

**Liberative Education for Farmworkers:
Assessing the Transformative Potential of Social Media/Networking**

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This is the irony of technology: its functional excellence contributes to the preservation of the society into which it is inserted, its quantitative virtuosity creates qualitative immobility and its experimental and open-ended character solidifies the closedness of the society which it creates.²

—Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope*

Abstract. *Despite being touted as emancipatory tools used for revolutionary means, social media and networking have reinstated the banking method of education. While liberative religious educators and organizers have largely embraced these virtual tools, this paper sets out to show the limitations of such tools if they are not accompanied by embodied praxis. From the perspective of the United States farm working poor, liberative education requires educators to occupy sites of social abandonment, as opposed to virtual websites, and embrace the bodies of the poor as the locus of religious education.*

Rubem Alves, one of the founding figures of liberation theology, did not have Facebook and Twitter in mind when the words above were published in 1969. In the spirit of his quote though, today the role of technology – online social media and networking specifically – creates this immobility in Christian Religious Education (CRE). Rather than participating in the Good News of resurrecting subjugated bodies, the use of online tools ensures that religious educators remain physically disconnected from those bodies. Despite being touted as emancipatory tools used for liberative means, online social media and networking reinstates the banking method of education. If religious education is to be liberative, then these tools must follow embodied praxis.

The paper is constructed from the perspective of a former agricultural worker and community organizer, where liberation means emancipation from economic depravity and harsh working conditions and liberative education is participating in la lucha.³ Simply, Christian religious educators, as I argue, have an embodied responsibility to respond to the material oppression and pain felt by the farm working poor by working in the fields. After defining the material deprivation of farmworkers in the United States, the paper will describe two specific social media and networking tools, Twitter and Facebook, and how they have come to distort liberative education. Following liberative pedagogies and theologies, I contend that in order to participate in liberative Christian Religious Education one must experience the material and embodied pain of farm labor and participate in the struggle for the liberation of our bodies.

¹ Patrick Bruner Reyes is a Catholic Practical Theologian, who works in the labor movement and lay educator movement within the Catholic Church. This paper is dedicated to the crop workers and packinghouse workers I labored alongside. Without every one of you, the world would not be fed. Without our liberation, the world remains spiritually malnourished.

² Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope* (Cleveland: Corpus Books, 1969), 25.

³ “The struggle.” I do not italicize any Spanish words. Following Carmen Nanko-Fernández who claims that by not italicizing, “this indicates the interaction between Spanish and English in the daily lived experience of U.S. Latino@s.” See Carmen Nanko-Fernández, *Theologizing en espanish* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), xvi.

Who Really Puts the Food on the Table?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines farmworker as any one of these types of laborers: field crop workers, nursery workers, livestock workers, farmworker supervisors, and hired farm managers. Daily average hourly earnings for farm laborers, broadly defined, stood at \$10.22 in 2012.⁴ Field crop workers earn even less at \$9.50 an hour.⁵ According to the US Department of Labor, the average farm working woman makes \$2,500-\$5,000 a year and the average farm working man makes \$5,000-\$7,500 a year.⁶ How one gets from the \$10.22 an hour figure to approximately \$5,000 in annual income is by accounting for the seasonality of crop work.⁷ Worse still, Human Rights Watch reported more than 200,000 children under the age of 18 were hired as farmworkers and unlike adult workers, these children earned less than minimum wage.⁸ Like adults workers, these children toiled in the soil for extended hours in hazardous conditions, received no benefits, no overtime and no vacation.⁹ For women in the fields, the Human Rights Watch report notes that “geographic, linguistic and cultural isolation combined with poverty and a desperate need for work, poor housing, vulnerability to deportation if undocumented, and the inability to seek protection create an inevitable climate for sexual harrassment and violence to flourish on farms.”¹⁰ Regardless of season, age or gender of the worker, location or even the particular crop work, what bind these workers and their families are material oppression, abuse, poverty and hunger.¹¹ How then does the material deprivation of farmworkers, relate to the role of social media as a potential liberative educational tool?

Share, Like and Tweet for Liberation?

Facebook is the largest social networking site on the planet with more than 955 million active users as of June 2012.¹² A user has the ability to construct a profile, join groups, share what one is doing with a short status update, broadcast and disseminate information about actions and events, and connect with ‘friends’ in closed networks.¹³ Still, research on the popular

⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Agriculture Counts, National Agricultural Statistics Board” (May 17, 2012). <http://usda01.library.cornell.edu/usda/current/FarmLabo/FarmLabo-05-17-2012.pdf> (accessed May 31, 2012).

⁵ *Ibid.* This data is from April 8-14, 2012, the latest week USDA survey data available at the time this paper was constructed.

⁶ U.S. Department of Labor, “The National Agricultural Workers Survey, updated January 11, 2010,” under “Income and Poverty,” <http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/report/ch3.cfm> (accessed January 15, 2012). The Human Rights Watch report, *Field of Perils*, noted below in footnote 8, suggests that ‘crop workers’ earned between \$12,500 and \$14,999 individually, and \$15,000 and 17,499 per household. They acquired their data also from the U.S. Department of Labor, “The National Agricultural Workers Survey: Public Access Data,” <http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/naws.cfm> (accessed April 27, 2010), and when I researched these figures as of June 23, 2012, there was no change in data. The difference in the annual income between the Department of Labor and Department of Agriculture comes in different use of terminology, between farmworkers and ‘crop workers.’ While crop workers earn less, they are also included in the term used by the Department of Labor as “farmworkers.”

⁷ Because of space constraints, the paper cannot discuss seasonality. However, it simply means that in certain regions of the world, certain farm labor is performed at specific times. Farm laborers are subject to not only the demands of the labor market – when people desire the goods – but also are at the mercy of when a particular crop needs particular work for that particular season.

⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Field of Peril: Child Labor in US Agriculture*, (May 2010). Available online at http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/crd0510webwcover_1.pdf (accessed April 2, 2012).

⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Field of Peril*, 26-27. If children are paid by the piece, meaning by an arbitrary unit of measurement for the particular product, such as in strawberries being paid per flat of strawberries picked (~12lbs), the resulting wage can be and has been documented to be less than minimum wage.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, *Field of Peril*, 63.

¹¹ This paper assumes that the crop worker does not own the land that one is working. It also assumes that executives of large agribusiness corporations do not work the land. The paper also assumes that the audience mostly does not work the land.

¹² Facebook, under “Key Facts,” <http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22> (accessed August 1, 2012).

¹³ Throughout the paper when discussing social networking terms like status update, share, like and tweet are used. Status update is the action when a person writes on their Facebook a message that people in their network can view, similar to a tweet. Share and Like are functions within online social networking where users, when viewing a material elsewhere on the web,

site shows that Facebook serves first as a way of showcasing one's own involvement in those particular struggles, interests and organizations – termed by researchers as *self-presentation*.¹⁴ There is little conclusive data, however, about the physical participation in offline activism by Facebook users.¹⁵ Similarly, in 140 characters or less, a Twitter user can share with their followers thoughts and feelings on any number of topics.¹⁶ Users share links, follow and participate in trending subjects with the appropriate #hashtag. For example, a tweet written on the 3rd of August, 2012, by the United Farmworkers Twitter account, shares a news article about agricultural workers sprayed by a crop duster.¹⁷

A critically consciousness farmworker would ask, could this tweet and subsequent retweets, protect those workers? Does it offer embodied liberation for the 10,000 to 20,000 farmworkers physician-diagnosed with pesticide poisoning each year?¹⁸

The common response to these questions from both outside the movement and inside the movement is 'yes, because so many more people know about what happened, so we can all come together to stop it.' Yet, is there any data to support the notion that those involved in online activism, information sharing and social networking really accomplish change in working conditions for the farm working poor? When evaluating the use of these sites and liberative pedagogies and theologies together, the answer is 'not really.'¹⁹

Liberative Pedagogies and Theology

How do researchers, educators and pedagogues evaluate that claim if methods and instruments for evaluation are inconclusive? Perhaps the task of practical theological research and liberative education is rather to “inspire and direct new modes of action/practice which will

can click a button and share that information with their network. Sharing and liking can be done when the user is not the author of the content generated on the webpage, but they would like to share that information within their own virtual network.

¹⁴ As reported in Lynne M. Webb, Megan Wilson, Maggie Hodges, Peter A. Smith, and Monica Zakeri, “Facebook: How College Students Work It,” *Social Media: Usage and Impact*, ed. by Hana S. Noor Al-Deen and John Allen Hendricks, New York: Lexington Books, 2012: 3-22. C.f. DeAndrea, D.C., Shaw, A.S., Levine T.R., “Online Language: The role of Culture in Self-Expression and Self-Construal on Facebook,” *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 29, 2010. 425-442; Grasmuck, S., Martine, J., & Zhao, S., “Ethno-racial Identity Displays on Facebook,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 15, 2009, 158-188. T.A. Pempek, Yermolayeva, Y.A. & Calvert, S.L. “College Students Social Networking Experience on Facebook,” *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30, 2009, 227-238.

¹⁵ Following the findings of Lynne Webb, Megan Wilson, Maggie Hodges, Peter Smith and Monica Zakeri, studies on Facebook have followed three main patterns: “1) by gathering data from users (Bake & Oswald, 2010), 2) by analyzing discourse on the site, such as descriptions of groups (Honeycutt & Cunliffe, 2010), or 3) by examining users’ homepages (DeAndrea et al., 2010).” Quote from Maggie Hodges, Peter Smith, Lynne Webb, Megan Wilson and Monica Zakeri “Facebook: How College Students Work it,” in *Social Media: Usage and Impact* ed. by Hana S. Noor Al-Deen and John Allen Hendricks (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 9. C.f. Aaron Smith, “Why Americans Use Social Media, *Pew Research Center* November 12, 2011. <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Why-Americans-Use-Social-Media.aspx> (accessed April 26, 2012). Here the report generated by the Pew Research Institute suggests that 67% of Adults use social networking to keep in touch with friends. Another report by Joanna Brenner, “*Pew Internet: Social Networking (full detail)*,” <http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/March/Pew-Internet-Social-Networking-full-detail.aspx> (accessed July 18, 2012), suggests that 71% of those with household income less than \$30,000 use social media; however, did not offer any data for those making less or statistics for particular occupations such as farm labor.

¹⁶ “Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news about what you find interesting.” Twitter, under “About,” <http://twitter.com/about> (accessed August 1, 2012).

¹⁷ See appendix.

¹⁸ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “Workplace Safety and Health Topics: Pesticide Illness and Injury Surveillance.” <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/pesticides/> (accessed 15 July, 2012).

¹⁹ Rhon Teruelle, “Social Media and Youth Activism,” in *Social Media: Usage and Impact* ed. by Hana S. Noor Al-Deen and John Allen Hendricks (New York: Lexington Books, 2012), 201-218. If you were reading the paper with the understanding I was going to investigate or answer whether or not social networking is an effective tool for social change, I propose that my purpose as an educator and organizer is to ensure that more bodies join the struggle for liberation from the oppressive system of agribusiness than attract a twitter following or even get this paper to be a trending topic.

enable individuals and communities to function, not more effectively but more faithfully.”²⁰ By tracing the orientation of liberation theology, religious educators are reminded that the principle location and the purpose of liberative education are how bodies are used, misused, abused, liberated and transformed. Following Paulo Freire, Daniel Schipani, Ada María Isasi-Díaz, Marcella Althaus-Reid and Ivan Petrella, the paper will look at the body of the crop worker as the locus of liberative education.

Paulo Freire’s *Education for Critical Consciousness* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provide the cornerstone for any liberative religious education pedagogy. Challenging the banking method of education where teachers merely deposit information into students, Freire articulates not only a vision of liberation, but also provides a class analysis of the oppressed and oppressor relationship.²¹ For Freire, “liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it,” and “those truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking methods of domination in the name of liberation.”²² Freire is clear that investigating is required to unearth and unmask these systems of oppression, but he is also clear that simple information sharing once these systems of oppression have been unearthed is not a liberative method of education in and of itself.²³

While naming these oppressions can be done through social networking tools, a Freirian understanding of liberation can only occur through the oppressed naming their own oppression and then liberating themselves.²⁴ Naming those oppressions on Twitter and Facebook – if done by the oppressed – could be a step towards liberation.²⁵ Social media and networking sites, however, are used primarily by middle and upper class people, and there is no reliable data available of usage by those making less than \$7,500 per year and working in the fields.²⁶

Written two decades before Facebook and drawing on Freire, Daniel Schipani notes that liberation theology and religious education meet in the unearthing of the historical reality of oppression and the verification of liberation through praxis.²⁷ The historical reality of oppression requires an “identification and focus on given social and existential conflict situations.”²⁸ Schipani follows Freire claiming that the oppressed – farmworkers in the United States – are the people who need to investigate and name the systems of oppression that allow for such conditions to exist.²⁹ After the oppression is named, Schipani notes there needs to be an active investigation of the sites of possible liberation in the everyday lives of the oppressed.³⁰

²⁰ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 256-257.

²¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 30th Anniversary Edition, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2011).

²² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79.

²³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 106.

²⁴ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 56.

²⁵ In his early essay, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, he called these agents of change, these ‘namers of oppression,’ radicals. The radical (or the conscientized in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) is a subject to the degree that one “perceives historical contradictions in increasingly critical fashion; ... he knows that as a Subject he can and ought, together with Other Subjects, to participate creatively in that process by discerning transformations in order to aid and accelerate them.” Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 12.

²⁶ See footnote 15.

²⁷ Daniel Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1988), 38.

²⁸ Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, 52.

²⁹ Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, 52.

³⁰ Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology*, 143.

In terms of liberating religious education to include one's embodied everyday living, religious education is in great debt to the contributions of the late Ada María Isasi-Díaz. In both *Hispanic Women: A Prophetic Voice in the Church*, co-written by Yolanda Tarango and *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology*, Isasi-Díaz articulates a Mujerista theology that contributes to the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, in the name of Hispanic/Latina communities. This is significant in the United States, because the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that nearly 70% of crop farmworkers were born in Mexico.³¹ This liberative Mujerista project is not a utopian vision where Mujerista theologies or ideologies come to define social structures, but rather works to guide grassroots communities to liberative and embodied praxis.³² Isasi-Díaz, like so many Latina/o scholars, claims that liberation happens in lo cotidiano, one's every day material experience.³³ For my own community and the locus of this paper, lo cotidiano of the U.S. farmworker is one of fear, poverty and physical pain from hard labor. Lo cotidiano for Isasi-Díaz is a process of interaction between thinking and action, and thus places "the centrality of the body in lived-experience" and "acknowledges the materiality of our persons."³⁴ While social media/networking may serve to relate one's experience of lo cotidiano through status updates, likes, shares and profile construction, it does not necessarily acknowledge the materiality of one's embodied experience. Participation on social networks or media sites for Christian Religious Education distorts the connection between one's thinking and one's actions. One cannot wield a smartphone and a field knife simultaneously!

Returning the locus of liberation theology to the body, Marcella Althaus-Reid's materialist-based theology argues that liberation begins within the particular context of the body, rather than some universal liberation.³⁵ Her content and method remind religious educators of the context in which bodies are in need of liberation by prophetically announcing the sights, sounds, tastes and smells of the oppressed.³⁶ Importantly, liberation theology focuses on the materiality of the poor, the queer and the oppressed woman worker, meaning the sights, smells, sounds, tastes and feeling of the harsh conditions of a farmworker's life and occupation.³⁷

Can one really 'share' or 'like' the smells, tastes and feelings of farmworker oppression through social media? One can relate statistics and tell stories as this paper does, but can the reader taste the mix of blood, sweat and dirt that went into constructing the paper? Is the dryness of the worker's throat, the pain of hunger while surrounded by food or the burn in the back from contorting one's body over rows of crops for 10-12 hours a day relatable by social networking sites?

Finally, Ivan Petrella in *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* calls on liberation theologians to look at three main themes that constitute liberation. The first is his notion of vita, meaning the zones of social abandonment – those places where society allocates its most disposable members.³⁸ The fields and barrios to which the farm working poor live and work are

³¹ United States Department of Agriculture, "Farm Labor: Background," <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/background.aspx#Numbersu> (accessed June 15, 2012).

³² Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 2. C.f. José Míguez Bonino, *Toward a Christian Political Ethics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 52.

³³ Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues*, 95.

³⁴ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues*, 51.

³⁵ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2.

³⁶ Marcella Althaus-Reid, "Class, Sex and the Theologian," in *Another Possible World*, eds. Marcella Althaus-Reid, Ivan Petrella, and Luis Carlos Susin (London: SCM Press, 2007), 26.

³⁷ Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 4.

³⁸ Ivan Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology: A Polemic* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 8-9.

examples of these *vitas*. The second theme is a return to class as the primary issue of liberation theology. He asserts that U.S. liberation theologians erroneously work within a context where race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality act as the locus for liberation theology, thus distracting religious educators from the material deprivation of the least of these – the farm working poor who put food on the table.³⁹ Finally, Petrella claims liberation theology should recover a sense of rebellion.⁴⁰ For theologians and educators who have found positions as guild theologians, university professors, religious educators, lay leaders or organizers, this is a challenge to work *for* liberation rather than working to define it.⁴¹

Under this rubric, liberation theologians and religious educators might reconsider the time spent re-tweeting, sharing, liking or constructing one's online self-presentation. Only by beginning with work dedicated to the material liberation in *lo cotidiano* – the everyday experience of the farm working poor – can one honestly participate in liberative education. It is this honesty to which Althaus-Reid spoke and which Petrella prophetically announces that liberation theology and religious education as fields of thought can be liberated from new practices of the banking method of education and complicity in oppression.

Considering the liberation concepts of the oppressed themselves as verified in praxis, *lo cotidiano*, the material smells, sights, sounds, tastes and feeling of oppressed bodies, and an emphasis on class, one can better assess the liberative potential of social media tools for religious education. Such a consideration redirects the religious educator's attention from these online tools to the tools that are in the hands of crop workers. These tools include field knives, ladders in the orchards, heavy machinery for preparing soil, packaging and cleaning crops and in some cases, more traditional tools like hoes, pitchforks and shovels.⁴² On an average day 243 agricultural workers suffer lost-work-time injuries and about 5% of these injuries result in permanent impairment due to a lack of protective tools, including protective gear and proper safety training.⁴³ Clearly, if liberation is to come through the oppressed themselves, these are the tools that religious educators must work with.

When speaking about Cesar Chavez and his own religious Mysticism – mentioned in this paper not only because of Chavez's integration of his Catholic faith tradition in the farm labor movement, but also because the United Farm Workers (UFW) celebrates 50 years of liberative work in 2012 - Luis D. León states that even back in the mid-twentieth century "farmworkers were an easily exploitable population ... growers used toxic pesticides on the crops ... in the fields, workers spent long hours under the blazing sun performing monotonous and backbreaking work without rest or proper equipment."⁴⁴ Luis León articulates that little has changed since Chavez and workers in California began to organize, evidenced by the tweet in appendix one articulating the continued danger of pesticides and unsigned assembly bills insuring proper shade and water for workers.⁴⁵ If one's everyday experience in one's body – *lo cotidiano* – is what

³⁹ Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology*, 82.

⁴⁰ Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology*, 150.

⁴¹ Petrella, *Beyond Liberation Theology*, 150.

⁴² The Human Rights Watch report noted previously that from 2005 to 2008 nearly 43 children under 18 died in agricultural work. Some of these deaths were the result of equipment use. See *Fields of Peril*, 28

⁴³ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "Workplace Safety and Health Topics: Agricultural Safety." <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/aginjury/> (accessed July 10, 2012).

⁴⁴ Luis D. León, "The Mysticism and Social Action of César Chávez," *Latino Religions and Civic Activism in the United States*, eds. Gastón Espinoza, Virgilio Elizondo and Jesse Miranda (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 57.

⁴⁵ *Farm Worker Safety Act of 2012 (Butler)*, AB2346. California State Assembly Bill, *AB2346 (Butler)* allows farm workers to sue employers who repeatedly fail to comply with mandatory requirements for shade and drinking water. "The Farmworker Safety Act of 2012: Factsheet," <http://www.asmdc.org/members/a53/attachments/AB2643FactSheetSpotlight.pdf> (accessed August 15, 2012). For full bill details see: California Legislative Information, under "*Ab-2346 Agricultural Employee*

needs liberation, then liberative educators will recognize online activism as a present day form of information depositing, without any social rebellion.⁴⁶ Following Albert Camus, rebellion “is the movement by which man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation.”⁴⁷ Meaning, rebellion occurs when the farm worker, within the systems of injustice known as agribusiness or as the food purchased by every consumer across the United States, declares the whole system inhumane as it violates her body. For the farmworker, the damné, the oppressed, the poor, those that physically put the food on our tables (the host), religious educators cannot participate in the rebellion and liberation by tweeting, unless one participates by physically moving into the field, working side-by-side with the oppressed: “In the liberation struggle, however, this people who were once relegated to the realm of the imagination, victims of unspeakable terrors...reform and amid blood and tears give birth to very real and urgent issues.”⁴⁸

In a society dominated by technology, some religious educators claim social networking has been successfully used as an organizing tool, which would legitimize its use for organizing farmworkers and others. The Occupy Wall Street Movement is often referenced as a movement fueled by the mix between social networking and embodied practice. The Occupy Wall Street website in and of itself serves as a social network and as a tool for organizing events, general assembly proceedings,⁴⁹ documents and contact information.⁵⁰

One particular group in Berkley, California, “Occupy the Farm,” focuses on seven acres of soil in Northern California, where they have occupied, plowed, prepped and planted over 7,200 feet of crop rows.⁵¹ While their work should be applauded, it does not address the harsh working conditions and material oppression of farmworkers in the United States, as the occupiers do not share the same socio-economic depravity as the crop workers addressed in this paper.⁵² What the Occupy Movement has managed to accomplish in promoting a public discourse about corporate influence, student debt, fighting corporate personhood, too big to fail banks, an unjust tax system, larger systems of injustice, they have failed to shine a light on the injustice involved in the very food purchased to fuel the bodies of the movement.⁵³ From the social context of the farm working poor in the United States, it is argued quite simply that the Occupy Movement – and the Church – occupies the wrong space.

Growing up in Salinas, California, the salad capital of the world, working the fields myself, returning each year from college to work as a laborer and Quality Assurance technician

Safety: Heat Related Illness,” http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201120120AB2346 (accessed September 1, 2012).

⁴⁶ Rebellion is a concept shared by Paulo Freire and Ivan Petrella. For both, the Rebel is one who not only can discern the system of oppression which binds her, but who also seeks to reject and rebuild an alternative reality. The Rebel can also be found in works such as Frantz Fanon’s, *The Wretched of the Earth*, as the one who rebels against systemic violence towards the oppressed through violence.

⁴⁷ Albert Camus, *The Rebel: The Essay on Man in Revolt* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 23.

⁴⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Richard Philcox, foreword by Homi K. Bhabha, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 19.

⁴⁹ General assembly can be defined as the gathering body of participants in the Occupy Movement, where issues, actions and daily organizing can take place. For a more detailed definition of the general assembly see, Take the Square, under “Quick Guide on Group Dynamics in Peoples Assemblies,” <http://takethesquare.net/2011/07/31/quick-guide-on-group-dynamics-in-peoples-assemblies/> (accessed August 1, 2012).

⁵⁰ Occupy Wall Street, www.occupywallstreet.org. (accessed May 12, 2012).

⁵¹ Take Back the Tract, “Why this Farm,” <http://www.takebackthetract.com/index.php/the-farm> (accessed July 8, 2012).

⁵² Ibid. The group consists of students, professors and local residents.

⁵³ Occupy Together, “About Occupy: Issues,” <http://www.occupytogether.org/aboutoccupy/> (accessed August 10, 2012).

in a packing plant, the embodied struggle located in the hungry, sweating and odorous bodies is nothing one could capture in a social networking tool.⁵⁴ Ultimately, this paper is a call for the field of religious education to move from discussing middle-class tools and theories for organizing liberative movements, to the actual tools, spaces and bodies of the field-working poor.

Work in the field of liberative religious education requires work in the fields. Simply, to understand the material deprivation of cutting lettuce in the field, one needs a lettuce knife, not a smartphone. Unless one is familiar with the pains of cutting with a knife and works to change the world from the fields, then one is complicit in the material oppression that continues to unsettle the stomachs, dinner tables, classrooms and congregation halls across the United States. Rubem Alves reminds Christian Religious Educators of a Christian tradition which focuses on the body: “Things of the body: the whole universe fits inside it. It is not by change that tradition speaks not of the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. This is an affirmation that life is beautiful and that the divine is found in the simplest material things... Thus I eat and drink the things of this world, the body of God.”⁵⁵ As Christian religious educators, let us honor all bodies by working in the fields for liberation.

⁵⁴ Taking pictures on the job is not permitted by the supervisor or manager and is punishable by losing one’s job in the very least, and for others the threat of deportation.

⁵⁵ Rubem Alves, *Transparencies of Eternity* (Miami: Convivium Press, 2010), 99.

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Appendix 1



Twitter Update by the UFW Twitter account on August 3, 2012. Accessed on same day.