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In the field of educational pedagogy, finding instances where one can take responsibility for one's peers and students is an extremely difficult and nuanced challenge. Between the knowledge that it takes to speak on behalf of yourself or someone else, finding avenues to seek opportunities, and the actual communication experience itself, asking someone who's unfamiliar with the concept can be an extremely daunting challenge. With these challenges defined, it becomes evident that access to information and a lack of critical discussions about equity are demonstrable causes for individuals to lose out on educational opportunities and be unable to advocate for themselves or others.

One element of the process of advocacy that is less formally as a skill or barrier is the process of the collection of information. Finding avenues for positive change or to find opportunities for oneself is regularly hampered by the fact that those resources are often not communicated or discussed broadly. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, educator and philosopher Paulo Freire outlines a process called *praxis*—the process of “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed”. When discussing advocacy in an educational context, praxis takes the forms of calculated efforts to analyze structural failures that leave students with lack of support. Freire elaborates upon this importance of access to information, explaining that “oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in

order to transform it” (Freire 1970). In this way, finding avenues to opportunity largely involves creating systems to analyze shortcomings, meaning that there’s more room for individuals to fall through the cracks.

Because the act of advocacy is so unerringly tied with one’s ability to communicate with others, a significant barrier to the performance of the act of advocacy is silence. While forceful silence is immediately identifiable and evidently harmful, silence that is the result of assumptions or that is considered inherent to a system is similarly, if not significantly more harmful. In *Teaching to Transgress*, in a chapter discussing the relationship of class struggle and critical pedagogy, outlines how perceived values and class systems cause individuals to lose sight of themselves and their identity, explaining that “During my college years it was tacitly assumed that we all agreed that class should not be talked about, that there would be no critique of the bourgeois class biases shaping and informing pedagogical process...in the classroom” (hooks 1994). hooks identifies social structures that incentivize those engaged in classroom pedagogy to think and act in accordance to racialized, sexist, and classist systems that seek to perpetuate a status quo. These systems and their relationship to advocacy are significantly more insidious than instances of outward aggression or open hostility towards individuals, as they are perpetuated by and perceived by people to be inherent truths or unchanging elements of culture. With these insights in mind, advocacy must concern itself with determining underlying causes of inequity, and must be prepared to interrogate existing social structures to determine lasting, meaningful answers.

## Works Cited

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. (pp. 51). Continuum.

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