

2009

Review of *A Call to Action: An Introduction to Education, Philosophy, and Native North America* By Curry Stephenson Malott

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A Call to Action: An Introduction to Education, Philosophy, and Native North America. By Curry Stephenson Malott. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008. xiv + 232 pp. References. \$89.95 cloth, \$32.95 paper.

In *A Call to Action*, Curry Stephenson Malott appeals to North American educators to acknowledge their essential role in the ongoing struggle for sustainable and ethical ways of living as humans. Malott joins a rising chorus of scholars who warn about a singular focus on the conflict between Indigenous and Western epistemologies (e.g., Glen Aikenhead's "Integrating Western and Aboriginal Sciences: Cross-Cultural Science Teaching" in *Research in Science Education*, 2001; Ray Barnhardt and A. O. Kawagley's "Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Alaska Native Ways of Knowing" in *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 2005; and Ladislaus Semali and J. L. Kincheloe's editors' introduction to their 1999 *What Is Indigenous Knowledge?: Voices from the Academy*). He advocates instead for educators to recognize how Indigenous knowledge and Marxist analyses inform one another and together offer a path toward unification and transformation.

To begin the process of transformation, Malott calls on educators to reflect on their responsibilities to the land on which they live and teach. In this way, educators may recognize that they are connected to one another and to the land, which may revolutionize their curriculum and pedagogy. In fact, Malott seeks to extend the appeal and reach of critical pedagogy by centering the issue of human relationship to land. Readers encounter some discussion about the role of humans as caretakers of the land and environment and a brief critique of how notions of resource scarcity breed a culture of fear and greed. We also read about a few examples of organic community development organized around natural resources like the Columbia River in the U.S. and the Lacondon Forest in the Mexican state of Chiapas.

Yet these ideas appear somewhat simplistic and disconnected when, in reality, they often interrelate as part of a worldview, or cosmology. Additionally, the concepts presented often

are quite complex—consider that Malott's discussion of the role of humans as caretakers is part of a broader understanding about the interdependence of human, natural, and spiritual realms (as in Gregory Cajete's *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education*, 1994, and A. O. Kawagley's "Alaskan Native Education: History and Adaptation in the New Millennium" in *Journal of American Indian Education*, 1999); or that Marc Pruyn's critique (in Malott, pp. 193-207) of national borders might be informed by Sandy M. A. Grande's description of the ways Indigenous peoples must simultaneously border patrol and border cross in her "American Indian Geographies of Identity and Power: At the Crossroads of Indigena and Mestiza" in *Harvard Educational Review*, 2000. Without situating this discussion of Indigenous knowledge in a particular theoretical or cultural context, Malott runs the risk of misleading those unfamiliar with these epistemologies or of not engaging existing research in this area. So, while it is admirable that Malott issues a call to action, readers need to know more about why and how to take this action, whether they are new or current educators, teacher educators, or critical theorists.

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