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*The Freirean Legacy, Alternative Pedagogy And
The Progressive Cultural Movement In The Philippines:
A Critical Appraisal Of Contemporary Trends
And Challenges*

Maria Jovita Zarate
AsiaVisions Media Foundation
The Philippines

TOWARDS A PEOPLE'S PEDAGOGY: THE FREIREAN LEGACY AND THE PROGRESSIVE CULTURAL MOVEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

Maria Jovita Zarate
AsiaVisions Media Foundation
The Philippines

IN evaluating and critically assessing the legacy of Paulo Freire, we must initially consider our similarities and differences as peoples of the world and as catalysts of social change. Honestly, I feel more challenged to single out varying differences among ourselves and use these as reference points in the colossal task of evaluation and appraisal of the Freirean legacy in the different parts of the globe. Discerning and putting more emphasis on our differences may eventually lead us to discovering more of the Freirean methodology in our pedagogical work --- the "universality" of its relevance to different societies and how variances in its actual application may be breeding grounds from which to develop new alternatives.

The gap that gnaws between our societies is both immense and disturbing. Relative economic affluence and political stability govern most of the countries present in this gathering. Most have wrested themselves free of colonial control and are treading the path towards economic self-reliance and progress. However, neocolonialism persists in its many guises, ravaging the lands and its peoples of the South. Class tensions mark social relations, aggravated by racial strife and patriarchal rule.

In the Philippines, the people's movement prevails as the most viable response to the structural arrangements that have spawn poverty and oppression. We may ask: what exactly is the people's movement? In the context of the Filipino people's struggle for liberation and national democracy, the people's movement is the organized and consolidated expression of the people's resistance to the prevailing social structures. Much of its strength is derived from the decisive participation of the basic masses --- the workers, peasants, fisherfolk and the urban poor, and the able support of other patriotic forces --- the students, professionals, intellectuals and the national bourgeoisie.

The existence and continued vitality of the people's movement in the Philippines may be the most important element that stands in the chasm that separates our society from the

countries of the North. A recognition of this element is invariably important to be able to historicize and contextualize the breadth and depth of Freirean influence in our pedagogical enterprise. The people's movement is the rich soil from which the seeds of our pedagogical work blossomed and bore fruit for our people. And the present state of our people's movement --- its gains and losses, the challenges it confronts and the imperatives for the future --- shall provide both the theoretical and practical rigor in the critical appraisal of Paulo Freire's legacy.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed reached Philippine shores in the late seventies, a time of gradual but sustained development of the people's movement amidst the reality of martial rule. At an instant, it encountered kindred spirits in the people's movement. Recognizing similarities between the struggle of the Filipino and Brazilian peoples, cadres and cultural activists immediately utilized it in the more comprehensive area of political education work. Freire's clarification on the nature of banking education only heightened their renunciation of the educational system as institutionalized by the American colonisers. Pioneering attempts led to new discoveries and gave birth to more specific spheres of concern such as human rights education, literacy and numeracy work, development education, and art and literary education and training.

How far has it developed in the hands of the Filipino people? What in Freirean thought persists in our pedagogical work in the people's movement? What are the extensions and deviations from the original premises of Paulo Freire? What alternatives can we create to reinforce the theory and praxis of pedagogy and make it the cultural activist's principal weapon in combating centuries of ignorance, illiteracy, exploitation and oppression.

The general parameters of this paper will be the people's movement, the historical bases and distinct set of principles of which will hopefully be expounded in the course of the discussion. Particular emphasis will be given the progressive art and literary movement as an inextricable component of a cultural revolution and as one of the main proponents and practitioners of what is now being referred to as people's pedagogy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The people's movement in the Philippines take its roots from the Propaganda Movement and the subsequent Philippine Revolution of 1896. While the Propaganda Movement was

initiated by Filipino expatriates in Spain, notably Jose Rizal, the Philippine Revolution was led by Kataastaasang Kagalanggalang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (Most Noble and Respected Sons and Daughters of the People which was founded Andres Bonifacio, a member of the working class. While the Propaganda Movement agitated for reforms from mother Spain, the Philippine Revolution had national sovereignty and independence as its foremost battlecry. The anti-colonial struggle confronted issues of national magnitude: military depredations of the guardian civil, forced labor, heavy taxation, the feudal system of agricultural production and the accompanying forms of exploitation it generated, and abuses perpetrated by the Spanish friars. The Katipunan was able to mobilize men and women to rise up in arms; however, they failed to attain victory because of the duplicity of the United States and the class betrayal of the ilustrados, notably General Emilio Aguinaldo.

The conquest of the Filipino people by the United States made the continued status of the Philippines as a colony. But the anti-colonial struggle persisted in the American Occupation and in the Commonwealth regime of the thirties. Agrarian unrest which initially simmered during the Spanish colonial period culminated in a series of bloody peasant revolts, most notable of which are the colorum revolts of 1924 and the Sakdalista uprising of 1935 which ended up in a massacre of peasants by the military upon orders of the colonial government.

Though the peasantry remained the majority class in the entire society, a class of urban factory workers grew in number due to the increase in agricultural production in the countryside. Minor manufacturing companies were erected to process raw materials from the countryside and then directly siphoned out of the country. As early as 1901, the first Filipino labor union was formed by Isabelo de los Reyes. Unremitting colonial and class oppression agitated a broad base of workers and peasants.

In November 7, 1930, the first Communist Party of the Philippines was formed by Crisanto Evangelista. The party strove to integrate the theories of Marx and Lenin, as well as the experiences of the October Revolution of 1917, to the concrete conditions of Philippine society.

Spontaneous mass actions, peasant demonstrations and industrial strikes intensified as the US colonial government employed ferocious methods to quell popular protest. It was

during this time that ferment in art and literature emerged alongside the political upheaval. The theory of art for art's sake, as advocated by the idealist and romanticists, clashed with the emerging ideology of proletarian art, as articulated by university professor S.P. Lopez. While the proponents of art for art's sake argued for the autonomy of art against social and political considerations, the ideologues contested this premise, and asserted that art should be an instrument for social change and should principally serve the toiling masses, as well as reflect their conditions and aspirations. Soon his ideology would gain many followers, most of whom are now enshrined in the history of nationalist art and literature. One of the most gifted poets of Philippine literature, Amado V. Hernandez, amplified the tenets of proletarian literature by concretely applying this to the practice of his poetry. His voluminous works which continue to serve as inspirational and educational materials to the struggle delineated the conditions, dreams and world outlook of the enlightened members of the peasantry and working class.

With the end of World War II and the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines in 1945, the ideals of nationalism came to the fore. A few writers and intellectuals assailed the continuing subservience of the Philippine government to the United States. It holds for a fact that the nationalist sentiment would ebb with each passing epoch, suffering severe blows during the Cold War period, and most of the time thwarted by the systematic and colonial miseducation of the Filipino, but time and again it would be resurrected in the collective consciousness of the nation, each time renewed and revitalized by the attempts of the Filipino people to organize and galvanize their unity towards more decisive political action.

THE CONTEMPORARY PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

The decade of the sixties was marked by the intensification of political mass actions spearheaded by students and intellectuals against, among others, the conscription of Filipinos to the Vietnam war. Militant student organizations were formed like the Kabataang Makabayan (Nationalist Youth) and the Samahang Demokratikong Kabataan (Association of Democratic Youth). Soon, the students managed to go beyond the confines of their campuses to live and learn with the basic masses of peasants, workers and urban poor. Their sustained and highly motivated organizing work paid off as thousands of workers and peasants were proselytized into the basic tenets of the national democratic struggle.

Teach-ins, discussion groups, symposia and fora characterized forms of teaching and proselytization. There was a marked tendency towards simplification of concepts. Student activists of this generation recollect how they manage to teach class analysis of Philippine society. A triangle is always the starting point, with the tip representing the ruling class and the broad base representing the basic masses of workers, peasants from whose labor the very few rich continue to enrich themselves. The "three magic weapons" of the national liberation struggle was illustrated by a man with a shield in his right hand and with a gun in his left: the head symbolized the Communist Party which provides the ideological foundation; the shield symbolized the united front which, drawing strength from their numbers, no dictatorship can frighten; and the rifle represented the people's army which wages armed struggle. Art and literary works bloomed and mushroomed in the soil of the people's popular movement. Skits, songs, poetry and fiction revitalized the call for proletarian art during the Commonwealth era, as cultural troupes and literary organizations founded by the students experimented with various form of protest art. In the visual arts, politicized artists valued the production and dissemination of art works with optimum visual impact, like murals and political graffiti. Inspired by Mao Tse Tung's treatises on art and literature as articulated in *Talks at the Yen-an Forum*, student activists went for the more didactic and direct forms of presentation, aside from the use of satire.

It is worth noting that at this time there did not exist a distinct theoretical framework for the teaching of art and literature. Cultural workers learned from the actual exercise of the craft. For instance, the theatre artists learned the motley of theatre forms and devices from their interaction with the director, with the text as material itself, with the audience and, of course, among themselves. Writers armed themselves with the tools of literary mass criticism, aside from erudite appreciation of formalist and traditional literary forms.

It can be said for a fact that it was during these years that cultural work assumed that character of a mass movement. As a mass movement, it, it set forth its definite tasks and imperatives vis-à-vis the overall people's movement, while defining its relations with other lines of work. It attracted and flourished a great number of constituents who all strove to improve their artistic craft, since this was the principal tool by which they engage in the struggle, while sharpening their analytical skills and refining the conduct of their political work with the masses.

In December 1968, a few young men, having repudiated the capitulationist strategies and tactics of the existing Communist Party, gathered to form a new organization. The new Communist Party of the Philippines renewed the call for armed resistance through a protracted people's war. It holds for a fact that this underground organization commanded a significant number of cadres who, in turn, influenced and directed the course of the popular resistance.

The declaration of martial law in 1972 simmered the cauldron of protest. Yet undaunted by military crackdown and incarceration, the activists persisted. Most went to the countryside to engage in mass work and directly participate in the armed struggle while those who opted to stay in the city centers were assigned to the urban revolutionary work, specifically organizing factory workers, urban poor and professionals.

Though the repressive years wore upon the activists and the cadres, this was also a period of daring experimentation in the use of forms in artistic and literary production, as well as in methods in reaching out to a captive audience.

In the countrysides, the image of the cultural worker cum people's army was one who went to the barrios in the hinterlands and regaled the peasants with their songs, poems and skits. With a rifle hung on one shoulder and a guitar on the other, they spent days traversing one sitio to another, bringing delightful entertainment and political education to thousands of peasant folks. Since majority of the cadres in the countryside came from the universities with some steeped in artistic and literary tradition, they sought ways and means by which to teach forms of creative writing, music and drama to the peasant folks. Thus, this was also a time of a marked rise in productivity in various fields such as the performing arts, visual arts, literature and music. A number of literary anthologies produced by the underground press could attest to the bountiful harvest of painstaking cultural work among the basic masses. While most of the writers who filled up the pages of these anthologies were the students and the professionals, still a number of them came from the peasantry.

Meanwhile, the urban city centers were governed by a dominantly popular and legal form of struggle. Labor unrest was stirring and unions were being formed even in the big multinational corporations. Facing threat of eviction and demolition, the urban poor faced organized community associations. Student councils were revived and rallied against

tuition fee increases and undemocratic forces in the campuses. Martial law may have silenced many but still there were souls who "raged against the dying of the light." It was in this context that cultural work took an exciting turn. Professional organizations of dramatists, filmmakers, writers, visual artists and others had been formed on a national and or regional basis. These entities incorporated in the articulation of their mission and program of action a commitment to the broad movement for social change.

The result was that committed art and literature saw in these years a phenomenal development as new forms were devised to elude the direct and biting commentaries on the social order. Circumvention of artistic forms came to be the most convenient way to address social issues. Thus, allegory, farce and historical drama dominated the theater scene. In the literary arts, discourses on committed art, mostly extensions from the Marxist analyses, lent credibility to the forays in fiction and poetry by a group of poets and writers whose battlecry was to bring back literature to the bosom of the people.

It was in 1973 that the Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA), a theater company formed in 1968 and committed to the pursuit of Filipino theater, ventured into giving theater workshops in the grassroots communities. Its basic integrated theater arts workshops later on came to be popularly known as BITAW, its acronym. Its basic content was composed of five main subjects woven throughout the entire duration of the workshop: creative drama, body movement, creative sounds and music, creative writing and visual arts. In as much as the course content seemed multi-faceted, to include the primary disciplines of art, theater was its cornerstone. All the other art disciplines were utilized to serve the ends of theater; thus, exercises in creative writing were geared towards scriptwriting, creative sounds and music towards composition for the theater, and the visual arts served the ends of production design for a theater performance.

Its philosophy for the theater was anchored on the reality that creative powers reside in each individual, even those who have been bereft of formal schooling. Viola Spolin, dramatist and exponent of improvisational theater, provided for them a framework for a theater training course. According to Spolin, to be creative, one has to open the mind to new vistas. It means digging inside the furrows of one's self. In the process of discovering one's inner resources, one's personhood, s/he becomes sensitive to others. Such sensitivity is the

building block of a fruitful working relationship with others, a much needed requirement for successful theater work.

In her book *Improvisation for the Theater*, Spolin expounds on it:

"We learn through experience and experiencing and no one teaches anyone anything. This is as true for the infant moving from kicking to crawling as it is the scientist for his equations.

"If the environment permits it, anyone can learn whatever he chooses to learn; and if the individual permits it, the environment will teach him everything it has to teach. "Talent" or "lack of talent" has little to do with it.

"We must reconsider what is meant by "talent." It is highly possible that what is called talented behavior is simply greater individual capacity for experiencing. From this point of view, it is in the increasing of the individual capacity for experiencing that the untold potentiality of a personality can be evoked.

"Experiencing is penetration into the environment, total organic involvement with it. This means involvement on three levels: intellectual, physical and intuitive. Of the three, the intuitive, most vital to the learning situation, is neglected."

And so it was witnessed: the peasants took up courses in the theater with the field as their classroom; the workers applied the rigidity of assembly-line work to the more tedious but challenging demands of mounting a play; the urban poor youth shied away from the temptations of prohibited drugs as they were initiated into the community theater groups which they formed after the workshops transpired.

Meanwhile, there were stirrings in other art disciplines. Galian sa Arte at Tula (Workshop for Literature and Poetry/GAT) was formed in 1973. Its roster of members draw mainly from the intelligentsia class, mostly students and young university professors. As the martial law years wore upon the people, committed cultural groups lived and died. In the latter years the participation of the basic sectors in art and literary work became more pronounced, largely due to the efforts of the enlightened middle class artists and writers who committed themselves to the vision of democratizing the tools of artistic and literary

production. It must also be noted that the commitments of these middle class artists and writers went beyond their artistic and literary calling for they were indeed protagonists of a broader social movement who were struggling against the dictatorship and for a national democracy. KAISAHAN (Unity), an organization of visual artists dedicated themselves to the propagation of committed art. Social realism pervaded over abstractionism and impressionism. In their canvasses were the stark realities of urban blight, feudal exploitation and peasant unrest, forlorn children bitten by the pangs of poverty and government neglect. Beyond these painful realities, the visual artists also touched on the people's struggle, using the metaphors of history to articulate contemporary struggles.

The tools of the artists and writers in educating the people became a major element in their bid to promote the creation, production and dissemination of committed art and literary works. After all, the crux of artistic and literary endeavor lies in the artists' abilities to create art. The process of creating (or "producing" art) is, of course, governed by inner laws and more importantly a fundamental knowledge of the language and the medium of art and literature.

But being artists and writers goes beyond producing works of art and literature. Most of them embarked on a modest endeavor to teach their art to others. Their university schooling in art became the vantage point from where they developed, and improved on, their training methodologies. Poetry and fiction was taught in an "experiential" manner, with the budding writers conducting a reading of their works, and then subjected to criticism: the "established" or "older" writers singling out the redeeming literary qualities of the creative work, both in form and in content, but never glossing over its weak points, ranging from defective poetic syntax to certain inconsistencies in the handling of the literary material. The political perspective was the absolute framework for all reading and all interpretation of the literary text.

The visual artists of KAISAHAN, steeped from the fine arts education in the universities, also ventured into actual teaching of the craft. However, they limited themselves to transmitting skills in the use of popular forms in the visual arts, for example, comics, political graffiti, installation art from available environmental materials.

Paradoxically enough, it was in the darkest years of martial rule that alternative methods for disseminating and sharing social knowledge were pioneered through the efforts of the progressive cluster of the Roman Catholic Church. They launched a program called Building Basic Christian communities. Nuns and layworkers conducted literacy classes in the hinterlands; soon they were able to tap the support of other professionals.

Inspired by the force of the liberation theology, members of the Catholic clergy combined literacy classes with political education work. Even the literacy and numeracy classes had a predilection to incorporate in the teaching of reading, writing and counting the economic, political and social realities of the illiterates. The program and its advocates maintained that illiteracy is only a function of underdevelopment and poverty, and that power to understand the world is the only way to change the world.

Soon they conducted para-teacher training courses for the initial graduates of the literacy and numeracy classes. It was through institutional support that came from the progressive Catholics that Education Forum, an institution committed to literacy for the grassroots and realizing an alternative agenda for Philippine education, came into being.

The "lifting" of martial law in 1981 was made to coincide ostensibly with the papal visit as a display of the regime's commitment to "democratic principles." It was immediately followed by a snap presidential elections that further "legitimized" the rule of Marcos. These cosmetic moves hardly made any significant changes in the social and political life of the nation and its people. The state structures remained firm and intact -- a corrupt bureaucracy, an abusive and repressive military, a conservative Catholic clergy, a muzzled media and a silenced citizenry. Meanwhile, the people's movement struggled to prove its viability as an organized force with a comprehensive paradigm for social transformation and a clearly spelt-out program for attaining its goals. Amidst the reality of state repression (the martial law years count as much as 10,500 political detainees and 2,400 victims of involuntary disappearances or "desaperacidos"), the people's movement in the Philippines grew stronger. In the words of one Filipino intellectual, it is the only social movement in Asia that endures as a force to reckon with, an organized and widespread enterprise that is capable of marching into the corridors of power.

FREIREAN LEGACY WEAVES WITH THE ART AND LITERARY MOVEMENT

The need to disseminate art and literature as a principal tool for the national democratic project necessitated the development of a pedagogy that will ensure the democratization and, thus, demystification of the tools of artistic and literary production.

The totalizing tasks of a cultural revolution emanated both from Mao Tse Tung and Paulo Freire. Demolishing oppressive and exploitative social structures and the corollary task of erecting a new social order more than a conscientized citizenry. It required a populace tempered --- and beaten --- by the gleaming lessons of political praxis.

When Freire's seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* reached the Philippines in the late seventies, it immediately provided theoretical backbone to the emergent practice of education work within the people's movement. While the framework provided by Viola Spolin opened new vistas for the artist-trainer, it was bereft of any class bias and thus, was not hinged to the glaring economic and political realities of the poor masses. Spolin's assertions were revolutionary in itself, as she liberated theatre from the dictates of the ready-made text. Spolin believed that the human mind, body and spirit conquering time and space are the animating elements of the theatre. In Spolin's theatre, the unschooled and the illiterate had a comfortable niche.

An highly organic combination was destined for the merging of Spolin's theatre and Freirean thought. As the human body discovered --- through movement, dance, sound and rhythm, words --- its capacity for creating art, Freirean method historicized and contextualized pedagogy, not to mean only tapping the creative reservoir of her/his students, but situating the entire educational process so that it makes use of the actual realities --- economic, political and cultural --- confronting the participants. Freire, unlike Spolin, did not pose neutrality, believing that education is either designed to preserve the status quo or change people's consciousness and thus liberate society.

While credit must be given to PETA for pioneering training modules which combined the basic tenets of Spolin for improvisational theatre with the keystones of Freirean thought, the cumulative efforts of the regional cultural groups based in the countryside and thus more immersed with the realities confronting the peasants, broadened and deepened the training design and extended its theoretical and practical possibilities for use of the basic sectors. It

was through these endeavours that theatre became highly charged with profound meaning as it assumed two dimensions--- one, as a process; and the other as a finished product. For the politically conscious cultural workers, the process and the product assumed equal importance. As a finished product, its dramatic material drew much from the generative themes, or "hot issues" which the audience have strong feelings. Thus there is a close link with entertainment and the motivation to act on these issues. As a process, it made the actors aware of the creative forces inside them and made them realize what they can accomplish as a group. Community presentations are events that allows them to "write, re-write, revise and revision" the play, not only from the standpoint of the actors or creators but, more importantly, the audience for which the final product is dedicated. The process and the product are two separate but related components; when combined, they become more inextricably related to the process of community conscientization, organization and political action.

Community theatres in the provinces referred to PETA's initial training design as the vantage point for their own pedagogical efforts. As early as 1975, a priest and some layworkers from Negros Oriental, a province famed for its big sugar estates owned by a few privileged families and the abject poverty of the sugarworkers, attended PETA's theatre workshop. The priest became critical of the absence of an organizing perspective in the training design. When they went back to the communities of their diocese, they used the PETA training design as a reference for innovating a community theatre training design, one that will cogently combine artistic training with cultural administration and management. In Mindanao, the largest island in the Philippines, a community theatre program was launched in Magsaysay, Lanao del Norte as early as 1976, from the impetus provided by the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference Secretariat-Creative Dramatics team in 1977, an institution supported by the progressive bloc of the Catholic church in Mindanao. It may be accurate to say that the early efforts of the progressive Church in the field of cultural work are the seeds from where the fruits of cultural work in the provinces can be traced.

Thus, being a committed artist also meant being a partisan trainer, and being a partisan trainer meant conducting painstaking mass work with the basic sectors of society--- urban industrial workers, out-of-school youth, peasants in the hinterlands, agricultural workers, illiterate women of upland communities, barefooted children who will never step into a

schoolhouse. Much demystification happens, therefore, to the valorized role of the teacher. Facilitator, animator, trainer, cultural cadre --- these terms became imbued with more meaning as the artist realized the primacy of living with the masses if only to render the training and learning cycle as meaningful and effective. The philosophy recognized the participants as thinking, creative people with the capacity for artistic and/or literary creation, the artist-trainer's role was to help them identify the aspect of their lives that they want changed, and then proceeded by using these aspects as breeding grounds for generative themes.

As a way of generalizing the different approaches to the pedagogy of theatre combining contributions of both Spolin and Freire, the following items form an essential part of a training design:

A. Priming and Unfreezing: The participants are introduced to a series of exercises that allow them to discover their bodies. Games and other group dynamics exercises serve as warm-ups and introduction to complex group work.

B. Introducing the Elements of Theatre: A series of exercises, structured learning experiences and lecturettes are designed to introduce them to the elements of art and drama, and allow them unlimited space to discover the potentials of their bodies and minds. Exercises graduate from simple to complex, but all demanding collective action.

C. Tapping Generative Themes as Sources of Dramatic Material: This component covers social investigation, dialogue among themselves and with the immediate community, exposure to the immediate and surrounding community, critical analyses through group discussions, and a summative structural analysis of the social, political, economic and cultural elements in the community.

D. Mounting and Rehearsals: It takes more than one person to mount a theatre performance. Thus, group work is emphasized in this aspect. The process of The process of coming up with a play, from germinal ideas and generative theme to finished product, is essentially discursive and dialogical. The group sits down to discuss their ideas, initially zeroing to the content; ideas are exchanged, debate conducted, to come up with a coherent working outline.

E. Community Presentation: These are special and valued community events. The sponsoring people's organization sends notices to the community members of a performance by the cultural troupe.

While the presentation is going on, the actors will learn a lot from the audience reactions-- their silences, laughter, applause or even walk-out. Dialogue with the community members are held after the presentation. Thus, these community events are also validation processes which allow community members to "authenticate" the presentation, give insights and volunteer their suggestions for the improvement of the play.

F. Summative Evaluation and Organizational Planning: The evaluation and assessment of the entire training cycle are ensured by the trainers and organizers. The summative evaluation provides opportunity to crystallize lessons as well as formulate recommendations for the future. Most of the time, the recommendations are stepping stones for the organisational planning component; future activities are drawn up. In general, this is the part that assures in the short and long-term, the continuity of the learning process.

In the Freirean approach, issues of principal importance were tackled to the participants. These generative themes, or hot issues, were transformed as basic sources of art and literary materials. In the countryside, themes of flesh and blood dimensions became the generative themes and since they were close to their lives as a people, they tapped--- and zapped--- the energies of the people. These themes revolved around landlord-peasant relationship, militarization and human rights violations, co-operative formation and socio-economic work, and even issues of national import, such as debt-servicing and graft and corruption in the government bureaucracy.

Boal came into the picture in the early eighties as a response to the growing need to develop and practice a pedagogy with a strong foundation in the theatre and the arts. Boal's contributions to the enrichment of the pedagogy of Freire is revolutionary and groundbreaking by itself.

In Boal's approach, theatre became a participatory act. Extending Bertolt Brecht's treatises on breaking the fourth wall, Boal allowed the audience to smashed that imaginary wall that

divides them from the performers and then direct the course of dramatic action. Thus, the process went beyond the dialogue; it spurred action, collective decision making and response. More aptly, Boal called it a "rehearsal for the revolution." The bigger stage is life, the more exciting dramatic action happens when the masses rise up and shape history.

This method of Boal is being integrated into the basic workshops for popular and political theatre in the different grassroots communities in the country. The method is laborious, and requires mental facility from the trainers to make it truly authentic and effective. When used to its maximum effectiveness, it becomes a truly liberating exercise.

In 1986, we tried it utilizing it in a basic theatre workshop for workers initiated by the union. Three months ago, the factory union emerged from a victorious in a certification election which pitted them against the management-supported union. Spirits were still high and morale had just received a boost but apprehension loomed above their heads. A strike might be forthcoming. The company management had been violating provisions in the collective bargaining agreement: the fifteen peso across the board wage and the regularization of contractual women workers.

After a series of priming and unfreezing exercises on the theatre, the workshop participants sculpted images of a workers' union planning for a strike. In one frame, they were able to capture diverse images -- intense discussion and debate, fear and apprehension, resoluteness and militancy. The exercise allowed them to create extensions to the single frame which they had initially created.

It would be interesting to note that the series of theatre exercises became fitting and effective rehearsals for a strike which they successfully waged, much to the consternation of the management. But it was through the series of theatre exercises that they were able to formulate step-by-step actions that would logically lead to the strike - first move was a work slowdown, then a general walkout, and then a strike, if the company refuses to heed their demands.

The conduct of an art and literary training is always a nodal point in the organizational life of a cultural group. More often than not, it is the very process of artistic training effectively combined with political education that these groups get started or, if the group had been

formed a long time ago, establish their bearing or, sometimes, get started. Both in the trade union and peasant movement, once the leaders of the people's organizations witness the lively, dynamic and dialogical processes of art and literary trainings, they immediately take interest in adapting such methods in the political education programs of their respective organizations.

The formation of regional cultural networks and national cultural network, immediately after the people power uprising that brought Corazon Aquino to power, heightened the imperative and concern for a more totalizing pedagogy. The political situation was drastically changed with the dissolution, albeit informal, of the broad anti-dictatorship front. Some political quarters suddenly hinged their hopes for social change with the popular president and her much vaunted democratic space.

But for some, the lessons of history remain crystal clear: emancipation lies with the people, not with a government that continues to support and be supported by its colonial masters.

TOWARDS A PEOPLE'S PEDAGOGY: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND IMPERATIVES

Freire and subsequently Boal provided a theoretical framework for the political education and training work that is congruent with the guiding principles of the people's movement in the Philippines. Freire historicized and contextualized pedagogy in a society already rife with class contradictions and struggling for national sovereignty. Adapting Freirean philosophy to art and literary work, the teaching of art and literature and subsequently the democratization of the means of artistic and literary production became immensely realizable.

Literature and the other disciplines of art can glean much from the great strides achieved by the theatre. Learning the rudiments of creative writing can seem to be more taxing than theatre, since the form requires a high degree of functional literacy. I had one experience of teaching traditional poetry to the peasants. Since the form relied on elaborate rhyming schemes and uniform meters, the peasants had to grapple with an literary form externally imposed.

Years of apprenticeship and study of contemporary trends in the literature of resistance, gave birth to a generative theme which we now refer to as testimonial literature. This has

been the basis of most creative writing training courses implemented with the basic masses. Testimonial literature, drawing from the human impulse to narrate her/his life story, veers away from the formalist school of thought that ascribes to literature formal elements like linear plot in the case of fiction or metric and rhyming schemes in the case of poetry; instead, it values capacity of the individual to "narrate" her/his views, insights, life events and stories in her/his own terms. Testimonial literature is necessarily political literature, since it captures the voices of suppressed groups and uncovers their perspectives of themselves, their community and society.

The decade of the eighties has also given rise to corollary concepts to pedagogy. Popular education and adult education have become buzzwords among non-government organizations and people's organizations in their bid to weave training and education as part of their centrepiece programs. However these trends, in their attempt to become increasingly "popular," are always in the danger of diluting the class partisanship of Freirean methodology, and thus turn itself against the fundamental principles of the people's movement. While employing participatory and dialogical learning methods, the educational content of these popular education modules has a way of obscuring the contradictions engendered by feudalism and capitalism. For instance, course content is heavily geared towards creating a belief that people's organizations and communities can realize democratization and development by peaceful coexistence with the oppressive and exploitative structures of the state. Most of these programs are funded by foreign development agencies which initially requires that recipient agencies assume a non confrontative stance vis-à-vis the government.

The encounter of Freirean pedagogy and feminism has not been an easy one. From the onset, Freirean pedagogy has identified its emphasis: on contradictions among social classes. Reading Freire with a gender lens, one can very well perceive the invisibility of women in his texts. Nonetheless, for some time now, cultural activists with a feminist consciousness have been addressing gender issues in their training modules. More exciting are forays in the development of women's art and literary groups who are able to trace the connections between gender and class contradictions, and painstakingly strengthening the unity of the women's liberation movement with the national liberation movement. As I have said, it has not been easy. Some quarters in the feminist movement, following the line of popular educators, have blatantly declared their non-espousal of the basic principles of

the people's movement; sadly, such belief is reflected in their approaches to pedagogical work. Strong resistance to the reality of class oppression mars their attempts to develop training courses for women. Thus, gender issues like domestic violence, prostitution, reproductive rights are taken as isolated issues emanating only from patriarchy, and in no way related to the totalizing perspective of undemocratic social structures.

Towards a people's pedagogy. There are two key words: people and pedagogy. In time, these words have attained diverse, sometimes even eclectic meanings, always allowing some latitude of deviation. People mean the disenfranchised sectors of society, thus affirming the strong class and, of late, the gender partisanship; pedagogy means the transmission of social knowledge necessary to shape history and change society through decisive political action of the working class and peasantry, not through token reforms from the ruling class.

If we affirm and reaffirm both the profound and operational definitions of these concepts, we will not be lost in these arduous journey of conscientizing, arousing and organizing our people as creative, dynamic Subjects of history.

* *The author is currently co-ordinator of the Outreach and Training Department and Projects Development Desk of AsiaVisions Media Foundation; and member of the Executive Committee and Council of Leaders of People's Media Network, a consortium of NGOs and people's organizations engaged in social communications and media work.*