

Interview with Michael Apple

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Abstract Michael Apple is a major thinker and a reference in the world educational panorama as far as studies on democratic education, curriculum theory and critical analysis of right-wing movements with expression in education are concerned. This interview discusses challenging issues that are present in the current democratic educational situation in both the US and Portugal, which are as relevant today as they were in the past, and which deal with educational and curricular restructuring in the context of neo-liberal and neo-conservative policies. In this regard, the author establishes an analysis that articulates culture and power, critically questioning their multiple effects on education. Given the present social and political situation, he engages with the complex ways in which the influence of the far right and the populist right has sought to impose its perspective on the national curriculum, well-illustrated by case that occurred in Portugal, which caught a lot of media attention and that is still far from resolution. In the interview, it is also possible to appreciate the legacy of M. Apple not only as a scholar of critical education, but also as a permanent activist in (the possibility of a) transformation through education, one that is based on his vast experience in the field of curriculum research and political militancy. Some aspects related to technology and its influence on education and the ethical responsibility of educators, teachers and students with regard to the transformation of society were also present in the conversation. In this respect, it is worth highlighting the progressive critical intervention that students are carrying out in recent years by taking, increasingly, action and mobilization efforts that challenge and affirm educational policy positions. The interview ends with a word of hope from the author addressed to all those who believe in the intervening and transforming role of education. Among them, the important progressive adage, so important to keep in mind: “*If not now, when? If not me, who?*”.

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Ana Pedro: International politics has given us many reasons to worry about the presence and influence of the far right and the populist right, both in places of power and in media discourses. It feels like more than ever we need to think about the articulations between democracy and education. So we are very happy, really, that you have agreed to have this conversation with us.

Regarding the way populist and conservative groups have taken advantage of issues related to minority rights to attack schools, we would like you to comment on a recent case that ended up having media relevance in Portugal. It is the case of the parents of two teenage students who do not want them to attend the compulsory secular subject *Citizenship and Development* designed for all students throughout their schooling. The reasons given are based on parental educational freedom of choice, claiming that certain specific issues taught in this subject, related to the body and sexuality, should, in the opinion of these catholic parents, be dealt with not at school, but at home.

This seems to be a particular case of authoritarian religious populism, that it is beginning to affect education and educators in the current political, social, and even media context, we would like to ask you, are we doomed

to be increasingly exposed to these issues and their interference in educational field?

Michael Apple: First, this is both similar and different in many countries. There's no doubt this is now worldwide. And in some ways, it is sponsored by the center. This is happening in Brazil quite powerfully; it's happening in Hungary; it's happening in the UK now; it's happening in Canada, and it's a list of the United Nations in many ways. Money is going to Brazil from ultra-conservative and evangelical churches in the United States to sponsor this. That is the same that is happening in Spain, it's happening in Hungary with the populist and authoritarian right, and the United States is supporting these kinds of movements in Hungary and Poland as well.

I want to mention that because we want to place this in a larger context. There's always been worries, by religious conservatives, about the official knowledge in school. That's nothing new. What is new is the massiveness of it. The support from authoritarian, populist organizations and the uses by neoliberals, who may not be authoritarian populist themselves, of cultural forms and debates and struggles to mobilize people to move to the right.

So, what we need is what Stephen Ball would call network analysis. That is, to look at where the support

comes from, international as well as national, and to understand as well that this is sometimes used in quite manipulative ways. This is a fundamentally Gramscian position. You'll forgive me for saying this, but the right is much better at understanding and using Gramsci than the left right now. The right understands powerfully that everything counts, and cultural struggles, struggles over the curriculum, struggles over pedagogy, struggles over education are central to their analysis. And, you may have a similar thing in Portugal, they have done this [wets finger and lifts it as if to catch the direction of the wind], in the United States we do this and it means we're looking at which way the wind is blowing. The rightist alliance, of which the most powerful segment usually are neoliberals, and neo conservatives, they put their finger in the air and they say "people feel like their lives are being threatened, there's not a great deal of mobility anymore in Portuguese economies, in Spanish economies, in the United States economies, high rates of downward mobility, and great fear of what has happened since COVID. Given that we want to take the things that are really powerful in people's lives, their children, their traditions, cultural forms that give meaning to their life, and we will use that to mobilize them". This is a vast umbrella, and it's raining in your life. Let's try and convince you to get under our umbrella. Well, tradition is the way of getting people to move. They're doing this, it's what Althusser called interpellation, you'll forgive the theory, and it's basically a beckoning. It says, "look, it's raining. If you want to solve this, we need to convince you to come under our umbrella. We take the things in your life that you're very worried about and we will use them, but again, it is often quite manipulative. So, that's the first thing. The second is that the right has been very powerful in taking the words that we use to evaluate our institutions, that stretch across political movements, and change their very meaning. A key word here, for these parents, when they're talking about parental choice is democracy. Now democracy has no essential meaning, it's used in various ways, and when most people talk about democratic education, it tends to be more liberal, more social democratic: parents have a voice, community members have a voice, women have a voice, people with disabilities have a voice, children have a voice, teachers have a serious voice, and that's what we call, in philosophy, thick democracy - anyone who can be affected by a policy has a voice. The right has said "we must change that to make democracy consumer choice". Choice on a market - it again connects to neoliberalism, marketization, privatization. So, the ultimate privatized form, the family, must be empowered to make choices, and that's a bit like what we call, in real estate, gated communities, which says, "I must protect my children from the culture and values of the other", and the other are immigrants, people of, in quotes, 'alternative non-binary sexualities'... So, I must instead define democracy as individual choice on a market. That's been very, very successful. Even though schools are not simply about individual choice - they're about what kind of society do we want, and we are trying very, very hard to change from oppressive societies and social relations to more thick democratic ones - The rightist forms that are changing our understandings of democracy are pushing for a return to a society which is based on individualization, traditional

knowledge and traditional families. Evidence of this is that the fastest growing school reform in the United States, and now increasingly in China and Brazil, is homeschooling. They say, "we are very worried about the culture that's being taught, we don't trust the state anymore, Essentially, it's neoliberalism at its worst form.

I'm going on about this because, in order to answer the question "are we doomed?" we have to say first, "who's the we?" and also, "who's the people who are doing it? What's their position?". During COVID many, many people grew more sympathetic to teachers and to schools. Those parents realized how important they were when they could not go to work or with women when they were doing domestic labor and realized now they're the teachers at the same time, and they're not being paid for it, and the emotional as well as intellectual labor is just so intense. As COVID got worse and worse, the right was able to colonize that space, to occupy that space: the state teachers were increasingly pictured as lazy, schools weren't reaching out to our children, for many poor rural parents, they felt that their traditions weren't being taught, increasingly it became anti-union, anti-teacher, anti-curriculum. So all of that is going on...

After saying all of this, however, I'm not pessimistic. Let me explain a couple of reasons. First, in many nations, teachers have mobilized very strongly to defend themselves. An example would be in Brazil. right now, I've worked in Brazil a lot, and I've spent a lot of time in São Paulo and especially in Porto Alegre. There was a national law "schools without parties" that basically guaranteed legislation that teachers could be fired if they taught about citizenship and, for example, critical race theory. So, teachers there have mobilized extremely strongly, and that law is not acted on as much as people thought. Brazil has a history of fascism, and Portugal, and so does Spain, so we have to ask again, "can we answer this without understanding the history of Salazar, or of *el jefe*, Franco, or of the military leadership in Brazil?". This means that there are traditions that can be drawn upon for teachers and communities to work together against these movements. I'm worried about it, but I want to thank the right - this will sound perverse - the right has told us that schools and curriculum are absolutely central to their project, so for many people on the left, in many of our nations, they assume that we can't do anything in schools. For them, schools are unimportant because we have to change the economy first. They use the classic Marxist assumption surrounding base and superstructure. For them, there's paid labor and that's where the real struggles go on, and class is always the central arena of crucial struggles. And then there's these superstructural things that take their directions from the economy-that's families, schools, everything besides the economy. - Yet, in a way that similar to Gramsci's arguments, what the right is saying is that curriculum, teaching, evaluation, all that is absolutely central to social transformation. I want to thank them for reminding us about that. At the same time, I'm beginning to see, increasingly, mobilizations with progressive religious forms - in the United States, for instance, black activists, ministers within black churches, are saying powerfully, that school and struggles over the knowledge and the victories that we have matter, and that is actually quite important. So, people are not puppets at

all, and the right recognizes that there must have been victories. Many, many parents who are not bigots are now reminding themselves what the risks are, that if they lose in the school, they lose their children's futures, and they lose a vision of society that is anti-racist, they lose a vision of society in which women are not treated simply as the help mates of their husbands, which is what's behind much of the positions on the right.

Pedro Ferreira: In this kind of situation, what can teachers and schools arm themselves with, what can they do? You were saying: mobilize and mobilize with communities, join different communities. Are these the tools schools have to face this kind of situation?

Michael Apple: First of all, I think we have to ask what tools schools are now using, as well as what tools are becoming available. There are many things that schools are doing. Remember I said that there are victories. Why would the right be so angry if schools weren't already doing progressive things?

That was my point about teachers are not puppets, and university folks and communities are not puppets. So, one thing is working dramatically with communities. Often these right-wing groups are only a small fraction of the communities. In the United States, for instance, we elect school boards.

That means the federal government has much more limited power than say, in Portugal, or Brazil. Very few people vote for school board representatives - the community members who guide the school. So, one of the things is to join teacher unions and progressive mobilizations and non-racist churches and non-sexist churches and mosques and synagogues, join together to fight back. They organize, they make certain that their candidates win elections, that elections over school governors become crucial.

I both like and dislike that because it means that if the right gets in power in a particular community and it elects an administrator to run the schools there's no wall to keep right wing stuff out. Certain groups, such as teacher unions in Chicago, have formed an alliance with the black and brown and immigrant communities in Chicago in which they are now mobilizing and against the neoliberal agenda, and against the right wing populist agenda. That required that teachers learn from the community. So, these tools don't just come automatically. Teachers were threatening to go on strike because the budget was being cut and schools might be closed, especially schools in poor communities. The community is mobilizing against the government of the city because there's no affordable housing whatsoever, people are becoming unhoused, they can no longer afford computers and the schools can't afford to give the computers to the kids, so, one of the things that teachers unions did was to give up something rather than fight for only professional autonomy. I'm the former president of a teacher's union, so autonomy and respect are very important to me. But this vision of autonomy is seen by many within the black and brown and immigrant communities to be, well, let me put it in a graphic way, racist. The community wants a voice about the curriculum, and so the teachers union said the following: "we will make it part of our strike pledge that one of the issues will be low cost housing, and money for computers and technologies for poor communities". An

alliance was formed between progressive immigrant communities and progressive communities of color and women's groups and the teachers' union. The strike was successful, the schools were not closed, and the curriculum became more responsive. There's one example.

We have to publicize this. This puts responsibility on us, and on many people at universities. Part of our research has to be as critical secretaries of these tools. My most popular book is not "Ideology and Curriculum" or one of the latest ones such as "Can Schools Transform Society", but it is this little book that is called "Democratic Schools", a million copies of that have been translated. That's me saying, I don't need to quote now from all the famous people, I need to quote from not so famous people, that is teachers and communities that are fighting back. We learn from them, and we make them public. Hope then is a major resource.

One last thing, we must form alliances with communities around the places where the right mobilizes, that it uses to pull people in. So I have been instrumental in forming what is called the Critical Media Project in which community members and activists, teacher union representatives, and academics and researchers pledge that when a local newspaper or a television broadcast or even a letter to the editor of the newspaper, when it attacks teachers or attacks schools, someone will volunteer, someone who has expertise in that area, such as schooling for citizenship or issues of race in Portugal or the United States, and we must drop everything we are doing and respond. We will write a piece that will be rewritten by critical journalists, that we have formed an alliance with, and it gets published or it gets on the news. The right is very, very clever in publicizing the things that they approve of and we're not. We have to form alliances and learn the tools of the right.

Ana Pedro: One of things that I really would like you to speak about, if you don't mind, is the ethical responsibility of the educators, the teachers, and the students regarding the transformation of society into a more critically democratic one. What do you think about this?

Michael Apple: I have to point to a book where I laid this out, a recent book called *Can Education Change Society*, where I lay out the nine tasks for critically democratic educators. So, let me mention a few of them. Even if we can't change what's going on, the first task is telling the truth. Telling what reality is really like. That requires research. It requires learning how to use the media. It requires taking risks. The second task of the critically democratic educator is to remember that there are spaces of possibility, to focus on those spaces where it's possible to win. An example would be gender politics. For example, in this one school, middle school girls, twelve- and thirteen-year-old, walked out in protest for not getting sex education, not being taught about the reality and honest stuff about their bodies. In the secondary schools, in many places in the United States, students went on strike over those kinds of things, and black students have walked out all over the United States, immigrant students have formed alliances to have the curriculum transformed. So, we need to look at where are the spaces of possibility and learn from each other. The third is what I mentioned before, becoming the critical

secretary. Part of our task is to be their secretaries. What are they doing that works? We must be the secretary of the mobilizations, of the counter hegemonic forms, of the teaching of citizenship in ways that are critically democratic, of the teaching that includes everyone's lives, women, people of color, immigrants.

Next, is to remember that there is a very, very long history, and we are not alone. Every nation has a long history of fighting back, and we must, in fact, rebuild those alliances. Increasingly, for instance, the left is fractured. There are still people who are traditional Marxists who again think that schools and curriculum are beside the point. Others think that sexuality and the body aren't really crucial. They're not willing to form alliances with other groups. Or, there are folks who think that Foucault solved everything. I don't, I think Foucault is very smart, but I always want to remember that he was a gay activist and he died as an activist. We have to rebuild the democratic forms and stop killing ourselves. My grandfather used to say, his favorite joke was, one that it wasn't just his, that "when the left lines up in a firing squad, it always lines up in a circle". We don't need the right to kill us, [00:38:00] we're very good at killing ourselves. Part of our task is to listen to each other, and in doing that, we must restore the multiplicity of the critical tradition and stop the infighting that makes it hard for us. The right is a compromise. They've got a big umbrella and a lot of groups under it. Many of us are not as willing to build that umbrella, but we have to learn about that.

Another one is to share what we know in a way that is not elitist. As a former teacher union president, I'm pretty good at not quoting from Marx, not quoting from Gramsci, not quoting from Foucault when I'm doing political work and talking in real folk American or real folk Portuguese.

We unfortunately have lost some of those skills of writing and speaking, so we have to learn again to talk in different styles, and that also requires learning from the right and the ability to talk in "plain folks" language in ways that are compelling.

Pedro Ferreira: As you mentioned, there have been victories, there have been a lot of agendas that have moved in recent years, and we should also celebrate that. One of the things I enjoyed in reading you was this idea that sometimes we aspire to pure forms of struggle that are against our own best intentions, and that some critical discourses risk being rhetorical and push away people we should be building alliances with.

You already referred to this, so maybe I'm just going to focus on a part of the question, how can we help teachers do this through teacher training? Can we include some of these ways of working in teacher training?

Michael Apple: I think this is crucial. First of all, much of the material in critical pedagogy or critical education, is totally cut off from the daily life of teaching. Let me give an example from here. I was the department chair of the teacher education program here for a number of years, and that is a part of me I never want to lose. I'm not ashamed of being in education, I think it's quite important. I'm a former teacher in urban schools and in rural conservative schools as well, and I never want to forget who I am. So that means that working with teachers is actually important, not just for the teachers, but to me, it connects

me, it's why I got in this in the first place, I wanted to get better stuff in schools.

In my own university, University of Wisconsin, which is considered one of the most progressive universities in the United States, we used to have about 500 applicants for our elementary school, primary school teacher education program, and we would accept 150. We now have about 125 applicants for 100 spaces because the budgets have been cut. Now, one of the reasons for this is that many, many people who might want to be teachers have been listening to all the criticisms, of schools of education of teacher education, and the right has been brutal in their criticisms. They also listen to teachers, and the latest reports in the popular press say that three out of every four teachers, in my own nation, are considering whether they can do this for the rest of their lives. This is horrific, but this is the reality. So many, many people have now negative emotions about it. As we cut school counselors, community activists who work with teachers and others, as we cut their positions, we then put it back on the school,

and then it's put back on teachers. So, the average work week of a teacher in the United States is 58 hours. Now that is a lot of hours to say the least. This creates a real challenge. One other challenge is the privatization of teacher education. At the same time that many people are not choosing to go into teacher education programs, we have things like Teach for America - they now have Teach Chile, Teach for Argentina, Teach China, this is now worldwide - where to become a teacher you go to school for six weeks in the summer and get a piece of paper that is called a license, you have no background whatsoever in education, no understanding of race or class or gender, you learn classroom management and then you are placed in the most difficult communities. Many people who might be outstanding teachers in the future don't want to be teachers. Also, it is no longer free to go to teacher education programs in many places. So it now is about 15 to \$20,000 a year to become a teacher at many universities, which used to be almost free. So, to answer the question we need to place it in its social context.

What many places are beginning to do is forming alliances with community colleges, normally technical colleges, and offering scholarships to people who do okay at the lower levels and bring them in as sort of a community "Grow Your Own" teacher program. Also, they are going into poor, rural and urban school districts, those districts that have teacher aids, people with only high school diplomas who are working with children with disabilities or working just to help teachers - they're paid low salaries - and they're also using "grow your own" procedures. Going into local communities, getting immigrant parents, Roma parents, black and brown, gay parents who are working in the schools already, are then brought into major universities and given fellowships so that they can afford it, and spending two years becoming teachers. Now, that solves two problems. One is that people who are marginalized become teachers, and that's very important. These people, as they become teachers, stop the alienation of many children. They see teachers as being more responsive to their local communities and their cultures, and most children in secondary schools then want to become teachers. But it also means we have to do

something else about teacher education. You can't put these people into the same courses as you had before with the same lectures. It requires that we are very good about hiring professors who are in their own lectures modeling good teaching, who show that we can do stuff that is progressive along disability, along issues of gender, along issues of class and race, along issues of climate change. So, it's required that we change teacher education programs. This is very complicated, and as someone who was the director, it's on my mind all the time.

Ana Pedro: In some of your later books, you address the need to speak and to learn from actual practices, and the everyday life of schools, and teachers. In this respect, how do you think we can bring these profoundly critical discourses to concrete educational contexts in meaningful ways?

Michael Apple: This is a tense issue because it requires that I do something that I don't really like to do, and that is to criticize the tradition that I've helped to build. We have good models for doing this. First of all, my late friend Paulo Freire was very good at this, and he sacrificed much including being exiled by trying to remind people that this is about real life, not simply about other things.

All too much of a critical literature in education is rhetoric, and I find that a tragedy and for too many people, the only political work they're doing is their hands on the keyboard. I can't imagine a transformative process unless we become what I call critical scholars. When I talked about the tasks of the critical educator, that's part of my argument. We have an ethical responsibility and political responsibilities to join in the mobilizations that we write about. I don't mean that to be rhetorical. Now this is a difficult thing because many, many people who call themselves critical educators, who are academics, will tell people what to do but won't do it themselves. Or they don't have a clear recognition of the risks involved, and that means I actually don't want to tell people what they must do without a serious understanding of their context and the risks that they may face.

Pedro Ferreira: You already referred, earlier in this interview, to actions by students who had an important role in bringing transformation in schools as well. Our next question goes in this direction because we often think communities, we think parents, we think teachers, but students have been saying, "we are also here", and they've been increasingly taking the stage and acting: the secundaristas in Brazil were occupying the schools, the Fridays for Future students are striking for climate action, and I remember some years ago in the US there was the March for Our Lives protesting against school shootings and gun related policies. They are taking very powerful stances and claiming a say in important things for their lives. We still often think of students as minor actors in schools. How can they be repositioned? And how can this contribute to changing schools and social inequalities?

Michael Apple: It's interesting because I've just finished a paper entitled "Who are the Agents of Transformation" and it's about student activism. I've talked about communities, I've talked about teacher unions, talked about mobilizations, multiple politics, and, I also mentioned, the signs of hope: these young women who say "we're not standing for this anymore, we're going on

strike". Part of the argument I now want to make is that, increasingly, one of the most important agents of social transformation are students themselves. The last time I was in Santiago in Chile, I was in talks with students supporting their closing the schools, like in Brazil and elsewhere. This is really important - let me give you an example of one instance of why this is so. In *Can Education Change Society?* I tell a brief story, in this paper it's a much longer story, of schools in Baltimore. Baltimore is one of the most racially segregated cities in the United States. It is a very poor city, and most of the students are students of color. There was a curriculum project called the Algebra Project, which takes a Gramscian position - we're not doing students of color, poor students, any good if we don't teach them the knowledge in mathematics, for instance, that they're going to be tested on. So, we have to do two things, reconstruct the knowledge so it's connected to their daily lives and teach it in a way that it is powerful. The state government, capitalists, cut the funding for education and transferred it into the building of a juvenile jail in that community. And the teachers, using a sort of Freirean pedagogy, spoke to the students and said "here's what's happening, you have to mobilize with us, you have to help us here". They asked the students to focus on "what are the problems you're facing? We're not going to teach any math yet." After much discussion the students said, "it's overpolicing. We're just walking down the street and the cops will stop us and search us, and we know that they will arrest us for minor things that a white person would never be arrested for, and then our careers are over."

So, one of the parts of the mathematics curriculum was statistics, and the question the teachers asked was "how would math help us fight back?". The kids then took the knowledge that they were learning - mean, mode, distribution, standard deviation - and found out that juvenile crime have been reduced significantly in the community. There's no need for the jail. Also, that the taxes that their community paid are higher than those of the major banks. That the major corporations paid zero taxes. Then they contacted the Occupy movement, they also contacted critical journalists and they used the stereotypes that black kids are stupid, that they don't care and are alienated, and surprised all these journalists because the kids had all these data and were really articulate. So, it hit the national news, and it hit the local news. The ultimate result was that there's no juvenile prison, the money came back. So here we have an instance that combines curricular forms, teachers who are deeply committed, an understanding that you can use the media in powerful ways, and that this knowledge can be reconstructed in powerful ways as well. This is the model, I think, that we want to bring to what's going on in Brazil, Chile, in the United States. In almost every dynamic of imposition and oppression, students are among the most important actors. In one of my most recent books, a book called *The Struggle for Democracy in Education: Lessons From Social Realities*, I tell the story of students in leadership where the teachers reached out to the students to fight back against the right. The students had gone on strike about curriculum changes because, for one of the national tests in the United States all indigenous history would be dropped, the history of Africa would be

dropped, the history of the Middle East would be dropped. So, it only would feature the age of exploration, Christopher Columbus, western history. It's quite racist and imperial, it's settler colonialism. The youth went on strike and the teachers realized that they too were losing their power to determine the curriculum. The students started to mobilize for the next school board election. They got the teachers to walk out with them, and within three months there was a new election, a recall, and these right-wing populists were removed from the school board. This is very important as an example. The teachers reaching out, students being the model, and then reaching out to the teachers and say "you want to join us now?", that's crucial.

Pedro Ferreira: We would like to hear you about the technological changes that we are all embedded in. This information technology digital layer is transforming many institutions and social relations that we used to know, as we used to know them, and it's growing larger and deeper around us. It's also clear that it makes a big difference in how we relate to information. Who holds information, where is information, how we relate to, how we find, how we keep information is changing. It's also challenging our relationships to knowledge and complicating the role of schools, at least the role of traditional schools and schooling. How do you see these technological transformations affecting schools these days? Can technology change schools and schooling?

Michael Apple: It already has, as you mentioned, and certainly COVID made it much, much worse. We know, for instance, that the uses of technology were unbelievably transformative about teachers lives. They led to the de-skilling of teachers, they led to oppressive circumstances for those people who did not have computers, did not have internet connections, or had one computer for six children and no place to study. We already know all about the negative part. We also know, however, that teachers used these new sites to join together, to teach each other about how to survive during a time of COVID, sharing lessons that were created, sharing meetings with community activists on how do you do this, sharing mobilizations in powerful ways about organizing. As one example in my own city of Madison, Wisconsin, where for very poor children two of the meals they get each day are provided by the school - they come for breakfast and they get free lunch - once COVID hits teachers had to mobilize with communities so that the food that the school would distribute inside the school could get to the children. Otherwise there would be a serious hunger problem. We know that it became a tool of mobilization across class boundaries, across racial boundaries, and that's very important. The technology can also create a new epistemology, where knowledge can be not just in textbooks, that need not be controlled by a government, especially when that may not be as progressive as you would like. There are many, many examples of that. So, the question should not be, "can technology change schools and schooling?", it already has, in fact, it always has. This is not new. However, this is not occurring in what I would call untilled soil, there is already stuff that has been planted. In China, for instance, there are cameras in the classrooms at universities, those cameras are one facing students and another facing the professor, and those

cameras are monitored. Now, that can be good, it could stop the professor from saying quite horrific things about gender or about all kinds of things. Or it could stop a professor or students from speaking about things that the government has assumed should not be talking to. We already know that there are technologies in teacher's computers that are built for profit, and that sometimes in their use there are hidden effects that we have to think about. There are data that are being sold on computerized toys. There are data on children and their keystrokes as well. All of this is for profit. On the other hand, we can individuate with these kinds of things. We can search out things, we can put students in contact with groups throughout the world that they're studying in ways that are extraordinarily powerful. So, instead of creating the "other" among indigenous people in Mexico, we can have kids with Latino heritage from this vast range of nations to be in close personal contact with kids with that same history in Chile or in Colombia. All of that is profound and really interesting. It changes epistemologically where knowledge comes from and who the knower actually is. At the same time, it's for-profit and part of the neoliberal agenda.

Let me give one last example. The conservative legislators in one of the states that I live in said anyone can be a teacher, and legislation was proposed that anyone with a high school diploma could become a primary school teacher. Why? Because they believe that it's all on the computers now, so teachers don't need all these skills.

Technology's already doing it, the question is on whose agenda, and how do we make clear that we want these things to be used in powerful progressive ways, and again, that's where we have to make those progressive ways public so that communities know what we're doing. That's also one way to fight back against the populist right.

Ana Pedro: We're coming to the end of this interview with two more questions. I'd like to ask you; can we make it an instrument of the way we think relationally?

And, to close in a positive note, where can we find the strength to resist? Because this is a permanent question that I have and I would like to hear you about this. Given that many people give up, at a certain point, what doesn't cease to keep you hopeful?

Michael Apple: My last name is Apple, I spent many years as a classroom teacher. When you introduce yourself to children, "Hi kids, my name is Mr. Apple", they laugh for about an hour. So, my pedagogic style is always a bit humorous because I'm saying some quite serious stuff.

Alright, so there are two principles that I think must guide what we do. One is relational analysis, and the other is repositioning. That requires that we do some work with communities and with each other. Part of our task is, and this is a curricular task in many ways, to do the kinds of things that show the history of the relations, that make our countries, our countries. It requires discussions of who is privileged and who is not remembering that we are not immune to this. Now, having teachers teach their students how to think relationally about inequalities in their societies and having teachers themselves use material that involves thinking relationally is what these conservative religious parents are really upset about, but I think that schools are not meant to be private goods. They're a public good and they have social responsibilities, and those social responsibilities are ethical and political.

We must understand that we have benefited from enslavement, from colonial forms. We are the beneficiaries. That requires that when we think relationally and that we also communicate this to our students and the larger society. That's the role of schooling. Schools should not just be something like a loaf of bread or a television set that we buy, and we can turn to any TV station we want. It is a social good and that means it must respond to the realities of those communities. That means that to think relationally, we must model that. I can't tell other people how to model it without saying, "here's what it looks like to be an educator, building curriculum, doing teacher education, working with unions". How do we make it an instrument of thinking relationally? We have to include a "we" in that, and the "we" has to be broadened constantly. This has to be done with recognition that too often progressives and critical educators push people aside, especially push religious people aside, and in Brazil, for example, pushing them aside means that they go to the theology of prosperity and they vote for Bolsonaro. It's not natural that people who are religious become Bolsonaro supporters, or Trump supporters, or supporters, in Germany, of the ultra-right neo Nazis. We have to find a way in which we can work with religiously affiliated groups and show them that we care, allow them to be part of this conversation. Now, that's difficult, but I have worked with issues of policy with people who think I have horns and a tail. In the United States, 43% of public and private secondary schools and middle [01:26:00] schools had something called Channel One. It was a for-profit television station, and it gave about \$70,000 to each school that agreed to it, and free equipment. That meant you didn't have to fire a teacher; you could keep a teacher. It had 10 minutes of news and two minutes of commercials. The news was very conservative, and the commercials were the ones used for World Cup commercials. At nine o'clock in the morning, throughout the nation, it turned on automatically. The kids did not watch the news, they watched the commercials. I formed an alliance with other critical educators, with religious evangelicals, to get Channel One out of schools. For the religious evangelicals children are made in God's image and they believed Jesus would not want children to be sold for profit. Now, I don't agree with the theology, but I'm going to fight to the death against selling children as commodities to make profit. Channel One is now bankrupt, it is not in any schools in the United States. This is a tactical alliance; I want to be very cautious about that. The

conservative religious parents no longer think I have horns; they may still think I have a tail, but they are more likely to trust me and to listen more carefully to my worries about "what's behind this?". These are the kinds of things that require us to think about who is the "we" and to not automatically assume that if you believe in the Quran or you believe in other holy books, that you will be driven out.

The other concept is repositioning. Whether I like it or not, I am born white. I grew up very poor, but now I'm a famous professor, and I have a decent salary. What's my social responsibility because of that? How do I reposition myself? I have to listen very, very carefully through all of the multiple dynamics of oppression, and that was brought home to me when my arthritis got so bad that I had to sign a government form that said I was disabled. Before that, disability was not on my agenda, that would happen after the revolution. Now I must understand, maybe I was a bit of a fool.

The last thing, where can we find a strength to resist? Why am I hopeful? First, looking at history, I think that we have faced this before. That's not a guarantee at all, but in the United States we were South Africa, we had legal apartheid. I am the father of an African American child; I will never give to the right what it demands. It's quite personal. But even if it wasn't personal, the right reminds me why I must continue, why we must continue fighting because they're telling us that what we do is really important. The right is saying that all of these questions we're trying to have a dialogue about are dangerous and damaging - "let's not have them, let's use schools to do other things". The fact that they are saying this is really crucial means that we have to thank Mr. Right and Mrs. Right and Ms. Right, for telling us how crucial these struggles to build and defend a socially critical and responsive education are.

I must admit I have faith that I'm not alone. The more expansive we that is being created documents that "we" are not alone.

I'm an optimist with no illusions whatsoever. Hope is a resource, maybe the most important resource. If we give up, we already know what the answer is, we lose. That's not acceptable. One of the reasons I wrote *Educating the Right Way* was taking your point seriously. Look, we're losing, what do we do? The questions we are asking and answering have a long history. Among the most important are these: If not now, when? If not me, who?

