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1 OBITUARY

2 **Dr Paula Allman**

3 17 January 1944, Chicago – 2 November 2011, Nottingham

4 *University of Nottingham academic, adult educator and Marxist scholar*

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6 When I left Paula Allman's house on the evening of Tuesday 25 October, I felt this would probably  
7 be the last time I actually saw her, even though I was hopeful that I would get another chance; a  
8 tribute session was being planned for London early in the New Year. I did not expect her passing to  
9 occur so soon after my visit. She had appeared to be in good spirits, though understandably weak.  
10 Intellectually alert as ever, she had been following the financial fluctuations on Bloomberg TV. She  
11 explained that she avails herself of such opportunities to understand capitalism in order to be able  
12 to critique it. Her rigorous academic writing and teaching left a legacy in various parts of the world.  
13 As a child, she held national swimming records in the USA. She could not fulfil her promise as a  
14 result of physical ailments and taught swimming to adults. She taught at different levels of  
15 education in her country and graduated from Florida, with a doctoral thesis on Piaget. In 1973 she  
16 settled in England after having taken up a postdoctoral fellowship there. For years she taught at the  
17 Open University and subsequently established herself at the University of Nottingham in what was  
18 the oldest adult education department in the United Kingdom. Her early writings included pieces  
19 in refereed journals on lifelong education and also on the education of older adults, particularly a  
20 chapter which appeared in Eric Midwinter's *Mutual Aid Universities*. Subsequently, she became very  
21 attracted to critical education inspired by the writings of Marx (of whose works she developed an  
22 impressive knowledge), Gramsci and Freire. She wrote numerous articles on or inspired by these  
23 authors in a range of academic journals and edited books, some in collaboration with her colleague  
24 at Nottingham, John Wallis. She even coordinated a diploma and Master's degree course in the  
25 area inspired by the philosophy of Paulo Freire. She was also very active in social movements both  
26 in her native country and in Britain. She was the first co-chairperson for Nottingham CND and was  
27 a member of the education subgroup of The Socialist Movement. In my last conversation with her  
28 she mentioned how she got to know E.P. Thompson as a result of the CND involvement and also  
29 that she befriended Caroline Benn, whose husband, Anthony Benn, wrote an endorsement for her  
30 first book. She was closely connected with the Institute for Education Policy Studies, an  
31 independent educational radical left policy unit, and collaborated with scholars such as Glenn  
32 Rikowski, Dave Hill, Mike Cole, Shahrzad Mojab, Peter McLaren, Helen Raduntz and Helen  
33 Colley. She served on the editorial advisory boards for *Convergence*, the journal of the International  
34 Council for Adult Education, and Sense publishers' book series, 'International Issues in Adult  
35 Education'.

36 Paula Allman continues to be revered by those who dream of and work towards ushering in a  
37 better world. She touched the lives of many persons. I was first touched by a 1988 piece of hers, on  
38 Gramsci, Freire and Illich, in a book on radical adult education edited by Tom Lovett. The piece  
39 directly connected with my own research interests. I was eventually privileged to get to know her  
40 personally and to collaborate with her on conference and journal projects, also co-writing a couple  
41 of pieces with her. I was also thrilled to see her ideas and writings coalesce into four single-  
42 authored books: *Revolutionary Social Transformation: democratic hopes, political possibilities and critical*  
43 *education* (Bergin & Garvey, 1999), *Critical Education against Global Capitalism: Karl Marx and*  
44 *revolutionary critical education* (Bergin & Garvey, 2001), *On Marx: an introduction to the revolutionary*  
45 *intellect of Karl Marx* (Sense, 2008) and a revised and updated paperback version of *Critical Education*  
46 *against Global Capitalism: Karl Marx and revolutionary critical education* (Sense, 2010). The last

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47 mentioned included an insightful Marxist analysis of current developments with regard to  
48 capitalism which, as Paula constantly reminded us, has been global since its very inception, as  
49 indicated in the Communist Manifesto, but which has been intensified through the revolution in  
50 information technology.

51 News of her death reached me as I was anonymously reviewing a manuscript, for a  
52 prominent critical sociology journal, in which the author or authors cited her work extensively.  
53 Like many, I will miss her scholarship and especially her deep and holistic understanding of Marx,  
54 Gramsci and Freire, including her superb insights into dialectical relations. I also admired her  
55 spirituality. Like Freire, she was 'person of faith', something she refers to in her writing, specifically  
56 in the *Critical Education against Global Capitalism* book. Above all, I will miss her deep, genuine  
57 friendship and her love for humanity and other species, including the pets which shared her space  
58 and which she adored. Here was a woman who knew how to love.

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**Peter Mayo**  
*international colleague and friend*