Memories of Paulo is a beautiful book, one that is enmeshed with humanity, humility and love, reflecting the life and work of Paulo Freire. Many of us know Freire through his writing and dissemination of ideas, which have gained currency over the past few decades in a number of circles around the world. But this book does not seek to offer a critique of Freire’s work. Rather, what distinguishes this work is that it involves a diverse collection of scholars and friends, talking and writing about what and who Freire was. We learn that he lived his life in an exceptional way, human and humane, filled with moments that have touched a range of people from all walks of life. As powerful as his message was, this book brings to light the true meaning of radical love, and it is clear that he injected love into his life-journey. Filled with stories, anecdotes and memories of Paulo, the book makes one question the meaning of education, and of life. Memories of Paulo is nothing short of an abrazo from those who loved a man who touched so many. Through this text, we learn a great deal about Paulo Freire, his life and his work, and we also learn of the profound impact that he has made.

Paul R. Carr
Youngstown State University
This book series is dedicated to the radical love and actions of Paulo Freire, Jesus “Pato” Gomez, and Joe L. Kincheloe.
TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy’s (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity—youth identity in particular—the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some “touchy-feely” educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.
Memories of Paulo

Edited by

Tom Wilson
Chapman University, California, USA

Peter Park
University of Massachusetts, USA and Fielding Graduate University, California, USA

Anaida Colón-Muñiz
Chapman University, California, USA
the necessary process from ingenuous to critical curiosity should also be accompanied by a rigorous ethical formation side by side with an aesthetic appreciation.

- From Pedagogy of Freedom

Maybe one of the best ways for conceiving of education is to say that it cannot accomplish it all, but it can accomplish something. That is, our problem, of educators, is to ask ourselves if it possible to make viable what sometimes does not seem possible.

- From Daring to Dream: A Pedagogy of the Unfinished
DEDICATION

This book of Memories of Paulo Freire is dedicated to Joe Kincheloe (December 14, 1950–December 19, 2008), who truly lived in the spirit of Freire towards a more just society through democratic and liberatory education, and to Bob Howard (March 22, 1954–April 11, 2010), whose tenacious advocacy for just and democratic schooling will never be forgotten.
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It is always a great honor to be asked on this historical occasion to write a Preface to this important book that brilliantly captures memories of Paulo Freire as recorded by those whose lives he profoundly touched and transformed. At the same time, to read and reread the wonderful recollections that people so dearly hold of Paulo Freire filled me with a complexity of emotions. On the one hand, these often moving and insightful stories bear witness that Paulo Freire lives on and is very much with us and, on the other hand, this book project reconfirms the presence of his absence—an absence that I almost feel daily com muita mágoa, with much sadness and pain.

In fact, the reading and rereading of Memories of Paulo painfully reminds us of the absence of an exceptional human being who, while he is no longer here with us em corpo e osso, he is ever more present in our lives in spirit, generosity, and love. Paulo always talked about the importance of having an enormous capacity to love in order to carry out the arduous and often difficult task of denouncing the cruel and obscene assaults against human beings who have the least when it is so much easier and comfortable to accommodate to the power structure from which we can reap benefits. Paulo exemplified his great capacity to love by the coherence with which he lived his life, and his unyielding commitment to social justice which gave and continues to give all of us tremendous hope that a discriminatory world can be changed to become more just, less dehumanizing, and more humane, acknowledging always that “change is difficult but it is possible.” I feel extremely privileged for having known Paulo, for having learned from him what it means to be human, and for having shared many laughs with him and Nita. These memorable moments I shared with Paulo always exhumed hope in his refusal to give up, in his rejection of cynicism, and his total negation of fatalism—a posture that refuses to accept any form of determinism while inviting us to embrace history as possibility. It is a posture that Paulo had in the world and with the world that continues to teach us the meaning of imagining otherwise para que possamos ser mais so that we can be more in our humanity. Paulo was a special friend, an exquisite human being, a lovingly militant intellectual whose death leaves a turbulent emptiness in our hearts. At the same time, his passion and compassion will always guide and define our collective struggle to eradicate hatred as we embrace what he always and kindly shared with us: LOVE.

It is within this context of love that Memories of Paulo became a reality to the extent that even those who have not consciously acknowledged this fact about Paulo, cannot escape the factor love as they reinvent Paulo in their unending struggle against social injustices, hatred, and all forms of dehumanization. It is the ever-present capacity to love and be loved that inspired, reinvigorated, and re-energized Paulo to share his always brilliant and insightful understanding of the world through the writing of penetrating and unveiling words during the last ten years of his life—words compact with passion, compassion, and wisdom that would
perhaps not been written in his last ten years of life without the presence of Nita Freire, who was simultaneously his dedicated *companheira*, student, teacher, and lover since, according to Paulo, “Nita taught him how to love again.”

Many of us feared that the death of Elza had cracked the very foundation of Paulo’s idealism which had not only attracted us to him and his writings but had also motivated many of us to embrace his challenge to make this world, in his own words, more beautiful, less ugly, more democratic, and less inhumane. Many of us also feared that Paulo had lost his *joie de vivre*, his intense desire to be in the world, to critically comprehend the world so as be able to transform it.

In the winter of 1987, I visited São Paulo to see Paulo, hoping to begin again our collaborative work that had stretched for many years. I remember perfectly the long plane trip from Boston to São Paulo—a trip filled with doubts, fears, and much uncertainty. On the one hand, I wanted desperately to see Paulo and resume our usual and always warm conviviality. On the other hand, I was afraid I would no longer find in Paulo’s beautiful and penetrating eyes the vibrancy that had so marked his ways of being in the world and with the world. I did not want to see Paulo without his unyielding belief in utopia that lovingly rejected determinism in favor of embracing history as possibility. I arrived in São Paulo in the morning and immediately telephoned Paulo. My initial hesitation disappeared almost completely when Paulo’s voice beamed with energy and joy. Even though I was very tired from the twelve-hour trip, Paulo insisted that I come to his house for lunch. As usual, I accepted since it was always difficult to say no to Paulo’s generous and loving invitations.

When I arrived at his house, Paulo introduced me to a very beautiful, almost classical woman who I thought was his colleague at the university. In introducing her to me, he spoke almost passionately about “her fantastic contributions to the Brazilian history of education,” her superb intuition, and her superior capacity for critical analysis. When we sat at the table to have lunch, I felt a great joy to see Paulo again happy. I noticed his insistence that this attractive, elegant, and eloquent woman sit next to him. In fact, in a classic Paulo Freire’s loving way, he strategically ushered me to another seat so Nita could be next to him. During this memorable lunch, I realized once again that Paulo always maintained a great coherence between his words, deeds, and ideas. I vividly remembered during that afternoon something that Paulo had shared with me many years earlier: “Never let the child in you die!” His playful gesture toward Nita, his loving smile, his undivided attention while she was explaining her thesis to us, the frequent gaze, and his almost nervous attempt to hold her hands (which he tried many times and not always successfully), made me want to imagine him as a teenager in love.

Many years later and sadly the last time I was with Paulo only months before his untimely death, as he and I were walking in New York, we finally talked about the concern that many of us had felt regarding his lack of desire to live after Elza’s death. I told him how happy I was to see him again filled with joy, renewed by an incredible hope, able to dream and love again. I remember clearly when he stopped, turned slightly toward me, and put his hand on my shoulder and said softly: “Yes, Donaldo. I was also fearful that I did not want to live anymore. What
Nita gave me was fantastic, magical! She not only made me rediscover the joy of life but she also taught me a great lesson that I intellectually knew but, somehow, I emotionally could no longer remember: to always view and embrace history as possibility. It is possible to love again.”

As we walked on Lexington Avenue, Paulo stopped again and said:

Nita not only taught me that it is possible to love again, but she gave me a new and renewed intellectual energy. I feel re-energized intellectually. For example, my new books, *Pedagogy of Hope* and *Letters to Christina*, could not have been written without her. She not only gave me the intellectual energy, but she also impressed upon me the importance of revisiting my earlier ideas so as to reinvent them. Her keen understanding of history enabled her to make compelling arguments concerning the importance of rethinking those historical contexts that had radicalized my thinking and that had given birth to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Her important notes to these books gave readers an important insight into the historical conditions that made me the thinker, the writer that I am today. This is fantastic! Nita is without a doubt one of the few people who truly and completely understand my work. It is almost scary. Sometimes I think she understands my ideas better than I do.

I would add that without Nita, we would not have *Pedagogy of Freedom*, a book that both Henry Giroux and Stanley Aronowitz consider as one of his best. Without Nita we would not have *Pedagogy of Indignation*. Without Nita we would not have *Pedagogy of Tolerance* and without Nita we would not have *Daring to Dream* and *Pedagogy of Commitment*. Simply put, without Nita we would not have the highly prolific Paulo Freire during his last ten years in this world. We would have an unfinished Paulo Freire who, even is his *unfinishedness*, would still have remained a great Paulo Freire. With Nita’s love, dedication, and inspiration, Paulo Freire became more than great. He became the most important educator of the last fifty years in the world. For her uncompromising dedication to Paulo, for her unyielding love to him, and for the loving companionship with him to be more together as soul mates and as intellectuals, we want to collectively say OBRIGADA.

The writing of this Preface to *Memories of Paulo* not only gave me the opportunity to humbly add vivid memories to this important collection of stories that both redefine and reinvent Paulo Freire, but it also allowed me to share with the readers of this insightful portrayal of Paulo Freire, his words of wisdom and also indignation concerning the nature of, not a reformist but, a revolutionary educational practice:

It is with profound conviction and, above all, in the democratic practice of this revolution that we can find great teachings for the struggle of the [oppressed] people. The popular content and the revolutionary practice of democracy understood as strategic value that can make educational practices possible and, above all, can create openness and an indispensable flexibility in the revolutionary process that begin to take shape in the answers to the concrete reality, aspirations and needs of the [oppressed] people.
PREFACE

It is in this context that the seemingly greater power of this Revolution can be generated: the moral and ethical power of the people who are heroically capable to confront the most criminal investments of North-American imperialism and the grave economic and social consequences that they provoke.¹

These prophetic words not only unveil the cruelties of an obscene capitalism which we are currently witnessing, but they also emanate from a deep love for humanity that left Paulo with no other choice but to courageously denounce a world (dis)order that remains deaf to the cries of ten thousand children who die of hunger every day in the world.

NOTES


Donaldo Macedo, Professor
University of Massachusetts, Boston
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A grateful acknowledgement first goes to Nita Freire, Donaldo Macedo and Peter McLaren for opening and closing our book with such passion and love, and to all our contributors for sharing their heartfelt memories about Paulo. A special thanks goes to our copy editor Patricia Harriman, College of Educational Studies, Chapman University, whose diligence, editing expertise, and consistent good humor has been invaluable in making Memories of Paulo a reality. Paulo was virtually unknown to her at the beginning of the project. Now, through her close readings of all the submissions, she too has “come to know” Paulo.

Second, our deep appreciation goes to Alexandre Oliveira for the translation of Nita Freire’s work from Portuguese to English, also Dan Whitesell, Irvine Valley Community College, and Fernando Hernandez, University of California Irvine, for the translation from Spanish into English of the article by Ester Perez. We also thank John D. Holst and Maria Alicia Vetter for the translation of Rolando Pinto’s entry from the Spanish.
Of all the stories I could tell about my husband Paulo Freire’s personality, I believe one is most important to tell, to instigate and stimulate educators toward the world of imagination and of creation. And that is to have a conversation with those who talk to me about his boyish side, which he fortunately never lost.

Paulo was a boy, with a great and profound critical capacity, as he devoted himself, even at an adult age, “to the things that only children do and think.” He would hide behind the door so I would find him. He was amused by the most ingenuous comedians possible. He would be exultant at my complimenting him on his beautiful whistling. He surrendered himself with great tenderness to his childhood heroes, chief among who was Tom Mix, with his unshakable belief—it might be cruel to say a child’s belief—in people’s good faith, without ever taking into account how ill-advised their behavior might be. Deep down, Paulo never wanted to lose his childlike joy and his great tolerance regarding human frailties.

At certain times, I thought it might be important to call his attention to those ways of his, his limitless generosity in giving of himself to others, in fact, one of his greatest virtues, I must recognize, but he would pay me no mind. He never changed in that. He remained in his childlike stance to the day of his death: Nita, it does not matter, what they do with what I say, with what I think and do. If they distort me, that is not my problem; it is the problem of whoever does that!!!

I would like, however, to take a moment in this narrative about my husband to make some considerations around what the figure of Tom Mix meant to him. I have spoken about this “hero’s” image to Paulo in two of my books, but I believe it is important to speak here and one more time about his relationship with this character-artist.

I had previously conducted an analysis of the emotional repercussion of the North-American actor upon Paulo, but now, I would like to focus on a more epistemological approach, however, without abandoning the emotional. In other words, I now want to speak in more detail about an adult artist from Hollywood, from such distant parts, who “told a great deal about himself” to a poor, Brazilian, northeastern boy who did not know the fantasy world of the movies, nor the stories of “good facing evil,” already so characteristic, at the beginning of the 20th century, of our brothers to the north. Those stories are the generative matrix of the culture—not always moral, but unfortunately moralistic—of the Yankees. But it was those stories of that culture that awakened in the Recifean boy an identification
between Tom Mix’s “dreams” and his own, even if those were not clearly perceived as a problem to be confronted and were, therefore, not conscious. It was a simulation of the truth to one and, to the other, the truth he could not understand to its full magnitude.

Paulo was acquainted with the elitist language of discrimination, of “do you know who you are speaking with,” “this inferior race think they are people,” “black men and women are only good for heavy labor,” a language that caused him disgust even before he understood the reason for being of that discourse on the part of the oppressors. After all, contrary to those, he was always, since he was a boy, with and in favor of the weak, the exploited, and the oppressed. In childhood, that was so out of sensibility and intuition. In his adult life, it was out of political conviction and ethical solidarity.

Clearly, Paulo had no way of realizing the differences between reality and dream, between truly living the poverty he found himself in, experiencing every sort of need, and wanting to be a modern Robin Hood. The fact is, however, that his indignation was alive within from a tender age, and Tom Mix helped him to emotionally see, to be, in fact, in the same position of concern as the actor’s—be that real or simulated—in favor of justice. That is to say, being against the oppressors as much as his childhood idol, who was, thus, a live presence throughout his life, from his boyhood world of make-believe to his death.

The American cowboy, therefore, no doubt had an important influence upon the adult Paulo’s boyish ways of being. It was Tom Mix who led my husband to begin to understand, besides the behavior of the “good men” in the cruel northeast where he lived, what he himself felt and intuited: the perverse adult world of oppression, the meanness of the powerful, as he would later say so many times, whether in the fight against sexism, racism, and against brutal social-class conditions, or with respect to any other forms of elitist discrimination against the many “minorities” in society.

As a boy, Paulo picked up, in the cowboy’s story, his stance before defenseless women, on a vein that was to be taken seriously. The defenseless female in Tom Mix reached him as a metaphor that he, boyishly, never let go of. In fact, Paulo enjoyed bringing up the metaphor, and did so many times, as the starting point for his political, ethical, educational argumentations. That metaphor was a starting point for the process of conscientization.

I am speaking of my realization that Tom Mix was a mythical presence, a necessary hero in the construction of childhood dreams, but it also remained present in my husband, in spite of all the obvious, profound, and critical overcoming, in Paulo’s revolutionary and humanist utopia, mediated by conscientization. Watching the Tom Mix films at about ten years of age or a bit more meant the concretization of what he wanted and dreamed of for his world: understanding the reason for being and helping those with whom he interacted or whom he saw stumble along in search of nothing or nobody, through the streets of Recife. Those were a boy’s dreams, yet they were dreams founded on the life ethic that he would come to create. Obviously, I repeat, it was not clearly laid out in his childhood dreams and conjectures, but it became concrete in his adult age. In the last ten
years of his life, Paulo countless times, wherever we went, in our pilgrimage throughout the world, especially in the USA, looked for at least one Tom Mix film of the many he had seen in his childhood days.

“Nita, I would so like to see again the full-length movies starred in by my buddy Tom Mix.” That sentence, repeated by Paulo so many times, gave me, since I married him, and it gives me to this day, the certainty that Tom Mix represented much more to my husband, in his childhood imagination, more than a simple movie meant to entertain adults and “plantear” (a word from the Spanish language that he regretted not having in Brazilian Portuguese) goodness in the souls of children. I am sure that to Paulo, Tom Mix represented much more than adventure stories about a justice-loving character in movies made for children.

In the twenties and thirties of the last century, differently from today’s grotesque and hideous “Hollywoodian” adventures with their outlandish and deadly machines or gigantic and terrifying insects, which do nothing more than provide “childhood” concreteness to the meanness of these globalization times and of neoliberalism, Tom Mix films said something that touched the souls of those who dreamt of a better world. With his soul, his boyish sensibility and sweetness, Paulo realized that, I am certain of it, at a tender age.

Nowadays, films made for adolescents do not mean or are not able to realize life as a human adventure of human greatness in the human world, a seeking for the best for human existence and the realization of its ontological destiny: that of happiness and justice. Paulo’s sensibility allowed him to become enchanted by such things, as was his beloved brother Themistocles, at the poor and modest Casa Forte theater in Recife.

Paulo’s critical understanding of education was born out of his wise and profound reflection and of various sorts of theoretical reading, from the starting point of his observations and intuitions about his northeastern reality, but also out of those “small” things that he experienced, that he lived through. Paulo’s critical understanding of education was born, as he would say himself: from his childhood, his reading of the life experiences that he went through, felt, and reflected upon. It was born from his most remote childhood readings of the world, which in his adult life gained the strength of categories for analysis and reflection. We must not doubt that those Tom Mix stories populated Paulo’s creative mind, for he never forgot them or him. Tom Mix stories simply made sense to the intuition of a sad and poor child, but one already greatly sensitive to and with solidarity toward human dramas.

Back in the eighties and nineties, when Paulo insisted upon finding, in some store somewhere out there in the world, one of the Tom Mix movies, he was aware of the importance of his dreams, his childhood enchantment, and of preserving those dreams and enchantment in his adult life, as a thinker of education. Paulo’s greatest dream was the utopian dream for better days, in a truly democratic society. That was a dream he dreamed since his childhood, one he brought with him throughout his life, one he deliberately never wanted to lose. On the contrary, by taking them seriously, he was able to incorporate them, build them into, his critical-utopian dreams for the transformation of societies, for a better world.
The final words in the book I wrote about my husband\(^2\) are precisely about his boyish side, Paulo’s *childlike facet*:

I, thus, finalize this Paulo Freire biography, as painful as it was to me, as permeated by moments of extreme joy as it was, as I recalled facts, moments, feelings, and emotions and wrote about them with his words, joyful words of his, because even when speaking about his own death, he spoke from the depths of his childlike joy in having been able to “return home,” in having returned to his beloved country. His joy was in his being boyishly open to LIFE. It was in the boy’s pleasure at being alive. Paulo would say, about the childlike joy that oriented his entire life to the day of his death, about his whole Life history: ‘Oh boy! That childlike joy is still very much alive and still childlike. I think I am going to live for a long time still and die in Brazil. Well, then, when I die, that joy will be childlike still.’ (Freire, p. 621)

Having received the title of “Bambino Permanente” (Eternal Boy) from the Biblioteca Comunale de Ponsacco, Pisa, Italy, presented to him in Reggio Emilia, on March 31, 1990, demonstrates that many of those who read Paulo felt that within his rigorous words there lay the *hidden boy* that he always was.

It is true; the greatest, the most beautiful trait of this political-ethical-educational thinker who was Paulo Freire is his having had the capacity for critiquing, for powerfully denouncing the dramas of life, without losing, at any point throughout his presence in the world, his way of being a responsible adult who knew how to love and be happy, and therefore, having *announced* the new as only boys who are pure, serious, and adult in character can do.

*Nita Freire, 2009*

Translated into English by Alexandre Oliveira

Original Portuguese follows

Paulo Freire, *o eterno menino.*

De todas as histórias que eu poderia contar sobre a personalidade de Paulo Freire, meu marido, acredito que a mais importante para atrair, instigar e estimular educadores (as) para o mundo da imaginação e da criação, é conversar com quem me lê, sobre o seu *lado menino*, que, felizmente ele nunca perdeu.

Com enorme e profunda capacidade de crítica Paulo foi um *menino* ao se entregar, mesmo na idade adulta, “às coisas que só as crianças fazem e pensam”. Escondia-se atrás da porta para que eu o encontrasse. Alegrava-se com os comediantes mais ingênuos possíveis. Ficava exultante com os meus elogios pelo seu belo assobiar. Entregava-se com grande ternura aos seus heróis de infância, o maior deles Tom Mix; e na sua crença inabalável _ seria cruel dizer numa crença de criança? _ na boa fé das pessoas, sem nunca ter levado em conta o temerário no comportamento destes e destas. No fundo Paulo nunca quis perder sua *alegria-menina* é sua enorme tolerância com relação às fragilidades humanas.

Em certos momentos pensei que seria importante chamar-lhe a atenção para com esse jeito sem limites de *generosidade de entrega* aos outros e outras, aliás, devo reconhecer, uma de suas virtudes maiores, mas ele não me dava ouvidos. Nunca mudou nisso. Permaneceu com essa *postura-menina* até o dia de sua morte.
Gostaria, entretanto, de me deter nesta narrativa sobre o meu marido fazendo algumas considerações em torno do que a figura de Tom Mix representou para ele. Falei sobre a imagem deste “héroi” para Paulo em dois de meus livros mas creio que é muito importante falar aqui e outra vez sobre a sua relação com este artista-personagem.

Antes eu tinha feito uma análise sobre a repercussão emocional do ator norte-americano sobre Paulo, agora quero focar-me numa abordagem mais epistemológica, sem entretanto, abandonar a emocional. Em outras palavras, agora quero falar mais detalhadamente sobre um adulto artista de Hollywood, de plagas tão distantes, que “contou muito de si” a um menino pobre, brasileiro, nordestino, que nem conhecia o mundo da fantasia do cinema e nem as histórias “do bem enfrentando o mal”, tão próprias, já no início do século XX, dos nossos irmãos do Norte. Histórias que são a matriz geradora da cultura – nem sempre moral, mas infelizmente moralista – dos yankes. Mas, foram as histórias dessa cultura que despertaram no menino recifense identificar os “sonhos” de Tom Mix com os seus, mesmo que ainda não percebidos claramente como um problema a ser enfrentado e portanto, não conscientes. Era para um a simulação da verdade e para o outro uma verdade que não conseguia entender na sua magnitude.

Paulo conhecia a linguagem elitista e discriminatória do “sabe com quem está falando?”, “essa raça inferior pensa que é gente!”, “negros e negras só servem mesmo para o trabalho pesado”, que lhe causava ojeriza mesmo antes de compreender a razão de ser deste discurso dos opressores. Porque, ao contrário, desde menino ele esteve sempre com e em favor dos fracos e dos explorados (as) e oprimidos (as). Na sua infância, por sensibilidade e intuição. Na sua vida adulta, por convicção política e solidariedade ética.

É claro que Paulo não tinha condições de perceber as diferenças entre a realidade e o sonho, entre viver de verdade a pobreza nela metida e nela sofrendo toda sorte de necessidades e querer ser um Robin Hood moderno. Mas, o fato é que, sua indignação, estava viva nele desde tenra idade e Tom Mix ajudou-o a ver emocionalmente, estar, de fato, na mesma posição de preocupação do ator – verdadeira ou simulada –, em favor da justiça. O que vale dizer, estar contra os opressores (as) tanto quanto o seu ídolo de infância, que, assim, foi uma presença viva por toda a sua vida desde seu mundo do faz de conta de menino até a sua morte.

O cow-boy norte-americano, portanto, teve sem dúvida alguma, uma influência importante, no modo de ser do menino Paulo adulto. Foi Tom Mix que induziu meu marido a começar a entender, ao lado do comportamento dos “homens de bem” do nordeste cruel onde vivia, o que sentia e intuía: o perverso mundo adulto da opressão, a malvadez dos poderosos, como dirá depois tantas vezes. Quer na defesa contra o machismo, o racismo e a situação de classe social brutais, quer com relação a quaisquer outras formas de discriminação elitista e discriminatória contra outras tantas “minorias” da sociedade.

Paulo, quando menino, captou na história do cow-boy, na postura deste diante das mulheres indefesas um veio a ser levado a sério. A mulher indefesa de Tom
Mix chegou a ele como uma metáfora, que meninamente nunca abandonou. Aliás, Paulo gostava e trouxe, muitas vezes, a metáfora como um ponto de partida para as suas argumentações políticas, éticas e educativas. A metáfora, como ponto de partida para o processo de conscientização.

Estou dizendo de minha constatação de que Tom Mix foi uma presença mítica, do herói necessário à construção dos sonhos da infância, mas também, permaneceu presente, em meu marido, com toda a superação óbvia, profunda e crítica, na utopia revolucionária e humanista de Paulo, intermediada pela conscientização.

Assistir às películas de Tom Mix aos 10 anos ou pouco mais de idade representava a concretização do que ele queria e sonhava para o seu mundo: entender a razão de ser e ajudar as pessoas com as quais se relacionava ou via tropeadamente caminhar à procura de nada e de ninguém, pelas ruas do Recife. Eram sonhos de menino, entretanto sonhos fundamentados na ética da vida, que viria a criar. Obviamente, repito, não claramente posta nas suas conjecturas e sonhos infantis, mas concretizadas na sua idade adulta.

Nos 10 últimos anos de sua vida Paulo procurou inúmeras vezes, por todo canto aonde andávamos, na nossa andarilhagem pelo mundo, sobretudo nos USA, por um filme sequer de Tom Mix dos tantos que tinha assistido nos seus tempos de infância.

Nita, queria tanto ver novamente "os filmes de longa-metragem protagonizado por meu camarada Tom Mix".

Esta sua frase, repetida por Paulo tantas vezes, me dava, desde que me casei com ele e continuou até hoje me dando, uma certeza de que, para meu marido, Tom Mix representou no seu imaginário infantil muito mais do que uma simples película para distrair os adultos e “plantear” (palavra da língua espanhola que ele lamentava não existir na brasileira) bondade nas almas infantis. Tenho certeza de que para Paulo Tom Mix representava muito mais do que histórias de aventura de personagem amante da justiça de filmes destinados às crianças.

Nos anos 20 e 30 do século passado, diferentemente das aventuras grotescas e horripilantes das holywoodianas atuais com suas máquinas mirabolantes e mortíferas ou insetos gigantescos e apavorantes, que nada mais fazem do que dar concretude “infantil” à malvadez dos tempos da globalização e do neoliberalismo, as películas de Tom Mix diziam alguma coisa que tocava a alma dos que sonhavam com um mundo melhor. Paulo com sua alma, sensibilidade e doçura meninas constatou isto, esteu certa disso, em tenra idade.

Atualmente as películas feitas para os adolescentes não querem ou não podem perceber a vida como uma aventura humana da grandeza humana no mundo do humano procurando o melhor para a existência humana realizar o seu destino ontológico: o da felicidade e o da justiça. Coisas, que a sensibilidade de Paulo se deixava encantar e ao seu muito querido irmão Themístocles, no pobre e modesto cinema de Casa Forte, do Recife.

A compreensão crítica de educação de Paulo nasceu de suas reflexões sábias e profundas e de leituras teóricas diversas, a partir de suas observações e intuições sobre a realidade nordestina, mas também dessas “pequenas” coisas que ele viveu,
que ele experimentou. A compreensão crítica de educação de Paulo nasceu, como ele mesmo dizia: na sua infância, na leitura de suas experiências de vida vividas, sentidas e refletidas. Nas suas leituras de mundo da infância mais remota, que na sua vida adulta tomou força de categorias de análise e reflexão. Não podemos duvidar de que as histórias de Tom Mix povoaram a criativa mente de Paulo, pois daquelas e deste ele jamais esqueceu. É que as histórias de Tom Mix fizeram sentido nele pela intuição de criança pobre e triste, mas já muito sensível e solidário aos dramas humanos.

Quando nos anos 80 e 90 Paulo insistia em encontrar em alguma loja de vídeos espalhada por este mundo um dos filmes de Tom Mix ele sabia da importância de seus sonhos, de seus encantamentos de infância e da preservação desses sonhos e desse encantamento na vida adulta, de pensador da educação. O sonho maior de Paulo era o sonho utópico de dias melhores, numa sociedade realmente democrática. Sonho que sonhou desde sua infância e, que carregou por toda a sua vida, o qual deliberadamente jamais quis perder. Ao contrário, os levando a sério os pode incorporar e embutir nos seus sonhos crítico-utópico de transformação das sociedades, de um mundo melhor.

As últimas palavras do livro que escrevi sobre o meu marido são justamente sobre o lado menino, a face-menina de Paulo. Finalizo, assim, esta biografia de Paulo Freire, tão dolorosa que foi para mim, permeada de momentos de extrema alegria, ao relembrar fatos, momentos, sentimentos e emoções e escrever sobre eles, com palavras dele, alegres palavras dele, porque mesmo falando de sua própria morte ele falava do mais fundo da sua alegria-menina: “volta para casa”, de ter voltado ao seu querido país. De meninamente estar aberto à VIDA. De com gosto menino estar vivo.

Paulo falava da alegria menina que norteou toda a sua vida até o dia de sua morte, de toda a sua história de Vida: Puxa rapaz! A alegria menina continua vivissima e menina ainda. Acho que ainda vou viver muito e morrer no Brasil. Pois bem, quando eu morrer, esta alegria ainda estará menina!” (Freire: 621)

Ter recebido o título de “Bambino Permanente” (Eterno Menino”) da Biblioteca Comunale de Ponsacco, Pisa, Itália, a ele entregue em Reggio Emilia, em 31 de março de 1990, demonstra que muitos dos que leram a Paulo sentiam que em sua rigorosas palavras estava escondido o menino que sempre foi.

É verdade, o traço maior e mais bonito deste pensador político-ético-educador que foi Paulo Freire foi ter tido a capacidade de criticar contundentemente denunciando os dramas da vida, sem contudo ter perdido, em nenhum momento de sua presença no mundo, a sua maneira de ser um adulto responsável que soube amar e ser feliz, e por isso ter anunciado um novo, que só meninos de caráter puro, sério, de adulto, podem fazer.

NOTES
1 Nita e Paulo: crônicas de amor. Olho d’água, Nita e Paulo crônicas de amor, Preface by Marta Suplicy, São Paulo: Olho D’Água, 1998; Chronicles of love: my life with Paulo Freire. Preface by Marta Suplicy, Introduction by Donald Macedo. New York; Washington, DC; Baltimore; Bern; Frankfurt Main; Berlin; Brussels; Vienna; Oxford: Lang, 2001; and Paulo Freire: uma história de
FOREWORD


Nita Freire

Dr. Ana Maria (Nita) Araújo Freire is an international speaker and author of many books and articles, including Paulo Freire: uma história de vida (2006) and Chronicles of Love: My Life with Paulo Freire (2001).
INTRODUCTION

For remembering, as we have conceived it, essentially implies consciousness of itself.

Aristotle, 350 BCE

What are memories? They are the indelible impressions we have of lived experiences. They mark moments when we have grown in our development; the time when a new child was born, a loved one has died; when our eyes have been opened to a new way of viewing the world; of understanding life in all of its complexities.

In this fast paced, technological world where memory is often viewed as how much information a computer chip can store without regard to its content, or how many gigabytes or megabytes a computer has, we reflect on the origin and meaning of the word memory—in the spirit of Paulo Freire (who always sought the meaning of words)—and seek to rekindle its more historical humane relevance. Drawing from the Sanskrit roots smar to remember through Indo-European smer memory, the ancient Greek mermeros/care laden and the Latin mermera with its connotation of both memory and mindfulness, this collection is not necessarily a concern for how much or how many memories we have of Paulo Freire but rather is an account of the care-laden and mindful intensity submerged within them.

With this in mind, our authors were asked to contribute their memories of Paulo with memories understood as “both to the power of remembering and to what is remembered.” The initial call for contributions read:

We are writing to invite you to join us in a book project dedicated to the memory of Paulo Freire. As you know, Paulo will have been gone from us ten years come 2007. To mark this occasion, we would like to get together with those of us to whom he has meant so much as a friend, a mentor, and a model and put together a book of remembrances. The emphasis of the book is going to be on the human side of which he shared so much with us. We like to include stories of personal nature that tell what kind of human being he was, with his joys and sadness, strengths and weaknesses, courage, humility, and sense of humor, particularly when the joke was on him. We believe Paulo embodied his teachings in his being, and this is what we are trying to capture. This is not going to be a book that illustrates his pedagogy, or explicates it. We prefer that these essays be short, about 1,000 words.

A follow-up call for submissions clarified two limitations: It requested first, contributions from those who had had personal contact with Paulo in one way or another, and second, to place emphases not on his theory or pedagogy per se but rather upon who he was and remains as an individual. However as we progressed in the book’s development, it became clear that, while most of the respondents adhered to our stated limitations, a few demurred. Some of the contributors wrote about Paulo as they got to know him through his work. They insisted they knew
him quite well in spite of never having the chance to meet him. A few others who
did know him, personally, seemed not to be able separate him from his theory in
that who he was could not be parsed from what he thought. Others thought that
either 1,000 words were not necessary or on the other hand, insufficient. In fact,
the average number of words turned out to be around 1500. After asking ourselves
what would Paulo likely do, we accepted these entries; the quality of their submis-
sions clearly trumped our stated limitations.

Thus, we have worked for several years putting together this tribute for Paulo,
whom we consider to be the most significant educational philosopher and practitioner
of the second half of the twentieth century. We embarked on this journey by
gathering the memories of people who knew Paulo as a way to honor him after the
10th anniversary of his death. Contributions came from writers throughout the
United States and other parts of the world. All of these “students” and friends of
Paulo cherish the moments they shared with him. They represent a wide range of
individuals who knew him at different periods of his life and in different situations
from onetime encounters to relationships spanning over thirty years. For the most
part, these individuals continue to practice as critical pedagogues in diverse fields
and localities with a common commitment to social justice and transformative
education, all in the spirit of Paulo’s legacy.

To reiterate a bit, we wished to commemorate him with stories about his
personal side, a social dimension of his person that those who read his books
and/or other writings rarely got to sense. In this manner, we meant to reveal his
many facets as a deeply humane individual who impacted the lives of many, from
a colleague who worked with him in Chile in 1968 to a ten-year-old child who
attended Disneyland with him in the mid 1980s.

In our attempt to show the intricacies of hope and love in this man, we called on
the colleagues and friends who had come to know Paulo Freire, the man. It could
be that they spoke with him at an invited event, or that they worked closely by his
side on an educational initiative; they might have shared a meal with him on one of
his many international visits, or sat with him to engage in dialogue; or they might
have merely attended one of his presentations. All of these writers give their
accounts of those special moments where they came to know Paulo in all his naked
humaness.

We hope that readers of our collection of stories will find the format simple and
unpretentious. Paulo often was apt to declare the right of individuals to speak in
their own voice as a moral necessity. To honor this claim, we have kept editing to a
minimum as much as possible. We know that is how Paulo would have liked it.

We invited Paulo’s beloved wife and inspiration, Nita Freire and his dear
friend, translator, and comrade, Donaldo Macedo to set the stage by writing the
Foreword and Preface, respectively, with his colleague, Peter McLaren constructing
the Afterword. Not surprisingly, we three editors also have taken the opportunity to
share our experiences with Paulo and the memories of how he touched our lives.
We organized the book somewhat chronologically, around different periods,
beginning with the 1960s and 70s, then into the very busy 1980s and ending in the
1990s. While these are not exact, we drew from the writings to get an idea of the
approximate timeline. We thank our many contributors for their willingness to reflect the moments they shared with Paulo Freire and that they hold so dear. It is indeed a tribute to Paulo that after so many years the memories remain so vivid and full of love. For it is out of love that Paulo did his work and lived his life.

Finally, it is out of commitment that we continue our work and live our lives in service of a better world where oppression is no longer acceptable and freedom is the result of a liberatory pedagogy for young and old, poor and affluent, privileged professional and worker alike. We seek the life of Paulo to serve as a reminder that with hope, all is possible in our quest for a more just world. Thank you, Paulo. We continue to miss you and will always remember you.

Introduction by Editors: Tom Wilson, Peter Park and Anaida Colon-Muñiz

NOTES

FROM THE 1960s

Cynthia Brown

Alma Flor Ada

John Pinto Contreras

John McFadden
1. REMEMBERING PAULO FREIRE

As the young wife (27 years old) of a Peace Corps doctor arriving in Recife, on the northeast coast of Brazil, in July of 1965, forty-two years ago, I knew no word of Portuguese and keeping my nine-month-old son alive and healthy seemed my most urgent task.

Recife was then a city of a million people, seventy percent of whom could not read or write. Paulo Freire, a native of the city, was not among the residents; he had fled first to Bolivia, then to Santiago, Chile, ten months earlier. A military coup had taken control of Brazilian national and state governments in April 1964, and Freire had been under house arrest for several months, then jailed for seventy days, before he left the country for what turned out to be sixteen years of exile.

Freire came to be seen as a dangerous man by the military authorities because he believed that the university should be a base for the education of all Brazilians, not just the elite. While teaching philosophy and education at the university, Freire also coordinated the Adult Education Program of the Popular Culture Movement. In February 1962 he became the director of the university’s newly established cultural Extension Service; there he developed his literacy program, supported by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) with enough funds to run a pilot project and train seventy coordinators.

Fewer than two years later, USAID terminated its assistance; it feared the rise of communism among the former illiterates. A coalition of Socialist, Labor, and Communist parties had elected the mayor of Recife, Miguel Arraes, to the governorship of the state of Pernambuco in October 1962. Two farm worker strikes occurred in 1963, the second one involving 25% of the state’s farm workers. The upper classes became frightened by the growing political awareness of the masses and retaliated with the military coup of April 1964.

I learned of Freire’s work from the university student who exchanged language lessons with me. She had worked with Freire’s “circles of culture,” and as she told me how they functioned, I realized their significance and wanted to learn more. Visiting the office of USAID, I posed as a researcher documenting how communistic Recife had been before the military takeover. Only under this ruse were they willing to give me copies of the slides that Freire used to provoke discussions and copies of the primers written by two of his colleagues, who could not stick to Freire’s decision that the generation of the words and the initial sentences should occur as a process by the learners and the coordinators working together.
I returned to the states in 1967, and three years later Freire’s major book, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was published in English. I loved the philosophical language that he so masterfully invented—but why didn’t he just tell people in plain words what he had done in Recife? I thought his readers would need more than inspiration, something specific to go on.

A few years later Herb Kohl and I organized a teacher education program in Berkeley to prepare people of diverse backgrounds for elementary school teaching. I began telling our students the details of Paulo’s literacy program, and Herb led the discussions of how these ideas might be applied to Berkeley’s classrooms. In 1978 my essay describing how Freire’s circles of culture operated was published by the Alternative Schools Network as *Literacy in Thirty Hours*, together with two interviews with teachers who discussed how to apply Freire’s ideas to teaching children.

Eventually, Paulo and Elza visited Berkeley. I was invited to Jack London’s home to meet them, along with a large group of Freire’s admirers. During the eager discussions that ensued, I posed to Paulo the question that I couldn’t shake; why hadn’t he been more specific in his writings about his teaching methods in Recife?

Paulo laughed and replied something like this: he knew the tendency of people to copy the methods of other teachers; that was exactly what he believed did not work to empower the learners or the teachers. To avoid being copied, he simply withheld any details that could be copied and focused instead on describing the conceptions that underlay his work.

How right he was! But Paulo didn’t scold me for trying to lay out the steps of his dialogue in the circles of culture; I can only hope that my account has not done too much damage of the sort he feared.

After dinner, as we gathered in the front hall to leave, the other women and I had a surprise that engraved itself on my memory. Elza fetched Paulo’s jacket out of the closet and helped him into it; the great revolutionary couldn’t put on his own jacket! I don’t recall that we said anything to him about this at the time, and I remember Paulo later joking about how much he had to learn about women’s liberation.

After Paulo returned to Brazil in 1980 to teach at the University of São Paulo, his friend there, Moacir Gadotti, posed to Paulo the same questions that one of Karl Marx’s daughters had put to Marx, so that the answers could be compared. At Freire’s death, a Brazilian newspaper published both sets of answers; here are a few of Paulo’s answers, with Marx’s in parenthesis:

- Your most characteristic trait: tolerance (coherence of purpose)
- Your idea of happiness: struggle (struggle)
- Your idea of disgrace: oppression (submission)
- The defect you are most guilty of: mistaken love (incredulity)
- Your greatest dislike: intellectual arrogance (Martin Tupper)
- Your preferred activity: teaching and learning (browsing second-hand bookstores)
It seems fitting that Brazil should have produced such a man as Paulo Freire. His tolerance, good humor, flexibility and absolute trust in the people seem as Brazilian as bossa nova, taken to the nth degree.

_Cynthia Stokes Brown, Professor Emerita
Dominican University of California_
ALMA FLOR ADA

2. PAULO FREIRE ALWAYS PRESENT

Paulo Freire became a part of my life, as it has happened for many, through his written words. As a university student in Lima, Perú in the early sixties, I read his essays smuggled from Chile in mimeographed copies. In the early seventies I rejoiced seeing that his thoughts had been incorporated into the Peruvian Educational Reform conceived and directed by the philosopher Augusto Salazar Bondy, who so lucidly had written about theories of domination. While this Reform was never fully carried on, partially due to Salazar Bondy’s premature death, and mainly because in Perú any form of social justice continues to be the need of many and the dream of a few, the documents developed to support it continue to be some of the best conceptualizations of national popular education.

My first personal encounter with Freire was in Sacramento, California, at a small gathering in a private home. He was already sitting, ready to speak, when I got there with my daughter Rosalma, and sat on the floor next to him. When he finished speaking his first words to me were very direct: “And, who are you?” I simply answered: “We had a common dear friend...” At the mention of Augusto Salazar, a bond was established that would only grow as time went on.

Thanks to Martin Carnoy’s efforts to bring Freire to Stanford, I was able to participate in an intensive course with Paulo. As a Latin American woman, a mother, living far from my country, it was natural to spend time with Paulo’s wife Elza, who was with him in that trip. Her comforting and nurturing presence had a great impact on me.

Paulo returned alone to California a few times more, and on a couple of occasions stayed at my home. And if Elza was not physically with him, she was always present in his conversation.

Of course, Paulo’s words and teachings were a constant in my life. Early on, when my daughter was a high school student, she had challenged me: “I like to listen to your presentations, I wish my teachers would treat me like you treat your students, and I have even read The Pedagogy of the Oppressed... but why doesn’t it feel to me that at home you are doing what you are teaching? It seems at home there is only one voice–yours!” This moment was one of the deciding moments in my life, which forced me to rethink my whole relationship with my children... and I have Paulo to thank for the firm commitment to walk the talk, to embody and become at every moment what I taught. And my life has been so much more meaningful for it.

Most of the dissertations I chaired at the University of San Francisco incorporated Paulo’s teachings on Critical Pedagogy and Participatory Research, and as my students taught me what they had learned from Freire, I continued learning...
from him as well. And he became one of the binding forces of the family the students were creating through their solidarity and their commitment to justice, inclusion and peace.

During one of his visits to speak at University of San Francisco, the Dean at the time and I took Paulo to lunch. I knew Paulo as someone who could truly enjoy a good meal. Unfortunately, this Peruvian restaurant served very large portions on oversize dishes. When Paulo saw the serving in front of him, he became very pensive, with eyes filled with tears he said: “In my country, a whole family could eat from a dish like this…” He never touched his food, and neither did we. For many years the Dean would say to me: “Remember the look on Freire’s face?” As with any of us, there were many layers to Paulo Freire, but compassion was always there at the core, and on occasion it could overtake him.

Elza’s death had a devastating effect on Paulo. And in subsequent encounters he wanted to share and discuss his loss with someone who had treasured Elza’s friendship, someone who also knew about losses and about cherished presences that survive death. And I was glad to be there for him as he had been there always for me.

Everyone who cared for Paulo rejoiced when he found a new strength in the relationship with Nita, who became his second wife. In São Paolo, I had several conversations with Paulo and Nita, about what this second beginning meant for both of them—at a park, walking through an artisan’s fair, visiting Elza’s tomb, and repeatedly at their home which Nita had redecorated very beautifully, with her collections of Brazilian art. These conversations stand out in my memory as a proof of their authentic and responsible way of encountering daily life. They were able to incorporate their love for their previous spouses and children into their own new-found love in a very truthful way, while at the same time preserving the glory they have discovered in their feelings for each other.

I remember Paulo jokingly saying one afternoon that he enjoyed “futbol” (soccer) because it was the only moment he could really just watch and not reflect about what was going on… but then he burst out laughing saying: “But, who wants to be dead, anyway?” Reflection, as well as love, was not only a way of life for Paulo Freire; it was life itself.

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