

## Rebecca Tarlau Bio

My name is Rebecca Tarlau, and I am currently entering my fourth year as a PhD student in Education at the University of California, Berkeley. I owe my current interest in education to a group of women in Recife, Brazil, who have been using education to organize for change in their community for the past thirty years. It was working with this organization that first made me passionate about education's potential to facilitate social and economic justice. After this experience, I continued to work with other organizations in South America as well as some U.S. organizations including labor unions and day laborer workers centers. I try to maintain a connection between the work I do in graduate school and my previous work with community organizations.

At Berkeley, I am studying critical pedagogy, popular education, the intersection of education and social movements, labor education, and global trends in international educational development. I believe that although education is seen as the solution to a range of economic and social issues, exclusive focus on *access* to schools ignores critical questions about how education actually achieves development goals. My dissertation project focuses on the education system established by the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST), the largest contemporary social movement in Latin America. The MST's explicit goal is for schools not only to educate in the traditional sense, but to also organize youth and adults into agents for change and development in MST communities. The MST schooling system is based on the pedagogies of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and the idea that education can be used to help people in oppressive conditions collectively define solutions to improve their lives. Freirean educational practices have taken root around the globe, but there is still a lack of empirical studies that show how or if these educational processes are linked to social and economic development. Most studies of Freirean educational programs focus on individual personal transformations, because the link between personal transformation and education is easier to make. For my dissertation, I will investigate the relationship between MST schools and development in MST rural communities across the country.

Last summer I spent nine weeks doing pre-dissertation research in Brazil. A link to a blog where I wrote about this experiences (including lots of pictures) can be found at this website:

[www.becktar.blogspot.com](http://www.becktar.blogspot.com)

I look forward to meeting everyone in Geneva!