

# Forever Learning, Revolutionary Love and The Collaborative Reading Space

by John Ros

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Being an active participant in the classroom should not seem overtly radical and though there are aims to create more engaging educational spaces, hierarchical pedagogies by design may be unable to accommodate true liberated learning. It is reasonable to expect that in one's lifetime, classroom learning will be encountered regardless of how that learning is ordered. Sadly, educational spaces are often the last places where learners of all walks and creeds can mix to challenge and support each other in mutually liberating ways. Creating shared learning spaces, especially physical ones, may prove even more important in our post-pandemic moment — especially considering the power we yield to the largest tech companies. Algorithmically curated communities become our parameters; likes and followers become our standards of success, all based on clicks of commonality. As we increase our digital footprints we must also take the gatekeepers to task before we become quashed by oppressive, biased strings of zeros and ones, preserving our connections by a fraying thread. With this in mind, the notion of forever learning becomes imperative to a society reaching new levels of disenfranchisement and digital and political segregation. Revolutionary Love may be one way to combat this turn toward further division.

Joy James recently wrote about Revolutionary Love. She explains:

Revolutionary Love originates from a desire for the greater good that entails radical risk-taking for justice. Seeking equity and securing basic needs (housing, food, education, healthy environments) despite constant frustrations and betrayals is a sign of faithfulness despite the hostilities of well-funded, anti-revolutionary and counterrevolutionary organizing to maintain predatory hierarchies and police forces invested in protecting reactionaries and destroying revolutionaries such as Illinois Black Panther leader Fred Hampton. Hampton was a revolutionary lover; he maintained that the greatest weapon is political education. Revolutionary Love is the portal for life-long education. <sup>01</sup>

This notion of life-long education, or forever learning, seems the first step in combating misinformation and division imposed from oppressive hierarchies in all forms. It offers a solution, albeit a complex and difficult one, to come together in spaces and develop camaraderie, especially among those we disagree with. We cannot look to the systemically violent and biased institutions to lead the way; we must create these forever learning spaces for ourselves. Stand4 Gallery and Anna Hoberman's Collaborative Reading Space are consummate examples.

First and foremost, Anna Hoberman is an artist, a dreamer and an adventurer. As a print-maker, Anna is a visionary, embodying all the best qualities of an artist, artisan, technician, art director, teacher and publisher.

Hoberman's prints are whimsical and quixotic. They represent relics from another time; time-keepers recording essential foundations to relatable imagery and archives of memory. Hoberman's newest series of book covers and spines with annotated pages is no exception. With this winsome series she unravels texts, revealing her own thoughts which build on comprehension through a dyslexic lens. These markings sit comfortably on the page — assigning phrases and sentences and paragraphs more personal meaning.

The print-maker's mind is methodical. They problem solve, adapt, envision — all often in reverse — as a print is pulled, its mirror image is revealed. There is a connection to history and material that seems embedded, recollected at a moment's notice, imagined anew, toiled over. Hoberman simplifies comprehension to the essence of imaginal quality — bringing thoughts to visual stenography — revealing a new understanding of stories and histories told again and again. Books find us and create us. As passports to other places both within and without, they inform us and form us — and the communities around us, from age-old institutions to a modest Bay Ridge Gallery. It is when we are able to engage on all levels, beyond ourselves, that we become truly active citizens within our current social experiment.

The book is the ultimate space for discovery. Books allow us to engage with those long past or those we do not know. They allow us to live beyond our boundaries and experience others in conversation or debate. In Tom Finkelpearl's *Dialogues In Public Art*, Freire states, "The existence of any action without evaluation is impossible. That is, the evaluation of the action implied moments of reflection upon action." Finkelpearl condenses this point:

We are reflecting, but this reflection is part of our practice, and we are also engaging in a process which will be a public manifestation, in a book, which will be published. People will have it in their home, in a library, in their moment of reflection/action. So our reflections and their public manifestation will result in other reflections which can become a part of the practice of the readers. <sup>02</sup>

Hoberman takes this exchange to heart, engaging with each of the writers in their shared space of the book — empty margins — an invitation to enwrap and beguile. What emerges are effortful cycles of learning, captive to the text — reading and rereading passages to ensure cognition. For the reader this repetitive action dissolves boundaries and opens up room for chance. These processes connect to Freire's notion of conscientization. bell hooks brings these thoughts together: "[I]t was Freire's insistence that education could be a practice of freedom that encouraged me to create strategies for what he called "conscientization" in the

classroom. Translating that term to critical awareness and engagement, I entered the classrooms with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer.”<sup>03</sup>

Off the page, these communal spaces are where we share experiences and support one another. I also cannot help but recall Sister Corita Kent’s, *Immaculate Heart College Art Department Rules*, which Hoberman has hanging in her studio. In the helpful hints section Sister Corita offers this addendum: “Always be around. Come or go to everything. Always go to classes. Read anything you can get your hands on. Look at movies carefully, often. Save everything — it might come in handy later.”<sup>04</sup> These thoughts, and all ten rules, are a beneficial guide for living a life of forever learning. *Revolutionary Love* neither romanticizes, nor attempts to explain a clear path forward. Hoberman not only shows us ways to engage with others through text and print, but offers up a space to build connections and develop respect and empathy for one another so that we can continue to build on who we are and what we leave behind.

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01. James, Joy. Revolutionary Love in Shades of Darkness. Black Agenda Report, 24 Feb. 2021, [www.blackagendareport.com/revolutionary-love-shades-darkness](http://www.blackagendareport.com/revolutionary-love-shades-darkness). Accessed 12 March 2021.

02. Finkelpearl, Tom. *Dialogues In Public Art*. MIT PRESS, 2001. pp 277-293.

03. hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge, New York, 1994. p 14.

04. Kent, Sister Corita. Ten Rules Poster. Corita Art Center, <https://store.corita.org/collections/posters/products/ten-rules-poster>. Accessed 14 March 2021.