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Interview

Interview with Patricia Hill Collins

Entrevista com Patricia Hill Collins

Entrevista con Patricia Hill Collins

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ABSTRACT

In October 2019, Patricia Hill Collins was in Brazil to attend the 39th Annual Meeting of the Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação. The presence and importance of education and black youth in the experiences and theoretical and methodological elaborations, central themes in their activities at the Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação, are explored in this interview given to us by Patricia. The questions were prepared by researchers on gender, ethnic-racial relations and youth and answered by e-mail by Patricia Hill Collins.

Keywords: Intersectionality. Black youth. Education. Patricia Hill Collins.

RESUMO

Em outubro de 2019, Patricia Hill Collins esteve no Brasil para participar da 39ª Reunião Anual da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação. A presença e a importância da educação e da juventude negra nas experiências e nas elaborações teóricas e metodológicas, temáticas centrais em suas atividades na Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação, são exploradas nessa entrevista concedida por Patricia. As questões foram elaboradas por pesquisadoras das temáticas de gênero, relações étnico-raciais e juventude e respondidas por e-mail por Patricia Hill Collins.

Palavras-chave: Interseccionalidade. Juventude negra. Educação. Patricia Hill Collins.

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RESUMEN

En octubre de 2019, Patricia Hill Collins estuvo en Brasil para asistir a la 39ª Reunión Anual de la Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação. La presencia e importancia de la educación y la juventud negra en las experiencias y elaboraciones teóricas y metodológicas, temas centrales en sus actividades en la Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação, son exploradas en esta entrevista que nos brinda Patricia. Las preguntas fueron elaboradas por investigadores sobre género, relaciones étnico-raciales y juventud y respondidas por correo electrónico por Patricia Hill Collins.

Palabras clave: Interseccionalidad. Juventud negra. Educación. Patricia Hill Collins.

FOREWORD

In October 2019, Patricia Hill Collins was in Brazil to participate in the 39th Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação (ANPEd) Annual Meeting at the invitation of several working groups (WG).[1] In that same period, she also participated in a series of events in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro based on an articulation encompassing different universities, research centers, non-governmental organizations, and social movements.

From the moment she was invited to ANPEd, Patricia valued the possibility of participating in a meeting involving researchers as well as professors in the field of Education. Although it was not her first time in Brazil, it was the first time she would participate in a national meeting in the field of education, enabling her to recover both part of her academic and professional trajectory in that area, and also the focus of some of her more recent research on the theme of education and black youth. Her enthusiasm with the invitation also arose from the fact that she recognizes herself first and foremost as a teacher, as she emphasizes at the beginning of her interview.

Patricia Hill Collins has been professor emeritus in the Department of Sociology at the University of Maryland since 2005, focusing on race studies, feminist thought, and critical social theory. Born on May 1, 1948 in Philadelphia, she studied in public schools where she lived experiences of silencing and invisibility that marked her professional path and academic choices. In 1965, she left Philadelphia to study Sociology at Brandeis University in Massachusetts. While still a college student, she worked in schools in Boston's black community, developing educational models based on the reality of black students. Her experience in the field of education contributed to her master's degree in Social Sciences at Harvard University, having then taught and participated in the building of curricula in several schools. In 1976, she served as director of the African American Center at Tufts University in Medford. In 1980, she began her PhD in Sociology at Brandeis University where she completed her studies. While still a doctoral student, she joined the Department of African American Studies at the University of Cincinnati, where she

1 The invitation and the organization of the activities were under the responsibility of the following working groups: WG 3 (Social Movements, Subjects, and Educational Processes), WG 6 (Community Education), WG 12 (Curriculum), WG 14 (Sociology of Education), WG 18 (Education for Young and Adult People), WG 21 (Education and Ethno-Racial Relations), WG 22 (Environmental education), WG 23 (Gender, Sexuality, and Education), WG 24 (Education and art).

remained for 23 years. She was the first black woman to hold the presidency of the American Sociological Association in 2009.

Patricia Hill Collins is internationally recognized for her contributions to Black feminist thought and to intersectionality as critical social theory, as research methodology, and as a way of resistance. As she acknowledges in this interview, in a career focused on teaching and learning with young black youth, intersectionality was the best path.

At the 39th ANPEd Meeting, Hill Collins participated in the round table discussion "Intersectionality and Education: theoretical and methodological challenges", alongside Helena Hirata, professor at the University of Paris VIII, and Marilia Pinto de Carvalho, professor at University of São Paulo, and also taught the course "Not just ideas: intersectionality and research in education".

The presence and importance of education and black youth in the experiences and theoretical and methodological elaborations, central themes in her activities at ANPEd, are explored in this interview granted to us by Hill Collins. Inspired by her analyses and provocations and by our own concerns, we jointly drafted the questions. Although the initial idea was to conduct the conversation during the ANPEd meeting, the set of activities that were already being carried out by Hill Collins at that moment led us to forward the questions by email to be answered later, respecting the necessary time for that development.

The pandemic of the new coronavirus affected the preparation and development of this interview for this journal. Despite the long gap between Patricia Hill Collins' participation in ANPEd and the publication, the issues addressed here remain central and gain even more relevance in a context of significant setbacks, losses, and denial of rights for black people, especially for black youth. Her theoretical soundness, her sociological and political imagination and openness to dialogue in the building of proposals for the field of education, which marked her presence at ANPEd, are present in this interview.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Let's start by introducing you to an audience in Brazil that is related to the field of education. So, we would like to start by asking you: who is Patricia Hill Collins?

I am first and foremost a teacher. My perceptions of teaching and pedagogy have shaped not only my career in education but many aspects of my adult life. Because I try to imagine my readers while I am writing, publications are pedagogical projects that are written for different agencies. I ask myself, "what am I teaching here, and why? Is this the best way of saying what I'm trying to say to these particular readers?". These are the same questions that good teachers ask about their relationships to their students. In this sense, pedagogy is broader endeavor that reflects the relationship between teaching and learning, the conversation between teachers and learners where we learn from one another. My view of teaching and learning has influenced not only how I write, but also what I choose to publish, the talks I give to diverse audiences, the jobs I have pursued and how I did them. In other words, my philosophy of education has been central to my biography, one where the interconnections of teaching and learning have shaped my intellectual activism.

I see a distinction between emancipatory education and critical education. Emancipatory education has a commitment to a broader vision of social change that is informed by ethical principles such as freedom, social justice, or participatory democracy. Critical education responds to what is — it criticizes social inequalities, points out social problems, proposes solutions and equips peoples to be problem-solvers. Because it aims to change current realities, it helps people grapple with the social problems that they confront. Emancipatory education

imagines what is possible beyond the here and now and critical education fosters the critical thinking skills that get us there.[2]

When I look back over my life, I can see how my experiences as a student and as a teacher contributed to my philosophy of education. During my 12 years attending the Philadelphia public schools, I had few options to challenge let alone change the disciplinary structures around me. To get my high school diploma, I had to do what teachers told me to do. But I did not have to believe what they told me to be true. I graduated from the Philadelphia High School for Girls, a public school that was founded in 1848 with a mission of educating girls. Given the defunding of public schools in the US, to my amazement, it still exists today, now serving African American, Latinx and girls from new immigrant populations. To this day, I am grateful for the skills of literacy, mathematics, and science that I gained in high school. But I also am saddened by the cost I paid for so many years of sitting silently in classrooms, suppressing my ideas. Here I part ways with Audre Lorde who counsels, "your silence will not protect you." My silence in high school did protect me, but it did not break me. I got my degree.

My formal schooling was designed to help me assimilate into a respectable place in a system that was fundamentally unfamiliar with students like me. I saw nothing wrong with being a Black girl from a working-class family, but that is not how schools and teachers saw me. They offered me a ready-made place in US society, one where Black girls and women were suitable only for serving others through low-paid domestic work, sex work, or if they were lucky, factory work, or lower-level secretarial work. My teachers lacked vision about my dreams and my possibilities. They offered me the formula of becoming the kinds of teachers they were, working within a respectable profession where I could replicate their vision of assimilation for Black youth. I saw what happened to Black girls who were deemed to be too sassy, uppity, or independent, or who criticized this dominant narrative. Those girls did not graduate. My family, community and church presented a different vision for me. By the time that I arrived at my elite public high school, it was clear to me that much was riding on my school success. I was one of only two Black girls from my entire neighborhood who passed the entrance exam to my school. My high school was virtually all-white, and they knew that I was going off to battle. Members of my family, neighborhood, and church were the ones who encouraged me to aim as high as I wanted and dream of possibilities that neither they nor I could envision. They provided an alternative analysis of my relationship to education that went beyond my individual concerns. They stressed the importance of education, not just for credentialing, but also for creating possibilities that were not available to those who came before me. They did not send me to school to become a better servant — they expected more.

As I look back over my career, I can see how I sought out experiences that helped me make sense of my formal and informal educational experiences. When I enrolled in college, I aspired to be a teacher, in part because that was the main occupation that was open to educated women, and in part because the civil rights movement was grounded in the significance of education for anti-racist struggles. During my undergraduate years, I received an excellent liberal arts education at Brandeis University that sharpened my skills of critical thinking around questions that mattered to me. Surely, the Black people in the working-class neighborhood were not stuck in dead-end, low-paying jobs because they lacked talent, or were unmotivated, or criminally

2 My views here have been influenced by the conception of emancipatory education offered by the Hegoa. Hegoa is a joint institute based at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU) set up in 1987 by the university and the Hegoa association. As both a university institute and a civil association, Hegoa defines emancipatory education as that process of education that incorporates a political dimension to its objectives and that has the aim of contributing to social change.

inclined. Surely there must be other explanations for this situation. My high school silencing was eclipsed by my growing voice in college about social issues. I majored in Sociology because it offered a structural analysis of race and racism as well as a focus on social movements. Sociology's content was timely, but the intellectual freedom that I experienced at Brandeis in non-traditional Sociology Department was invaluable. For my senior honors thesis, I wrote a paper on "Community Control of Black Schools" where I investigated my own questions and developed my own arguments. Through that project, I learned that, when you are working on something that you are passionate about, it does not feel like work at all. My thesis was close to 100 pages long — I had no idea I had that many words in me!

Enrolling in the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Harvard University was a logical next step. I would gain the credentials to become a classroom teacher, and I could deepen my understanding of critical and emancipatory education through serious study. The technical training that I received at Harvard was invaluable — John Dewey's analysis of the necessity of public education for participatory democracy, Paulo Freire's pedagogical theory of literacy as a form of empowerment, and William E. B. Du Bois's impeccable historical and sociological scholarship on Black people all sharpened my critical education toolkit. But the connections that I made with African American educators who were struggling with how to provide a quality education to Black youth let me know that I was on the right path. Harvard proved to be one important touchstone linking a surprisingly seamless progression from my senior honors thesis to working as a teacher in the Black community schools movement in Boston.

I spent the next five years working in three K-8 community schools in working-class Black neighborhoods where we envisioned our schools as central to Black freedom struggle. That is about all we shared when we started. Our differences were many — I worked with Black parents, Catholic nuns, former nuns, Black businesspeople, Harvard graduate students and faculty from education, some amazing 7th and 8th grade student leaders, a volunteer who was assigned to our school as part of his work release program, and two young white women from Colorado who just wanted to help out. Needless to say, there were just as many differences of opinion as there were people working there. We had a vision, not a finished idea of an "ideal" school whose formulas we followed, but rather we had the responsibility of envisioning education through practice. We were trying to build Black community schools in real time and real space, creating curriculum, pedagogy, all in the best interests of addressing the question, what constitutes a quality education for the Black youth in our school? That question and the experiences that inform it have carried me throughout my entire career. My formal education granted me impeccable credentials as a teacher, but to me the kind of teaching that I was able to do in the community schools was a radical act.

My years working in the Black community schools movement certainly broadened my current perceptions of why teachers are so significant as frontline actors in social justice initiatives. As teachers, we have to decide how we will position ourselves within education as a profession that we were trained to enter and education as a calling whose mission is to challenge and criticize everything around it. As educational professionals, we are encouraged to assimilate and fit in, then pass on our knowledge to the young. But is it really helpful for Black kids to have teachers whose primary purpose is socialize them into a system that oppresses them? I did not know it at the time, but my undergraduate sociology honors thesis, my two-year master's program in teaching, and my decision to forgo a high-paying job to work as a classroom teacher in Black community schools solidified a commitment to critical education and emancipatory education that I have carried with me ever since.

Without doubt, my practical experiences as student and as a teacher expanded my vision of education beyond critical to possibilities for emancipatory education. I graduated from high school at age 17, and if you had asked me then to imagine what lay ahead for me in life, I could not have done it. I was too young and too inexperienced to know how the world worked, let alone my purpose and place in it. I could only see as far as making it to college, but I really had not given much thought to what I would do when I got there. I had never heard of sociology, let alone had plans to major in it. How could I aspire to be a college administrator heading a Black student center, or a professor spending 23 years in an African American Studies department, or a professor of Sociology in a prestigious university? I had no sense that my love of reading could underlie a profession (I was shocked when I found out that you can get paid to read) or that I would publish so many books and articles. Who knew that I would be invited to speak at international conferences like ANPed! It's been a long journey, but I am so happy to be here.

My career in education has taken many unexpected turns, but at each step it has rested on my belief in power of the importance of critical education as a tool for empowerment and on the need for creativity and imagination for emancipatory education. I found my own way, certainly with others helping me. I am convinced that, with opportunities and a little encouragement from teachers formal and informal, each student can find his or her own way as well. When it comes to social justice work, there are no formulas for success. And we are all in this together. Why would we help people to submit to systems that oppress them? Why would we do that to ourselves as teachers and as learners?

Your thinking in education is being introduced by black female researchers who participate or are readers of Black Feminist Thought. We note that some young black women are readers and activists of black feminism. They read Patricia Hill Collins, especially the upcoming translations. How would you present the main aspects of your black feminist thinking to those in the field of education?

Several of the main ideas of *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins, 2000) stand out as essential for cultivating critical education and emancipatory education. First, Black women constitute agents of knowledge, not objects of knowledge. We have ideas and analyses and become empowered when we define our own realities on our own behalf. There was a period of time where Black women were seen, spoken about, but rarely heard. When people are oppressed, they usually know it and want to do something about it. Black women have been denied formal positions of authority as knowledge creators but have long found ways to exercise agency. For example, Black women have used poetry, music, dance, storytelling, cooking, gardening, and art to resist being treated as objects in traditional scholarship and popular culture. The phrase "make a way out of no way" can mean, "make do with less — settle and just get by." Or it can mean imagining possibilities for moving forward, despite clear guidance about the future. We make our future by what we think and do now. This is empowering.

Second, Black women's self-defined knowledge taps a different sensibility concerning family, work, sexuality, government, and many other topics. For example, because motherhood is an important topic for many Black women, it constitutes a site of analysis and political activism. Black women care deeply about their children but because they are responsible for their well-being, Black mothers face important questions. How do we keep our children safe in a world that can kill their spirit and their bodies? Do they want our daughters and sons to go willingly their assigned, subordinate places in society, or do we want Black youth to reject these places and imagine new futures for themselves? Whether an individual Black woman

has children of her own or not, these questions shape a broader discourse on motherhood in Black communities. Black women's activities as mothers, whether biological mothers of their own children, as othermothers caring for children in their extended families, as mothers of the community who garner respect within their churches and neighborhoods, or as community workers in grassroots organizations such Mothers of Murdered Children, inform Black feminist understandings of motherwork. And this interpretation of motherwork articulates with Black women's understanding of the power and potential of education. My sense of Black women's motherwork is that it embraces Freire's notion of education for critical consciousness where developing social literacy or the ability to "read" society is paramount for Black youth.

Third, and relatedly, motherwork fosters an expansive understanding of education that helps explain why education has been an important site of political activism for Black women. Black women view and use education to build organizations, reinterpret practices that devalue Black people, and to protect young people. *Black Feminist Thought* presents numerous examples of how education constitutes a site of Black women's political engagement. Black women as teachers have long made important contributions to Black community development. Some activities are obvious — many prominent nineteenth and twentieth century Black women intellectuals were teachers. Before the late twentieth century, teaching was one of the few jobs that literate, formally educated Black women could find. But these women often interpreted their roles as educators more broadly than educating their own children. Rather, they became community educators, viewing education as important for Black community development. Anna Julia Cooper is celebrated for her 1896 book *A Voice from the South* that laid out an intersectional analysis of race and gender. Cooper was continually at risk of losing her job as a teacher in the Washington, DC school system, yet held a free supplementary school for Black working-class children in her living room-school on her own time. Ida Well-Barnett struggled to get her own education and procured a job as a teacher in the Memphis public schools. This was no small feat for a Black woman who was born into slavery. But Wells-Barnett found her fellow-teachers to be too conciliatory to racial violence and left her teaching career in favor of journalism as her terrain of education. There are so many other Black women who interpreted teaching and education more broadly as a site for political empowerment.

Finally, the very existence of Black feminist thought speaks to the importance of creating and sustaining Black women's communities. Community lies at the heart of Black feminist thought. In *Black Feminist Thought*, I examine how Black women have developed a series of safe spaces that enabled Black feminist thought to flourish. Ideas are not free floating — they are reproduced by people in specific social settings in response to specific needs and challenges. The kind of oppositional knowledge that is essential to Black women's resistance is nurtured in particular political spaces. The more that I learn about Brazil, the more I see connections between the Brazilian notion of *quilombo* space as a free space for Black women, and the concept of safe space as a metaphor of what I had in mind in describing African American women's communities. When I visited a *quilombo* in São Paulo in 2019, I felt like I was in a free space where Black women's agency was central, where the collective space was free of surveillance, where Black women's motherwork was alive and well, where it was clear that education is political, and where the value of oppositional knowledge was respected. My visit reminded me of so many Black women's spaces that are scattered in many places, often hiding in plain sight in order to be effective. It also reminded me of our efforts to create safe and free spaces for Black youth informed the community schools movement.

There is a distinction between seeing *quilombo* space as a "thing" and understanding quilombo as a metaphor for a variation of Black women's community that, because it is a free political space, provides safety for Black women to be fully human. Critical and emancipatory education require such spaces to create and nurture this way of knowing. Finding spaces to create and sustain Black feminist thought as a collective endeavor means attending to Black women's communities and the spaces that can nurture that knowledge. Such spaces are critical for Black women, but they promise to enrich us all.

In Brazil we have a serious issue: the genocide of black youth. Despite the statistics and denunciations of the Black Movement and black youth, the production of knowledge seems to find no analytical categories to help us understand this situation. In the case of Brazil, age, as a category, could not be considered structural for understanding this reality?

I think that age can be especially useful in analyzing the forms of violence that Black youth experience, both in Brazil and in a broader global context. Sadly, the violence targeted toward young Black people in Brazil by police and vigilante groups is neither new nor confined to Brazil. Such violence has been the legacy of white settler-societies that have created tremendous wealth for European colonial powers through systems of colonialism and slavery. We know that blackness has been demonized within an ideology of white supremacy in ways that impact women and men differently. Because I work within an intersectional framework, I continue to study how race, class, and gender as systems of power impact the lives of Black people. But your question asks me to push my thinking even further. If young people are, in fact, subject to structural forms of discrimination by race, gender and class because they are young, in what ways might the age as a category of analysis help explain these patterns? Moreover, if this is the case, how might being young be a site for resisting systemic racism? Might we see distinctive analyses of violence and forms of resistance to violence from the very people who are its targets?

Addressing these questions depends on how age is conceptualized. In my current work, I am using intersectionality and generational analysis as two promising avenues for thinking through how age might work as a structural category of analysis. When it comes to intersectionality, age is mentioned, but age as a system of power has yet to garner the same attention as that granted race, class, gender, or sexuality. But analyses of race, class, gender, and sexuality as intersecting systems of power might shed light on why intersecting oppressions fall more heavily on young people who are multiply disadvantaged within these systems of power. Because these theoretical questions are broad, I try to make them more manageable by theorizing from on the particular experiences of Black youth. How might intersecting power relations affect Black youth because they are young? This is a good starting place for unpacking how age as a system of power structures specific experiences of Black youth, in this case, violence. Being young and Black in the US provides a set of common challenges. Intersectionality provides a lens whereby certain structural features of US society come into view — the significance of schooling, the foster care system, the juvenile justice system, and the depiction of Black youth within the media and mainstream culture. Certain social problems also come into view that disproportionately affect Black youth, for example, higher rates of school suspension, how the foster care system responds to Black children and youth who are rendered homeless when their parents cannot care for them, and differential treatment of Black youth by police and other agencies of the criminal justice system. Being young exposes young people to certain social problems, for example, disproportionate surveillance and encounters with the police. Yet young people experience these common social problems differently due to gender, sexuality, class, and citizenship status.

The idea of a social generation provides another framework for thinking about youth. Generational analysis suggests that people who share similar experiences when they are young, especially if such experiences have a direct impact on their lives, develop generational sensibilities that shape their political consciousness and behavior. Black youth may share a chronological age with their non-black counterparts, yet intersecting power relations that foster shared experiences may generate a shared generational consciousness. I think that coming of age as a Black person in the US does foster a shared awareness of system racism, if we only know how to look for it. For example, Black youth in the US who have participated in or witnessed the growth of the Black Lives Matter Movement from 2014–2020 have lived through what may be a sea change in understandings of systemic racism in US society. Intersectionality provides a framework for analyzing the power relations of this period whereas generational analysis offers a window into how youth who came of age during this period would have a distinctive generational consciousness on these events.

Understanding how violence as a social problem affects Black youth as well as their responses to living with the threat of violence lends itself to this kind of analysis. For example, young Black people are vulnerable to specific forms of violence because they are young. For example, Black girls who are exposed to sexual harassment violence in schools, public transportation, and the social welfare system; or Black boys who are pressured to join street gangs who control their neighborhoods; or Black LGBTQ youth who encounter bullying and harassment experience the threat of violence if not actual violence and assault than other groups. Increasingly aggressive policies of mass incarceration in conjunction with persisting blocked opportunity structures in housing, education, and employment over the past several decades have been devastating for young Black people in the US. And they have not been alone in living in societies that routinely see Black youth as social problems rather than trying to address the social problems that Black youth face.

This does not mean that Black youth have been passive recipients of these punitive public policies. Because they are too young to vote, Black youth have not been present in electoral politics, but they have been visible and vocal in cultural politics. Black activism by Black youth has taken two forms that complement their participation in political protest and an increasingly visible social movement against anti-Black racism: creating hip hop as the social protest of Black youth against a "new Jim Crow" characterized by mass incarceration in ghettos, jails and prisons; and under the banner of Black Lives Matter, engaging in social protest against state-sanctioned violence via a constellation of local, grassroots initiatives. Hip hop marked a category of youth as a social generation that lacked the electoral voice of politicians and the protections of wealth garnered by a growing Black middle class. Hip hop created a global platform that highlighted the significance of cultural politics as a crucial site of activism, whereas the Black Lives Matter movement combined cultural politics of social media with effective community grassroots organizing. The explosion of global social protest in 2020 in response to the killing of George Floyd rests on the actions of Black youth who sustained a discourse that resisted mainstream discussions of Black violence with hip-hop; and who also were visibly present at social upheavals. The deaths of Florida teenager Trayvon Martin (2012), teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (2014), and 25-year-old Freddie Gray (2015) were catalysts for widespread social protest among African Americas, primarily young people. Events that were recorded by young citizen-journalists on their smartphones and discussed on Twitter and similar social media created a Black public sphere for activism by Black youth. These and other events catalyzed myriad of forms of activism by young Black people and their allies.

And this is just one example of one social generation of Black youth in a particular time and place. Across diverse national settings, young people have long resisted social injustices

that accompany racism, sexism, heterosexism, and militarism. For example, Black youth in South Africa participated in a broad anti-apartheid struggle, with many boycotting their schools to protest being taught in Afrikaans. In Brazil, public school students and college students who were disproportionately poor and/or Black occupied their high schools and colleges to resist proposed curriculum changes and funding cuts. The advent of communications technologies and access to the internet has opened up new forms youth protest in the digital era that transcend national boundaries.

How would you rate this transnational ultraconservative movement, strong in Brazil after the last elections, which disseminates an anti-gender, racist, sexist, and LGBTphobic discourse that has been rooted in school, social policies, family conceptions? What about the role of women?

My overall evaluation of ultraconservative groups rests on holding their leaders accountable for all preventable deaths that occur under their watch. Our elected officials are failing to keep us safe, fed, housed, educated and hopeful for the future. My overall assessment of far-right movements has been consistently negative, but the year 2020 has ushered in so many unexpected events that the irresponsible leadership of ultraconservative politicians as unconscionable.

These are chilling times in Brazil but equally so in the United States where our respective countries both have democratically-elected leaders who deny the realities of life and death. Covid-19 has been a game changer. The global health pandemic has made the stark differences of social inequality both within countries as well as among nation-states patently clear. Promises that an unfettered globalization grounded in free markets and open borders would bring economic security to all ring hollows. The year 2020 also brought the emergence of global, multiracial social protest against systemic racism that, to my surprise, occurred under the banner of Black Lives Matter. When a 17-year old Black teenager stood her ground and filmed the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, she had no way of knowing that her footage would be the catalyst for visible social protest. Floyd's preventable death sparked a global social unrest not only among Black people who were most closely affected, but among young people who marched in solidarity for social justice. Yet in the face of these global challenges of an unprecedented pandemic, an economic crisis that aggravated social inequalities and global social protests against systemic racism, the leadership in Brazil and the United States doubled down into a stance of denial that covid-19 as a real threat. By failing to institute responsible public health measures and threatening to use force against their citizens as a way to quell dissent, they became the threat to participatory democracy.

I see this moment as an important turning point in recalibrating how we understand political resistance. By "we," I mean poor people, Black people, women, indigenous peoples, youth, LGBTQ+ people, Muslims, Palestinians and similarly colonized groups, victims of anti-Semitism, differently-abled peoples, and all others who either are members of groups targeted by ultraconservative groups and/or who stand in solidarity with individuals in these targeted groups. My earlier comments about critical and emancipatory education speak directly to this challenge of building solidarity across groups that ultraconservative leaders and their followers routinely demonize for political gain. I see no ready-made global mass movement where we can all unite under some banner or slogan of peace, love, and happiness. Ideological conformity to any party line, no matter how seductive it may be, is not what is required now. Rather, we need critical and emancipatory thinking that takes on the question of building this kind of solidarity. The scope and passions of the global social protests suggest that the feelings and emotions are there. Yet thinking through resistance is hard because it is difficult for us to see our way forward in times of such profound social change.

Living in an uncomfortable present is always more challenging that taking stock of a past that we have survived or dreaming about a future that is yet to come. Looking back to learn from our mistakes and celebrate our victories is far easier than thinking through the here and now. Trying to understand how we got here by examining historical examples of Hitler's rise to power in Germany in the 1930s or the success of the US Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s in dismantling formal racial segregation can only take us so far. We can comb histories of ultraconservatism or fascism for insights about how right-wing movements came to power and what it took to dislodge them. We do need a critical analysis of history to explain the present. Yet we also must ask and answer our own questions about the here and now. How exactly did a transnational ultraconservative movement become powerful enough to prevail in electoral politics of democratic societies? And what might our critical analysis tell us about the steps to take in the here and now to shape the future we want to see?

I never assume that people who are oppressed are complacent. I do not interpret silence as submission or consent. Instead, when I see people who seemingly suffer in silence, I always assume that political resistance exists, even if it remains unexpressed and/or unrecognized. Studying resistance in everyday life is challenging because much of it remains hidden and/or misrecognized by more powerful groups, often by design. For example, historically, women's resistance has been hidden, leaving the impression that women agree with the decisions of more powerful men in their families, their communities, their workplaces, and their nation-states. But there has been tremendous variability among women in their acceptance of social injustices, both their own as well as the people who surround them. For me, studying Black women has fostered a new view of how central women have been and can become in responding to social injustices. Women have been important to critical education initiatives, both as those who encourage children and youth to fit into existing inequalities or who encourage them to change them. Yet these contributions are easily overlooked by theories that vest power and authority in men. Education is often viewed as an ancillary site to power relations, a privatized place for women and children whose experiences are supervised and interpreted by men. This gender narrative views education as apolitical and uncontested. Children who are well-raised and well-educated are expected to assimilate into the status quo, and women are often judged by their ability to produce such children. But a political analysis of education sees all sites where young people learn about their place and purpose in the world as sites of power contestation. And if the world we are encouraged to embrace is organized through unjust power relations, then each of us must find our place and purpose in a world of racism, sexism, class exploitation and homophobia. Education is not neutral. Rather, it is a site of contestation between privilege and penalty where we are each pressured to go to our assigned place.

Far too many people have remained silent when faced with transnational ultraconservative movements in their nations, cities, neighborhoods, workplaces, and families. Do they not recognize the danger of movements which disseminate anti-gender, racist, sexist, LGBT phobic, and anti-immigrant hate speech? The question is what their silence means. In the US, we see the visible face of such movements in white supremacist demonstrations, hear it in the rhetoric of our national leaders, and read it through anonymous posts on social media. Some who remain silent in a context of this hate speech may implicitly support the ideas, thinking the damage they do will not harm them. But others who have remained silent may be simply afraid of what might happen to them and those they love. My work on Black feminist thought has convinced me not to misread silence for consent, regardless of who is being silent. Thus far, anonymity and silence has seemingly protected all those who refuse to take a stand. But this global pandemic, skyrocketing social inequality, and global social protests against systemic racism suggest that

there will be no more business as usual for any of us. Social change may not come tomorrow, but it will come someday. Preventable deaths impoverish us all. We deserve better from our leaders and from each other.

Which of your books, not yet translated into Portuguese, would you point to as a possible translation in Brazil in order to expand your thinking in the area of education?

When I was growing up, books opened the world to me, allowing me to visit places that I thought I would never go and imagine things that were beyond my everyday life. The best gift that my mother gave me was teaching me to read, finding books for me to read, and helping me get my first library card. As soon as I could write my name, a requirement for getting a library card, she took me to our local branch of the Philadelphia Free Public Library and helped me sign up. She wanted to be an English teacher but could not afford to go to college. I inherited her dreams and her disappointments about education. More importantly, I developed my love of books from her.

I have published three books that I wish were in translation that I wrote with the kinds of readers who use public libraries in mind. Unlike my more academic books, these three books aim to explain the core issues in my work in ways that are more accessible to general readers. I would like to see *On Intellectual Activism* (Collins, 2012) translated into Portuguese. This book gathers together essays, talks, and interviews from my work on Black feminism, the sociology of knowledge, critical education, and racial politics. Because people often enter my work through one of these gateways, they are often not aware of the range of things that I have published. In *On Intellectual Activism*, I describe two kinds of truth-telling that inform critical analysis, namely, speaking the truth to power and speaking the truth to people. Speaking the truth to power means criticizing social inequalities and social injustices that result in unjust treatment directly to those who hold power, e.g., administrators, elected officials, corporate leaders, and media executives. Speaking the truth to power often begins with a simple question, "why are things the way they are?". Efforts to silence such a seemingly simple question speaks volumes about how threatening that question can be to people who wield power. In contrast, speaking the truth to people fosters critical discussions among people who are in a similar social location, for example, for Black women, speaking the truth to one another and to others who are in similar circumstances about the realities of our lives and our interpretations of those realities. These two aspects of critical discourse are interconnected, but not the same. I believe that young children do both kinds of truth telling naturally. They ask the hard "why" questions that adults consider embarrassing or naïve. They also question each other's experiences and worldviews and are willing to learn from one another if they are encouraged to do so. My intellectual development was nurtured within settings where both kinds of truth-telling were cultivated.

I would like to see a revised or expanded version of *Another Kind of Public Education: Race, Schools, the Media and Democratic Possibilities* (Collins, 2009) translated into Portuguese. This book contains essays that I prepared from transcripts of talks that I delivered in 2008 as part of a lecture series to social workers, teachers, and community workers in Boston, Massachusetts. In *Another Kind of Public Education*, I draw from examples from my own teaching to examine the connections between pedagogy and critical education. Those discussions hold up well. But I also present an argument about envisioning democratic possibilities that, sadly, has been sorely challenged by current political realities in the US. I think the main ideas of the book hold up well, but it must be read in the context of its times. I was writing during the Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. When I sent the book off to the press, I had no idea who had won. It was a time of great optimism — I began my term as ASA [American Sociological Association] president in 2008 and was planning the 2009 annual meeting. The global financial crisis was on

the horizon and also colored my analyses. My ideas about public education and what it can do for democracy were shaped by that context. I would temper my ideas considerably now, in light of the emergence of a far-right populism that has set out to dismantle many of the educational programs that were in place at that time. This book introduces many of the principles that I hold dear, for example, the aforementioned commitment to critical education and emancipatory knowledge. A revised edition of this book might work.

I have just found out that the revised edition of my co-authored volume with Sirma Bilge on *Intersectionality*, 2nd ed (Collins and Bilge, 2016), is scheduled to be released in Portuguese in 2021. I hope that this happens, but we all need to be flexible during this global pandemic. That volume contains one entire chapter on intersectionality and critical education. The argument that I sketch out in *Another Kind of Public Education* concerning race, schooling, and democracy through the lens of intersectionality is developed more fully in *Intersectionality*. They can read as companion pieces, and they are both written for a general audience.

As I write, I envision each of my publications as an opportunity to teach and learn from people who I will never meet. Good writing resembles good pedagogy — skilled teachers know how to translate complicated material into terms that resonate with the people they want to reach. But teachers also must learn from the people they aim to reach and build their experiences into pedagogy. Teaching and learning is a recursive, reciprocal process. In my books, I am to teach but also to learn from those who read them.

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