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Special Section: In Memory of Paulo Freire 1921-1997 - Preface

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Preface

This issue of the *Journal of Pedagogy, Pluralism and Practice* is dedicated to the memory of Paulo Freire who died on May 2, 1997 at the age of 75. Paulo Freire is the author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *The Politics of Education*, *Pedagogy of the City*, *Pedagogy of Hope* and many other books that have created a radical discourse on liberatory education and have influenced teachers, theorists and cultural workers throughout the world. His last book, *Pedagogia da Autonomia: Saberes necessários à prática educativa*, is not yet translated in English, but is expected soon, possibly entitled *Pedagogy of Freedom*. The Portuguese text is reviewed in this issue of the Journal. In the early 1960's, Paulo Freire joined liberatory education and political action in the context of a successful adult literacy program in Brazil that enabled marginalized peasants to gain some measure of political power. Following the military coup in 1964, he was imprisoned and later exiled. He worked and taught in Chile, the United States and Switzerland, before returning to Brazil in 1979, where he continued to write and transform the nature of thought and action in education.

As an educator, social theorist and philosopher, Paulo Freire has offered a truly democratic and liberatory vision of education based in experience, dialogue, reflection and critique. Reflecting humbly on his writing and his travels all over the world, he has called himself a "vagabond of the obvious" who works to join theory and practice to understand education in terms of cultural politics. "My utopian dream has to do with a society that is less unjust, less cruel, more democratic, less discriminatory, less racist, less sexist" (*Pedagogy of the City*, p. 115).

Literacy is central to Paulo Freire's work. "Reading the word," he shows us, is dependent upon "reading the world." Literacy is understood not merely as skills or job preparation, but as "critical literacy" that enables us to more fully read and to transform (to write) the world, to recognize injustice, to create democracy in collective struggle against the forces that oppress and marginalize the lives of the poor, of racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and of women and men throughout society.

Paulo Freire recently visited Boston and Cambridge, and spoke at Lesley College on April 3, 1997. On that occasion he chose to depart from his customary practice of engaging in a free ranging dialogue with those present. Instead, he wished to tell us about his new book, *Pedagogia da Autonomia: Saberes necessários à prática educativa*, which was being published in Brazil in a format intended to keep the price to R\$3. It would be, he hoped, a book that might be widely read and not be unavailable to the poor who have a great stake in the future of education in Brazil. During the talk, he discussed some of the central concerns of the book which, in a sense, provides a

review and reaffirmation of his thinking about education with emphasis upon a theory of teaching and learning and the dialogic relationship between teachers and learners.

The first essay of this section of the Journal is based upon that meeting at Lesley College last April. The authors, who participated in hosting the event, met several months later to record a conversation in which they recalled and reflected upon Paulo Freire's words. Their purpose was to engage in a critical dialogue with each other and with their understanding of Paulo Freire's work. That dialogue was later transcribed and edited to a form suitable for re-presentation as a "written" essay, which might also fit within the space limitations of the Journal.

The second essay, which appears both in Portuguese and English, offers a review of *Pedagogia da Autonomia: Saberes necessários à prática educativa*. The authors who are now educators in Massachusetts were born and raised in the Açores.

The third essay is a personal reflection on reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The author has been a nurse and an educator of nurses at Roxbury Community College. Her essay examines her experience and that of her students as re-lived through a critical reflection deeply influenced by reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* twenty five years after its original publication.