

Paulo Freire: The Man from Recife: A Review

LOIS MCFADYEN CHRISTENSEN

Abstract:

Paulo Freire: *The Man from Recife*, by James D. Kirylo (2011) is an in-depth biographical book about Freire's life from his birth through disseminating his lasting legacy. Included in the remarkable text are Freire's challenges with people of poverty in Brazil, Chile, and Guinea-Bissau, Africa. As was Freire's custom to interact among people in each context perpetuating the practice of reading the world, geographically particular worlds (Freire, 1998), in an unpretentious yet persuasively strong way, Kirylo captures the slices of life from each chapter of his life. Particularly salient is the innovative chapter in which Kirylo includes quotes from a myriad of noted critical scholars who were influenced personally by Freire. Uncannily, Kirylo perfectly places Freire's quotes to adroitly accent the biography making it somewhat autobiographical. Critical pedagogues and Freirians, put this text on your must read list.

PAULO FREIRE: THE MAN FROM RECIFE: A REVIEW

James D. Kirylo's warmly written text, *Paulo Freire: The Man from Recife*, offers readers a remarkable insight into the extraordinary life of Paulo Freire. Being able to glimpse into Freire's childhood home and perceive the authoritatively nurturing and loving caregiving by his parents, readers are able to consider the circumstances that paved Freire's path. Privy to Freire's puzzled life's journey as presented by Kirylo, readers easily piece together the occurrences that perfectly

established the man who had and has such transformational power upon people in poverty and critical educators.

Written in a chronological format, Kirylo (2011) wraps Freire's life story in his unpretentiousness, but stresses his committed work to equalize the uneven class divisions through teaching people in poverty how to read the written word while simultaneously reading the world. Paulo Freire, an exceptionally intelligent man and the essence of an educator, was able to accomplish this feat in 45 days. Yet, his work continues to give critical pedagogues inspiring criterion to build fervent principles for equity and justice. Kirylo aptly and eloquently points this out.

Through conquering a chunk of Brazilian illiteracy among people in poverty for generations, Freire clearly stirred adult literacy learners who deeply valued their culture, background, and nuanced communication. Learners within Freire's adult literacy circles assumed their newly found voices as Freire learned greatly from actively listening to them. This is the essential work that critical pedagogues perpetuate. Minds, eyes, ears, souls, mouths and hearts of people of poverty were widely opened and liberated through Freire's cultural action for freedom. As narrated by James D. Kirylo, an educative liberator himself, this too is the same path that those dedicated to critical pedagogy have to follow. Indeed, Kirylo's (2011) book has to be required reading for educators at every level to comprehend authentic freedom and understand the lives of people and children in poverty through the exemplar life of Paulo Freire.

Paulo Freire's life. Freire's first teachers were his parents. In later years, a few distinct teachers noticed and connected to Freire's natural curiosity. Freire's mother found a private secondary school where he could study and inquire on a scholarship, although he was older than the other students and in dire poverty at the time. It was at Colegio Oswaldo Cruz that Freire discovered his ability and passion for teaching (Shor & Freire, 1987). His future was sealed irrespective of earning a law degree along the way to a securing a Ph.D. Freire's destiny was to educate and empower people in poverty and those held in the margins of society. Progressivism was Paulo Freire's natural epistemology. Critical of static authoritarianism, his way of thinking and reflecting, and ultimately Freire's way of being and doing in the world is comprehensively traced in Kirylo's (2011) readable text.

Kirylo (2011) makes this flawlessly clear through narrative accounts he describes Freire's life in the geographically and culturally diverse settings. Kirylo gives examples of Freire's *approach* to teach people through inquiry and transformational listening. Readers have the insights necessary to comprehend why Freire rejected the term "method" (Kirylo, 2011). It was Freire's custom to interact among people in every context perpetuating the practice of reading the world rather than implementing a method to teach them (Freire, 1998). Providing vi-

carious experiences to readers (Geertz, 1983), Kirylo describes how Freire implemented cultural circles and centers in each global locale in which he committedly worked.

The Chapters. Kirylo (2011) has a mystifying knack to perfectly place Freire-an quotes into his text. It is almost as if he is channeled by The Man from Recife himself. As a scholar and human being, one particular quote was most poignant. It flows over pages 62 and 63 and describes Freire's life while he was in Chile.

Kirylo handles Chapter Five in relation to Freire's epistemology. It is tightly braided with critical theory and pedagogy. In this chapter Kirylo draws on Freire's comprehension of the historical contexts and themes of critical theory. Freire did not fully realize the connections of critical theory until adulthood. Although critical theory proselytizes action, it was purely philosophy and a model. However, it was Freire who unquestionably enacted critical theory, making it praxis extraordinaire.

Revered as a gentle spirit with the strongest of commitment, Freire is pondered by renowned scholars in Chapter Ten. This unique and innovative chapter addition particularizes Kirylo's book. Having multi-dimensional passionate, yet personal reflections from myriad noted scholars is undeniably the finest example of conscientization.

Human rights require action. Freire delivered on deed, and suffered years of exile for it. As a man guided by an inner principle of liberation, Freire's critical comprehension about people kept in the margins, molded a man of action.

Kirylo's text (2011) remarkably details how Freire related to the cultural capital, the richness of the diverse colonized people in Brazil, Chile, and Guinea-Bissau, Africa. Kirylo reminds readers that Freire's books have been translated into 35 languages. His books represent multiple disciplines from around the globe (Kirylo, 2011, p 121).

Kirylo's book prompts readers to synthesize Freire's life, actions, education, thoughts, and ultimately deconstruct hegemonic structures within his experience and therefore, transfer what is read to readers' lives. Kirylo's (2011), *Paulo Freire: The Man from Recife* should be a transformative text for all who delve into the stunningly descriptive written pages. With encouragement and promotion, Kirylo's text is a response to revisit mainstream education (Stanley, 2007); it is a must-read for those who call themselves critical pedagogues.

REFERENCES

- Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach*. (Translated by Donaldo Macedo, Dale Koike and Alexandre Oliveira). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- Geertz, C. (1983). *Local knowledge: Further Essays in interpretive anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kirylo, J. D. (2011). *Paulo Freire: The Man From Recife*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Shor, I. & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.
- Stanley (2007), W. B. (2007). Critical pedagogy: Democratic realism, neoliberalism, conservatism, and a tragic sense of education. In P. McLaren & J. L. Kincheloe's (Eds.), *Critical Pedagogy: Where are we now?* New York, NY: Peter Lang.