

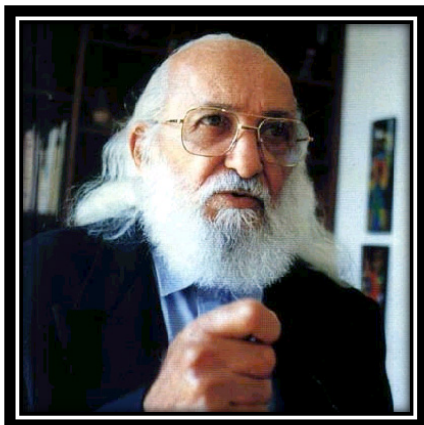
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

Paulo Freire

educator, activist, author

“Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.”

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Background Information

Born September 19, 1921; Died May 2, 1997

Paulo Freire was born into a middle class family just before the Great Depression, an economic event from 1929 to 1939 that severely hurt economies worldwide. In Brazil, Freire was poorly educated and grew up without money.¹ However, in 1944, he attended the University of Recife, studying law, philosophy and languages. Due to his experiences as a child, Freire dedicated his life to helping those without money, education, or status.

Freire's Resistance

Although he was a registered lawyer, Freire started his career as a teacher at a public high school. Freire focused on supporting youth with deeper level thinking that went beyond memorization and tests. Then Freire took a job with the Department of Education and Culture, working on curriculum for the illiterate and predominantly poor populations of Pernambuco, Brazil. He also helped adults to pass the literacy tests that were used to limit the voting rights of the poor during the presidential elections in Brazil.

In 1964, the Brazilian military overthrew the government, and Freire was imprisoned for almost three months. Then he moved away from Brazil and lived in exile for almost two decades.² During his exile, Freire wrote about educating oppressed populations. Freire exposed students to the social and political barriers in their lives and encouraged them to take direct actions toward freedom. Instead of filling students mind with endless facts, Freire created a teaching style that met students at their level and taught them about the true nature of society.

Achievements

Freire used his experiences as a child to effectively change the spaces in which he was raised. He was an award-winning author and revolutionary thinker, who influenced civil rights organizers and teachers worldwide. In the United States, Freire's ideas inspired civil rights protestors fighting for Black voting rights. His work stands for justice, liberation and equality for those without. Today, there are research centers and teaching styles dedicated to Freire that aim to fight against corruption and oppression.

¹ Bentley, L. (2014, August 13). A Brief Biography of Paulo Freire. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from <https://ptoweb.org/aboutpto/a-brief-biography-of-paulo-freire/>.

² Smith, M. K. (2002). Paulo Freire: dialogue, praxis and education. Retrieved November 12, 2019, from <http://infed.org/mobi/paulo-freire-dialogue-praxis-and-education/>.

Essential Questions

1. Freire was imprisoned and exiled from his country for standing up for the poor and disadvantaged. Was he wrong for doing so?
 - a. Why or why not?

2. Paulo Freire used his experiences as a child to effectively change the spaces in which he was raised. What experiences have you faced that shape your learning and life?

3. How do our backgrounds and privileges change how we learn, live and grow in society?

4. *“Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.”*
 - a. Do you argue with his position? Why or Why not?