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FOREWORD

Version 5

At a moment such as this in history, when people declare the impotence of action and the futility of values so insistently and with such certainty, when the ideological discourse decrees the freedom from ideology, the death of dreams, and of utopia, when people justify adaptation to the world as it is as opposed to the rebellious struggle to change it (through which we affirm ourselves and become creatures capable of decisiveness and rupture), it is appropriate and even necessary to celebrate the appearance of a book such as Participatory Research: Voices from North America. The authors in this volume not only recognize the potential of women and men to act, to know, to value, to establish limits, to choose, to imagine, to feel, to create, to decide, to formulate an action and direct it toward a goal, to refine and evaluate that action, in order to humanize the world, to reshape or recreate it, but they also recognize in participatory research that they promote a politico-pedagogic instrument for moving women and men to action. The authors of this book know very well that the silence, the paralyzing fatalism in which millions of Marias and Pedros, Susans and Joes, Fatimas and Mohammeds of the world today find themselves as individuals and as social classes, is not their fate, their lot, or their given destiny. Precisely because it is not destiny, nor fate, that they should wait for better days as they do--simply waiting expectantly, instead of expectantly struggling for better

days, they can have hope and not the hopelessness of accommodation that simple, fruitless waiting brings.

The authors of this book also know that participatory research is no enchanted magic wand that can be waved over the culture of silence, suddenly restoring the desperately needed voice that has been forbidden to rise and to be heard. They know very well that the silence is not a genetically or ontologically determined condition of these women and men but the expression of perverted social, economic, and political structures, which can be transformed. Participatory research that these authors propound, in which the silenced are not just incidental to the curiosity of the researcher but are the masters of inquiry into the underlying causes of the happenings in their world, becomes, as mentioned earlier, a politico-pedagogic instrument for moving them beyond the silence, in which they find themselves, into the quest to claim the world.

This book deserves to be read.

Paulo Freire

Sao Paulo

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