



Race relations in Brazil and the construction of black identity in the educational scenario

Relações raciais no Brasil e a construção da identidade do negro no cenário educacional

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ABSTRACT

In this article we present some reflections on racial issues that permeate society in the 21st century, after 134 years of the abolition of slavery. In view of recent statistical data that prove how unequal the paths experienced by black people are compared to the paths of white people in political, economic and social circles. The problematization of racial relations has progressively expanded in Brazilian society in the last decade, as well as debates on the subject.

This problematization involves both the daily practices of these relationships, clashes and political actions, and the conceptual constructions related to them. We experience several social differences, and racism is the basis for understanding the social inequalities that still embarrass Brazilian society. The unacceptable distances that still separate blacks from whites, in the middle of the 21st century, which reflect on unequal access to goods and services, the job market, higher education, as well as the enjoyment of civil, social and economic rights. The racial practice affects the subjectivity of human beings, that is, in the construction of their identity. Dialogue about racism or any racial issue is still a challenge. Seeking to discuss, demystify white cultural attitudes, which are factually rationalized by a dominant and oppressive group, which nowadays have undergone modifications, is an obstacle to be faced, since, for the most part, discrimination is camouflaged.

Keywords: Anti-racist education, Identity, Race Relations and Afro-descendancy.

RESUMO

Neste artigo apresentamos algumas reflexões sobre questões raciais que permeiam a sociedade em pleno século XXI, após 134 anos de abolição da escravatura. Em vista de dados estatísticos recentes que comprovam o quão desigual são os percursos vivenciados por pessoas negras em comparação com as trajetórias de pessoas brancas nos meios políticos, econômicos e sociais. A problematização sobre as relações raciais tem se ampliado de forma progressiva na sociedade brasileira nessa última década bem como os debates sobre o tema.

Essa problematização envolve tanto as práticas cotidianas dessas relações, embates e ações políticas, como as construções conceituais a estas relacionadas. Vivenciamos diversas diferenças sociais, e o racismo é a base para entender as desigualdades sociais que ainda envergonham a sociedade brasileira. As inaceitáveis distâncias que ainda separam negros de brancos, em pleno século XXI, o que refletem nos acessos desiguais a bens e serviços, ao mercado de trabalho, ao ensino superior bem como ao gozo de direitos civis, sociais e



econômicos. A prática racial atinge a subjetividade do ser humano, ou seja, na construção da sua identidade. Dialogar sobre racismo ou qualquer questão racial ainda é desafio. Buscar discutir, desmistificar atitudes culturais brancas, que são factualmente racionalizadas por um grupo dominante e opressor, que nos dias atuais passaram por modificações é um obstáculo a ser enfrentado, já que, na sua maioria a discriminação se apresenta camuflada.

Palavras-chave: Educação antirracista, Identidade, Relações Raciais e Afrodescendência.

INTRODUCTION

Brazil was one of the last countries to abolish slavery, leaving deep marks on society, which have dragged on over the centuries, through economic, social, racial, cultural and political inequalities, over the years. Forming elitist white classes, which consolidated prejudice, which affects a large population contingent of black people in post-abolition society, taking into account that they were seen as a symbol of degradation and backwardness, as an obstacle to the ideal of society that was intended to be built.

The general scenario of slavery in Brazil, described by several historians, shows that the slave regime was no less violent than in other countries. On the contrary, we can perceive a daily, multiform and naturalized violence, which gives us clues to the understanding of current Brazilian racism. In view of this, intellectuals, the government and the elites of the time saw the construction of a challenging profile, since society was marked by different racial groups (whites, indigenous and blacks) and by its slave-owning past.

Silvio Almeida, in his book *Structural Racism* (2018), compiles the concept, showing how racism passes through all the structures of society, being generated from a political-historical process of ideologies, in the logical and technological sense, of forms of inequality and violence. All this is generated within colonialism as a structure of our society.

We experience various social differences, and racism is the basis for understanding the social inequalities that still shame society. The unacceptable distances that still separate blacks from whites, in the 21st century, which reflects in unequal access to goods and services, the labor market, higher education as well as the enjoyment of civil, social and economic rights. It is worth mentioning that there are also other causes of persistent racial inequalities, such as the past exclusion and invisibility of the black population, their condition of poverty and, above all, the denial of their rights after the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888.

The study was developed, with the objective of presenting some reflections on, how racial issues permeate society in the 21st century, after 134 years of abolition of slavery, the white man was and is privileged, compared to the black man and how there are faces of discrimination and access to goods and services today. We have experienced several racial confrontations, which aimed to study the procedural changes in the fight against racism, but that even in the face of great advances, sadly are still part of the



national and international educational scenario, being far from approaching equal access between blacks and whites.

When addressing the racial issue, we cannot fail to remember the social power structure, which has existed since the colonial period, occurring since European exploration by the world, which imposes the models of politicians, with cultural domination and consequently the construction of the identity of the black. What is perceived, is a silence on the racial issue, it is as if this subject along with prejudice did not exist, and that in fact the implementation of Law 7.716/89, took place in practice in full:

Known as the Racism Law, it punishes any type of discrimination or prejudice, whether of origin, race, sex, color, age. In its article 3, the law provides as unlawful conduct the act of preventing or hindering someone from having access to public office or being promoted, motivated by prejudice or discrimination.

Racism is a complex phenomenon, difficult to be understood and faced, even in force for several years, we experience many social and political denials, in addition to racial practices presenting themselves in different ways and often camouflaged in society, Silvio Almeida, in his book *Structural Racism* (2018), makes a compilation of the concept, showing how racism passes through all the structures of society, being generated from a political-historical process of ideologies, in the logical and technological sense, of forms of inequality and violence. All this is generated within colonialism as a structure of our society. Although they celebrate the creation of the law, experts point out that the legislation took time to be created. "It took time for there to be an understanding that a legal device was needed to curb these practices. Brazil ceased to be a slave country 130 years ago and the law is completing 30 years of implementation, that is, there is a gap of 100 years". This is enough time for prejudice to take root in society and consequently will require years of struggle to actually abolish prejudice.

However, little by little, black movements among other actions have been seeking equity, through advertising, and many other manifestations, in order to fraternize, and popularize Brazilian parity, breaking the idea of superiority of the white over the black in the social class. Faced with advances, we cannot fail to mention the importance of actions for the self-affirmation of black identity, such as the relevance of law 10.639/03 in education.

However, the efforts of black social movements, since the 1970s, made it possible to formalize, in 2003, Law 10.639/03, an affirmative action policy that emerged with the aim of changing this precarious scenario: its mechanisms were designed to reduce the evident social differences between whites and blacks in the country and also, an attempt to raise awareness, at the national level, about this alert, in addition to highlighting the real importance of blacks and Africans for Brazil, thus valuing their culture and strengthening a black identity.



The research is based on qualitative methodology, with an approach to the discussion of race relations in Brazil and the construction of black identity in the educational scenario. This research started from the review of literature that addresses racial issues in recent years, added to the approach of different publications, in the field of education, composing some theoretical considerations about the role of education in the fight against racism. A descriptive approach was used, as well as the bibliographic character, for better substantiation.

In this sense, the research is outlined from bibliographic research. Gil (2008) emphasizes that the bibliographic research starts from the exploratory studies in search of expanding and substantiating the analysis of the theme under discussion, with the realization of research developed from the technique of content analysis. Thus, the secondary sources were obtained through consultations in databases made available in the Portal Periódicos Capes, such as Scielo and Google Academic, through the indexers of black identity, school space and afrodescendence.

We bring to this research, a dialogue between academic production, representations and varied organizations around the theme, articulating concepts and reflections about the importance of the educational field and racial discrimination, and the process of building black identity. Faced with the reality of racism, we need to encourage the elimination of racial discrimination, not only in the educational space, but also in other non-formal spaces, such as opening this discussion in the political, religious scenario, including social networks, digital media, such as television, among other spaces that enable the promotion of black self-perception, and the promotion of their militancy and ethnic equality. As stated by Hooks (2013), silence can be an act of complicity so that we become disengaged in collective struggles.

CONSTRUCTION OF RACIAL IDENTITY IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

When referring to identity, especially the identity of the black person, it is very common for people to categorize individuals regarding their racial characteristics in a reductionist way, based exclusively on skin color - classifying them as black or white. In order to understand the problem of the black person, the knowledge of how they constitute themselves in the world, building their self-esteem, self-image and their way of existing, it is fundamental that we understand the category identity.

Ethnic-racial relations are formed historically through the construction of images and social representations. As Stuart Hall puts it,

Representation is the process by which members of a culture use language to institute meanings. This definition carries a premise: things, objects, events in the world do not have, in themselves, any fixed, final or true meaning. It is we, in society, among human cultures, who attribute meanings to things. Meanings, consequently, will always change from one culture to another and from one era to another.



In this way, it is noted that the reconstruction of "being black" goes through a process of awareness and valorization of blackness and the political and sociocultural construction of their identity. According to Nilma Lino Gomes, recognizing oneself in an identity "supposes, therefore, to respond affirmatively to an interpellation and to establish a sense of belonging to a reference group." Thus, a school that is able to foster differences and dialogue between individuals from different ethnic-racial groups allows black students to deconstruct stereotypes and prejudices in relation to their origin and acquire a sense of belonging, which can lead them to act in defense of the values of their ethnic-racial group.

According to Ferreira and Mattos (2007), despite the fact that black people are fundamental characters in the construction and development of our country, there has been a process of systematic disqualification of them. According to these authors, stigmatizing physical, intellectual and social references associated with black people were created. These references became socially legitimized, becoming "truths" shared and disseminated by the majority of the population. This process led black people to experience situations of humiliation and personal discredit, which triggered the disadvantages they face in concrete everyday situations.

In this sense, the school space is the place of socialization, discussion and clarification in the process of building the identities of young students. This construction is involved in the entire educational process, and manifestations of conflict may occur, such as racism, segregation of young people and consequently denials of identities.

According to Foulcault (1999), the State has the school as an instrument of social control and one of its ideological apparatuses. Thus, the school and its school space, of conviviality and different social relations, play an important role in the construction of the identity of the students.

The school space, from its socializing practices, has the ability to include and exclude young black people in today's society. The representations of all social groups circulate in the social environment producing meanings and consequences. It is important to emphasize the importance of primary socialization in the construction of the identity of the black person, because if parents and family have appropriated negative values regarding their racial group, they will most likely transmit these values to their children, not questioning them and contributing to the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudices about the black person. Consequently, the black child appropriates these values as being true and does not question the representations attributed to him, reproducing these negative values in his relationships, which becomes a vicious cycle.

If we assume that social interactions are constitutive processes of personal identities, situations such as the family that is silent about its ethnoracial characteristics may favor the introjection of negative values in a tacit way, not only by the person who places himself in the "other group" but, what is more dramatic, by the Afro-descendant himself in relation to himself. Identities thus constituted retain the inability to develop affirmative attitudes towards racial specificities (Ferreira, 2002, p. 72).



In this sense, the school becomes a favorable environment for debate and discussion, enabling the recognition of black identity. Thus, Bastos (2015) emphasizes that:

The school is a privileged place in the complex process of identity construction. The different subjects involved in the educational process triggered by educational institutions - teachers, pupils, students and guardians - construct different identities throughout their life history, and the school, as a space for learning and socialization, is of great importance in this. In this sense, the reinforcement of stereotypes and negative representations of what it is to be a woman and to be black marks the school trajectories of subjects who develop different strategies to deal with prejudice, racism and sexism. It is at school that one of the most striking confrontations of belonging takes place, and it is in this territory, beyond the family, that gender and racial identities are also constructed (p. 616).

The construction of black identity needs to be discussed, valued and recognized in the school space. Because the whole process of black identity confronts the reality of our society, facing racism and prejudice. Thus, according to Carvalho (2012) the school institution is a social space in which adolescents share meanings, references, representations and other identity practices present in society.

Oliveira (2016) notes that different social relations occur in the school space and that these reflect the cultural diversity of Brazilian society. In this way, the school space becomes primordial for the preparation of students to recognize the values, customs and contributions of black culture in the formation of Brazilian society in a constant process of building black identity. Still according to Oliveira (2016) through good education it is possible to break the racial prejudice against blacks and let them be themselves, exposing their cultures, religions, using their rights as every Brazilian citizen, wherever they are, because they are free, no matter the color of their skin.

RACE RELATIONS, IDENTITY AND BRAZILIAN RACISM

The debates on race relations have progressively expanded in Brazilian society over the last decade. This problematization involves both the daily practices of these relations, the clashes and political actions, as well as the conceptual constructions related to them.

Talking about racism or any racial issue is still a challenge. Seeking to discuss, demythologize white cultural attitudes, which are factually rationalized by a dominant and oppressive group, which nowadays have undergone modifications is an obstacle to be faced, since, for the most part, discrimination is camouflaged. The concept of race comes from the European and North American people, with discourse based on political and social construct, categorizing the concept around which a system of power is organized. In addition to our colonial construction, in our political history, we do not have the colonial overcoming with the molds of social construction of the Republic, which has as its core the formation of the "Brazilian nation" all around the racial issue, clinging to the idea of social cleansing of eugenics (PEREIRA, 2013).



Racial practice affects the subjectivity of the human being, that is, in the construction of his identity. Of course, the difference in hierarchical values, not only being the individual different, but also articulated through stigma, dishonor and inferiority in the face of the other. These points are the projection of what white society has turned into taboo, forming what Grada Kilomba (2019) articulates by Everyday Racism, which refers to all vocabulary, speech, image, gestures, actions and looks, which place black subjects in repressed aspects in white society, always placing it as the other, becoming the personification of what the white subject does not want to be recognized, even in the face of legislation that criminally punishes the subject who produces prejudiced actions.

"In January 1989, Law No. 7716 was passed, which criminalizes any direct or indirect manifestation of racially motivated segregation, exclusion and prejudice. This law represents an important step in the fight against racial prejudice and provides for penalties of one to three years in prison for those who commit hate crimes or racial intolerance, such as denying employment to people because of their race or access to educational institutions and public or private establishments open to the public.

Racial discrimination is not marked by a sporadic event, but by a sequence of experiences throughout the biography of the subject or any of the family nucleus that permeate the different spheres of collective life, being present also in the school conviviality. In Brazil, cordial racism prevails as a new form of expression of racism, which is discrimination against non-white people, characterized by a superficial courtesy that hides discriminatory attitudes that will be expressed in jokes, popular sayings, jokes, among others, always of a racial nature (Lima & Vala, 2004).

Prejudice, in turn, harasses subjectivity in the construction of its values, in the face of the values hierarchized by society, which reaches the stigma of inferiority in relation to the white person in his daily life. Everyday racism does not refer to a one-off experience, but a constellation of life experiences, a constant exposure to danger, a continuous pattern of abuse, which is repeated incessantly throughout one's biography, on the bus, in the supermarket, at a party, at dinner and in the family. It therefore functions to justify and legitimize the exclusion of racial others from certain rights (KILOMBA, 2019).

Finally, a discussion that has raised divergent opinions in society is discrimination against whites called reverse racism. "Reverse racism would be the classic form of prejudice motivated by race, color or ethnicity, but against whites, or blacks against whites." But it is worth remembering that the exploitation of labor was black and never white, but here fit other long discussions that is not the focus of this study.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Brazil, the struggle against racial inequalities has involved many subjects throughout this black diaspora, whether from a more Africanist or more relativized stance. Facing and eliminating the historical cycle of discrimination is a struggle of many philanthropic or non-philanthropic organizations, especially non-governmental ones, in order to defend the rights of the black population, with the intention of avoiding the spread of discrimination. The denial of prejudice by Brazilians, according to SILVA (2017), distorts the way in which victims of prejudice see reality, as they tend to question whether that prejudice, they are witnessing is real or something they created from the purest imagination.

In summary, the fact that the population does not assume prejudice, represents an obstacle to strategies to combat racial discrimination, since campaigns on this subject are not taken seriously, because the individual does not consider them directed to him.

It is necessary to stimulate the valorization of culture, language, religion, worldview and other values of their group, their community, their ethnicity, their nation, it is a great opportunity to encourage and value solidarity and identity that guarantee the survival of the group. The human being to build his identity, carries the basis in his family, his religious community, his lineage, his ethnicity and his nation, if during the process of education and socialization, if the positive values of these communities of belonging were not emphasized and inculcated, most likely the construction of his identity would be negative.

Certainly, individuals and groups create beliefs and values, which gradually become truth. Seen from this angle, prejudices have in short, the necessary conditions for the birth of discrimination. All that is missing is a leap from opinion to discriminatory action or behavior that can be visible and measurable. The various forms of prejudice we have described can lead to various forms of discrimination: socio-economic discrimination, discrimination based on religion, sex, gender, profession, age, ethnicity, "race", culture, nationality, among many others existing in society.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The complexity of representations about the black population indicates a historically formulated framework. The results show that the difficulties to seek equality are still numerous, from the challenge of implementing an ethnic-racial education that reflects contents, practices and postures, including in the educational scenario. More than 34 years have passed since the implementation of Law 7.716/89, and undoubtedly, we can see advances in the educational landscape. Several proposals have been established and highlighted, in addition to the publication of works aimed at instrumentalizing teachers at all levels to comply with the established guidelines.

Currently, there is a greater production of books that cover the issues raised by the law and that provide knowledge of the fundamental role that black men and women played in the construction of the



country. However, one wonders: for what reasons is there still no systematic applicability of Law 10.639? We know, in fact, that there is a difficulty in applying it and that most of the productions based on this law are made impossible by the formal councils and commissions, which are in the discussion of educational guidelines and proposals and, in large part, those who make up the commissions and intellectual councils are whites linked to the Brazilian elite, since the number of post-graduated black people is still much lower if we compare it with the white. This means, as demonstrated in the work of Jesus (2017), that there is no diversity, for example, when selecting books that work with racial issues, most of which are chosen by white researchers who ignore the guidelines and questions of black social movements and their theorists, causing many of the stereotypes to be reproduced, which directly contributes to the permanence of racism, since black men and women do not occupy these spaces considered to be of power. In this way, we perceive some failures of the project of this law, on the part of the state, and the need for a rearrangement in search of equity.

Thus, the discussion of black identity becomes a complex process in view of the possibilities of the construction process, as well as deconstruction. Because it becomes comprehensive from its territorialization, spatially, temporally and culturally. Thus, the discussion of black identity highlights its holistic characteristic.

We can say that currently there has been a considerable expansion regarding the debate about differences and combating racism in Brazilian society. However, even after its inclusion, law n. 10.639/2003 still encounters difficulties for its realization in the school environment, as it is still considered that the law only interests blacks, wrongly considered as a portion, and not a majority, of the Brazilian population. The lack of approach to the guidelines of Law 10.639 in the classroom may also imply a lack of otherness and/or empathy with the disadvantaged ethnic group. Likewise, many students leave elementary and high school with little accumulation and knowledge of the history of Africa and Afro-Brazilian culture, despising, for example:

According to data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), conducted in 2015, although they represent the largest part of the population (52.9%), black students represent only 28.9% of the total number of postgraduate students, and the university is still controlled by white interests.

The school space, through socializing practices, has the capacity to engage young people in debate and critical reflection for a process of recognition of an identity considered on the margins of the opportunities of a non-black youth, who needs public policies for access to vacancies in universities and public institutions. Thus, through interdisciplinary practices, using the debate of Science, Innovations, Literature, Music, Cinema and other areas, the school space can contribute to the process of identity construction of young students and consequently in their community.



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