

Health is democracy: yesterday, today and always

THE YEAR 2017 ENDS WITH A CHANGE IN THE DIRECTION of the Brazilian Center for Health Studies (Cebes) defined in the Fifth National Symposium, in which was strengthened the consensus that the entity's original flags, such as the struggle for democracy and health as a right, should be resumed. The foundation of such guideline for Cebes is justified not only by the post-coup national conjuncture of 2016 that has been annihilating the rights conquered in the Federal Constitution of 1988, but by the growing tension between capitalism and democracy on a global scale that points to the end of democratic capitalism, initiated after World War II.

Agreeing with Streeck (2016) in assessing the articulations between democracy and capitalism in the contemporary world, there is a deep crisis of democracy succumbed to capitalist interests. The postwar social pact that aligned capitalism with democracy and that kept markets domesticated or even disciplined by democracy is in disarray, which leads to the de-structuring of the social formation of democratic capitalism. For the author, to the same extent that global capitalism has advanced, national democracies have retreated, reversing the logic that had been in force so far. From this perspective, democracy came to be dominated by markets, altering the post-war social contract and the balance that remained between the interests of capital and the interests of citizens. As a result, democracies are increasingly limited in their ability to act, since they have no control over the material bases of capitalism.

The current dominance of financial capitalism and the unsustainable and unjust concentration of wealth and income for a portion less than 1% of people expose the unviability of the underway ultraneoliberal project. The exclusion of the other 99% has direct consequences on their life quality and styles, whose repercussions are present in the social determination of the health/disease process.

Brazil is bitter in difficult times, and our democracy succumbs to the antipopular interests of capitalism. The coup imposed on the country in order to satisfy especially the oil companies' interests has emptied the possibilities of recovery of the economy and leads to an inexorable destination of a peripheral country. For that, and as a consequence, our democracy has been mutilated with the connivance and participation of all the powers. The Congress has carried out changes in the Constitution – without the endorsement of the people, destroying basic universal social rights of citizenship – and, in the midst of tricks and maneuvers, gives up national sovereignty and democracy itself.

The setbacks in the field of health are immense and difficult to reverse, from the freezing of resources for 20 years to the dismantling of policies and programs and the destruction of the bases of interfederative relations, whose intention and purpose seem to be to leave health absolutely devastated.

For all that, today's Cebes has the clarity that the challenges are huge, which expands its responsibility in the sense of facing and resisting, having its base on political commitments, and as its source of inspiration its long and historic struggle that resulted in the conquest of the universal right to health, in the Constitution of 1988, and in the democratic recovery in our country. We will be intransigent in the defense of social security and of the constitutional SUS (Unified Health System).

The repercussions of the economic and political crises on health are evident, and the health situation aggravates as the healthcare system worsens every day. That's why, for Cebes, it is fundamental to understand health as a universal right of citizenship, as a strategic public policy for confronting the ancestral national inequalities that have their roots in our enslaver elite.

The urgency of the reforms being carried out as well as the perverse process of predatory privatization on the part of the great capital no longer leaves doubts that the ultraneoliberal attack we are undergoing is due to the strategic geopolitical importance of Brazil. We will fight tirelessly for a sovereign country project, founded on social and human rights of citizenship, ecofeminist, antiracist, libertarian, shared and radically democratic.

In 2018, in the 30 years of the Citizen Constitution, we revere the spirit of popular mobilization that took place in 1988 and we call for a resumption of the unity of the political forces in convergence for national sovereignty, for the radicalization of democracy at the service of the interests of the people, and for the unity of Latin America and of the world.

Finally, it should be noted that the Fifth National Cebes Symposium, held on November 23 and 24, consistently expressed its strengthening and the strengthening of internal democratic construction. The participation of nuclei in the organization of pre-symposia was fundamental for the accomplishment of a participatory process, converging for the election of a board with diversity and representativeness. Thus, looking at the past and firmly stepping into the future, Cebes places itself on the national political scene. Long live Cebes!

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Reference

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