

SPECIAL ISSUE:
PAULO FREIRE'S BIRTH CENTENARY COMMEMORATION

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Postcolonial Directions in Education

Focus and Scope

Postcolonial Directions in Education is a peer reviewed open access journal produced twice a year. It is a scholarly journal intended to foster further understanding, advancement and reshaping of the field of postcolonial education. We welcome articles that contribute to advancing the field. As indicated in the Editorial for the inaugural issue, the purview of this journal is broad enough to encompass a variety of disciplinary approaches, including but not confined to the following: sociological, anthropological, historical and social psychological approaches. The areas embraced include anti-racist education, decolonizing education, critical multiculturalism, critical racism theory, direct colonial experiences in education and their legacies for present day educational structures and practice, educational experiences reflecting the culture and 'imagination' of empire, the impact of neoliberalism/globalisation/structural adjustment programmes on education, colonial curricula and subaltern alternatives, education and liberation movements, challenging hegemonic languages, the promotion of local literacies and linguistic diversity, neo-colonial education and identity construction, colonialism and the construction of patriarchy, canon and canonicity, Indigenous knowledges, supranational bodies and their educational frameworks, north-south and east-west relations in education, the politics of representation, unlearning colonial stereotypes, internal colonialism and education, cultural hybridity and learning in postcolonial contexts, education and the politics of dislocation, biographies / autobiographies reflecting the above themes, deconstruction of colonial narratives of civilization within educational contexts. Once again, the field cannot be exhausted.

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Papers submitted to *Postcolonial Directions in Education* are examined by at least two reviewers for originality and timeliness in the context of related research. Reviews generally are completed in 30-60 days, with publication in the next available issue.

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION PAULO FREIRE (1921-2021): BIRTH CENTENARY SPECIAL ISSUE

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This final issue for 2021 serves as a tribute to the subaltern and decolonising pedagogical politics of Paulo Freire who was born a century ago. *Postcolonial Directions in Education* celebrates the stature of this significant Brazilian as a humanist, leading pedagogue and decolonising figure, arguably the most influential educator since John Dewey, and a colossal figure from the majority world.

Conferences marking this commemorative year of Freire's birth centenary were held in several countries. One of these meetings featured both co-editors of this journal. Peter Mayo, the UNESCO Chair in Global Adult Education, coordinated the Paulo Freire Birth Centenary Fest held from 6 – 8 December 2021, and Anne Hickling-Hudson participated in the conference as one of the 24 invited speakers. Both have worked closely with Freire's thought, and have sought to apply his transformative approach to pedagogy and discuss it in their writing.

For these conferences in honour of Freire, occurring during an ever alarming spread of Covid-19 and its variants, use was made of the electronic platforms that

have become familiar to many for gatherings, meetings and teaching. This provided the advantage of reaching people in different parts of the world, although we can never lose sight of the fact that many are bypassed through the use of these devices. They reside especially, but not only, in the majority world, and not simply the geographical majority world. They feature prominently among those addressed by Freire and his collaborators in his practice of popular education, in his educational administration while he was Secretary of Education in his native country, Brazil, in his writings translated into many different languages, and importantly also in the free consultations that he gave in countries and regions seeking self-determination and postcolonial development, including Tanzania, Nicaragua, Grenada, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, and São Tome e Principe.

For all his possible human errors and controversial positions, which he frequently owned up to in self-reflective pieces, Freire did not waver from his lifelong commitment to working alongside those he described as 'the oppressed'. Similarly, Franz Fanon called them the 'wretched of the earth' and Danilo Dolci referred to them as 'the poor Christs' (I poveri Cristi, in Italian). This orientation characterises many of the articles published throughout the first ten years of this journal and will, we are sure, continue in the foreseeable future. Freire continues to serve as a person to think with, for those who travel along these paths, though of course he is not the only such philosopher, as he himself would be the first to point out.

Freire is an iconic figure in scholarship and activism, the two being often intertwined. His impact is seen in a variety of disciplines ranging from education and sociology to philosophy and anthropology. His presence is felt in areas such as Health Sciences, Communications, Youth Studies, Community Development, Labour Studies and Gerontology. He is the target of affirmation, re-

appropriation or outright criticism in Women's Studies. As Carlos Alberto Torres, a contributor to this issue, has put it so succinctly and eloquently: We can be for or against but never without Freire.

Freire's enduring influence can be gauged from the huge corpus of writing around his work. Hardly a year passes without a book or academic papers and other articles published about him. This issue of *Postcolonial Directions in Education* constitutes one of the latest examples. It follows closely on the publication in English of Walter Kohan's intellectual biography of Paulo Freire previously published in Spanish and Portuguese –Peter Mayo reviews the English version of Kohan's book in this issue.

Detractors, as any world figure is bound to have, maliciously rail against the existence of a 'Freire Industry', as others of similar mean spirit would say about Antonio Gramsci. And yet it is amazing that these philosopher educators continue to inspire and stimulate the critical social justice oriented imagination despite the kind of vilification that Freire, for one, is now receiving in his homeland at the hands of the current right-wing regime. Like its forerunner, the interim government, this regime has been striving hard to dislodge him from the accolade of being declared 'Patron of Brazilian Education'. The vicious attempt by Jair Bolsonaro and his ilk to revile Freire has prompted widespread condemnation worldwide.

We have assembled a good mix of people who either published with Freire (in an editorial capacity, or co-writing a talking book or interview) such as Henry Giroux, Ira Shor and Carlos Alberto Torres, or had Freire collaborate with them writing forewords to their work (again Giroux), or who draw on Freire to discuss issues teased out in their work as is the case with Antonia Darder. Other contributors to this issue directly engage Freire's thought in the struggles with which they contend,

such as Inês Barbosa and João Teixeira Lopes with regard to mobilisations in Portugal, Inny Accioly regarding the quest for dignity in these pandemic times and Tal Dor regarding the ever-burning question of Palestine.

In recent correspondence between the co-editors of this journal, Anne Hickling-Hudson wrote to Peter Mayo: ‘I am so lucky to have spent two weeks working as a facilitator with Paulo Freire and his teaching team in the second year of the Grenada Revolution. I knew little about him at the time, 1980, and had no idea what a watershed that two-week seminar would be, for me. It caused me to rethink every aspect of pedagogy and communication, and to start the journey of developing more philosophical clarity about what we as progressive teachers are doing, and why. I believe Freire must have had that impact, also, on the 50 Grenadian teachers in the seminar. There was never any rhetoric with Paulo. Never any didacticism. His style was gentle dialogue, listening, and sharing ideas. This is always more likely to lead to persuasion. He came across as eager to listen and learn in our collaborative journey of seeking the postcolonial transformation of education.’”

The closest Peter ever got to meeting Paulo Freire was at a book signing session at the Pedagogy of the Oppressed conference in Omaha, Nebraska a year before Paulo died. He had heard him speak at the opening plenary that day and would subsequently become good friends with his widow, Nita, and would meet his daughter Cristina in Paris in June 2019. Cristina would tell him that Paulo mentioned Peter’s name among family or close circles. Peter worked closely with persons who were, in turn, close to Freire, such as Carlos Alerto Torres, his teacher when Peter was a Master’s student at the University of Alberta in Canada, and later Peter McLaren and Ira Shor. This was before Peter wrote his four books on Freire, the most prominent being his comparative work on Freire and Gramsci which was first published by Zed Books and

subsequently in Catalan, Portuguese (in Brazil), German, Italian (in Sardinia), Spanish, Turkish and Japanese translation. He 'knew' Freire through reading and engaging with his ideas.

The collaboration of all of us in this issue of the journal, we think, makes for a fitting tribute to Paulo Freire in his Birth Centenary year.

THE PROFOUND SOLIDARITY OF PAULO FREIRE

Antonia Darder

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ABSTRACT In this paper, Antonia Darder refers to her first face to face meeting with Paulo Freire while attending a conference as a graduate student. She describes Freire as someone who conveyed a deep sense of love, hope and dignity to the people he encountered on his path, in ways that opened them up and made them feel loved and appreciated. In this discussion, Freire's love is understood not as romantic or sentimental, but rather as politicizing and humanising; a love imbued with a profound sense of solidarity with others and a commitment to revolutionary struggle. She notes Freire's continuing relevance in a world characterized by the great economic disparities of capitalism, including dire inequalities of health care and life opportunities in these pandemic times. This points to a colonizing, neoliberal world that throws into sharp relief its deadly and discriminatory nature where everything is left to the vagaries of the marketplace and any semblance of public safeguards are systematically undone. Darder notes that even in the midst of such struggle, Freire's pedagogy conveys an abiding sense of hope and faith for grassroots democratic struggles. As examples, recent movements in Chile and India are cited as collective efforts that inspire hope and possibility. In so doing, she foregrounds Freire's faith in progressive social movements as significant to the large political project for economic democracy and educational justice.

RESUMEN En este artículo, Antonia Darder se refiere a su primer encuentro cara a cara con Paulo Freire cuando ella asistió una conferencia como estudiante de posgrado. Ella describe a Freire como alguien que transmitió un profundo sentido de amor, esperanza y dignidad a las personas que encontró en su camino, de una manera que las abrió y las hizo sentir amadas y apreciadas. En esta discusión, el amor de Freire no se entiende como romántico o sentimental, sino más bien como político y humanizador; un amor imbuido de un profundo sentido de solidaridad con otros y comprometido a la lucha revolucionaria. Ella señala la relevancia continua de Freire en un mundo caracterizado por las grandes disparidades económicas del capitalismo, incluso las graves desigualdades en la atención médica y las oportunidades de vida en estos tiempos de la pandemia. Esto apunta a un mundo colonizador y neoliberal que pone de obvio su naturaleza mortal y discriminatoria, donde todo se deja a los caprichos del mercado y cualquier apariencia de salvaguardias públicas se deshace de forma sistemática. Darder señala que incluso en medio de tal lucha, la pedagogía de Freire transmite un sentido perdurable de esperanza y fe para las luchas democráticas de base. Como ejemplos, los movimientos recientes en Chile e India se citan como esfuerzos colectivos que inspiran esperanza y posibilidad. Al hacerlo, pone en primer plano la fe de Freire en los movimientos sociales progresistas como algo significativo para el gran proyecto político de democracia económica y justicia educativa.

KEYWORDS solidarity, love, hope, social struggle, COVID-19

Words are not good enough to evoke all that I have learned from Paulo. Our meeting had that quality of sweetness that lingers, that lasts for a lifetime; even if you never speak to the person again, see their face, you can always return in your heart to that moment when you were together to be renewed—that is a profound solidarity.

—bell hooks (1994:58)

As any feminist of my time, I begin this brief tributary reflection about Paulo Freire by affirming that the personal is always political. In this regard, Paulo, a Brazilian man born early in the 20th century, was truly ahead of his time. He understood in deep and substantive ways that social struggle and transformative knowledge can only be built through our personal involvement in collective political struggle with others. This always began for Paulo with an openness to the world around him and through sustained dialogues about the experiences of his everyday life and lived histories. Hence, Paulo was a man who closely observed and was attentive to nature and fellow human beings around him, relishing the very act of being alive. This central feature of his pedagogical sensibility is essential to comprehending why both his work and his presence have had such an enduring sense of love and solidarity to those of us who knew him. It is also fundamental to understanding why Paulo, a consummate revolutionary intellectual, also became so internationally loved and cherished personally, pedagogically, and politically.

Meeting My Father in Struggle

Para Antonia, porque você também é como minha filha!

—Paulo Freire¹

I often ponder on the providence of meeting this extraordinary man of Recife. In life, if we are lucky, we may experience at least one exquisite moment; a moment which often passes before we know it, just like a shooting star in

¹ Inscription by Paulo Freire in my first copy of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

the dark night sky. In 1987, I had the good fortune to experience one of those rare moments. I was attending a conference in Irvine, California, which featured the work of Paulo Freire. I was a graduate student of education and single mother of three adolescent children, living by very modest means, teaching at a small Quaker college, and completing my doctorate. Arriving late to the opening of the conference, I looked for a place to sit. The only seat available was by a lively woman, who welcomed me as I scooted past her and sat down. I did not realize it then that this moment would absolutely change my life and transform the direction of my scholarship.

The woman's name was Cristina and she and I quickly sparked a conversation and exchanged comments about the speakers, as if we had been lifelong friends. At the lunch break, she asked me to join her family for lunch. I followed her out the building toward a small group of people. Among them was Paulo Freire, who just happened to be Cristina's father. I was surprised and awed to find myself in the company of Paulo Freire! This was author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the book that had most sparked a fire for justice buried in my soul. Reading Paulo's book brought me into communion with a deep political force, as I had never experienced before—for the first time, I literally felt the inner power of my conscious awakening within me and the inception of a more grounded and loving understanding of the world. In essence, those days at the conference, with Paulo and others² who also sought to transform the unjust conditions of education and the world, unexpectedly awakened within me a new sense of my existence as a

² The conference at California State University Irvine was organized by Tom Wilson, a beloved comrade. In attendance were Paulo's daughters Christina and Madalena, as well as critical scholars Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Donaldo Macedo, Roger Simon, and others.

political subject of history and surprisingly opened new possibilities for my future contribution as an activist, teacher, and public intellectual.

From then on, any time I could spend with Paulo, I made the effort to be there. True to the inscription he penned in my book—*Para Antonia, porque você também é como minha filha*—I felt embraced by Paulo like one of his daughters. He would say that Cristina and I were very similar, in that we were quick witted and laughed easily. Paulo was a warm, calm, and compassionate man. He had the ability to make the world slow down, so that we could talk, enjoy a meal, a drive, or a walk together. Paulo was a wonderful storyteller and my great fondness for him only equaled my profound respect for the man. Paulo would speak kindly to the waiter in a restaurant, making eye contact, smiling, and speaking in a familiar way. He did not fear the company of people and in his company, people's reticence to speak seem to disappear, making one feel articulate, intelligent and respected. We all felt this way, because this is how Paulo treated the people who crossed his path.

Hence, it is not surprising that meeting Paulo remains etched in my memory as one of the most beautiful experiences in my life and one of the most affirming moments in my intellectual formation as a young woman. I say this because I was unaccustomed to feeling understood or having the strength of my ideas acknowledged within male dominated academic contexts—contexts that were often quite hostile to working class, women of color who spoke too loudly or who expressed themselves too passionately or who too easily broke into tears in the midst of a public lecture. More often, I found myself easily maligned as being too sensitive or too subjective in my way of speaking or too

fervent in my manner of engaging within these intellectual forums.

In contrast, Paulo argued that we cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity, in that these are inextricable to our humanity. His comfort with human vulnerabilities, along with his subjective sensibilities, wisdom, and tremendous generosity of spirit allowed him to see in people born of oppression a real capacity for struggle, which he believed needed to be cultivated and nurtured in the process of our becoming what Antonio Gramsci (1971) called organic intellectuals. It was as if the hardship, anguish, and grief Paulo endured in his early life or while in prison or in exile deepen within him a humanizing capacity to recognize and appreciate the pain of others. Paulo understood, in the flesh, that it was precisely through the power of our pain and fury that the struggle for liberation could be built.

Commitment to Loving Tolerance

[T]he more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can transform it. This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into a dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side.

—Paulo Freire (1970:23, 24)

One of the astonishing things about Paulo was the way he genuinely lived his pedagogy and his politics, with a commitment to loving tolerance. In this sense, his wisdom and theories were as much grounded in readings, as they

were in his own experiences with others and the world. He was not afraid to enter, to listen, or confront the world, open and unveiled. Yet, to do this, requires both great humility and a strong commitment to respect one's own humanity and the humanity of others, as well as the sentient qualities of the natural world. This organic sensibility permitted Paulo to enter into the world of others with ease and tenderness, to say what he felt and thought in a conversation and yet, simultaneously remain dialectically grounded in himself, with political clarity and coherence. No matter what might be taking place, he could see beyond the obvious material circumstances of the moment, in order to access the connections between the historical and contemporary conditions that informed the present. This is a quality that was evident when listening to him speak or reading about his engagement with the world in his books; particularly in what he called *talking books*, where he sought to express and illustrate the power of dialogue. His book with Ira Shor (Shor and Freire, 1988), Antonio Faundez, (Freire and Faundez, 1989); and Myles Horton (Horton and Freire, 1990) are wonderful examples. Paulo's loving tolerance was also enhanced by his commitment to express his mind and heart, without guile, open, honest and direct. His pedagogical principles and ideas were not abstract concepts to be twirled around for public amusement or to impress others. He lived his pedagogy of love in simple and extraordinary ways.

On one occasion, I was at a critical pedagogy symposium in Boston, feeling very troubled with some of the exchanges taking place between a well-established comrade and a female scholar who had critiqued his work. The disturbing nature of the exchange got the best of me. Impetuously and with a sense of frustration, I countered what had been said in a manner that caused some anger and closed down the dialogue. Later at dinner with Paulo

and Nita, Paulo spoke to me very candidly. He said he saw in me a deep sense of commitment to struggle for justice, but that I needed to accept that, in doing this very difficult work, one must enact a certain level of tolerance founded on love, particularly with people who are comrades and allies in the struggle. He could see my surprise and difficulty with accepting his position, in that I refused to believe that tolerance of any form of injustice was the answer. Then, he looked directly into my eyes and said, “Antonia, you will be a great intellectual someday, but you must be more tolerant in your responses.” At that point, the conversation shifted and his words were left forevermore hanging in the air, never to be revisited. For a young working-class, colonized, Boricua woman who had been fighting all my life to feel valuable, I could barely understand his meaning. It is only now, after almost four decades of teaching and engaging difficult questions of political struggle and emancipatory formation, that I can more fully recognize and appreciate the gift of love that Paulo gave me that day.

As I write this, I am reminded of Paulo’s love and courageous commitment to the personal and political formation of others, not only in the classroom but in the larger arena of the everyday. Paulo’s concern for loving tolerance was indispensable to his enactment of this revolutionary love and commitment to others. In fact, he often spoke of tolerance as an *indispensable quality* (Freire, 1998b) of teachers and activists, for without it, authentic experiences of democratic life are impossible in schools or on the streets. For Paulo, tolerance did “not mean acquiescing to the intolerable; it does not mean covering up disrespect; it does not mean coddling the aggressor or disguising aggression” (ibid:43). Nor is tolerance about *playing the game*, or extending a civilized gesture of hypocrisy, or a coexistence with the unbearable. Instead,

Paulo's critical expression of tolerance was grounded on basic human principles of respect, discipline, dignity, coherence, and ethical responsibility to ourselves, one another, and the world. More importantly, his call for a tolerance encompassed a critical understanding of love as a motivational force for political struggle—a force that could serve as a powerful impetus for resistance of oppression, in the face of our dehumanization.

Love as a political force

By fighting for the restoration of our humanity we will be attempting the restoration of true generosity. And this fight, because of the purpose given it, will actually constitute an act of love.

—Paulo Freire (1970: 29)

The question of *love as a political force* is essential to understanding Paulo's revolutionary vision of consciousness and transformation. The inseparability with which he theorized the political significance of love in the evolution of consciousness and political empowerment is key to grasping accurately the depth of his meaning. Paulo felt a kinship with Eric Fromm's thesis in this regard (Fromm, 1956). As such, love was not a mere sentimental exchange between people, but rather he understood love to constitute an intentional spiritual act of consciousness, which emerges and matures through living, learning, and laboring together. Across Paulo's books is found both a beautiful and powerful view of love, often glossed over by the very people who most need to comprehend deeply its humanizing intent. Like Che Guevara before him, Paulo maintained that a revolutionary politics of love had to be the underlying force of any political project, which requires us to counter oppression daily while,

simultaneously, we seek new possibilities for social and material transformation.

As was his way, Paulo engaged a politics of love by highlighting the pedagogical power of his personal and communal exchanges, which he maintained was important to building an emancipatory relationship between teachers and students. In particular, he emphasized the power of an embodied pedagogy and politics, through which we could cultivate greater intimacy between self, others, and the world. Paulo believed that “living with [democracy] and deepening it so it has real meaning in people’s everyday lives” (1987: 12) should be a central political concern in our struggle for liberation. Here, democracy and the solidarity necessary for its evolution are made possible through a pedagogy fortified by a universal regard for the dignity and equality of all people, no matter their differences or circumstances. Paulo’s view of love as a dialectical force, which simultaneously engages unity and difference, beckons us toward a radical knowing that encompasses both emotion and reason (or mind and heart), along a kinship for all life. For Paulo, this revolutionary sensibility constitutes a socialist imperative, if we are to effectively transform conditions of inequality and disaffiliation that are the hallmark of advanced capitalism.

There is no question that Paulo’s life signaled a love and tenderness generated by a political grace born of collective consciousness and a shared curiosity, creativity, and imagination, which gave a grounded meaning to his views on resistance and revolutionary praxis. Further, Paulo believed that to affirm all human beings as free, and yet to do nothing to enact that freedom is a farce. As such, he argued that it is only through our commitment to love and labor together for a more just world that relationships of solidarity can be nurtured and political dreams of freedom be proclaimed and

built. Paulo's pedagogy of love also reminds us that we, as human beings, must unite ourselves with the world and with others in the process of social and political co-creation—so through our shared participation in the labor of struggle, our communal process can nurture and reinforce a deeper sense of our self-determination and our existence as historical beings. Hence, Freire points to a love that is born and emerges directly out of our embodied participation and unwavering political commitment to the transformation of history, so that we might claim our place as free and empowered subjects, rather than remain objects of domination.

In his writings and speeches, Paulo often touched on the essence of love as inseparable to our labor as educators and democratic citizens of the world. He wholeheartedly coincided with Fromm's view, "One loves that for which one labors, and one labors for that which one loves" (Fromm, 1056: 26). This also resonates, undeniably, with the extent to which Paulo, himself, intimately and passionately loved the world—a significant feature of both his pedagogy and personal way of being. With this in mind, we can better appreciate Paulo's preoccupation with the dehumanizing forces so prevalent in schools and society. He was adamant about the political necessity to unveil authoritarian ideologies, pedagogies, and practices that curtail the pleasure of life and deaden our capacity to love, generating in us all a sense of alienation and estrangement from self and the world. In contrast, he advocated for educational and political projects that could cultivate and nurture our political imagination, epistemological curiosity, and the joy of learning necessary to forging our struggle against racializing and neoliberal destruction.

Paulo's Critique of Colonizing Neoliberalism

We need to say no to the neoliberal fatalism that we are witnessing at the end of this century, informed by the ethics of the market, an ethics in which a minority makes most profits against the lives of majority. In other words, those who cannot compete, die. This is a perverse ethics that, in fact, lacks ethics. I insist on saying that I continue to be a human... I would then remain the last educator in the world to say no: I do accept...history as determinism. I embrace history as possibility [where] we can demystify the evil in this perverse fatalism that characterizes the neoliberal discourse in the end of this century

— (Macedo, 2000: 26)

Despite his critics on the left, Paulo's work was uncompromisingly grounded in a humanizing socialist vision. Without question, when Freire spoke of the "ruling class" or the "oppressors," he was referring to historical class distinctions and class conflict within the structure of capitalist society. For Paulo, capitalism was the root of domination. His theoretical analysis was uncompromisingly grounded in questions of class formation, particularly with respect to how national political economies relegate the great majority of workers to an exploited, colonized, and racialized class. Nevertheless, for Paulo, the struggle against economic domination could not be waged effectively without a humanizing praxis; one that could both engage the complex phenomenon of class struggle and effectively foster

conditions for critical social agency across our differences and among the masses.

Hence, it is no surprise that Paulo was an acerbic critique of neoliberalism and, as such, he would have been outspoken about the conditions we are facing in the world today. And, just as he predicted, the contemptuous policies of neoliberalism, over the last four decades, have led to unrelenting economic speculation and despicable extraction of natural and human resources, leaving the majority of the world's population scrambling for crumbs. In the midst of global empire building, human suffering is met by the contempt of the ruling class. Their market logic and neoliberal ethos enlist bootstrap notions of individual responsibility, cut-throat competition, and doctrine of "small government" to promote the glories of privatization and defend their global profiteering schemes.

Paulo (Freire, 1993) spoke out against the cart blanche impunity of conservative neoliberal promoters who sought to push back public health resources, educational spending, and labor protections, while moving fiercely to privatize health care and education and block the influence of trade union organizations. It's ironic that this willful neglect of the public welfare resulted in the woeful failure of conservative governments to respond swiftly to a pandemic that has resulted in over 100 million cases worldwide, with 2.3 million deaths³ in one year, more deaths than all the wars in the 20th century combined or any other pandemic in history.⁴ The global spread of Covid-19 has been largely due the disdain of neoliberal pursuits, which have privileged the needs of capital over the needs of people. The result is that extreme inequality is rampant. Chronic conditions of

³ See: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/geographical-distribution-2019-ncov-cases>

⁴ See: <https://time.com/5815367/coronavirus-deaths-comparison/>

economic injustice have not only set off a global health crisis, along with its similar devastating impact on education and worker conditions, but also highlighted growing cleavages in political, economic, and racialized inequalities across societies. Job losses, evictions, food insecurity are all at an all-time high. Globally, the racialized wealth gap today is higher than it was in the 1960s⁵ and global inequality between countries mirroring the 1800s.⁶

Paulo (2002) adamantly critiqued the manner in which advocates of neoliberal excellence around the world coexist brashly indifferent to more than a billion inhabitants of the developing world living in poverty. Fast forward to 2021, conditions of those impoverished have only worsen. According to Oxfam⁷ ⁸ 8 men own more wealth than 3.6 billion people. The richest 1% have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people, while almost half of humanity survives on \$5.50 a day. It is not surprising then that Black, Latino, Asian, Indigenous, and other racialized populations globally are facing overwhelming negative consequences associated with COVID-19 and its variants in our communities, where statistics show staggering disparities in infection rates and death rates of up to four times greater, compared to our white counterparts (Booth and Barr, 2020). Moreover, for people with learning disabilities, who have always been considered problematic to capitalist accumulation, rates of death have been reported to be six

⁵ See; <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/todays-racial-wealth-gap-is-wider-than-in-the-1960s>

⁶ See: <https://ourworldindata.org/global-economic-inequality>

⁷ See; <https://www.oxfam.org/en/5-shocking-facts-about-extreme-global-inequality-and-how-even-it>

⁸ See: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/just-8-men-own-same-wealth-half-world>

times greater.⁹ There is no way to understand this from a Freirean perspective than as a crisis of humanity.

Moreover, Paulo understood unequivocally that there is no fix for global capitalism. The “post-welfare state model of social order that celebrates unhindered markets as the most effective means of achieving economic growth and public welfare” (Bell and Green, 2016) is unequivocally bankrupt to any vision of equality or justice before, during, or after the pandemic. The shameful mishandling of the coronavirus crisis has made this blatantly visible, particularly in the debacle surrounding lack of PPE for health care workers and insufficient ventilators. Yet, the same market logic is now driving the development and distribution of vaccinations. Rather than coming together in global solidarity as an international community concerned for the well-being of human life worldwide, competitive market reasoning persists among COVID-19 vaccine players who will split \$100 billion in sales and \$40 billion in profits.¹⁰ And, as would be expected, wealthier countries readily secured the majority of vaccines available, while global populations most in need had considerably less access.¹¹ Beyond access, the cost of the vaccine to different countries is of concern. South Africa, the worst hit nation on the continent is being charged 2.5 times more than European countries for doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine (Sullivan, 2021). Thus, even with a potential treatment in sight, the world is bound to emerge from this dreadful chapter of history more unequal than ever (Goodman, 2020) unless, as Paulo proposed, people worldwide rise up collectively to oppose

⁹ See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-54924121>

¹⁰ See: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-55170756>

¹¹ See: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-the-consequences-of-global-Covid-vaccine-inequality/2131116>

global policies and ways of life that ultimately rob us of our humanity.

Indispensability of Hope

Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle.

—Paulo Freire (Freire, 1994: 9)

For Paulo, hope was essential to political struggle. Despite his strident critiques of oppression, he refused to surrender to despair or to falter in his faith in people to transform the course of history. He recognized the power that a pedagogy of hope brings to the struggle for radical social change, whether struggles are in the classroom or in the streets. Moreover, hope is necessary if we are to radically counter, within schools or society, the forces of patriarchy, material oppression, and racism intensified under neoliberal rule. For Paulo, educational praxis does not occur in a vacuum. It is a political endeavor for liberation, in which we critically unveil the conditions that shape the lives of teachers, students, and their communities, as we seek avenues for social and material reinvention.

Paulo also recognized that the power of hope is even more essential to political struggles against global economic tyranny, where stark inequalities are politically explosive and, to the extent that the system is unable and unwilling to reverse them, it turns to ever more violent forms of containment. Increasing state control over people's lives, therefore, is bound to reflect the global capitalist reality of our time, particularly as governments more fiercely seek to impede mass movements and protests of people on the streets. With this in mind, Paulo's work encompassed a radical call to action, if we are even to dream of a more just

and equal world. He passionately argued for an education that is life affirming, where students everywhere can experience the democratic conditions to develop their critical abilities as democratic citizens of the world, who are prepared to freely engage their lived histories with self-determination, to embrace an abiding promise to global justice, and to undertake a commitment to labor together as freedom fighters and loving architects of a more just world.

Paulo often spoke of his memories of African revolutionary leader, Amilcar Cabral (Mendy, 2019), who firmly believed that all political struggles for liberation commence with the courage to dream of a world that does not yet exist. It is this ardent spirit of hope and faith in the possibility of human beings to transform the world that was overwhelmingly reflected in Paulo's pedagogy of love and in the images, stories, protests, and chants of millions of people who put their lives on the line for a collective dream. This year alone, people worldwide took to the streets in support of Black Lives Matter protests against the brutal police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man in Minneapolis. The force of these protests not only intensified national debates in the U.S., but also sparked much needed international debates about anti-black racism. The far-reaching influence of the Black Lives Matter Movement underscored growing multinational resistance to state sanctioned racism, particularly against Black men and women around the world.

After years of unprecedented levels of austerity measures, state repression, and human rights violations in Chile, the people waged a mass struggle of resistance against the current government. Beginning in 2019, hundreds of thousands of people effectively launched a social uprising across sectors of the population in opposition of the Piñera government. At street protests, chanting "*El pueblo unido*

jamás sera vencido!”,¹² the masses stood firm in their demand for not only changes to the national constitution, but the end of state repression. They called for explicitly incorporating into the constitution social rights related to public education, health care, housing, employment and prison reform, in an effort to end the brutal legacy of Pinochet’s dictatorship. In October 2020, after a grueling year of national political struggle, 78 percent of the people of Chile democratically voted to approve the rewriting of the Chilean constitution.

In response to neoliberal-inspired laws, farmers in India have waged one of the largest political strikes in the history of the world. Despite police repression, 250 million people marched to Delhi on November 26, 2020¹³ to join a general strike in defiance of the Modi government’s refusal to rescind initiatives aimed at a program of agrarian “modernization” that would result in the takeover of the nation’s agricultural production by large transnational corporations, destroying the independent livelihood of small farmers, who comprise 56% of India’s workforce. The farmer’s astonishing level of solidarity and organizational commitment has been accomplished through their deep faith in the collective power of workers united, despite lack of economic resources.

Paulo would have championed these inspiring examples of contemporary political struggles, in that they well-illustrate how the collective power of people’s hope can move mountains. Yet, through Paulo’s insights, we can also surmise that longstanding neoliberal assaults by racialized global capital against democratic efforts to build a humanizing and just social order are already poised to generate a fierce global class war between the oppressor and

¹² Translation: The people united, will not be defeated!

¹³ See: <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2020/11/27/250-million-people-participate-in-nationwide-strike-in-india/>

the oppressed, between the haves-and-have nots. Nevertheless, as the inhumane ideology of capital continues to fail people around the world, it is only a matter of time before the pendulum swings and political struggles—of trade unionists, climate change activists, women in struggle, peace groups, and other revolutionary organizations around the world—will coalesce, with boots on ground, to fight against the inhumanity manufactured by global capitalism. Hence, it is not surprising that Paulo argued to his death that our human survival and the survival of the planet depends on nothing less than worldwide political movements to end the barbarism of capital rule. This demands not only the reinvention of a new meaning of education, but reimagining a life-affirming, just, and loving global existence—a world where life is exceedingly more precious than the profit margins of the wealthy.

Paulo Freire: Present!

What inheritance can I leave? Exactly one. I think that it could be said when I am no longer in this world: Paulo Freire was a man who lived. He could not understand life and human existence without love and without the search for knowledge.

—Paulo Freire (Freire, 1993:136)

I will conclude here by reaffirming Paulo's very special place in my heart, as *my father in the struggle*. Even today, I remain in awe by the unique way Paulo's eyes sparkled when he spoke and his deeply affectionate manner. He made people feel strong, intelligent, appreciated, and beautiful. This quality, so seldom found in academics or intellectuals, became for me a shining example and a moral compass for my own life and revolutionary praxis out in the world. Paulo

made openness of heart seem simple and easy, but with time, I came to realize the massive strength and self-determination required for a person, any person, to enact loving humanity as a way of life and still remain politically coherent and relevant to the struggle for our liberation. Over the years, Paulo's pedagogy of love has remained with me, even during the darkest moments of my life, as I too have sought to be a just and loving mother, daughter, partner, friend, and comrade, as well as activist, teacher, cultural worker, and intellectual.

Paulo's inheritance was indeed that he lived and loved, in the most profound sense. My words, therefore, simply cannot express the love and profound solidarity I experienced in communion with him. My memories of Paulo echo deeply bell hooks' memory of Paulo. His memory lingers within me, surrounded by such a sweet tenderness—a tenderness that continues to nourish my soul even today. Most astonishing about all of this is that I never spent a great deal of time with Paulo, given he lived in Brazil and I in the U.S. Yet, I still can easily access that overwhelming feeling of solidarity I experienced with Paulo, during those few sweet moments of life I spent in his company. So, despite the fact he has been dead for more than 20 years, the beauty of his humanity, the passion of his commitment, and the coherence of his politics remains ever with me and so many others, inspiring us to live and labor with hope and faith in our collective power to realize a just and enduring socialist dream, where the well-being of human beings is indeed paramount.

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PAULO FREIRE BEFORE AND AFTER THE COUP – A PERSONAL ESSAY

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ABSTRACT This paper provides a first person account of a personal relationship between the author and Paulo Freire which culminated in a ‘talking book’, as Freire calls such books, between the two. It captures Freire’s feelings about the unleashing of the state’s repressive forces to stem the groundswell of activism, which includes education, and critical literacy, for which Paulo Freire was a catalyst. In so doing, the military intervention was intended to halt the momentum in a country roused for social transformation. This, for Freire and others, is a crime against democracy and humanity, for which the perpetrators should be brought to justice, as he imagined would be the case when the totalitarian and murderous¹ military regime in Argentina, under the command of General Galtieri, collapsed in the aftermath of the defeat in the war concerning the Falkands/Malvinas in 1982.

KEYWORDS Argentina, Brazil, coup, violence, remaking history.

¹ For accounts of the horrors of the dictatorships in Argentina see *Nunca Mas* (Never again) under Conedep headed by public intellectual and author, Ernesto Sabato and, in Brazil, *Brasil: Nunca Mais* (Never Again), a document prepared by a commission headed Paulo Freire’s friend, Paulo Evaristo Arns, a Franciscan Bishop of the Cathedral of Sao Paulo. Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns (1985) is the book’s author. Ana Maria Araujo Freire (1996:198), Paulo Freire’s widow, makes reference to the latter document in her notes in Freire (1996).

“After the coup, I was really born again with a new consciousness of politics, education and transformation.”

--Paulo Freire, *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (1987), 32.

A long time ago, my good fortune was to meet Paulo Freire and write a book with him. On a cold February day in 1984, walking to join him, I first glimpsed Paulo through the steamy windows of a pizza parlor in Amherst, Massachusetts, where he was in residence at the University. Paulo sat among students conversing and eating. When I entered the dining room, he may have recognized me from the photo on my first book which he had read and written a letter about to me. He stood up and came over to embrace me. Overwhelmed, I held on to avoid passing out. Then, he sat me down next to him and introduced me to those at the table. I was struck by his face which was a handsome beige-tone framed by a signature white beard and expressive eyes. Later on, he would tell me he liked his dark shade of skin, declaring, “I am not certain of my whiteness.” Before my several trips to Amherst ended that February, I would see on his face and hear in his voice an abiding pain for the terrible coup of 1964 that ruptured his life and work, and forced him out of his beloved Brazil.

On my second trip to Amherst that February, I was driving alone from New York when news came over the radio about the arrest of General Galtieri in Argentina, the recent head of that nation’s military junta, now disgraced for losing the Falklands/Malvinas War to Britain. I was cheered that a junta somewhere was paying a price and I thought of the coup in Brazil twenty years before Galtieri was taken into custody. I was eager to bring the good news to Paulo when I joined him at the residence of the university provost. Paulo sat on a sofa conversing with his hosts, several deans among them. I waited for a break in the talk and then abruptly announced, “Paulo, Galtieri has been arrested!” Paulo’s

eyes opened wide, and he leaped to his feet, exclaiming “No! Is it true?” I too stood up and said, “Yes, the news just came in.” The deans also stood up, though in some confusion. Seeing us all on our feet around him, Paulo registered embarrassment for leaping up when “Galtieri” meant little or nothing to others in the room. Quickly, Paulo recovered and explained about the deposed head of the junta, “It is very important to make the military accountable for their violence against the people.” The others nodded politely, and we all sat back down. Of course, holding the military responsible had never happened in Brazil, as Paulo knew too well.

A week later, I was in a campus apartment used by Paulo and Elza, his first wife for forty-three years. A large tray of black beans was usually soaking in their refrigerator. Paulo asked me to drive him to a supermarket so he and I could shop for dinner. We bought pasta, sauce, broccoli, and vanilla ice cream (Elza’s favorite, he told me.). After dinner, Elza went to bed early while Paulo and I washed the dishes. Then, we watched a film on TV, *Judgement at Nuremberg* (1964), the Hollywood drama about the 1946 trial of Nazi war criminals. The film was well-received when it came out (the same year as the coup in Brazil) and I remember watching it back then, though Paulo had never seen this courtroom drama. The film presented intense court scenes where Jewish survivors and others testified about their suffering. Paulo watched with growing passion. He started to sweat, something I would later observe at other times when a testimony at a public session or a story he was narrating drew him into deep feelings. Then, as the movie continued on TV, he turned to me and said, “It’s very important to arrest war criminals and make them accountable,” repeating the lesson he drew about Galtieri the week before. His anger and sadness were palpable in the room; I felt like a witness to his lasting pain from the coup.

Twenty years had not healed all the psychic and political wounds. During the coup, Paulo's office was ransacked; he was harshly interrogated by police, then sent home only to be arrested without warning and jailed without indictment, trial, conviction or sentencing. He remarked how brave Elza was then, never reproaching him for this calamity, bringing food to jail for him and others. After seventy days of his incarceration, lobbying on Paulo's behalf by the Brazilian Catholic Church succeeded in getting him released. (Paulo told me that the Church approached coup leaders and vouched for him, telling them "This is a good man.") But relentless police interrogations began again. Fearing imminent re-arrest, he sought asylum in the Bolivian Embassy (the only South American one willing to shelter him). Finally getting safe passage, Paulo escaped but could not bring his wife and 5 young children. A few weeks later, a coup in Bolivia overthrew the government protecting Paulo. He was on the run again, this time to Chile, where Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic government took him in and allowed Elza and the kids to follow.

The 1964 coup erupted just as Paulo planned to open 20,000 "culture circles" nationwide. He had been appointed by liberal President Joao Goulart to direct a massive effort which could develop the basic literacy in peasants and workers then required by the Constitution of 1932 to qualify as voters. If tens of thousands of Freirean culture circles qualified hundreds of thousands of new working-class voters, electoral power could shift to the left and the oligarchy could finally lose control of government. This historic threat became sharply visible one year before the coup, when Pres. Goulart brought his entire cabinet to the small town of Angicos in the impoverished Northeast of Brazil to witness the graduation of 299 peasants and workers in a culture circle set up there by Paulo. The mostly adult students impressed Goulart. Freire addressed the President at the event: "[There] exists today a people who decides, a

people that is rising up, a people that has begun to become aware of its destiny and has begun to take part in the Brazilian historical process irreversibly.” (Kirkendall, 2010: 40)

The President was looking ahead to national elections in 1965. The Constitution kept the electorate conservative by denying the vote to millions of working people who could not read or write. Soon after the Angicos graduation, the first labor strike ever in that region erupted. Goulart spoke in its favor, and asked Freire to the capital Brasilia to direct a national program of literacy. Could literacy democratize Brazil by mobilizing millions of the poor to vote and even to strike? But the culture circles barely got underway. A series of confrontations in March 1964 escalated to a military takeover. Goulart fled to Argentina. The coup accomplished what armed violence can do for threatened elites--extinguish rivals and crush democratic insurgencies from below.

Forced from Brazil, Paulo became in his own words “a peregrine of revolution” flying from place to place. The coup drove Paulo out of his native land in his prime during his most productive years for mass organizing. Paulo Freire was in love with Brazilian speech, food (the bean stew called *feijoado*, the sugar cane liquor called *cachaza*), the dance and music. (Whenever I traveled with Paulo, we ate Brazilian whenever we could, dish by dish as Paulo told stories.) No longer situated in his home culture, Paulo often found himself in places whose languages were not his, whose histories and cultures were unfamiliar. Abroad after 1964, Paulo was no longer a native in any space but rather became a foreign guest, invited, honored, but not embedded and soon to move on. With little choice but to adapt to radically different conditions than before the coup, he had to reinvent himself as a scholar and author, as a public speaker and consultant, as a visiting professor.

He had spent fifteen years in Brazil learning the everyday conditions of the working class and developing for them a “situated pedagogy,” designed from local “generative” words and themes posed as problems for dialogue and action, legible because the subject matters represented familiar contexts. This pedagogy made strenuous demands on the teachers to reposition themselves as students of their students before they served as teachers for the students. Paulo articulated this mutual goal early in the second chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, in his famous contrast of his method with the dominant “banking concept of education”: “The *raison d’être* of libertarian education...lies in its drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students.” (Freire, 2018, p. 72, italics in original).

In writing and in speaking, Paulo declared that all pedagogies are political, not just his; no method or theory, no classroom practice, curriculum or testing regime can be neutral, that is, free of political impacts and effects because all develop human beings to act, think, and speak one way or another. Paulo openly owned the politics of his pedagogy, to question and transform an unequal, unjust status quo. Authorities who set up, finance, and regulate formal schools, colleges, and educational programs do not do so to teach students how to question and displace them. Formal education is a long, managed process of unequal social development; unequal by gender, race, and class; managed by successive layers of authority beyond the classroom teacher (department chairs, division deans, district superintendents, state commissioners, federal monitors, etc.). Paulo thought it “naïve,” “angelic” or “manipulative” to ignore or deny that traditional teaching and learning sustained the unequal status quo (The unequal wealth and power dominating all societies and the unequal inputs and outputs of all education systems

were so apparent that Paulo designated himself “a vagabond of the obvious” for traveling the world to denounce what should be obvious.). He wanted his public appearances to serve as “pretexts” in his words, that is, apparent occasions to hear from a celebrity but actually chances for oppositional educators to consolidate their resistance. He warned, however, that resistance “is not a weekend on a tropical beach.” Opposition involves greater or lesser risk depending on the action, the time and place.

The risks of opposing the unequal status quo were less apparent than the promises when young Paulo Freire worked in Brazil. About the time before the coup, he said: “With some exception in left groups, there was almost a certainty that we would move forward to power. There was a great generalized hope that I was part of...The moment was extraordinary. The young were absolutely motivated historically to participate in the transformation.” (Shor and Freire, 1987: 32) The oligarchy was threatened by popular mobilizations. To stop this, a massive military intervention was needed, which threw Paulo Freire out of one life and into his next. He could not return home until 1980, after the regime lost authority and provoked growing opposition in the face of economic failures.

In 1984, two decades after the coup that ruptured his work and life, Paulo at 63 was in Amherst, Massachusetts where I met him. Paulo Freire, in my judgement, can be understood as a survivor of political violence who recovered to fight another day. This was a fortunate survival and recovery not possible for all targets of repressive violence. He lived to codify the pedagogy of the oppressed into a small library of books which launched an international school of critical teaching and learning. That school continues to grow and evolve. Two generations of educators and scholars followed Paulo’s work with reinventions, refinements and critiques. Paulo has also been survived by the Workers’

Party (Partido Trabalhadores, PT) in Brazil which he helped found to contend for state power. Social justice was to him a dream fought for with the weapons at hand, then passed on to the next generation who face the rewards and risks of remaking history with their own hands, as he put it.

His first life of opposition was overwhelmed by repressive generals and oligarchs, so Paulo Freire regathered and restarted a second life for social justice. When news of General Galtieri's arrest sprang him to his feet like a young person, not a man of 63, he spoke eloquently with his body about his lifelong commitment to change the world. It's our turn now.

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² 18th printing 2015

NAMING PALESTINE

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ABSTRACT: I enter the conversation and the celebration for the centenary of Paulo Freire from a feminist perspective that enhances a critical reading of political Zionism and the State of Israel as a settler colonial project in Palestine. In this paper I seek to transcend Zionist essentialist nationalist paradigms by shedding light on what it means to deconstruct the *Master* consciousness while “feeling at home” (Ahmed, 2006). I would like to suggest that enabling the “disorientation of encountering the world differently” (ibid.) is a learning process that involves engaging in a profound transformation of consciousness

תקציר:

אני נכנסת לשיח חגיגות המאה לפאולו פריירה מפרספקטיבה פמיניסטית הבוחרת קריאה ביקורתית של הציונות ומדינת ישראל כפרויקט של קולוניאליזם התיישבותי בפלסטין. במאמר זה אני מחפשת להתעלות על הפרדיגמות הלאומיות והמהותיות של הציונות בהשמת דגש על המשמעות של פירוק תודעת האדון 'המרגיש בבית' (Ahmed, 2006). אני מתבססת על שרה אחמד (שם) המציעה אלטרנטיבה למפגש עם העולם שבאה דווקא מתוך חוסר ההתמצאות כתהליך למידה שמצריך שינוי תודעה משמעותי.

KEYWORDS Nakba, Occupation, Settler-colonialism, Intifada, Home

“The naming of the world, through which people constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance.” (Freire, 1970 [2000]: 90).

“Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world.” (ibid: 87).

My encounter with Paulo Freire’s work happened through activism within the Israeli radical left, namely with my political engagement in “Mahapach”¹. Facilitation of Israeli and Palestinian radical encounter groups, recognition of the Nakba and the right of return among Jewish Israelis through the work of Zochrot², participation in direct anti-occupation actions and activities against the Israeli army – to all I was strongly devoted and very much engaged in from the start of the Second Intifada.

In Mahapach, our choice to speak about *Toda’a* (consciousness in Hebrew) was drawn from Freire’s work. We were inspired by his concept of *Conscientização* (Freire, 1970 [2000]) and the way he refers to the dynamic movement when one learns to perceive, in a complex way, the socio-political contradictions of domination. A better understanding of reality, Freire taught us, leads political actors to actions in order to change reality and resist oppression. The language of consciousness transformation within contexts of domination, racism and colonialism was

1 Mahapach-Taghir is a feminist, educational, communal organization that operates in a Jewish – Palestinian partnership among and within communities on the social and geographical periphery. The organization operates through local activism to promote social justice, solidarity, and community resilience, with the aim of building an equal and democratic society. <https://mahapach-taghir.org/en/home/>

2 Zochrot ("remembering" in Hebrew) is an NGO working since 2002 to promote acknowledgement and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948, and the reconceptualization of the Return as the imperative redress of the Nakba and a chance for a better life for all the country's inhabitants. <https://www.zochrot.org/en>

constantly present within our speech and praxis in the field. It is at the heart of my intellectual development but also at the heart of my own process of consciousness transformation and development of a counter hegemonic awareness to political Zionism.

My quest to better understand the ways in which Jewish Israeli political actors liberate themselves from Zionist settler colonial thought is profoundly inspired by Paulo Freire and bell hooks' development of knowledge, and in particular, the necessity and urgency to engage in praxis of decolonization with Palestinian partners.

Both Freire and hooks taught me that dialogue enables to critically gaze at the multiple authoritarian power dynamics of Israeli coloniality. Critical dialogue deconstructs hegemonic thought that looks down at knowledge that is considered low in the hegemonic pyramid (Freire and Faundez, 1989). Accordingly, liberating ourselves, as Jewish Israeli activists, from what I now call colonial arrogance allows us to look at others and the world as equals and partners in struggle and in reconstruction of new and perhaps critical, knowledge.

Following bell hooks' work on consciousness transformation and reflections on pedagogies of transgression (1994, 2003, 2010), I thus choose to position myself, and speak from a standpoint bringing into perspective settler colonial present/ce in Palestine within a clear historical understanding that embraces the possibility to transform reality, as Freire (Macedo, 2000) would put it, I believe. Naming the world, according to Freire, is the basis of true, and radical dialogue. It is the starting point of a conversation that can transform the world.

Through the telling of my multiple colonial stories - as Sara Ahmed (2015) says "we all have a story, right?" - I

would like to speak about home “defined as from where one came” (Peteet, 2007, in Abuaker, 2020). I allow myself to speak about *home* rather than “*homeland*”, from a standpoint of “whiteness” (Ahmed, 2007). In this sense I am not trying to recenter the conversation on whiteness (Tuck and Yang, 2012) or seeking to enter processes of settler appropriation. Rather, to take responsibility when engaging in concrete praxis of change towards profound decolonization of the place I call home.

we want to be sure to clarify that decolonization is not a metaphor. When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. (ibid: 3)

Being from somewhere in France

I have been living in France for the last 14 years. After I say a single sentence in French, I am constantly asked: *Tu viens d'où ?* Where do you come from?

For Anaïs Duong-Pedica in “Thinking Kanaky Decolonially”, this question must be understood in context. Within hexagonal France, thus from a Eurocentric perspective, being asked “where do you come from?” is “a way to assign people to imagined geographical places and cultural racialized communities” (2021:145). When asking this same question from an Oceanian perspective, it does not necessarily seek for a name of a nation state, but rather a question that would allow positioning when entering true dialogue: “where are you in relation to me/us?” (ibid.).

While my skin color does not reveal my “strangeness” to French hegemony, my accent does. But having two

mother tongues – two languages that are part of my colonial trajectory, it is hard in French to detect my *origine*. My white skin and queer accent destabilize the hegemonic order of French migration (Soumahoro, 2020).

The expectation to the question “where do you come from?” is that I would have a simple answer that would just give a *word*, a name of a nation state, a country. According to Freire, within this encounter people hegemonically seek for the “unauthentic word, one which is unable to transform reality...” (Freire, 1970 [2000]: 87).

At times I ask back, “where do you think I come from?” Yet the “correct” answer, if there is one, is never found.

I would like to unsettle that which they already know of me when encountering the stranger (Ahmed, 2000), to unsettle the colonial frames (Ahmed, 2007) in which they seek to fit me. Rather than fulfilling the expectations of a simple answer, I would rather tell my multiple and intergenerational colonial stories.

I was born in the beautiful city of Haifa, into a Jewish Anglo-Saxon, South African family. I never lived in South Africa but always wished I could be part of the life that my grandparents had left behind. They always used to say that Haifa reminded them of Cape Town.

I grew up to the “heroic” story of my Grandfather answering the Zionist call in 1948 to engage in building a sovereign home for Jews – a Kibbutz Galuiot, the “ingathering of the exiles” (Shohat, 2017). I know today that 1948 is a key date in the contemporary history of Palestinians and Palestine:

That year, a country and its people disappeared from maps and dictionaries... ‘The Palestinian people does not exist,’ said the new masters, and henceforth the Palestinians would be referred to by general, conveniently vague terms, as either ‘refugees,’ or in the case of a small minority that

had managed to escape the generalized expulsion, 'Israeli Arabs.' A long absence was beginning (Sanbar, 2001: 87, in Abu-Lughod and Sa'di, 2007).

Ironically, my grandparents had always portrayed the colonial Western life they had left in South Africa as superior to the Middle Eastern one we led within the Jewish State. Life "*there*" seemed better than life "*here*" (*here referring to where I was born not where I am now, at my desk writing these words*) due to my interiorization of colonial arrogance³. This arrogance is drawn from Zionist Eurocentrism "as an oppressive shaping-force of culture and identity" (Shohat, 2017: 307⁴). Shohat has shown in her work the dynamics of *inferiority/superiority complexes with regard to both "East" and "West"*. Particularly in her critical analysis of the Zionist concept of "*Return to the Motherland*" (ibid:177⁵) she develops the double relation to the land due to the Zionist ambivalent relation to the East.

At the age of twenty-one my grandparents took my cousin, who is more like a sister to me, and me to visit what they transmitted to us as our *motherland*, South Africa. It was our family colonial return. I felt passionately connected to that land. I did not expect that during that trip, the cracks within my own colonial consciousness would start through my encounter with Mabel, the woman who had to depart, or was dislocated, from her own home and family in order to raise my mother and her siblings. When Mabel saw me after twenty years, she opened her

3 I refer here to my PhD dissertation, entitled: "Towards Radical Consciousness Liberation: Palestinian, Israeli Recounting Decolonial of Trans/formation", defended in 2017 at Université Paris 13, USPC.

4 I refer here to her piece "Postscript to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*" in her *Selected Writings*.

5 I refer here to her piece "Exile, Diaspora, and Return: The Inscription of Palestine in Zionist Discourse" in her *Selected Writings*.

arms and said: “*My grandchild*”. I was touched by her connection to me but did not share the same love. And then she turned to my grandparents and said: “*Master, Madam*”. My cousin and I looked at each other surprised, realizing we were unfamiliar with these codes. I then turned to my grandfather, who looked embarrassed.

Mabel naming my grandfather *Master* ended up becoming a *Radical Encounter* (Dor, 2018). I am not sure she meant it, but she brought in to the conversation the colonial power dynamics positioning me directly as a dominator. Using the *word* Master – the *true word* (Freire, 1970 [2000]: 88) – transformed my world. She allowed the dissonance to take place in the space. The dissonance between me being at the same time her grandchild and that of a *Master* unsettled the Knowledge I had of my so-called “Motherland South Africa” – the Knowledge drawn from colonial frames (Ahmed, 2007). The capital K was removed, as Freire and Faundez suggest when referring to authoritarian power of scientific knowledge (Freire and Faundez, 1989: 45), of the knowledge I had of South Africa and later on of Palestine.

In a conversation with a feminist Jewish activist living in Haifa she recounts that throughout her process of liberation from Zionism, she understood that to liberate herself from colonial consciousness she has to constantly confront her *sense of entitlement*. She went further and said that being Jewish-Ashkenazi one walks the land as a *Master*. According to her, deconstructing the consciousness of the Master is an important, perhaps even essential, part in her liberation process to radical consciousness.

Parting from Zionism seems to be related to the separation of the embodiment of a *Master*. The settler colonial project of Zionism defines the space in which one

acts, where some bodies would feel entitled while others cannot. In Ahmed's words, "bodies are shaped by histories of colonialism, which makes the world 'white', a world that is inherited, or which is already given before the point of an individual's arrival." (2007: 153).

The definition of *Master of the land* is situated within Zionist settler colonialism. While a Jewish-Ashkenazi Israeli walks the land as a Master, neither Palestinians nor Mizrahi Jews experience the colonial space in the same way. Even more so, being a Master of the land prevents those who were dispossessed of this land from returning.

Sarona Abuaker (2020) shows us that for Palestinians in the diaspora, the rupture from Palestine produces a connection to the land through the production of what she calls, Palestinian-ness.

The reality of dispossession impacts Palestinians' ways of engaging, moving in, and experiencing Palestine on the physical realm of being able to access the land. Out of this physical uprooting, and the response to it, is a production of Palestinian-ness tied to a "place-bound definition (which) focuses on return, and home is defined as from where one came" (Peteeet, 2007). (Abuaker, 2020: 245)

Abuaker's definition of Palestinian-ness urges me to think of ways to return home when undoing the Master. Is there a way to return outside the embodiment of colonial borders? My entrance to the land is not forbidden, nor am I in exile, I am just away from home as "...home is defined as from where one came".

Naming home Palestine

“The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination.” (Freire, 1970 [2000]: 89).

In hooks’ terms (1990), the possibility to build a liberated feminist consciousness is the dynamic work towards change; it is resisting to become part of the hegemonic center. It is the dynamic process that would embody the margin as a site of resistance (ibid.). Embracing the marginal space, allows a complex understanding of reality, of coloniality and of the possible ruptures from it. “To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body” (ibid: 341).

Insisting to think from the margin allows me, I believe, to deconstruct the Knowledge I have of the space I call home. It would necessitate working towards a radically different future. It is the path towards the deconstruction of the Master. It is a form of political resistance that can transform “our ways of looking and being” in the world and creates the conditions “to move against the forces of domination” (hooks, 1992: 20).

Acting from the margin, is thus a space from which one seeks creative and alternative actions – “A space of radical openness” (hooks, 1990). It perhaps answers the call to bring the idea of diaspora back to Palestine and find ways to think about what it means to live with the Other (Butler, 2012: 15).

I think of home while embodying the margin, resisting colonial return, returning home from the margin and working towards the dismantling of the Master's house, without internalizing the tools:

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. As Paulo Freire shows so well in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors' tactics, the oppressors' relationships. (Lorde, 1987 [2007]: 123)

I come from Palestine, I say. But I'm not Palestinian. I'm Israeli⁶.

These are the true words (Freire, 1970 [2000]), the word that allows entering a dialogue, an encounter, that do not name the world "on behalf of others" (Freire, 2000: 89).

Naming *home* Palestine, as an Israeli, is a praxis to rupture the *colonial Master Narrative* towards the re-creation of a shared *Arab-Jew* space in Palestine (Shohat, 2017). It enables radical dialogue, while understanding my multiples positions and positionalities as a constant process "in the making", in constant quest of asking questions and seeking to understand and deconstruct colonial power dynamics.

6 In a recent text written by Ariella Aisha Azoulay entitled "Dear beloved children" she deconstructs the Zionist master narrative (and that of French coloniality as well) through conversations with her Arab Algerian Jewish ancestors. She says: "coming close to our ancestors means calling the place where we were born its name, Palestine, as they did."

It is, as Freire puts it, a joint attempt to learn more than what we already know (Freire, 1970 [2000]: 90). By speaking the *true word* (ibid.), I join those who seek to return to a place that was taken off the map (Abuaker, 2020: 246). To think “beyond what we see” (ibid.) within settler colonial frames.

Calling where I was born Palestine is the satisfaction from the margin (hooks, 1994). Yet it is the acknowledgment that this is only the starting point of a conversation, a task, that can transform Palestine from a land of Masters to a decolonized land for radical return.

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PAULO FREIRE: A GLOBAL AND COSMOPOLITAN EDUCATOR. THE VOICE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN BIOGRAPHER.¹

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ABSTRACT Paulo Freire is perhaps the best-known educator in the world and his work has inspired a generation of progressive teachers and even socialist educational projects. Freire's principle of education as a cultural action, his conceptualization of *conscientização*—the process of conscientization or consciousness raising—and his approach to adult literacy education have been adopted and adapted by many educational initiatives in which in which the learning activity takes into account socio-political context or significant situations in which it takes place. But what is the political origin of Freire's theory and practice? What is the political content of his so-called method? How is it that Freire's ideas have had such a lasting impacting spreading over decades and across the globe? This text attempts to answer these questions. I investigate the development of Freire from the beginning of his work in Brazil and Chile, through efforts to apply his method in different cultural environments of Africa as well as his return to Brazil in the 80s and the beginning of the 90s until his untimely death.

RESUME Paulo Freire es quizás el educador mejor conocido en el mundo entero, especialmente desde la segunda mitad del siglo

¹ A previous, slightly different, version of this article was published in Portuguese as Torres, C. A. "A voz do biógrafo Latinoamericano: Uma biografia intelectual." [The voice of the Latin American biographer: An intellectual biography]. In *Paulo Freire: Uma bio-bibliografia* [Paulo Freire: A bio-bibliography], edited by M. Gadotti, A. M. Araújo, A. A. Ciseski, and C. A. Torres et al. São Paulo, Brazil: Paulo Freire Institute, UNESCO, and Cortez Editora, 1996.

XX y el principio de este nuevo siglo. Freire ha inspirado toda una generación de maestros y maestras progresistas e incluso proyectos educativos de orientación socialista. El principio que Freire sugirió de la educación como una acción cultural, la conceptualización de la conscientización, y su acercamiento a la alfabetización ha sido adoptado y adaptado por muchas iniciativas educativas en las cuales la actividad de aprendizaje toma en cuenta el contexto socio-político o las situaciones significantes en las cuales esta actividad tiene lugar. Pero ¿cuál es el origen político de la teoría y la práctica de Freire? ¿Cuál es el contexto social de su llamado método Paulo Freire? ¿Cómo es que las ideas de Freire han tenido un efecto tan amplio a través de décadas impactando el mundo global? Este texto buscará discutir algunas de estas cuestiones. Este análisis biobibliográfico investiga el desarrollo de Freire desde sus principios en Brasil y en Chile, así como su esfuerzo en aplicar su teoría y método en diversos ambientes culturales de África y su retorno a Brasil en las dos últimas décadas del siglo pasado hasta su muerte.

KEYWORDS: Literacy – Popular education – Biography – Political philosophy of education.

1. Latin American Origin

Since the 1959 publication of *Educación y Actualidad Brasileira* in Recife, Brazil, later revised and published with modifications as *Education as a Practice of Freedom*, Paulo Freire's work has influenced not only the pedagogical practice of Latin America but also of Africa. His main works have been translated into various languages and new generations of educators consider Freire as a classic in his area of scholarship. At the same time, there is a theoretical revalidation of Freire's initial works that emphasize his relationship with a developmental ideology of ISEB² in Brazil in the early 1960s and with the sociological theory of Karl Manheim.

² Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB), located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, during the period from 1955 to 1964, served as one of the main

The ISEB represented one of the most significant efforts, prior to the 1964 coup, to develop a nationalist and developmentalist ideology aimed at contributing to the process of social modernization supported by the Joao Goulart government.

Paulo Freire along with other intellectuals—Heilo Jaguaribe, Roland Corbisier, Alvaro Vieira Pinto, Vicente Ferrerira da Silva, Guerreiro Ramos, Durmeval Trigueiro Mendes—were participants in the intellectual environment that evolved within the ISEB offices. Among the most influential authors for the ISEB theorists was Karl Mannheim; but also influential was German Anthropology of the 1930s (J. Spengler, Alfred Weber, Marx Scheller), existentialist philosophy (M. Ortega y Gasset, JP Sartre, M Heidegger, K Jaspers) and the origins of historical sociology (Max Weber, Alfredo Pareto and Arnaldo Toynbee).

The controversial work of Vanilda Pereira Paiva (1980), documents this issue. The author argues that Freire's perspective was eminently populist and related to the developmental nationalism that prevailed in the Joao Goulart administration. That argument, which has been considered an academic critique of Freire's work in Brazil and has contributed to my sympathetic criticisms of Freire's published work in Spanish and Portuguese. Paiva's analysis is limited in that it is based in part on an orthodox Marxist perspective of the notion of Russian populism and relates it to the discontent with Freire's Christian philosophy and anthropology roots.

Vanilda Paiva has attempted to show in detail the similarity between Freire's concept of critical consciousness process and the understanding process proposed by the Hungarian sociologist. Similarly, Mannheim's major themes, such as the broad discussion

centers for the formulation and dissemination of nationalist and developmentalist ideologies in Brazil.

of liberty, the democratic approach, the fundamental democratization of society, and the theory of democratic personality, are crucial issues in Freire's early writings. Paiva's ex post evaluation is risky, as she emphasizes formal similarities while omitting a substantive analysis of the differences between Mannheim and Freire. It is clear, however, that his origin as a Brazilian educator was ideologically that of a liberal-democratic thinker strongly influenced by the theory of Christian Personalism, whose representatives are, for example, Tristao de Ataide, in Brazil or Emmanuel Mounier, in France. Nonetheless, his early thinking and his writing incorporated Critical Theory a la Frankfurt, and with the passage of time, Gramsci's analysis, and the concepts of radical Deweyism (Torres, 2014).

There are several reasons for Freire's strong influence. First, his works are based on hypotheses that reflect an innovative synthesis of the most advanced currents of contemporary and classic philosophical thought, such as existentialism, phenomenology, Hegelian dialectics and historical materialism. Freire's innovative vision and exceptional talent as a writer in Portuguese and Spanish has conquered, with his initial writings, a wide reading public made up of educators, social scientists, theologians, and political activists.

English-language readers, however, often manifest difficulty in understanding Freirean texts. I think it has less to do with the quality of the translation of his work, despite serious imperfections in some cases, than with the nature of Freire's phenomenological dialectical thought and explanatory strategies. This difficulty may have intensified with the latter books having been "spoken" or "dialogued" compositions with a distinctive oral flavor. Freire's dialectical thought develops within a model of logical and rational analysis different from positivist explanations, and therefore outside the common line of

thought in countries where English is the dominant language.

Second, Freire's early writings appeared during a period of intense political conflict in which the class struggle in Latin America acquired expressive force; recognizing this historical moment is extremely important in understanding Freire's popularity in Latin America. The period from the early 1960s to the early 1970s was marked by interrelated events. Among the most important are: the triumph and consolidation of the Cuban Revolution (1959-1961) and the installation of the first socialist government in the region (1962); the relative advancement and consolidation of popular forces—particularly the unions of the working classes and left-wing political parties—under populist regimes; and the Alliance for Progress project designed and supported by the Kennedy administration as a North American response to the radical trend that emerged such as the Cuban Revolution. The project brought considerable financial support for the economic, political and educational programs of the Latin American continent. Two aspects of this development program should be highlighted: First, support for agrarian reforms that attempted to destabilize the power of the traditional agrarian bourgeoisie and promote agribusiness in the region; second, the diversification and expansion of the industrialization process through import substitution during the period of consolidation of the penetration of United States multinational corporations in Latin America. The implications that these trends had in changing the original political and economic structures were many (Torres, 2020).

This was also a period in which the first symptoms of a crisis of hegemony within the bourgeoisie became clearly perceptible in some countries of the continent. In particular, the populist experience (which could be considered a Bonapartist experience) of Peronism and Getulism appears only as a period between the crisis of

the oligarchic state of the 1930s and the attempt to establish a hegemony of bourgeois industrial capitalism in South American societies of the 1960s. The failure of this attempt and the political activism of the masses provoked bourgeois coalitions that turned towards coups d'état and the administrative control of the state by the military as their last resort to restore order.

A major consequence of this process was the emergence of popular revolutionary movements in Latin America with different expressions and strategies according to the historical experience of each country. For this reason, Freire's proposal for education as a practice of freedom—in opposition to the positivism and educational pragmatism then predominant in educational circles—and the pedagogy of the oppressed naturally resonated with progressive Latin American educators and was put into practice across the region.

Third, among the most critical reasons for Freire's success was the close relationship between his early educational philosophy and Catholic thought. Following the Second Vatican Council (1965), the Catholic Church and other Christian churches entered a process of ideological transformation and expansion of their socio-cultural systems and strategies aimed at civil society (Torres, 1992).

Concerning the ideological-political position of the church, the Final Documents of Medellín (1968), serves as an essential historical record to verify our thesis. Strong evidence of the influence of Freire's thought appears in the document on education as follows:

Without forgetting the differences that exist with respect to the educational systems among the diverse countries of the Latin American continent, it seems to us that that the curriculum is far too abstract and formalist. Didactic methods are more concerned with the

transmission of knowledge than with the creation, among other values, of a critical spirit in approaching reality. From a "social" point of view, educational systems are oriented towards the maintenance of the prevailing social and economic structures rather than their transformation. It is a uniform education, at a time when the Latin American community has awakened to the richness of human pluralism; it is passive when the time has come for our peoples to discover their own being, plethoric with originality; it remains oriented to sustaining an economy based on the desire to "have more" when the youth in Latin America demands the pleasure of self-realization, oriented towards service and love. Our thinking on this aspect seeks to promote a vision of education that is consistent with the integral development of our continent. This education is called education for liberation: an education that enables the learner to be the subject of their own development. " (Final Documents of Medellín, Buenos Aires, Paulinas 1971: 70-72 my translation)

This language is similar to that of *Education as a Practice of Freedom* that has enormous resonance as an essential text for Christian educators. In the same way, in 1963, the approval of Freire's literacy method was made official by the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil, which the Grassroots Education Movement adopted (MEB) as its method for literacy through the "tele school" (distance education, using televisions and monitors).

In summary, the development of Freire's thought reflects a new horizon: the repercussion of the work of Louis Althusser and, subsequently, of Antonio Gramsci in the academic realm of Latin America, and of the figures of Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, in practical and

political circles, were symptomatic of the new socialist and progressive groups. Additionally, the resurgence of the guerrilla groups and armed struggles with the predominant characteristic of incorporating progressive and massive bourgeois militants--many with Catholic roots—generated new political issues, redefining their strategies, transferring the struggle from the countryside to the urban centers. In some instances, these guerrilla movements - for example, Uruguay with the "Frente Amplio" or in Argentina with the experience of the Peronist Montoneros - were strongly linked to mass political activism.

Indeed, there has been considerable experience with armed struggles in the region throughout the 20th century: the Mexican Revolution (1910-1917), the Sandino Movement in Nicaragua during the 1930s, and the Nicaraguan Revolution in the 1970s, famous for its success in the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, the popular insurrection in El Salvador (1932), The Bolivian Revolution (1952), the armed struggle in Cuba (1957-1959) and the experiences of the multiple guerrillas in Colombia and Venezuela between 1940 and 1970, to cite just the most relevant cases. Notably, one of the most distinctive characteristics of the new guerrilla movements in the 1960s was the adherence of middle-class members rather than the traditional peasant brigades.

The progressive incorporation of the Catholic militants was highly significant, especially the symbolic significance of Father Camilo Torres, a Sociologist educated in Belgium, and one of the founders of the school of Sociology of the National University of Colombia who died fighting alongside the Colombian guerrillas in the late 1960s. Other indications of the new era for Catholic and Protestant churches in the region included the new liberation theology and philosophy, Christianity for the Social Movement, and the new universal ecumenism endorsed by the World Council of Churches.

At that time, there was marked interest in national and indigenous issues within philosophical academic circles along with a revalidation of the popular national culture in opposition to the limitations of European and North American lifestyles. Finally, within the social sciences, new proposals for studying the developmentalist process gained prominence. For instance, the so-called Dependency Theory acquired even greater relevance—transcending Latin American scholarship to become embraced by scholars in the United States, the Soviet Union, as well as Africa—through the writings of Fernando H. Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, André Gunder-Frank, Osvaldo Sunkel, and Pedro Paz, Theotonio dos Santos and others. In this context, through his pedagogical writings, Freire represents and reflects a particular ideological moment in Latin American societies.

After the 1964 Brazilian coup, Freire left the country to live and work in Chile at ICIRA, an organization of the Christian democratic government responsible for expanding education within the agrarian reform program. In Chile, Freire had the opportunity to experiment with his methodology in a new intellectual, political, ideological, and social environment. He worked with the most progressive sectors of the Young Christian Democratic Party—some incorporating into new parties that later formed the Popular Unity coalition—while coming into contact with highly stimulating Marxist thought and robust working-class organizations. That was the beginning of the triumph of the Popular Unity in Chile, the first successful democratic electoral experience of transition towards socialism in Latin America, which began in 1970, ending in 1973 with the coup that brought Pinochet to power.

In 1970, Freire left Chile after accepting an invitation from the World Council of Churches in Geneva to work as a senior consultant for the Department of Education. Meanwhile, the popularity of Freire's method and his

problem-posing educational philosophy grew and reached progressive educators through Latin America and came to be widely adopted, from small local experiences to national adult education initiatives, such as those carried out in Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador.

From that moment on, the word conscientization (or critical consciousness) gains force within the political-cultural programs of socialist groups. Its popularity, as a new educational perspective, grew everywhere. Freire defined pedagogy as cultural action, distinguishing between two distinct forms of cultural action: banking education and problem-posing education. Concerned with the diverse connotations of the word conscientização, Freire explicitly warns against the obsession with using that word—an emblem in conservative programs whose educational principles were closer to banking education than to problematizing education or cultural action for freedom.

Freire's thought is now clearly seen as an expression of socialist pedagogy or social democratic pedagogy, depending from the epoch; and, over time, his analysis, working within the historical-materialist model, redefines his old existentialist-phenomenological themes without adopting an orthodox position.

These brief considerations serve to guide us in the following section, to will clarify the characterization of the process of education, cultural action and critical consciousness in Freire's work and its contribution to radical social change.

2. Dialectic phenomenology

In the text "Liberating Cultural Action," published in the author's book, Paulo Freire: Education and Conscientization (Salamanca, Spain), Paulo Freire affirms:

My perspective is dialectical and phenomenological. I believe that from here, we have to see how to overcome that opposing relationship between theory and practice: overcoming what should not be done on an idealistic level. From a scientific diagnosis of this phenomenon, we can determine the need for education as a cultural action. Cultural action for liberation is a process through which the consciousness of the oppressor that lives within the consciousness of the oppressed can be drawn out (Torres, Salamanca, Sigueme, 1980: 85).

Therefore, from Freire's perspective, education as cultural action is related to the process of critical consciousness and, as a problematizing objective education, must be an instrument of the political organization of the oppressed. Paulo Freire in an interview published in the same book (158-159, our translation) where further expands: "The first level of apprehension of reality is awareness. This knowledge exists because as human beings we are "placed" and "informed," as Gabriel Marcel was accustomed to saying, people re spectators with and in the world.

That coming into awareness of the world, however, is not yet critical consciousness. There exist levels of intensity of awareness. That is, the development of a critical awareness.

For this reason, critical consciousness implies going beyond the spontaneous sphere of apprehension of reality towards a critical position. Through this critique, reality becomes a known object of which the individual assumes an epistemological position: a person seeking knowledge. Therefore, critical awareness is an environment test, a reality test. As we are raising awareness, we are revealing reality, and we are penetrating the phenomenological essence of the object that we are trying to analyze.

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Critical consciousness does not mean confronting reality, assuming a false intellectual position, which is "intellectualist." Critical consciousness cannot exist outside of praxis, that is, outside of the action-reflection process. There is no critical consciousness without historical commitment. Therefore, critical consciousness means historical consciousness. In the last analysis, class consciousness is not psychological consciousness. Class consciousness does not signify class sensitivity. Class awareness implies class practice and class knowledge. For this reason, the revolution is also an act of knowledge. For no other reason, Lenin emphasizes the importance of revolutionary theory without which, he asserts, there would be no revolution.

Finally, class consciousness has a strong identity with class knowledge. But knowledge does not come naturally. If we define knowledge as a fact finished in itself, we would be losing the dialectical vision that can make the possibility of knowing explicit. Knowledge is a process resulting from the permanent praxis of human beings on reality. In truth, individual existence, although it presents singular characteristics, is a social existence".

Therefore, education implies the act of knowing between knowledgeable subjects, and awareness is at the same time a logical possibility and a historical process linking theory with praxis in an indissoluble unity. At this

point, a summary of the principal characteristics of Freire's analysis is essential:

1. Freire's global proposal transcends the critique of current educational models and essentially develops by transforming itself into a critique of culture and the construction of knowledge. In summary, the basic affirmations of Freire's work rely on a dialectical epistemology to interpret the development of human consciousness and its relationship with reality.

2. For Freire, the central questions and problems of education are not pedagogical questions. On the contrary, they are political questions. Ultimately, the educational system does not change society; on the contrary, society has the power to change the educational system. Meanwhile, the educational system can still play a crucial role in a cultural revolution. For Freire, the revolution implies the conscious participation of the masses. Critical pedagogy, as a cultural praxis, contributes to revealing the ideology hidden in people's conscience. Put like this, the revolution itself is a meaningful pedagogy for the masses –Freire has spoken of revolution as a continuous political workshop.

3. But what can be done before the revolution? Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed is designed as an instrument of pedagogical and political collaboration in the organization of the subordinate social classes. In this sense, it is important to emphasize the distinction proposed by Freire between "cultural action" and "cultural revolution": "Cultural action develops in opposition to the elite that controls power; in contrast, the cultural revolution occurs in complete harmony with the revolutionary regime, despite the fact that the cultural revolution should not be subordinated to revolutionary power. The limits of cultural action are determined by the reality of the oppressed and

by the "silence" imposed by the ruling elite. The nature of the reality of the oppressed consequently determines different tactics, necessarily different from those used in the cultural revolution. As cultural action, it confronts "silence" as an external fact and, at the same time, as an internal reality; the cultural revolution confronts "silence" only as an internal reality (Freire, 1970: 51).

4. The specificity of Freire's proposal is the notion of critical consciousness as class knowledge and praxis. Following the Brazilian philosopher Álvaro Vieira Pinto, Freire considers the "heuristic activity of consciousness as the greatest possible contribution of the thought process." In that sense, he sees his contribution to the process of human beings as a constant revalidation of the "subjective" conditions for revolutionary praxis.

5. It is a pedagogy of consciousness. Therefore, this pedagogy—particularly in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*—emphasizes a fundamental aspect in the process of political organization of subordinate social classes: the links between revolutionary leadership and the practices of the masses. They are expressions on a generic level—particularly in the first writings before the African experience—closely related to political ethics, without discussing, in detail, the problems and characteristics of the State and the revolutionary political party.

6. Finally, from an educational perspective, Freire's proposal is an anti-authoritarian proposal despite the directive pedagogy, whereby teachers and students teach and learn together. Starting from the principle that education is an act of knowing, teacher-student and student-teacher must engage in a permanent dialogue characterized by their "horizontal relationship," which does not exclude power imbalances or differences in experiences and knowledge. It is a process that takes place

not in the classroom but within a cultural circle. A "discursive" knowledge does not exist, but rather a knowledge based on daily and contradictory experiences of teachers-students / students-teachers. Indeed, this set of concepts, unfavorable to crucial components of an authoritarian pedagogical framework, emerges as a practice and ideology of "counter-hegemony" within teacher training institutions.

In this sense, in the 1960s, Freire's proposal is not related to the formal system of instruction before the revolution. On the contrary, from the beginning, this proposal avoids suggesting a change within formal education marked by the concentration of bureaucratic mechanisms. In its place, change the reference to the non-formal, less structured system. Another important characteristic of this strategy is that many of its representatives avoid working with this pedagogy within the institutions of the capitalist State, preferring to work professionally in universities or private institutions, often linked to religious organizations or churches. It was not surprising, therefore, that upon returning to Brazil in June 1980, Freire worked at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of Sao Paulo and the public higher education institutions, the University of Campinas (UNICAMP) and the University of Sao Paulo (USP). Rosiska and Miguel Darcy de Oliveira - who were members of the Institute for Cultural Action (IDAC), founded by Freire in Geneva, and Freire's main collaborators in Guinea -Bissau- also worked, when they returned to Brazil, on a popular education project supported by the Archdiocese of Sao Paulo.

There are some complementary arguments for that strategy:

1. Freire and progressive educators had initially developed their proposal in Brazil (1960-1964), Chile (1965-1970), and Africa.

2. The political implications of adult education exceeded those of formal instruction methodologies. Therefore, defining, for example, pedagogical constructs such as "generative words" as based on the community's needs and its "minimal vocabular universe."

3. From the point of view of this educational philosophy, adult education programs are more linked to the needs of the community and more sensitive to its pressures than formal instruction. Therefore, "popular" education must be understood more as a form of education developed by the oppressed than for the oppressed.

4. This education also has a curricular and organizational flexibility that formal instruction does not present.

5. The results of adult education are more immediate than those of formal instruction. It is unnecessary to wait 10-15 years, as is the case with the formal schooling of children, to incorporate the "graduate" into the job market or political activities.

6. Adult education, in the periphery of capitalist social formations, seeks to work mainly with the dispossessed, those who do not have power, revealing that illiteracy, far from being a "social ailment," is a consequence of a hierarchical class structure, or of violent historical processes such as colonization.

7. Finally, adult education has shown great importance as an instrument for political mobilization and critical awareness in some of the transition processes towards socialism, such as in Cuba and Nicaragua.

It is essential to highlight that, as the experience of Latin America shows, this pedagogical proposal can only be adopted, at least in a liberal-democratic institutional and political context. Such a condition obviously restricts its applicability in some Third World countries under despotic-bourgeois regimes. Consequently, this pedagogy may be adopted by a revolutionary party—as part of its educational strategy within a process of social transition—or by social movements based on non-governmental organizations.

The experience of the Workers' Party in the municipal administration of Sao Paulo and the role of Paulo Freire as Secretary of Education of the city of Sao Paulo with his bold initiatives for democratic curricular reform, the Council of Schools and MOVA-SP showed the limits and possibilities of a progressive administration of the public system.

3. The African Influence

Paulo Freire's first contact with Africa occurred through his participation in the Tanzanian Literacy campaign after 1970. He was invited to present his literacy method at the Institute of Adult Education at the University of Dar in Salaam and help organize new experimental projects, such as the Adult Education Course curriculum. Unfortunately, only scattered references and scant documentation of experiments with Freire's literacy method exist to evaluate his experience in Tanzania.

Likewise, through Tanzania, Freire's introduction into the African reality led to a significant phase as he immediately came to have a more meaningful participation in the literacy efforts of Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé, and Príncipe. Paulo Freire many times expressed

his interest in the experiences of Angola and Mozambique in adult education.

We can summarize the most significant differences and similarities compared to the Latin American experience concerning this work. In Africa, educational development was strongly influenced by the decolonization process, particularly because the colonial educational structure is different from non-colonial education. Colonial education was elitist. For those who had access to colonial education, it essentially served as a means of cultural "de-Africanization"—the Portuguese way—a particularly more violent way of colonizing: a means of creating a select corps of civil servants who generally, upon graduation became employees of middle government positions within the bureaucracy under official colonial leadership; a means of creating a select urban elite to support colonizer's project: a black skin, white mask of the bourgeoisie, in the words of Frantz Fanon. Regarding this colonial context in the case of Guinea-Bissau, Freire concurred with the perception of Amilcar Cabral, which was that the intellectuals of the bourgeoisie had just that alternative: "to enter the revolution or commit class suicide, becoming a real option of the middle class in the general picture of the struggle for national liberation" (Paulo Freire, 1978: 16).

Freire argues that the new educational system would not contribute to class suicide among intellectuals but impede them from becoming elites within a new society—an important measure is to link education and productive work, avoiding full-time students, and normalizing the working student promoting an intimate relationship with the peasant (rural worker).

A second significant difference is the level of development of the productive forces and the social relations of production that have determined the class structure and the dynamics of society. African societies differ from Latin American societies in several respects.

For example, there is no extensive agrarian bourgeoisie in rural areas with "oligarchic" origins—preserving ownership of the means of production—as is the Brazilian case which is comparable to "coronelismo" with its "patrimonial" foundations and "clientelistic" practices that historically have affected the configuration of the Brazilian bureaucratic state.³

Similarly, there is no extensive industrialization process that could somehow allow the emergence of a national industrial bourgeoisie with any different objectives—however secondary—in its economic and symbolic interest originating from the agrarian bourgeoisie, multinational corporations, or the State bureaucracy, as is the case of Argentina, Brazil or Mexico for example. These differences, expressed in the political struggle, demanded different political strategies and different levels of the relative autonomy of the State in Latin America. Likewise, the petty bourgeoisie of African societies, now firmly tied to the post-colonial state, did not develop an extensive educational system like the post-populist experiences in Latin America.

In other words, the pressures expressed by the middle classes towards expanding secondary and higher education institutions were not present. This observation is compatible with Amilcar Cabral's assertion that "under colonial conditions, it is the petty bourgeoisie that is inside state power" (Cabral, 1969: 69). Despite having a growing interventionist role in African societies, the military did not have the same historical importance in the constitution of the nation-state as they did, for example, in Latin America. Neither did the Catholic Church—another major participant in Latin American politics—secure the religious monopoly and cultural influence it had maintained in Iberian and Luso America

³ A traditional form of oligarchy.

Capitalist social formations in Africa and Latin America have some similar characteristics, including peasant illiteracy. However, post-colonial African governments have concentrated educational efforts in rural areas. In contrast, in Latin America—due to an accelerated urbanization process, burgeoning internal migrations, the penetration of "agribusiness," and ultimately, the combined effects of the irregular development of capitalism—there is a progressive imbalance between the areas rural and urban. Illiterates are concentrated, in equal measure, within rural areas and the peripheries of capitals or metropolitan centers. In that continent, Paulo Freire had direct contact with the peasantry and the populations in the urban periphery. These experiences became primary sources for the elaboration of his problematizing education. Freire has emphasized the contrast between the Brazilian and Chilean experiences and his experience in Guinea Bissau.

Freire has argued that adult literacy programs, understood as a political act and as an act of knowledge within the national reconstruction process, will be successful under conditions of progressive and radical alterations in society's social relations of production. Freire argues that: "as an educator, I place greater emphasis on understanding an exact method of knowing [...] my great concern is the method as a means of knowledge. Being this the case, *we* must ask ourselves, to *know* in *favor* of what and, because of that knowledge, *against* what to *know*; in whose *favor* to *know*?" (Freire, 1986: 97)

Freire will argue that the successful conclusion of the literacy campaign and the continuation of the post-literacy process is strongly linked to the progressive realization of the social transition to socialism in Guinea-Bissau.

At that point, one of Freire's richest methodological suggestions in Guinea and Sao Tomé and Príncipe was to start adult education programs in areas undergoing

transformation or that have experienced critical conflicts, for example, during the liberation war, or through social class tensions and disputes. Freire argued that adult education programs would help strengthen the revolutionary consciousness of people participating in the liberation struggle or who have committed the transition towards socialism and radical change in the social relations of production. However, in a more coherent and systematic way, there is a demand to associate the literacy process with the process of production and productive work—one of the main theoretical failures in Freire's early writings.

Rosiska and Miguel Darcy de Oliveira raised this crucial methodological question in light of political and technical considerations. Any population gains greater motivation for literacy programs if they have participated enthusiastically in the liberation struggle and accumulated a rich cultural and political experience that the program offers and develops. However, the criterion of political receptivity growing out of the richness of the group's previous experience is insufficient. If the literacy campaign aims to transcend the celebration of the past and instead offers a vision towards the future, the region selected for the campaign must be experiencing a socio-economic transformation. This aspect seems extremely important because it is questionable whether learning to read and write corresponds to the real need of a peasant who continues to live and produce in traditional ways in a rural area. On the other hand, literacy may acquire more meaning if it is related to the production of new techniques being introduced in a particular area or to the creation of new production units, such as, for example, agricultural cooperatives. In other words, within the context of a transformative process, literacy could facilitate the peasant's acquisition of new technical knowledge necessary for the literacy project to be oriented towards and contribute to the political mobilization of the

community; empowering the peasant to take command of the change process, rather than simply being a passive "beneficiary" of an established plan that is applied from the outside to the inside of the communities. (Darcy de Oliveira, 1976: 49).

Adding to this "economic determination," a third important difference with the Latin American scenario resides in specific political variations. First, the experience in Tanzania offers Freire the opportunity to work within the socialist experiment, with a centralized plan, a revolutionary socialist party, and a substantive interest in adult education as a real methodological alternative to the formal educational system. Adult education in Tanzania is far from irrelevant: with a population of seventeen million, the literacy rate in 1966-1967, when functional literacy programs began, was 25-30%. When the literacy programs were evaluated, in 1975-1976, the government declared that the literacy rate had grown to 75-80%; however, other sources have stated that it was 55-60%.

Adult education was inextricably political education that, as Denis Goulet clarified, that incorporated politicized issues such as the political unity between Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde and took on issues concerning the association between manual and intellectual work, and the notion that it was the responsibility of all citizens to contribute to the PAIGC effort to create a just society moving forward. These factors were enhanced by the PAIGC experience of revolutionary struggle in Guinea-Bissau, when the literacy campaign appeared to reach a critical stage in the national reconstruction after the liberation war, an experience comparable to Nicaragua during its own literacy campaign. In this respect, Freire expressed the contrasting results of the early attempts in Guinea-Bissau: For a period of time, the literacy campaign was completely successful among the militants of the Revolutionary Army in urban areas of Guinea-Bissau, yet

the Basic adult education directed at society at large failed in its fundamental objectives.

Second, another innovation from that African period is Freire's enthusiastic opinion of the leadership, for example, Amilcar Cabral in Guinea-Bissau, President Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, or President Pinto de Acosta in São Tomé and Príncipe. That aspect is particularly true in the constant references given by Freire in the writings of Amilcar Cabral as a revolutionary Marxist theorist.

Third, Freire was aware of the difficulty of choosing a language of instruction for the literacy programs; that is, should it be in an indigenous or Creole language(s), or should it be in Portuguese? This question, although briefly analyzed, continues to be relevant—from Freire's perspective--towards the process of national identity, mainly when "now the precise figures were not available, approximately 80% of the total population of Guinea Bissau did not speak Portuguese. The common language of various ethnic groups in the country is Creole, a mixture of Portuguese and African dialects" (Goulet, 1978: 31). In other words, Creole is spoken by approximately 45% of the population and is not a written language.

On a personal level, it is understandable that Freire, a sensitive intellectual, shows interest in these questions, having rediscovered his mother tongue in Guinea-Bissau, then so distant from Brazil, ten years after his exile. Finally, it is a different innovation in Freire's experience in Africa, and the strong emphasis placed on the post-literacy process as inextricably associated with the literacy phase. In a letter to the coordinators of the cultural circles in São Tomé and Príncipe, Freire emphasized the following objectives for this post-literacy process:

1. Consolidate the knowledge acquired in phases prior to mastering writing, reading, and mathematics.

2. Deepen that knowledge by systematically introducing the basic rudiments of the grammatical and arithmetic categories - fundamental operations.
3. Continue, in a more profound way, with the reading of reality through the reading of varied texts and rich and varied topics.
4. Develop the capacity for critical analysis of reality and oral expression of that reality.
5. Prepare students for the next stage, which, due to the needs imposed by the national reconstruction process, courses for technical training must be created in various sectors. That is the same as saying that these human resources training courses are specifically developed with a critical vision and, through that, with a global vision that opposes the directed and alienated vision of their activities.

Paulo Freire's work in Africa has been the focus of criticism and controversy. What follows is a brief presentation and analysis of the Guinea-Bissau literacy training.

The planning phase of the mass literacy campaign began in 1975, and the first campaign was launched in 1976, with more than 200 literacy teachers organizing cultural circles in villages. Literacy training inspired by Freire's method was adopted in rural areas and the capital of Bissau. Linda Harasim says that literacy for national reconstruction had failed: out of 26,000 pupils involved in literacy training, virtually none became functionally literate. In her study, Harasim argues that the causes for this literacy failure were the following:

1. The development of the material conditions of Guinea-Bissau.

2. The contradictory political conditions of the national reconstruction process.
3. Some unexamined assumptions of Freire's theory and method, particularly his populism and ideological idealism that seem to have been shared by the authorities of the revolutionary PAIGC party in Guinea-Bissau.

On the one hand, there seems to be an infinite list of material conditions making any attempt at economic or educational development impossible in one of the 25 poorest countries in the world. That includes low productivity, self-subsisting, dispersed, and isolated villages - Harasim estimates that 88% of the total population in Guinea-Bissau works in subsistence agriculture - cultural, linguistic, tribal, ethnic, and economic differences, and the absence of unity politics. On the other hand, exacerbated by the low level of development of the productive forces, the attempt at national reconstruction in Guinea-Bissau confronted some of the familiar problems of any transition to socialism in the Third World. Harasim explains that among the critical problems facing the national reconstruction, the following are of note:

- A growing bureaucratization, centralization, and inefficiency of the state apparatus;
- A cadre of trained people alongside the necessity of relying on a colonial bureaucracy that did not support the PAIGC struggle;
- The centralized action in the capital of Bissau, with a concentration of 83% of civil workers and 55% of the country total population; thus, deepening the rural urban contradiction;

- The failure of the development strategy based on state farms and cooperatives;
- The need for funding for literacy training.

Finally, adding these resulting contradictions to the poor material conditions and the problems of national reconstruction, Freire's theory and practice failed, not presenting an efficient proposal for literacy. Freire is accused of imposing a Western vision on a different scenario, such as that of Guinea-Bissau. Harasim argues that perhaps Freire had been idealistically led to think that his method had universal validity and was appropriate for any Third World society—a problem that arose from his romanticized perception of the level of political literacy of the rural population of Guinea-Bissau. Along with these misconceptions, the planning, campaign organization, and method implemented did not take into account the absence of well-trained militants in Guinea-Bissau who were capable of understanding and implementing the literacy strategy and method.

According to Harasim, this political criterion was considered an original value: "The fundamental contradiction resides in the fact that Freire's concept of "politics" was rooted in moral and philosophical notions and did not implicitly contain a practical plane of action." In Harasim's assessment, by assuming a utopian vision of social reality and an ideal moment of educational experience, Freire overestimated the animators' [literacy campaign workers] ability to implement the literacy process and produce educational material appropriate quantity, quality, and continuity. Consequently: "The introduction of Freire's method in the conditions of Guinean reality turned out to be a mechanical learning, directive, based on memorization—precisely what Freire was against. Most of the students were unable to go beyond the first five or six words of the manual; they were unable to create new words. Similarly, where there was a

high level of peasant participation, it was perceived that after six months, the students were able to read and write, but when they were questioned about what they were reading and writing, the understanding was zero: they did not understand anything". (Harasim, 1983: 377-378).

Freire's view is very different. Reflecting on the conditions imposed on literacy practice in a society undergoing *social* transformation and how this affected his work, Freire makes reference to the similarities between his work in Africa and his early experiences in Chile and Brazil. Still, the central issue to which he attributes the failure of his efforts in Guinea-Bissau is the choice of language for the literacy process. Considering the literacy experience in Guinea Bissau, Freire argues that, as an intellectual militant, he is not a typical researcher under the auspices of "academic autonomy" or "scientific objectivity." As an intellectual militant, what he could not do in Guinea-Bissau was "transgress the political limitations of the moment. As a foreigner, I could not impose my proposals on the reality of Guinea-Bissau and the needs determined by the political leaders" (Freire and Macedo, 1987: 103).

Freire concluded that the PAIGC had taken over and changed its initial decision, determining that the language of the literacy campaign would be Portuguese, the language of the colonizers (Freire and Faundez, 2013: 124). Nevertheless, as Freire discovered, his suggestion was outside the political limits imposed on his work, and he had to accept Portuguese as the language of instruction, even though his method was not originally designed for the acquisition of a second language. Freire argues his experience in the literacy process, assuring that: "With or without Paulo Freire it was impossible to conduct a literacy campaign in Guinea-Bissau in a language that was not part of people's social practice. My method did not fail, as has been discussed [...] the question should be analyzed in the following terms:

whether it would be linguistically feasible or not to conduct literacy campaigns in Portuguese in any of those countries. My method is secondary to this analysis. If it is not linguistically viable, my method or any other method will certainly fail". (Freire and Macedo, 1987: 112, 113). It is notorious that Amílcar Cabral denied any criticism of his suggestion to adopt Portuguese as the official language as cultural opportunism. For Cabral, Portuguese was the only true gift the colonizers gave to Guinea-Bissau (Amílcar Cabral. Analysis of some types of resistance, Guinea-Bissau, edited by PAIGC 1979: 102-105). Freire does not agree (Freire and Faundez, 1987: 126).

4. Relearning Brazil

After living in exile for sixteen years, upon returning in 1980, Freire tried to relearn Brazil, incessantly traveling throughout the country, lecturing, publishing, and conducting dialogues with students and teachers. Freire succinctly summarized this process of relearning Brazil to me—during a conversation in a Californian summer at Stanford University in July 1983—that he believes in "reading Gramsci, but also living popular Gramsci in the favelas. This is the reason why I work at least two afternoons a week with people from the favelas ."

In 1980, Freire began working as a professor at the Faculty of Education at the Pontificia Universidad Católica and the Faculty of Education at the University of Campiñas in Sao Paulo. After getting involved with higher education, he created the *VEREDA-Centro de Estudos em Educação* [the VEREDA Center for Studies in Education], bringing together many people who worked on the original popular education projects of the 1960s. Politically, Freire collaborated with the Education Commission of the Workers Party (a socialist-democratic party of which Freire has been part of since 1979 while he was still in Geneva)

and accepted the honorary position of President of the São Paulo Workers' University—an institution financed by the Workers' Party concerned with labor unions and political education.

The event that most profoundly marked Paulo Freire in the 1980s was the loss of his wife, Elsa, who passed away in October 1986. With Elsa's sudden death, Freire lost not only his lifelong companion, friend, and lover but also his vital optimism and desire. Freire married again in 1988 to an old friend of the family and his student, Ana María Araujo.

With his appointment to the position of Secretary of Education for the City of Sao Paulo, in January 1989, as part of the Workers Party administration of the city, Freire became responsible for 662 schools, serving 720,000 students, from kindergarten to grade 8. Under his leadership, the Municipal Secretariat of Education, in collaboration with popular movements and educators, initiated an adult education and literacy initiative, MOVA-SP (Movement for the Alphabetization of Youth and Adults in São Paulo), in one of the largest cities in Latin America that at the time had eleven million four hundred thousand people. (Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MOVASP/>)

As Secretary of Education, Freire had the unparalleled opportunity to implement his education philosophy in his own country, not as an academic advisor but as a political activist in a municipality ruled by a socialist party. However, the socialist objectives of the Workers' Party must be considered in the context of the new democratic and constitutional reform in Brazil. Freire left the Ministry of Education on May 22, 1991, but one of his collaborators was appointed to replace him. Freire agreed to remain as a kind of "Honorary Ambassador" of the municipal administration. This author had the honor and privilege to serve as adviser in the administration of Freire.

At the same time, Paulo Freire's perspective on literacy work becomes relevant for industrial societies. After returning to Brazil in 1980, Freire produced several "spoken" books and articles not translated into English, including his dialogues with Sergio Guimaraes, Moacir Gadotti y Guimaraes, Frei Betto, Adriano Nogueira, and Debora Mazza, among others. In his book with Donaldo Macedo, Freire warns of a vision of literacy as a cultural policy, that is, the literacy process should not only offer reading, writing, and numeracy; and calls for the consideration of "a set of practices that work to strengthen and enrich people. In a general way, literacy is analyzed considering whether it serves to reproduce existing social formations or serves as a set of cultural practices that promote democratic and emancipatory change." (Freire and Macedo,1987).

Literacy as a cultural policy is also mentioned in Freire's work on emancipatory theory and critical theory of society. Therefore, emancipatory literacy "is based on a critical reflection of the cultural capital of the oppressed, transforming itself into a vehicle by which the oppressed are equipped with the necessary tools to re-appropriate their history, culture, and language practice. (Ibidem:157).

The impact of Freire's work on current academic-pedagogical life is impressive and cannot be restricted to the literacy process. The Freirean proposal has not only been implemented in social studies and in the curriculum of adult, secondary and higher education, but in various areas, such as the teaching of mathematics and physics, educational planning, feminist studies, languages, educational psychology, critical reading and writing, among others. Further, in his dialogues with Ira Shor, Freire attempts to formulate the Pedagogy of the Oppressed towards a consideration of the problem of social reproduction in the context of industrialized societies.

It can be argued that Freire's work has been simultaneously reinterpreted and reinvented, as Freire would say, in industrially advanced societies by those who have constructed a new theoretical synthesis by bringing Freire, Dewey, and Habermas together (see for instance Morrow and Torres, 2002).

A notable representative of the agenda of Critical Pedagogy is Henry Giroux and his theory of resistance in pedagogy and curriculum. In other words, Freire's political philosophy has influenced socialist-democratic perspectives on education in the United States. In this sense, Ira Shor's work is exemplary for trying to understand the reproductive power of instruction despite the "Culture Wars" that prevail within the mosaic of the United States and pointing out the possibilities of relating the North American struggles with liberation theory. Consequently, the apparent paradox is that the political activism of literacy in industrialized societies is guided by the notions of education and social change developed in the third world.

5. Concluding with the 'Pedagogy of the Question'

The Latin American and African past of Freire's pedagogy has shown a surprising unity of topics, themes, and methodologies. This unity is possible thanks to Freire's tendency to discuss his practical experience theoretically. As he states, "without exception, each book that I have written has been a report of some phase of political-pedagogical activity in which I was hooked in my youth" (Freire, 1978: 176). In other words, Freire's perspective is a systematization of political-pedagogical practice.

In these closing conclusions, originating from Freire's highly regarded "pedagogy of the question," we would like to invite the reader to consider two essential questions: First, is this a pre-or post-revolutionary pedagogy? Second, in Gramscian terms, can a process directed

towards critical consciousness be taught as a process of counter-hegemony in any historical epoch? Undoubtedly, many other highly relevant points require a much more extensive and theoretical discussion. In the meantime, I must limit my discussion by offering a few conclusions, questioning, or responding to both aspects.

To begin with, what are the political factors that shape liberation education? What are the minimum conditions to engage in education for liberation? Under what functional conditions can we prognosticate methodological, didactic, curricular, and organizational changes required to advance the development of this alternative educational proposal? In other words, given the strength of the educational bureaucracy located mainly within the instructional system and considering the proprietorship of the State concerning the principal means of knowledge production, should this political-pedagogical space shift its main concern from the educational system towards the informal system? Or, given the priority of the political struggle, is pedagogical practice insignificant?

Therefore, assuming, as Freire does, that we cannot modify society by changing the school (liberal utopia), is it also necessary to abandon educational reforms? In other words, if the school system is an arena of struggle for capitalist social formations, what are the authentic spaces of that struggle? That is, do the spaces that contribute to the process of political organization of the oppressed exist? Or, paradoxically, do these spaces contribute to the process of legitimizing the Capitalist State through an indulgent State system but systematically obstructing its organic ties with the working class and social movements?

Similarly, assuming the potential utility of this pedagogy in a process of social transition, is it possible to sustain this Freire pedagogy in a type of "Jacobinism" to be explained following the institutionalization of the revolution? In the same way, considering the strong

emphasis suggested by that pedagogy on the critical consciousness process, how can we reconcile the process of political deliberation opened by that pedagogy with the ideological consolidation process of a triumphant revolutionary movement? When revolutions are not any longer a common occurrence in the 21st century, what other options are opened up for social transformation of the common sense?

Along the same lines of reasoning, emphasizing the importance of critical awareness, is it possible to accentuate and, in the same way, support spontaneous practices of politics to the detriment of the process of political organization, coordinated struggle, and centralized politics for a successful revolution? Put differently, what are the connections between strategies and tactics for social transformation in the context of neoliberalism and the growing authoritarian populism emerging in many societies on Earth, challenging liberal democracy?

The second question is of comparable importance. Generally speaking, most of the authors have tried to analyze education, hierarchical class structure, and ideological domain; they have focused on education starting from the hegemonic classes' perspective and the process of cultural and social reproduction. Freire's work, on the contrary, has shown another perspective: the need to redefine education starting from the perspective of the subordinate classes. There is considerable coincidence with the Gramscian education formula, contributing to the development of a new culture, a new *Weltanschauung* (or world view) of the subaltern classes.

The oppressed class must develop this culture of a new *Weltanschauung* through its organic intellectuals, starting from the bosom of capitalist society? The concept of organic intellectuals in this time and age become controversial, as it is as well the concept of public

intellectual. Bypassing this conversation, I would like to emphasize that Freire's premises are equally important:

1. It is crucial to study the educational process starting from a dual perspective: using the lens of the hegemonic class—reproduction of social relations of production—and the lens of the subordinate classes: education as a way to build a new hegemony.

2. Education is vital to rebuilding the culture of the oppressed, mainly through the notion of the systematic elaboration of popular knowledge: knowledge understood as an instrument of struggle against hegemony.

3. Designing autonomous educational practices embedded in poor urban-rural communities can help expand the organization and power of the oppressed.

4. Finally, Freire's notion of a dialectical relationship between the revolutionary leadership and the masses has been a rich terrain for educational, indeed revolutionary, and mass practices. In Gramscian terms, a rich terrain for developing young worker leadership. In this sense, the relevance given by Freire for the epistemological and political self-surveillance of the militants' praxis in Guinea-Bissau raises a new and essential question towards political practice: how should this surveillance be assumed within a revolutionary process? Moreover, is it possible this surveillance in the context of spontaneous mass processes of social transformation?

Even so, some experiences originating from the many popular education experiments in Latin America—dismantled after a coup d'état and the assassination of certain militants as a result of their exposure—left some people wondering if this pedagogical program is a feasible project for facilitating the process of building a counter-

hegemony; or, on the contrary, should be viewed as a sympathetic but impossible dream. Or, actually, should the educational process presented above be supported to reveal the controlled variables that achieve a better result from these educational programs? This may include linking educational practices to a revolutionary party or redefining the importance, extent, and meanings of political struggle within the educational system and within the capitalist state bureaucracy. A comprehensive study, beyond the limits and possibilities of this text, is required to answer all these questions. Meanwhile, it is possible to conclude that there are good reasons why, in pedagogy today, we can be with Freire or against Freire, but not without Freire.

Afterword: Is Freire Current Today?

A central proposition of political philosopher Paulo Freire was to reinvigorate the question of ethics in education and its implication for citizenship building.⁴ Freire was a postcolonial thinker credited with being the initiator of Critical Pedagogy, one of the first theoreticians and practitioners of an epistemology of the Global South, and originator of the Participatory Action Research Methodology (PAR), on parallel lines with the work of Colombian sociologist Orlando Falls Borda. This methodology questions who is the object, the subject of the research; and, who owns the intellectual property

⁴ At the turn of the century, Freire's main book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was classified as the third book most cited in Google in a publication of the London School of Economics and Political Science. The book of Freire is listed as the third most cited after the book of Thomas Kuhn *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and the second most cited, from Everett Rogers *Diffusion of Innovations*. It is important to mention that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the only book on education in the 25 most cited. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/05/12/what-are-the-most-cited-publications-in-the-social-sciences-according-to-google-scholar/>

emerging from the research (e. g., study findings, data collected, findings, publications, etc.).

This methodology has not been applied only to education. Still, there is a growing application of PAR in other fields such as public health: “PAR reflects questioning about the nature of knowledge and the extent to which knowledge can represent the interests of the powerful and serve to reinforce their positions in society. It affirms that experience can be a basis of knowing and that experiential learning can lead to a legitimate form of knowledge that influences practice. Adult educators in low-income countries drew on these intellectual perspectives to develop a form of research that was sympathetic to the participatory nature of adult learning. This perspective, strongly supported by the work of Freire, who used PAR to encourage poor and deprived communities to examine and analyze the structural reasons for their oppression. From these roots, PAR grew as a methodology enabling researchers to work in partnership with communities in a manner that leads to action for change.”⁵

UNESCO has built new principles for education over several decades, following a framework traditionally defined as Scientific Humanism.⁶ Institutional structures

⁵ Fran Baum, Colin MacDougall, Danielle Smith. *Journal of Epidemiology Community Health*. 2006 Oct; 60(10): 854– 857. doi: 10.1136/jech.2004.028662. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2566051/> See also Torres (1992), ‘Participatory Action Research and Popular Education in Latin America.’ *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 5 (1).

⁶ J. P. Singh; UNESCO: Scientific Humanism and its Impact on Multilateral Diplomacy. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12624>; Bokova, Irina, A New Humanism for the 21st Century. http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/a_new_humanism_for_the_21st_century/; Vincenzo Pavone, *From the Labyrinth of the World to the Paradise of the Heart: Science and Humanism in UNESCO's Approach to Globalization* (Critical Media Studies: Institutions, Politics, and Culture) Landham, Maryland, Lexington Books-Rowman and Littlefield, 2008; Freire, P (2013), *Education for Critical*

articulating governability of societies--more so now with the growing challenges facing democratic societies add additional complexity to political and pedagogical paradigms calling for new models of partnership between the state and civil society. A new compact based on intelligent collaboration—though alliances between social movements, grass-roots organizations, community organizations, universities and critical intellectuals, and NGO's working closely with diverse institutions from the public sectors—will require careful and sustained public policies that will promote, facilitate, in some cases finance such compact.

In addressing 21st Century challenges, lifelong learning must be valued as a new human right. Viewing lifelong learning as a human right is particularly critical in the domain of retraining for new jobs with growing concerns about the precariat⁷ and their ability to learn, unlearn and relearn as the precondition for literacy beyond reading, writing, and numeracy. A lifelong learning culture shows how to live together, care about the environment, the planet, our societies, ourselves, and how to promote a model of happiness based on freedom and dialogical democracies.

Paulo Freire was a *sensei*, a great teacher with whom we are eternally indebted. In this celebration of his centenary, we should always remember the mantra Freire offered Moacir Gadotti and me during a conversation at UCLA in 1991 having a coffee, when we discussed the creation of the Paulo Freire Institute in São Paulo. At that meeting, Paulo insisted: "I do not want the creation of a fellowship or a Church. I want people not to repeat me but to reinvent me."

Consciousness, London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic.

⁷ This neologism refers to people in a condition of existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare.

I will conclude with a poem that I wrote a few days after his death.

Requiem for Paulo Reglus Neves Freire

Now you are no longer with us.
Your heart that loved so much
Stopped beating, and you were gone.
You have left us so alone.

With you has gone the voice of the poor,
the dispossessed, the oppressed,
those without voice.

With you has gone the consciousness of Latin America,
a great part of our dignity.

With you has died a living myth,
you, who struggled with your contradictions,
you, who taught us with parables,
you, who captivated with your smile,
your white hair and beard, blowing in the breeze,
an incomparable beautiful face.
Like Minerva's owl
You arose at dawn.

With you, we were born into the vigor of education,
that you defended until the last moment.

With you, we learned
dialogue, not polemics.

With you, we possessed a prophet.
who denounced and annunciated.

With you, we knew that the pilgrimage of this world
only has meaning in struggle.

With you, teacher who sheltered himself beneath the
mango tree,
 practicing words and world
there on the back patio of your childhood home in Recife,
we came to understand the anguish and hopes
 of all teachers.

You left us your spirituality, without limits
 like your humanity.

You left us your scruples,
testimony of an old fighter without concessions
 to capitalism, to injustice, to absent democracy, to
oppression,
to lovelessness and the last of demons you sought to
exorcise
 Neoliberalism.

You left us an invitation
 not to celebrate you or repeat
 but to reinvent you.

With you, we go on living
 with that sensibility, utopian,
in loving solidarity.

Still, you left us so alone,
so immensely sad.
Friend, teacher
 who is no longer.

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PAULO FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY OF HOPE REVISITED IN TURBULENT TIMES

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ABSTRACT This paper written by one of Freire's collaborators focuses on the Brazilian educator and thinker's pedagogy of hope and its importance in an age characterised by cynicism and the widespread mantra that there is no alternative to Capitalism. This paper argues for a radical and educated sense of hope which can revitalise critical human agency to operate strategically and responsibly to intervene in and contribute to collectively changing the course of history. This necessitates our understanding of the nature of different forms of oppression, not avoiding the question of class but broadening the range and facets of oppression to include race, gender, migration, and ecological insensitivity. It argues for the importance of utopia and the need to rescue it from the clutches of a reified system whose overarching narrative is dystopian. Freire provides a healthy utopian alternative to this, based on his ongoing struggles against different forms of oppression, including colonial oppression in his own country but also in the many former colonies he visited during his time in exile.

KEYWORDS utopia, critical agency, praxis, collectivity, transformation

Paulo Freire's birth centenary this year throws into sharp relief a pedagogical message of hope in an ever-difficult period marked by various forms of oppression and ongoing modes of colonization. His corpus of writing transcends the age in which it was produced. This is the mark of a

truly great writer who continues to inspire hope for the construction of a world not as it is but as it should and can be. Hope reverberates as a distinctive message for a decolonizing and liberating politics. It is the sort of position and analyses that emerge from the reflections of a 'third world' luminary, suffering like other similar public intellectuals, who survived banishment for sixteen years from his homeland which he loved and was roused for transformation. Freire learned from the experience of exile returning at an elderly age and living long enough to stamp his mark on the Brazilian, and more specifically, the São Paulo scene, through municipal educational reforms and further writings.

Pedagogy of Hope (Freire, 1994) is the one volume which accounts for most of these vicissitudes and that extends its reach beyond the sixties, seventies and eighties, as well as beyond the first four years of the nineties, when it was produced, to address the future. Originally intended as a text for revisiting his opus magnum, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2018), after twenty-five years, it turned out to be prophetic and an invaluable source for navigating turbulent times.

These are times when colonisation sparks danger for survival of the planet, the sort of danger that prompted Freire and his colleagues from Brazil, to commit and contribute to the Earth Charter (*Carta da Terra*). Despair and hope collectively exists cheek by jowl. The specters of Necropolitics and ailments have come to haunt us even in the most intimate spaces of our lives. A pandemic, whose global spread is facilitated by colonizing and socially divisive policies, continues to wreak havoc, especially among Indigenous populations in Freire's native Brazil, among the homeless removed internationally from the index of human concerns and those many others among the multitudes who eke out a living at the margins of society. The plague has become a metaphor for a capitalism that has turned savage.

This is the medieval European bubonic plague writ large. The small percentage who benefit from the riches of Empire, the once much condemned 1%, vilified by mobilizing social movements against the global Neoliberal system, can experience their relative Covid-induced ‘imprisonment’ in plush and spatial surroundings, including the accoutrements for an everyday holiday life. There are no such safety and comforting outlets for the destitute, those seeking to survive by the ‘skin of their teeth’ and the elderly. Body bags and graves are, in certain countries and areas, at a premium and cannot keep abreast of the death toll. Manufactured ignorance is the order of the day and people’s concerns and anxieties are increased as they try to sift through the web of conspiracy theories, misinformation, and state sponsored fabrications, particularly those emanating from and well-known right wing populist politicians apportioning blame to a variety of persons, the disposable who feature among what Freire calls ‘the oppressed’.

This type of irresponsible right-wing populism, to be distinguished from that type of populism in South America in the 50s and 60s in Brazil through which Freire’s brand of popular organisation and education thrived, provides a perilous counterweight to public health authoritative (not to be confused with authoritarian, as in Freire’s distinction) sources. In Freire’s present-day Brazil, under the leadership of Jair Bolsonaro, a new term has been coined: *negacionismo* which literally translates into English as ‘negationism’, negating through a politics of denial and disappearance, the existence of things that make people disposable, relegated to terminal spheres of exclusion. It is as though Bolsonaro sees this as a golden opportunity to strengthen what Zygmunt Bauman (2006:39) calls “the human waste disposal industry”. As a result, it is the poor who become poorer as jobs are cut, replaced by such innovations as AI-induced mechanisms and other technological paraphernalia. Human life becomes ever more dispensable. This is especially true of

the lives of the have-nots, the Indigenous, slum dwellers, and immigrants crossing perilous deserts and raging seas whose boats, some rickety, are not allowed to berth inside European harbors. Such populations have become unnamable, unknowable, and relegated to the abyss of neoliberal cruelty – they are national governments’ pawns in a necropolitical game against larger supranational institutions such as the EU. Immigrants are often rendered the scapegoats for all the pandemic ills, especially via the bellowing sound-bags of right-wing populist, racist and ever colonizing politics.

What inspiration can Freire provide in this regard? Paulo Freire’s pedagogy instils hope against a discourse of cynicism that embraces a normalized sense of Armageddon. In Frederic Jameson’s and Slavoj Žižek’s words, it is always “easier to imagine the end of the world, than the end of capitalism” (Fisher, 2009: 2), the latter tainted by blood as with many other situations throughout its history. This would be a common feeling as we experience, in these times, “unprecedented disruptions to our social orders and personal lives.” (Merrick, 2020, online)

For Freire, hope is not a desperate and forlorn invocation to counter what comes across as the ‘will of God’, that desperate proclamation from peasants in his earlier texts and *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1994: 48), which he decried and regarded as part of the problem of that ideology (ideology as an obfuscation or distorted version of reality) which kept them immersed in the ‘culture of silence’. It is, to the contrary, a means of empowerment and conscientisation which makes people read the world, as well as read the word, to understand its underlying contradictions, and do so with a sense of social togetherness, and mobilise, educate and act collectively to change it (Freire and Macedo, 1987). What appear *prima facie* and strictly as the forces of nature, of which all species, including we humans, form an integral component, are the result of human malpractices and

nefarious policies and ideologies that are part and parcel of what Peter McLaren (1995) calls a “predatory” Global Capitalism with its ‘universe’, in Marx’s analysis, consisting of an ensemble of unequal and differentiating power relations.

Freire’s *Pedagogy of Hope* shows how, in Romain Rolland’s phrase, pessimism of the intellect can be healthily overcome by ‘optimism of the will’. Pessimism can serve to politically disengage and disempower human beings rendering them, as Freire expressed in his earlier works, fatalistic in their attitude to humanly constructed crises. A political pedagogy of hope, to the contrary, spurs us on to regard these situations as challenges that engage our critical thinking, consciousness, emotions and imagination in order to strategize against them and to confront the terror that they arouse within us. They are challenges to be surmounted collectively in an ongoing process of critical understanding, mobilization and struggle. It is as though Freire is echoing Walter Benjamin in his struggle on behalf of and *with* the Oppressed, the presently apparent hopeless ones for whose sake “we have been given hope.” (Benjamin, 1996: 156)

Antonio Gramsci, one of the 20th century’s greatest analysts of capitalism, in relation to whose ideas Paulo Freire’s have been juxtaposed, in a complementarity manner (Mayo, 1999, 2015), wrote of an ‘Interregnum’ in which the old is dying and the new is struggling to emerge, a situation which seems to characterise the present conjuncture as indicated by Nancy Fraser and others (Fraser, 2019, Giroux, 2020). The current crisis presents us with the opportunity to strive towards the ‘new’, all the while imagining a future that does not mimic the present. There are moments when long standing or invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) traditions are questioned, the way Gramsci, in his interest in artists and playwrights, including those of different political persuasion than his who questioned old assumptions, foregrounded their preoccupations. This is where resistance in varied forms

makes its presence felt.

In the current period of uncertainty and precarious living, particularly in the aftermath of the economic crisis of 2008 and the current pandemic crisis which reveal the limits of so-called 'Capitalist realism' (Fisher, 2009), the overwhelming colonizing and predatory nature of this mode of production has been laid bare. It is not the omnipotent system it purports to be, unable as it is to cater for health issues that extend well beyond the vagaries of the market. Its market-driven values come up short when measured against the much-needed life-centered values.

The spirit of critical resistance and an energized solidarity once again come to the fore as the streets are reclaimed by multitudes inveighing against the brutality of police violence, structural racism, and attacks on journalists, dissidents, and critical intellectuals. The young, of whatever race and class, are proving to be agents of democracy and help rewrite the script of social justice. A decolonizing process of hope and expectation re-emerges in its often radicalism. Struggles are no longer personal, as if pertaining to the singular, atomised individual, as neoliberalism would have us believe, but are public. They are calling for collective action, as in the student riots in the UK and mobilizations in Quebec Canada and parts of Europe including Vienna and Greece.

There appears to be a groundswell among youth and the social movements of which they form part, not just in the West but also in subaltern southern contexts (the various movements for the assertion of Indigenous rights in India and South America and also land rights, for example the MST in Brazil and the Frente Zapatista in Chiapas, Mexico), clamouring for the emergence of the New to replace the Old Order. As I argue elsewhere (Giroux, 2021), this intermeshing of despair and hope suggests that we are really in an interregnum. It characterised by the desperate attempts by the repressive forces of the dying old order, in a crisis of hegemony, to

impose a sense of authoritarianism, similar at times but also different from that which led to Paulo Freire's banishment from his country in 1964, and the visible struggle to usher in a new world. Freire's pedagogy and politics of hope are, given his remarkable prescience, a model for articulating education and politics to actions that speak to the struggles and promises of these times. His book *Pedagogy of Hope* might well be a manifesto for those engaged in the present struggle, just as that great pedagogical and political book, *Letter to a Teacher* (School of Barbiana, 1969), by the eight boys of Barbiana under the direction of their master, don Lorenzo Milani, served as a manifesto for Italy's 1968 movement.

As a public intellectual whose oeuvre evolved, a person in process who built on his previous work clarifying and rendering more nuanced concepts and formulations already enunciated in his early work, Paulo Freire continued to explore new areas of enquiry. They ensued almost naturally from ones already broached but which were refined and rendered more complex as a result of new experiences that derived from different international contexts. These included the postcolonial contexts for his work in newly independent countries in Africa, on behalf of the World Council of Churches in Switzerland during the last phase of his period in exile. They also include experiences in countries such as Nicaragua and Grenada in a revolutionary phase during which mass literacy campaigns were staged. There was the process of relearning Brazil following his return from exile and the experience of educational administration when called upon to serve as Secretary of Education in a PT¹ led municipal government in one of the world's most populous cities, a megalopolis. His head remained turned to the Left and to the plight of the oppressed, be it street children or undernourished 'meninos popular' ('popular children') thrown out of the schools after two years or less, children euphemistically labelled 'dropouts'. They also include

¹ Partido Trabalhadores – Workers' Party.

those who are functionally and critically illiterate.

Education, for Freire and those who share his view, is political while the political is educational. Freire refused to isolate himself in the prison-house of abstractions, disciplinary silos, and the comforts of an academic discourse. On the contrary, he consistently connected his work to actions, social problems, and matters of power. Moreover, he engaged in praxis in multiple sites and in contexts far removed from academia, even though he held positions at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC) and at the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP). He was a man who acted reflectively and politically not only on but most particularly *in* the world and suffered for this.

While working in and against capitalism and the systems it spawns in different aspects of a person's life, what he and other Brazilians call 'being tactically inside and strategically outside the system', he had no illusions about this mode of production and the broader universe it generates. It was an evil and grossly exploitative system that had to be transcended. This notwithstanding, his political struggle was not class reductionist as he broadened his definitions of the oppressed to include an array of social groups extending to many of the people mentioned earlier in this essay: Blacks, Indigenous, women, migrants *sans papiers* (without papers, undocumented), the *gastarbeiter* (guest workers such as those he encountered in Switzerland when he was based there, mentioned in *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire, 1994: 122). And yet the class struggle was not placed on the back burner as in Laclau and Mouffe's prominent book of the late eighties (1989). He once said, at an AERA meeting in 1991, something to the effect that "Perestroika did not put an end to that".

Intersectionality increasingly became an important aspect of Freire's critically engaged pedagogical politics. In a response to a number of writers, in a book published at the time of his death (Freire, 1997), he spoke of 'Unity in

diversity' which necessitated the struggle for one to come to terms with one's contradictions, to become less incomplete and therefore more coherent. He was committed to a vision of society predicated on popular sovereignty, social justice and equality. In this regard, he stands close to sociological luminaries such as C. Wright Mills and the contemporary Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Dorothy E. Smith, Zygmunt Bauman and Patricia Hill-Collins. In this regard, he posited an education for critical consciousness at the basis of the intersection of people's everyday lives, their histories and the social structures which they help create and transform, rather than simply reproduce, through their agency.

He echoes Gramsci in seeing capitalist and colonial hegemonic formations as being perpetuated through uncritical commonsense assumptions and dominative notions of education characterised by cultural invasions/imperialism and therefore prescriptive 'banking education' - all delineated in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2018). Here, the themes of colonialism and invasion of the mental universe of the colonised are expounded upon in the fourth and final chapter of the book. Freire, for his part, countered this, dialectically, by a dialogical, non-prescriptive education, in which the teacher enjoys authority without being authoritarian. This is intended to foster critical agency among officially designated educator and teacher-students who render the subject or topic discussed the target of co-investigation spurred on by epistemological curiosity. This process of critical literacy, which included civic literacy, was geared to not only interpreting the world, but, as in Marx's eleventh thesis of Feuerbach, to change it. Of course, the quest for change was for Freire a collective one, involving tactical interventions and learning which are rooted in the participants' existential situations but which gradually do not remain at that juncture, lest, as stated in *Pedagogy of Hope*, this would entail a dangerous form of populism referred to in Latin America as *basismo*. (Freire, 1994: 84)

The approach therefore is to gradually lead students outside of the immediacy and, perhaps, comfort zone of their limited experiences. Freire argued that there is politics in everyday life, and in the workings of popular culture – the basic existential situations of learners. Stanley Aronowitz is spot on when stating that, for Freire, “learning begins with taking the self as the first but not the last object of knowledge.” (Aronowitz, 1998: 12) One ought to transcend the existential situations to develop critical consciousness. (Robbins, 2016, online) *Conscientização*, the process of coming into consciousness, is a vehicle to help transcend the existential situation. Of course, Freire never decoupled the personal experiences, which provide different takes on the objects of co-investigation, from the structuring forces that condition and shape them. Moreover, he refused to collapse the political into the personal. Instead, he endlessly worked to see how one shaped the other as part of a more comprehensive politics in which matters of subjectivity and power merge in the challenge of rethinking matters of agency, consciousness, and identity.

Configurations of power were analysed for an understanding of how they impinge on the way knowledge is selected from the cultures of society, thus exposing whose ‘cultural arbitrary’, in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms, conditions this selection. How does this selection thwart or enable the generation of greater social justice? Critical thinking, though necessary for Freire, was not regarded by him as sufficing in this quest. It is meant to lead, in Freire’s view, to a concrete ‘on the ground’ collective contribution to bring about change in the form of greater social justice in the community or directly related contexts. This is the distinction between ‘intellectual praxis’ and ‘revolutionary praxis’. Social agency entails the latter and establishes social hope as a precondition of both agency and politics. Critical educators are meant to instil upon their students the need to exercise the ‘right to govern’ rather than passively accept the fate of being

governed, a point which draws parallels with the School of Barbiana and its task of helping students to develop into 'sovereign citizens'.

At the same time, Freire urged educators to provide the conditions to teach students to learn how to govern rather than learn how to be governed. As with the School of Barbiana (1969), Freire urges educators/students to explore the broad spaces for critical education and action that exist beyond strictly demarcated educational settings to avail themselves of multiple other spaces in society at large, especially, in his case, within and among progressive, social-justice-oriented social movements.

Freire's approach is no mix and stir recipe but one which stresses contexts, their limits and possibilities and therefore also reinvention. It is one which is intended to help develop a critical attitude and foster greater understanding of the power dynamics at the heart of the pedagogical situation. Whose knowledge is selected, by whom and for what purpose? This might entail delving into history to explore the conditions that helped render a particular knowledge hegemonic at the expense of others. It entails a series of WH (who, which, when, where, what) questions and also the How question. It entails questions regarding representation, identity and subjectivity. It is very much a pedagogy of the question, highlighting the complexity of things and the need to be wary of certainties. It is based on problem posing rather than simply problem solving – problematization.

The approach adopted in a pedagogy of hope is dialectical which sees seemingly disparate elements that are opposed to each other as being connected, a relationship in which one would not exist without the other. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is written in this dialectical style, especially in its first three chapters. The approach entails the exploration of the relation among things that are never completely separate. In this sense, pedagogy becomes contextual, relational and comprehensive. There can be no oppressor without

oppressed, dominating authoritarian teacher without a dominated, subjugated student, and so forth. The approach entails exploring and working through the contradictions between things in the dialectical relation. The ultimate goal and healthy utopia is to end the contradiction itself; that there would be no oppressor and oppressed. Simply replacing the present oppressor with the present oppressed reproduces the contradiction of opposites and does not change the relation. The alternative is to help develop what Freire calls 'reinventing power'.

At work here was an intricate dialectic of affirmation and expansion, an understanding of the immediate forces that shaped students along with the crucial task of broadening those horizons. Education has a history of being enmeshed in political struggles and its process and outcomes are inextricably related to diverse ideological struggles and contestations over relations of power.

Freire was a complex thinker who scoured an extensive terrain. He therefore eschewed reductionist, one-dimensional views of education irrespective of their ideological provenance. He repudiated orthodoxy coming from any political quarter, including the Left. This might perhaps have been conditioned by the traditional rigid positions taken by the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and its rhetoric, at a time when several movements were engaged in diverse struggles for democratisation in his country, not least the ever-pertinent Latin American struggle for land/Agrarian reform. Vulgar Marxism was anathema to Freire, based on its diktat of what he calls, in *The Politics of Education* (Freire, 1986), a theory of predestination, based on the belief in the inevitability of revolution, a theory which denies the critical interaction between agency and structure that is so central to Freire's vision. Vulgar Marxism, which is making a return among some younger academics, would have appalled Freire given its class reductionism, sterile retreat into a regressive economism, its appeal to political purity, its

display of vacuous guarantees, and its prison-house of certainty and unchecked hubris.

Freire's emphasis on authentic dialogue should not play down his belief in the unabashedly directive nature of an education that embraces authority. Directivity is not to be confused with authoritarianism, a distinction made earlier, and indoctrination. He takes his cue from Antonio Gramsci's interplay between spontaneity and conscious direction, engaging the tension involved. He struggled, as did Zygmunt Bauman, against any foreclosing of human possibilities through adherence to a pre-established script, but argued for a continuous pedagogy of the question, a pedagogy involving one's problematizing statements and concepts. (Bauman and Tester, 2001: 4) It is a value committed pedagogy that Freire advocated and practised, one which renders problematic any posturing of 'neutrality', a view shared by many other key figures such as Gramsci, with his 'I hate the indifferent', Lorenzo Milani with his 'better a fascist than being indifferent' and Ada Gobetti's similar assertions (Mayo and Vittoria, 2021).

Neutrality, for Freire, is tantamount to siding with the dominant. It is a cover for both complicity with authoritarianism and the flight from any sense of moral, political, and social responsibility. A neutral education therefore is a reproductive one which serves to depoliticize and normalize power relations, thus preserving the status quo of a world based on inequality and a Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest (read: the most resourceful in terms of symbolic and material wealth). This obfuscated view of education as a technical and neutral enterprise, is captured in the post-PT Brazilian governments' (the PT, or Workers' Party in English, is the party of which Freire was a founding member) mantra of 'Escola sem Partido', that is School without Party. Non-neutrality was misrepresented by the interim and Bolsonaro governments in Brazil as signifying indoctrination, a far cry from what Freire espoused as indicated earlier, that very same Freire whom these governments sought to deny

the well-earned title, bestowed during the Lula and Rousseff PT governments, of Patron of Brazilian Education.

This posturing of neutrality in education or in anything else for that matter serves to extricate, at the level of dominant discourse, the processes involved from consideration of the organising political and social structures that condition them. It negates the struggle for an education that renders students and teachers critical agents in a quest for the reconfiguration of the power structure itself, a renewal of the democratic process which, like education, is an ever unfinished process.

All this is intended to avoid education and democracy as being regarded as a form of reification, in Feuerbach's and Marx's sense of the terms. An engaged critical pedagogy entails a sustained commitment to condition the kind of subjectivities produced under specific democratic social relations. Fundamental is an understanding that the choice of content is a political choice as is the choice of pedagogical relations fostered. Questions of citizenship emerge from these processes of understanding. At stake is an understanding of the relationship between the manner in which one learns, what one knows, and the way one acts responsibly and conscientiously as a citizen in the larger polis.

Contrary to encouraging scriptural 'party' readings, the staple of several critiques of a politically engaged education elsewhere and captured in the phrase 'escola sem partido' in Brazil, Freire underscores the unfinished nature of human beings which entails a continuous act of enquiry to intervene in history to contribute towards shaping it as active agents, as subjects rather than objects of the historical process. Neutrality encourages indifferent responses, creating passive bystanders, standing aloof as objects of history.

Unmasking power to be able to speak truth to it, and to intervene to change the capillary relations that constitute it has always been the staple of Paulo Freire's

pedagogy of hope. At the same time, power is defined not only through dominative forms but also through possibilities for social reconstruction of alternative social forms and human capacities (Corrigan, 1990). In his fostering of a radical hope, Freire makes clear that the present does not set the limits of what is possible. Nothing is set in stone, immutable - all can be changed. This applies to the construction of a world, in Freire's words, "meno feio, meno malvado, meno desumano" (less ugly, less mean, less inhuman). He, to the contrary, projects an image of human agents subject to bursts of creative energy to change things rather than reproduce them. They would be inspired by a language of critique (not to be confused with mere criticism) which comprises denunciation but also hope and possibility. It is a language which calls for a moral and political practice predicated on collectivity and social responsibility.

It is crucial to acknowledge that Freire understood education in the widest terms and in doing so argued strongly that education was central to politics itself. Freire viewed education in its broadest contexts, comprising a wide range of sites ranging from formal education institutions to settings of non-formal education, in tents or in the shade of a mango tree. Also included are the mass media, including digitally mediated ones. He argued for an education with praxis at its core. None of these are immune to neoliberal encroachments; neither are they incapable of staving them off.

As far as communicative processes are concerned, he avoided turgid and obscure language which appealed to coterie of literati but stood aloof from the daily preoccupations of people outside them. He insisted on a language which, though poetic at times, was simple without being simplistic, as he once confided to my colleague and friend Peter McLaren. Theory was not meant to be reified nor abstract, at the furthest remove from the struggles of everyday-life. Abstraction was, in the words of Derek Sayer, a form of violence (Sayer, 1987). The

language of Freire, as demonstrated in his own writing, notably *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, had to be steeped in the dialectics of struggle, a language reflecting a mode of thinking not linear in shape but moving between elements that seem detached from one another, but which are connected by their interdependent relations. This goes to show that Freire was against the sort of anti-intellectualism found in populist settings appearing to promote democratic posturing where any recourse to theory, on occasions even to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed's* opening chapters, is dismissed as “oppressive”. For Freire and others, good theory is a codification of the experiences reflected upon in a process of praxis (not to be confused with practice, the drift of everyday life). Praxis means reflection upon action which includes recourse to theory which is possibly revised in light of this reflection – all this with the purpose of transformative action.

Freire saw critical educators including formalised teachers as transformative and public intellectuals. Like Gramsci, he saw them as proposing particular views of the world while addressing important social problems. They were not coddling aunts nor the type of professionals who would stay away from struggles (Freire, 1998) being led to believe that they were part of a ‘noble and dignified’ profession. They were neither simple machine operators for the transmission of prepackaged material, deskilled technicians dispensing ‘teacher proof’ material. To the contrary, these views horrified Freire and he inveighed vehemently against such representations intended to deny teachers agency, critical agency in their immediate educational surroundings: the classroom, popular education circles, higher education institutions and the wider settings of what I call ‘public pedagogy’.

Teachers can be important intellectuals in a democratic public sphere. Not only can they provide the architectural scaffolding upon which agency is constructed, the present interpreted, and the future imagined, but they also can be the front-line intellectuals

who take seriously the notion that there is no democracy without informed citizens. Freire wrote his later works at a time when the world was well under the sway of a Neoliberal politics with the emphasis placed on excessive individualism and atomised individuals at that, governed by simple self-interest and by the ideology of *responsibilisation* (one is responsible solely to and for oneself). As is well known, this ideology prompted some (e.g. Margaret Thatcher) to even question the existence of society.

Freire rejected a regressive neoliberal individualization which focused exclusively on the self, rendering all problems a matter of individual responsibility while denying if not erasing the social and political in favor of the therapeutic. In this discourse, the only normative anchor is the individual. Ignored here are those structural, economic, and political conditions that drive massive inequality in wealth and power, ecological devastation, systemic racism, and class warfare. Freire, for his part, expressed grave concerns about the erosion of community life. As Education Secretary in São Paulo, he sought to safeguard vestiges of a welfare state rendering those who joined his municipal government's project of the 'popular public' schools as responsive to communal needs. They were intended as schools that comprised a learning community within and outside their precincts. Freire saw neoliberalism as a means of de-politicization and unbridled privatisation and consumerism.

Failure was apportioned to the individual and educational policies surrounding such mantras as lifelong learning made initial and continuing education an individual responsibility rather than a social one. The same applies to health, pensions and what were once social safeguards born of struggles between organised labour, other social organisations/movements and capital. Freire stressed that persons are social and ecological beings who do not exist as apart from the rest of nature and the entire

universe in which they are rooted. They are located in an ensemble of relations, intra-human and human-earth relations.

In *Pedagogy of Hope*, he broadens the nature of relations in which people exist as relational beings. His later writings and those of the persons he inspired tackle social class oppression intertwined with one or more of misogyny, racism, climate change, refugees, and a host of other 'species beings' considered disposable and subjected to constant forms of 'immiseration', to use Marx's term. In *Pedagogy of Hope*, he revisits many of the shortcomings at work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and engages in a dialectical analysis of many of the substantial and unwarranted criticisms of the latter work.

Freire never wavered from his commitment to class politics but did so without eclipsing or giving short shrift to gender and racial politics, even thanking feminists for flagging the *machista* discourse in his early work. He subsequently sought to render his later views more socially inclusive, even deliberately avoiding totalizing language. From the more totalizing language of 'becoming more fully human', as if there is an essentialist discourse of what it means to be human, he reverts to the notion of people becoming less incoherent and incomplete, recognizing a politics of biodiversity which makes us aware of our contradictions. In *Pedagogy of Hope* and later works, he revises and renders more nuanced and more inclusive his conceptual framework, oppression being represented as multifaceted where the earlier stricture of 'Internalizing the image of the oppressor', again a multifaceted oppressor, is rendered all pervasive, more capillary and therefore more diffuse than in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, written in Chile in 1968 and first published in English in 1970. Conceptually speaking, much water has flowed under the bridge since then.

As a scholar and public intellectual, Freire provided work that is accessible and rigorous. His style becomes

clearer in his later work, a huge portion of which consisted of dialogues with kindred spirits such as Ira Shor, Antonio Faundez, Myles Horton, Jonathan Kozol, and Donaldo Macedo. I am confining myself here to dialogues published in so called 'talking books' in English. There are other published dialogues which have not been translated into English such as the ones involving Frei Betto and Ricardo Kotscho and also Sergio Guimaraes and Moacir Gadotti. bell hooks claims to have wanted to do such a book with Freire although this never came to pass. This would have taken his engagement with issues of gender, class and race further, although Donaldo Macedo did broach such topics with him in single conversations in journals such as the *Harvard Education Review*. They covered a large number of areas perhaps, at times, skimming over the surface, though I would argue that some did stretch Freire to deal with issues having a broader international resonance, notably North American resonance. Freire's age and enthusiastic return to his homeland provided a sense of urgency reflecting the sense of someone who wants to do so much while cognizant of the little time available in which to do it. Self-reflection is consistently a hallmark of Freire's body of work. And a sense of Hope, a radical sense of Hope, persists throughout the whole oeuvre.

Hope lays at the heart of what Freire terms (Freire, 1994) "an adventure in unveiling", reflecting the readiness to reinvigorate many for the task of continuing the ongoing struggle for what I would term a 'substantive democracy'. An educated hope was key to keep people galvanized to continue striving for change, preventing them from lapsing into despair and to channeling their anger into dead ends or worse into bouts of unproductive cynicism. His urge was for people to keep the dream of a better world alive, the dream which is rooted in that which is possible but is 'not yet' and which lends coherence to their critiques and actions having a transformative dimension. It had to be anchored in both a historical consciousness and the

concrete realities of the time. Stanley Aronowitz recognizes this in Freire, contending that “Freire's belief in the emancipation of men and women is rooted in an "existential" commitment to an ethical ideal rather than to historical inevitability.” (Aronowitz, 1998: 7-8)

Hope is not simply a matter of enlivening the spirits and engaging the imagination, important though these are, but also the catalyst for acting coherently in a manner that foregrounds questions regarding power and organization at different levels including the socio-economic and cultural levels. This becomes more urgent at a time when the new forms of fascism and authoritarianism are on the rise conjuring images of the past that continue to haunt us. Pier Paolo Pasolini saw the ghost of a new fascism throughout post-World War II Italy with the US-CIA shackles placed on its purportedly democratic process which prevented one large popular party from sharing in the national government. As I have argued, his chosen term would well suit much of the world's political climate today with clear attempts at derailing representative democratic processes via legal loopholes to condition who gets to govern Freire's Brazil and Paraguay via white coups - ‘Golpe Branco’. More recently we had the crass scenes of thuggery making its presence felt through Trump-hordes marching towards and ransacking the Capitol in light of the latest US Presidential results – shades of the 1922 ‘stage-managed’ Fascist ‘March on Rome’. These moments which shake the foundations of representative bourgeois democracy, despite its obvious limitations, lend credence to John Dewey's statement that “Democracy has to be born anew every generation, and education is its midwife.” (Dewey, 1993:122) It is a sense of hope that must have education as its resting piece, therefore what I keep calling an educated hope. It is a social dispositif that activates social resistance, mobilization and a collective effort. It is predicated on critical consciousness, analyses and an understanding of power and its apparatuses, power once

again conceived in both its dominative and reactionary and its propositional and transformative sense. There is power also in resistance and collective counter-action.

Freire counters the neoliberal sense of individual, consumer-oriented false sense of freedom with a sense of liberation carried out not on one's own but in concert and solidarity with others, a point that takes us back to his groundbreaking *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2018). It is the hope that inspires us to repudiate TINA (there is no alternative). It spurs us onto combat the smothering and inertia-inducing state of what, once again, the late Mark Fisher (2009: 6) called capitalist realism, "a monstrous, infinitely plastic entity, capable of metabolizing and absorbing anything with which it comes into contact." (p. 6) This is symptomatic of what he calls 'reflexive impotence' (Fisher, 2009: 21).

Freire's pedagogical politics of educated hope enable critical agents to scour the liminal spaces available to overcome capitalism's "horizons of the thinkable," which suppresses what seems unthinkable. (Fisher, 2009: 9) Hope uncovers hitherto untilled liminal spaces of what can or might be possible, wary of course of what is yet not possible as people make change but not "under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given, and transmitted from the past." (Marx and Engels, 1978: 595), Marx warned in the *18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*. Hope "contains the spark that reaches out beyond the surrounding emptiness," and traverses established and mind-forged boundaries. (Bloch, in Rabinach, 1977:11) This urge to transcend limits and, in bell hooks phrase, 'talk back' helps consolidate civic culture and a healthy public sphere characterised by harmony in diversity.

Freire's embrace of a pedagogy of hope, finding its many homes in different sites of practice, was characterised by a repudiation of an idealist/abstract or vulgar utopianism far removed from the struggle over

power. As with Gramsci, he did not limit these struggles to the economic or strictly political (narrowly conceived) terrain but extended them to the cultural domain, the latter imbued with its own sense of agency and with cultural workers acting as agents of cultural transformation that impacts on the broader social life itself. Cultural forms and practices were seen not as mere epiphenomena, foliage emanating from the material economic bark beneath (adjusting E. Brontë's famous phrase), but as sources of change. There was revolutionary potential attributed to culture that reacts in a dialectical manner on the relations of economic production, a key Gramscian insight.

Freire regarded hope as being linked with the perennial quest for human dignity manifest in such uprisings as those in the Arab world at the start of the last decade. It also involves learning lessons and drawing inspiration from public memories and histories that indicate the limits and possibilities of situations calling for resistance and the struggle for change. Reading the world entails reading the histories and constructions of the world, alongside the word made flesh, in the latter case involving a critical media literacy, an important aspect of critical literacy, the kind of literacy to which Paulo Freire's political work attaches utmost importance.

This is all part and parcel of refusing to give up the dream of a just and equitable society, once again the imagining of a world governed by social justice and ecological sensitivity, a decolonizing world in which matters of critical literacy, education and pedagogy are mutually sustaining to help develop an authentic democracy in the true sense of the word. This would be a democracy for the multitudes and not for the few who bask in the sunlit uplands of Empire. In the fight for justice, economic equality and democracy itself, Paulo Freire speaks strongly to the importance of collective struggles and the need for broad-based social movements. Freire is instructive in showing us how to derive insights from the

past and commit ourselves to constructing, with others, a more just future, at a time when there is an urgent need to rescue that sense of healthy utopia or heterotopias from the iron cage of 'Capitalist dystopian realism'.

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LEARNING THROUGH COLLECTIVE ACTION AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATIONS IN PORTUGAL: DIALOGUES WITH PAULO FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT In this article, we analyse social mobilizations in Portugal as privileged spaces for collective learning. What is learned and how is it learned in the context of struggle? What makes each and everyone involved in a protest? What dilemmas and contradictions mark these processes? To what extent are these experiences related to Freire's pedagogy? In this sense, we established four learning categories: operational, strategic, convivial and political-ideological. The analysis of the dynamics experienced in these contexts derives from five core concepts in Paulo Freire: dialogue, conscientization, conflict, indignation and hope. Finally, we offer some clues about the relationship between dispositions, contexts and capitals.

RESUMO Neste artigo analisamos as mobilizações sociais em Portugal enquanto espaços privilegiados de aprendizagem coletiva. O que se aprende e como se aprende nos contextos de luta? O que faz cada um e cada uma envolver-se num protesto? Que dilemas e contradições marcam estes processos? Em que medida essas experiências se relacionam com a pedagogia freiriana? Nesse sentido, estabelecemos quatro categorias de aprendizagem: operacionais, estratégicas, conviviais e político-ideológicas. A análise das dinâmicas vividas nesses contextos é feita, também, a partir de cinco conceitos nucleares em Paulo

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Freire: o diálogo, a conscientização, o conflito, a indignação e a esperança. Por fim, deixamos algumas pistas sobre a relação entre disposições, contextos e capitais.

KEYWORDS Collective learning; social mobilizations; critical education; militant dispositions; Freire's pedagogy

“We lived in the streets, nobody was home at night”, “there was this sense of ‘urgency’, we thought that “we could change the world”, not least because “everything had yet to be done” (Gomes et al, 2005: 75)

This is the testimonial of a participant in the literacy campaigns during the PREC –Revolutionary Process in Progress, which followed the 25 April 1974 revolution in Portugal and lasted about one and a half years. During what was dubbed the “golden age” of adult education and training, educational, social and cultural experiences that challenged employer, state and military powers sprang up throughout the country, bringing about “new types of social relations and new forms of social organisation and exercise of power”, becoming an “immense and dynamic collective learning process”, through participation in “debates and decision-making, in struggles, in the autonomous management of villages, factories or companies” (Canário, 2006: 211-213). This powerful popular movement represented an “explosion of autonomy”, the background of which was “arduously and persistently structured and preserved by the autonomous activity of the labour movement from the 19th century to 1974.” The “political work of the resistance was strongly cultural” during the Fascist period and was carried out through a dense network of recreational and cultural associations, the construction of various forms of mutualism, the creation of the trade union movement, but

also through more informal approaches, such as the collective reading of newspapers or study circles, even in adverse contexts such as political prisons (Canário, 2007: 19-21).

With the newly found freedom and restoration of democracy in April 1974, the educational project continued working towards the construction of a socialist society. The motto of the literacy campaigns – “conscientise, organise, mobilise” (Melo and Benavente, 1978: 37) – truly represents the driving force of those processes. Learning took place through political participation in different venues and forms – associations, cooperatives, public libraries, theatre companies, occupied factories – blurring the boundaries between what was and what was not educational, between physical and intellectual work, between formal and informal education, between educator and learner, at a time when “Paulo Freire’s ideas were a norm and not an alternative.” (Stoer and Dale, 1999: 68). To cite but one example, the assessment of adult literacy, laid down in Implementing Order (*Portaria*) 419 of 13 July 1976, referred to the ability to “read and understand newspaper articles, newsletters and notices”, “completing applications” or “writing neighbourhood committees’ announcements” (Melo and Benavente, 1978:117-118). When reflecting on this period, Pintassilgo highlights that it was “quite a laboratory of pedagogical experiments”, regretting that the “simple recalling” of some of those experiments is enough to “sense the great divide that separates us from those times of intense social mobilisation and strong belief in the power of education” (2015: 15-18).

In fact, almost fifty years later, there is not much left other than nostalgic memories of those times of defiance and collective subversion. Protests and social movements in Portugal – whether spontaneous or organised – have since then been discreet, if not barely existing, with very few exceptions, such as that of the student struggle in the

mid-1980s or, more recently, during the economic crisis and Troika intervention between 2011 and 2013. Along the same lines, the field of popular adult education has also been affected by the technocratic drift. While, traditionally, adult education has always “favoured associative, community and local dynamics, as well as devices for critical mobilisation and political and citizenship education” (Lima, 2006: 15), today it has called forth a “logic of certification production”, a “subordination of the concept of education to the concepts of training” and of an individualist and competitive “lifelong learning” (ibidem: 17-18).

In the year marking the centenary of the birth of Paulo Freire, one needs to take a fresh look at his legacy, in the context of contemporary movements and collective actions, based on the experience of a militant research carried out in Portugal during the period of austerity (Barbosa, 2016), but also based on the participation of both authors in political parties, unions or movements. What is learned and how is it learned in the contexts of struggles? Why do people take to the streets to protest? What dilemmas and contradictions mark these processes? To what extent are these experiments and learning related to Freire’s pedagogy?

1. Education and learning in collective action

The dimensions of associations, activist groups or social movements are plural, as are their forms of organisation, the objectives that drive them, and the degree and type of impact they can have in the context where they operate. Therefore, to refer to learning in associations or social movements tends to be misleading, in that we would always be referring to distinct and often divergent realities. Paulo Freire, in a rare essay where he clearly discusses the relation between education and social movements, calls all collectives where “knowledge and the

transformation of better living go hand in hand” the Popular Movement: “workers in the factory committee”, “slum dwellers in the residents’ association” or “neighbourhood women in the struggle for day-care” (Freire and Nogueira, 1989: 67). Gadotti also refers to the need to expand the concept of “social movement”, as a large part of the population is “organised informally” into clubs or associations (Gadotti, 2008).

When we speak of “education in the collective action” our intention is to highlight the type of learning experienced by adults, as a result of their participation in collective organisations and of an ongoing political action towards social transformation. Some of the important assumptions include: a broad concept of education, setting out the different processes and spaces where it takes place; a focus on the participation, experience and collective dimension of learning; and a perspective of critical and emancipatory education, resulting from the firm belief in its transforming role.

Although this is still an underexplored field - in general, social movement scholars rarely address the educational dimension and, on the other hand, adult education scholars scarcely focus on social movements - there is some work to be noted, showing signs of growing interest. Griff Foley (1999; 2004), for instance, studies the learning that occurs during the struggle against oppression in social and collective actions, for almost two decades. Gohn, in turn, refers to the processes of self-learning and learning resulting from the experience in social and collective processes, setting them within the field of non-formal education and, more specifically, in social movements, with particular emphasis on the “pedagogical process of participation” (Gohn, 2006:37). For Canário, acknowledging non-formal educational processes – which is still “undervalued and little known or recognised” – is associated with the “primary assumption of adult education” that “people learn with and through

experience”, and that this experiential heritage is the “most important resource for the realisation of new learning” (Canário, 2006: 195-198).

This presupposes breaking away from the technicalities and supposed neutrality of the educational task. For Mayo, the term “participation” (as with many others) was appropriated by capitalism and turned into a cliché in adult education. More than preaching it indefinitely, it is necessary to “recognise the political nature of all educational interventions” (Mayo, 1999: 24). Foley even considers that education and learning in social movements cannot be disconnected from “political economy, micro-politics, ideologies and discourses” (Foley, 1999: 6) and that “at the heart of an emancipatory adult theory” should be a “critique of capitalism” (ibidem: 138).

Holst also defends that it is necessary to “rejuvenate the Marxist theory on adult education”, arguing that while Paulo Freire’s idea that “education is politics” was widely assimilated and taken into the social movements in the 1970s, today this is very much a discussion topic because the practice of social movements is taken as being political rather than educational, due to the fact that the tendency is to downplay informal education and that the increasing professionalisation of this field has discarded its historical roots from within the social movements (Holst, 2002: 77-81).

From a Marxist perspective, emancipation has always been tied with struggles and social movements, with a “historical, economic and political process” around a political project of radical social transformation (Afonso, 2001). Thus, “education cannot in itself be considered as emancipatory without reference to a broader project” (ibidem: 229). According to the author, the “relation of education with emancipation has been thought out and re-updated” in the “action and reflection of social movements”, in the “experiences that carry within them new emancipatory possibilities” (ibidem: 238). Gohn adds

that the nature of this learning and participation, whether “emancipatory or integrating”, will “depend on the quality of relations and interactions that have been developed” and “on the political project of the groups in action” (2006: 44).

But what are these experiences and how can they be emancipatory? What actual relation could there be between education and participation in mobilisations or social movements? These are the considerations that will be addressed hereafter, in a discussion around the tension between “integration and emancipation”.²

According to Foley, much of the discussion about what is learned in social actions or movements is “abstract and exhortatory” (1999: 138). The author stresses the importance of recognising the “complex, ambiguous and contradictory nature” of these movements and struggles and, as such, of the learning taking place within them, which is shaped by intrapersonal, interpersonal and social factors. O’ Sullivan (1999), for example, identifies three fundamental educational moments: one relating to *critique* (of systems, realities, politics, etc); another of *resistance* (in the form of opposition or reorganisation); and a third one of *creation* (of new strategies, interactions, etc). Gohn, in turn, describes multiple types of more or less evident learning that unfolds at various levels: practical, theoretical, instrumental technical, political, cultural, linguistic, economic, symbolic, social, cognitive, reflective and ethical. Learning ranges from the ability to speak in public, to financial management, knowledge about rights

² This idea is somewhat similar to Boaventura Sousa-Santos’s proposition, for whom the project of modernity was defined, in its essence, by a balance between regulation and emancipation, which was never achieved, with the scales tipping in favour of excess regulation. In this time of transition in which we live, the possibility of there being a change in paradigm opens up with the “principle of community” and “aesthetic-expressive rationality”. The desired solution today is not, therefore, a new balance between regulation and emancipation, but rather a dynamic imbalance that swings towards emancipation.

and the laws that govern them, or the construction of a common language and grammar (2011: 352-353).

The greatest difficulty – especially for the activists involved – is to recognise it as such. The task of critical education is, therefore, to create spaces for consciousness-raising processes regarding this informal learning, to reflect thereon and develop action strategies accordingly (Steinklammer, 2012: 33). Choudry and Kapoor (2013) highlight the “many powerful critiques and understandings of dominant ideologies and power structures, visions of social change and the politics of domination and resistance” which emerge as “knowledge-production dimensions of movement activism”, even if they are often invisible or ignored (2013: 1-2). Laurence Cox is adamant: social movements produce significant forms of knowledge and are sources of epistemological innovation. The question is to understand how sociology can dialogue with and be inspired by them, not least in view of the promotion of a public sociology (Cox, 2014).

The Popular University of Social Movements (UPMS) seems to be an example of an initiative that shares these concerns, bringing together knowledge and practices of diverse origins. The UPMS emerged from the World Social Forum and aims to promote the “self-education” of activists who, through “reflective understanding of its practice”, can “increase their efficacy and awareness”. As for committed researchers, they see the “distance between the analytical and theoretical frameworks” and the reality they want to understand and transform reduced (Santos, 2006: 156-157). The idea behind this is to carry out a “dialogical and political” work whose core concept is the “ecology of knowledge”: “contextualised, situated and useful knowledge at the service of change-inducing practices”, which can only “flourish in environments as close as possible to such practices and in such a way that the protagonists of social action are recognised as

protagonists of the creation of knowledge.” (Santos, 2004: 86; Santos, 2006: 155)

We have established four categories of learning from the analysis of the dynamics and interactions in an activist context (Barbosa, 2016), but also from previous and subsequent experiences of participation in informal collectives, movements or political parties:

Operational: the learning is directly related to the implementation of practices and to their more operational aspects. This includes writing a press release or minutes, using social networks and other forms of communication and dissemination, filling in forms, designing projects, managing accounts and funding.

Strategic: the learning is related to the decisions on how to do it, choosing which methodologies to use, target-groups, spaces, partnerships, and organisational methods. Strategies are not usually learned *a priori*, but rather based on the results obtained and, as such, on the continuous reflection of the group, i.e., on its work and rework.

Convivial³: the learning that results from intra and interpersonal experiences that take place in a collective. Some are more visible, like leading a meeting, managing leaderships, moderating a debate, speaking in public, dealing with conflicts; other are more difficult to perceive, such as the construction of group identity, the awareness of the collective or the capacity to access other realities.

Political-ideological: the learning that takes place at the level of the collective’s macro decisions. How do we understand the world? What systems are we fighting against? What are our priorities? Who are our allies? Some of the examples of this type of learning include knowledge of the laws and regulations, claims of rights, construction

³ The term “convivial” used herein is inspired by the work of Ivan Illich in the field of education, in particular “Deschooling Society” and “Conviviality”.

of common values, and analysis and deconstruction of dominant discourses.

Learning may be individual (filling in a form) or collective (devising strategies), may take place at macro (taking a political position) or micro levels (making an announcement), and usually occurs in a transverse, interpenetrating manner. Some examples observed in the context under analysis: the fact that they consider themselves as a feminist collective led their supporters to obtain information about the legal framework or statistics concerning gender violence; led to the development of an inclusive language not only in their interactions, but also in the outside communication; resulted in attention being paid to the participation of women in the debates they organised or even in the inclusion of a babysitting service in their initiatives, so that no woman was left out.

2. Collective action and Paulo Freire's pedagogy

Let us look at a popular assembly filled with people discussing the right to housing, at an informal collective that organises a protest against sexual harassment, and at an association preparing for yet another anti-racism campaign. What do all these spaces have in common? What binds these activists together? Why do they join these causes for which there is not always an outward return? Which elements feed the disposition for militancy and the vibrancy of the moment? Based on Paulo Freire's pedagogy, we will analyse the essence of the collective action contexts and list some of their fundamental concepts: *dialogue*, *conscientisation*, *conflict*, *indignation* and *hope*. Within these concepts, many other words are part of Freire's vocabulary (boldness, love, praxis, emancipation, autonomy, liberty) and intersect and complement each other, forming a dense and complex body.

Dialogue: communication and interaction with the other is an unequivocal condition of collective action: sharing experiences with comrades, listening attentively to the speech of a leader, dealing with potential allies, and opposing ideas of antagonist groups, take centre stage within these spaces. For Augusto Boal, playwright and the driving force behind the Theatre of the Oppressed, dialogue is the antithesis of oppression. When “only one of the interlocutors has the right to speak: one sex, one class, one race, one country”, “the others are reduced to silence, to obedience. (...). And this is the Paulo-Freirian concept of oppression: the dialogue turns into a monologue.” (Boal, 2009:19). More than being an exchange of words between individuals or social groups, dialogue appears as a way of breaking the “culture of silence” and also as a source of critical learning. “No man (*sic*) fights against forces they do not understand, whose importance they cannot measure, whose forms and shapes they do not understand” (Freire, 1979: 22). Reality is analysed and problematised in the dialogical process and this is also where the oppressed become aware of their oppression, freeing themselves from alienation. However, this awareness is not yet conscientization, as the latter is the “critical development of awareness” (*ibidem*: 15).

Conscientization: in political participation, having refined knowledge of the oppressive systems or of the various forms of inequality or injustice is not enough; it presupposes a will to transform them. Conscientization implies a political commitment, a “critical insertion in history. It implies that men (*sic*) take the role of creators of the world; recreators of the world”. (Freire, 1979: 15). Often, the activist impulse stems from a diffuse desire to be part of a certain cause, but this desire to be a part of the collective quickly provides a setting for the development of critical and collective positions among peers and in the face of challenges being posed. It is not

uncommon for that experience to generate multi-involvement dynamics (Sawicki and Siméant, 2011). The district nuclei of the protest movement under the slogan “Que se lixe a Troika” (To hell with the Troika) (2011-2013) or the recent social mobilisations against gentrification in Porto are a clear example of this, in that it brought together feminists, anti-racists and ecologists under common and intersectional claims. The “pedagogy of questioning” (Freire, 2002) is the starting point for deconstructing myths, ideologies or dominant discourses, for reformulating ideas and appropriating concepts. As in our research (Barbosa, 2016), Themelis (2017) highlights the educational potential of participating in social mobilisations against austerity in Greece to decode the meaning of “crisis”, “debt” or “outside” and to generate critical interpretations about them. “To read the world” (Freire, 2001) is, thus, to “write” or “rewrite” the world, i.e., to transform. Conscientization is not the “starting point of”, but a “product of”: “I do not become aware in order to fight. By fighting, I become aware”. The deepening of this awareness is “generated in praxis”, in the action and reflection on the practice of struggle, in a “dynamic cycle” (Gadotti, Freire and Guimarães, 1989: 87).

Conflict: the processes of dialogue and conscientization within social mobilisations imply moments of horizontality and consensus, but especially relations of force and contradictions. Dilemmas about what constitutes paid or voluntary tasks, about the difficult balance between informality and institutionalisation, about identity and diversity, or about autonomy and heteronomy are a source of permanent tension, but also of discovery (Barbosa, 2016). For many authors, conflict is one of the most important aspects of collective learning (Gadotti and Freire, 1995; English and Mayo, 2012: 21; Kilgore, 1999: 199) “Educating presupposes a transformation, and there is no kind of

peaceful transformation” (Gadotti, 1995:29). “Pedagogy of conflict” does not seek to hide the conflict, but rather to face it, to uncover and use it as a source of learning, because it is through conflict that the dialectic aspects of reality, the contradictions and the spaces of resistance become evident. This restless practice is at the same time “militant and loving”, founded on Marx’s dialectics and is essentially “critical and revolutionary” (idem, 2003: 58-59). This perspective calls for pedagogy of provocation and an “epistemology of controversy” that does not obscure, but rather considers objection and conflict as essential elements of analysis (Correia, 1998). In fact, it is by disagreeing that one can indeed speak of democracy (Ranci re, 1996).

Indignation: this is another driver of collective action that maintains the cohesion of a group in the face of a certain cause. Daniel Bensaid, one of the protagonists of May ‘68, wrote: “Indignation is a beginning. A way to stand up and start moving. First comes indignation, then rebellion, then we shall see. You feel passionately indignant even before you understand the reasons for this passion. Principles must be established before interests and opportunities are calculated” (Bensaid, 2008:97). This leads to omissions in the analysis of social movements. The sense of injustice, the notion of inequalities and the will to change the order of things do not only occur on a rational level; it implies and articulates body and emotion dialectically. Collective action involves moments of tension and anxiety, expectation and joy. *Pedagogy of Indignation* (2000) – the last book by Freire, whose title was chosen posthumously by his long-standing partner, Nita – describes precisely the transformative potential that occurs from the combination of anger and affection. In this sense, what goes on behind the scenes of a collective is just as important, if not more, than what transpires to the

media: moments of conviviality, camaraderie, rituals and parties.

Hope: as opposed to resignation and fatalism, hope appears as a beacon for any social and political mobilisation. It would be unthinkable for a collective to meet through the night, sacrificing their free time to define strategies of struggle, take risks in clashes with the police or the State if they did not think it was worth it. Along with this belief in the power of their action is the boldness which Paulo Freire also referred to, which is contrary to fear, is subversive, relies on the liberty to imagine other possibilities, and is focused not only on resisting, but also on creating alternatives (Themelis, 2017). This hope does not mean only a subjective feeling that animates a collective. Objectively, it is necessary to reach objectives, small achievements, otherwise the movement loses morale. During the period of crisis and austerity (2011-2014), thousands of people took to the streets in Portugal saying a clear “no” to the measures imposed by the government and the Troika. However, the intransigence on the part of the latter and the subsequent feeling of failure caused the movements to disintegrate. Many other collectives have lost strength because they felt they were coming up against stumbling blocks. How many supporters have not become discouraged and given up because they felt there was nothing left to do? It is, therefore, a “untested feasibility” (Freire, 1992, 2007)⁴ that brings together the “warm stream” and the “cold stream” (Bloch, 2005) and transforms utopian thought into concrete, continued and achievable actions, situated

⁴ Paulo Freire addresses the utopian concept as a “untested feasibility” (inédito viável) in his books *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Pedagogy of Hope*, published 24 years apart in their English versions though the first one was completed in Portuguese 1968, while he was in exile in Chile, and the second one, also in Portuguese in Brazil, in the 1980s.

between denunciation and announcement (Freire, 2000: 37).

3. Final notes on the relation between dispositions, contexts and capital

Through this text, and based on the Portuguese reality, we have sought to analyse the conditions that enable critical learning in collectives aspiring to be social movements. One message strikes us as particularly important: departing from Pierre Bourdieu's proposal (1997), expanded by Bernard Lahire (1998), such learning results from the (mis)matches and contradictions between dispositions (to learn, to fight, etc.), contexts (plural) and capital. As structured and systematic forms of action, dispositions refer to socialisation processes. These are far from being limited to the family and origin, but rather expand along a path of ongoing acquisition, in which new and old learning intersect, dialogue, negotiate and modify each other, giving rise to new ways of interpreting the world, its relations and conflicts. We cannot, therefore, hold up the socialization thread in a moment and space, even though we admit the existence of contexts that also provide opportunities for new practices to emerge. A disposition (coherent, durable and systematic way of thinking, acting and feeling) [*has*] as a certain origin and trajectory, along which it gains or loses strength, depending on whether or not it is activated and mobilised. We can learn to struggle, but also to unlearn and give up ... We cannot simply presuppose that a certain disposition is an omnipresent and all-encompassing entity that automatically adapts individuals to situations (or the present to the past).

The key question is, however, how to keep (critical, reflective, fighting) dispositions alive in "weak" or "intermittent" contexts, such as those that result from hastiness (doing more and more things at the same time

and in different social roles and spheres of life), precariousness and uncertainty. In short, the challenge is to understand the conditions under which one can accumulate “militant capital”, as a wealth of political competences (knowledge and know-how) outside the traditional institutionalised politics, while still establishing dialogues and connections with it. The analysis of the communication between repertoires (the collective, work, leisure, emotional life) is also worthy of note, as these bridges, translations and adaptations can either strengthen or weaken the activist dispositions.

Similarly, it is also important to question the effects of the new cultures of work (or of non-work ...) and their huge impact on the precariousness of the self (in cognitive, relational and emotional learning environments) or on hegemonic governmentality (the “sweet” internalisation of discipline and self-control – Foucault, 1987). Such processes and contexts produce new forms of subjectivation in line with the logics and perpetuation of the system (“the individual is fully responsible for himself”, “absolute master of his own course, successes and failures”, etc.), in a difficult conciliation between the “impulse to resist” and the “fantasy of autonomy” (Lloyd, 2011). How many times have we incorporated, without realising it, the values of flexible accumulation in the name of a libertarian and anti-bureaucratic tendency (the pressure of the “society of individuals”)?

Lastly, we draw the lines of what these dispositions may be, in the tense articulation between knowledge that is practice, and practice that is knowledge: openness to otherness and to dialogical learning (against sectarian tribalism); the awareness of the constraints and possibilities that shape us (and the art of transforming the awareness of coercion into the possibility of liberty); the politicisation through exercising conflict as an opening to a world of controversies, disputes and contradictions; indignation against conformist reasoning and anticipatory

obedience and, finally, hope, that overturns fatalistic logic and opens up the imagination to what is possible.

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REINVENTING FREIRE'S PRAXIS IN THE FIGHT FOR LIFE WITH DIGNITY: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PATHS FOR CRITICAL EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT The article reflects Freire's work to unveil ethical principles and theoretical and methodological paths for a transformative praxis in formal educational contexts and beyond them, connecting universities, social movements, and public schools.

RESUMO O artigo reflete sobre a obra de Freire com o intuito de apontar princípios éticos e caminhos teóricos e metodológicos da práxis transformadora em contextos educacionais formais e para além deles, conectando universidades, movimentos sociais e escolas públicas.

KEYWORDS Praxis; Critical Education; Social Justice; Universities; Social Movements

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed the obscene degree of inequality and injustice to which a large part of the black, mestizo, and indigenous population is subjected at capitalism's peripheries. These are entire populations, which are denied the primary conditions for a life with dignity, which are left at the margins of

the parameters of civilization enjoyed by the countries of the global North, such as sanitation, drinking water, housing, and food.

Contrastingly, the new pandemic normality separates those who have access to coronavirus vaccines and health care from those who die at home, with no vaccine prospects and no vacancies for hospital care.

Among educators, the new pandemic normality separates, on the one hand, those who take their academic courses in an online format and see in the technologies a world of possibilities to be taken advantage of. On the other hand, there are educators in peripheral schools and universities, where the internet and computers are privileges for a few.

Considering the brutality and dehumanization of capitalist normality, the text affirms that life with dignity is only possible if it is a reality for everyone. In other words, the attack on the dignity of life anywhere in the world is an attack on life worldwide.

Affirming the right to life with dignity has direct implications for critical educators' work around the world. They refuse to be dehumanized and subordinate humanity to the degradations of capitalism. In this sense, this text reflects Paulo Freire's work, revealing theoretical and methodological paths for a transformative praxis from formal educational contexts. The reflections presented here are based on the experience of ten years of praxis in public universities in Brazil, in projects and actions connecting universities, social movements, and public schools. We agree with Marx and Engels when they state that:

All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human

practice and in the comprehension of this practice (Marx & Engels, 1993, p.128, our translation).

In this sense, the purpose of this text is not to highlight specific cases or projects as models to be followed but to bring to the debate some of the concrete challenges faced in practical action and that are, therefore, the target of collective critical reflection.

The educator needs to be educated

One of Paulo Freire's best-known and perhaps one of the least understood statements is "Education does not transform the world. Education changes people. People change the world" (Freire, 1979, p.84, our translation).

The individualistic ideology woven into all dimensions of social life under the capitalist mode of production undermines the transformative power of this statement - and of Freire's entire work - by restricting the understanding of society as the sum of individuals who, each individually doing his or her part, would transform the world. The voice of Margaret Thatcher, who in the 1980s stated that "there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families," echoes in the minds of many educators.

About this, Freire states: "the taste that each person shows for individualism is the particular expression of a social consciousness of that person" (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p.37, our translation). In this sense, Freire reaffirms Marx by understanding that just as people form the environment, the environment also forms people. In other words, human consciousness is developed in the concrete context of social life.

And what does the individualist position stand for? It dichotomizes the individual and the social. Generally, this cannot be realized since it is not feasible to do so. Nevertheless, the individualist ideology ends up denying social interests or submitting social interests to individualist interests. (...) The individualist position acts against understanding the true role of human action. (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p.42, our translation)

The fragmentation of the social in isolated individuals, who do not recognize themselves as a class, is fundamental for maintaining the capitalist order. Freire reaffirms this in “Pedagogia do oprimido” (Pedagogy of the Oppressed - Freire, 2011). He points out that the strategy of dividing is manifested in all the actions of the dominant class to maintain oppression.

However, the analysis and critique of the ideology of individualism is a very complex process, precisely because this ideology puts in opposition, on one side, individuals, their subjectivity and their self-fulfillment needs, and, on the other side, class, history, and the need for social transformation. As long as these dimensions are considered self-excluding, understood as opposites, and not as being deeply interrelated, labor exploitation will continue to hinder both self-realization of individuals and the dignified life of the working class.

Once the capitalist mode of production establishes the phenomenon of private property as an absolute value, it reduces human life to mere commodity destined to propel wealth accumulation. One cannot forget that private property - of land, which is a crucial example - presupposes the existence of several individuals who are dispossessed of property, which therefore institutes a model of a society divided into classes.

The notion of individual, in this context, is shaped in parameters that ensure that the phenomenon of private property remains unquestioned. As Saviani (2003) explains, in slave and feudal societies, the relations of exploitation and subjugation were transparent, and slave owners justified their violent acts based on the law that ensured that enslaved human beings were not individuals but objects under their property.

In capitalist society, by contrast, the once enslaved subject's appearance of freedom becomes central. Indeed, the appearance is that of a society in which individuals are free to make choices and, from individual effort, accumulate wealth. Individualist ideology is tied to the myth of freedom, which in turn is only formal. The myth of freedom conceals the fact that the dynamics of capital reproduction imposes itself on human life. Capital assumes the appearance of an entity with a life of its own that does not stop at any ethical, legal, political, environmental, or cultural obstacle.

In this social context - and not outside or above it - we educators are formed and develop our understanding of the reality in which we are completely immersed. Many educators engaged in transforming society, who are inserted in an individualistic ideology, find it difficult to envision that their pedagogical action can go beyond the intention of "transforming people" who, in turn, would transform the world.

Paulo Freire tried to express when he stated that "Education does not transform the world" (Freire, 1979, p. 84) that the merely pedagogical path is not enough to change society, although it is extremely necessary. Transforming society requires a practical, active path beyond educational institutions.

Moreover, subjects cannot be divided between active and passive or between those who think and those who act. In other words, the dualism between educators and learners cannot be accepted because “educators need to be educated” (Marx & Engels, 1993).

In this sense, Freire follows up on the initial idea by stating that “education changes people. People change the world” because human beings - unlike animals - when acting on the environment, have the ability to reflect on the action and, therefore, to transform themselves in this interaction with the environment, in an ongoing process of self-transformation. As Freire states in another work,

In fact, the unfinishedness of being or its inconclusion is part of the vital experience. Where there is life, there is the unfinished. Nevertheless, only among women and men did this unfinished become conscious” (Freire, 1996, p. 12, our translation).

Changing circumstances and changing oneself must be a unitary process, carried out in revolutionary praxis (Marx & Engels, 1993). Therefore, there can never be educators who should not be educated.

The denial of both the dualism between educators and students and the conception of a subjects who think they are transforming without actually transforming themselves point to the need to engage in an incessant, continuous praxis (Sánchez-Vázquez, 2011). As Mayo (2020, p. 464) points out, “our life is constantly in need of reflective examination, with recourse to and the evaluation of theory and identification of its occlusions.”

In this sense, it is not possible to ignore the ethical aspect of praxis, which makes subjects engage in the permanent commitment to reflective practice, thus

maintaining a degree of coherence. Dussel (2012) emphasizes that there is an ethical duty in the critique of the capitalist system, which is expressed in an active stance before the world - a stance claimed by Marx when he states: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it” (Marx & Engels, 1993, p. 128, our translation).

In the era of globalized capitalism that relentlessly produces misery, hunger, and death, the critical educator must actively take a side, no matter in which country or context. Freire defends this perspective and states that it is not possible for a person living critically to exist without assuming the right and the duty to choose, to decide, to fight, to do politics.

And all this brings us back to the importance of the formative practice, and the ethical nature of this practice. And all of this brings us back to the radical nature of hope. I know that things can even get worse, but I also know that it is possible to intervene to make them better (Freire, 1996, p. 22, our translation).

Gramsci’s words also call for the urgency of taking a stand against capitalist barbarism:

I hate the indifferent. I believe that life means taking sides. One who is really alive, can be nothing if not citizen and partisan. Indifference is lethargy; it is parasitism; it is cowardice; it is not life. Therefore, I hate the indifferent. Indifference is the dead weight of history. Indifference plays an important role in history. It plays a passive role, but it does play a role. It is fatality; it is something that cannot be counted on; it is something that disrupts programmes, overturns the best made plans; it is that awful something that chokes intelligence (Gramsci, 2020, p. 33).

The affirmation of life is opposed to the “lethargy of the indifferent” (Gramsci, 2020). In the greater purpose of life affirmation, we argue that the praxis of the critical

educator should be guided by what Dussel (2012) calls the ethics of liberation, which calls for the ethical duty to transform the reality that causes victims.

If I do not assume responsibility, I do not cease to be responsible for the death of the other, who is my/our victim, and of whose victimization I am/we are an accomplice, at least for being a human being, destined to the communal responsibility of the shared vulnerability of all living people. I am/we are responsible for the other by the fact of being human, “sensitivity” open to the face of the other. Moreover, it is not responsibility for one’s own life; it is now responsibility for the denied life of the other (Dussel, 2012, p. 378, our translation).

Responsibility for human life in general achieves concreteness, not to remain a mere abstract conception, as we advance in critical analysis of the capitalist system and recognize its real, concrete victims, in whose faces we can recognize ourselves.

When we analyze history from the perspective of the oppressed - history of colonization, enslavement, pillage, rape, genocide, exploitation - what we see is “one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet” (Benjamin, 1940, p.6).

In the continuum of this history, the catastrophe deepens and continuously accumulates a greater number of victims. In the face of the single catastrophe, Benjamin states “that not even the dead will be safe from the enemy, if he is victorious. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious” (Benjamin, 1940, p.4).

For justice to exist, it is necessary to transform the established order (which produces victims, denies the right to live) so that the *impossibility of living* for these victims is converted into the *possibility of living* and

living better. The material demand of the ethics of liberation is not only the reproduction of life (especially the life of those who have historically been denied their right to live) but also the development of human life in history, that is, the humanization of all humans.

Here, better living is understood as a quest that can only be realized if it is collectively, universally including all living beings. This clamor is present in the perspective of the *buen vivir* (good living) of the indigenous peoples of Latin America and the Zapatistas' struggle when they claim and reaffirm *dignity*, the struggle for life with dignity. Holloway (1997) reflects on the revolutionary role of dignity in the Zapatista movement:

Dignity is an assault on the separation of morality and politics, and of the private and the public. Dignity cuts across those boundaries, asserts the unity of what has been sundered. The assertion of dignity is neither a moral nor a political claim: it is rather an attack on the separation of politics and morality that allows formally democratic regimes all over the world to co-exist with growing levels of poverty and social marginalisation. It is the 'here we are!' not just of the marginalised, but of the horror felt by all of us in the face of mass impoverishment and starvation. It is the 'here we are!' not just of the growing numbers shut away in prisons, hospitals and homes, but also of the shame and disgust of all of us who, by living, participate in the bricking up of people in those prisons, hospitals and homes (Holloway, 1997, p. 9, our translation).

When Holloway says that "Dignity cuts across those boundaries, asserts the unity of what has been sundered," we can understand, for example, that the attack on the lives of peasant communities in Africa (threatened by the predatory actions of mining companies from many countries including Britain, the US, Canada, China, or Brazil), or the attack on indigenous communities in Brazil (by invaders who

illegally exploit mining for export or international timber trade) represents an attack on the dignity of all humans.

From this perspective, the necessary and urgent social transformation will only be possible with the active and persistent stance of people who refuse to be dehumanized and to accept that humanity is subordinated to capitalist degradation.

The praxis of liberation demands action. However, it is not a final act but the constant one that relates subjects to each other with the common goal of transforming reality. In this constant and persistent act, it is fundamental to seek unity between the transformation of circumstances and self-transformation, in an attitude radically opposed to a naive utopianism that, separating these two dimensions, restricts the pedagogical act to the search for the self-transformation of subjects.

Therefore, not falling into naive utopianism requires knowing the reality to be transformed: the capitalist society that dehumanizes human beings to even more extreme levels and denies the life and dignity of entire populations in Africa, Latin America, and the peripheries of the central countries of capitalism.

Educational institutions and the challenge of the praxis

Since capitalism is a complex and contradictory totality, its understanding demands a theory that helps to unveil the connections between social phenomena, to go beyond the understanding made possible by the perception of appearances, and to achieve a more rigorous understanding of the facts observable in

everyday life (Freire & Macedo, 2011). As emphasized by Kosik:

If reality is a dialectical, structured whole, then concrete cognition of reality does not amount to systematically arraying facts with facts and findings with findings; rather, it is a process of concretization which proceeds from the whole to its parts and from the parts to the whole, from phenomena to the essence and from the essence to phenomena, from totality to contradictions and from contradictions to totality. It arrives at concreteness precisely in this spiral process of totalization in which all concepts move with respect to one another, and mutually illuminate one another (Kosik, 1976, p. 41, our translation).

In her analysis of the method in Marx, Miriam Limoeiro Cardoso (1990) points out that the “concrete” (which at first sight is recognized as concrete) only makes sense when the analysis discovers its determinations because social reality is a determined reality, the social facts are as they are for a reason. There are specific relations that engender them, a certain causality. “In this sense, they are determined and, thus, their explanation can only be achieved when one apprehends their determination” (Cardoso, 1990, p. 12, our translation).

[...] from the analysis of the relationship between parts and the whole, the concrete wealth of dialectical contradictions is increasingly developed within a unitary process, thus discovering the essence of the manifestations (Kofler, 2010, p. 61, our translation)

For Marx and other critical theorists, including Freire, the philosophy of praxis, enabling one to work through the contradictions of life, and hence think and act in a manner intended to stop reproducing them, constituted the means to interpret the world coherently with the ultimate goal of transforming it (Mayo, 2020). Thus, we can understand praxis as a permanent

dialectical process in which critical reflection guided by a radical theory (which goes to the root of contradictions) and action guided by the purpose of transforming society are closely interdependent. Therefore, it is not about reflection and action without a defined purpose. As Sanchez-Vasquez states

One does not know for the sake of knowing but rather in the service of an end. The activity of consciousness, which is inseparable from all true human activity, presents itself to us as the elaboration of ends and production of knowledge in intimate unity (Sanchez-Vasquez, 2011, p. 226, our translation).

Unlike other animals, humans are social beings who act consciously; therefore, they can plan, prospect, and transcend the present moment to envision new possibilities for the future, which Freire calls untested feasibility.

The untested feasibility is a word that entails the understanding of time and space [*untested feasibility entails an understanding of time and space*- journal editors]. Time and space in which we, in an impatiently patient manner, nurture the epistemological curiosity that ought to take us to philosophical and scientific knowledge, which in turn would materialize the ontological and historical hope through the transformative ingenuity [*potential* – journal editors] underlying human dreams (Freire A. M., 2002, p. 9).

Thus, transformative praxis needs the formulation (always collectively) of an ideal result or an end to achieve - as a starting point - and the watchful and permanent intention to adjust actions according to the stipulated end. “The end, in turn, is the expression of a certain attitude of the subject before reality. By the fact of tracing an end, I adopt a certain position before reality” (Sanchez-Vasquez, 2011, p. 224, our translation).

Just as the worker has in his head the design of what he will produce in his workshop, we, women and men, as such, workers or architects, physicians or engineers, physicists or teachers, also have in our heads, more or less, the design of the world in which we would like to live. This is the utopia or the dream that urges us to struggle. The dream of a better world is born from the bowels of its opposite (Freire, 2000, p. 85, our translation).

In line with Freire's thought, Sanchez-Vazquez points out important reflections on the process of praxis:

[...] The consciousness must be constantly active, peregrinating from the interior to the exterior, from the ideal to the material, with which throughout the practical process, the distance between the ideal model (the prefigured result) and the product (definitive and real result) deepens more and more. This introduces into the process, concerning the ideal model, a burden of uncertainty and indeterminacy. The inevitable loss of the original end in every truly creative (non-bureaucratized) practical process does not mean eliminating the determining role that the end has in such a process (Sanchez-Vasquez, 2011, p. 271, our translation).

As previously discussed, the concrete reality - both the focus and the context in which the praxis develops - is a complex and contradictory totality, which imposes a series of challenges to the praxis and confers a high degree of unpredictability and uncertainty about the outcome. For this reason, it requires high activity of consciousness (critical reflection on action) throughout the process.

Bringing the focus to educational institutions, the ethical duty of educators - discussed earlier - imposes the need to act concretely for the transformation of this society that places a large part of the global population (especially in the peripheries) facing "limit situations." It is a term used by Freire and is inspired by the work of Alvaro Vieira Pinto (Pinto, 1960). He states that

“limit-situations” are realities that put a concrete brake on “being more” to some subjects and, therefore, are obstacles to their liberation. Human beings find themselves in this reality under capitalism, which drives dehumanization to ever more extreme levels.

In the Brazilian context, the limit situations that threaten life and dignity have reached extremely critical levels. Some examples are the high number of deaths by COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021. In relation to this, the ultraconservative neoliberal right wing in power is investigated by a parliamentary commission for not taking the necessary measures to prevent the death of more than 600,000 Brazilians from COVID-19¹. In addition, the food insecurity situation that more than half of the population faces is dramatic. The ‘National Survey of Food Insecurity in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Brazil’, conducted in December 2020, indicates that 116.8 million Brazilians (Brazil’s population is circa 212 million) do not have complete and permanent access to food (PENSSAN network, 2021). Another sad example is the fact that between 2015 and 2019, at least one human rights activist was murdered every eight days².

Alvaro Vieira Pinto argues that the limit-situations are not “the insurmountable contour where possibilities end, but the real margin where all possibilities begin” (Pinto, 1960, p. 284, our translation). In the author’s perspective, the concept of “limit situation” provides the opening for historical transcendence and unveils an infinity of acts to be done. Those educators who are self-described as being

¹ Official data on COVID-19 in Brazil is available at <https://covid.saude.gov.br/>

² <https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/jamil-chade/2021/01/28/um-ativista-foi-morto-no-brasil-a-cada-oito-dias-revela-relatoria-da-onu.htm>

critical cannot stay passive while most of the population is having their dignity stolen.

When it comes to university institutions, there are countless challenges to be faced so that a transformative praxis can be established - which, by principle, should have as its first objective to break down the walls that separate university, school, and social movements.

In the Brazilian case, the scarcity of public resources for public universities and for social policies demands from educators a permanent state of struggle against privatization in defense of the public good and for better working conditions. On this point, the unions have enormous importance.

Another problem is the racist and elitist culture ingrained in universities. In the last decade, affirmative policies have made it possible for black students from low-income families to enter public universities. However, there is not enough budget to ensure that these students can finish their undergraduate courses. Thus, the share of the population of 24 to 34 years old that has a higher education degree remains low (21.3%), compared to neighboring countries such as Colombia (30%), Chile (33.7%), and Argentina (40%) (INEP, 2020). In addition, the illiteracy rate in Brazil remains at high levels so that, in 2019, Brazil has a population of 11 million illiterate people, which would be equivalent to the sum of the populations of Finland and Norway (IBGE, 2020).

Thus, it is not possible to disregard the fact that attending higher education is a privilege. Furthermore, the struggle for a more humane and egalitarian society must necessarily involve the struggle for the end of privileges. That is, the recognition that accessing higher education is a human right, just like housing,

food, healthcare, the right to cultural identity and territory, to a balanced environment, and so forth.

These are struggles undertaken by countless social movements in Brazil, such as the Landless Workers Movement (MST), the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB), the Homeless Workers' Movement (MTST), the indigenous movements, the quilombolas (maroon communities) movements, the movements of popular pre-college courses, the black movements, and many others. Historically, these movements develop organizational strategies, methodologies of struggle and resistance, political training and fulfill the important social task of keeping alive the memory of the struggles of oppressed peoples.

Several educators and groups of researchers have been facing the challenge of the praxis in Brazilian public universities in order to break the walls that separate the academic world and the social movements, having as a starting point the affirmation of the importance of social movements for the transformation of society.

This text intends not to highlight specific cases or projects as models to be followed because, besides being countless and diverse in their theoretical perspectives and methodological strategies, there is no model to be followed for the transformation of society. Instead, there is a long trajectory to be traveled collectively. Here, the intention is to debate some of the concrete challenges faced in practical action, which are, therefore, subject to critical reflection.

Methodological paths

As discussed earlier, praxis is not action without definite purposes. On the contrary, it requires collective formulation of an ideal result or an end to be reached - as a starting point - and an attitude of openness to the inevitable changes in planning. Therefore, it is not possible to establish in advance a methodology to be implemented. However, from work experience over ten years in Brazilian universities, it was possible to observe some common challenges faced in the process of praxis. Identifying the challenges makes it possible to unveil methodological paths - not a ready-to-use methodology - collectively traveled in a dialogical way.

Here, dialogue is understood in its radicality, as advocated by Paulo Freire (2011): to be dialogical is to experience dialogue, which can be understood as the loving encounter of men and women who, in interrelation with the concrete environment, act to transform the world and, in this process, humanize themselves and move towards the higher goal that is the humanization of all. Therefore, to be dialogical is not to invade, not to manipulate, not to sloganize.

The praxis involves paths that start from the urgency of social struggles and the concrete need to be mobilized to ensure the rights and integrity of individuals and social groups at risk of life. Freire, in his work 'Educação como prática da liberdade' (Education as the practice of freedom', 1979), states:

One of the great, if not the greatest, tragedies of modern man is that he is today dominated by the force of myths and commanded by organized publicity, ideological or otherwise. For this reason, he has been renouncing, without knowing it, his ability to decide. (...) Despite his disguise of initiative and optimism, modern man is crushed by a deep sense of

impotence that makes him stare, as if paralyzed, at the coming catastrophes (Freire, 1979, p. 50, our translation).

Renouncing the human capacity to make decisions and act guided by them is to disregard that only humans are transforming and creative beings who, in their permanent relations with reality, produce not only material goods, sensible things, objects but also social institutions, their ideas, their conceptions. That is, human beings make history.

It is man, as a real historical subject, who in the social process of production and reproduction creates the base and superstructure, forms social reality as a totality of social relations, institutions, and ideas; and in this creation of objective social reality creates at the same time himself, as a historical and social being, endowed with human senses and potentialities, and realizes the infinite process of the “humanization of man.” (KOSIK, 1976, p. 51, our translation)

As real historical subjects, professors and students produce and reproduce the university. In Brazil, the long tradition of struggle and strikes by professors, with student organizations’ support, ensures that public universities remain free, despite all attempts at privatization. In addition, the professors’ unions and student organizations have been of enormous importance in defense of democracy.

Referring to Marx, Freire (Freire & Macedo, 2011) points out that human beings make history based on the concrete conditions that a generation inherits from previous generations. From this concrete situation, a generation can continue history or have the possibility of making a revolutionary rupture. In this way, even if the concrete conditions are not favorable for revolutionary rupture in favor of the working class, the current generation must work to create the conditions for transformation to become possible in the future.

The importance of the understanding - discussed above - that “the educator needs to be educated” lies here. It is necessary to be permanently self-critical about the coherence of our actions concerning the end (purpose) established collectively. In this sense, it is necessary to keep in mind that the praxis carried out by educational institutions - which seek to break the barriers that put the university and the social movements at different poles - necessarily deal with the dimension of historical time, which forces us to recognize the limits of our action and, upon recognizing the limits, act collectively to overcome them. In this movement, it is understood that every effort to transform society is a collective effort, which has an extended temporality. We received this legacy from those who preceded us, and it will continue beyond with those who come after us. Therefore, in a patiently impatient way, we are urged to develop the capacity to understand that our temporality exceeds the limits of the temporality of our own lives and that we may not be present at the celebration of the victories we so long for.

The experience of praxis at the university has pointed out that, besides the challenges already mentioned, there is a permanent challenge related to the tension between the notion of temporality in which university curricula are structured and the other temporalities that condition concrete social life and, especially, the processes of the struggle for rights.

The notion of temporality in which university (and school) curricula are structured refers to chronological temporality, established in successive semesters (or school years) and anchored in plans and schedules. This temporality is of great importance. It helps

organize the action and establish spaces for the encounter between educators, students, and social movement leaders (for example, the space in a curricular discipline and a classroom).

Nevertheless, from the moment that praxis breaks the university's walls, subjects are faced with the tensions caused by this temporality: planning and schedules are essential, but a truly dialogical praxis needs to be fully open to transform itself into the concrete encounter between concrete subjects in concrete territories.

The notion of temporality required in concrete life (outside the university) is not linear and carries a high degree of unpredictability. It is a temporality that can be more or less extended because it is conditioned by the multiple dimensions of social life: culture, customs, climate, economy, political dynamics, intersubjective relations.

For example, if the process of praxis is developed in a region where the primary means of transportation is river navigation - as in some locations in the Amazon region - the dynamics of the waters imposes a particular temporality to actions. This temporality differs from the one in a city like Rio de Janeiro - where precarious transportation and long traffic jams make the time of locomotion unpredictable. Likewise, the praxis in certain conflict regions in Rio de Janeiro - where firefights between police and drug dealers are a daily reality - faces numerous unpredictable factors.

How to deal with the tensions between the university structure (low budget for research and extension activities, poor infrastructure, highly competitive and elitist culture), the temporality of this

structure (which can impose changes in the team members of a project and discontinuities, for example) and the temporality demanded by the concreteness of praxis that, in many cases, demands urgency?

In the poem *Like a River*, the Brazilian poet Thiago de Mello (Mello, 2006) captures the complexity of the difficult collective task of social transformation and the need for persistence.

LIKE A RIVER

To be able, like a river
To carry along
The tired boat
Unable to convey any hope;
Washing away and cleansing
The stains of suffering.

Covered by the silence of distance
To grow and deliver
The full Power of a song,
Exactly as the river deciphers
The secrets of the earth.

When it is time to decrease
The river saves its strength
To stay flowing.
Sometimes it disappears and for a while
Its waters will run deep in the earth.
But it learns always to return
In order to fulfill its trade: Love.

To accept, like a river,
Those sudden waves
Of foul Waters
That bring to surface
The hidden truth of the deep

Like a river, sum of streams,
To learn how to follow
And widen with others,
To finally meet
The ocean.

To change, always on the move,
Sustaining the same being,
Different yet in each moment:
Like a river.

(Mello, 2006)

Praxis requires permanent attention to the present time and space (in the physical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions), as well as permanent critical analysis of time and space in the historical dimension.

As Freire (2011) states, in the existence of human beings, the “here” is not only a physical space but also a historical space constructed by them and, therefore, possible to be transformed. The statement that men and women are subjects of history implies the idea of a subject that only exists in history. That is, individuals are a social product from a history that only exists as the history of their activity (Sanchez-Vasquez, 2011).

Therefore, it is imperative to keep alive the memory of the social struggles of the oppressed, their stories, their ideas, their projects, their insurgencies, and their resistance strategies. The history of the “defeated” - as opposed to the history of the winners, which becomes the “official” history - states that the battle was not over. Each new generation inherits the strength, wisdom, and tenacity to continue the struggle. Benjamin (1940) points out that:

[...] there is a secret protocol [Verabredung:also appointment] between the generations of the past and that of our own. For we have been expected upon this earth. For it has been given us to know, just like every generation before us, a weak messianic power, on which the past has a claim. This claim is not to be settled lightly (Benjamin, 1940, p. 3).

These struggles cross universities: the struggle of those who have been denied their right to education that occurs in the movements of popular pre-college courses, the struggle for housing and food that occurs in urban centers, in rural areas, and also inside universities, when students fight for housing near the campus and “bandeijão” (subsidized meals for students), the struggle of the various student movements that question the elitist, racist, and authoritarian university structure and that organize strikes, protests, and occupy the university demanding rights.

Is it possible to develop ways of teaching and learning that have as their starting point the strengthening of these struggles? From our point of view, such ways of teaching and learning involve the endless search for possibilities to break through the academic structure (even being inserted in it), experience the tensions and contradictions that emerge, and reflect critically about them, considering the new horizons that open up, expanding the collective vision of what is possible and tracing other paths.

For example, it is possible to elaborate a curricular discipline connected to practices with a social movement, engaging educators and students in the elaboration of, for example, leaflets to give visibility to the movement’s demands and technical documents as subsidies for the judicial disputes they may face. Furthermore, as part of the collective reflection, there are other actions such as systematizing the strategies adopted and the paths taken, the setbacks and conflicts; studying strategies and paths taken by other social movements and dialogue with them; mapping

the social actors involved in the judicial disputes and the underlying interests; trying to foresee probable scenarios if a certain attitude is taken by the collective or not; and so on.

As mentioned earlier, one does not know for the sake of knowing but rather in the service of an end (Sanchez-Vazquez, 2011). The countless limit situations faced by social movements unveil an endless number of acts to be done (Pinto, 1960). On this path, the elaboration of ends and the production of knowledge are intimately united.

Conclusions

The text aims to present a reflection on Paulo Freire's work in dialogue with other authors to unveil theoretical and methodological paths for the praxis developed from universities, bringing to the debate some of the concrete challenges often faced.

We argue that affirming the right to life with dignity is an ethical duty of educators that brings direct implications to their pedagogical work, requiring the breaking out of the "lethargy of the indifferent" (Gramsci, 2020) to follow a practical, active path beyond the educational institutions. On this path, changing circumstances and changing oneself is a unitary and continuous process carried out in praxis.

In this sense, "the educator needs to be educated" (Marx & Engels, 1993) in praxis, in the ceaseless struggles for rights, and, therefore, in the long collective path of human life in history, that is, the humanization of all humans.

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IN MEMORIAM BELL HOOKS (GLORIA WATKINS) (1952-2021)

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Introduction: Tal Dor pays tribute to bell hooks a couple of days following the announcement of her demise. The journal was already at the stage of final production which had to be delayed to include this paper as a tribute to the great African-American activist, writer, poet, luminary and pedagogue. It is also fitting for a special issue on Freire, who was a key source of inspiration to hooks, who desired to engage in a 'talking book' with him which, alas, never came to pass. Tal Dor juxtaposes hooks' and her own settler colonial worlds in this tribute which takes the form of an open letter.

KEYWORDS: transformation, love, life, death, dialogue

Dearest bell hooks,

It is December 16th 2021. I don't know how to start writing to you. I just finished off a paper for the celebration of the centenary of Paulo Freire, in which I conversed with you, of course (*see Dor, this issue – editors*). I did not imagine I would have to mourn your death so shortly after. A dear

friend of mine, who knows how your work has transformed my life and how I have been conversing with you for the last 20 years, called to give me the very sad news.

bell hooks just died, she said. The words resonated on the phone. I felt profound sadness scrolling up my body.

How can I speak about the sweetness of my encounter with you and your work while feeling so much loss?

I choose to write you. I cannot think of another way to enter this conversation. I am inspired by your playful dialogue with yourself when you describe the way in which Paulo Freire influenced your life and work:

I wanted to speak about Paulo and his work in this way for it afforded me an intimacy – a familiarity - I do not find it possible to achieve in the essay. And here I have found a way to share the sweetness, the solidarity I talk about (hooks, 1994: 45).

In my work on processes of liberation from settler colonial Zionist thought, you have been central in showing me the way to learn to change, to transform my own consciousness and seek genuine solidarity to end Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestine - “the power to transform,” you named it (hooks, 1984).

Reading your book *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, thinking Black* (hooks, 1989), I think of my childhood trajectory within the Israeli settler colonial space. I want to share with you the pain I experienced as a child. But not as a reproduction of a culture of domination which is narcissistic, as you say, but rather as a praxis in the struggle to end domination.

When I was young, my family doubted that I would finish high school and I actually barely did. Reading for me was a very difficult task. Today, as I write these lines, I know

that my liberation processes from colonial consciousness, are processes through which I did not only develop political and intellectual feminist counter-hegemonic consciousness; I also acted within tasks that sought liberation from the hegemonic labeling of a dyslectic child.

Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life. It is about finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world (hooks, 2003: 43).

I know you differentiate between the personal quest for freedom and the collective liberation struggle. In your piece “Love as the Practice of Freedom” you speak about the importance of feeling self-interest in change in order to critically examine our “blind spots” (hooks, 1994 [2006]: 244). You speak about ethics of love as an important part in one’s self-longing for change. Love ethics you say, is the ability to acknowledge blind spots and thus develop the oppositional gaze at domination.

The love I got from my family as a child empowered me to carry on, yet the warmth and strength I got from your writings as an adult is what transformed my life and allowed me not only to transgress with regard to forces of domination but also to disregard borders and reach to unreachable spaces – on many levels.

I would like to share with you that my political *transFormation* influenced my sense of entitlement and encouraged me to read. Yet, reading you is what sparked my passion and feminist willfulness to learn and what motivates me to carry on in the struggle, in creating dialogue even when it is hard, and at times painful: “the pain of loneliness, the pain of loss, the pain of isolation, the pain of exile - spiritual and physical. Even before the words we remember the pain. As comrades in struggle

writing about the effort to end racial domination in South Africa put it in the Freedom Charter: « Our strange struggle of memory against forgetting »”(hooks, 1989: 4).

This letter is my struggle to remember and recognition of how your work has deeply touched my life and transformed my consciousness - not only as an intellectual, a sociologist and a critical pedagogue but also as a radical feminist anti-colonial activist.

bell, I have tremendously learned from you, but I am not sure words can express the profoundness of this process. I go back to your dialogue with yourself in *Teaching to transgress* and look for words:

Only that words seem to be not good enough to evoke all that I have learned from Paulo. Our meeting had that quality of sweetness that lingers, that lasts for a lifetime; even if you never speak to the person again, see their face, you can always return in your heart to that moment when you were together to be renewed—that is a profound solidarity. (hooks, 2003: 58)

You have given me language, not only to me but also to many of us struggling to find creative ways to end colonial domination. You have provided this language to any of us who seek *transFormation* towards radical thought and praxis as a means to build a sense of entitlement to act from a marginal and excluded position (hooks, 1994). You showed us the way towards formative processes, through willful learning and a constant quest for wellbeing (hooks, 2003: 46). Liberation, you taught us, is the way to engage in self-formation when entering into the quest for radical thought. You taught us acceptance, but not as a passive stance rather as radical action to change the world.

You taught us Israelis and Palestinians, struggling to end Zionist domination, to name the multiple racial,

sexist, class oppressions and understand our position within it and thus our responsibility. You taught us to seek for the **truth** and reveal that which is under the surface (2010b), to unveil the hegemonic lies. You taught us to develop that oppositional gaze at reality that enables us to reframe the way in which we live reality and then carry out actions of critical thinking as empowered agents within it.

You have given us language, you taught us that we can develop an enlightened consciousness (hooks, 2003) as the possibility to start seeing the *truth*. You taught us that in order to change the world we have to create new language, that of feminist resistance that which will allow us a more complex gaze at the world.

You taught us to love as a task of resistance to violence - refusal to embody the violence. You invited us to think of liberation processes as a willful act of love, an act that one chooses to take. The choice derives from the will to li(o)ve in community. Being part of a community permits collective and joint *transForming*.

We learned from you the importance of praxis, of question-asking pedagogy. This strives to discover the: Who, What, When, Where, and How of reality (*see Giroux, this volume, editors*). And then know how to use the knowledge we have acquired. Knowing, according to you, helps prioritize and “determine what matters most” (hooks, 2010a: 9).

I learned from you that critical thinking is praxis, as it is a way of life and a way of approaching the world, rather than a singular action. That Knowledge is constructed through dialogue. Being in constant doubt, which develops the ability to think dialectically.

So, I choose to remember, I choose to continue the dialogue with you, I choose to love: “Awakening to love can

happen only as we let go of our obsession with power and domination” (hooks, 2001: 87). I choose to embrace the unknown:

I know no one who has embraced a love ethic whose life has not become joyous and more fulfilling (hooks, 2001: 88).

Thank you bell hooks, for fulfilling my life, for teaching us about struggle, for taking part in the journey. For radicalizing the encounters that have changed my life.

Rest in power, we miss you already!

Tal Dor
Paris, December 2021

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Review

Walter Omar Kohan, *Paulo Freire. A Philosophical Biography*, ISBN pb 978-1-3501-9598-1, hb 978-1-3501-9599-8, ePDF-3501-9600-1, EBook 978-1-3501-9601-8, 2021, , London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 277 pages

Another book on Paulo Freire, whose birth centenary is being celebrated this year, has seen the light. I keep saying that, as long as there is rigour and new ‘takes’ on Freire as a subject to think with, then such books are welcome. I personally think that these qualities are contained in Walter Kohan’s offering which, as Carlos Alberto Torres, prominent Freirean scholar, writes in his endorsement on the back cover of the paperback version in hand, is a tour de force.

This book was previously published in Spanish and Portuguese, the Spanish version bearing the title *Paulo Freire. Mas que Nunca?* (Paulo Freire. More than never/ever?). The subtitle replaces the main title in this book because of a theme taken up in its main contents, the question of time. This book is original and imaginative in the way the discussion on Freire’s own ideas is organised thematically around the following: Life, Equality, Love, Errantry and Childhood. Some of the themes are familiar to those steeped in the Freirean corpus, although Kohan, who is quite erudite and well versed in philosophy, especially classical philosophy and, as an Argentinian ensconced in a Brazilian university,

Latin American social thought, provides innovative nuanced approaches to them. Equality is often preferred to equity, quite in vogue especially in the Anglophone world, in the discussions on social justice.

Scholars such as Kathleen Lynch have argued for a more refined concept of equality, one that takes into consideration the intersectionality of all dimensions of social injustice, and the conditions that need to be in place to deliver robust equality outcomes rather than merely equal formal rights.

Quite remarkable are also the different forms of time outlined in this book. *Chronos* stands for the chronological sense of time with watersheds, dates, past and future. *Kairos* entails ‘seizing the moment’ which is the opportune time that might not return. This has implications for revolutionary activity (when the conditions are ripe).¹ Finally we have *aion* which, as used by Freire and others, transcends *chronos*. For educators, it can involve working towards establishing the conditions to insert oneself in the *now*, that is “inhabiting the present” (p. 178). As far as education is concerned, it serves to problematise attempts to vocationalise it for a future that might not even come to fruition, what Gramsci, in his denunciation of the Giovanni Gentile reforms, called ‘mortgaging the child’s future’ (*ipotecare il futuro del fanciullo*, in the Italian original). Kohan highlights the relation of Freire’s writings to these categories. *Kairos*, for instance, is reflected in Freire’s frustration, writing in exile in Chile, at the CIA and multinationals-backed military coup in 1964. This brought about a rupture of a democratisation process in a country roused for social transformation. The discussion on time runs throughout the book, in the main thematic

¹ This brings to mind Marx’s caveat, in the *18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, that we bring about change but under conditions not of our own choice.

section and also in the added interviews, notably the one with Jason Wozniak.

The other theme which struck me in this book is that of *childhood* in Freire which, according to Kohan, is given short shrift in the thinking around his ideas. Yes, those who confine themselves to his early works, born out of adult literacy experiences in Angicos, Guinea Bissau and elsewhere, may fall into that trap – equating Freire solely with adulthood. I would submit, however, that many have seen the value of Freire’s approach and denunciation and annunciation (anuncio, denuncio) of different pedagogical approaches, always political pedagogical approaches, to engage in education within the ‘limit situations’ of formal schooling. There is ample evidence of this in the literature around Freire, and explicit ones at that. As for Freire’s own writings, I would argue that it is not even a case of leaving it to others to reconfigure his approach for schooling and other formal engagements. Freire’s oeuvre extends to published work, even in English translation, connected with Higher Education (his dialogue with scholars at UNAM Mexico, published as *Paulo Freire on Higher Education*, SUNY Press, 1994). Other published work connects with Freire’s involvement in formal education, certainly with his role in reforming public education. This occurred when he was Education Secretary in the Mayor Erundina-led Municipal Government in São Paulo. *Pedagogy of the City* would be the key work in English translation in this case, backed by the ethnographic work by Maria del Pilar O’Cadiz, Pia Wong and Carlos Torres, admittedly on social movements but more widely on the larger municipal context: *Education and Democracy: Paulo Freire, Social Movements, and Educational Reform in São Paulo* (Westview Press, 1998). We learn of his attempts at providing the conditions for children, the popular way of calling children in Brazil as *meninos / meninas popular* (child from the popular

classes), to learn, with cooks being engaged to ensure they are not famished. Together with other employees (janitors, administrators, teachers, etc.) in this community schools project (those who democratically elect to join the project of the 'popular public schools'), these cooks are formed as educators. This was presented by Freire and others in a symposium on his work as SP Education Secretary, held at the 1991 AERA meeting in Chicago. They have as much a say and vote on the schools' running as parents and the professional teachers. All are brought to bear on the educational experience of the child and all school employees are therefore immersed in a holistic education culture.

Kohan however highlights Freire's insistence throughout to not kill the child in us, to prevent what William Wordsworth, referring to the Platonic theory of Anemnesis (The Immortality Ode), described as shades of the prison house descending upon the child. In this case, not necessarily the romantic English bard's, it would be the child in us. The point is captured by Freire in the sense of social justice and critical consciousness being allied to dreaming - dreaming of a world *menos feio, menos malvado, menos desumano* (less ugly, less mean, less inhuman). This dream is ideologically represented as being 'impossible' but Freire did cling to the hope that it can be possible. Rooted in our existential situation, it is that dream which helps us imagine a world not as it is but as it can be. This is a call to rescue utopia or heterotopia from the stranglehold of 'Capitalist realism',² evoking memories of the kind of post-war dystopian reality which Samuel Beckett tackles in *Waiting for Godot*. Apparently 'dream the impossible dream' was the song Paulo Freire use to hum when he visited Danilo Dolci at his centre in Partinico

² I adopt the late Mark Fisher's phrase. On this, see Henry A. Giroux in this volume.

near Palermo in Sicily.³ The child in us smacks of being inquisitive and of asking questions, hence Freire's 'pedagogy of the question' which Kohan rightly highlights with regard to the book, *Learning to Question*, involving Paulo's exchange with Antonio Faundez. This is one of Freire's few 'talking books', translated to English, which provide some tension and contested positions. It also brings to mind a conversation between Freire and Neal Bruss and Donaldo Macedo, originally published in the *Boston Journal of Education*. Questioning is situated at the heart of problem-posing. One of the standard criticisms of conventional schooling and parenthood is that they kill the inquisitive dimension of our upbringing through pressure for conformity and to embrace the 'given', specific social constructions of reality, normalising discourses if you will. Figures such as Jean Piaget, Gabriela Mistral and Ada Gobetti underline this. Questions beget further questions and induce scepticism towards 'certainties'. This approach is politically dangerous from the vantage point of those within the system-world seeking to safeguard the status quo. In short, the child is not to be dismissed as a fount of naïveté but is feared by those who want to smother change initiatives. The child in us will be tagged with the warning, echoing Mr Murdstone regarding David Copperfield, 'Take care of ... [*the child*]. [*The child*] bites' – more metaphorical, in our case, than literal (in Dickens' case).

Another aspect of this book, which struck me, is the notion of the errant Freire or the errant intellectual. It is the image of the itinerant intellectual who wanders in exile. This image connects with Paulo Freire's well known exile post-1964 which took him to Bolivia, Chile, the USA, Switzerland, including sorties to parts of Europe, the

³ I am indebted to former Maltese Education Minister, Evarist Bartolo, for this point. In his youth, he had a stint working at Dolci's centre and Freire's visit coincided with his time there.

Caribbean and Africa, and then back to Brazil. As with James Joyce, on self-imposed 'exile' from Dublin, Freire's thoughts never wavered from his home context as manifest throughout his works. Freire immersed himself in the present exposing himself to a variety of struggles and issues, worldwide, about which he wrote but Brazil was firmly on his mind. As I argued in several books, talks and papers, exile served as a means of praxis for Freire, as it must have done to Joyce, enabling one to obtain critical distance from an everyday reality one thought one once knew to see it in a more critical, semi-detached manner – critical distancing. Freire and Faundez discuss this in their specific 'talking book' originally produced by the World Council of Churches in Geneva – *Learning to Question* (1989). After being convinced of the 'non fragility' of the new democracy in his home country (by the Rev. Paulo Evaristo Arns, among others), Freire and most of his family travelled back for him to relearn his homeland before intervening in public policy in one of its largest cities. Kohan, for his part, presents these episodes as Freire's 'third exile', the first being the exile from his mother's womb, which applies to all of us, the second being his dislocation from Recife and its playful present of innocence and vitality to the experience of Jabotão when the Great Depression left its mark on many livelihoods, including that of the Freire family. There, he had to confront new harsh realities, having to enter the accelerated adulthood world of work and deprived schooling (just like Gramsci following his father's arrest), to contribute to his family's ability to put food on the table.

Freire however broadens his repertoire, as an intellectual and pedagogue, being alive to these new learning experiences, experiences that included reading and learning from books, newspapers and other documentation. As Wordsworth himself insisted, in 'The Tables Turned', however, this also entailed learning from

mutable life lived to the full, from the rest of nature in which we are all immersed (“One impulse of the vernal wood would teach you more of man [*sic.*], of moral evil and of good than all the sages can.”). Freire learnt from different sources, from his interpersonal communication with peasants in different countries and continents, other intellectuals such as Amilcar Cabral whose spirit he encountered in former Portuguese colonies in Africa, years after Cabral was assassinated, and different revolutionary and post-independence contexts and social movements from all corners of the world, including his homeland Brazil.

Like the errant knight of medieval chivalry, he is depicted, in the chapter on Errantry⁴, as having moved from site to site with love. This was not love proclaimed in a *Chanson Courtois* for a fictitious damsel. We do have chronicles of love put together by his second wife Nita, and interviews. There are interviews in this book, one with his son Lutgardes that affirms how important was his much-loved first wife, Elza (she died in 1986) in Paulo’s evolution as an engaged intellectual and pedagogue – confirming the same point stressed to Antonia Darder and me, at a meeting in Paris (2019), by Freire’s Geneva-based daughter Cristina (not the Cristina of the *Letters to Cristina*). The recurring notion of love attributed to Paulo Freire’s thinking is love for anything one engages in throughout life. This includes what Antonia Darder, author of this book’s Foreword and *Paulo Freire. A Pedagogy of Love* (Westview Press, 2002), refers to as a love for humanity and the rest of nature manifest in his striving for a better and more social-justice oriented and ecologically more sensitive world. It is reflected in his view

⁴There is double meaning in the word err here. It also means revising errors of judgement and views. Freire revised earlier misconceptions and writings especially with regard to gender and masculinity, ultimately providing a multifaceted view of the subjects of history. There was greater emphasis, in his later writings and interviews, on ecological concerns.

of education as an act of love and, more generally, in revolution as a similar act, the latter as described by Ernesto 'Che' Guevara. One fights for a better and more socially just world because of one's love for humanity and the rest of nature. All these sentiments are captured in this compelling and lucid book, a fitting tribute to Freire on his birth centenary year.

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