



To the Participants in the First International Meeting of the Paulo Freire Forum

The Paulo Freire Institute came into being, as the result of an idea that can be traced to Paulo Freire himself. It was during a conference at UCLA, on April 12th, 1991. After lecturing there, and while conversing with several of his friends, Moacir Gadotti, Carlos Alberto Torres and Peter McLaren, among them, that the vision of the PFI was born.

At that seminal conference, Paulo commented that there already existed discernable signs around, objective grounds and felt interest, to embark in the creation of a viable space –where individual persons and institutions– engaged in doing research and/or practical work based on his pedagogical principles- could meet in a congenial and supportive environment. A list of a few names of persons were suggested then by Paulo. These persons constituted the first members of the International Council Board of what , quite soon, became the Paulo Freire Institute.

The composition of the International Council of the PFI was later modified and expanded, reflecting suggestions initially made by Carlos Torres and Moacir Gadotti, and, later, by Francisco Gutiérrez, José Eustáquio Romão and Walter Esteves Garcia. It was, also, on that very same occasion, that Paulo requested his friend Moacir Gadotti, to personally assume the responsibility for coordinating the work necessary to put the proposal into practice. In that way, the first steps were taken to create the Paulo Freire Institute, which was officially founded in September first, 1992.

Paulo Freire thus participated in all of the significant stages of development of the Paulo Freire Institute, all the way from its inception to its recent history. He was there during its creation, and also when its first members were suggested , during the discussion of its guiding and early organizing statutes, when defining its basic course of action. He was among us at the time of its official foundation, decisively participating in all the main discussions and decisions of the PFI. He always actively contributed with his valuable and clarifying reflections on how to better implement the projects carried out by the PFI.

Unfortunately, he is not physically present with us during this First International Encounter, to witness in person this important moment: the fruition of the vision that became this Institute, this place which enables (or strengthens) communication among people and institutions who still dare to believe and struggle; who seek to overcome the persisting ugly realities of exploitation, oppression and humiliation, to which millions of fellow human beings in our contemporary world are still condemned.

We, at the PFI, believe that the legacy of Paulo Freire remains the great inspiration that continues to unite us and that, certainly, will keep us in permanent contact to continue to defend all of the educational principles, which by upholding “Education as a Practice of Liberation” as its guiding notion, provides us with badly needed support to continue in our struggle.

Here and now, by renewing, our vows and convictions and, thereby, adhering to the ideal principles that were inspirational in the creation of the Paulo Freire Institute and, as founders of the PFI, we wish to extend our warmest gratitude for the collaboration and solidarity that we continue to receive from so many different persons and institutions throughout the world.

At the same time, we express our disposition to support, within our possibilities, other groups and organizations willing to follow and develop further the ways indicated by Paulo Freire. In this perspective, the Human Being is the central point of departure in the construction of a society both more human and with enhanced solidarity.

In greeting with particularly warm affection each and all of the participants in this First International Meeting of the Paulo Freire Forum, as representatives of the Paulo Freire Institute we wish you all a very good stay with us in São Paulo. We wish ,as well, that these three days of conviviality will remain meaningful in your personal and professional lives. Let this occasion be an auspicious beginning of this permanent forum of reflection, a renewal of hope, a strengthening of our ties and a commitments to the struggle that motivated the existence of the one who made us closer to each other: Paulo Freire.

A warm embrace to You All!

Carlos Alberto Torres, Francisco Gutiérrez, José Eustáquio Romão, Moacir Gadotti e Walter Esteves Garcia
Diretores do Instituto Paulo Freire