



Though Weingarten now points to how the pandemic was used to accelerate privatization and marketization of education with charter schools, she doesn't mention the most chilling inroads in privatizing public education and destroying democratic control of our schools: use of educational technology to control learning and profit from student data, the colonization of public education with "platform capitalism." The reason for this omission is that AFT and the National Education Association (NEA) are junior partners in the project, which is global.

Goldberg reports when "Weingarten became the A.F.T.'s president, [Diane] Ravitch told her it was her job to save public education in America." Though this idea of union leader as savior is liberalism's conventional knowledge, no statement could be farther from the truth or more dangerous for workers to believe. The fate of public education depends on teachers, mobilized as workers, along with activists in social justice movements, students, and parents using their collective power to force change. One lesson school workers pummeled by exhausting work demands and attacks on their professional integrity can learn from this interview is that we need to address the admittedly formidable task of transforming the national unions.

What Weingarten doesn't say even if she understands it is that capitalism has changed in the past fifteen years. Our opponents are more formidable than they were, and we cannot trust the national unions to lead. But we can resist successfully if we fight smart. In the first chapter of my new book, which New Politics will publish shortly, I delve into what that means. In the meantime, if you belong to an AFT local, it's your right and obligation to ask why you weren't consulted - to question why the Executive Council of the union allowed Weingarten to set national policy on a matter of life-and-death for so many people.