

Practicing Pinayist Pedagogy

Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales and Jocyl Sacramento

In 1995, I¹ wrote an article entitled “Pinayism” and my life was forever changed. In many ways, the article was a proposal to develop a theoretical framework addressing the social, political, and economic struggles of Pinays.² Defining Pinayism has been challenging, organic, and collaborative because of the epistemological and political diversity of Pinays I have met. After fourteen years of workshops, talks, presentations, and lesson plans, Pinayism has become a praxis asserting a transformative and transgressive agency that combines theory, practice, and personal reflection.

To further examine the growth of Pinayism, this essay focuses on Pinayist pedagogical praxis. In this article, I collaborate with Jocyl Sacramento, a recent graduate of San Francisco State University’s Asian American Studies Master’s program. Her work develops the notion of Pinayist pedagogy, which further expands on the “Pinayism proposal” and how it has become a transformative curricular praxis. From the onset, one of the main objectives was to create a Pinayism that would be useful in the everyday lives of Pinays. Our aim is to explore the ways in which Pinayist pedagogy fulfilled this objective in spaces both in and outside of the classroom.

Defining Pinayism as Pedagogy

Pinayist praxis is a process, place, and production that aims to connect the global and local to the personal issues and stories

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of Pinay struggle, survival, service, sisterhood, and strength. It is an individual and communal process of decolonization, humanization, self-determination, and relationship building, ultimately moving toward liberation. Through this process, Pinays create places where their epistemologies are at the center of the discourse/dialogue/conversation and organizing. Pinays also represent Pinayism through critical cultural production of art, performance, and engaged scholarship that expresses their perspectives and counternarratives.³

Building on these descriptions, Pinayism has expanded to include Pinayist pedagogy, a curricular and spatial intervention of transformative praxis that aims to teach the elements of process, place, and production. Building on Paulo Freire's notion of praxis to "encourage students to become social agents, developing their capacity to confront real-world problems that face them and their community,"⁴ Pinayist pedagogy's goals are two-fold: 1) teaching and learning critical Pinay studies with the central purpose to develop the capacity of Pinays to confront global, local, and personal problems that face them and their community; and 2) mentoring, reproducing, and creating a community of Pinayists.

At the core is critical Pinay studies, the teaching and learning of Filipina women's stories, including their history and their contemporary experiences. Pinayist pedagogy aims to uncover challenges that Pinays face, while creating plans of action that pursue social change for the betterment of their lives. Pinayist pedagogy resists oppression both in the content and the methods of the curriculum and calls for a commitment to social justice, making the classroom a space of "transformational resistance."⁵ Freire argues that this transformation will occur if students and teachers engage in a reciprocal relationship where knowledge is shared through a circular exchange where both students and teacher participate in mutual humanization.

Through Pinayism, this humanizing pedagogy becomes a practice of freedom. Freire suggests that this "liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one."⁶ Pinayist pedagogy is more than childbirth, where the nurturing process of childrearing is what truly leads to the humanization and liberation of teachers, students, and Pinays. Central to Pinayist pedagogy is the creation of communities that humanize and liberate Filipina women. bell hooks asserts that a holistic approach to liberatory teaching "does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are em-

powered by the process.”⁷ Similarly, spaces of Pinayist pedagogy become places of healing for both Pinayist teacher and student.

In Search for a Humanizing Pedagogy: The Pinayist Workshop

It (the Pinayism workshop) challenged me to love myself and to see beyond my internalized perceptions of what the world thinks of me. It also made me think about how I treat other Pinays.

—Pinay high school student

Pinayism began in the community and has created community, where Pinays could come together, share their experiences, and possibly plan actions to improve their lives. For many, these workshops were the first time Pinays were the center of the dialogue.

Although each workshop is different because of the participants and the facilitators, the constant elements are a discussion on Pinay needs, connecting global, local, and personal issues of Pinays, defining Pinayism, and a discussion amongst the participants on how to practice Pinayism in their daily lives.⁸ To ensure that the workshop implements Pinayist pedagogy, we introduce the five stages of the Paulo Freire’s cyclical process of praxis:⁹

Identifying the Problems: At a 2008 Pinayism workshop for high school students held at the University of California San Diego, participants read *Pinays Screamed but No One Heard*¹⁰, a poem dramatizing the history of Pinays in the United States from 1587 to the present. The participants then took part in a Pinay Issue *Utak Baguio*,¹¹ brainstorming issues that Pinays deal with on global, local, and personal levels. Young women and men juxtaposed issues like sexism and sex-trafficking with suicide rates, domestic violence, high rates of breast cancer, teen pregnancy, eating disorders, mental health issues, intergenerational conflict, racism within feminism, media representation, lack of mentors, and pressures of conforming to standards of beauty. They clearly had a sense of the multitude of issues facing Pinays today.

Analyzing the Problems: Workshop participants are provided with statistical and qualitative data on their identified issues. For instance, if the issues of overseas contract workers come up in the *Utak Baguio*, the facilitators cite how 75 percent of overseas contract workers from the Philippines are women.¹²

The workshop facilitators then engaged participants in detailed conversations, aimed at teasing out the connections between the lives of Pinays in the United States and how Pinays are

perceived on a global level. With a working definition of Pinayism, workshop participants can frame possible ways to address these issues facing their communities.

Creating Plans of Action: Participants get into circles of about five to six people and each group is assigned one of the issues brought up during the Pinay Issue *Utak Baguio*. In these circles, participants collaborate to create posters with a plan of action to address the issues. These plans should have individual and communal actions with global, local, and personal outcomes. Since we often begin our workshops with poetry, we sometimes conclude by having participants write poems about how to address challenges in the lives of Pinays. These plans, whether in the form of posters or poetry provide participants with ways that they can take Pinayism into their daily lives.

Freire's stages 4 (*Implement the plan of action*) and 5 (*Analyze and evaluate the actions*) usually cannot be completed in the workshop format but we encourage participants to stay in contact with us to share their experiences and reflections.

Reflections and Outcomes

At the end of a Pinayism workshop, a young Pinay made her way through a crowded room. She was pale, and with watery eyes, she whispered, "My auntie is a mail-ordered bride. What should I do?" I was silent as I listened to her auntie's story. I learned a great deal from her ability to be vulnerable and courageous in the same breath. I could only suggest she talk more to her family about it. I also gave her names of supportive organizations. Years later, I learned that this Pinay went to college and became an activist for women's rights. I last saw her at a protest in front of the Philippine Consulate urging the Philippine government to stop the sex trafficking of women and children. She humanized Pinayism for me. She also gave me hope.

A Space of Hope: The Pinayist Classroom

Hope is something shared between teachers and students. The hope that we can learn together, teach together, be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the following of our joy.

—Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom*¹³

Central to Pinayist pedagogy is the pursuit of a humanizing education, a hope shared by teachers and students, regardless if they

are Pinay or not. In Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University, I usually teach elements of Pinayism in each of my courses. Specifically in my Asian American Women's course, where a majority of my students are Asian American, with an equal gender balance between women and men, I teach a unit that focuses on critical Pinay studies.

This unit begins with a discussion about what Pinayism is in order to demystify students' preconceived notions about what it means. Although Pinayism is centered on the teaching of critical Pinay studies, it is important to acknowledge that Pinayism is not about male-bashing nor is it meant to be divisive. Pinoys along with men and women who have relationships with Pinays are encouraged to participate in Pinayism.¹⁴ A Pinay college student pointed out:

Putting Pinayism in a context of inclusion and a way of life allows for more widespread change. Pinayism then, is no longer alienating or separate from other movements, or from the support of Filipino men. Addressing Pinay issues in this way allows for the underlying foundations of family and community to play an important part, whereas in mainstream Feminism, it was overlooked and deemed unimportant to the movement.

The unit emphasizes how Pinayism goes beyond mainstream feminism to engage the complexities and intersections—where race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, spirituality, religion, body image, educational status, age, place of birth, mental health, diasporic migration, citizenship, nationalism, globalization, transnationalism, and love cross—to understand how Pinay identities, perspectives, multiple subjectivities, negotiation of contradictions, and transformative resistance are birthed.

The unit has several components that are spread across five to ten class sessions, depending on the course topic. It usually begins with a contextualizing of Pinayism in the history of feminism, womanism, and third world/women of color studies. One of the activities in the unit includes a global internet search where students are instructed to search terms that are associated with Pinays on the internet. This often results in some extremely negative portrayals, which are often oversexualized images. In a "boodoo" doll creation activity, students work in teams to create dolls that represent certain body alterations that are typically associated with Pinays or Asian women. Poetry workshops provide an outlet for students to write about Pinays or women in their lives.¹⁵

One of the major activities included in the unit is the Pinayism Scenarios. Drawing from Augusto Boal's (1971) development of the Theatre of the Oppressed, students participate in interactive theatre that creates a dialogue between performers and audience members about problems in their communities. In this critical performance pedagogy, performance in the classroom to pursue a critical dialogue on how the curriculum and literature presented in the course is directly connected to the cultures, histories, experiences, and problems faced in the students' communities with the aim of pursuing an education that is both humanizing and liberatory. In the Pinayism Scenarios, the students are instructed to do the following:

1. Show *conflict*: Do a one-minute skit of the scenario.
2. Describe the *context*: Discuss with the class how your group contextualizes the scenario in a larger framework (such as colonization, racism, sexism, beauty-queen syndrome, classism, ageism, homophobia, and so on).
3. *Connect* the global, local, and personal issues of Pinays: Explain how your scenario deals with global, local, and personal issues.
4. *Create* alternatives: Redo the one-minute skit with a Pinayist reaction.

Following is an example of a scenario:

Celia is twenty years old and comes to the U.S. to marry a man she met on the Internet. He seemed nice in the online chat rooms but is abusive when she arrives in the U.S. He treats Celia as his personal slave. He beats her, even putting a hot iron to her face so she would be ashamed to leave him. What can be done?

The Pinayism Scenarios often lead students to develop ways that they will make changes in their own lives to address issues that pertain to Pinays. It also leaves them wanting to do more. The in-class activities usually culminates in a midterm or final which encourages the students to create a presentation or project that follows Freire's cyclical process of praxis. Students have created oral herstory projects, audio recordings, multimedia presentations, community service projects, political campaigns, and even political fashion shows. Through these projects students often have a transformative Pinayism experience.¹⁶

Reflection and Outcomes

Pinayist educators challenge dominant ideologies by presenting different ways of utilizing reproductive labor. Pinayist educators

use their role as teachers to reproduce people who choose to participate in transformational resistance. They resist reproductive theory suggesting that education produces workers to help maintain the capitalist economy. Instead, Pinayist educators create communities of social justice in the classroom. Their pedagogy provides a counterhegemonic, student-centered, and culturally relevant teaching and learning experience that utilizes love, holistic health, and community to humanize the teacher, student, and Pinay.

Pinayist educators also bring forth their Pinay perspective by sharing personal narratives. These stories illustrate the communal nature of teaching that they bring into the classroom, which provides a process of humanization for both the teacher and the student. They also provide a space for their students to “become conscious about their presence in the world” and how it affects Pinays.¹⁷ A Pinayist educator’s classroom is a space where students find hope and a place to call home.

Where Pinays Call Home: Creating Pinayist Communities

“I want my classes to be a catalyst for students to change their lives.”

—Pinayist high school teacher

Introducing the concept of Pinayism through workshops and in the classroom has created a space where Pinays feel we belong—a place to call home. We are challenged to reflect on how Pinayism can be applied in our own lives and how we can share Pinayism with others. Groups of students have initiated classes on Pinayism.¹⁸ Filipino student groups have held workshops to discuss gender issues and brought on local Pinayists and Pinayistas to share an overview of the possibilities of Pinayism. Pinay scholars insert Pinay narratives into their academic work to ensure that the contributions and voices of Pinays are recognized. These examples of Pinayism as a pedagogical praxis show that Pinayists are taking it upon themselves to introduce, practice, transform, and reproduce Pinayism.

A growing number of Pinayist educators serve to centralize Pinay experiences and epistemologies by incorporating the Pinay narrative in the content of the curriculum at any level, from toddlers to our elders, and in any setting, both formal and informal, in a classroom and in the community. Pinayism in academia is not just about theory production. Its key components also include accessibility and mentorship. Pinay pedagogues create communities that critique oppression, seek social justice and (re)produce agents of social change.¹⁹ Ultimately, Pinayist pedagogy places Pinays at

the center of the curriculum, legitimizing our existence in the world. Pinayism is not only about teaching the content of Pinay studies, but also deliberately about the humanizing pedagogy we use to teach, and the overall purpose and problems that we, as Pinayists, aim to confront.

Notes

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1. The singular voice refers to experiences of Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales.
2. Pinay and Pinoy are nicknames for Filipina/o in America, adopted by some of the earliest Filipina/o immigrants to Hawaii and the United States. Because of its almost exclusive use by working-class Filipina/o immigrants and their descendants in America from the turn of the century to the 1960s, some newly immigrated, elite Filipinas/os in the 1960s and 1970s shunned the term because of its roots in the working-class experience of early immigrants. Now, the term is widely used by Filipinas/os worldwide to refer to anyone of Filipina/o ancestry.
3. For an expanded definition of Pinayism, please refer to Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, *Pin@y Educational Partnerships: A Sourcebook of Filipina/o American Studies, Volume II* (Santa Clara: Phoenix, forthcoming).
4. Jeffrey Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008): 25.
5. Daniel Solórzano and Dolores Delgado-Bernal, "Examining Transformational Resistance through a Critical Race and LatCrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context," *Urban Education* 36:3 (2001): 319.
6. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000): 49.
7. bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994): 21.
8. After participating in the Conversing Pinay conference in 2000, I began to really think clearly about developing a Pinayism that aims to connect the global, local, and personal worlds of Pinays.
9. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell, *Art of Critical Pedagogy*.
10. This poem can be found in Tintiangco-Cubales, *PEP Sourcebook, volume II*.
11. In the 2006 PEP Tibak Training, Artnelson Concordia used the Tagalog translation *Utak Baguio*, for brainstorm.
12. Statistics were cited by Elsa Valmidriano as being from GABRIELA Network's findings published in 2007, www.gabnet.org.
13. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 69.

14. In his article responding to Pinayism, Frank Samson calls on men to join the Pinayist movement by exploring praxis on the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels. He states that the first step in engaging in Pinayism is to develop an ownership predicated on a Pinayist consciousness. He describes this individual process as a direct opposition to a society that equates masculinity with heterosexist patriarchal norms. He asserts that Filipino men must implement Pinayism as “a way of being in the world.” Samson challenges men to reevaluate how they view their mothers and women in their family and urges men to refrain from participating or perpetuating verbal, physical, and sexual assault against Pinays and other women. See Frank L. Samson, “Filipino American Men: Comrades in the Filipina/o American Feminism Movement,” Melinda L. de Jesús, ed., *Pinay Power: Peminist Critical Theory: Theorizing the Filipina/American Experience* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005).
15. Tintiangco-Cubales, *PEP Sourcebook, volume II*.
16. Allyson Tintiangco-Cubales, “Final Project Runway: In the I’s of Asian American Women,” Geraldine B. Stahly, ed., *Gender Identity, Equity, and Violence* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2007).
17. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Indignation* (Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2004): xx.
18. A group of students initiated a directed group of students’ class at University of California, San Diego. This class was housed in the Department of Ethnic Studies in Spring 2005.
19. Jocyl Sacramento, *Reproducing Resistance: A Study on Pinayist Pedagogical Praxis*. San Francisco State University, San Francisco, 2009.