

Remembering Pato

by
Aitor Gomez

Jesús Javier Gómez Alonso (Pato) was born in 1952 in Bilbao, the largest city of the Basque Country. Gernika, another town of the same country, suffered in 1937 the first air bombing against a civil population by the Nazi aircraft, which we could see in the reproduction of the Picasso painting that Pato had in his hall. When he was thirteen, Pato met his friend Ramon Flecha and later Iñaki Santacruz; soon they enrolled in the clandestine movement against Franco's dictatorship. In 1972, several friends were expelled from an exclusive Business School University due to their involvement in the democratic movement and they moved to Barcelona. Pato got married and had a child (Aitor). During the political transition Pato, member of the anarchist trade union CNT, was the workers' representative in the Hospital where he worked as an administrator, leading a movement for the transformation into a public health institution.

In 1992, after working in several companies, he decided to make a key change in his life. Friendship and love were his motivations; he decided to renounce to a wealthy position in a company and to fulfill his dreams. He met his wife Lidia Puigvert; he established a close friendship with Paulo Freire and started to live with his friends Iñaki and Ramon. He also met friends like Donaldo Macedo, Nita Freire, Basil Bernstein, Henry Giroux, Henry Levin, Ulrich Beck, Joe Kincheloe, Shirley Steinberg, and Peter McLaren. He started to teach at the University of Barcelona, and met very good friends in the Department of Educational Research Methods. Pato was one of the key members in the center of research CREA, where he created a research program on love, conducted research and social action with the Romà, developed the communicative research methodology and contributed to building up the educational transformative project "Learning Communities."

International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, Vol 1 (1) (Spring 2008)

In a few years, he produced interesting literature, partially translated into English. In the piece “Why the Romà do not like mainstream schools. Voices of a people without territory” (*Harvard Educational Review*, 2003, 73, 4, 559-590), we have an example of the transformative results of conducting research ‘with’ rather than ‘on’ the Romà. In “Contemporary Sociological Theory” (Peter Lang, New York, 2003), we can read the usefulness for social action of his dialogic approach to social theories. His key contribution on the communicative research methodology is in a book in Spanish: “Metodologia comunicativa critica” (Roure, Barcelona, in press). His contribution on the analysis of love is also published in his book: “El amor en la sociedad del riesgo” (Roure, Barcelona, 2004).

In 2003, Pato had cancer on his lung. It was quickly discovered and removed. His research program on love was then one of the bases used by SAFO (a women studies’ group working in CREA) to develop their work on the prevention of gender violence. SAFO conducted studies on gender violence in high schools and also the two first studies in Spain on gender violence in universities, funded by the Spanish and the Catalan Women’s Institutes. They also participated in the Catalan Platform against gender violence. Simultaneously, CREA as a group and four of their members (Pato, Lidia, Ramon and Rosa Valls) started to receive attacks that generated a lot of pain. Pato could not have the peace he needed for his recovery, although an international campaign of solidarity with CREA gave him a lot of faith.

In October 2005, a liver metastasis was found. Although doctors said that nothing could be done and that he would die before two months, Pato and his friends fought to obtain ten months with a lot of joy and love. In Boston, he received the care of friends like Donaldo Macedo, Lilia Bartolomé, John Comings and Rima Rudd. Lidia got pregnant and Pato was always talking about his new child. Pato wanted to die at home, with friends and without pain, and he got this. The last two days and nights, he wanted to have always Lidia and Ramon in his sight.

Pato died on August 8th, 2006, at nine o’clock. The 7th of August, when he could barely speak, he sometimes opened his eyes and said “hello, pretty” while looking at Lidia, with whom he carried out, till the end, his proposal of a love revolution. The previous night he was talking a lot with Ramon about memories of struggle, friendship and love that will be always with us. After the ceremony in Barcelona, people are talking a lot about keeping Pato’s dreams forever with us, struggling forever for equality, solidarity, friendship and love. A new ceremony will be celebrated in Bilbao, before dispersing his ashes in San Juan de Gaztelugatxe, a beautiful place of the Basque Coast which symbolizes the love between Lidia and Pato.