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## Shaking the Hands of Our Mentors: Boal and Freire and Us

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## Shaking the Hands of Our Mentors: Boal and Freire and Us<sup>1</sup>

Katherine Burke<sup>2</sup>, Mariana K. Leal Ferreira<sup>3</sup>, and Mark Weinberg<sup>4</sup>

*This collection of three personal narratives documents the ways in which a radical mathematics educator, a socially conscious but disillusioned theatre-maker, and a social activist seeking tools for change discovered the techniques of Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed and met the wonderful men who developed them.*

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<sup>1</sup> Editor's Note: A version of this essay originally appeared in the 2012 issue of *Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Journal*. It was revised and reprinted in this issue to facilitate the transition to the new journal website. We encourage readers to use this version of the manuscript.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Burke is a multidisciplinary artist, teacher, and activist. Her work in health humanities at Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine engages Cleveland residents, medical students, health care workers, and physicians in an ongoing examination of health and well-being in Cleveland. As the director of the acclaimed verbatim play *May 4th Voices*, she brought to life the oral histories of witnesses to the 1970 shootings at Kent State University. An activist who uses Theatre of the Oppressed and other arts-based techniques to foster dialogue and inspire action, Burke is a past president of Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed, Inc., and has taught and implemented applied theatre for social change methods nationally and internationally.

<sup>3</sup> Mariana K. Leal Ferreira is a medical anthropologist and mathematics educator from São Paulo, Brazil. She uses Theatre and Pedagogy of the Oppressed in her classrooms at San Francisco State University, in California, where she teaches in the Liberal Studies Program. In her book, *Acting for Indigenous Rights: Theatre to Change the World* (2013) Mariana discusses these hands-on activities in detail and instructs students how to write and perform their own plays (download for free at [www.indig.umn.edu](http://www.indig.umn.edu)). Mariana's most recent book, *Mapping Time, Space, and the Body: Indigenous Knowledge and Mathematical Thinking in Brazil* (Sense Publishers 2015), brings people, land, and numbers together in the fight for justice.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Weinberg is an activist theatre-maker and teaching artist in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Mark has engaged in theatre which focuses on social justice issues for many years, chronicled the development and processes of collectively organized theatres in *Challenging the Hierarchy: Collective Theatre in the United States* (Greenwood Press), and co-founded the Theatre and Social Change focus group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE). He is also co-founder, with Jenny Wanasek, of the [Center for Applied Theatre](http://www.centerforappliedtheatre.org) which uses Theatre of the Oppressed and related techniques to work with groups from all areas of life to identify problems and explore solutions. Most recently, CAT's work has focused on dismantling cultures of violence.

The power of Paulo Freire's and Augusto Boal's ideas and the results of their actions have influenced educators, theatre-makers, and activists all over the globe—and we believe, always will. The people they taught and influenced, like the three of us, and the people who have been taught about them, the “multipliers,” continue to spread their techniques and the attitude of compassionate, respectful, and empathetic justice that informs them.

What follows are three personal narratives about the way in which Freire and Boal touched the lives of the authors. The stories are idiosyncratic and anecdotal—a glimpse into some of the beautiful connections that have been made—and are not meant to be advisory or self-congratulatory. They chronicle in fits and starts the way a radical mathematics educator, a socially conscious but disillusioned theatre-maker, and a social activist seeking tools for change have come to and used *Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed* and along the way been able to shake the hands of their mentors. They are more reminiscence than road map. We hope you enjoy the journey.

### **A Mathematics of Love and Generosity: My first encounter with Paulo Freire in Brazil**

Mariana K. Leal Ferreira

A quick look at my tiny personal bookshelf in the Xingu Indigenous Park in the Brazilian Amazon in the early 1980s was all but revealing. Nature almanacs on local fauna and flora, highlighting the most dangerous creatures like anacondas and jaguars. Practical survivor guides such as *Donde No Hay Doctor* (Where there is No Doctor). Classic Brazilian novels such as Machado de Assis' *O Alienista*, and modern anthropology texts on language and kinship by my favorite Brazilian authors. Finally, a huge variety of cheap sexy romances about Brazilian “Indians,” sort of like the *Savage Love* series in English. These, I was sure, would attract the attention of the curious *Fundação Nacional do Índio* (National Indian Foundation – FUNAI) military officials. The FUNAI guys insisted on perusing through my books every time they landed at

the Diauarum Post where I was stationed as a Portuguese and mathematics teacher some 30-plus years ago. Little did they notice Paulo Freire's undercover books on the shelves.

The trick always worked. Seduced by the flashy covers of the dirty romances, the government thugs (yes, they carried pistols tucked in their pants and knives strapped to their calves) were instantly attracted to the images of naked Indians and valiant colonizers. "Wow, this is hot," was the usual comment, followed by, "Can I borrow it?" Distracted, they never checked out any of the other books whose fake covers disguised the "subversive" works of Paulo Freire. Reading and teaching Freire on Indigenous lands—or anywhere else for that matter—would have landed me in jail in a heartbeat. To the government dictators, Freire was a "communist" who insisted on teaching the illiterate folks of the poor Brazilian Northeast how to read and write (otherwise, they couldn't vote). For that reason he was sent to prison after the military coup in 1964, exiled briefly in Bolivia and then in Chile for five years. Nonetheless, he continued his literacy work abroad and first published, in 1967, *Educação Como Prática da Liberdade (Education as a Practice of Liberty)*, soon followed, in 1968, by *Pedagogia do Oprimido (Pedagogy of the Oppressed)*, first English edition in 1970). A wide collection of other books and anthologies in Portuguese, English, and many other languages followed suit. On my rustic bookshelf, which hung from the rafters of my thatched-roof shack, there were no signs of Freire's revolutionary pedagogy. My father Jorge had taught me how to neatly replace the covers of banned books with those of nature almanacs and classic novels, which didn't interest government officials at all.

But the book trick didn't work as well with my 300-plus students from 7 different nations. They traveled from all over the Xingu Park to learn how to read and write in Portuguese and in their native languages, and do mathematics at the adobe schoolhouse where I taught. Sure enough, there were plenty of math books on display which could have made students busy themselves exclusively with calculations (especially making change for small purchase items they had no familiarity with, such as milk or ice cream), with no conceptual learning whatsoever. There was also a collection of regular first-readers for show-and-

tell if the military happened to drop in for an unexpected visit. These were de-contextualized materials used in public schools all over Brazil. The first-readers we had on display were based solely on the sounds of syllables that formed words that meant nothing in the Amazon, such as *uva* (grapes). No one in the Xingu Park, aside from the white employees, had ever seen or tasted a single grape. The lesson u-va, ve, vi, vo, vu then led to the sentence *A vovó viu a uva* (Grandma saw the grapes), which made even less sense to local communities. What a difference from Freire's discussion of the seventeen *palavras geradoras* identified in the *Círculos de Cultura* (Circles of Culture) in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1960s. Such generative themes, which reflected the communities' real-life situations, included the concept of *favela* (shantytown), discussed in detail in terms of its inhabitants' basic needs. Only then did the word FAVELA acquire the necessary meaning to be broken down into syllables (fa, fe, fi, fo fu; va, ve, vi, vo, vu, and la, le, li, lo, lu), following the phonetics of the Portuguese language. Next, Freire suggested, students could build words that made use of these and other syllables, such as *chuva* (rain)—words that were significant in their everyday experiences. The rainy season is when corn, squash, manioc, and sweet potatoes bloom and grow, feeding everyone.

The constant roar of military airplanes, headed to the Air Force base located a few miles upstream on the Xingu River, and the few aircrafts that tried to land on the narrow airstrip behind our schoolhouse gave us plenty of notice to clean up the classroom. Our own heavily politicized first-readers, seasonal calendars, maps, and health guides could be quickly hauled to a hidden attic in a house nearby. But the images of recent killings by neighboring farmers, deforested lands, and polluted rivers that covered the walls of the schoolhouse revealed our true purpose.

What was even more difficult to cover up, however, was the consciousness that emerged anew, and that shone on the students' faces, breathing through their skins—an attitude of *conscientização* that did not, because it could not, pretend to be anything other than liberating. Years, decades, and centuries of involuntary servitude on miniscule reservations, extreme poverty and ill health, and forced assimilation into

the broader Brazilian society left communities feeling hopeless. How could they not smile and feel good about contributing to the national movement of Indigenous Peoples, helping re-write the new Constitution of 1988 and, ultimately, history? Such an assertive attitude infuriated the military. At night, sitting around the council fire in the main village plaza, we'd find solace in Paulo Freire's astute words: "The oppressor also needs liberation."

Even the atmosphere in our packed dirt-floor schoolhouse smelled of generative themes: land, water, food, health, and education. *Palavras geradoras* occupied the students' minds and souls, and cracked broad smiles on their faces as they wrote down and read aloud their own narratives. "If the school is shut down by the military, we'll meet in the forest or across the Xingu River!" "If they take away our typewriter, we'll write by hand!" "If we cannot study during daytime, we'll use candlelights!" (We did it anyway). An avalanche of letters, memos, petitions, and reports started landing on the desktops of government officials at FUNAI's headquarters in Brasília, demanding protection from farmers and goldminers, and asking for seeds, tools, medicine, school supplies. But FUNAI generals were far from pleased. Heavy retaliation ensued. All over the country, Indigenous leaders were being assassinated, but the Freirian liberation movement was well on its way and could not be stopped.



Fig. 1. From right, Mariana Ferreira in the company of three Suyá women in the Xingu Indigenous Park, 1981

After the military lifted his exile status in 1978, Paulo Freire returned to Brazil. He became Secretary of Education in São Paulo. Those of us revolutionaries working as teachers and nurses on

Indigenous territories and in shantytowns around big metropolitan areas celebrated his return. The communities we served benefited enormously from the array of Freire's books that came out in the 1980s in the areas of education, politics, and literacy. A broad variety of pedagogical materials, initially banned by the dictators as "subversive," received more and more support—first from the Secretary of Education in São Paulo with Freire in charge, of course, and then from the Ministry of Culture and Education of Brazil. Several NGOs, mainly the *Comissão Pró-Índio de São Paulo* (Pro-Indian Commission of São Paulo), helped us publish and distribute innovative materials to the native schools that flourished throughout the country. Today, there are more than 3,000 Indigenous schools that teach in their own languages (about 200 in Brazil), following unique calendars and curricula.

In 1995, Paulo Freire's force gained momentum with the democratic election of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso—a sociologist, political scientist, and university professor. Cardoso helped further, to a certain extent, the goals of the Indigenous organized movement in Brazil. He supported, among many other initiatives, Freire's educational reform and literacy program outlined in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* movement. The First Lady, sociologist Ruth Cardoso, also backed culturally diverse curricula in the country. In 1997, with the death of Paulo Freire, an education task force led by Professor Ruth Cardoso generated culturally grounded curricula for Indigenous schools in Brazil. I coordinated the mathematics area and helped assemble the National Curricular Guidelines for Indigenous Schools (*Referencial Curricular Nacional para as Escolas Indígenas*). Soon after, I was finally able to write a powerful mathematics textbook for thousands of Indigenous schools across the country. It was only in this book, *Madikauku—Os dez dedos das mãos. Matemática e Povos Indígenas no Brasil*, that I could wax poetic, without fear of backlash, about the amazing contributions Freire made to the organized Indigenous movement in Brazil.

Looking back at my first face-to-face encounter with Paulo Freire, I remember our handshake and quick dialogue at the *Museu de Arte de São Paulo* (MASP) in 1991. My mother Ilsa, an art historian and

educator, invited me to the opening of an exhibit about art and popular education. “Paulo Freire will be there,” she announced, sending warm shivers down my spine. What would it be like to finally meet this man in person, someone who had long inspired me to read the world through the seemingly simple words of Indigenous persons? What could I say, other than “nice to meet you?” Should I bring him a memento, a gift from the Amazon?

Once we arrived at MASP, sweat beads formed on my forehead. As we exited the glass elevator on the first floor, I noticed academics, politicians, and journalists lined up against the shiny white walls of the spectacular exhibition hall. The place was packed. Bright lights obfuscated my vision as my mother and I made our way through the crowd. And suddenly, as I looked straight ahead, the man who revolutionized popular education was standing just a few feet away, talking to folks like you and me. Ilsa cut right across the multitude, went straight up to him and said: “Paulo, I want you to meet my daughter, Mariana.” He immediately turned to me with a broad smile on his face, held my hands, and said kindly: “I admire your work in mathematics.” So he knew about my work? Somehow, he looked just as I had imagined: a philosopher of sorts with long hair and a grizzly beard, dressed in plain, gray clothing, like my father Jorge. I remember mumbling something like: “Nice to finally meet you in person,” and then a few words about how important his ideas were to me. And then I took a seashell out of my purse and gave it to him. Paulo thanked me, dropped the shell into a pocket, and turned to the guests around him. As we drove back home, Ilsa joked around saying that I shouldn’t wash my hands for at least a week, to hold in all that wisdom. I laughed. By then I knew, deep inside, that Freire’s generosity and solidarity were deeply ingrained in me, in the spirit of Indigenous Peoples’ gift-giving practices and his *Pedagogy of the Heart* (originally called *Under the Shade of the Mango Tree*). Paulo Freire asserted, throughout his writings, that education was an act of love—like eating mangos for us Brazilians.

How best to describe the circulation and exchange of gifts and emotions from a Freirian perspective than in the words of Jamie Llullu Manchineri, a mathematics teacher who worked on the



Mamoadate Indigenous Land, state of Acre in Northern Brazil, and wrote in the opening of the book *Madikauku* in 1998, “Love is also used by mathematics. Those who love or have compassion for their relatives, collaborate with the community, and share goods with others.”

### **No Longer Disillusioned: Boal's Effect on Me**

Mark Weinberg

I have read enough language-laden theory to last several lifetimes. I have spent enough time in theatre classrooms, on both sides of the desk, to have gotten my fill of academia. Yet the two most influential books in my life are Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*—relatively direct and clear statements of the core principles of radical thinking and radical praxis.

In 1980 I left my teaching position at a small Midwestern college. My politics, my experience running a co-op grocery, and my theatre training were coming together in a theory and practice of collective theatre-making. I helped form a collective in Madison, Wisconsin and we were in the middle of creating a play called *Obadiah's Image: The Training of a Rapist*. In 1981 I convinced the theatre department at the University of Minnesota (where I had completed my MFA in directing and left school) that I should be allowed to finish my Ph.D. After a grueling oral exam, during which I had to defend my dissertation topic—collective theatre in the US—I stopped by the co-op where I had worked in Minneapolis, and in a disheveled rack in the corner of the store I found a single copy of *Theatreworks* announcing The Gathering, a festival in St. Peter, Minnesota. It turned out to be the Woodstock of political theatre.

Three groups about which I wrote were there, and I later toured the country visiting them as part of my research. But the strongest connection I made was with one company member, Doug Paterson. Several years later, after Doug and I had co-founded the Theatre and Social Change focus group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), we found ourselves in the unusual position of holding the two offices in the association that were responsible for putting together the annual conference. Doug

suggested bringing a Brazilian to the conference in Atlanta to give workshops and deliver the keynote address. I had read *Theatre of the Oppressed* and I was unimpressed. The analysis of catharsis was pretty good, but the claim that *anyone* can make theatre rang hollow in the ears of someone who had spent many years and untold hours learning how to be a theatre-maker. I had stepped away from the simple principles of Freire and Marcuse, but Doug was persuasive and sitting in a little diner in Chicago, he changed my life.



Fig. 2. From left: Mark Weinberg, Augusto Boal, and Doug Paterson, circa 2003

I was breathless when Boal finished his keynote, and I used my official position to get invited to dinner with him and Doug. When Doug was called away to deal with a broken bus, I asked Boal what he wanted to do. “I’ll ask you questions as long as you’re willing to answer them” I told him. His response, one which became a most pleasant part of our seventeen year relationship, was “Let’s have a glass of wine.” We talked for nearly two hours about the meaning of theatre, the nature of oppression, Freirean teaching, the pain of being away from our children when we traveled, and the place of TO in the worlds of theatre and progressive politics. I took his workshop the next day, and I was hooked.

After several more workshops with Boal and like-minded theatre-makers (like the amazing Michael Rohd and charismatic powerhouse Norma Bowles), I felt ready to try my hand as a joker. Somehow I wheedled an invitation for Doug and I to co-joker an introduction to TO at a conference in Canberra, Australia. I decided that I would use the occasion to try a modification of one of Boal’s Image Theatre techniques that I had been playing with in the classroom—beginning with the anti-model and, rather than

moving to the model, intensifying the oppression. The discoveries made by the participants about their self-oppression and their complicity in oppressing others were extremely powerful. I sheepishly told Boal about what I had done when we next met, and he supported me whole-heartedly, urging me to develop the arsenal of TO, not just repeat what he had done.

Years later, Doug was asked to give some TO workshops at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, but instead steered the department chair in my direction. At the first workshop I met Jenny Wanasek, now my life partner and co-founder of the Center for Applied Theatre. At the end of the workshop series I was invited to split my contract between the campus where I was teaching and UW-M where I got to develop courses in Participatory Theatre and Applied Theatre (a community service class where we created Forum Theatre with community partners). Jenny and I traveled to New York to take a five-day workshop with Boal, and she was hooked, too.

Jenny and I were asked to work with a group of people who had lost someone to drugs or addiction to develop a program about drug addiction that could tour to schools. *Amy's Addiction* became the impetus for forming the Center for Applied Theatre—one arm of which tours Forum pieces, developed with members of the community whose problems the plays address, to schools and youth programs. Over the past several years we have reached over 15,000 students.

The other arm of the company, actually Jenny and I, uses TO techniques that we have modified over the years to work with groups trying to define problems, challenge perceptions, and combat oppression, including faculties, students, NGOs, service organizations, unions, support groups for LGBTQ teens and runaways, half-way houses for ex-inmates, and others. Most recently our work has focused on dismantling cultures of violence and, in a surprising twist to us, on the creation of videos problematizing violent choices. (See our chapter in *Come Closer: Critical Perspectives on Theatre of the Oppressed* for a description of some of our methods.)

Meeting Boal has changed every facet of my life. My work in collectives had waned, my isolation in my teaching job had increased because of my push for Freirean methodologies, my politics continued to radicalize but become detached from my work-a-day activities, my personal life was a bit of a shambles, and my anger was increasing in proportion to my feeling that I lacked tools to promote meaningful social change. Meeting Boal was inspirational and invigorating. I changed not only the way I taught, but what I taught. Rehearsals for and performances of scripted plays I directed were colored by discoveries made using TO techniques. I met the woman I love and, co-joking with her, continue to develop the tools I thought I couldn't find. And over the years, and over many more glasses of wine with Augusto Boal, I found and loved a new friend.

Boal approached the task of social change as an artist and an activist, as a politician and a person, as a mentor and a student—with love, respect, and perhaps more than anything else, joy. He reminded me always that the act of tossing a pebble into a pond is all that we can do, but that the ripples continue to the shore and return; that systemic oppression is best combated in the struggle of the moment; that the stories people tell about their own lives reverberate with more power than the myths perpetrated by those in power; and that laughter itself is subversive.

I have recently left teaching all together, and will be cutting back on my other work commitments soon. Using TO to promote social justice continues to become an ever greater driving force in my life.

Half the people I know have photographs of themselves with Boal. In mine, Boal has his arms draped around Jenny and two of our daughters. It was taken in my dining room. I am a lucky man.



Fig. 3. Mark, Jenny, and daughters with Augusto Boal, circa 2003

## **The Library**

Katherine Burke

In 2002 I was working as adjunct theatre instructor in the Division of Theatre at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. The Division had received a grant to support an interactive theatre ensemble that would address challenging social issues on campus, and I was asked to head up the ensemble. Because I didn't know exactly what "interactive theatre" was, I traveled around to observe other ensembles' methods. I primarily observed a skit/talkback format, in which a scene about some terrible event (sexual harassment, for example) would take place; the actors would remain "in character" after the scene was done so that the audience could ask them questions or make comments. "Easy enough," I thought; we adopted the skit/talkback format and, with an ensemble of six to eight graduate student actors, did performances across campus about sexual assault, substance use, harassment, and diversity. After a while we got quite good at creating moving, even cathartic, performances.

We were asked to design and implement a workshop about sexual harassment for staff and faculty. Since we were not familiar with the subject matter, we spent a great deal of time researching sexual harassment laws and statistics in Indiana and consulting with campus authorities on the subject so that we would be able to answer any questions the audience might have in the talkback. We created a stereotypical scene in which a male boss was harassing his female employee, ending with the boss giving the employee an ultimatum, threatening her employment. Then the audience began to pepper the actors with questions and accusations. They blamed the boss, shaming him, even yelling at him; they sympathized with the employee; and some even blamed the employee, citing her short skirt and attractive appearance as the cause of the boss's unwanted attention. When the workshop was over, we received applause, took bows, and mingled with the audience who told us what great actors we were, and what a wonderful show. We had experienced all this before at other workshops, but on this day, I was struck by how ineffective we were. The audience had experienced a catharsis and left the workshop feeling great. The actors, who had

undergone an emotional performance, had also experienced a sort of catharsis. But what had been accomplished? Nothing! It was merely a good show. No real change would come about as a result of all this time, effort, and intention.

At the same time I was teaching a beginning acting class, and I was becoming tired of using the same acting games from year to year. In search of new games, I went to the library, where I found Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, with thousands of games! How had I never heard of this book? How thrilling. I took it home and began to read, and therein found the answer to my interactive theatre ensemble problem. This was how we could change our world. We began to implement Theatre of the Oppressed techniques immediately. We perforated the wall between actor and audience, played games with the spectators, made images, and created Forum Theatre plays. I saw now that our responsibility was to present the world as we saw it, to use the scene to pose questions; we didn't need to have heavily-researched and prepared answers for the audience's questions. Instead, we could all work together to find alternative courses of action. Our initial forum scenes were admittedly not very good, because we were still creating workshops for communities of which we were not a part. We were not the oppressed: these were not, for the most part, *our* issues. This was a flaw in the design of the entire project. The workshops were still trying to teach people using a "banking model," modeling "good" behavior.

In 2001, I attended the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed conference for the first time in Omaha, Nebraska, and trained with Augusto Boal for three mind-opening days. People from all over the world sat on the floor to take in Boal's words. "Come closer," he said. "Come closer." We did. He was kind and gentle, and his critiques of our Forum scenes were laser-accurate. I was in a scene—about the conflict between administration and teachers—with some of the most experienced practitioners in the room (Mark Weinberg was one!), and when we first performed it for the group, Augusto's critique was that we, the actors, still did not know what the scene was truly about, so we needed to create an image to distill the meaning. I posed myself as if I were yelling but not being heard, and for the first time I began to understand

the *how* and *why* of Image Theatre, how we “think with the whole body,” as Augusto told me. The final day of the training was my birthday, and Augusto gave me a little kiss on the cheek for my present. I would train with Augusto twice more at PTO conferences in the following years. Each time I felt like a novice. I still do.



Fig. 4. Katherine Burke (standing left of image, in blue shirt) leading *The Great Game of Power* at a Theatre of the Oppressed training in Akron, OH, March 2015

I felt embraced by the community of practitioners, whose tireless work inspired and motivated me. By this time, the grant for the original interactive theatre ensemble had run its course, so I was on my own. I took what I learned back home where I began working with advocates for victims of sexual assault, children of migrant workers, and universities; I traveled around the Midwest to help schools establish Forum Theatre groups; and I even went to the Republic of Georgia to share Boal’s techniques and ideas with artists, writers, and social activists. I continued to attend the PTO conference annually, learning more and more from practitioners each time. It was inevitable, I suppose, that I would join the board, and I am honored to have served as the president of the organization.



Fig. 5. Katherine Burke welcomes attendees to the 2013 Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed Conference in Oxford, Ohio

Even with my PTO community, I am confronted by the same isolation that many practitioners experience. I am the one who comes in, leads a workshop or training, and then leaves. I train people to do the work, but rarely actually do the work myself. It has taken me years to find my footing in activism. My breakthrough is happening now, in the few years since I have left academic theatre and entered medical education in Cleveland, Ohio. Theatre of the Oppressed is an ideal tool for marginalized communities struggling for health care equity. Now, nearly fifteen years since I went to the library and discovered TO, I find myself in a position to truly put in practice what I have learned: action and reflection, praxis.

In *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Boal wrote that “Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it” (xxx). For me, TO has reshaped my entire future, my politics, my purpose, and I am poised now to help build a future of just and equitable health care for all. My way of stumbling upon this work was ordinary, but going to the library that one day sent me on a profound path.



Fig. 6. Katherine Burke addresses the 2013 Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed conference in Oxford, OH

## Works Cited

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