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Paulo Freire

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InstitutoPauloFreire

Steve Biko

International Peace Award

In a unique development, Umtapo has decided to present the Steve Biko International Peace Award 2005 posthumously to the late revolutionary Brazilian popular educator, Paulo Freire, whose ideas and pedagogy formed the basis of Umtapo's modus operandi since it was established.

Freire was the one who married politics and teaching, the one who dared us to teach students not only to read and write but to "read the word and the world." Skills alone are not enough, he taught us; the point of education must be to illuminate reality, to unmask how domination works. And he emphasized that teaching could be part of changing society. In the early 1960s, a man living in Recife, Brazil explained why he wanted to conquer his own illiteracy: "I want to learn to read and write so that I can stop being the shadow of other people." Paulo Freire dedicated his life to helping people emerge from the shadows to transform their own lives, and to challenge the oppression that thrives on and perpetuates ignorance.

Born in Recife in 1921, Freire earned a law degree but spent most of his life as an educator. His career

encompassed university extension projects in Brazil, the establishment of literacy programs in Chile, Nicaragua, and Guinea-Bissau, international consulting, and, toward the end of his life, three years as secretary for education for Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest school system. He authored two dozen books, including the highly influential "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," published in 1970.

Freire leaves a profound legacy. Steadfastly opposed to teaching as indoctrination, he insisted that learning is inescapably political and that educators should help students articulate their own vision of social justice. He argued for a pedagogy that draws on the lives of our students to engage them in asking critical questions about the larger society. "[B]y criticizing traditional schools," Freire said, "what we have to criticize is the capitalist system that shaped these schools."

Quotes In Memory of Paulo Freire

A Bit of My Life with Paulo Freire

Ana Maria Araujo Freire

"I wish to speak as his widow, as a woman who has lost and cries for the man who loved and was loved by her so much. I wish, thus, to speak about the passion, about the complicity and the difficulties of a life so intensely shared..."

Remembering Paulo Freire

Ann Berthoff

"Paulo Freire was dangerous because he made change seem possible to the peasants. His revolutionary praxis depended on his passionate belief that the oppressed can move towards liberation, can begin to take power, NOT because they can recognize the letters of the alphabet and NOT because they can read but because they know THAT they are literate..."

Paulo Freire in Context

Gary A. Olson

"Literacy worker, Secretary of Education, coffee aficionado, Paulo did not simply pontificate in his scholarly works about 'democratic practices,' he practiced democratic politics in everyday life..."

Che Guevara, Paulo Freire, and the Politics of Hope

Peter McLaren

"Few figures as vivid as Che Guevara and Paulo Freire have crossed the stage of human history. It surely is tragic that their generation did not awaken at their call, but more tragic still is the possibility that future generations will choose not to heed their message or follow their bold example. We will never see the likes of them again."