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PAULO FREIRE IS BOTH A PHILOSOPHER AND AN EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGIST. SO FAR, CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF HIS WORK IN THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD HIS PHILOSOPHY.¹ THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE WAY TO PROCEED, HOWEVER, SINCE THE FREIRE METHODOLOGY CAN BE PUT INTO PRACTICE, OBSERVED AND ANALYZED FROM AN EXPERIENTIAL POINT OF VIEW. WE HAVE CHOSEN THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH. THIS ESSAY IS A REPORT ON OUR FINDINGS.

FREIRE HIMSELF WORKED OUT THREE DETAILED APPLICATIONS OF HIS METHOD. ONE IS THE NOW LEGENDARY APPROACH TO ADULT ILLITERACY. CLOSELY ASSOCIATED HISTORICALLY WITH THE LITERACY METHOD IS HIS PROGRAM ON THE "CONCEPT OF CULTURE."² THE THIRD APPLICATION IS A WAY TO APPROACH THE "POST-LITERACY PHASE" OF A BASIC ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM IN A PEASANT AREA.³

WE UTILIZED THE LAST APPROACH AS A MODEL FOR AN EXPERIMENT IN AN URBAN AREA INHABITED BY ORDINARY AMERICANS.⁴ MOST OF THE PEOPLE WERE WORKERS, AND BILINGUAL IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH.

FREIRE DIVIDES THE BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM INTO VARIOUS STAGES. HIS PHILOSOPHICAL INSIGHTS DEMAND A METHOD OF DISCOVERING THE PEOPLE'S SIGNIFICANT THEMES, AND THEN RETURNING THE THEMES TO THE PEOPLE AS THE BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM. FREIRE ASSUMES THAT THIS WORK IS INITIATED BY A TEAM OF EDUCATORS AND SOCIAL SCIENTISTS.

FIRST STAGE OF THE INVESTIGATION—INITIAL CONTACT OF EDUCATOR-RESEARCHER AND THE COMMUNITY. THE PROCESS BEGINS WITH A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN ORDER TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE EDUCATORS ARE DOING. IN THE SAME MEETING THE EDUCATOR ASKS IF THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS AGREE WITH THE PLAN. IF THEY DO, THERE IS A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS TO ACT AS RESEARCH ASSISTANTS. THE ASSISTANTS GATHER DATA ON THE LIFE OF THE AREA, AND ARE INVOLVED IN EVERY MEETING AND DISCUSSION DURING THE RESEARCH PHASE. FREIRE CALLS THE BEGINNING OF THE ACTUAL RESEARCH A "DECODIFICATION" OF THE THEMES OF THE COMMUNITY.

1. THE RESEARCHERS VISIT THE COMMUNITY. "THE INVESTIGATORS SET THEIR CRITICAL 'AIM' ON THE AREA UNDER STUDY, AS IF IT WERE FOR THEM AN ENORMOUS, UNIQUE, LIVING 'CODE' TO BE DECIPHERED. THEY REGARD THE AREA AS A TOTALITY, AND VISIT UPON VISIT ATTEMPT TO 'SPLIT' IT BY ANALYZING THE PARTIAL DIMENSIONS WHICH IMPRESS THEM."⁵

- 2. EVALUATION MEETINGS. WHAT THEY DO:
 - A. READ THEIR FIELD RESEARCH NOTES TO EACH OTHER.
 - B. ANALYZE THE DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW, "THE ANALYSIS"

¹SEE PAULO FREIRE: A REVOLUTIONARY DILEMMA FOR THE ADULT EDUCATOR (ED. STANLEY GRABOWSKI, SYRACUSE U., 1972).

²BOTH ARE DESCRIBED IN DETAIL IN EDUCACAO COMO PRAXICA DA LIBERDADE. THE "CONCEPT OF CULTURE" IS A SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS WHICH DEMONSTRATES TO THE PEASANTS THAT THEY ARE REALLY "CULTURED" CONTRARY TO THEIR OWN

OF REALITY MADE BY EACH INDIVIDUAL DECIDER SENDS THEM ALL BACK, DIALOGICALLY, TO THE DISJOINED WHOLE WHICH ONCE MORE BECOMES A TOTALITY EVOKING A NEW ANALYSIS."⁶

C. FORMULATE "THE PRINCIPAL AND SECONDARY CONTRADICTIONS WHICH INVOLVE THE INHABITANTS OF THE AREA."⁷ THIS IS A LISTING OF THE THEMES IN THE "MINIMUM THEMATIC UNIVERSE" WHICH IS THE TOTALITY OF MAJOR THEMES INTERACTING IN THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE OF A DEFINED AREA.

D. "STUDY THE INHABITANTS' LEVELS OF AWARENESS OF THESE CONTRADICTIONS."⁸

SECOND STAGE OF THE INVESTIGATION--CODIFICATION.

1. "ALWAYS ACTING AS A TEAM, THE INVESTIGATORS WILL SELECT SOME OF THESE CONTRADICTIONS TO DEVELOP THE CODIFICATIONS TO BE USED IN THE THEMATIC INVESTIGATION."⁹
2. ALL THE FACETS OF THESE CODIFICATIONS ARE STUDIED BY THE INVESTIGATION TEAM.

THIRD STAGE OF THE INVESTIGATION--DECODIFICATION. THIS IS DONE BY THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY IN "CIRCULOS DE INVESTIGACAO"¹⁰ WHICH WE CALL "RESEARCH GROUPS." THE EDUCATOR OR COORDINATOR OF THE RESEARCH GROUPS "MUST NOT ONLY LISTEN TO THE INDIVIDUALS BUT MUST CHALLENGE THEM, POSING AS PROBLEMS BOTH THE CODIFIED EXISTENTIAL SITUATIONS AND THEIR OWN ANSWERS."¹¹ THESE SESSIONS ARE TAPE RECORDED FOR FURTHER ANALYSIS BY THE TEAM OF INVESTIGATORS.

FOURTH STAGE OF THE INVESTIGATION--"THE INVESTIGATORS UNDERTAKE A SYSTEMATIC INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF THEIR FINDINGS."¹²

1. THEMES ARE CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO THE VARIOUS SOCIAL SCIENCES.
2. THE SPECIALISTS LOOK FOR THE FUNDAMENTAL NUCLEI WHICH COMPRISE LEARNING UNITS AND CAN BE ORDERED TO GIVE A GENERAL VIEW OF THE THEMES. THIS IS THE PROGRAM CONTENT OF FURTHER EDUCATIONAL MEETINGS, "THE ORGANIZED SYSTEMATIZED AND DEVELOPED "REPRESENTATION" TO INDIVIDUALS OF THE THINGS ABOUT WHICH THEY WANT TO KNOW MORE."¹³
3. THE SPECIALISTS ^{PREPARE} AN ESSAY FOR EACH THEME WHICH INCLUDES SUGGESTIONS FROM THE OTHER SPECIALISTS AND THEIR DISCIPLINES, PLUS A BIBLIOGRAPHY.
4. THE TEAM PREPARES "HINGED THEMES" IF NECESSARY. THESE ARE THEMES WHICH ARE NOT DIRECTLY SUGGESTED BY THE PEOPLE, BUT NECESSARY TO DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE THEMES WHICH ARE SUGGESTED. (THE "CONCEPT OF CULTURE" REFERRED TO BEFORE IS A HINGED THEME.)
5. THE TEAM CREATES CODIFICATIONS TO REPRESENT THE PROGRAM CONTENT. THE CODIFICATIONS CAN BE VISUAL, WRITTEN, AUDITORY OR ANY COMBINATION.

SELF IMAGE. IN BRAZIL, CHANGING THE SELF IMAGE OF THE ILLITERATE PEASANTS WAS AN ESSENTIAL INTRODUCTION TO A REALLY EFFECTIVE LITERACY PROGRAM.

³ PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, PP. 101-116.

⁴ ROBERT COLES SUGGESTS "ORDINARY AMERICANS" RATHER THAN THE LEARNED ALTERNATIVE EXPRESSIONS WHICH TEND TO REIFY AND MAKE OBJECTS OF THE GROUP OF PEOPLE.

⁵ PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, 102.

⁶ OP. CIT. P. 106

⁷ IBID.

⁸ OP. CIT. P. 105.

⁹ OP. CIT. P. 106. THE "CODIFICATION" IS NORMALLY A PICTURE, WHICH

THE STAGE IS NOW SET FOR A MASSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM USING THESE MATERIALS. DIALOGUE AND PROBLEM POSING ARE THE MODES OF USING THE MATERIALS, JUST AS THEY WERE DURING THE RESEARCH PHASE. "THE TEAM OF EDUCATORS IS READY TO REPRESENT TO THE PEOPLE THEIR OWN THEMATICS, IN SYSTEMATIZED AND AMPLIFIED FORM. THE THEMATICS WHICH HAVE COME FROM THE PEOPLE RETURN TO THEM, NOT AS CONTENTS TO BE DEPOSITED -- BUT AS PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED."¹⁴

THE BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM CONTINUES TO CHANGE AND ADAPT. "WHEN A SUGGESTION IS POSED AS A PROBLEM TO THE GROUP, NEW THEMES APPEAR."¹⁵ THERE IS A "CENTRAL TEAM" WHICH CONTINUES TO STUDY THE NEW MATERIAL WHICH COMES IN FROM THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE CULTURE GROUPS, AND ADAPT THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ACCORDINGLY.

PILOT PROGRAM

FIRST STAGE--INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNITY. MY ENTRY INTO THE COMMUNITY WAS FACILITATED BY THE INTEREST AND THE INVITATION OF A LOCAL CATHOLIC PRIEST. HE WAS INTERESTED IN THE FREIRE METHOD AND SAW THE EXPERIMENT AS A BENEFIT FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE PARISH.

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE INVESTIGATION WAS SHORTENED BY THE USE OF A TECHNIQUE DISCOVERED AND PERFECTED FOR THIS SITUATION THROUGH MY EXPERIENCE WITH GROUPS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. THIS SHORT CUT AND OTHERS DEVELOPED OUT OF THE NEED FOR GETTING THE PROGRAM GOING WITH THE PART-TIME ATTENTION OF ONE PERSON, RATHER THAN THE FULL TIME ATTENTION OF A TEAM OF EXPERTS ENVISIONED BY FREIRE.

THE PASTOR, AT MY SUGGESTION, INVITED A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO ATTEND A MEETING. SIXTEEN PEOPLE ATTENDED. THE TECHNIQUE DEVELOPED WAS TO GIVE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF FREIRE'S IDEAS, CONFIRM THAT THE GROUP IS INTERESTED IN HELPING, AND THEN EXPLAIN THAT THEY CAN HELP RIGHT NOW BY SUGGESTING THE THEMES WHICH THEY THINK ARE SIGNIFICANT FOR THEIR AREA. THE RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION ABOUT THEMES IS ALWAYS EXCITING AND SWIFT. IN THIS GROUP, EIGHTY-ONE THEMES WERE SUGGESTED WITHIN THE SPACE OF THIRTY-FIVE MINUTES.

THE THEMES WERE TYPED UP AND SENT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP THE NEXT DAY. THEY HAD AGREED TO CHECK THEM OUT WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS AND THINK ABOUT HOW THE THEMES COULD BE COMBINED AND PUT INTO AN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE.

- 9 A VISUAL SUMMARY OF A THEME.
- 10 OPUSCULO PEDAGOGIA DO OPRIMIDO, CH. III, P. 53. PORTUGUESE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT.
- 11 PEDAGOGIA DO OPRIMIDO, P. 110.
- 12 IBID.
- 13 OP. CIT., P. 82.
- 14 OP. CIT., P. 116.
- 15 OP. CIT., P. 115.

4.
THIS APPEARS TO BE A GOOD WAY TO START IN THIS COUNTRY EVEN IF THERE ARE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO HIRE THE COMPLETE TEAM OF PSYCHOANALYST, PSYCHOLOGIST, ANTHROPOLOGIST, ECONOMIST, SOCIOLOGIST, AND EDUCATOR. ONE REASON IS THAT THIS WAY INVOLVES THE COMMUNITY PEOPLE AS THE MAJORITY AND THE MOST VOCAL MEMBERS OF THE TEAM FROM THE BEGINNING. IT THEREBY OVERCOMES THE PROBLEM OF VOCABULARY BETWEEN EXPERT AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS. EITHER THE "EXPERT" SPEAKS THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE OR THEY LEAVE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO OVERESTIMATE THE ANTAGONISM WHICH COMMUNITY PEOPLE FEEL TOWARDS OUTSIDERS WHO USE HIGH FLOWN LANGUAGE WHICH LEAVES THEM OUT OF THE DISCUSSIONS. YET THIS WOULD INEVITABLY HAPPEN WITH A TEAM OF ACADEMICS WHO SURELY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO RESIST SPEAKING TO EACH OTHER IN THE HARD WON ARGOT OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES. WHEN THE RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR SUCH A TEAM, THE "EXPERTS" CAN BETTER BE INTEGRATED INTO THE TEAM AS CONSULTANTS WHO WORK FOR THE INVESTIGATION TEAM, AND ONLY FOR SPECIFIC TASKS.

ANOTHER REASON THIS APPROACH FITS OUR NEEDS IN THIS COUNTRY IS BECAUSE IT GETS STARTED FAST. CONCRETE RESULTS ARE VISIBLE WITHIN THREE WEEKS. THESE ARE THE FIRST MEETINGS OF THE "RESEARCH GROUPS" USING THE PICTORIAL CODIFICATIONS PREPARED BY THE INVESTIGATION TEAM. THE COMMUNITY PEOPLE KNOW ARE VERY SUSPICIOUS OF GETTING INTO GROUPS WHERE IT IS ALL TALK.

SECOND STAGE—CODIFICATION. AFTER A WEEK OF REFLECTING AND INTERVIEWING, THE SAME GROUP THAT WAS SELECTED TEN GENERATIVE THEMES. A SMALLER GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS AGREED TO DO MORE WORK ON THE CODIFICATIONS. HERE IS A LIST OF OUR RESULTS.

1. CHILDREN VS. PARENTS

CODIFICATION -- A TEENAGER AT A MEAL WITH HIS PARENTS AND OTHER SMALLER BROTHERS AND SISTERS. THE TEENAGER IS CLEARLY NOT A PART OF THE FAMILY GROUP. HE IS SULLEN AND APART; GAZING OUT THE WINDOW AT A SPORTS CAR PARKED IN FRONT.

2. HUSBAND VS. WIFE

CODIFICATION -- A WIFE TALKING TO HER NEIGHBOR WITH A VERY BAD FACE, OR CRYING. THIS TAKES PLACE AT THE KITCHEN TABLE WHILE THEY DRINK COFFEE TOGETHER. THE HUSBAND IS IN THE OTHER ROOM WATCHING T.V.

3. COMMUNITY VS. NO COMMUNITY (MISTRUST)

CODIFICATION -- A MEETING WHERE PEOPLE ARE TALKING TO EACH OTHER, IN ONE TO ONE RELATIONSHIPS, RATHER THAN IN A GROUP. THE PICTURE WOULD SHOW A SITUATION WHICH WAS CLEARLY SET UP FOR GROUP WORK -- PERHAPS A CIRCLE. SEVERAL EMPTY CHAIRS WOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED. THIS MIGHT SUGGEST TO PEOPLE ~~THE CONCEPT OF THE THEMES WHICH CONCERN~~ ALL THE PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT EVEN THERE.

4. LANDLORDS VS. RENTERS

CODIFICATION -- A RUN-DOWN TYPE HOUSE WITH LOTS OF STUFF IN FRONT (LIKE CHILDREN'S PLAYTHINGS, PERHAPS THE CHILDREN THEMSELVES). A SIGN IS POSTED IN FRONT WHICH SAYS: FOR RENT \$175 PER MONTH.

5. SOCIAL CHANGE VS. DESPAIR AND ESCAPE (DRUGS)

CODIFICATION -- A COLLAGE SHOWING SOMEONE SHOOTING OR SNIFFING ON ONE SIDE, WITH "MIDDLE CLASS" DRUGS ON THE OTHER SIDE IN A MEDICINE CABINET.

6. NEW CUSTOMS VS. OLD ONES (TEENAGE SEX)

CODIFICATION -- THREE PEOPLE ON A COUCH? YOUNG MAN, YOUNG WOMAN, AND "AUNT." THE MAN AND WOMAN ARE HOLDING HANDS BEHIND "TIA'S" BACK.

7. JOBS VS. UNEMPLOYMENT
CODIFICATION -- EMPLOYMENT OFFICE WITH LONG LINE.

8. STUDENTS VS. THE SCHOOL SYSTEM
CODIFICATION -- PICTURES OF "X" SCHOOL WHERE THERE HAD RECENTLY BEEN A WALKOUT BY THE STUDENTS (6TH GRADERS) TO DEMAND CHICANO AND BLACK HISTORY COURSES AND NO POLICE ON THE SCHOOL YARD.

9. CHURCH VS. FAITHFUL
FARMWORKER PICKET LINE INCLUDING NUNS AND PRIESTS IN CLERICAL CLOTHING.

10. CULTURE GROUP VS. TELEVISION (I.E. PASSIVE VS. ACTIVE USE OF LEISURE TIME)
DRAWING OF THE CULTURE GROUP WITH A TURNED OFF T.V. IN THE ROOM.

THIRD STAGE -- DECODIFICATION THE INVESTIGATION TEAM NOW HAD THE MATERIAL PREPARED FOR THE RESEARCH PROJECT. IN ORDER TO INTEREST PEOPLE IN BEING PARTICIPANTS IN THE RESEARCH GROUP, WE USED THE HOUSE MEETING METHOD. THIS IS A CRITICAL AREA IN ANY AMERICAN ADAPTATION OF THE FREIRE METHOD. THE PROGRAM IS NO GOOD IF NOBODY COMES. THE PROBLEM IS THAT THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE PAY OFF FOR THE PARTICIPANTS, LINE "COME TO THE MEETING SO YOU CAN LEARN TO READ." IT IS DIFFICULT ENOUGH TO EXPLAIN WHAT THE MEETING IS, MUCH LESS WHY COMMUNITY MEMBERS MIGHT WISH TO ATTEND. FREIRE GIVES NO CLUE AS TO HOW THIS CAN BE DONE BEYOND THE SUGGESTION OF GIVING SPEECHES TO ALL THE LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS. IN OUR COUNTRY, THE FLAW IN THAT APPROACH IS THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE DO NOT BELONG TO ANY ORGANIZATION. MOREOVER, ANYONE WHO HAS HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF "BEING WORKED INTO THE AGENDA" OF A COMMUNITY MEETING KNOWS THE VERY LOW POWER OF SUCH A PRESENTATION. WE FOUND THE HOUSE MEETING TO BE THE SOLUTION.

THE IDEA AS SIMPLY TO TALK TO PEOPLE IN THEIR HOMES ABOUT THE IDEA, HAVE THEM INVITE OTHER PEOPLE OVER TO HEAR THE SAME IDEA, GET THEIR POINTS OF VIEW AND SHOW THE ADVANTAGE OF SOME CONCRETE ACTION ON THEIR PART.¹⁰ THE ACTION IN THIS CASE IS TO ATTEND THE RESEARCH GROUP MEETINGS.

WE STARTED THE PROCESS WITH ONE GROUP. I WAS COORDINATOR, AND USUALLY A COMMUNITY MEMBER FROM THE INVESTIGATION TEAM WOULD ATTEND AS AN OBSERVER. THESE DISCUSSIONS WERE TAPED, TRANSCRIBED, AND STUDIED BY THE INVESTIGATION TEAM. ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES TO EACH CODIFICATION WOULD REQUIRE A LENGTHY ESSAY.¹¹ HERE ARE OUR CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS PART OF OUR EXPERIENCE.

1. NO MATTER HOW GOOD THE DISCUSSIONS ARE, THE COORDINATOR MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORGANIZING ATTENDANCE AT THE MEETINGS, WITH REMINDERS, CHECKING WHEN SOMEONE IS ABSENT, ETC.

16. THE MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE PEOPLE ON HOUSE MEETINGS ARE FRED ROSS AND CESAR CHAVEZ OF THE UNITED FARMWORKERS UNION. FRED ROSS IS PREPARING A BOOK WHICH WILL INCLUDE DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE HOUSE MEETING AS AN ORGANIZING METHOD.

17. THE OMITTED MATERIAL WILL BE INCLUDED IN A BOOK INTENDED TO SERVE AS AN INTRODUCTION TO PAULO FREIRE FOR EDUCATORS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA.

2. THE METHOD DOES NOT WORK MECHANICALLY. ALL THE INGREDIENTS CAN BE THERE (GROUP, COORDINATION, COORDINATOR, TAPE RECORDER) AND STILL THE EXPERIENCE CAN BE A FLOP. DEFINING WHAT MAKES A SUCCESS IS MORE DIFFICULT. IT INVOLVES HITTING THE RIGHT THEME, AND TRUST-AFFECTION AMONG THE GROUP MEMBERS. LATER DISCUSSIONS ARE ALWAYS DEEPER AND TRUER THAN EARLIER ONES WHEN TRUST AND LOVE HAVE NOT HAD TIME TO DEVELOP.

3. TALKING ABOUT THESE THEMES WITHOUT ACTION IS CONFUSING TO PEOPLE. THEY CAN SEE HOW THIS OR THAT THING IS VERY BAD, BUT IF NOTHING CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT THEY RIGHTLY SAY, "SO WHAT?" THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE DISCUSSIONS AND BUILDING A CURRICULUM HAS TO BE REPEATED TIME AND AGAIN.

4. PROBLEM POSING MUST BE CONCRETE AND WITHIN THE THOUGHT-LANGUAGE OF THE GROUP. THIS IS VERY HARD FOR ACADEMICS TO DO.

5. THE COORDINATOR IS CONSTANTLY TEMPTED TO PATERNALISM, OFTEN WITHOUT BEING AWARE OF IT. HE OR SHE CAN ONLY BE CURED OF IT BY THE PEOPLE AND THEIR CRITICISMS.

6. THE THINGS THE PEOPLE LEARN FROM THESE DISCUSSIONS IS NOT PREDICTABLE. AT THE FINAL DISCUSSION WHEN THE RESEARCH GROUP STUDIED ITSELF, IT CONCLUDED TWO THINGS:

- A. THEY DID NOT HAVE AN EDUCATION AND HAD NEVER SPOKEN OF ANYWHERE BEFORE. THEY HATED P.T.A. MEETINGS BECAUSE WHEN THEY HAD SOMETHING TO SAY, THEY COULDN'T BECAUSE OF A FEELING OF BEING TOO UNEDUCATED TO RISE AND SAY IT. THIS WAS CHANGED BY THE GROUP EXPERIENCE. THEY SAID THAT THEY WOULD FEEL FREE TO SPEAK UP AT ANY KIND OF MEETING FROM NOW ON.
- B. THE NEIGHBORS WERE MUCH NICER THAN THEY HAD EVER EXPECTED, AND THEY WONDERED WHY THEY HADN'T GOTTEN TOGETHER WITH THE PEOPLE ON THE BLOCK BEFORE THIS.

NEITHER OF THESE THEMES WAS EXPLICITLY DISCUSSED DURING THE FIRST NINE MEETINGS. EDUCATION APPARENTLY TOOK PLACE THROUGH THE STRUCTURE OF THE GROUP RATHER THAN THROUGH THE CONTENT.

FOURTH STAGE -- PREPARATION OF THE MASS EDUCATION EFFORT

THE INVESTIGATION TEAM HAD GROWN AND BECAME AN OFFICIAL "ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE" OF THE LOCAL PARISH. THE MEMBERS DECIDED TO GO THROUGH THE WHOLE PROCESS THEMSELVES BEFORE OFFERING AN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM TO THE PUBLIC. FROM THEIR EXPERIENCES AS A RESEARCH GROUP WE LEARNED:

1. IF THE GROUP IS MOTIVATED ENOUGH IT IS MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE FOR THEM TO MAKE THEIR OWN COORDINATIONS AND COORDINATE THEIR OWN MEETINGS. IT CAN BE DONE THROUGH THE FOLLOWING STEPS.

A. THE WHOLE GROUP DECIDES WHAT THE GENERATIVE THEMES ARE FOR THEM. THIS TAKES ONE OR TWO MEETINGS.

B. EACH THEME IS TAKEN BY A SUB-GROUP OF TWO OR THREE.

THE TWO OR THREE PEOPLE INVENT AND DRAW A CODIFICATION, AND ACT AS COORDINATORS TO POSE THE PROBLEMS OF THE THEME. THE MOST ELECTRIFYING DISCUSSION OF THE WHOLE SERIES WAS ONE

ON THE THEME OF RELIGION. THE CODIFICATION PRESENTED A FAMILY SAYING THE ROSARY TOGETHER IN A CIRCLE, WHILE "SOMEBODY" WAITED IN THE NEXT ROOM. THIS HIT THE WHOLE GROUP IN A WAY THAT THIS "EXPERIMENT" NEVER SUSPECTED.

THE GROUP FINISHED THEIR OWN RESEARCH GROUP PHASE, AND THEN COORDINATED ANOTHER RESEARCH GROUP WITH NEW PEOPLE. THEY DID THIS WITH A MINIMUM OF HELP FROM ME, AND FINALLY WERE READY FOR THE MASS EDUCATION PROGRAM, IN THE AREA OF COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND DEVELOPMENT. THE THEMES THEY DEVELOPED WERE:

1. COMMUNITY

PRINCIPLE CONTRADICTION: COMMUNION VERSUS ISOLATION

2. SCHOOL

PRINCIPLE CONTRADICTION: THE EDUCATION WE NEED VERSUS THE EDUCATION WE GET

3. HAPPINESS

PRINCIPLE CONTRADICTION: CONSUMERISM VERSUS REALLY ENJOYING OURSELVES

4. RELIGION

PRINCIPLE CONTRADICTION: TRADITIONAL RELIGION VERSUS THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

5. MONEY

PRINCIPLE CONTRADICTION: POVERTY VERSUS ECONOMIC STABILITY

6. RACISM

PRINCIPLE CONTRADICTION: RACIAL PREJUDICE VERSUS ACCEPTANCE

SEVERAL "CULTURE GROUPS"¹⁸ WERE RECRUITED. THE CODIFICATIONS WERE DRAWN BY A TRAINED ARTIST AND DISCUSSION OUTLINES WERE READ.

THE RESULTS OF THESE MEETINGS WERE MIXED, WITH SOME BEING VERY GOOD AND CLEARLY BENEFICIAL TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CULTURE GROUPS. OTHERS WERE DISAPPOINTING. THE ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE FELT THAT SOMETHING WAS STILL MISSING. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ACTION AND REFLECTION, INSISTED UPON SO MUCH BY FREIRE, WAS THE NOTICEABLE MISSING LINK. IN OUR ANALYSIS WE REALIZED THAT THE GROUPS WITH WHICH WE WERE WORKING WERE VERY HETEROGENEOUS. THE ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE ITSELF HAD AN INCREDIBLE RANGE ECONOMICALLY AND "STATUS-WISE". THE GROUP RANGED FROM WELFARE MOTHER TO PRINCIPAL OF THE LOCAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL. EDUCATION RANGED FROM M.A. DEGREE TO GRAMMAR SCHOOL DROP-OUT. WE REALIZED THAT THE EXPERIENCES OF THE INVESTIGATION TEAM WERE SO POSITIVE, AT LEAST PARTLY, BECAUSE THEY HAD CREATED A COMMON ACTION UPON WHICH TO REFLECT--THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE. THE NEW GROUPS WERE JUST AS HETEROGENEOUS, WITHOUT THE COMMON ENTERPRISE TO HOLD THEM TOGETHER.

¹⁸ "CIRCULO DE CULTURA": THIS IS THE FREIRE TERM FOR THE BASIC GROUP IN THE MASS EDUCATION PROGRAM.

THE NEXT STEP FOR ADULT EDUCATION

THE ADULT EDUCATION GROUP HAS HAD ONLY MODERATE SUCCESS IN ATTRACTING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY TO ITS DISCUSSIONS. THE REASONS FOR THIS MAY BE FOUND PARTLY IN THE LACK OF SPIRIT IN THE COMMUNITY. HOWEVER, WE MUST ALSO FACE THE FACT THAT THE MEETINGS WE DID HAVE DID NOT GENERATE THE KIND OF INTEREST AND LEARNING THAT WE WERE EXPECTING.

WE MUST LEARN FROM THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE, HOW TO EDUCATE BETTER. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THESE GROUPS IS ABLE TO BE EXPRESSED IN TWO STATEMENTS:

1. THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH COMMON GROUND AMONG US TO GET AT VITAL COMMON EXPERIENCES WHICH LEAD TO DEEPER UNDERSTANDING.
2. THERE WAS ONE COMMON EXPERIENCE WHICH REVEALED ITSELF, THE THEME OF "ISOLATION," BUT WE WERE NOT ABLE TO DEAL WITH IT IN A HEARTFELT WAY. WE DISCOVERED THE PAINFUL FACT OF ISOLATION AND ITS CORRESPONDING IDEOLOGY, RUGGED INDIVIDUALISM. THE DISCOVERY LED TO FRUSTRATION IN THE DISCUSSIONS. THIS IDEOLOGY IS PART OF OUR CULTURE AND STILL TO BE OVERCOME, EVEN BY THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP.

THIS LEADS US TO THE CONCLUSION THAT TALKING ABOUT PROBLEMS IS INSUFFICIENT EVEN AS A STARTING PLACE. MERE TALKING REINFORCES THE INDIVIDUALISM THAT IS OUR CURSE BECAUSE TALK THAT IS ABSTRACT AND NOT CONNECTED TO ACTION BORES US AND ALIENATES US FROM EACH OTHER EVEN MORE THAN BEFORE.

IN OUR CULTURE, TALK IS ALMOST MEANINGLESS AND SO ACTION IS NECESSARY FROM THE BEGINNING. IT SHOULD BE THE KIND OF ACTION WHICH OVERCOMES ISOLATION AND INDIVIDUALISM. IT SHOULD BE THE KIND OF ACTION WHICH CAN SERVE AS A COMMON EXPERIENCE FOR PROFOUND UNDERSTANDING OF THE TOTALITY OF OUR SITUATIONS.

WE BELIEVE WE HAVE DISCOVERED THE RIGHT ACTION TO START US ON THIS ROAD. THE PARISH RELIEVES AN AVERAGE OF FIFTEEN CALLS PER DAY REQUESTING HELP FOR THINGS LIKE FOOD, HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, ETC. WE COULD VOLUNTEER TO TAKE CARE OF THESE CALLS, AND DO IT IN A WAY WHICH WOULD BE EDUCATIONAL RATHER THAN JUST ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF WHAT PAULO CREATOR CALLS "WELFAREISM" (ASSISTENCIALISMO). OUR GOAL WOULD NOT BE TO GIVE A MERE HANDOUT TO THE CALLER. RATHER WE PROPOSE TO ORGANIZE A NETWORK OF PEOPLE FROM THE PARISH WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE "HELPERS," AND INFORM THEM OF THE NEEDS AS THE CALLS COME IN TO THE OFFICE.

WE DO NOT AGREE WITH THE ASSUMPTION OF THE WELFARE SYSTEM IN OUR COUNTRY THAT IT IS ONLY THE PROFESSIONALS WHO CAN HELP THOSE WHO WANT HELP. HELP OF THIS NATURE SHOULD BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COMMUNITY. ONLY THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS (NO AGENCY) CAN OFFER NON-BUREAUCRATIC AND NON-PATERNALISTIC ASSISTANCE WHEN IT IS NEEDED. THE NEED FOR SUCH ASSISTANCE EXISTS, BUT IT CONFRONTS THE CULTURAL FACT THAT WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO CALL UPON AGENCIES AND PROFESSIONALS TO DO WHAT WE COULD DO OURSELVES. MEMBERS OF THE PARISH COULD TAKE CARE OF FOOD, HOUSING, AND TRANSPORTATION EMERGENCIES OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY FAR BETTER THAN ANY AGENCY. YET WE ARE NOT ACCUSTOMED TO DOING AND THINKING THAT WAY.

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO DO AND THINK "HAC WAL?" IT WOULD REQUIRE A NETWORK OF PRIVATE CITIZENS WILLING TO GIVE THEMSELVES ALONG WITH THEIR GOODS TO ANOTHER PERSON WHO NEEDS THE GOODS AND THEM. ORGANIZING AND PUTTING INTO PRACTICE SUCH A NETWORK OF PEOPLE IS TRUE CULTURAL ACTION. IT IS CHANGING THE "WELFAREISM" MENTALITY AND EFFECTING TANGIBLE RESULTS BY COMMUNITY EFFORT. IT COULD BE AN EXTRAORDINARY EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE.

OUR VISION IS ABOUT A GROWING NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHERE HELPER AND HELPED BECOME UNDISTINGUISHABLE, AS THE HELPED BECOME HELPERS IN THEIR TURN. IT IS A VISION ABOUT A NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND THAT WHAT THEY ARE DOING IS CHANGING THE CULTURE TO CULTURAL ACTION. THEY ALSO HAVE ENOUGH SPIRITUAL-INTELLECTUAL CONTACT IN CULTURE GROUPS TO BE ABLE TO DEEPEN THEIR GRASP OF THEMSELVES AND OF SOCIETY. THEY LEARN FROM EXAMINING THE NEW EXPERIENCES PRODUCED BY THEIR CREATION OF A COUNTER-CULTURE NETWORK OF PEOPLE WHICH ACTUALLY DOES THINGS.

HOW COULD SUCH A VISION BE PUT INTO PRACTICE? FROM THE DISCOVERY OF THE POTENTIAL "HELPERS" THERE ARE TWO SOURCES ALREADY SET UP IN THE PARISH STRUCTURE. ONE IS THE TELEPHONE LIST, AND THE OTHER IS THE SUBDIVISION OF THE PARISH INTO EIGHT SMALLER PARTS. WE START WITH TELEPHONE CONTACTS AND CONCENTRATE THEM ON ONE OF THE EIGHT AREAS. A TELEPHONE INVITATION (FOLLOWED BY A HOUSE CALL AND PRINTED INFORMATION, IF NECESSARY) WILL LEAD TO BLOCK MEETINGS IN WHICH OUR VISION IS EXPLAINED TO SMALL GROUPS.

WE WILL EXPLAIN:

1. NO ONE WILL BE A "HELPER" WHO HAS NOT BEEN TO AT LEAST ONE MEETING TO DISCUSS WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT.
2. NO GOODS OR SERVICES WILL BE WELCOME WHICH ARE NOT PERSONALLY DELIVERED OR ORGANIZED BY A PARISH MEMBER OR GROUPS OF MEMBERS.
3. THE INTENTION IS TO MAKE A PERSONAL COMMITMENT, OFFERING FRIENDSHIP AND INTEREST AS WELL AS THE "THINGS" REQUESTED.
4. THE HELPED BECOME THE HELPERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AND THE HELPERS BECOME THE HELPED.
5. THERE WILL BE A CONTINUING SERIES OF BLOCK MEETINGS WHICH WILL FOLLOW THE CULTURE GROUP FORMAT, TO HELP US ASSIMILATE OUR EXPERIENCE, AND TO MAKE THIS NETWORK OF PEOPLE A HUMAN REALITY.
6. AS CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE WE WILL GO INTO OTHER KINDS OF ACTION, TO ANSWER THE NEEDS WHICH ARE SEEN AND FELT BY THIS NETWORK OF PEOPLE.
7. PEOPLE WHO NEED SOMETHING ARE LETTING THE PARISH KNOW ABOUT IT AT THE RATE OF SEVEN CALLS A DAY, SO THERE WILL BE NO LACK OF PEOPLE REQUESTING AID.

PARISH IS USED HERE TO DESIGNATE A PLACE. ALL PEOPLE ARE WELCOME AND ENCOURAGED TO GET INTO IT.

THERE IS NO CONCLUSION TO THIS REPORT. MAYBE IT WILL BE A NEW BEGINNING.

IN RETROSPECT, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE THEMES THEMSELVES WERE POORLY CHOSEN. THEY ARE TOO VAST, TOO OVERWHELMING, AND FAIL UTTERLY TO BREAK THINGS DOWN TO "LEADING IDEAS" WHICH CAN BE DISCUSSED FRUITFULLY AND LEAD TO COHERENT ACTION.

The conclusions which I have drawn from this for educators who want to use the "FREIRE" method are:

- 1) You cannot prove the method "works" or not, because it is not mechanical. What makes it work is partly emotional and at a level which can be encouraged, but not forced or programmed.
- 2) Like the little girl who had a little curl - - - when it is good, it is very very good; when it is bad it is horrid.
- 3) Although many things remain to be worked out for application in this county, I am sure that the FREIRE approach to Adult Education is solid. In the fall of 1973 I begin a collaboration with a sizeable Metropolitan Adult Education district to set up on a large scale. A basic Adult Education program using the FREIRE method is adapted to our cultural and political realities.
- 4) Ways to combine common action with reflection must be found for the method to work.

There is no viable movement for radical social change to which ordinary Americans can relate. The FREIRE method, for its full implementation, assumes such a movement. Therefore, the method cannot be used as it stands. Nevertheless, the FREIRE method is filled with ways to make Adult Education a more humanizing experience, and some of these ways can be used now.

The academic discussion of FREIRE will be very sterile unless those who are experimenting in _____ make their work known, using my services as a communicator and as a clearinghouse for this information. I am arranging now for a way to publish such research material so that it will be available for general use. I invite anyone who is doing such work to communicate with me and I guarantee that everything available will be passed around, at least in mimeo form, to the other experimenters.

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(I would welcome critical comments on this paper. Please direct them to me at the above address)