

Education for racism through adultcentrism: necropolitics and the Black children

Educazione al razzismo attraverso l'adultocentrismo: necropolitica e bambini di colore

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Abstract

In Brazil, the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, the effects of colonization reverberate in the insurgence of a necropolitics that directly affects Black youth and children. According to the Brazilian Forum of Public Safety, between the years of 2016 and 2020, 35 thousand people from 0 to 17 years old were killed in violent ways. In 2021, around 7 children or teenagers were victims of lethal violence per day. For such, the text updated the condition of contemporary necropolitics considering its colonizing genealogy, having as central axis the comprehension of «*the complex of Miguel Otávio*», (Souza and Carvalho, 2022, p. 7) as the capacity whether rational or not, conscious or unconscious, of adultcentrism to banalize the risks to which children are submitted, to the point of dying in gratuitous, stupid, violent, irresponsible and negligent forms. Considering examples such as Miguel Otávio Santana, who was 4 years old and was killed due to infant abandonment, and João Pedro Mattos, who was 14 years old and was shot by the police with a rifle, both cases taking place in the most rigid period of the COVID-19 quarantine, it is possible to understand that such processes educate the Brazilian society to treat differences as a synonym to inequalities and that adultcentrism is key in the composition of the Brazilian racism that sustains the death of Black children.

Keywords: Black children, necropolitics, racism, Brazil.

Sommario

In Brasile, l'ultimo Paese delle Americhe ad aver abolito la schiavitù, gli effetti della colonizzazione si riverberano nell'insorgere di una necropolitica che colpisce direttamente i giovani, i bambini di colore. Secondo il Forum Brasiliano per la Sicurezza Pubblica, tra il 2016 e il 2020, 35 mila persone tra gli 0 e i 17 anni sono state uccise in modo violento. Nel 2021, circa 7 bambini o giovani sono stati vittime di violenza letale ogni giorno. Per questo, il presente articolo ripensa la condizione della necropolitica contemporanea considerando la sua genealogia colonizzatrice, adottando come asse centrale la comprensione del «complesso di Miguel Otávio» (Souza e Carvalho, 2022, p. 7) ovvero la tendenza, che può essere razionale o meno, consapevole o inconsapevole, in base alla quale l'adultocentrismo banalizza i rischi a cui sono sottoposti bambini e bambine, tendenza che può arrivare a far sì che muoiano in forme gratuite, stupide, violente, irresponsabili o negligenti. Considerando esempi come quello di Miguel Otávio Santana, che aveva 4 anni ed è stato ucciso per abbandono infantile e di João Pedro Mattos, che aveva 14 anni ed è stato colpito dalla polizia con un colpo di fucile, è possibile comprendere che tali processi educano la società brasiliana a trattare le differenze come sinonimo di disuguaglianze e che l'adultocentrismo ha un ruolo fondamentale nella costituzione del razzismo brasiliano che sostiene e rende possibile la morte di bambini di colore.

Parole chiave: bambini di colore, necropolitica, razzismo, Brasile.

1. Brazil is born from death!

The birth of what we now know as Brazil comes from death. A small digression is pertinent to explain the schizophrenia present in the formulation of an ideal of a nation

for Brazilians. In 2022, in the country that is now distant from the 522 years of its invention as a colony, 134 years after Lei Aurea, internationally known as Golden Law (Law No. 3,353 of May 13, 1888) which forbade slavery in its territory – the last one in the Americas to do so –, 133 years since the proclamation of the republic, 34 years since a citizen Constitution – which considers racism as an unbailable crime, children as subjects of right and education as a universal right (Munanga, 1996) – and which experienced democratic and direct elections from 1989 to 2014, when president Dilma Roussef suffered a State coup and was unable to finish her mandate, it does not sound believable that, according to the UN, Brazil is the country that kills Black youth every 23 minutes, but it is.

In 2018, through direct elections – which, however, kept Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, the candidate from the Worker's Party, from running for it – the candidate that represented conservatism, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, was elected without a government plan, but based on a *belief system*, as defined by Rocha (2021) in the text *Guerra Cultural e Retórica do ódio* (Cultural Wars and Hate Rhetoric). Such a belief system brought the motto *Brazil above everything, God above everyone* as a campaign slogan. The triad *God, Homeland, and Family* expressed the fundament of his speech, which sought a tone of Neo-Pentecostal Christianity for the characterization of a State that has been considered secular since the proclamation of the Republic in 1890. In other words, it represented 150 years of political, historical, and cultural backset.

But the word *Brazil* announces a complexity that demands to be discussed, as according to Mbembe (2021, p. 224) «decolonization represents a great moment of delinking and branching of languages within the history of our modernity». Thus, in order to systematize an etymological definition of the term it is essential to get to know the chain of meanings inherent to the colonial term *Brazil*, which is set as an adjective because it comes from *Brazilwood*, a colonial name attributed to a typical tree from the Atlantic Forest, which the Tupi-Guarani, a Native Brazilian people, referred to as *Ibirapitanga*.

It is worth highlighting the irony present in the adjective *brazil*. Its meaning comes from the word *ember* (*brasa*, in Portuguese), red as ember because that was the color of the wood extracted from Ibirapitanga, the main export product during the 16th century. Therefore, *ember above everyone* might be a metaphor to express numbers such as 690 thousand deaths due to COVID-19.

But it also highlights numbers such as the ones provided by the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry (CPI, in Portuguese) about the murders of Black youth, whose rapporteur Lindberg Farias pointed out that «23.100 Black young people from 15 to 29 years old are murdered. That means 63 per day. One every 23 minutes» (CPI, 2016, p. 32). The last Atlas of Violence shows that these numbers have intensified.

In 2019, black and brown people (according to the classification of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE)¹ represented 77% of the victims of homicide with a 29,2 rate of homicide per 100 thousand inhabitants. Comparatively, among non-black and brown people (the sum of yellow, white, and indigenous people), the rate was 11,2 per 100 thousand inhabitants, which means the chances of a black person being murdered are 2,6 times superior to those of a non-black person. In other words, over the last year, the rate of intentional violent deaths among black people was 162% bigger than those of non-black people. Likewise, black women represented 66,0% of the total of women who were murdered in Brazil, with a

mortality rate of 4,1 per 100 thousand inhabitants, in comparison to 2,5 for non-black women (CIDH, 2021, p. 49).

The numbers reported above express the absence of citizenship and the extermination policy applied toward the black population, especially the black youth. It is worth emphasizing that, even with the most recent reports such as the aforementioned, there is no specific axle for childhood. The only few times words such as *childhood or child* ever appear, are related to adolescence.

If Brazil has its roots in *ember* with emphasis on its reddish color, to be a Brazilian citizen means to be a worker, or, in other words, those who extracted brazilwood. The term is not born to mark the citizenship of a subject who is born in the country but to recollect an activity/function. Just like an ember, coloniality of power still burns in Brazil; being the adjective of a type of wood, that is, of an export product, bluntly expresses our heritage as an exploration colony.

It is also necessary to consider the generally conventional distinction between commercial colonialism – or even trading-post colonialism – and settler colonialism properly speaking. Certainly, in both cases, the colony's – every colony's – enrichment made sense only if it contributed to enriching the metropole. The difference between them, however, resides in the fact that settler colonies were conceived as an extension of the nation, whereas trading-post or exploitation colonies were only a way to grow the metropole's wealth by means of asymmetrical, inequitable trade relations, almost entirely lacking in heavy local investment. [...] The colony served as a pressure relief valve for all the undesirables, for the categories of the population *whose crimes and debaucheries* could have been *rapidly destructive* or whose needs would have driven them toward prison or forced them to beg, while rendering them useless for the country. This scission of humanity into *useful* and *useless – excess and superfluidity* – has remained the rule, with utility being essentially measured against the capacity to deploy a labor force (Mbembe, 2019, p. 11).

Thus, the workforce is what marks and defines Brazil, not only through its name, but in its modus operandi, since we continue to practice asymmetrical, inequitable trade relations, but the product is no longer wood, but black people and their workforce. Nascimento (2016) denounced that miscegenation is a synonym for genocide, for its process happened through sexual violence undertaken against black women. In the 1970s black women were referred to as *export-like mulatas*, a national product, and were associated with alcohol in different advertisements. Black children, especially black boys, were a byproduct, surplus, and superfluous. Bastide and Fernandes (2008) problematized the prevailing saying of the aforementioned time: *white for marriage, black for work, and mulata for fornication*. But what about the children? What was the surplus of black women for?

The false aesthetic of a miscegenated, but absolutely unequal and divided country originated weak and thoroughly fanciful stories in a desperate attempt to consolidate itself as a nation, but the schizophrenia present in the formulation of such an ideal of a nation caused racism to be reaffirmed through denial and brought along the speech of a passive and kind country that started to sound naive, associated with an aesthetic of infantilization and hypersexualization of racial relations within its lands.

Mbembe (2017, p. 176) locates a question that reverberates with our goals here: «how to belong fully in this world that is common to all of us, how to pass from the status of the excluded to the status of the rightholder?». In this text, we will insist on

taking the black child as the bluntest rightholder in the stances against necropolitics and that's why this digression was necessary.

2. The black re-existence fell to the *resurrection* of the dead ones!

For Souza and Carvalho (2022), black children have historically been treated as pickpockets, guttersnipes, *pixotes*, and captains of the sand². As fruits of black women, the *export products* that were animalized for centuries through the term *mulata*³, the black child is typified from their birthplace, reduced to a consumer good for a society forged on hygienist values. Bastides and Fernandes (2008, p. 199) pointed out the strength of such a *soft solution*, in other words, the miscegenation as the expression of genocide, as the political idyll moved forward with its strategies to dilute the Black peoples in the white mass, as a sort of confiscation of the racial economy which envisioned, ever since the slave colony, the superiority of the non-black person, typified as a common dominant in every order and possibility.

Consequently, the black child, as the descendant of the dehumanizing and exportable, naturalized the transformation of differences into inequalities. If over the past century approaches of authors such as Nogueira (1985)⁴, Bastides and Fernandes (2008) showed the marks of ethnic belonging sentenced individuals to objectification, the such sentence was not exclusively destined to a cultural perspective but highlighted the centrality of the social forge of inequality that was the infrastructure of the capitalist society. In this case, the exploitation of Black peoples has always been set as the most efficient workforce, since the whole social structure depended on the exhausted energy of their bodies, a fundamental and unavoidable infrastructure for the generation of wealth, the justification of land properties, recognition of inequalities, the banalization of death and so on.

In the opening of the recent 47th session of the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner of the United Nations, Michelle Bachelet, presented the report on systemic racism against African and Afrodescendants whose human rights have been ruthlessly ignored and debased and pointed out «This is a story that begins in first childhood. Wherever there is data available, it shows that afro-descendant children are usually victims of racial discrimination in schools, have weaker educational results, and, sometimes, are treated as criminals from early on» (ACNUDH, 2021).

It is our understanding that the childhood of black children should be a sort of social occurrence to work as a turning and mutation point in this tireless palimpsest. However, over it, throughout all of the areas of black life, are still written the aggravation of inequalities and marginalization. As Carvalho and Souza argue (2021), the black child has always been and still is whipped by the colonial load of a childhood that is equally loaded with colonial jurisdiction. By extension, to devise denying black children a childhood peculiar to them was preponderant for the dehumanization of the group as a whole since the social projection on black people was marked with the signs and values of a cultural system closed to their destination: the fact that they are black.

But there is something apparently paradoxical in this plot. It is the fact that the willful childhood denied to black children and suppressed from them has not prevented the traces of infantilization of all Black peoples. Infantilizing Africans was a justifying strategy of the forged co-dependency based on iron, lead, gunpowder, and scourge. The speech of infantilization related to race and age refers to a historical construction far from being overcome.

The African is presented not only as a child but as a stupid child, prey to a handful of petty kings who are cruel and fierce potentates. This idiocy is the result of the congenital vice of the Black race, and colonization is a form of assistance, the education and moral treatment for such idiocy. It is an antidote to the spirit of cruelty and the anarchic functioning of “indigenous peoples.” From this point of view, it is a gift of civilization. Colonization was viewed as a form of general treatment for the idiocy of races predisposed to degeneration. [...] Race always appears in the argument for colonialism, operating simultaneously as a material matrix, a symbolic institution, and a psychic component of the consciousness of empire. In the defense and illustration of colonization, no justification escapes a priori from the general discourse on what were considered at the time to be the qualities of the race (Mbembe, 2017, pp. 64-65).

In this sense, the association of the adjectivization of afro or African was composed as a synonym for childish. Souza and Carvalho (2022) indicate that there is a kind of social unconscious that updates the destination imposed on black enslaved Africans as subalternization. Slavery has justified the inferiority of Black peoples *ab ovo*, atavistically assimilating them as subjects in an eternal development phase and, therefore, incomplete, dependent, demanding of curtailment, and incapable of responsibility. Hence, vigilance, coercion, and punishment have expanded beyond colonial times in Brazil, resulting in hygienist public policies that still reverberate in the tropics. If the raptures of the patriarchal privatist family saw children as bastards, abandoned; children under the threshold of survival, managing petty delinquency, the first misfortune that stamps their criminal profile; children whose «poverty comes before anything else as the lack of rights, possibilities and hope» in the terms of Martins (1993, p. 15), and ended up placing them under the fatality of social exclusion, the unavoidable destiny of black infants, it was because black people had always been seen as a social problem for the construction of a newly manumitted nation. Rodrigues' caustic terms help us understand this perspective:

Black Africans are what they are: neither better nor worse than whites: they simply belong to a different phase of intellectual and moral development. These infant populations couldn't make it to a very advanced mentality and for this evolution tardiness, there have been two complex causes. Among these causes, some might be looked for in the organization of negro races properly said, whereas others might be in the nature of the habitat where these races are confined. However, what can be guaranteed with the acquired experience is that intending to impose European civilization on black people is a pure aberration (Rodrigues, 1957, p. 29).

Thus, the colonial relations of subalternization of Africa have objectified part of non-Western humanity with the discursive emphasis engendered by the adjectivization: *blacks*. The qualifying composes dehumanizing strategies of blackness. The *racial sadism* around it, as considered by Kilomba (2010, p. 79, no emphasis added), is subordinate to the empire of senses riddled with the «sadistic function of getting pleasure from inflicting pain and humiliation on the racial Other/ giving her/him a sense of loss toward the white subject». It takes little effort to, therefore, understand why black Africans are historically stereotyped as childish, immature, ingenuous, irascible and dangerous. There is a global chain of equivalences of senses ready to justify the erasure of the black child as the central subject of a history that resists reviewing the logic of its occurrences, values, and the identity forces that insist on being fixated as

immutable representation. As the most vulnerable link in the social system, black children continue to carry the insidious marks of the fantasy of domination and the multiple powers of racism. Here, racism «functions through a discursive regime, a chain of words and images that by association become equivalents: African - Africa - jungle - wild - primitive - inferior - animal - monkey» (Kilomba, 2010, p. 75).

In this chain of meanings that forge differences as synonyms for inequality, there is also childhood versus adulthood, as such enunciations are defined by the opposition, with no room for complementarity and, according to the binary logic, one noun then becomes the antonym of the other (childhood versus adulthood/black versus white). Therefore, there has been a process of infantilization of black adults and of destitution of *childhood* for black children. Racism and adultcentrism go hand in hand in an inseparable way to reiterate the dehumanizing of black people. That is to say that an adultcentric society is necessarily a racist society.

Against all obviousness, an adultcentric society is not the one that puts *adults* in the center. The “truth” of adultcentrism is not restrained in its term, but in its functioning: a system of effective statements that relegates young people of *yet-not-a-subject*, of belated, lacking, or beings with deficits, not in contraposition to those who are historically adults, but in contraposition to the *real world*, to an adult and the actual world, to the world of the *accomplished beings*. Such a world is an image that is valued for its imposing function of a social, economic, political, cultural, and libidinal project that turns generations into agents of its vitality. And in this sense, society is adultcentric [...] A critique of an adultcentric society can not be erected from a call out of consciousness but from the will manifested as an intellectual, political, and pedagogic practice inspired by the question of what can we really understand of adultcentrism (Vásquez and Bravo, 2021, p. 8).

The context of COVID-19 pandemic within the context *Brazil above everything and God above everyone* projected the inseparability between racism and adultcentrism and the absolute social inequality that takes place in Brazil. In this direction, two cases make this relation explicit: João Pedro Mattos Pinto, a 14-year-old black boy, murdered by Rio de Janeiro’s military police while he was studying at home with his cousins; and Miguel Otavio, a 5-year-old black child, abandoned in an elevator by the employer of his mother, who was forced to work during the pandemic.

Say his name! João Pedro Mattos Pinto

On May 18th, 2020 Brazil was under a strict quarantine process, in which residents were oriented to social isolation and schools were working through a remote teaching system, which means children and teenagers were at home at all times. However, the number of deaths and executions by the military police forces in different Brazilian states was higher than the previous year, when there was no social isolation; around 6% higher to be more specific, summing up 3.181 deaths of black children and teenagers between May and June. Such data is not provided by the State, as in the past 6 years there has been a dismantling of official data sources, but they are found in documentaries such as *As histórias por trás de mortes pela polícia em plena pandemia* (The stories behind the deaths by military police in the middle of a pandemic) by BBC News Brazil (2021), and productions such as the ones from the Brazilian Forum of Public Safety.

João Pedro Mattos Pinto was shot on May 18th, 2020 in the city of São Gonçalo, in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro state. The case had widespread repercussions because it happened during the social isolation period and João Pedro was home with 4 other children. The police officers fired over 70 rifle shots; one of them hit João Pedro. When asked about it, the officers justified that they shot the house because they noticed the house had a pool. In other words, they consider that in a *favela*, a house that offers some sort of comfort could only belong to someone connected to drug dealing.

The death of João Pedro was shocking and the arguments used by the officers were completely out of purpose. The visibility of the case made the Federal Supreme Court, represented by minister Edson Fachin, forbid military operations during the isolation period in all of the *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro. So, on June 5th, 2020, two weeks after João Pedro's murder, the Federal Supreme Court announced: «Nothing justifies a 14-year-old child being shot over 70 times. The fact is symptomatic by itself to state that if the normative framework is kept, nothing will be done to decrease police lethality, a state of things that does not respect the Constitution at all» (Supremo Tribunal Federal, 2021).

Police violence in Brazil expresses necropolitics since, in the first semester of 2020, more people were murdered by police violence than in the entire year of 2020 in the United States⁵. In 2020, the data from the Rede de Observatório de Segurança (Safety Observatory Network, 2021) points out that, even with the intervention of the Public Ministry forbidding police actions, 1.245 people were murdered by the police and 90% of them were black, most of them in a similar profile to João Pedro Mattos. Despite the wide repercussions throughout the country and the pressure of the family and the black movement, the case has not been solved yet and no police officer has been punished.

According to Souza, Anjos e Correa (2022), it is fundamental to call to mind such cases because there are so many children with a similar profile that, little by little, these victims end up losing their identities and becoming nothing but numbers. Thus, necropolitics is expressed through colonial violence:

Colonial violence was, finally, a *phenomenal* violence. In this regard it affected not only the domain of the senses but also the psychic and emotional domains. It generated mental disorders that were difficult to treat and heal. It excluded any dialectic of recognition and was indifferent to all moral argumentation. It attacked time, one of the privileged mental contexts of all subjectivity, which placed the colonized in danger of losing the use of all traces of memory, precisely those that might have allowed them «to turn loss into something other than a hemorrhagic abyss». One of its functions was not only to empty the colonized's past of all substance, but also to foreclose on the future. It also attacked the bodies of the colonized, structuring their muscles, provoking stiffening and deformation. And it did not spare the psyche, since violence aims at nothing less than decerebration. The body and conscience of the colonized were striped with cuts, wounds, and injuries (Mbembe, 2017, p. 164).

The gunshots that struck the house with children and teenagers were originated from helicopters. As Rafaela Mattos Pito, João Pedro's mother, was on her way back home, she noticed the movement of the helicopters and called her son, who uttered his last sentence over the phone: «Mom, don't worry because we're inside the house» (Guimarães and Press, 2021). The phenomenon of colonial violence remains to reiterate the necropolitics expressed in João's last sentence and in his mother's uneasiness that persists to this day as she fights for justice. Below is an example of the organization of

his family members and the black movement for the hearing that happened on September 5th, 2022.



Fig. 1: *Justice for Miguel!* (image produced by João Pedro's family, spread through social media profiles on Instagram and Whatsapp, 2022).

The work relation that is imperiously forged on black children's experiences is updated in the understanding of Miguel Otavio's death, with what Carvalho and Souza (2021, p. 4) announce as Miguel Otávio complex: «On a Tuesday, June 2nd, 2020, Miguel Otávio was killed, at 5 years old, by suffering an excruciating fall from the 9th floor of the Twin Towers building, in the city of Recife, Pernambuco state». On that day, his mother, Mirtes Renata Souza, saw herself compelled by the imperative of her work as a maid in the house of her employers. Because she had no one else to leave her son with, Mirtes Renata took him with her to her job. As she was leaving to walk the employer's pet, her son, who was under the interim care of her employer, is allowed to enter an elevator by himself. Miguel was then walking and exploring the environment of the 9th floor, still alone, when he falls and dies.

Not forgetting about this fact means confronting necropolitics; forgetting it means vitalizing necropolitics. The complex of Miguel Otávio could be defined as the capacity, whether or not it's rational, conscious or unconscious, of adultcentrism to banalize the risks to which black children are subject, to the point of causing their death in a gratuitous, stupid, violent, irresponsible and negligent way. Not forgetting about the black children and teenagers killed by racism means opposing sovereignty.

The ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in the power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die. To kill or to let live thus constitutes sovereignty's limits, its principal attributes. To be sovereign is to exert one's control over mortality and to define life as the deployment and manifestation of power (Mbembe, 2019, p. 66).

Such a complex also refers to social inequalities inherited from a colonial system that tests, all of the time, the life that is passive of dying. In this case, and in almost most cases, black mothers, fathers, and guardians; residents from vulnerable neighborhoods, servers who are compelled to cheap, unstable, precarious, risky labor and subject to the whim of their *masters* see their daughters and sons being taken by stray bullets, discretionary police violences, reified and elective racism, neglect of public power and suppression of fair social opportunities. We'd also add the following detail: the complex of Miguel Otávio, as an idea, concerns the easily prevented death, but that, however, is effected in the game of *normosis* necropolitics.

The complex of Miguel Otávio is evident because the security cameras of the building showed the child's absolute abandonment (Alves, 2020) in the elevator and that Sari Corte Real, his mother's employer, presses the button from the penthouse. Even though Sari Corte Real was charged with manslaughter, which means her intention to kill was recognized, she paid 20 thousand reais of bail and the process is still in progress.

The pressure of the family members and the black movement remains constant with marks and campaigns that have as watchword the expression *Justice for Miguel*. So far, there has been the promulgation of a bill entitled *Menino Miguel* (Law 17.020, 2020), promulgated on August 13th, 2020, which «forbids, within the state of Pernambuco, the use of elevators and restricts, in the terms it specifies, the free circulation in common areas, of children who are not escorted of a person over 18 years old, and gives other measures».

Little by little, other states of the union are organizing and approving the bill within their territories. Below a poster that exemplifies the two-year battle seeking *Justice for Miguel* and all of the black children. The mobilization for Miguel has been intense and gathered the support of two representatives of MPB, which, in Portuguese, stands for *Brazilian popular music*, the singers Maria Bethania and Adriana Calcanhoto, with a song entitled *June 2nd*.

In the black and racist country
In the heart of Latin America
In the city of Recife
Tuesday, June 2nd of two thousand twenty
Twenty-nine degrees Celsius
Clear sky
The maid leaves for work
Even in the middle of the pandemic

And for that takes by the hand
Miguel, five years old
The name of an angel
Her one and only
Thirty-five meters of “flight”
From the ninth floor
Fifty-nine seconds before his mother returned
The destiny of Icarus
The black blood
The air wings
In the black and racist country
In the heart of Latin America



Fig. 2: *2 anos sem Miguel!* (image produced by João Pedro's family, spread through social media profiles on Instagram and Whatsapp, 2022).

Thus, the comprehension of what are, in fact, the childhoods of black children demand the comprehension and recognition of the social movement as an educating agent that systematizes and reassures emancipatory knowledge in the terms of Gomes (2017). The so-called *identity of the black Brazilian*, however, cannot be mistaken for identity subjectivation policies, capable of reducing human differences and singularities at the judgment of values and identities, both captured and sedimented by the binary associating of belonging and not belonging or the inclusion and exclusion. Conceiving the black identity through countercolonial routes means creating a sense of agency in a black person through their own becoming.

Such a countercolonial agency is only possible with the notion of childhood as one of its cornerstones. In other terms, such an identity is nominalist, in the sense it embraces a name attributed to all of the mobile power of social production in which black men and women state that what they say is not reduced to identitarianism crystallized by the expropriation of the differences between blackness itself. To use Mbembe's (2017, p. 28) words «If the Western consciousness of the Black Man is an identity judgment» on the other hand, it is important to pay attention to the fact that the declaration of identity happens when «the Black Man affirms of himself that he is that which cannot be captured or controlled; the one who is not where they say he is, and even less where they are looking for him. Rather, he exists where he is not thought» (*ibidem*).

Circumscribing the child in this wide context demands a deepening in the ancestral legacy, as their names remain in the reflection that fundamentals the humanization of their group and demands a project of a nation that goes beyond the *embers* imposed by the exploitation history.

3. Epistemological spin for an antiracist education

Even before being *ember Brazil*, the country had been named land of the Holy Cross, that is, the compulsory Christianity is the first mark of colonization. As such, formal education enters the country under the Jesuits aegis, who became famous for imposing the Portuguese language to the Native people. In this sense, the whole process for emancipation, especially through Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2017), will lead to the reflection of language aspects. Therefore, the concept of freedom forges all of the work of the mentioned author *the education as the practice of freedom*, which aims the recognition of the humanity of the subject, that is, through thinking, within the Brazilian specificity, an education that disrupted the process of dehumanization imposed by slavery.

Paulo Freire denounces that the process of banking education in Brazil was about an instrument of oppression that dialogues with Frantz Fanon (2001), in *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which the image of the oppressor and the oppressed as well as the colonizer and the colonized meet with one another.

Nowadays, it is pertinent to recognize that the dispute of narrative of different social movements, in such case, the Black movement, has made use of other references connected to the processes of Afro-Diasporic resistance, with the notion of colonial load⁶ which invades all of the processes of formal education.

Thus, education becomes a right in Brazil only in 1988 and the Law on Brazilian Education Guidelines and Bases (1996) is the instruction for the conduction of a formation for the exercise of a critical, reflexive and acting citizenship. In a simple equation, we have a process of unfinished slavery from 1500 to 1888 for the Native and Black population, that is, almost four centuries, and the education for citizenship is not even four-decades old. For that reason, Paulo Freire's text, *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994), suggests that:

The idea that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naïveté, is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism. But the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion. To attempt to do without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle is one of its mainstays. The essential thing, as I maintain later on, is this: hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practice in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness. The hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain.

Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope. Hope, as it happens, is so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take every care not to experience it in a mistaken form, and thereby allow it to slip toward hopelessness and despair. Hopelessness and

despair are both the consequence and the cause of inaction or immobilism (Freire, 1994, p. 2-3).

It is through the contribution of practice that, over the last years, the researches on education have been focusing on the practices of Black re-existing to comprehend other pedagogical possibilities that recognize the difference and disrupt inequalities. In 1988, Asante brought up the term *afrocentricity* to express «an African ideology, distinct from a Eurocentric ideology, that allows African agency, that is, a sense of self actualizing based upon the best interests of African people» (Asante, 2003, p. 1). Later on, in 2017, he wrote a book dedicated to teachers of Black Children, *Revolutionary Pedagogy*, in which he even mentions the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire an influence to his own work, but goes on to state that the revolutionary pedagogy goes further than critical pedagogy ever could – although he does recognize it brings us closer to a revolutionary idea – because «you cannot successfully bring something from the category of Western and American literature that is meant to buttress the status quo theorists into the classrooms in urban America and hope to have any real success» (Asante, 2017, p. 15).

Authors such as Janice E. Hale have talked in works such as *Black Children*, that date back to 1982, about the importance of learning how to teach Black children by understanding that they come from a different «culture that has its own roots in West Africa (Hale, 1982, p. 8)». Therefore, it is not possible to contemplate the way they learn through an Eurocentric conception of education that didn't even contemplate them in the first place – considering primary education became a right for all in Brazil, according to the Constitution in 1824 (Brasil, 1824), but only applied to those who, among other things, were free, while slavery would take another 64 years to be abolished, although in Brazil it is common, especially among Black movement activists and scholars, to refer to it as interrupted abolition because there were no reparations or further actions to those previously enslaved.

In Brazil, there is a rising debate on whether or not homeschooling should be legal as it is, for example, in the US. Even though such debate is usually promoted by neoliberalism defenders, it is important to highlight that, when it comes to Black children, for example, there are other circumstances involved. Black children and their culture need to be considered, therefore, need to be known by educators. Ama Mazama and Garvey Musumunu (Asante, 2017, p. ix) did a research that showed that «the growing numbers of African American families homeschooling their children is related to the families' belief that education in public schools, *inter alia*, demeans black children». That is not to say homeschooling should be legal, but to say that these families need to be heard and that these children need to be seen and feel seen when they are part of school environment.

The epistemological spin for an antiracist education implies on collectively building narratives that rescue memories and translate forged experiences into civilizational values such as: orality, corporality and ancestry. And they might unveil in Black cultural manifestations, especially *candomblé*, for it is set as a territory of protection for the community. For Silva (2005), education only has meaning when it meets the interests of the community, thus, having as a reference for the comprehension of these temple communities developed by Black women was the axis that structured Black resistance, through the mythical memory of maintenance of Africa (Souza and Nogueira, 2022, p. 15).

In this sense, through the pedagogy of hope that is found in the maintenance of orality, corporality and ancestry principles, contributions for education in Brazil go on resignifying and highlighting the humanity of our children, therefore, the concepts of

childhood and children reoriented in an antiracist perspective might support the process that is currently taking place, metaphorically putting of part of the fire of colonial exploration with the course of cold and fertile waters that are inherent to the land of Pindorama. In this other land, the maintenance of the memory of Miguel Otávio and João Pedro Mattos are structuring for the orientation of our position in relation to the education that we hope to build.

Notes

¹ It is worth mentioning that the Brazilian Institute of Geography classifies the group nominated as *black* (negro, in Portuguese) as a composition of *pretos*, which means dark-skinned people, and *pardos*, which means mixed-race people (CIDH, 2021).

² Poem by Abdias do Nascimento, from 1983:

Then, together and with no name
We must continue our dream
Reinventing our letters
Recomposing our own names
Weaving the strong bonds
In which
To the joyful laughter of the new day
We will hang the usurpers of our childhood

For the black childhood
We will build a different world
Nurtured through the axé of Esú
The endless love of Oshun
The compassion of Obatala
And the righteous sword of Ogun

In this world there will be no
Pickpockets
Guttersnipes
Pixotes
And captains of the sand

³ The word *mulata* has its origin in the Latin word *mulus*, mule, which, in other words, means a hybrid, barren animal, product of the mating of a horse and a donkey, or the mare with a donkey. In this regard, read Silva (2018).

⁴ «Racial prejudice is considered as an unfavorable disposition (or attitude), culturally conditioned, in relation to the members of a population, who are considered stigmatized, whether due to their appearance, the whole or partial ethnic ancestry that is attributed or recognized in them. When race prejudice is exercised due to appearance, in other words, when it is taken as an excuse for the manifestations of physical features of individuals, the physiognomy, gestures, or accent, it is said to be related to marks; when the assumption that the individual belongs to a certain ethnic group is enough for them to suffer the consequences of prejudice, it is said to be related to the origin» (Nogueira, 1985/1954, pp. 78-79).

⁵ In 20 years, police officers in São Paulo killed 11.300 people. In the United States, all of the police forces combined killed 7.300. With a population 7,5 times smaller than the United States, where around 319 million inhabitants are assisted by around 17 thousand police agencies, the state of São Paulo (43 million residents) has a police force 53% more violent than all of the United-station forces combined (Caramante, 2015).

⁶ Concept coined by Luiz Rufino in *Exu e a Pedagogia das Encruzilhadas* (2017). «Following the paths through the crossroads, there is another conceptual via that must also be crossed, coloniality. This phenomenon, that I rather name marafunda or colonial load, is understood as being the condition of Latin America, submitted to the deepest roots of the racist/capitalist/Christian/patriarchal/modern European system and its forms of perpetuating violences and logics produced by the domination of being, knowing and power. It is necessary to highlight the effects of disenchanting unleashed by the coloniality produce blockades in communication among Latin-American people. However, it is betting in the power of crossing and practicing the exercise of folding the language – actions of amplifying other forms of communication – that I'll firm that coloniality is nothing but the colonial load. That is, the bad luck and

and the haunt propagated and maintained by the spectrum of the violence of colonialism» (Rufino, 2017, pp. 12-13).

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