

# Book Review

By Martha García

***Sentipensante (Sensing/Thinking) Pedagogy: Educating for Wholeness, Social Justice and Liberation***, by Laura I. Rendón. 198 pgs. Sterling, Va.: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2008. ISBN 978-1-57922-325-0. \$27.50 cloth.

The first aspect of this book that captures attention is its title. The word *sentipensante* is a neologism; it does not exist, period. The author invented it, which constitutes a parallel with her approach: she is proposing a new teaching methodology, which implies a new way of living. Even though this stipulation may be interpreted as a utopia, the author has conquered it through her classroom teaching and research.

The introduction, "A Need for a New Dream of Education," explains the author's ultimate objective – the transformation of the individual; the transformation of society, nations and the world may follow. The first chapter analyzes difficulties individuals encounter as members of a specific society when they have to define themselves as unique human beings. These individuals may then attempt other paths to express their spiritual, social, emotional, psychological and intellectual needs or abilities.

The second chapter includes faculty interviews, and the author shares the meticulous methods used in obtaining her results. Rendón introduces each of 15 faculty members (seven male, 10 White, three Latino/a, one Asian and one African-American), 10 of them at four-year and five at two-year institutions.

The third chapter portrays through words, tables and graphics the "Difrasismos Inherent in Integrative, Consonant Pedagogy" and "The Relationship Between Content and Contemplative Practice."

In the fourth chapter, Rendón utilizes, in a highly effective fashion, her results as the foundation of creating new avenues and venues to integrate holistic approaches that will introduce faculty and students to a better social structure. Some illustrations: community-service learning as activist contemplative practice, engaging students in the practice of self-reflection and positioning the faculty member as a social agent of change. In applying some of these principles, the author displays a methodology that emphasizes a new relation between pedagogy and social justice, where the unbalanced results found in previous works would despair, and a new sense of equilibrium is accomplished promoting a more conscious system of learning, growing and justice in a modern society.

Chapter five examines difficulties and resistance that this new model may provoke in the academic world – which has been ruled by a different pattern and behavior in the classrooms. Rendón denotes the impor-

tance of mentorship, active participation in the role of an agent of change, and the importance of working together as colleagues and faculty members. At the same time, the assessment of students must be re-evaluated to achieve these social and academic goals. The most challenging aspect of this new model may be the lack of criticisms that it proposes; this can be particularly unforeseen in demographic populations in which the individual learns to obtain respect, recognition and a position in society through the criticisms of others. This new approach, in my opinion, makes this new model successful. In addition, it is validated by the responses of the students exposed to this unique pedagogical approach.

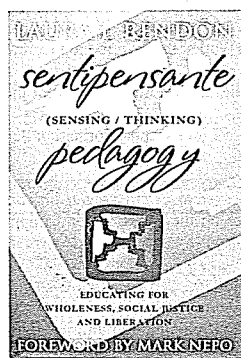
In chapter six, titled the same as the book itself, the author presents the infrastructure and superstructure of this new model in a systematic matter, using narrative, graphics and examples as the platform to deliver, in the most tangible way possible, a pedagogical concept that seems so intangible, *sentipensante*.

The final chapter prepares the reader for a new beginning. It contains a beautiful poem by Rendón, "¿Quién soy yo? Who am I?" which represents – creatively – the author's own *sentipensante*. She introduces the poem with the following: "Perhaps my greatest strength is my past. For my past has given me my identity, the DNA of understanding social change from the eyes of a woman, a Latina who rose from poverty to better understand privilege in American society." The appendix, references, permissions and index follow the seventh and last chapter.

This masterpiece condenses the theory and the practice of a new pedagogical mission; it deposits in the faculty member the opportunity to function beyond his or her limitations, and it transforms the mentality of a utopia into the tangible results of its practice. This is about inclusion, one in which faculty and students become one in recognizing and accepting their responsibility in obtaining and maintaining social justice and liberation. All the individuals who hold a teaching duty must read this book. It should be considered required material in diversity, social sciences and education courses. Implementing this new model will require change, effort and time – in other words, learning. In the end, teaching is all about learning.

If I must select a word to describe this book, it would be ¡Magnífico!

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