

# Pedagogy of the Oppressed

By Zachary Margulis

World-renowned educational philosopher Paulo Freire will conduct a workshop for teaching assistants on campus on April 18 and give a public lecture on April 19.

Freire, a Brazilian educator whose legendary book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* changed the face of education in the Third World, now runs the city school system in his native Sao Paulo, Brazil. His profound influence began in the 1960s, when he developed educational ideas for literacy campaigns that formed a key element of liberation movements throughout the Third World. He has worked in Brazil, Chile, Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau and Mexico.

"Freire's major contribution was that he articulated a way in which education could be truly liberating by helping

methods had such profound impact there, Hurst said, that peasants started demanding rights to the land they worked, seeding the disorder that led to the collapse of the civilian government and resulted in Freire's exile.

After 1964, he fled to Chile, where he stayed until the election of left-wing president Salvador Allende years later. Since then he has lived in Mexico, the United States and Switzerland, finally returning to Brazil after its return to civilian government in 1984. He was instrumental in designing the Sandinista literacy campaign following the 1979 revolution in Nicaragua.

"If you look at the impact of educators throughout the world in terms of numbers of people influenced, he's unequivocally the most important of the twentieth century," said Hurst.

Freire's influence is greatest in the Third World, where his methods have inspired and reflected a strong trend towards democratizing education. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has been translated into 20 languages, selling somewhere between five and eight million copies worldwide. Outside Latin America, it has been especially well-received by opposition groups in South Korea, South Africa and India. The reception has been chillier in Socialist countries like North Korea and the Soviet Union, where they use the rhetoric of liberation, "but they don't indulge in the practice," Hurst said.

While the book has been popular in Europe, especially as a way of understanding the Third World, its explicitly non-Eurocentric emphasis has limited its influence there.

Freire's latest book, *You Make the Road by Walking* hit the shelves several weeks ago. It brings together two strands of thought about education that developed independently in the United States and the Third World, taking what the slums of Sao Paulo and the mining towns of Appalachia have in common in their endemic educational solutions to oppression.

The book represents many years of collaboration between Appalachian educator Miles Horton and Freire. Horton, who was in his early 80s, died last January.

Horton founded and ran the Highlander Center, a Tennessee institution for adult education that brought Blacks and whites into the same classrooms for the first time in Tennessee history. Multi-racial education was illegal in Tennessee until 1971.

Asked what classes at the Highlander Center did to make her refuse to move to the back of a bus in Selma, Ala., Rosa Parks replied simply: "Everything."

Freire's ideas caught the attention of Graduate Assembly Teaching Assistant Training Coordinator Lula Fragg when he first visited Berkeley several years in a row in the early 1980s.

"I thought he'd be a perfect person for our conference on T.A. training," Fragg said, because of his emphasis on the

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people understand the conditions of their lives so they can change them," said Berkeley Professor John Hurst.

The method is designed to help people solve their own problems, so that the role of education becomes limited to providing vocabulary and context for the expression of ideas. The goal is to educate, not to domesticate, in Freire's terms. "The idea is that you (the educator) don't tell the people, the people tell you," Hurst said.

Freire's ideas first got him into trouble after Brazil's 1964 right-wing coup. He had been working on a literacy campaign sponsored by the progressive pre-coup government in the country's impoverished Northeast region. His

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value of democratic education.

Fragg contacted Hurst, who organized the earlier visits, and succeeded in attracting Freire to the campus, where he will run a workshop for T.A.s on April 18 from 10 a.m. to noon in the Tilden Room of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Student Union Building and give a free public lecture on April 19 from 7 to 9 p.m. at 155 Dwinelle Hall.

Hurst said Freire will "help people ask if we genuinely believe in a democratic society and what we need to change in the university and education in order to achieve that. Of course, there is no single answer — but the first step is to ask the question."

*The Graduate Assembly presents*

two events with

**Paulo Freire**

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***1. TAs as Facilitators***

*Thursday, April 18, 1991, 10-12 AM*

*Tilden Room, MLK Jr. Student Union*

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***2. Conscientization: A Public Lecture***

*Friday, April 19, 1991, 7-9 PM*

*155 Dwinelle, UC Berkeley*

*for more information contact Lula Fragd - 642-2175*