

# Neoliberal capitalism can be confronted

## Interview with Noam Chomsky

Por José María Barroso Tristán

Noam Chomsky (1928), Linguistics Lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is considered one of the greatest active intellectual. His creation of generative grammar puts him in a place of honour in Linguistics. Moreover, he has combined the linguistic developments with an intense social activism; he remains one of the greatest analysts of the politics worldwide. His researches on mass media and about the influence of the United States in the Latin America's governments, especially in Central America are well-known. Along with the above mentioned, he is a reference in both, educational and philosophical fields.

Professor Chomsky has taken time in his busy schedule to do this interview with *Iberoamérica Social*. Here we talk briefly with him on issues such as the relationships among mass media and the educational system, the political relationship related to the tragedy of Ayotzinapa, among others.

**Iberoamérica Social: You have conducted deep analyses on mass media and their impact on the public opinion. We also know that subsidiaries of large corporations in communication businesses dominate the production of textbooks used for national education systems. What impact does this fact have on the education of citizens?**



Noam Chomsky: For many young people, these textbooks and the curricula that are designed around them provide their main windows on the contemporary world, its history, and the causes of what they see around them.

Take the United States, the richest and most powerful country in world history, with incomparable advantages – and ranking 27<sup>th</sup> among 31 members of the OECD in measures of social justice, barely above Mexico and Turkey, with a far worse record for African Americans and the remnants of the indigenous population. There is no way for American citizens to comprehend this situation and what can and should be done about it without honest study of the two original sins of American society: virtual extermination of the indigenous population and centuries of murderous slave labour camps that provided the basis for modern industrial development, followed by policies that carry

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the tragedy and crimes forward to the present day.

There is of course much more, and the same can be said of other countries. Textbooks can contribute to meaningful citizenship, or can undermine its prospects.

**IS: That lack of honest studies impedes knowing the different situations I relate with the logic of the power to impose his reality. Who is the power and what are their tools?**

**NC:** Who the power is depends on the nature of the society. If it is a pure totalitarian state (an ideal type), then the state authority is the power, and the tools are typically coercion, or men reaching to violence. If the society is state capitalist on the western model, with formal democratic procedures and some protection of civil rights, then the power is somewhat more diffuse, an amalgam of state power and various forms of concentrated economic power with some inputs from the general public. The tools used range from coercion to propaganda in various ways. To spell it out one has to examine particular cases.

**IS: On September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014 took place the *Escuela Normal de Ayotzinapa* tragedy in Mexico, where six students were killed and 43 other were victims of an enforced disappearance. There are no guiltyies for that, but the hard relationship between the *Guerreros Unidos Cartel* and the local police has been demonstrated. Whereas justice and the media are in connivance with the State. Could we be talking about the impunity of State violence through outsourcing of repression?**

**NC:** Like many others, I have been following this hideous atrocity as closely as I can. I suppose the full story and the motives of the perpetrators will never be completely revealed, but there is no doubt about police involvement with the murderous narco gangs, along with at least tacit complicity, probably much more, of the army and segments of the political class. Not the least of the horrors was the discovery of mass graves of other victims, more evidence of the horrifying tragedies that have turned all of Mexico into what some have called a “narco grave,” a monstrous consequence of the fraudulent and brutal “drug war” launched in Washington, a calamity for Latin America and for the Black male population of the US, the primary target. One of the few encouraging elements of these atrocities is that there might not be complete impunity, and perhaps the rising social movements will be able to bring this terrible chapter of Mexican history to an end.

**IS: I feel in your words a deep hope in people and social movements and their possibilities to change the situation in which we live. Do you think civil organisation is able to confront and finish with the neoliberal capitalist system?**

**NC:** Prediction in human affairs is a low probability endeavor. Too much depends on will and choice. Certainly neoliberal capitalism can be confronted, and some of its worst features can be overcome. In fact, that has already begun to happen, notably in Latin America. How far it can proceed is up to us. There are no evident limits.

**IS: Thank you very much Mr. Chomsky.**