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Opinion – I am Science: Without democracy there is no liberating science and education

The traditional schools and colleges of Brazilian public universities, and more especially the University of São Paulo (USP), have always been spaces for the reproduction of white elites who alternate in command of the country – with rare exceptions. But the act of this August 11, at the Faculty of Law, had many symbolisms and showed us how the University can and should paint itself as a people.

One of them was the presence of a plural sea of ??people of different origins, classes, races and age groups taking the famous “arcades” of the oldest and most famous law school in Brazil, which has already trained 13 former presidents and 45 former governors. from Sao Paulo. With social and political differences, the crowd that surrounded the São Francisco College united in defense of our democracy.

The public reading of the “Letter to Brazilians and Brazilians in Defense of the Democratic State of Law” showed how collective organization is capable of attracting and uniting diverse segments, both from academia, the arts, business, unions and student and popular movements. It is from this unity envisioned there that the historic turn that we long for can and must affect, towards the reconstruction (and reinvention) of our country, with the deepening of democracy and social justice.

In the midst of constant threats against the democratic order, the union of representative sectors of Brazilian society, convened by the public university, is a sign that the mobilization in defense of the Democratic State of Law is also a recognition of the social role that Brazilian universities can fulfill. in this historic transition. And how higher education institutions open to all sectors, especially popular movements, expand the ability to imagine other, more plural and solidary futures.

The demonstrations that took place in different Brazilian regions echoed the voice of almost 1 million people who signed the document, demanding honesty and respect for the results of the polls in the upcoming election.

The three coordinators and several researchers from the SoU_Ciência Center attended the event at the Faculty of Law. We are on the side of all entities and institutions that rise up against the authoritarian attacks that are surrounding and threatening us.

After all, without democracy there is no autonomous science committed to the well-being of the population. Authoritarian regimes give rise to racist, colonialist and homicidal conceptions of science. A socially engaged science, especially with the improvement of the lives of the most vulnerable population, can only occur in democratic environments, with broad popular participation in the country’s destiny.

The same goes for Education. There is no plurality of ideas, freedom of teaching and emancipatory learning without democracy. Authoritarian regimes do not allow schools to be critical and problematizing environments, transforming them into spaces of indoctrination, violence and subalternity.

Therefore, an increasingly broad and full democracy is essential for the advancement of education, for a science and university focused on the demands of the population. There is no possibility of inclusive social development, with economic benefits for all and, above all, human development, without freedom of expression, the right to vote and broad popular participation.

The current government has curtailed democracy in several ways, with the extinction of participatory councils, the blocking of social funds, such as the National Fund for Scientific and Technological Development (FNDCT), the dismissal of officials committed to popular causes, the dismantling of culture, the appointment of illegitimate deans, not chosen by the academic communities, and with the general criminalization of leaders and social movements.

Yesterday, we reiterated which Brazil project we need and want. We will defend our democracy, even if fragile and limited, tooth and nail. So that you can leave this historic crossroads stronger, more inclusive and plural.

The Charter initiative, created within the university space, only reaffirms the role of professors, researchers, servants, students and public higher education institutions: it is our mission to stop social setbacks and fight for more investment in education and science, with the University always open to the public.

Public universities will play their role in this fight, as they did at other decisive moments for the country. Our future is at stake and Brazilian institutions are and will continue to be attentive and strong. We will not shrink in the face of threats and attacks from those who want setbacks in our history.

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