After considerable reflection on this, six key ideas seem most critical: (1) center social justice and equality; (2) partner with communities on the basis of mutuality;

(3) build egalitarian institutional structures; (4) elevate the importance of critical consciousness; (5) expand notions of citizenship and social responsibility to a global level; and (6) build connections to broader social movements to achieve change.

Center Social Justice and Equality

The conception of social justice embedded in this article centers on the struggle to challenge social and economic inequality among peoples and groups within the broader society. Relatedly, many colleges and universities seek to address social inequalities by seeking to expand educational access for underrepresented students. Although such a practice is admirable and ought to be advanced, it is nonetheless a limited approach to solving social and economic inequality. The engagement of students over the years in a wide array of social justice issues offers a conception of the university reaching into society and directly confronting social inequality. Examples of students envisioning such a scope of social struggle are many, from students engaged in the Free Burma Coalition and challenging oppression in Myanmar, to students in Argentina organizing opposition to neoliberal regimes of power,⁴ to students engaged in service to low-income individuals and families, to Chicano students seeking to advance active engagement of the university in local communities. A Chicana student activist at UCLA, for example, captured elements of this view in her discussion of the role of a Chicano Studies center: 'We saw it as a cultural center where the community could come in with problems. . . . And the center would help the community to do research to solve their problems.' Her comments capture a key element of the early Chicano student movement and its motto: 'Of the community, for the community' (Gómez-Quíñones, 1978). Such a vision suggests the possibility that taking on serious social inequalities ought to be a core function of the university. A recent example of this vision of the university is evidenced by a group called the Harvard Alumni for Social Action (HASA), whose members seek to persuade their university to expand its mission and use some of its massive \$35 billion endowment toward strengthening colleges and universities in Africa (Strom, 2008).

Of course, many grassroots organizers operating within the walls of the academy have already conceptualized the university as a resource for addressing social injustice (Rhoads, 1994, 1998a, 1998c, 2003; Rhoads and Martinez, 1998). Given their insight, these individuals hold the potential to play a vital role in redirecting the university as an agent of social change. Furthermore, if we are successful in transforming the university in more emancipatory ways, grassroots organizers are more likely to flourish, given an environment more supportive of social engagement and collective struggle. Indeed, their knowledge of organizing is crucial both to the project of transforming the university and subsequently to maintaining its re-vitalized mission. Accordingly, we should do all we can to support student organizations engaged in social struggle in order to strengthen cadres of grassroots organizers and ensure that they have the skills and mindsets to refashion and advance a university focused on advancing social justice.

Partner with Communities on the Basis of Mutuality

The ways in which universities interact and engage with communities need to be structured around the ideals of mutuality (similar to the ideal of reciprocity as well). Mutuality may be understood as reciprocal exchanges involving all parties giving and receiving, while also exchanging roles between being 'doers' and the 'done-to,' in Howard Radest's (1993) terms. In stressing more thoughtful and reciprocal relationship building, I primarily draw from studies of student involvement in community service and service-learning, as well as work centered on the role of caring in general (Noddings, 1984; Kendall, 1990; Coles, 1993; Radest, 1993; Rhoads, 1997; Rhoads and Howard, 1998). However, to achieve such relationships university actors working with communities must be knowledgeable of how domination and colonialism so often enter into university-initiated partnerships and collaborations. Here, I am mindful of the relevance of indigenous scholarship, as well as concerns raised by indigenous communities about the forms of domination that so often accompany university research and outreach (Bishop, 1998; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Rains *et al.*, 2000). Consequently, mutuality as a guide to community partnering necessitates that every effort be made to eliminate or at least minimize domination. A key mode for achieving such an objective is working to fashion egalitarian and caring dialogues in a manner consistent with Freirian pedagogy.

The ideal of mutuality is especially relevant when one considers that the essence of grassroots organizing calls for collaborative and cooperative relationship building among various social actors and organizations. Mutuality as an ideal suggests that universities do not act *on* or *for* communities, but instead engage in cooperative and egalitarian partnerships in which community and university actors all have a voice in determining the ways in which problems are identified and addressed. From a Freirian perspective, for the university to act *on* or *for* the community is disempowering and reflective of a banking model of pedagogy applied to university service and extension. This also applies to how a university goes about conducting research. Along these lines, Santos talked about the importance of action research and how universities might embrace a more 'participative definition and execution of research projects involving working-class and, in general, subaltern communities and social organizations who are grappling with problems' (Santos, 2006, p. 87). Mutuality thus expands the traditional model of university research by suggesting that communities and community organizers should actually be engaged as research partners in action-oriented inquiry. For leaders seeking to reach beyond the university, building relations with appropriate community members and organizers on the basis of mutuality is at the very core of what it means to operate in a 'grassroots' manner.

Build Egalitarian Institutional Structures

For the preceding changes to come about, universities need to become more egalitarian in terms of their structures and operations. Here, the university and its leaders might stand to learn a great deal from grassroots movements, including the creativity and energy that often derives from meaningful collective struggle. Just as in grassroots struggle, a wide array of voices ought to have a say in

developing and casting the ideals upon which the university is to operate. When students at UNAM took over the campus to resist large tuition increases, they were fighting for the educational opportunities of many groups often excluded from educational policy making – lower income and working class citizens. Similarly, when the Board of Trustees of Mills College moved to fundamentally alter the nature of the institutional identity, they ignored two important constituencies – students and alumnae. Only later did the Mills College trustees recognize their mistake but after the students and alumnae launched a strike and effectively shut down the campus for nearly two weeks. Additionally, the work of graduate student organizers to increase the benefits and wages of teaching assistants and other graduate employees covered under union contracts is one more example of efforts to expand university decision making to include those often marginalized within the knowledge production apparatus of the contemporary university. Bringing new voices, including those of community organizations, to the table as part of university decision-making processes will expand representation and better ensure a more democratic definition of university mission and objectives. As it stands now, organizations and individuals with the capacity to fund the university, including corporations, federal agencies, major foundations and wealthy financiers, already have a clear voice in shaping the interests and actions of universities. What is suggested here is a more egalitarian approach to engaging individuals and groups in shaping the value orientation of the university, and consequently, the nature of its actions. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways but certainly lessons can be taken from the Argentine grassroots rebellion, where communities and neighborhoods formed their own governance structures and created opportunities for local workers and citizens to have a voice in decisions that shape their daily lives. Universities similarly could expand the composition of their many decision-making bodies to include significant student and community participation. Perhaps lessons can be learned from Latin American universities, some of which are guided by a congress that includes significant student representation.

Elevate the Importance of Critical Consciousness

For Freire (1970), critical consciousness represents a more complex understanding of forces acting on one's life in a dehumanizing manner and a commitment to acting against those forces. Two interactive processes are at work: reflection/action. It is not enough to simply recognize or understand forms of oppression; one must also commit to challenging them through actions. Every action in turn leads to deeper reflection, which then informs further action.

Consistent with a Freirian vision of education, universities need to embrace forms of teaching and learning that promote increased awareness and understanding of the ways in which social forces act on people's lives to produce and reproduce inequalities. Consciousness raising activities of many student movements offer insight into how pedagogical strategies might be used to raise important conversations about social justice. One area in which grassroots organizers have been quite clever in promoting dialogue is through the use of media, both mainstream and alternative. African American students at Rutgers University, for example, organized a sit-in during a major sporting event to raise conversations about

racial inequality, both at the university and within the broader society. Similarly, the Free Burma Coalition made effective use of the Internet as a global vehicle for expanding people's understanding of inequalities and suffering in Myanmar. The women of Mills College used various media to get their message out about the value of an all-women's educational environment and the potential such learning contexts offer for addressing gender-based inequalities. Furthermore, the ways in which the women of Mills organized through consensus-building activities, in which all participants had the opportunity to fully engage and share their views, highlight the important role democratic dialogues can play in advancing understanding of key issues and promoting self-empowerment. In this case, the women struggled to construct a leaderless movement, rejecting the banking model of education whereby a single authority figure defines and conveys reality. Instead, they engaged in collaborative constructions of meaning and strategy building from the bottom up, a methodology consistent with powerful forms of grassroots organizing and leadership. The result was an empowering experience, as noted by one of the Mills women with whom I spoke back in the mid-1990s: 'I think there was a real congruence between the students' values and their actions and that's when they were the most effective. They had values about inclusion, about group decision making, and integrity, and it just showed up in everything they did.'

University education needs to move beyond normalized conceptions of knowledge and truth and include counter and oppositional narratives in order that students might develop the kinds of critical questions necessary for confronting complex social and global realities. Extended dialogues about a diverse range of issues are needed, and clearly student activists have contributed to expanding such dialogues over the years. However, this should not simply be the province of activists but, instead, needs to be front and center in how we think about university education and the role professors and students play in challenging one another to examine issues in deeper and more complex ways, and at times, from an oppositional stance. Without encouraging oppositional viewpoints to flourish, it is difficult to imagine students engaging in the kind of dialogues necessary for critical consciousness to emerge.

Expand Notions of Citizenship and Social Responsibility to a Global Level

Several of the activism studies that I conducted have either been of the international variety or have had international issues as a source of concern. Research on the Argentine grassroots rebellion, the student strike at UNAM, and the work of the Free Burma Coalition, for example, raised various issues about the nature of contemporary societies and the influence of globalization. Additionally, many global crises such as genocide in Darfur, the US invasion of Iraq and global warming have attracted the attention of students and student activists. Given the growing influence of global forces, be they of the economic, political, or environmental variety, universities need to do a better job of embracing global responsibilities and challenging their key constituencies to do the same. Universities, for example, should consider global issues as a core of the general education experience, while challenging students to move beyond individualist and nationalist understandings of social responsibility. Another reasonable goal is to develop

curricula and out-of-class experiences that help students move toward seeing themselves as global citizens acting in an increasingly interconnected world (Sze-lényi and Rhoads, 2007). Universities can also do a better job of rewarding faculty and staff who take on global concerns in their research and/or extension work.

Grassroots leaders, be they campus-based or otherwise, also can play a key role in challenging the consciousness of today's universities and expanding the ways in which they view social responsibility. My research reveals that many students have already taken on this challenge, often through creative use of the media, as was the case with the Free Burma Coalition and its deployment of the Internet to build international solidarity. Grassroots leaders need to push the boundaries of acceptable organizational practices for achieving change given the bureaucratic limitations of the modern university. There is much to be learned from the creative strategies deployed by student organizers over the years, including their use of alternative media, campus rallies, demonstrations, boycotts, petitioning, and so forth, all of which may be used to raise consciousness about global concerns and obligations.

Build Connections to Broader Social Movements to Achieve Change

Universities and their key actors, including faculty and students, may have great difficulty implementing significant social changes by acting on their own. What is clear in this age of globalization and complex network societies, as Manuel Castells (1997) has aptly described them, is that change requires collaboration and engagement across a variety of political and cultural organizations (Rhoads and Liu, 2009). Indeed, it is no great leap of faith to suggest that traditional organizations face serious limitations in light of the complexities and entanglements of global societies. A solution to the challenge of advancing social change in a global post-industrial world is to pay greater attention to the role of social movements (Touraine, 1988). Such an argument suggests that grassroots organizers and the kind of leadership skills they are likely to possess, including the ability to forge broad social ties toward engendering collective action, may be important resources as campuses seek to expand their social impact. Accordingly, universities committed to an emancipatory agenda should seek to participate in or initiate social change by forging broad alliances and coalitions across a variety of relevant sectors, including building ties with grassroots organizers and their related organizations and/or movements. Many of the student movements that I have studied over the years, including the struggle of Native Americans at Michigan State University to preserve the state's Native American Tuition Waiver Program, the student strike at UNAM, the Mills College strike, as well as efforts by Chicano students at UCLA and African American students at Rutgers to address various race-related inequities, involved forging coalitions with multiple fronts and engaging numerous organizations, often in a grassroots manner. They are examples of how single individuals and organizations may be inadequate when it comes to challenging powerful structures and elitist decision-making bodies. Indeed, university actors aligned with key social, cultural, and political organizations are more likely to achieve significant change by working with such organizations and building connections with communities of interest. The University of

Michigan and the role it played in bridging a broad social movement to preserve affirmative action in college and university admissions is an excellent example of this and should be studied by other universities seeking to address social inequalities (Rhoads *et al.*, 2005).

Conclusion

I am fully aware that the idea of the contemporary university having, as its primary mission, the alleviation of social inequality would involve a dramatic shift in thinking. Also, I realize that some universities in the United States take such concerns quite seriously, although I have yet to find one that centers its mission on emancipatory aims. In suggesting that they *ought to*, some readers may accuse me of being out of touch with reality, of ‘dreaming’ of universities that we will never see, or worse yet, of extending social science work beyond that which we can actually observe through classic models of empiricism and hypothesis testing. However, Mark Twain said it best, ‘If you can dream it, you can do it.’ Indeed, some working within the academy are in fact acting on ‘dreams’ of a revitalized university; evidence of this may be observed in the work of a national consortium of 80 colleges and universities seeking to promote forms of scholarship more beneficial to the public good (June, 2008).

Certainly some of the grassroots organizers with whom I have interacted over the years may have been a bit on the idealistic side, they may have dreamed of a university beyond that which they could see or touch, or they may have envisioned a more just society with a vital university playing a key role. Although some were driven by idealism, they also had a powerful sense of agency, and accordingly, many engaged in significant actions to advance a more democratic world, whether it was through strengthening a more inclusive curriculum, as was the case of Chicano students at UCLA; or challenging the pervasiveness of racial inequality in US society, as with African American students at Rutgers University and Asian Americans and Native Americans at Michigan State University; or perhaps struggling to keep a university accessible to the working class and poor, as was the example of student activists in Mexico City at UNAM. These students and many others that have been studied here, have had two things in common: a vision of something better and the willingness to pursue that vision. To paraphrase Mao, they dared to struggle and dared to win. The women of Mills College embraced an all-women’s learning environment and against great odds won their battle and preserved an educational space largely free of patriarchy and sexism. Queer students at Pennsylvania State University offered their contribution to opening up the minds of a campus and advancing more tolerant attitudes toward sexuality and diverse sexual identities. Students who engaged in community service also made their contributions, whether touching one person at a time by working at soup kitchens and homeless shelters in Washington DC, or by enhancing the lives of a poor family in rural America by tarring a roof, rebuilding a porch, or by working with Habitat for Humanity to construct a new home. From these students there is much to be learned and applied toward rethinking the broader mission of the contemporary university and toward strengthening the role of grassroots forms of leadership. Yet perhaps there is no more important

lesson than to harken back to the words of Mark Twain and allow ourselves to dream up a whole range of transformative possibilities.

Notes

1. I base my discussion of the emancipatory work of the contemporary university on a particular vision of social justice focused on minimizing social and economic inequality within the broader society and at the same time concerned with promoting fuller and more active forms of democratic participation. In terms of the latter point, a good deal of my thinking is informed by the notion of 'participatory democracy' conveyed in the 1960s work of the Student for a Democratic Society (SDS) and contained in the Port Huron Statement.
2. For an extended discussion of the essential theoretical and conceptual elements of a more emancipatory vision of the modern university, see Rhoads and Liu (2009) and Slocum and Rhoads (2009).
3. Over the years, a number of committed graduate students contributed in significant ways to my research, either through library and archival work or in some cases by conducting field work. I am grateful to the following students for assisting with my research on student activism: Lorraine Bedard, Tracy Lachica Buenavista, Kayton Carter, Tracy Davis, Scott Dixon, Amy Fann, Anthony Gutierrez, Matthew Helm, Karen Kim, Jenny Lee, David E. Z. Maldonado, Julio Martinez, Liliana Mina, Leticia Oseguera, Jenée Slocum and Motoe Yamada.
4. The phrase 'neoliberal regimes of power' is used here to describe a global trend stressing the market as the ultimate adjudicating force in determining social value. The word neoliberal more or less derives from the movement of the 1980s associated with Reaganism and Thatcherism to deregulate economies, while elevating the role and relevance of global markets. The 'new liberals' or 'neoliberals' were thus those who favored liberalization of global trade. In terms of the reference to Argentina, neoliberal regimes of power are often associated with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its structural adjustment programs.

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