

PAULO FREIRE: COMMUNITY BASED ARTS EDUCATION

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This paper is about Paulo Freire and his influence on the perspective and application of literacy programming and interdisciplinary education through the arts. Portraiture, as used in this paper, is a collection of stories that illuminate historical, social, and cultural influences that connect (Reinharz, 1992) Freire to a community and to the world. Freire's pedagogical theory requires educators and students to examine self, culture, and community. It also addresses issues of power, voice, conflict, class, gender, and race. Freire's philosophy and application illustrates the value he placed on education through life experiences/knowledge, the arts, and cultures of the people. In this paper, I present excerpts from Freire's 1996 conference presentation at Diadema, interviews with Freire, Francisco Brennand, a Brazil artist and co-worker of Freire, and Ana Mae Barbosa, past president of International Society of Education through Art, a professor at The University of São Paulo, and a student of Freire.

BACKGROUND

Paulo Freire came from the State of Pernambuco whose capital is Recife. Once considered one of the world's poorest regions, its economy has improved in recent years (Freire, personal interview, September 3, 1996). Freire was born in 1921 into a middle class family. In the 1930 depression, his family went bankrupt. However, due to his father's determination, he was able to stay in school. He studied philosophy and law at the University of Recife, then worked for three years as a labor union lawyer. His professional experience with workers and his past experience as a poor student made him realize that education was a privilege enjoyed by a minority in his country. The majority of the people lived in poverty oppressed by a minority that dictated the rules to the oppressed majority (Mashayekh, 1974, p. 4).

He became a professor of Philosophy of Education at the University of Recife, where in 1959 he earned a Ph.D. in education. With the help of student volunteers, Freire started the Adult Education Program of the Popular Culture Movement, which taught people how to read and write, and also encouraged popular festivals, performances, and the arts in the ghetto and rural areas of Recife (Brown, 1974, p. 245). The Movement's objectives were to raise class-consciousness and increase the popular vote. This was during the early 1960s when rural and urban unions started organizing in the Northeast of Brazil. In 1961 two farm workers' strikes brought together 83,000 and 230,000 workers in an effort to bring about social reform (Freire, 1978, p. 110).

In Brazil, literacy was intimately associated with power. According to the law, only those who were literate could vote; and the traditional political duty was to vote according to the interests of the elite. However, with the formation of the peasants' leagues in the 1950s, farm workers became aware of the power of voting. Consequently, they wanted to change their powerless poverty situation which was fostered by the elite. Freire's cultural movement accelerated the revolts. In 1963 conditions were ripe for the literacy campaign to start in the country. Its beginning was June 1963, several months before the end of the populist government of President Jao Goulart. The Minister of Education, Paulo de Tarso was a friend of Freire. He was impressed with the work in Pernambuco, and decided to adopt Freire's literacy method for a Brazil-wide National Literacy Program. Under Freire's direction, training programs for adult literacy educators were developed in most all the state capitals from June 1963 to March 1964. The coordinators were mostly college students. The campaign started in the cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, and in the Northeast states of Rio Grande Norte, Bahia, and Sergipe (Elias, 1976, p. 13-14). Freire's plan was to start the literacy campaign in regions where social and political reformation had already begun through organizing leagues and unions. As Freire (1978) wrote, "the tone of the literacy campaign in Brazil was eminently political" (p. 110) and not only training for illiterates. He added that it was urgent to establish as close a link as possible between literacy education and political consciousness of Brazil's masses.

The following excerpt is from Freire's 1996 presentation at Diadema's Congress of Cultural Education and Leisure Sports. Freire

tells his story of that time period and how his educational theory developed. Freire's speech is presented in an unedited form. His English is spoken with the intonations and patterns of his Brazilian dialect.

It was hard for me to understand how these people dealt with reality, they used to explain pain, discrimination because of destiny or god's punishment. For me, this ideology paralyzed the people and maintained stratification. We had to learn the power of the counter attack because to stay in fatalism helps the dominant. What we tried to do was place the people in movements—candidates of subjects within history. When I went home I felt drained but happy. Paulo, I asked myself, how could I challenge the gently ingenious consciousness with this group of people that is out of the fight? Paulo, why not use something to provoke reflection about culture before reading and writing class. Paulo, what you need is to be able to offer challenges that allow growth and apprehend the comprehension of culture as a result of practical intervention of the human beings of the world (world not made by humans) through their work. The results were to create a world in which culture became one with history, politics and social knowledge for all. I tried and it worked very well. And I thought, well, if me and two more fellows [sic] are able to open a hole to get water—if you are able to defend us against bad climate. . . if I'm able to change the world that we didn't make. . . why can we not change the one we did? Culture is the instrument of the world changing. So, I thought that it would be a very good idea to work with concrete and existential situations. So I asked an artist, Francisco Brennand, a sculptor, to make ten visual works that illustrated concrete and existential ideas. What I wanted was to provoke the reading of codification that brought to them discovery of the relationship of culture and nature and try to overcome fatalism through community arts.

Soon the campaign spread all over the country. The plan was, by 1964 to equip 20,000 groups to teach approximately 20 million illiterates. Working this way I was fascinated watching people discovering that it is possible for people to change the political world by collaborating. [On April 1, 1964] The literacy campaign was interrupted with the military coup

which ousted Goulart. [Blamed by the new government for applying a model of education opposed to national interests, Paulo Freire was put under house arrest and imprisoned for about seventy days.] Because the dictatorship wanted to find something on us and found nothing, they intimidated the students. A student who was very scared about the situation told the military about the visual art works. The government apprehended the art and stripped my citizen rights.

I met with the artist Francisco Brennand at his Recife studio in 1996. I asked him to give an account of his working relationship with Freire, to describe the art work that was seized, and how he dealt with the dictatorship.

Freire was very famous in Recife for his literacy program and his political work with the workers. The idea of educating illiterate was so simple but so dangerous and Freire made many enemies. The company owners and elite did not like the idea of literacy programs. They feared that the workers would want more say and more money. Everything was political. Freire approached me to make art that symbolized culture, reformation, literacy, and self. I studied the program, the situation, and I began to design the works. I make tiles which is a traditional art form. I paint on tiles. I work with clay. Clay is from the earth and is a part of humans and we are a part of it. Freire's goal was for the viewer to understand the relationship of self to the world and that people can make change for the good. I produced the works and Freire was very pleased. The political situation became unstable and we began to realize that the literacy program and the connection to culture and the arts of the people were targeted by the elite and others. When the military coup occurred, many people were in danger and others easily talked to save themselves. Freire was one of the targets because of his work with the workers. My art was seen by the dictatorship as dangerous and it was destroyed. There are no reminders of that work, no photographs. Freire was not yet beaten. He asked me to make another set. I said no Paulo. They will be destroyed also. This time was hard for everyone but especially for those who had dreamt of a different Brasil. I was fortunate. I continued to be an artist and made tiles and sculptures.

Freire was exiled to Chile and worked with the UNESCO Consultant at the Institute of Capacitation an Agrarian Reform. While in Chile, he also directed a National Literacy Program under two different government regimes: the Christian Democrats and the Popular Unity Party. Under both governments, literacy was narrowly viewed as a way to increase workers' production and quality of product (Freire, personal interview, September 3, 1996). During the Christian Democratic government, the purpose of adult literacy programs was to strengthen production on the farms and factories. During the Popular Unity Party government, the role of the literacy campaign was to make the peasants aware that literacy and having a job was one in the same (Freire, 1978, p. 111). Although the governments' objectives and Freire's differed, literacy was the ultimate goal for all.

In 1969, Freire came to the United States at the invitation of the Harvard University Center for the Study of Education and Development and the Center for the Study of Development and Social Change. In 1970, he went to Geneva, Switzerland, to work as a special consultant to the office of education with the World Council of Churches. During this time, he kept in contact with key people in Brazil (Barbosa, personal interview, September 10, 1996). Ana Mae Barbosa is a recognized international leader in the political movement of Brazilian art educators. Barbosa's first elementary education course was taught by Freire:

He was already famous in Recife, but not nationally known. In a writing examination, Freire asked us to tell why we chose to be teachers. I wrote why I hated the idea of teaching and that I was forced to do this to get a job. The next day he gave back everyone's composition except mine. He said that we had to talk privately. He invited me to investigate the possibilities of education. I used Paulo Freire's methods. For three years, I taught literacy, reading, and writing to children in the first grade; I did that through art. This was revolutionary in my day. I was invited to teach art education in the school where Paulo Freire was president and then I worked for the *Escolinha de Arte do Recife*. I was a fighter. Freire taught me about liberation. (Morris, 1998, in print)

Barbosa and her husband lost their jobs as professors during the dictatorship. Barbosa remembered: "Paulo was always trying to send books to us and we would write to him frequently about our work, our readings, and our research. I went to Geneva twice to visit him" (Ibid).

Until his death in May 1997, Freire continued to write, support the Workers Party, present at conferences, teach, and mentor educators from all over the world. Freire remarked, "I find all the experiences have helped me grow as a person and of course as a teacher. I have enjoyed meeting so many people from all over the world but I belong in Brasil" (Freire, personal interview, September 3, 1996).

COMMUNITY AS THE HEART OF PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED: THEORY TO APPLICATION

Freire's theory considers the arts and education as cultural community action for freedom. Adult literacy can only be viewed as cultural action for freedom—an act of knowing and reflecting critically on the process which motivates people to learn to read and write. It is not enough to become literate for the purpose of obtaining a job or keeping a job. He explained that "illiteracy is not a disease that needs to be cured but a concrete expression of an unjust social reality. At the same time, it is a linguistic problem and a political problem" (Freire, 1977, p. 16-29). The act of knowing is based on a dialogue between the community, teacher and the students. The subject to be explored is determined by the community needs. The exploration facilitates action to reform problems. Through reformation, freedom from illiteracy and oppression is possible because the people have determined the process and course of action. The cultures and the arts are ways that express issues in languages that are understood by the community. He referred to this as problem-posing education. Freire maintained that in order to become literate, it is necessary for the learners acquire a new vision of the world which is based on a critical awareness of social inequities (1978, p. 72). Freire believed:

- that the same way they were denied the right to read and write, they were also denied the right to profit from the product of their work

- that their work, regardless of their illiteracy, is for them a source of knowledge
- that nobody knows everything, and nobody ignores everything. In this world we are all learners (1977, p.29).

Freire did not consider the literacy movement a miracle instrument for freedom, but it certainly contributed to the process of becoming free. He believed literacy increased the learners' consciousness and helped them to become aware of their social, historical, economical, and political realities. In his presentation at Diadema, Freire explained his pedagogy in simple terms:

Joy makes a political difference and joy to be happy is the key to literacy. Education is not only about school systems. Education is about joy—education, culture, leisure. Without arts, we have no way to express the needs for reformation. Why the arts, when there are so many needs such as jobs, homeless and I reply who doesn't have a cultural project doesn't have an educational program—both are needed.

Freire viewed the arts and culture as languages. To be literate and to be understood by many, people must be able to express their ideas in a multitude of ways. Freire (1973) wrote that "to be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world" (p.3). If people adapt to the world, accommodating themselves to situations, they become passive, unable to change anything. If they integrate and have relationships with the world, they become dynamic and will be able to change things, creating culture. By developing a critical attitude, people can overcome a posture of adjustment and become integrated. According to Freire, students should experience this process in education by experiencing art, expressing through their cultural arts, integrating subjects, integrating one to the world, developing a critical consciousness and encourage dialogue. This requires a new pedagogy, attitude, and approach.

Freire believed that literacy implies discussion of the whole education field in society. It does not make sense to discuss literacy in a society whose form of education is selective and elitist in character. This kind of education has to reach everyone, should be revealing and critical, with learners and teachers conscious of their own role, and be interdisciplinary. Freire recommended exploring issues, ideas, values, concepts, hopes which characterize an epoch, as well as obstacles

which impede human's fulfillment. He referred to those as generative themes because "they contain the possibility of unfolding into again as many themes, which in their turn call for new tasks to be fulfilled" (1972b, p. 74).

Here are two examples of Freire's theory as applied. The first example took place in São Paulo from 1989 to 1992. When Freire was nominated the Municipal Secretary of Education in 1989, he faced several political and pedagogical challenges. The Workers Party assumed power in São Paulo, the third largest city in the world. Never had this happened before and the pressure to succeed was great. Freire also inherited an almost broke educational system that had developed into:

- reproduction of fragmented and compartmentalized content, and use of pedagogical didactic books as the sole instructional resource;
- an authoritative relationship between the divisions of the school;
- powerless school communities which were not allowed to participate in the educational process;
- disregard for the students and community's social and cultural experiences in the development of the curriculum (Rizzi, personal communication, September 12, 1996).

São Paulo has almost four million children between the ages of 1 through 14. Fourteen percent of these children are illiterate. There are approximately four hundred thousand dropouts and 80 thousand juvenile delinquents. The Municipal Educational System is composed of nearly seven hundred schools in which about seven hundred thousand students are enrolled. Because of the complexity and magnitude of the problems, Freire and his Secretary of Education team selected the following goals as a plan of action:

- to establish a public, popular and democratic school system;
- to create interdisciplinary curricula (Ibid).

Freire's conceived school as a place where participation is understood to be indispensable for the growth of the individual in society and there must be a partnership between school and community. A school is where educators are free to choose their own peda-

gological approaches, be capable of critical thought, select programs and methods to suit their needs, and be able to understand their community. The schools that participated in this project volunteered to do so.

This project was the opportune chance to work with generative themes in a public educational system. The former experiences took place in alternative pedagogical situations. Freire's generative themes: issues, ideas, values, concepts, hopes, characterize an epoch, as well as obstacles which impede people's fulfillment. Freire calls them generative themes because "they contain the possibility of unfolding into again as many themes, which in their turn call for new tasks to be fulfilled" (Freire, 1972, p. 74). The investigation of generative themes is the investigation of people's thought about reality and people's actions upon reality. This is why, according to Freire, investigation of themes requires investigators to work with the people of the region as co-investigators. Collaboration was viewed by Freire as a valuable educational tool. The questions raised at this time by the Freire team were:

1. Which content is the best and for whom?
 2. What is the relationship between course content and the students reality?
 3. What is the relationship between school and life or more specifically, what is the significance of school in daily life?
- Samples of generative themes that were chosen by the schools during this process:

1. The subway and leisure
2. Raising social consciousness: prejudices and employment
3. Quality of life: consciousness and participation
4. Housing: urbanization and values
5. Cohabitation and violence

Triangular Methodology of Art Teaching was formed by Freire's pedagogical principles and specifically assumed the proposed stance of Ana Mae Barbosa, based on her interpretation of Discipline Based Art Education (Rizzi, personal communication, September 12, 1996):

1. The knowledge of Art is constructed at the intersection of experimentation, codification, and information. Three domains must be taught:
 - a. Art History
 - b. Studio
 - c. Reading art: including aesthetics and criticism.

2. A society is artificially developed when, along with high quality artistic production, there is also a high level of understanding of this production.
3. Each generation has the right to look at and to interpret history personally giving it new meaning.

In the evaluation done by the Secretary of Education at the end of 1992, the following items were considered successful outcomes of the project:

1. New School organization with collaboration of teachers allowing for growth of the educators and professionals.
2. The opportunity for dialogue was created which modified the concepts of curriculum and construction of knowledge.
3. The students became more participatory, creative, aware, and critical.
4. The integration of the community and of the parents in the schools.

The following obstacles were noted and still exist:

1. Teacher turnover
 2. Organization difficulties such as scheduling
 3. Difficulty in integrating the general curriculum with the arts
 4. Lack of professional development
 5. Lack of professional commitment by some educators
 6. Establishing a dialogue where none had previously existed
- The following were considered difficulties in the art education process:

1. The practical and theoretical preparation for classroom educators.
2. Difficulty in abandoning old pedagogical practices because of a feeling of insecurity and fear of the unknown.

The following were considered successful of the art education process:

1. Better comprehension and awareness.
2. Better comprehension and awareness concerning areas of knowledge which are involved in the construction of the knowledge in art.

The second example was in Diadema. It is a city in the state of São Paulo. The Workers Party was in power and the school system had adopted Freire's theory. The education administration's evaluation had been almost identical to São Paulo's project evaluation. The difference is that the Workers Party lost their power in São Paulo and the project was abandoned. The Diadema school system administrators "decided to produce a conference that celebrated our accomplishments and address the obstacles. Paulo Freire was contacted to be our keynote speaker. His words will inspire us to continue the long hard work that is in front of us" (Personal communication, September 1, 1996). The conference was viewed as a place and process where problems regarding art and community centered education could be discussed. "If dialogue is the key to Freire's theory and literacy process, then teachers need a forum to dialogue" (*ibid.*). The emphasis was to evaluate the project and make changes that would address the problems.

THE INTERVIEW AND CONFERENCE

The conference was a time to share and to celebrate their development of a community art centered literacy curriculum and program. The lobby was filled with visual displays of art work by children and adults. The artists were there to discuss their works with interested viewers. The 1,500 seat auditorium was full. People were sitting on the floor and on the stairs. One of the teachers that I had met earlier asked me to follow her to a room where I was introduced to Freire. He smiled, patted my hand and asked me if I spoke Portuguese because he preferred to speak in his language. I admitted that my Portuguese was at a two year old level. He laughed and decided that it would probably be best if he continued to speak English. I asked many questions, but the main question I had was about the conclusions of the São Paulo and Diadema evaluations regarding teacher reformation and attitudes when initiating integrated/interdisciplinary pedagogy and curricula. How do you continue the momentum when there is resistance to change? How do you get beyond negative resistance? Freire thought for a moment and then answered:

Time. It takes time. We forget that it took a long time to get to this moment. Often failure is due to enthusiasm that turns into frustration. To be successful the identified goals must never be forgotten but often the way to obtain those goals

change due to unperceived needs. If you think of literacy metaphorically, we are all illiterate of something. Teachers are taught and then they teach. If they are taught to do a job, they do not know the value of learning beyond making a living. They will measure their success according to their pay and in Brazil it is very little. It is not hopeless. I get tired of hearing how this prevents successful reformation. These teachers, like illiterate students, need to be taught the intrinsic value of learning. They need to experience the joy of teaching and making a difference in one person. They need to have the support of those who already understand this and not feel inadequate. Negative resistance is illiteracy. To never try is fatalism. To attempt and quit because some did not see it your way is fatalism. To continue but not address problems is asking for failure. In applying a theory such as in this case in Diadema, the teachers must go beyond believing and just be it. It is not about literacy it is about living, it is about being, it is about cultural identity and expression, it is about political awareness and participation. Teachers who resist reformation are often afraid—afraid of inadequacies, afraid of challenges, afraid of change because it is new.

We discussed the Diadema and São Paulo projects and the similarities of the evaluations to projects that I had worked with in the United States. He stated that "many times people assume I have the answers but I do not—only the energy to explore." Back in my seat, the conference began with a working people's chorus. The content of the songs was culturally and politically influenced by the community and the audience responded with approval. At times, I felt that I was attending a church service because of the confirmation and affirmation that many of the teachers were experiencing. The second act was a dance company that addressed issues of the working class including company owner's attitudes. They combined European music, African dance and Catholic religious symbols to tell their story.

When Freire walked in, everyone stood, applauded, and greeted him. The ovation lasted for over thirty minutes. He did not seem to notice the mass as a whole but greeted individuals with a smile, a handshake, or a hug and a kiss. The physical manifestation of mutual admiration was contagious. It was hard for me to realize I was actually witnessing this occurrence. Freire climbed the stairs to the stage and took his place at the long table. Political figures, teachers,

and adult students sat at the table and each proceeded to greet him. After the introduction, Freire delivered his presentation which included his educational and political history and what he perceived as the current pedagogical concerns:

Democracy is hard because it demands tolerance. To live democratically demands and makes us go beyond words and to leave our differences which is so hard to face. To change is difficult but possible. It is my advantage to be seventy-five years of age and it is possible of having no fear in speaking because of the experience I've accumulated. I remember when I was discussing with a street sweeper about culture and the worker said 'Oh my God, I'll go into the work place with my head up high because I know who I am. This is the way we change things—not with guns. To change with guns gives power to the gun not with the people.' Everything is about people. Reality is the reason for reality. We have no time to think about change—we have to do it. The neo-liberal ideology is perverse and I'm astonished with the number of educators and fellow students after the fall of the Berlin Wall, pervert themselves and start to become pragmatic educators [strongly stated]. For me the dream is fundamental, utopia didn't die, history didn't die because if history is dying what we have is eternity of the present and the present is Capitalism, Capitalist. And to be politically conscious today is even more important than that of the 1960s. Do you believe or not? The neo-liberalist arrived at the university, they are the post modern fatalist and they are who we have to fight against. It is important [necessary] to continue to fight for the people. The globalization of the economy will be able to generate a new world-wide dimension. Even being this way, I can not accept quietly the perversity of the neo-liberal theology that imprisons people and makes the poor miserable. This theology is fatalism. With the same energy—only a little tired at seventy-five, I'm still fighting today. So fight. Don't stop the fight because the motionless will get to you.

Freire expressed that power is not in a few but in the mass called—democracy (Personal communication, September 3, 1996). It is through the cultures and the arts of the people that the masses will understand the importance of education. Literacy is not about a job and/or a career, but lifelong learning, knowledge, and pursuits in

possibilities. Freire pointed to several aspects of the Diadema and São Paulo projects that deserve to be highlighted.

During and after this project students and teachers experienced:

- respect as human beings and citizens
- the possibility of trying the joy of collective creation
- the possibility of doubting and figuring out the best way
- the possibility of being different and not being excluded
- the possibility of thinking, being, expressing this existence and being listened to.

(Personal communication, September 1996)

In 1994, I taught a workshop for teachers at The Paulo Freire Secretary of Education Building that was sponsored by The University of São Paulo. Many of the teachers had been a part of the Freire project. The teachers spoke about the joy of being able to exist, think, and contribute to the welfare of a community. Those who experienced it stated they would "never forget the quality and commitment of this project and they know that they still have to work hard in order to build up all the possibilities and hopes" (Personal communication, June, 1994).

As I read and write about current educational reformation that includes aspects of integration, critical theory, and collaboration, I conclude that it is very important for art educators to look outside of their own countries, to find and explore reformation projects such as those at São Paulo and Diadema. According to the National Institute for Literacy in The United States, illiteracy is on the increase and by the year 2000, two out of three Americans could be illiterate. Adults who can't read cost Americans an estimated \$224 billion each year in lost wages, lost taxes, basic skills training, unemployment compensation, prison and law enforcement, and lost international competitiveness. The most poorly educated adults suffer the highest rates of morbidity and mortality from chronic diseases and conditions. Children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the educational level of their parents, especially their mothers. The most significant predictor of success in school is having a mother who completed high school. These are our realities and possibly integration, collaboration, community-based, and arts centered programs that encourage critical thinking, cultural identity, cultural embracement, and multiple ways of expressing are the pathways toward literacy. Paulo Freire has passed away, his influence has touched and inspired many. Freire was his

theory. I found his philosophy and actions to be one in the same. I conclude with a thought that Freire expressed during our interview, "Education is a process that requires collaboration, democracy requires patience, and life requires both."

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CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH ART: TWO RESEARCH PROJECT REVIEWS

SEYMOUR SIMMONS III

Against a background of contemporary social problems and concerns, this article considers the role of the arts in creating community. It begins with a synopsis of Ellen Dissanayake's anthropological perspective on the importance of the arts in human evolution, human development, and premodern societies. It then considers current approaches to community-building through the arts based on two recent research projects done by Harvard Project Zero and its affiliates. One project, the Lincoln Center Institute Arts-in-Education Survey Study, reviewed twenty-two arts-in-education programs including community art centers, cultural centers, arts-infusion schools, and state and local arts councils. The other, Project Co-Arts, involved a survey and portraits of community art centers that focus on education in economically disadvantaged communities. In discussing this research, different forms of community-building are considered, including efforts to sustain ethnic communities as well as those intended to bring diverse populations together. Suggestions are made in conclusion of ways art programs can enhance connections within communities while maintaining autonomy and integrity.

With all its technological and material benefits, contemporary society is often characterized in terms of its declining human conditions (Goleman, 1995; Kids Count, 1997; Kozol, 1988, 1991). The breakdown of the family, homelessness, alienation, amorality, abuses of various kinds all affect our lives, whether directly or indirectly, on a daily basis. In response to these circumstances, arts advocates have advanced a number of claims for the social and personal importance of the arts. Certain of these claims focus on the value of studying art to help us reflect upon the central themes and challenges of human