

IN MEMORIAM

Dip Kapoor (2025)

Ali A. Abdi

University of British Columbia

Professor Dip Kapoor (University of Alberta) passed away on August 26, 2025. Dip was an outstanding, scholar, teacher and colleague who, beyond his loving family, will be missed by many colleagues and friends in academia and among the global activist community organizations.

I first met Dip when I joined the University of Alberta's Department of Educational Policy Studies in July 2000 as a new Assistant Professor. Having completed his PhD in the same department, he was then teaching there as a sessional lecturer. It wasn't a chance encounter but as he noted when he came into my office and introduced himself, he wanted to know more about me, my work and research intentions. To deploy the selectively over-used cliché of immediately connecting and from there, becoming conversational colleagues and later close friends, wouldn't represent any exaggeration of the moment and its aftermath. Extendedly, from those initial collegial visits and connections, I slowly realized that we had select scholarly affinities on critical and intersecting deconstructive as well as reconstructive knowledge and research interests and intentions.

Beyond the academic parcels though, I was also seeing, sort of inter-reflectively, Dip's open-boundary professional qualities and unguarded generosity with his ideas, perspectives and time, which I still fondly recall and inter-subjectively, despite his permanent departure from this world, appreciate. In those occasions also, I slowly started admiring, even epistemically and stylistically embracing Dip's immense erudition in areas of mutual research interest including but not limited to sociology of education, comparative and international education, and global adult/community education, the latter leading to an edited volume we collaborated on in 2009.

With those early, briefer conversations, slowly and occasionally extending into longer interlocutions, I became more aware of, at a somewhat higher analytical level, Dip's discursive and attached critical gifts to decipher and reconstruct complex conceptual and praxical contexts that relayed, often with telegraphic urgency, his active commitments to protect the basic rights of those extensively marginalized in his native India. It should have been rare that a post-PhD scholar located in Canada who hasn't yet secured a full time position in academia was so actively focused on protecting the rights of people in one of the most rigidly stratified situations in the world.

It was that commitment where he went beyond talking about the situation, and actually cooperated, on counter-oppressive community projects, with Adivasi activists in India around the work of the Center for Research and Development Solidarity (CRDS) in Odisha (formerly Orissa), to actively and on the ground, support Adivasi peoples' rights.

For a brief context, the Adivasi who are recognized as 'Scheduled Tribes', and are said to be the original Indigenous inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent, and who number around 104 million people, are acutely marginalized in socio-economic, political and access to other resources. In supporting the rights of the Adivasi, many times against powerful resources extraction and by direct extension, environment depleting companies, Dip, as he shared with me more than once, faced situations that were neither peaceful nor accommodating.

Yet he never wavered or doubted his resolve to fight against such organized and institutionalized marginalizations. In addition, there were times when in order to push back against the system, along with his Adivasi colleagues, he had to tactically and carefully deploy, as he put it, his own socio-cultural capital (as factually and momentarily on the ground then) to get the attention of local power brokers.

Locally, Dip was also supportive of Canada's Indigenous peoples as well as immigrant populations' rights in his hometown of Edmonton, Alberta, which should also demonstrate his unboundaried commitment to the rights of the unjustly less endowed irrespective of their geographical habitations and politico-economic power contexts.

It was in 2003 that Dip finally secured a tenure track position at McGill University in Montreal, where, via important collaborations with like-minded colleagues, he focused on global human rights and social justice projects that, upon his return to the University of Alberta in 2006, expanded his prolific record of scholarly publications that produced 13 edited/co-edited books as well as over 60 academic journal articles and book chapters.

While some scholars, perhaps I could be counted in this regard, might ride the zeitgeist of topical temporalities, more or less moving with the emerging popularities of certain research areas, Dip never wavered in dissecting, along with his thought-affinity colleagues in almost all parts of the world, the need to take down (for my stylistic preference here) the contemporaneously lives-affecting heavy debris of colonialism, which is mainly operationalized through neoliberal colonialization, neocolonial NGO-ization, savagely elite privileging continuities of politics and economics, and the need to support and sustain emerging global counter-oppression solidarities.

Dip was also an outstanding teacher and much-loved supervisor and mentor. I still recall when a couple of times, I asked him to be a guest lecturer in two of my classes when he was still a sessional lecturer at U of A. The students in both classes were so impressed with his topical erudition and instructional methods that many of them asked me which courses was he teaching so they could enroll in his classes. While his uniquely interactive instructional qualities delighted and selectively challenged those in his courses, Dip was also a supportive and caring graduate supervisor/mentor who always conveyed the message that emerging scholars had a special devoir to contribute to societal transformations.

It was on that teaching and supervision excellence, that Dip received, unsurprisingly for me and I am sure for many of his students and colleagues, the U of A's Faculty of Education Graduate Teaching Award for the 2013-2014 academic year.

In his last edited work, *Contesting Colonial Capitalism in the Americas, Africa and Asia* (2025, Routledge Critical Development Studies), Dip, despite his worsening health situation, somehow managed to bring together over 20 contributors including both established and emerging scholars, and as he has done often, also included his well mentored former students to partake in this important project. The book, which has become a bestseller on amazon.ca, was thematically conceived, which again testifies to Dip's collegial generosity and support, to remember the activist + global rights struggle scholarship of his late McGill colleague and previous collaborator, Professor Aziz Choudry, to whom the volume is dedicated.

In critically endorsing the book and its dedication to Professor Choudry, the UCLA Distinguished Historian, Robin D.G. Kelley, noted how the volume, in its collective spirit, elevates the work of 'the insurgent laboring classes who believe another world is possible'.

I was more than privileged to receive the book as a gift from Dip when I visited him in Edmonton in June 2025 (two months before his passing). I treasure this work as the last scholarly achievement from my dear friend and colleague.

Dip thickly personified and unapologetically embraced the well-rounded and much needed counter-system complex existentiality of the engaged, insurgent intellectual who critically reads the world and acts upon it with deep insight, scholarly depth and courageous alignment with the systemically excluded across the world. He will be immensely missed, but his academic oeuvre and actioned community engagement shall continue to inspire us.