

# Implementing a popular education approach in adult education



Andy Nash and Tim Groves

# Let's start with ourselves

- Take a quiet minute to write the things that make teaching challenging for you (one idea on each post-it note).
- Put everyone's notes out on the table and sort them into categories. Label these.
- Prioritize the 3 most important categories.
- Share your priority categories with the group.
- What can adult educators do about these?

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity **or** it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

- Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

# Popular Education

- The starting point is the concrete experience of the learner.
- We create new knowledge together by analyzing our collective experience.
- We link local, personal experience to a broader social and historical context.
- Skills are taught in service of building people's agency to take individual and collective action.
- We learn by reflecting on our actions.

# Our Adult Education Context

- Diverse students with diverse experiences, contexts, and goals.
- Limited time with students, many requirements.
- Limited opportunities to take action relevant to all.

What does popular education look like in our U.S. adult education context?

# Popular Education in U.S. Adult Ed

Popular Education	Participatory Education	Student-Centered Education
Issues-driven	Issues-driven	Curriculum-driven (responsive)
Issues are problematized	Problem-posing	Issues are problem-solved
Aim is skills in service of social change	Aim is skill development for individual advancement and social analysis	Aim is skill development for individual advancement
Focus on collective action	Focus on understanding options and connecting to others	Focus on individual action

# Participatory Education

- Start with the experiences of the learners.
- Look for patterns and analyze (problem-posing).
- Learn new things (explore the themes, build skills, do research, learn history of the issue, learn what's already being done)
- Identify ways to take action and take steps.
- Reflect.

# Problem-posing process

1. What do you see here? What's happening?
2. Why do you think this happens?
3. How has this affected you and your community?
4. What can people do in this situation? How can we change this situation?



Eliciting experiences and identifying issues



# Lucia's Story

My name is Lucia. I am from El Salvador. I coming to Boston in 2001. I have one son. My son has eleven years old. He is Norteamericano. He speak English. He speak Spanish but he doesn't likes to speak Spanish. He doesn't read or write Spanish. He doesn't listen the Spanish music. Sometimes he is impatient because I no speak English. Sometimes I think he is embarrassed because we coming from another country.



Image and text from *Problem Posing at Work*, published by Grass Roots Press.

Jean-Louis: I'm quitting.

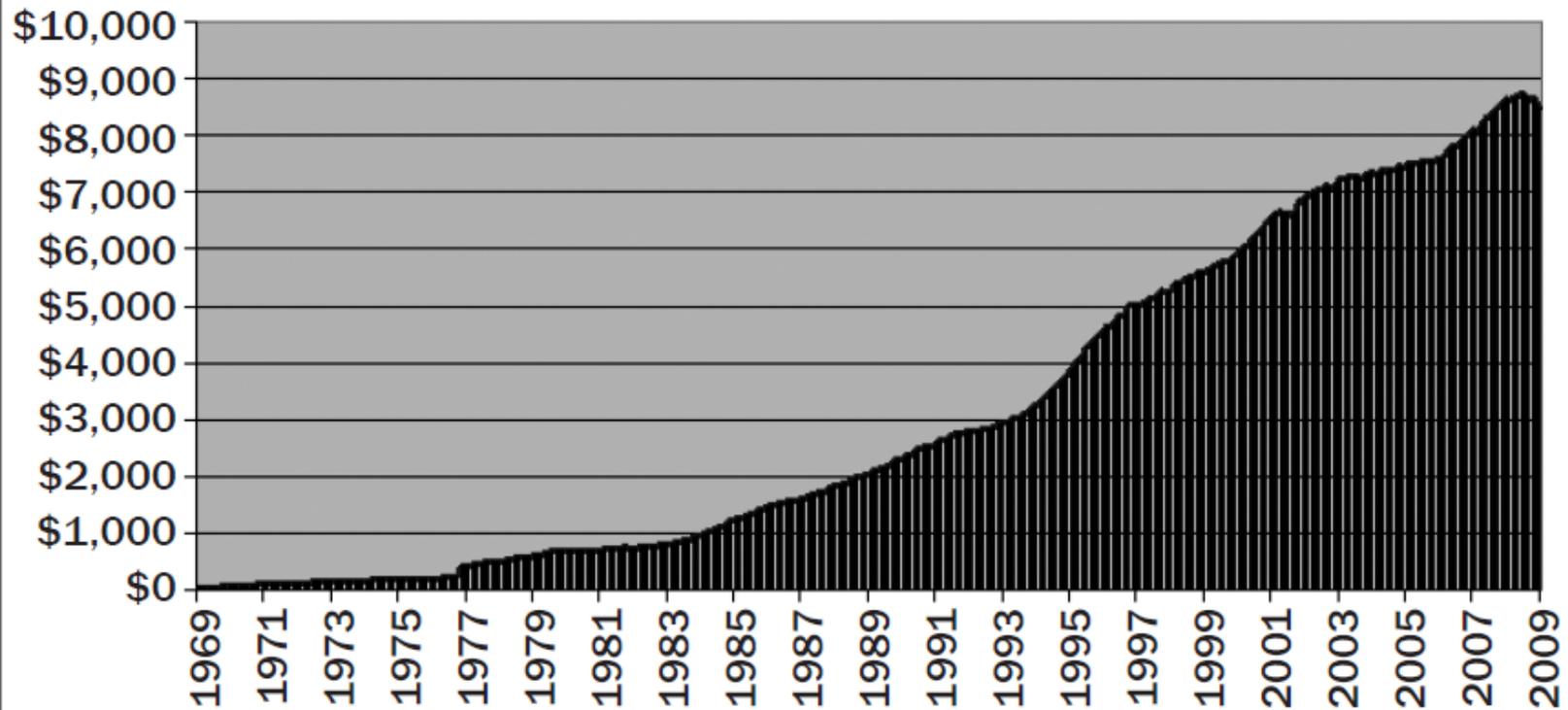
Jose: How come?

Jean-Louis: I don't want to be stuck washing dishes forever.

Jose: Your English is good. Why don't you apply for a job at the front desk?

Jean-Louis: Have you ever seen a Haitian in the front of the house?

## U.S. Credit Card Debt Per Household (\$)



*Study the graph above. Notice the title and what is on the x axis and the y axis. Write several true statements based on the information in this graph. Source: <[oneinabillionblog.com](http://oneinabillionblog.com)>*

# Expensive Technology

## Saying No to My Daughter (and the Phone Companies)!

*Leonardo Espinoza*

Technology is so expensive. It creates problems for families who don't have the money to buy all the latest devices. How do other families afford them? In my case, I have a big problem with my

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**Now my feelings are hurt because my little girl is mad at me.**

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13-year-old daughter. She wants me to buy her an iPhone that costs \$400 to \$600. I say, "No, it's too expensive."

Do you want these types of things for your kids? Don't spoil them like that; give them love instead. I completely disagree

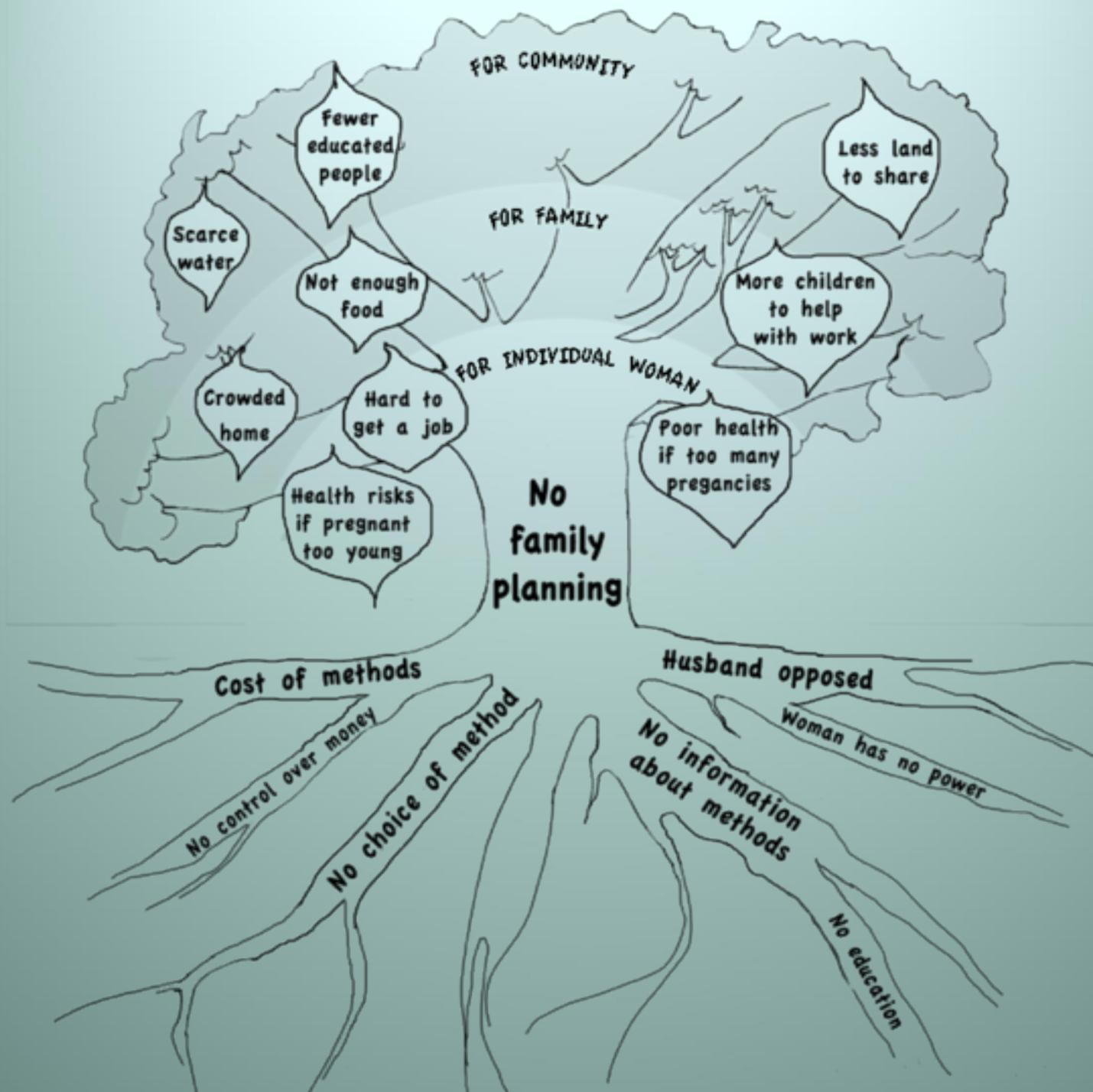
with buying expensive phones for little kids. I understand that you want to check whether your sons or daughters are okay, but why must we use expensive phones for that? Now my feelings are hurt because my little girl is mad at me. I love her a lot, but what can I do? It is what it is.

My question is: why do phone companies introduce new phones so often? They should stop thinking only about their pockets and think more about poor families that don't have anything to eat. Please have some care for others! When you die, you might wish to take your money with you, but, too bad, you can't.



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*Leonardo Espinoza, pictured above with his 13-year-old daughter, is a student at the Elk River Learning Lab in Elk River, MN. He is from Ecuador. He is working on his basic skills so he can get a better job. He has three children.*



# How Schools in the US Compare to My Home Country

HOW SCHOOLS IN U.S. COMPARE TO MY HOME COUNTRY

Area of Comparison	In My Home Country	In the U.S.
1. Transportation		
2. Discipline		
3. Homework		
4. Teachers		
5. Vacations		
6. Meals		
7. Parent Involvement		
8. Clothes		
9. Cost		
10. Students		

# Topics that Emerged

- Homework(both supporting children and asking teachers for more/less)
- How to get academic support for children
- IEPs(Individual Education Plans)
- Raising children when patterns of school clothes, etc. are different
- How to understand different ways teachers teach

# Questions about an IEP

## **1. Special Education:**

*Services that help children who have special learning needs.*

# Questions about an IEP

**2. Disability:** *Anything which interferes with a child's ability to learn in a regular classroom.*

## Examples:

- If a child is in a wheel chair, he can't be in a classroom on the second floor if the school doesn't have an elevator.
- If a child always has trouble understanding what she reads, she won't be able to keep up with her class without individual attention.

# Questions about an IEP

## **3. Evaluation:**

*If the Special Education context, it is a series of tests given to the child by different school staff to help decide whether the child is eligible for services.*

# **SPECIAL EDUCATION INFORMATION FOR SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The Special Education Department ensures that all students who require special education services in order to maximize their learning are identified, and their individualized learning needs are met in the least restrictive environment possible. Special Education Department education staff work with teachers, administrators and families to ensure Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students are implemented with integrity.

# Scenario

- **Mr. Garcia:** Hello, I would like to ask that my son, Kevin, be tested for an IEP.
- **Principal:** Hello, why do you think your son needs an IEP?
- **Mr. Garcia:** His doctor says he may have autism.
- **Principal:** Okay, I understand. The school will send you a letter to ask for your permission to get your son tested for an IEP in 5 days. There will also be an IEP meeting.
- **Mr. Garcia:** Do I need to go to the meeting?
- **Principal:** No, parents do not need to go. We will give you the information later in a letter.

Question: *Principal tells Mr. Garcia that he does not have to come to the IEP meeting. Did the principal give the right answer?*

# Literacy Activities

## Literacy Activities

Put a green star next to activities you do in English.

Put a blue star next to activities you do in your first language.



I read with my children.



I play games with my child.



I sing songs with my child.



I tell my child stories.



I talk with my child.



I write with my child.



I listen to my child read.



I go to the library with my children.

**Parent:** How is my son's reading?

**Teacher:** He is very good. His reading is a good level for this grade.

**Parent:** Great!

**Teacher:** What do you do at home to help your child with reading?

**Parent:** My sister reads with my child at night. I can't read a lot in English, but I tell my child stories in Portuguese.

**Teacher:** Excellent! What kinds of stories does he like?

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# Lucia's Story

My name is Lucia. I am from El Salvador. I came to Boston in 2001. I have one son. My son is eleven years old. He is Norteamericano. He \_\_\_\_\_ English. He speaks  
speak/speaks

Spanish but he doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ to speak Spanish.  
like/likes

He doesn't read or write Spanish. He doesn't listen to Spanish music. Sometimes he is impatient because I \_\_\_\_\_ speak English. Sometimes I think he is  
doesn't/don't  
embarrassed because we come from another country.

# True or false?

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Lucia is the mother of Mario.         | T | F |
| 2. Mario speaks English.                 | T | F |
| 3. Lucia speaks English.                 | T | F |
| 4. Mario was born in El Salvador.        | T | F |
| 5. Lucia feels embarrassed.              | T | F |
| 6. Mario wants to “fit in.”              | T | F |
| 7. Mario wants to disrespect his family. | T | F |

Match the cards to the words in the story

listen	write	music
embarrassed	impatient	country

Mark the word breaks

MynameisLucia.IamfromElSalvador.IcametoBostonin2001.Ihaveoneson.

## Match sentence parts

My name	in 1981.
I don't	speak English.
My son is	is Lucia.
I came to Boston	eleven years old.

# Sequence word cards

read	He	.
Spanish	doesn't	or
write		

# Helping Lucia and Mario

1. What does Lucia need?
2. What does Mario need?
3. What can they say to each other?
4. How can parents help each other with this problem?

# The resources we draw from

## Immigration

## Good Jobs, Not Just Any Jobs



# THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for Social Justice: News, Issues, and Ideas

### IMMIGRATION

**A Story of Push and Pull**



The California Department of Transportation assigned graphic artist John Hood, a Navajo and a Vietnam veteran, to develop a caution sign for California highways. Posted in 1990, it quickly became a cultural icon for those who accept and those who oppose immigration, both legal and illegal.

As he sketched, Hood tried to imagine the despair that might drive such a family across the border and onto a dangerous foreign highway. He drew from his own experience fighting in Vietnam, where he had seen families run for their lives as villages were attacked. He remembered stories his Navajo parents had told him about ancestors who died trying to escape as U.S. soldiers marched them onto reservations.

The drawing was finished in a week. Even without faces, you can see the urgency that the characters feel. "It doesn't just mean they are running across the freeway," Hood said. "It means they are running from something else as well. I think it's a struggle for a lot of things, for opportunities, for freedom."

Source: <http://www.nelrc.org/primary-source/218>

Issue 38 [www.nelrc.org/changeagent](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent) March 2014



# THE CHANGE AGENT

Adult Education for Social Justice: News, Issues, and Ideas

### GOOD JOBS, NOT JUST ANY JOBS!

**Paid Today, Broke Tomorrow**



*Mariama Diallo*

A good job should allow you to pay your bills, to eat, to get clothes according to the weather, and to get medical treatment when needed. Not only that, a good job should pay you enough so that you can have time to live and enjoy a little of life.

I've been at my job for almost 11 years but I have never gotten a raise even though the price of everything has gone up. We receive only minimum wages. We work hard for a paycheck that doesn't allow us to survive. Who wants a job where you get paid today and you're broke tomorrow? It makes you feel like things are falling apart around you because you know that you are not going to be able to pay your bills.

Nowadays, many adults realize that it's time to make a change for a better life. We don't want to accept any job in order not to be unemployed. But how can we get good jobs—jobs that allow us not only to survive but to enjoy life too?



Mariama Diallo is a student at the Adult Learning Center MS-Manhattan: #5 in New York City. Mariama came from Senegal over 11 years ago. She is delighted to show her work to her 10-year old daughter, Fatoumata, who is an excellent fifth grade student. Fatoumata has been selected to participate in the school's math bee.

Issue 36 [www.nelrc.org/changeagent](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent) March 2013

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