

To Pato with Love

from the McLaren/Layera family

Pato was a scholar and educational activist. Peter had heard about Pato and knew some of his work and had met a number of young scholars who had either worked with Pato or had been influenced by him. Joe Kincheloe talked a great deal about “El Pato”, Joe’s “primo del Corazon”. But our one and only meeting with Pato was not at a scholarly venue. It was in the streets, restaurants, and cafes of Barcelona. It was part of a loving encounter with one of the most kindest and generous human beings that has ever crossed our paths. True, we had heard of Pato’s special bond with Joe Kincheloe, but we really had no special “template” in our minds known as “El Pato, the Man From Spain.”

We are writing collectively about Pato as a family, because that is how we met and bonded with Pato, on our first family trip to Spain. In March, 2005, the four of us traveled to a conference in the arts, in Barcelona. We met up with Joe Kinchloe, Shirley Steinberg, their son, Chiaim, and daughter in law, Marissa. Pato was not part of the conference we were attending, but we were eager to meet him. Our introduction to Pato was through Joe and Shirley. Although Pato had an extremely busy schedule he carved out time for the eight of us and delighted in introducing us to the city and surrounding countryside. Pato’s enthusiastic generosity of spirit, kindness and thoughtfulness melted our hearts. He treated us like family and was utterly attentive. Our memories of that visit are irrevocably intertwined with memories of Pato.

On a car trip to Empuries we vividly remember Joe and Pato in the front seat singing along, bellowing really, to the Dire Straights song “Money for Nothing”. They sang in glorious unison, joyfully roaring out the lyrics word for word, gleefully nodding their heads together in synchronicity to the beat, until the very end

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of the song at which time they dissolved in laughter, quickly echoed by all the occupants in the car. That was Pato: pure joy.

After exploring the ruins at Empuries, Pato took us to the nearby seacoast town of L'Escala. It was nearing dinnertime and the town's restaurants were filling up with diners. Strolling through L'Escala we were all certain that we would not be able to get a table for our large group and would probably have to make do with something on the highway back to Barcelona. Pato seemed serenely unperturbed as we passed packed eatery after packed eatery. Then he led us up to a restaurant with huge, glass windows that was perched high atop the sea wall. Pato strode in, while we hung back doubting our chances, but inside in the very middle of the room was a beautifully set table waiting for our party of 10! Gazing out at the sea, feasting on anchovies and Albarino and course after course of fabulous Spanish dishes, we had one of the most delicious, memorable and boisterous meals of our lives. Pato had planned the whole thing in advance. How he seamlessly managed to get an unruly, dawdling party of 10 from Empuries to a dinner reservation in L'Escala without once hurrying us or giving away the spectacular dining event that awaited us was pure Pato. He was a truly exceptional and loving man and when we visualize Pato he always wears his engaging smile and laughs his ready laugh.

Love
Peter, Jenny, Laura and Marcelo
Los Angeles, CA.