



# QUITO # INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION  
# WOMEN LEADERS # ANONYMITY  
# PAULINA LEMA

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## WORKING GROUP: QUITO

In 1973, Leif Duprez wrote a letter to Helen Mackintosh - Freire's colleague at the World Council of Churches- in which he narrates having met indigenous leader Paulina Lerma in Quito, who worked with "Freirean methods" promoting self-organization among indigenous kichwa-speaking merchant workers.

In Duprez's words, Paulina Lerma explained how they managed to organize a union of 1,200 lifters at the market, who met regularly, maintained dialogue with national organizations, and fought for a true "Agrarian reform".

Based in the conversation held with Lerma, Duprez concludes that "these people (the Kichwa people) are afraid to be physically exterminated and run the risk to be culturally reduced and dispossessed of their own pride and heritage"

Nowadays, in Quito, popular markets continue to represent strategic sites for popular organization, indigenous education, and the reproduction of the kichwa language.

Generally, stories around popular education in the Andean region are often focused on the ideas, actions and texts of protagonic figures of the Liberation Theology movement. In contrast, Duprez's letter reminds us how in popular education processes there were vast networks and articulations of collectivities such as self-organizing communities, educators and women leaders acting often from anonymity.

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Image: Mural painting at Transito Amaguaña Intercultural Bilingual School, Authors: Anne Stickel, Warner Benítez and children from the school. Wholesale Market of Quito, Ecuador, 2014.

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**Do you know of educators, women leaders or colectivities who have supported and sustained popular organization and direct action in the history of your local context?**

**Within the historical social movements that you know, which are examples of concrete practices related to critical education?**

**If you are aware of historical references of popular education, how are they currently relevant, and resonant?**