

## Remembering Joe Lyons Kincheloe: A Revered Master

By Vanessa Jae Paradis

*“Our memory, our understanding of the historical forces that pull our puppet strings, can liberate us, and hopefully save us.” (Kincheloe, 1991)*

The way we use language can sometimes morph into ethnic slurs and defamation without our conscious awareness, even if we otherwise view ourselves as being egalitarian and committed to social justice, and even if we, ourselves, are oppressed. Described in this article is just one example of how the elite cabal steals our words, constructs and defines new words for us, and appropriates culture in ways that divide us, demean us, and of course, supports their rule over us along with their never-ending quest to increase profit. As Raina Bird so aptly puts it, “English doesn't borrow from other languages. English follows other languages down dark alleys, knocks them over the head and rifles through their pockets for loose grammar” (Vanderburg, 2011). As a consequence, we are often blind to the hidden dimensions of the language we use.

For example, we tend to be oblivious to these matters when we use the latest “cool” slang dispensed to us via “popular culture” because history has been erased from our minds as culture becomes Europeanized for power and profit motives. However, empathic people seem to have an emotional connection to that history; it seems to be in their DNA somehow. Joe had that sensitivity and he was able to identify it in others whom he referred to as “sensitives.” In his work, he stresses the importance of getting many perspectives and of researching long neglected historical information; in other words, we need to uncover and correct the lies we have all been taught in school and through the media. Joe was an exceptionally empathic person and realized that historical knowledge can help us all gain a broader understanding, even an empathic understanding. Pinar (2010) in his observation of Joe, stated, “He took to heart issues others seem to shed like water on a duck’s back.” This is one of the qualities of empathic people – we feel things deeply and are connected in ways that so many people seem to have lost and may have a difficult time understanding. Joe used his empathic abilities to provide a great service to many of us by sharing his unconditional love and his ability to literally feel and transmute other people’s pain. He was always able to provide the perfect words to “assuage suffering,” as he has framed it in his works; there are many people who can attest to this special gift Joe shared generously and unconditionally. He shared his gifts with me as well. His mission as he stated many times throughout his work was to “alleviate suffering” and that’s exactly what he did while he was here. And he has left us important tools that can aid us all in doing the same for ourselves as well as for others for far into the future. As he also stressed, we need to do work within ourselves as well as work outside ourselves in service of other people if we are to make the world a better place.

It is distressing that the very epistemological tools Joe wanted us to use to take back our power to achieve liberation and alleviate suffering in the world are being used against him and his mission, and they have been used in the very manner he was adamant about curbing. This may not be the *intention* and I am not claiming that it is, but it does go to show how this can happen when we don’t review and consider history thoroughly and take time to gain multiple

perspectives on complex issues, a precaution Joe warned us about in his works over and over again. It is important to understand greater historical and social contexts through research and to adopt a greater sensitivity for other perspectives. While this may seem like a daunting task, it is one that nevertheless needs to be done if the dead end course the world has been on, particularly during the last 30 years, is to be reversed. In this era, it is no longer good enough to simply express our own narcissistic views without at least some comprehension and acknowledgement that there are other ways to view the complex and expanding social environs we participate in, perhaps some hidden dimensions not taken into consideration. We can express our views, without feeling the need to force them upon other people or convincing them that “our” way is the “right” way. There are multiple right ways but there are also wrong ways . . . things that just make a huge “clunk” in one’s mind because they are so far from truth somehow, yet we can’t quite put our finger on what’s wrong. It is important to begin to listen to those “clunks,” follow through with questions, seek the answers and even set new priorities that have less to do with money and fame or “being right” and more to do with what is right for the world, particularly if we call ourselves “social justice workers” or if we are responsible for the shaping of young minds with our teaching.

As Joe has made clear, it is important to consider multiple perspectives, observe from multiple vantage points, and refrain from just going with the latest and “coolest” fads. He had stated, “Knowledge workers often unconsciously produce information that leads to the degradation of various peoples around the world” (2008; p. 84). It is important to become more conscious in order to avoid this as much as is humanly possible and put into action “a critical complex epistemology [that] is not fearful of softness, subtlety, soulfulness, or sensitivity as it makes its multilogical connections to diverse dimensions of the world” (p. 82). Thus, as an empath, I am not afraid to be too sensitive, too caring, and too considerate – and neither was Joe. On the other hand, if social justice or fairness becomes breached or oppression is identified, or if I hear a loud “clunk” in my mind as a signal that something is wrong, then like Joe, I am not afraid to take a bold and vocal stand against the “critical sheep” and “uncritical goats” -- as Joe humorously framed the sometimes unthinking and unjust ways people in education make important decisions affecting the lives of teachers, students, colleagues, and peoples around the world. (Kincheloe, 2008).

### **800 Years of Oppression (When Being White Is Not White Enough)**

I am of Scottish-Irish descent, as was Joe. The phrase “800 years of oppression” is a common phrase amongst the Irish and refers to our long domination by the British who maintain the powerful elite groups in the upper echelons of society where they pull the puppet strings. This elite and privileged tip of the hierarchy is, of course, epitomized by the many violent and unjust actions all over the globe with numerous instances of colonization and genocide that have occurred for many hundreds of years and as we all know, it continues to this day. The contrived potato famine in Ireland, which was in fact genocide of the Irish peoples by many accounts, is but one example, and it is an example that affected my people and Joe’s people. The faux famine was then used against us as evidence of our inferior intelligence; we were “stupid” to rely on one agricultural product, which was a lie propagated by the British while they concealed

the fact they had failed to allow foods to be properly imported for the Irish peoples during the years of this preventable famine. The Irish have been victims of a disinformation campaign for hundreds of years pertaining to their intelligence and it still permeates views today. In his work, Joe has written of multiple instances during his education when teachers and professors have questioned his expert writing ability and even accused him of plagiarism solely because of his ethnicity and class, having been raised in the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee.

As Wray (2006) expounds:

Of crucial importance are the ideas about poor whites that circulated through early-twentieth-century public health campaigns, such as hookworm eradication and eugenic reforms. In these crusades, impoverished whites, particularly but not exclusively in the American South, were targeted for interventions by sanitarians who viewed them as “filthy, lazy **crackers**” in need of racial uplift and by eugenicists who viewed them as a “feebleminded menace” to the white race, threats that needed to be confined and involuntarily sterilized (Editorial Review)

While the word “crack,” the root word of “cracker” has a complex etymology, which is discussed later in this article, during the time of the potato “famine” and shortly afterward, this English word became increasingly popular. It had been used by the British against both the impoverished Scottish and the Irish peoples, and at the same time, the British widely spread lies about the “ignorance” of the “crackers” through the media. “Crackers” were the impoverished Scottish-Irish peoples who could not afford to take the grains to be milled and had to manually “crack” their grains in order to use them for food, is one interpretation as to how the term came to be used; however, the conversations and traditional storytelling of these peoples were looked down upon and ridiculed, referred to as “crack,” which was an English slang word that originally meant gossip or boasting. These terms followed the Irish when they immigrated to the United States, where we still have Southern “crackers” today, and the “cracker cattle,” herded by “cracker cowboys.”

There were many forms of racism perpetrated against the Irish peoples (also called the “white niggers”), for example job postings and classifieds stating, “No Irish need apply,” as well as upon Southerners in general. These prejudices still thread through our discourse today in sometimes subtle and other times, not such subtle ways. It is important that when we remember and write about Joe, we stay sensitive to these threads of bigotry. During my work with Joe, one of the things that upset me most was when I had written a blog praising him for his work along with two other critical theorists’ works and some “feminists” complained to Joe instead of coming directly to me with their issues. Apparently, my acknowledgment of important male contributors was taken as an offense against women who had contributed. As a consequence, I felt so distraught for Joe because the blog was meant to praise him the way he generously praised everyone else; however, these women did not seem at all concerned with how he might have felt being placed in the awkward situation of having to tell me of their complaints over praising him and his work. I ended up crying for two days because I felt that it was disrespectful toward Joe and the hard work he had done, especially considering how he so

often had been forced to take the back seat over his heritage. It is a perfect example of how politics, including among “critical pedagogues” is powerful for shaping what we can and cannot write about. While Joe would have been the last to support praise about himself because he was very humble and highly sensitive to the ramifications of being a “privileged white male” and the inflammatory controversy surrounding “reverse discrimination” perpetrated during what he referred to in his work as the “recovery movement,” in my observation, he would have been the first to feel its effects. There is ample evidence in his writings that he did, indeed, feel the effects of prejudice relating to being a Southerner of Scottish-Irish heritage and raised in the Appalachians (see Pinar, 2010; Kincheloe, 2008).

### **The Elite vs. White “Crackers”**

As an entry in Wikipedia explains, the relationship between England and Ireland is complex. Early-on, England took on a “paternalistic” view of Ireland which was grounded in elitism. Negative views of Irish culture track back as far as 1155 when Henry II wished to “subdue” Ireland and the Irish Church:

*(we) do hereby declare our will and pleasure, that, for the purpose of enlarging the borders of the Church, setting bounds to the progress of wickedness, reforming evil manners, planting virtue, and increasing the Christian religion.*

An early example is the chronicler [Gerald of Wales](#), who visited the island in the company of [Prince John](#). As a result of this he wrote *Topographia Hibernia* ("Topography of Ireland") and *Expugnatio Hibernia* ("Conquest of Ireland"), both of which remained in circulation for centuries afterwards. Ireland, in his view, was rich; but the Irish were backward and lazy:

*They use their fields mostly for pasture. Little is cultivated and even less is sown. The problem here is not the quality of the soil but rather the lack of industry on the part of those who should cultivate it. This laziness means that the different types of minerals with which hidden veins of the earth are full are neither mined nor exploited in any way. They do not devote themselves to the manufacture of flax or wool, nor to the practice of any mechanical or mercantile act. Dedicated only to leisure and laziness, this is a truly barbarous people. They depend on their livelihood for animals and they live like animals.*

Anti-Irish racism in Victorian Britain and 19th century United States included the stereotyping of the Irish as alcoholics, and implications that they monopolised certain (usually low-paying) job markets. They were often called “white Negroes.” Throughout Britain and the U.S., newspaper illustrations and hand drawings depicted a primordial “ape-like image” of Irish faces to bolster evolutionary racist claims that the Irish people were an “inferior race” as compared to Anglo-Saxons. *Wikipedia (Anti-Irish Sentiment)*.

This myth of Irish ignorance along with the other stereotypes came to be heavily promulgated in the media even 100 years after the “famine.” For example, a television program, *The Goon Show* by comedian, Spike Milligan presented episode after episode specifically targeting the Irish peoples. Spike Milligan was born in India and later nationalized as Irish; however, he served in the British Army as did his father and he was eventually made an honorary

Commander of the British Empire in 1992 and given an honorary knighthood in 2000. The British Broadcasting Corporation had used his Irish connection to justify the production of *The Goon Show* in the early 1950s, which Spike was all too happy to comply with (he enjoyed degrading people, and unlike his racial slurs against blacks, this degradation of the Irish was “politically correct”). He was “Irish” so it must be perfectly fine to make fun of the Irish in this way, so the rationalization goes. Thus, he presented skit after skit that berated the Irish people for their “ignorance” (Universalium, 2010).

This is an example of consciousness construction by the powers-that-be at its finest. History had been erased and altered, and by this point, we, the Irish were laughing, too, at least some of us. And, in the meantime, people in Ireland were somehow convinced and came to accept that the word “crack” meant something opposite of its original meaning, which is a widely used strategy by which those in power change sacred meanings, symbols, and words -- to destroy culture and control peoples all over the world, and to essentially rewire our thinking. This tactic was behind the move of the United States to choose the Eagle for its national symbol, the sacred symbol for Indian tribes in America, and make it illegal to own Eagle feathers. Both the Canadian and U.S. governments have strict laws about possessing Eagle feathers (even if they are found on the ground), with very stiff fines and prison time if you are found with even one eagle feather. Indians are allowed to own them, but they must prove they are a member of a nationally recognized tribe, which is becoming more and more difficult as even the criteria for this proof continues to be ever more stringent (Frauenfelder, 2009). It is illegal to sell the feathers, of course, and in his memoirs *Lame Deer* (1992) writes of an incident that illustrates how federal agents would attempt to set up American Indians for arrest by trying to persuade them to sell their Eagle feathers.

Returning to the Irish, the menacing and calculated berating of the Irish peoples that was sent out on the airwaves as well as in other forms of media in the 1950s was harmful in many ways, and the emotions can be perceived down through the genealogical DNA of those of us who are blessed as empathic beings, even among the youngest ones who have no conscious knowledge of the history. However, for most people it was (and still is) socially acceptable to laugh wholeheartedly, as I discovered when one of *The Goon Show* videos, “The Irish O’lympics” (gr00ved7, 2007) was posted on a discussion forum and everyone (except me) found it hilariously funny. I analyzed it for the satanic content and the symbolic human sacrifice which the media often use to program, desensitize, and degrade the minds of the masses. I had no idea how far back that tradition can be traced in television programming, until I detected it in this episode. The “nuns” in the video are not nuns at all, but calling them nuns “kills two birds with one stone” as they were also making fun of the Catholic Church while symbolizing the sacrifice of an Irish person by people dressed in black robes. The laughter of the people who viewed the video in this discussion forum was justified in their minds, because some of them were “Irish.” In my mind, I have a hard time laughing at the foibles of others unless it is by their own volition that we are encouraged to laugh *with* them (not at them). Clearly, if the viewers who found the episode funny and entertaining knew the history, it no longer affected them as it does people who are highly empathic or people who feel the pain of further victimization due to comprehending this as further oppression. And even when these viewers were brought up to

date on the history and the ramifications by my postings to the discussion, it seemed that most of them just didn't get it. The only response was further justification. To me that is frightening. Are the masses so mind controlled, so "dumbed down," and/or so narcissistic that they are literally unable to consider a perspective other than their own? Do they not comprehend that there are, in fact, people who are hurt by their laughter? Are they literally unable to adopt a more sensitive and caring perspective? I hope that my posts to the forum at least resulted in people thinking about these issues.

Of course, as an Irish person – and as all humans should be able to -- I can laugh at myself and my own foibles just fine without someone else's inventions. And so could Joe. In fact, the one and only time we had the opportunity to meet in person, back on July 31, 2008, we did just that. We were laughing so hard we were both doubled over. I literally felt like I was not going to be able to stop laughing. The story I told him and the story he told me about our respective foibles crossing the US-Canadian border had us both absolutely "cracking up." "Cracking up" means laughing uncontrollably (in English) -- *or does it?* -- Let's explore the word *crack* and its popular culture twin, *craic*.

### **Etymology of the Word "Craic"**

The word "craic," also spelled and pronounced "crack" *was never a Scottish, Irish, or Gaelic word*. I am putting that right up front because the story is that "craic" is an Irish word meaning a social gathering where people have a great time and great conversations. The original word, according to the popular culture myth was "crack," but because of the nature of its use (it is usually associated with bars, pubs and music – and, too often, crack cocaine), the spelling was changed to "craic" which was proclaimed to be an "Irish" word. This was purportedly done to avoid the implication of crack cocaine and the complaints and controversy that arise. Ironically, today "craic" is widely marketed with innuendos relating to crack cocaine (e.g., "craic head").

Unfortunately, these two words, "crack" and "craic" have popped up in the "academic" literature in several places now to describe Joe, who like me is of Scottish-Irish ancestry as I have mentioned. Allegedly, these words represent his conversational skills. Of course, Joe was a white Southerner where, as already has been discussed, the words "crack" and "cracker" have been used historically and are used yet today pejoratively. Thus, I find the use of "craic" and "crack" as descriptive of Joe, an upstanding scholar who took his work very seriously, offensive at best and it brings to the surface for me many questions.

### **Questions**

Joe's formulation of a critical complex epistemology would have us asking who is using these words, "crack" and "craic," and why? What was their true relationship to Joe and his work? Why do they insist on using highly controversial and negatively charged terms to describe Joe? Why were the words invented in the first place? What purpose and who do these words serve today? Would someone who loved Joe choose these words? Are there better, more honorable and noncontroversial ways we can describe Joe as a skilled conversationalist and scholar?

### **Popular Culture Critical(?) Pedagogy**

As an example of how these words, “craic” and “crack” can quickly and insidiously morph, the term was initially introduced in a published eulogy to describe Joe’s conversational abilities (Summerfield, 2009; 2010). Subsequently, they were used again in an article describing Joe and his academic discussions in the university commons (Anderson, 2011), all within the “scholarly literature.” Following that, we have a scholarly article about Joe in which Parmar (2011) writes, “Joe – aka ‘the crack’ -- combined with critical complex scholarship will ultimately shatter FIDUROD and all future assaults on critical complex epistemologies!” (p. 61). Something is wrong with this picture. I find this statement so blatantly misguided and contradictory – and prejudiced -- that it is not worthy of further acknowledgment or analysis, but I just want to make the point how fads can quickly deteriorate from bad to worse.

I have come to believe the roots of the problem lie with the popular culture version of “critical pedagogy” that is being forced on the masses today -- *not* to be confused with Joe’s **critical complex epistemology and pedagogy**. The masses are being fed a “postmodern” critical pedagogy that is as sick as the popular culture it seems to be in bed with, and it operates out of an old paradigm that will not work for the new and special children coming along; indeed, it will not work for any of us except the power wielders (koprinkata1, 2010). This “popular culture critical pedagogy” is being pushed on teachers across the nation today and it is being promoted for “teacher development” purposes. I cannot see how taking dumbed down and nefarious media and promoting it in the classroom can do anything but further dumb down education, not to mention further indoctrinate students and cause conflict over the representations of human beings and their relationships. However, I will save that very long discussion for another time. Again, it requires a broad and wide historical analysis of the origins of critical pedagogy and how those origins are manifested in various factions of critical pedagogues, including an analysis of the ways they are promoting media in education that are not in the best interest of learners.

### **White Racism? (Yes, If You Are Not a “Blue Blood”)**

Blue blood refers to royalty. As most people know, the world powers are a long line of “royal” blood and they keep it all in the family. If we are not part of that royal blood, even if we are “privileged” whites (the false assumption being that all whites are always privileged), we do suffer from prejudice and a system that serves to keep us disempowered, particularly if we began life on this planet poor. Southern whites, in particular, suffer prejudice from their Northern neighbors. It is no longer “politically incorrect” to discuss these complex issues because, first, the term “politically correct” was invented to keep us from discussing the issues, and secondly, by bringing truths and multiple perspectives out into the open, we can resolve them. Joe’s earliest work, *Understanding the New Right and Its Impact on Education* (1983), made this very point – that when we are all given the opportunity to voice our perspectives, no matter how extreme, we can see the complexity of the issues, and then it becomes feasible to find solutions.

Again, the indoctrination of what's "politically correct" only serves as a tool to control us and keep us from discussing the issues in this very manner Joe is calling for in his work. We are perfectly capable of being caring and respectful toward each other without an elite cabal defining for us what's right or wrong and misaligning us with their platitudes. The issues and history surrounding their invention of the word "craic" is just one such example of their disingenuousness. And we buy into it all too quickly because we have also bought into the idea that "it's all about me" and it's all about material pleasure and being "cool."

As I stated previously, the first place I discovered this invented word, "craic" and "crack" used to describe Joe was in a Eulogy for him shortly after his passing, written by Judith Summerfield (2009). She used it in the popular culture sense, meaning conversation, stating:

Joe made a "ceili" wherever he went. In the great Irish storytelling tradition, the **ceili**, from the Celtic, is the telling of stories round the kitchen table, stories to tell the histories of the people, and to create the future, to build courage and fortitude against the weather, human suffering, and the tyrants. To laugh, and have a good smoke. To **crack**. (p. 4).

The ceili, which is a social gathering, is of course, an Irish tradition. It could have been a fine, memorable metaphor (if one must use a metaphor) to describe the conversational quality Joe shared in informal settings. However, the comment

"To laugh, and have a good smoke. To crack"

feels animated and contrived and is immeasurably misleading, especially for those who do not have a clue as to what it is supposed to mean, which I did not the first time I had read it. *Elementary school hermeneutics* would have a conscientious person who loved Joe avoid juxtapositioning the word "smoke" and "crack" and barely separating them with the feeble word "to," given the ramifications. Additionally, the beautiful tradition of the Céilidh/Céilí, of which I have fond memories, has been denigrated. This all seems so obvious that I am wondering why I need to even point it out. Can this drastic error really be done unconsciously by someone who loves Joe? I would assume that someone using this highly controversial expression would know about the controversy its use invokes and would try to avoid provocation, especially in connection with the memory of someone who has passed away whom so many people loved and revered for having great influences on their educational careers and research. Perhaps it was an accident, one of those "unconscious" acts we are all capable of committing. Whatever caused the writer to frame Joe's conversational skills in this manner, it made a huge "clunk" in my mind the moment I read it. Something was not right.

I had made my concerns known about the way the author expressed this with its innuendos relating to crack cocaine as soon as the eulogy was published online, but nothing has been changed. The eulogy has now been published by Summerfield (2010) in the academic literature. More recently, Summerfield's partner, Philip Anderson (2011), apparently in an ongoing effort to justify this rather than correct it, has recently published an article, "Joe at the Céilidh:



Catching Up on the Craic with Joe L. Kincheloe.” And even worse, there is an effort by Anderson to more widely promote this view of Joe and even pushing the concept of “craic/crack” onto the masses and into the classroom (“The Craic in the Classroom: Practical Knowledge for Teaching,” p. 27). Ironically, he also discusses “subjugated knowledges,” “colonialism,” and “essentialism” in this article.

While Anderson has carefully, eloquently, and painstakingly attempted to justify his and his partner’s use of this expression based on details of their personal experience visiting Ireland -- and I do not question the validity of their experience or the choice of metaphor **for themselves** -- he has failed to take a broader look historically, racially, socially, politically, psychologically, and epistemologically in order to consider the perspectives of other people. He has also failed to synthesize Joe’s theory into his concept. This is unacceptable in a book that is promoted as “critical” and “educational,” and titled, “Teaching Joe L. Kincheloe” (Brock, Malott & Villaverde, eds., 2011) and in an article that calls for “multiple voices outside oneself” (p. 28), which is what Joe’s theory requires of us. The choice to use the words “crack” and “craic” (the alternative spelling) seems to be purely based on mainstream disinformation as promulgated by the “gods” of popular culture. To make matters worse, Anderson argues against teachers encouraging their learners to better understand what they are reading, contending, “Much of the educational value of reading is in the process and experience of language, not the answering of questions about its ‘content’” and he advises teachers to “Get over yourself . . . Don’t be different *from* your students, but different *with* your students. Stop trying to save them from themselves like some colonial missionary” (p. 29). What an unenlightened view given how popular culture is being rammed down their throats not only in the media, but now also in the classrooms.

### **Popular Culture Uncritical Pedagogy**

Anderson’s directive to teachers is a very sad perspective, in my estimation. The idea of not encouraging students to seek more knowledge and understanding about the content they are reading is absurd and then connecting that to judging the teacher as a “colonial missionary” if she or he encourages this knowledge seeking is even more absurd. Of course, this is supposed to translate over to how teachers are to use popular media in the classroom: just enjoy, no matter that it might be degrading, based on false history, desensitizing, and mind constructing. We can argue about the –isms and further divide people, that’s a good thing, but let’s not track down the full context or analyze too deeply or we might expose some truths. What a dead end if teachers actually practice this way and it might very well represent the “Dead End at Freire,” (Gibson, 2008) since it is Freire’s work that seems to be leading this mass movement to popular culture in education – although we should not leave out of the conversation the dead end of Marxism. Joe “bleached” Marxism from his work for good reasons (Pinar, 2010).

It seems clear that “critical” pedagogy is merging with popular culture and forming what we might rather wish to label “popular culture uncritical pedagogy” in order to differentiate it from true criticality, scholarship and education. This statement is based on a trend evident upon scanning the literature, particularly mass marketed “education” books, and it may be in part due to the “publish or perish” mentality that is still pushed by the universities. Much of what is

being published today as research is in bed with the media and it is completely lacking the complex criticality Joe was calling for. It serves to “dumb down” education even further and indoctrinate through slanted interpretations while making money from the toys, clothing, music, video games, and numerous other products that are soft-marketed through this approach. And it is a monumental travesty to connect Joe’s work with popular culture, Marxism, postmodernism, anarchy, and all of the other negative political and social influences that have occurred in the literature since he has left us. This amounts to misappropriating his hard work, taking it backwards and allowing it to be used as a weapon to control and manipulate people rather than as a tool for liberation. Of course, Joe referenced popular media – but he did so in a way that is vastly different from the way it is being forced upon school children today. Based on personal experience as a teacher aide as well as from the literature scan, popular media is being used as a substitute for real teaching and learning and as a means of manipulating and programming impressionable young minds. Joe certainly did not nor would have approved of using popular culture for assigning pigeon holes or labels for people as has been done to him with “craic” and “crack.”

### **Joe’s Critical Complex Epistemology and Pedagogy**

Joe was a visionary, so far ahead that he could no doubt see these trends long before they were even occurring. And yet it is clear that some people immersed within the trends today are not seeing the ramifications of what they are writing and teaching about. Carefully reading Joe’s work shows that he had completely severed his work from mainstream critical pedagogy and, in fact, when reading closely, he had never truly included his work within mainstream “critical pedagogy.” He has repeatedly clarified throughout his work that he had his own version of critical pedagogy – an evolving *critical complex epistemology* and *critical complex pedagogy*, and as if to highlight that fact, he did not include his name among the list of key critical pedagogues in his book, *Critical Pedagogy Primer* (always look for what is missing!). He did define *his* version of critical complex epistemology and pedagogy in that book, however. While some scholars have attempted to misrepresent his work in order to meet their own political, economic, and misinformed agendas (e.g., “postmodernist,” “Marxist,” “anarchy,” “morality,” and “pop culture”) since Joe’s death, and many more simply misunderstand Joe’s work, there are multiple ways he had already extricated his work from sinking into the abyss that those efforts will no doubt fall into. These will be discussed in future articles.

It is important to realize that any attempt to purposely drag Joe’s work backwards will only result in those doing so looking like fools. I am not talking about people who honestly try to use his work even though they may not fully understand it, as I am obviously doing. I do not in any way claim I fully understand his work. It is multidimensional and encompasses a lifetime of learning. Those people who are using his work for good purposes are to be recognized and commended and Joe would be very pleased. I am referring to work that is an obvious attempt to drag his work backwards in ways that are known he would never have approved. As Joe put it in his hilariously humorous way he was “Playing With the Queen of Hearts: The Joker Ain’t the Only Fool In FIDUROD” (2008, p. 21). While there are multiple ways to interpret that statement, here it represents the fact that Joe left no cracks in *his* theory. And I am speaking in terms of the English word (e.g., fissures), not the fabricated “Irish” word. Accused of being totalizing,

(e.g., Lincoln, 2001; Pinar, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), Joe's totalizing was calculated and brilliant – and it was and is based on a very strong foundation of love. It is this very totalizing aspect of Joe's critical complexity theory, apparently, that helps us expose the foolish ideas (the other "fools in FIDUROD") so that we can fully analyze their ideas and then use logic (heaven forbid) to decide if we want our consciousnesses constructed with them or if we feel right about constructing our students' consciousnesses with them. And if we don't yet have the logic or intellectual skills to make this deep analysis he is calling for, merely using his theory and working to become proficient will help us develop the ability to use reason, emotion, and intellect in ways that will move us toward being more human.

Yes, Joe was all for having a good time and good conversations. However, I do not believe Joe would ever have approved of laughter *at* other people or of deconstructing and reformulating culture for the purpose of profiting from things that are not good for us, which is what the mainstream popular culture use of "craic" is about. We are free to choose to be a participant of "craic" popular culture, but in my view, it behooves us to fully understand what we are participating in. That is the purpose of the tools that Joe has left for us. We can use those tools for "Getting Beyond the Facts" (Kincheloe, 2001).

### **When "Crack" Is Not Craic and "Cool" Is Not Cool**

Again, "crack" and "craic" were never Scottish, Irish or Gaelic words. The words were devised by the British. According to multiple independent sources, "craic" was an invented word based on the English word "crack." Not everyone is pleased as these discussions indicate:

"The spelling craic causes serious nausea among intelligent people. This glib spelling of the word was invented in the 1970s . . . I stress that this is a word which was NEVER in the Irish language" (Irish kc, 2004).

The author goes on to explain that the word **cráic** is in the Irish language. According to [Irishgaelictranslator.com](http://Irishgaelictranslator.com), It means *buttocks* or *anus* (and by some interpretations, "asshole"):

Cráic means buttock or anus.  
For "conversation", maybe..comhrá

Yes, comhrá. It's a compound word created from other words meaning "talk jointly", just like the Latin source for the word "conversation".  
(Irish-Gaelic Translator).

As noted in the discussion above, the closest Irish word to "craic" is "cráic" which has a derogatory meaning in certain contexts and the Gaelic word for conversation is *comhrá*.

Continuing this exploration of the etymology, a musician from Donegal, Caomhin MacAoidh, has stated that the word craic is "a modern-Gaelic, commercially exploited spelling of the

English word 'crack', most typically found on Irish-bar posters linked by the word 'agus' to the word 'ceol', this indicating commercialization of traditional music as a device in 'selling 'ol'".

Fintan Vallely (2004), in relation to traditional Irish music and the word "craic", illuminates:

I stress that this is a word which was NEVER in the Irish language (but cráic, meaning arsehole, or creac, meaning herd, are). . . . When I went to Dublin (from Ulster) in 1968 NOBODY I met in Dublin used 'crack' ... 'Crack' only began to be used with the influx of northerners and in the context of music, it travelled with northern influence (at the fleadh cheoil, etc).

Blog author, Irish KC, concludes:

I've read something similar in the excellent book, [Last Night's Fun: In and Out of Time with Irish Music](#) by Ciaran Carson, another Ulster musician: "Which brings us to the famous 'crack', popularly and recently Gaelicised as 'craic' and advertised in countless retro-renovated bars throughout the land, as in 'Live Ceol, Sandwiches and Craic'".

It was always my understanding that the word is English. It is a part of the very old Northeast English dialect spoken by Geordies you hear in Tyneside where a magazine called [The Crack](#) exists. There it means 'conversation', or 'gossip' which is how it is used in Ireland when you ask "What's the crack?".

[The British Library](#) defines the Geordie word "crack" as: probably derived from the Anglo-Saxon verb cracian (cf. modern German krachen) - from which we get Standard English expressions, such as to crack a joke and wisecrack.

My belief is that the word "crack" went from England to Scotland, across to Ireland with the Ulster Scots, spread amongst the music community of Ulster and then down to the rest of Ireland where it was then Gaelicized, commodified and exported.

A quick [google search](#) reveals just how massively "crack" and "craic" have been commoditized. It can be found everywhere, from hometown bars down on the corner to upscale places such as the *Lion and Rose British Restaurant and Pub*, complete with provocative photos of their "[Roses](#)" (women servers) "who make the Lion & Rose a fun and unique experience." It makes one wonder what else is served there. But never mind that, because the Lion & Rose is "upscale" with their very own version of craic that helps them lure more customers and make more sales. Thus, they tout their own epistemologically-enhanced version of "[craic](#)": "Craic is an English Irish term pronounced "crack" that has many definitions. Many people think of craic as the warm feeling and inviting sound of a busy English or Irish pub---cheerful voices all blending together with the right music played at the right volume" (Lion and Rose, 2011). The music industry in particular has picked up this idea, promoting "craic" concerts all over the Western world. A search on craic, craic concerts, craic beer, etc. will turn up enough craic to make you want to go into hibernation. The point is, beer or ale has gone transnational (search

Guinness beer and craic) and along with it, so has craic and crack in both forms (conversation and cocaine) with everyone jumping on the almighty dollar bandwagon. And it is supposed to be “cool” and acceptable because it has now become “popular culture.” It is incomprehensible that scholars wish to push this insanity onto their students. What possible good can it bring? It has not restored Irish culture; it has destroyed it – a brief look at the history is illuminating.

### **Historical Usage of the Word “Crack” and “Cracker”**

Myers (2011) provides another perspective on this trend, indicating once again that the word did, indeed come from the English language:

But in both mainstream English, and Hiberno-English, saying "craic" is rather like referring to "le snobbisme". For "craic" is not Irish at all, but merely a transliterated Gaelic version of the English word "crack". The 'Shorter Oxford English Dictionary', (noun, item 3c) defines "crack" as: 'A gossip, an intimate talk. Scottish and north, E(arly) 18th century.' And the verb, "to crack", meaning "to discuss the news, to gossip or chat", is even older, being Middle **English**, between the 12th and 15th centuries.

From Wikipedia on the derivation of the related English word “crackers”:

Another theory is that the term derives from an Elizabethan word used to describe braggarts. It is documented in Shakespeare’s King John (1595): “What cracker is this same that deafs our ears with this abundance of superfluous breath?”

As time went on, the terms “crack” and “cracker” became pejorative slang aimed at impoverished Scottish and Irish peoples by the British, and later the words were imported to the US as these peoples immigrated:

As early as the 1760s, this term was in use by the upper class planters in the British North American colonies to refer to Scots-Irish and English settlers in the south. The vast majority of whom were descendants of English bond servants. A letter to the Earl of Dartmouth reads:

“I should explain to your Lordship what is meant by Crackers; a name they have got from being great boasters; they are a lawless set of rascalls on the frontiers of Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia, who often change their places of abode.”

According to the 1911 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, it [cracker] is a term of contempt for the "poor" or "mean whites," particularly of the U.S. states of Georgia and Florida (see [Georgia cracker](#) and [Florida cracker](#)).

Historically the word suggested poor, white rural Americans with little formal education. Historians point out the term originally referred to the strong English & Scots-Irish farmers of the back country (as opposed to the wealthy planters of the seacoast). Thus a sociologist reported in 1913: "As the plantations expanded these freed men (formerly bond servants) were pushed further and further back upon the more and more sterile

soil. They became 'pinelanders', 'corn-crackers', or 'crackers'.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cracker\\_\(pejorative\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cracker_(pejorative))

One version of the traced etymology has it that the impoverished Scottish and Irish people could not afford to get their grain processed at the mill, so they had to “crack” it themselves, thus the British labeled them as “crackers” and it came to be derogatory. The word “crack” also implied bragging and gossip, and it followed the Scottish-Irish peoples who had immigrated to the U.S. to escape the potato famine. Today in the rural South, poor whites are still often denigrated with the label “crackers” and some Southerners, particularly in the states of Georgia and Florida choose the label to differentiate themselves from the Northerners who have flooded their states (if you can’t beat them, join them, it seems). It may be the reason Joe highlights being labeled as a “hillbilly” in his last book, *Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy: An Introduction* and even included the word in his otherwise very sparse subject index. Point well made. How many people “get it”?

### **Jimmy Cracks Corn: We Do Care**

*The terms are derogatory*, and we have been lied to about their meaning. Using the term “crack” (or its alternate spelling “craic”) to describe someone is pejorative from historical and current Scottish-Irish perspectives as well as current Southern perspectives. The practice of using these terms is highly controversial for multiple reasons, as discussed in this article. Joe was Scottish-Irish *and* grew up as a rural Southerner from the Appalachian Mountains, so using this label affects him negatively in multiple ways. Should critical scholars insist on using these terms to describe him, given this context?

Some people may disagree with the assessment that these references are derogatory, including Scottish-Irish people, if they have not studied the history or if they have come to accept these terms, themselves. That’s fine. They are free to use the words; it is still a somewhat free world. The important consideration is whether we have the full information from which to base an intelligent decision or if we are just following along like sheep.

I am also of Irish descent and I do not accept these terms. I will not accept them for myself nor will I accept them as a metaphor for describing Joe’s conversational skills – and I do not advocate promoting their use in the classroom as suggested by Anderson (2011).

As should be clear by now, I am not alone in my assessment of these terms and the wish to not participate. As this article has shown, there are many other people who are not happy at all about with this distortion and commercialization of culture as represented by the use of these words “crack” and “craic.” This can be discovered by reading some of the online discussions on the topic. For example from the Mandolin Café Forum (2008):

**Gil-Scott Heron**

09-07-2008, 09:52 PM

I'm a Celt/Gael and I'm afraid that 'craic' (or 'crack') is actually an English/Scots word, brought to Ireland via the 17th century Plantations. It's not a Gaelic word.

**gunt**

10-07-2008, 06:22 PM

Another fabrication to justify the adoption of the word. It's just like loyalists inventing half-truths and hijacking other symbols to prove to themselves (if no-one else) that they have a genuine identity (see the Red Hand, Cu Chulainn, Red Branch Knights etc.).

I'm fiercely proud of my Gaelic culture, identity and history, and we don't need to be diluting that image with bastardised, imported falsehoods. As I have said, that is the remit of loyalist revisionists.

Incidentally, in relation to the term “crack” and its original meaning, “to gossip,” Joe absolutely detested gossip, so this term is inappropriate in that sense as well. Joe had **conversations**; he did not engage in gossip. In fact, there’s a really funny story about gossip and me being an “Eager Beaver Critical Pedagogue” back when I was working on Joe’s project. Apparently, someone in conversation with him dropped that label for me and Joe laughed. It was thought that Joe was laughing at me for being so active on his website, for being an “eager beaver.” After Joe passed away, someone presented it that way to me because they wanted to hurt me and put me down simply because I refused to stop writing about Joe and his work (I had not been “sanctioned” to do this work, as the story goes). In reality, Joe was laughing about the hypocrisy of the negative labeling among “critical pedagogues”; he was just as passionate about research and writing as I am; in fact, obviously, by the amount of work he did, he was even *more* passionate. Given his own passion for research and writing, here is someone standing in front of him idiotically criticizing me for writing too much, even labeling me an “eager beaver critical pedagogue,” well I can imagine this probably tickled Joe’s funny bone. I found it hilariously funny, too, especially since I do not consider myself a “critical pedagogue” but rather a “critical complex epistemologist.” And anyway, Joe had told me numerous times how much he appreciated the work I was doing on his web site and when I asked him if I should change what I was doing, he praised me for “engaging” with people and told me, “keep doing what you’re doing.” One more thing I should point out is that Joe despised gossip so much that he referenced George Harrison’s song, “[The Devil’s Radio](#)”, in his book *Knowledge and Critical Pedagogy: An Introduction*, which makes a powerful point about how destructive gossip is for everyone. Just think; if it had not been for that gossip, I would not be writing about this today. Now it seems I have a never ending joke (“Hermes” keeps providing me with reminders).

### **The Céilidh and the Céilí**

I am going to address these concepts briefly and only because they have come to be so closely associated with “craic” and “crack”. These words, “**Céilidh**” and “**Céilí**” are derived from the Old Irish word *céle*, which means companion. This has traditionally meant an Irish gathering that involves dancing to Gaelic and Irish folk music. In fact, the group, Celtic Woman, has a song, [At the Ceili](#), that describes these functions. Thus, céilidh is of Gaelic and Irish (céilí) origin, although originally these were any type of a social gathering. This highlights yet another issue with the

English word “crack” and the invention of the word “craic” – no such words as “craic” and “crack” were associated with these social gatherings as they are today with this current fad. Thus, not only are the “popular culture” pushers creating and defining “craic” and “crack,” in their greed for profit, they have also misappropriated Céilidh and Céilí (Wikipedia). The details will not be taken up here, however. As is often the case with research in general, this research can be greatly expanded and the intricacies further delineated, but my intent is to just write a brief article here in order to present another perspective and explore a better way to describe Joe’s magnificent scholarly discourse skills.

### Conclusion

What has been depicted here is an example of how the linguistic power-grabbers have convinced us that “craic” (pronounced “crack”) is a “cool” word and that it is politically correct to use it to represent enjoyable conversations and good times, even in rowdy pubs. Some people take it as far as using it as a label for people who are fun to be around, such as did Parmar (2011) with her statement, “Joe -- aka ‘the crack’” or as a signification of a Celtic folk star (e.g., Anderson, 2011; Parmar, 2011; Malott, 2011). Because of the obvious negativity the term draws from some people when the term is spelled as “crack” and due to its close association with crack cocaine in the venues in which the word “crack” is being used today, the Gaelic alphabet and language (which does not have the letter “k”) was used to invent a new word, “craic” to address this issue and to make the word seem more “Irish.” The closest real Irish word to this is **cráic**, which means anus, buttocks, or the slang expression, “arsehole/asshole.” Thus, “craic” as based on the Gaelic alphabet, is being called an Irish word which creates tremendous confusion over the etymology of the word. And it was probably known that the real “crack heads” would get great pleasure in spending money to announce their passion on t-shirts and other items touting the alternative spelling, “craic head.”

In fact, the word is now widely commercialized as a “cool” way to proudly proclaim being a “[craic head](#)” and is being sold on multitudes of sundry products ranging from t-shirts, caps, buttons, coffee cups, posters and as a promotional tool to get people to attend music festivals and the numerous bars, restaurants, and pubs that are capitalizing on this fad. It is all about money and power – and it has become a part of popular culture forced upon the masses who are all too ready and willing to adopt Aleister Crowley’s, “do what thou wilt” attitude.

I suppose the “cool” people will continue to use and spell the terms “crack” and “craic,” either way; it doesn’t matter because it has the same effect. The really “cool” people will boldly spell it as “crack” even if it does have the negative association with crack cocaine or may be taken as a racial slur today in the South. It does little good to use the more “politically correct spelling” (“craic”) because in the final analysis, there is nothing correct about it.

In the same manner that the [cabal](#) has changed up the beautiful and sacred symbols of many cultures to have opposing and dark meanings and continue to do their work through the media to keep dark thoughts in our minds in an attempt to prevent us from connecting to our spiritual nature, they play the same evil twist with words, changing their meanings and inventing new



words. They can keep us dumb and we will insult ourselves for them! Yes, being a poor country – and Scottish-Irish -- girl, I ate up those **Cracker Jacks** when I was a child, and thought the prizes were so cool (what else was there?). A “Jack” is a commoner, a laborer, thus, with Cracker Jacks we have a “cracker” (white trash) laborer.

Of course, it is quite impossible to delete every reference of crackers. (*I love crackers with soup and beans.*) Nor is it required that we do so; that would be ludicrous, but this has been an important exercise in opening our minds and learning more truth about the history of this controversial term that has literally been pushed upon us. It makes me highly suspicious that one reason it continues to be pushed so heavily by the transnational capitalists and media is that, in addition to selling alcohol, it has also become a profitable way to market drugs and most likely sex in its most deviant forms if one were to get deeper into the research, both being important sources of revenue for the elite rulers and another way to keep society debased.

### “Girl, There’s A Better Life for Me and You”

“Girl, there’s a better life for me and you” are lyrics from the song, “[We Gotta Get Out of This Place](#)” by the Animals that Joe referenced in his chapter titled, “From Reductionism to Critical Knowledge” (2008, p. 51). (This is so apropos: click the link and watch the music video all the way through: It was created by someone from **Ireland!**). At any rate, we simply must transcend the tendency to be reductionistic whereby we allow someone else to narrowly define our experiences for us and to force us to accept labels. It is a serious injustice when critical thinkers blindly accept and further promulgate labels for Joe using these reportedly “Irish” terms which are not Irish at all and which, in fact, are not very kind words to describe academic and scholarly conversations with him.

Joe describes his family history of **conversations**: “My own southern heritage is exposed by the importance of storytelling in my childhood. The realization that the subjects of my father and mother’s stories – their cousins, uncles and aunts (most of whom I never knew) – are more familiar to me in my mind’s eye than some of the people I have called *close friends* in my life in the America of the late twentieth century is disconcerting” (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 150)[ his emphasis].

Disconcerting as it may be, from what I have witnessed for myself and from what I have read, I can certainly understand why Joe would feel that way. Of course, he would have probably enjoyed the music, the camaraderie, the discussions, if discussions can actually occur above the music and the broadcast television at today’s overly venerated commercialized pubs. But Joe was capable of doing it all – he was skilled in discourse in any environment and to put him in just one box is not reality, nor is it fair; it is a monological, essentialist view that trivializes the complexity of Joe’s abilities and personality, and goes against what he was calling for us to do. In my view, we must not lose sight of the grander purpose of Joe’s work. We must not be sheep and follow along with the uncritical goats just because it’s the easiest thing to do or because we are told that it is considered “cool.” We must learn to think for ourselves.

In his last book, Joe stated:

I am not particularly happy with the “way ‘we’ are” in Western societies at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century: the hierarchies, the ways men treat women, the heterosexism, racism, class bias, the competition, the fear of “taking a hit,” **the neo-bourgeois low affect “cool,”** the humorlessness of particular topics, etc. Yes, I admit it – I want to see not only a social and pedagogical revolution but an epistemological and ontological revolution as well. (2008, p. 252) [Emphasis added].

Use the terms “crack” and “craic” if you think it is cool to do so, but keep in mind that “craic” is not “crack” nor vice versa no matter what twist someone wishes to put on it. I am all for freedom of expression. I am the last person to call for censorship. However, I am one of those apparently rare sensitive people who **feels** something is wrong with this particular usage, especially as it is being used to describe Joe. There are infinite possibilities for painting a more beautiful picture of Joe and the loving and engaging person he was. The memory of the derisiveness of the terms crack and craic, and the ways they are used to manipulate people and sell them alcohol and drugs as it destroys culture seemed to have been encoded in my psyche, even before doing this research and it is what prompted me to do the research, but I also know that knowledge is the key to transcendence. The intent of this article is not to take away from the people who enjoy the experience of what they deem to be Irish culture. There is no intent toward being a “missionary” or “savior.” The only intent is to encourage people to learn more so that they can make their own decisions and not be so quick to jump on bandwagons that do not have their interests at heart.

Given this knowledge, using the terms to describe Joe in the manner as has been done in the “scholarly academic literature” really grates on me because it is counter to loving Joe and counter to everything his work represents. It is not something I could ever do, personally, no matter what my experience with Irish culture in Ireland might have been and how “valid” using the term “crack” might be for some people.

### **This Just In: Joe as a Master of Discourse and a Revered Master Teacher**

Joe often used the expression, “This Just In” in his work. I don’t know what his reasons were, but I do know my reasons. It’s as if I have a 24/7 connection to people “in the cosmos” and they drop me critical messages at opportune times. Some people attribute these clues and messages to Hermes, but Hermes can’t possibly do it all – I believe he has lots of helpers. What was the message? I was prompted to add something from Foucault’s work. I had no idea what, because I have not yet studied Foucault’s work (they don’t teach it in “school”). So, I simply opened Foucault’s book, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* (2001) and landed on page 371. What is discussed on this page and the next page is the concept of “asceticism” in discourse. Asceticism relates to building the strongest link possible between the subject and truth. It is an important goal for discourse and undoubtedly forms a foundation to Joe’s theoretical work.

As many have pointed out, it is difficult or impossible to get to one final truth for complex issues, such as being raised in this article. But we can get closer to truth and present more sides of the issues in spite of our own subjectivity, and this was the point of this particular entry by

Foucault. In this chapter, Foucault describes the complexity of discourse and its various aims, along with the skills required of the **master**. He states, “And so it is only when we turn to the **master**, that is to say the person who must deliver true speech, that quite naturally the problem arises: what to say and how to say it according to what rules, technical procedures, and ethical principles?” (p. 372). Joe was a master of discourse who has provided us volumes of guidance. He stressed getting multiple perspectives to increase our understandings because as he pointed out, every perspective reveals *and* hides things. Researching, rather than just going off our own personal experiences uncovers the hidden things and aids us in constructing discourse that is closer to truth because it considers other realities and ontologies, not just our own, thus, we can better connect with people as Joe was able to. It opens our minds to accepting multiple possibilities and frees the imagination and creativity which is so important for finding solutions that address social justice issues and serve to alleviate suffering.

Thus, because Joe had mastered conversations with people from *all* walks of life and in *many* cultural contexts, he was a true **master of discourse**. And he was a true **scholar**. That’s the way I prefer to remember Joe. I also love to remember him as being a “Southern Treasure” (Pinar, 2010) – a Southern Treasure white man who proved that “sweet southern hospitality” is not just a fantasy or myth.

*But most of all* I revere Joe as the greatest **Master** I have ever known and I feel so blessed to have had the privilege of working with him.

Just as I finished writing this article, serendipitously, Master Argonza/Guru Ra (2011) who is another Master I have developed a great reverence for and who is guiding me on my path, just posted a new article that describes the ability of true Masters and the relationships between them and their chelas:

The Christians consider Jesus as the greatest of all masters whom they regard, in fact, as the only master worth their respect. While the blind faith of Christians is objectionable, their reverence for a master is understandable as one that defines the relationship between a devotee and a teacher of the Law.

In the spiritual Brotherhood—Great White Brotherhood —the relationship between the chela (disciple) and masters is the source of deference and demeanor for the Brothers & Sisters of Light. Such a reverence is volitional, a manifestation of devotion (mutual devotion), and show of mutual respect between chelas and masters.

A teacher (master) in the Brotherhood always puts into light the volitional will of the chela and does not in any way interfere by undercutting such voluntarism. No teacher of Light ever controls or manipulates chelas, as such act of control and manipulation belongs more to the masters of the Black Brotherhood or Dark Brotherhood.

The term master means being a teacher of divine wisdom. It has nothing to do with being master of certain slaves.

In conclusion, it is very true that Joe taught me with the qualities Guru Ra has discussed, and I revered Joe from the moment I began participation on his website; I knew he was a Master. Mere words cannot explain how much gratitude I feel for what Joe has accomplished – not just for me (it's not about me) – *but for the world*. So, yes, I have immense reverence for Joe and I always will. I believe we all should. His writing, his wisdom, his humor, his love, his teaching, and his ability to engage in conversations with anyone, any place demonstrate his mastery of discourse, and importantly, the mastery of Master Teaching he had achieved. It is something for which we should all wish to strive, and his work provides a guiding light.

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