

# MARGINAL MIND MATTERS NPC.

Ad-Hoc Committee for Political and  
Economic Conscientization



**;MARGINS**

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Push Boundries

*"We cannot achieve sustainable development and make the planet better for all if  
people are excluded*

*from opportunities, services, and the chance for a better life,"*

*~ United Nations (2015)*

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## 1. Background

In the conversation around social exclusion, we must engage those excluded in gauging what inclusion means to them, however, most of the socially excluded do not even know that they are excluded from society or how they have been impacted by that exclusion. It is for this reason that self-awareness plays such a critical role in the fight to mitigate social exclusion and why self-awareness is a cornerstone of Margins' offerings.

Self-awareness is a tool for the excluded to look at the world critically and gain an understanding of the nature of exclusion. When individuals gain a sense of what exclusion is, they can also gain a sense of what inclusion might look like, and how to achieve social inclusion through social action.

Conscientization is a concept that arose from Frantz Fanon's, *Black Skin White Masks* which declared that human emancipation from slavery is conscientization (Saxena, 2022). The term conscientization was further developed and popularized by Paulo Freire in his seminal work, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Saxena, 2022).

Conscientization means developing a critical consciousness to perceive oppression and to act against it. In the words of Ledwith, conscientization is,

*“...the process whereby people become aware of the political, socio-economic and cultural contradictions that interact in a*

*hegemonic way to diminish their lives” (Ledwith cited in Stokes, 2017:3).*

According to Freire, the marginalized are driven into ignorance and lethargy by domination (Freire, 1993; Saxena, 2022). The effect of this domination is that humans move away from their reality towards a false consciousness. Freire observed that the systems of production are instrumental in developing a false consciousness. Free, strong, and capable people are turned into unquestioning, scared, mechanical, oppressed objects of the capitalist machine (Saxena, 2022).

## **2. De-Capitalizing the Human Mind**

Freire was of the view that the masses have no understanding of how society functions because oppression prohibits all the things that facilitate self-awareness i.e., self-knowledge, self-assertion, and self-development (Saxena, 2022). The marginalized are denied education and dissuaded from knowing themselves through systems that entrench inferiority and shame. The upshot is a distorted and limited experience of society and themselves (Freire, 1993).

*“The dispossessed are kept submerged in their situation and prevented from gaining critical awareness of the concrete realities of their world and making a response,” (Freire cited in Saxena, 2022:2).*

The cycle of oppression and entrenchment of inner hatred (by the systems of dominance) create an opportunity for outside agents to speak and act on the

behalf of the masses. Altruism and its many manifestations represent another structure of exploitation and oppression. Freire believed that the oppressed would remain in a constant and evolving struggle against the systems of dominance until they were re-humanized through conscientization (Saxena, 2022; Stokes, 2017). Freire's conscientization proceeds through three stages.

First, a holistic transformation is required from within where the mental structures of colonization and capitalization are deconstructed. Freire believed that when the individual achieved inner emancipation, they would be able to perceive the exploitative characteristics of society (Freire, 1993).

*“They used to say, we were unproductive because we were lazy and drunken. Now that we are respected as a man, we are going to show everyone that we were never drunken or lazy, we were exploited,”*  
(Freire cited in Saxena, 2022:5).

Critical thinking, consciousness, and the participation of the masses in their own emancipation allows them to understand that exploitation is not the result of powerlessness and ignorance but the cause of it (Saxena, 2022). Critical thinking entails education on democratic empowerment, socio-economic justice, and respect for diversity (Saxena, 2022).

Second, inner transformation needs to be reinforced through community engagement and dialogue if it is to be sustained (Freire, 1993). Dialogue encourages critical consciousness and critical consciousness leads to the

realization of social reality (Saxena, 2022). The realization of oppression then leads to the third and, final stage, of conscientization which is the collective expression of social discontent through social action and social change and this, inevitably, leads to the end of dominance and freedom from the cycle of oppression.

### **3. The Ad Hoc Committee on Political and Economic Conscientization**

The Ad Hoc Committee on Political and Economic Conscientization aims to create a space for the marginalized to become aware of their exclusion, engage in open discussion about the impact that exclusion has had on their lives, and explore practical ways of addressing exclusion through social change. In the words of Freire,

*"Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it. And this fight, because of the purpose given it by the oppressed, will constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressors' violence, lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity." (Freire cited in Stokes, 2017:4).*

The Ad Hoc Committee on Political and Economic Conscientization will gain insights into the marginalized experience and produce new knowledge based on that collective lived experience as well as develop a road map for social change. It will signify a shift to a more humanistic approach to conceptualizing and mitigating social exclusion. The activities of the Ad Hoc Committee on Political and Economic Conscientization will include:

- A podcasting channel that is geared to conscientizing people about what social exclusion is and the role of self-awareness in mitigating social exclusion,
- Research outputs geared to conscientization including electronic brochures on social exclusion that are easy to understand and accessible on social media and other platforms used by the marginalized such as WhatsApp,
- Quarterly roadshows or indabas where speakers go out to impoverished communities and engage in dialogue about social exclusion,
- An online photo research project where the excluded take pictures of their lived reality and post it online with an explanation of what social exclusion means to them, how it has impacted them, and how they plan to escape that exclusion,
- Video journals or amateur films capturing the hardships of social exclusion which will feature on Margins platforms,



- An annual publication featuring experimental qualitative, participative research outputs where the economically excluded share their experiences of social exclusion, the impact it has had on them, how they perceive inclusion, and the means through which to achieve it.

#### **4. Goals of the Ad Hoc Committee on Political and Economic Conscientization**

- Gain legitimacy for the fight against social exclusion by pioneering a process that includes those who feel the exclusion themselves,
- Diminishing the power ratio between the marginalized and those speaking on their behalf and, thereby, stemming further exclusion,
- Empowering the marginalized by providing a platform for them to be transformed from silent, nameless, and faceless statistics to people with individual and unique stories to share,
- Decolonize and decapitalize the human mind by overturning the stereotype that the marginalized are stupid and lazy and incapable of effecting social change,
- Promote participatory and empowering research processes that lead to effective and inclusive policy-making.

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