

**TABU: AN INVITATION TO (RE)THINK EDUCATION FOR RACE RELATIONS
IN DARK TIMES**

***TABU: UM CONVITE A (RE)PENSAR A EDUCAÇÃO PARA AS RELAÇÕES RACIAIS
EM TEMPOS SOMBRIOS***

***TABU: UNA INVITACIÓN A (RE)PENSAR LA EDUCACIÓN PARA LAS
RELACIONES RAZALES EN TIEMPOS OSCUROS***

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ABSTRACT: The article aims to (re) think education for race relations in times that turn out to be gloomy from the film “Tabu”. The work is an exploratory research based on a qualitative reflective approach. The results show that despite the policies that have been seeking to institute new ways of looking at and working on differences, they come up against the idea of a homogeneous national identity that disqualifies differences, preventing the specificities of the black condition in society from being given due importance. We know that we have a long way to go in creating and / or valuing other ways of acting in education, in addition to the attempts to develop an impartial, neutral and politically correct discourse. It is education being called to position itself.

KEYWORDS: Race relations. Identity. Alterity. Culture. Education.

RESUMO: O artigo tem por objetivo (re)pensar a educação para as relações raciais em tempos que se revelam sombrios a partir do filme “Tabu”. O trabalho trata-se de uma pesquisa exploratória pautada em uma abordagem qualitativa reflexiva. Os resultados apontam que as políticas que vêm buscando instituir novas formas de se encarar e trabalhar as diferenças esbarram na ideia de uma identidade nacional homogênea, que desqualifica diferenças, impedindo que se dê o devido valor às especificidades da condição negra na sociedade. Sabemos que temos muito caminho a percorrer na criação e/ou valorização de outros modos de agir na educação, para além das tentativas de se elaborar um discurso isento, neutro e politicamente correto. É a educação sendo chamada a se posicionar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Relações raciais. Identidade. Alteridade. Cultura. Educação.

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RESUMEN: *El artículo tiene como objetivo (re) pensar la educación para las relaciones raciales en tiempos que se revelan oscuros después de la película “Tabu”. El trabajo es una investigación exploratoria basada en un enfoque cualitativo reflexivo. Los resultados muestran que a pesar de las políticas que han buscado instituir nuevas formas de enfrentar y trabajar con las diferencias, chocan con la idea de una identidad nacional homogénea que descalifica las diferencias, impidiendo la debida valoración de las especificidades de la condición negra en sociedad. Sabemos que nos queda un largo camino por recorrer en la creación y / o valoración de otras formas de actuar en educación, además de los intentos por desarrollar un discurso imparcial, neutral y políticamente correcto. Es la educación la que está llamada a tomar posición.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Relaciones raciales. Identidad. Alteridad. Cultura. Educación.*

Introdução

In July 2021, the forty-sixth anniversary of the political independence of most of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa was celebrated (was there reason to celebrate?) Forty-six years of liberation from the Portuguese colonial yoke, after a war that started in the 1960s and ended with the independence of the colonies between 1974 and 1975. influence until today, in several dimensions of the life of these countries, on the other hand, the economic, educational and political advances can be clearly perceived, although this crossing still demands a long walk in favor of sovereignty and democracy.

Perhaps this is the right moment to answer, once again, the question asked to us, some twelve years ago, by a Brazilian friend: “Would it not have been better for African countries to remain colonies of Portugal, instead of facing the difficulties they still face? today, after years of independence?” We remember that our first response was: “My dear friend, nobody likes to be considered a second-class citizen in their own country. Would you like to be in that condition?”

Bringing to light, at this moment, some reflections on aspects of the memory of the colonization/decolonization process in Portuguese-speaking Africa, racial relations in contemporary times and some connections with the field of education, becomes, therefore, especially relevant, precisely because this is a commemorative season. After all, what do we really have to celebrate, in these forty-five years, with regard to relationships with the Other, with the Different? What has changed in internal and external racial relations and what can be considered an indication that we have learned to face the “Other as a legitimate other in coexistence”? What place has education been occupying in this debate?

In this text, instigated by the movie *Tabu* (2012)³ by filmmaker Miguel Gomes, we tried to get a little closer to the memory of colonization and its reflexes today, in the same perspective that guides Benjamin (2001), which is to try to collect, with our reflections, the struggles, dreams, and unfinished projects of those who remained on the margins of an excluding and racist civilizing process, aiming to continue them in the present and in the future. Thus, the study was guided by an exploratory research, but also based on the experiences and reflections that we have accumulated over the years that we have worked in undergraduate and graduate courses on the theme of race relations and its unfoldings in the educational field. The research perspective was based on a reflexive qualitative approach (MELUCCI, 2005).

The paper is divided into three sections. In the first, with the sole purpose of introducing the reader, we bring some notes about the choice of the movie *Tabu*. In the second section, we outline considerations about some aspects raised by the film, which instigated us to take a longer look at some developments of the Portuguese colonization in Africa that reverberate today. Observations that are based on two questions: can images retell stories, history? What challenges does the movie *Tabu* pose? We believe that the images brought to light by this film "revive" our memories, precisely because they allow an updating and a work of re-signification that may involve other forms of conceiving social, political, and educational practices. In other words: these images allow a displacement of the past into the present.

In the third and last section, still instigated by the film, we try to establish some bridges with education, our field of action and reflection, in its connections with the debate on the issues of diversity, difference, racism and related issues. The idea is to show, even if briefly, the actuality of this discussion and the demands it poses to the educational field, in the perspective of building a decolonial and anti-racist education, in nebulous times like the ones we are living in. Finally, the final remarks.

³ The movie narrates the anecdote about a European explorer in Africa who, after losing his wife, disappears in the forest, is consumed by a crocodile and in an anthropophagy of feelings he is transmuted into it to look from there. *Tabu* is a meditation on nostalgia and, as all the great films about history, is a work about today. *Tabu* is essentially a film about the impossibility of this Eurocentric gaze today.

Notes regarding the choice of the film *Tabu*

The decision to choose the aforementioned movie, as a provoking and guiding element for the considerations that we will make here in this text, has a somewhat unusual explanation. The first time we watched it was by mere chance. It was shown by a pay TV channel, the story was already half way through, and therefore we didn't have the opportunity to understand the plot well. However, we could still tell that it was a narrative set in a Portuguese-speaking African country, in the colonial period and also in Portugal, but in a more contemporary time.

At the same moment we remembered that we had read an article, a few months earlier, on the Radio Mozambique website (2015) on the Culture link, which referred to this very movie. So it was not the first time we had come across this work. We remember well the discomfort that both the report and the alluded film caused in us, to the point of deciding not to stop talking about the subject. We recall here the phrase by the Mozambican writer Mia Couto, used as an epigraph to open this essay, when he points out that "it is not the flying to the places that marks memory. It is how much of those places continues to fly within us". (COUTO, 2010).

Another reason that seems important to us in choosing this theme is a supposed similarity between our affective, social and political experiences as ethno-racial experiences in Cape Verde, Portugal and Brazil, and the issues that the plot addresses or seems to address. We anticipate here the feeling that enveloped us during most of the film: a kind of summons to action. What experiences do we have to narrate from this sad period in the life of the colonies and the colonial Metropolis itself, in conjunction with dissident and resistance struggles and movements? What resonates from that past in the present?

In an interview granted to BUALA Portal, the filmmaker Miguel Gomes (2012) reportedly said that the film *Tabu* began to be sketched in his head from a trip to Mozambique, and by the things he heard about the atrocities committed by the Portuguese in the colonial period. The restlessness provoked by the issues addressed by the author are indicative of how racism, the struggles for racial equality, the conflicts, contradictions, and ambiguities in the construction of racial identity cross our lives as colonized subjects and help shape our daily look around race relations in these countries.

In short, a memory that, if on the one hand is collective and shared by many, on the other is individual and affective, of resistance and "(in)submission" to low expectations, to the prophecies of failure that, historically, have sustained the view of us. For this reason, we seek

here to narrate some experiences, with the sole purpose of strengthening the discussion, already started by others, about the theme of alterity and its unfoldings in our lives, as Linhares points out (2006, p. 8-9).

We well know, even from our own experience, that without shared experiences, which can subsidize common meanings, the collective and social-political memories are weakened, as well as the capacity to narrate them, interconnecting existences and experiences. Thus, the indissoluble links between the fabrication of experiences, memories, and narrations are weakened.

To look again at this past and its repercussions in the present of ethnic and racial relations is, therefore, to dive into this memory of struggles, dreams, challenges, conquests, revolts, and desires. A memory that is made of scattered fragments and subject to the whims of reminiscence. That is, subject to the game of remembering and forgetting. This is what the film *Tabu* suggests: a dive into my/our memories.

Figure 1 – Can images retell stories, history? What challenges does the movie *Tabu* pose us??



Source:Domingos (2014)

The image above is a scene from the movie in question. The use of image in this text is inserted in a wider discussion, which has in the researchers Alves and Oliveira (2004) some of the main exponents. The authors call attention to the narrative aspect of images, highlighting that our reading of an image and the reflections we make about it are always conditioned to our memories and previous knowledge about the other and about phenomena in general, also constituted by previous narratives or images. In this sense, quoting Mangüel (2001), they add that an image gives rise to a story which, in turn, gives rise to an image. What stories can this image, and this film in particular, (re)tell about the black presence in

Portugal today, about racism and processes of ethnic and racial exclusion, in its connections with the colonial past?

This is a 2012 film, consisting of two parts: the first part of the narrative, called LOST PARADISE, is set in Portugal, nowadays, where the author narrates some episodes of the life of the main character, Aurora, already in her old age. Aurora is a Portuguese lady, half senile, of unstable and rebellious behavior, whose life trajectory, lived mostly in Mozambique during the colonial period, hides an obscure past, captured in fragments of memory that escape in her deliriums. A brief examination of Lost Paradise leads to the conclusion, always provisional, that the author wants to put us before some aspects of the current reality of Portugal, after the decolonization process.

A first aspect that stands out in the film and that we understand as a possible allusion, even if brief, to the effects of the decolonization process today, or how much the colonization process still echoes in us, is the case of, on the one hand, the only black character playing a housemaid, who supposedly symbolizes the condition of African immigrants from former colonies in Portugal, and on the other, the white characters portraying the difficulties of integration of many Portuguese who lived in Africa - the so-called "returnees". All this becomes clear when we examine the numbers regarding the difficulties of integration of this part of the population into Portuguese society, the data on racial and gender inequality, the loss of privileges of the "returnees", all this combined with loneliness, loss of emotional ties, and other vicissitudes of this process.

The character Aurora is an interesting example of the difficulties mentioned above. She lives in the company of her Cape Verdean maid named Santa (notice that in the credits of the film Santa does not appear among the main characters, although she has a considerable participation). Santa has little expression in the film, besides a subservient behavior that can be summarized in the phrase: *"M'am, I only do what I am told to do!* She doesn't smile, doesn't express any feelings, even when she silently shows solidarity to her boss when she is in crisis. A black woman, illiterate and in the process of becoming literate, only hinted at in the film, but which draws immediate attention.

The issue of the education of African immigrants is only suggested in the film, through the character Santa. However, due to its importance, we believe that it is a debate worthy of a closer look. We can ask ourselves: What are the reasons for the low schooling of a good number of Cape Verdean women in this country, in particular? What public policies have been adopted by the Portuguese government to combat racism and to circumvent this reality? What exists on Portuguese soil that is indicative of progress on this issue, with a view

to guaranteeing the exercise of citizenship by this portion of the population? In research carried out in Portugal, as part of a Doctorate program undertaken by one of the authors of this text, in the early 2000s, it was possible to perceive interesting clues to this reality.

Some explanations are necessary to help understand the representation of the Cape Verdean woman ⁴ as a maid in Miguel Gomes' film: former Portuguese colony until July 1975, Cape Verde, historically, has been an exporter of labor to Portugal, mainly, and other countries. The emigration of female labor is a case in point: an examination of my memories of twenty years spent in Cape Verde, a country to which I always return because of family ties, until I came to Brazil through the Undergraduate and Graduate Student/Graduate Agreement Program (PEC-G)⁵, brings me back to the perception of the common and frequent recruitment of Cape Verdean women to work as maids in Europe, particularly in Portugal.

My aunts, with the exception of my mother who decided not to emigrate but to continue working in Cape Verde, for instance, worked for most of their lives as domestic workers in Portugal and France. My older sister also lived this experience until she returned to Cape Verde in the mid-1990s. Some cousins still live in Portugal and other European countries, and also work or have worked as maids and in other occupations in these countries.

The poverty of the islands, unemployment, low education and other issues drove them at that time and, to some extent, even today, to dream/desire work contracts abroad. This process begins well before the political independence, since the conditions of the islands dominated by Portugal were the most precarious, but the emigration gains new contours after the decolonization process, with the increasing difficulties through which the country was going through, which pushed and still pushes thousands of Cape Verdeans to emigrate.

Portugal is one of those countries that received a large contingent of Cape Verdeans. The conditions in the host country are not the best for these immigrants, most of whom are illiterate or semi illiterate. Many are employed in construction, domestic and cleaning services, and agriculture, earning low wages and working under precarious labor conditions. They end up settling in degraded areas with no housing conditions.

⁴ From here on, the next two paragraphs bring some personal memories lived by one of the authors of the present text, therefore the use of the first person in the speech.

⁵ The Undergraduate Student Exchange Program (PEC-G), officially created in 1965 by Decree 55.613, and currently regulated by Decree 7.948, offers students from developing countries with which Brazil has an educational, cultural or scientific-technological agreement the opportunity to pursue their undergraduate studies in Brazilian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). PEC-G is managed by the Ministry of External Relations, through the Division of Educational Issues, and by the Ministry of Education, in partnership with Higher Education Institutions all over the country (BRAZIL, 2020b).

Cape Verdean women, with rare exceptions, still swell the statistics that indicate that, until recently, the majority of domestic workers in Lisbon were women, although currently this picture has been changing, not so much due to improvements in the living conditions of Cape Verdean immigrants in Portugal, as a result of more inclusive public policies, but due to racism and competition from Eastern European and Brazilian women.

In an interesting study conducted on Female Immigration in Portugal and its relation to domestic work, Baptista (2009) indicates some elements that help us understand this issue of domestic work in Portugal, as well as the place occupied by Cape Verdean women in this market. According to him, in the group of domestic workers paid for domestic service in the country, Cape Verdean women stand out, accounting for 56% in 2006. However, still according to this author, their representativity in the total of immigrant domestic workers has decreased, contrasting with the situation of Brazilian and Ukrainian workers.

The devaluation and stereotyping associated with domestic work is not only due to the gender issue, but also to the issue of ethnic hierarchization, motivated in part by the transformations in the globalized world. Stereotypes that associate domestic work not only with women, but also with women with low educational qualifications, coming from the lower strata of Portuguese society.

Ethnicity begins to configure a new dimension of stereotypes related to paid domestic work. Consequently, there is a growing movement of hierarchization of ethnicities, with Ukrainians currently being preferred, with an image associated with superior qualifications and values, Brazilians, and finally Cape Verdeans. São Tomense and Guinean are currently the most sought after in this market (BAPTISTA, 2009, p. 149).

Batalha (2008), in turn, adds that until the 1960s, there was no space in the Portuguese labor market for Cape Verdean women. Thus, first came the men and only later the women, who started selling fish in the streets, until the imposition of rules for marketing fish by the Portuguese government. From there, they began to dominate the cleaning market, in family homes as maids, in shopping centers, businesses, and other public and private spaces. Competition from Eastern European immigrant women and, soon after, from Brazilian women, emerged in the mid-1990s, when most Cape Verdean women were already working as cleaners.

However, the mere fact that the reality of domestic workers in Portugal is characterized, until recently, as consisting mostly of Cape Verdean women, does not exempt us from a more critical and deeper analysis of this conjuncture. On the contrary, it forces us to understand how it was built, its most obscure and little visible elements, and also to seek ways

to change it. Because, as Linhares (2006) points out, it is necessary to delve into the dark, little penetrated, silenced, and naturalized spaces of social relations, no matter how "normal" and natural they may appear to be. It is these spaces that most of the time cover up unequal relations, oppressions that need to be unmasked.

In view of this, the place in which the black and Cape Verdean woman is placed in the narrative justifies a critical analysis of the typifications and clichés current in both Portuguese and Brazilian society about certain social groups. Just recently an image of a black Brazilian actress playing the role of a maid in two soap operas, almost simultaneously, circulated in social networks. And this means that it is urgent to broaden and put in the spotlight this and other representations, in order to combat racism and sexism. In short, a question that demands broader and deeper reflections on the space that black people occupy in Portuguese and Brazilian dramaturgy.

A colder examination, on the other hand, of this same representation, places us before the possibility, among other probable readings, of the author placing us, in a categorical and intentional way, before an explicit and blatant absence! A single black actress representing, in a film, an expressive population contingent such as that of black Africans in Portugal is a strong indication that something is wrong.

In this way, whether affirming or contesting, Miguel Gomes places us in front of racism and the exclusion of this part of the population in Portuguese society, as well as issues of gender associated with "race". Here we recall Benjamin (1996, p. 200) when he indicates that "Nothing that has happened can be considered lost to History. The question that remains is: would the colonial experience, the racism and the inequality that happened in a history of more than five hundred years of domination be repeating itself now, in the current context, even after so many struggles and fights for a more just society?"

Another question comes to our attention as we advance in the narrative: Mrs. Aurora has a relationship with her Portuguese neighbor Pilar, a very religious woman involved with certain social causes: Justice and Peace Commission, Human Rights Campaign, etc. However, a contradiction stands out: Pilar defends a political and militant position in favor of the disadvantaged, has attitudes of indignation about the inequities of Portuguese society, but does not seem to be bothered by the reality of Cape Verdean and African women in general, not questioning the racism and inequality experienced by these women in Portuguese society. Could this be another criticism of the representation of naturalized racism in Portugal? A continuity of racism present in colonial history? (RAPOSO, 2015). What would the author be

instigating us? To think about the supposed indifference, the veiled racism, the complacency of the Portuguese with these issues?

The racism in Portugal expressed in the movie is not only veiled through silence and absences. It is also an explicit racism, which can be seen in the following sentence addressed by the boss to the maid Santa, who, in turn, listens silently and without any reaction: "I'm tired of your damned mojo, black servant of the devil! Or again: "The one who sent me the black woman was..." and makes a sign with her fingers, indicating that it is not a name to be pronounced. "You black witch. You have set my daughter against me with your damned mojo And further, "I fear that my daughter has been poisoned by the lies and witchcraft of this servant of the devil."

It is important to remember that this memory constitutes everyone. Even in Cape Verde, racism is an issue present in our daily lives. The weak or almost non-existent integration of mainland Africans with the natives of the island of São Vicente reveals a very big social problem, but one that does not seem to deserve much consideration yet. The Cape Verdean in general seems to be a racist person, because his discourse and emotions towards black people from the African continent seem to be full of the racial theories of the 19th century and their subsequent developments. Sometimes explicit, sometimes veiled, the relations between "Creoles", as Cape Verdeans are called, and "Africans" in several situations are still of a frightening distance.⁶

As for the "Africans", it is pertinent to point out that it is very common to hear a significant portion of the Cape Verdean population utter phrases rejecting African identity. This is another discussion that deserves attention in the context of studies on Cape Verdean identity and racism. How to include African culture in the curricula, for example, if Cape Verdeans, in general, do not think they are Africans?

Another issue stands out in the first part of the film: the reality lived by the two main characters who lived in Africa, on their return to the Metropolis. One of them lives in an asylum and is considered "lelé" by her closest relatives; the other, with senile behavior, lives practically apart from her daughter, only in the company of her maid. No news, no close relatives.

The loneliness of these characters emerges as evidence of the settlers' uprooting and its consequences when they return to the metropolis. A situation experienced by most of the Portuguese who returned home after the decolonization process. A new expatriation that, it

⁶ This statement is based on the experience of one of the authors of this text, who is Cape Verdean and who has lived for many years with people who express this behavior and/or attitude.

must be said, for many, did not happen of their own free will but for economic and political reasons. Without emotional ties, without friends, without roots, the settler is no longer the one he was when he left his country of origin, even though his dreams were always directed to the Metropolis, where he dreamed of one day returning to live, or die. Uprootedness, feelings of inadequacy, are some of the emotions experienced by the returnees (MEMI, 1977, p. 23).

The second part of the film is narrated by one of the main characters, an old man who also lived in Mozambique during the colonial period. He relies on his memory to introduce us to his past, which represents the past of many people like him. Called *LOST PARADISE*, it is set in Mozambique. *LOST PARADISE* is a brief and sometimes superficial sketch of life in this colonial African country. A displacement in time that leads us to think of an attempt to highlight the intimate connections between past and present, as Benjamin (2001) would tell us.

Loneliness in youth, loneliness in old age. The settler does not live the life of the colonized, which he rejects and despises, he does not identify with their customs and values that he calls "repugnant and heretical rituals. He isolates himself in his world of privilege, together with his countrymen in the same social and economic situation. A solitary existence, however, full of privileges and other benefits that the colonial enterprise made possible for its own, to the detriment of the low and degrading living conditions of most of the natives.

In this period, if it existed, the relationship between a white man and a black woman was generally marked by sexual abuse or, in the case of consent on the part of the woman, she was seen as a sexual object by the white man. Affective relationships between a white man and a black woman in colonial Africa, and, I would risk saying, even today, were and are very rare. The film exemplifies this phenomenon well when it narrates the sexual incursions of Gian Luca's friend with black women, and the son that resulted from a relationship between him and one of these natives. A son that he rarely visited, adds the narrator. Privileges, both in the possession of material goods and human lives. A very clear example of this way of looking at the other as a material good, very common in this period, can be seen in the sentence of the same character: "Among Aurora's possessions, there was a wizard cook...".

It draws attention, as we conclude this part of the text, the allusion, in our view, somewhat ironic of the liberation struggle, when he points out that the murder of Gian Luca's friend by Aurora was assumed by the Mozambican national liberation movement. Moreover, it reveals an apathetic serenity of the Mozambicans in the face of the picture of revolts and massacres perpetrated by African rebels, suggesting a conformism that, in fact, never existed.

The colonial war claimed many lives during the almost ten years it lasted. Portuguese lives, lives of several African countries fighting for their independence. If, according to the film, the Portuguese living in the colony armed themselves as best they could when the conflicts exploded, it was because privileges were at stake. In the case of the Africans, what was at stake was their dignity as subjects and citizens within their own country, where they were regarded only as a tolerable presence.

Domingos (2014), relying on Edward Said in "Easternisms," in turn, warns that cinema constructed this other almost always represented by its exoticism and backwardness. The "culturalization" of the other, whether to highlight his inferiority or to show his difference, is a powerful instrument of concealment of power relations. From this perspective, he warns that Miguel Gomes' film tries, in a somewhat veiled, timid, and ambiguous way, to make a generic criticism of Portuguese colonialism in Africa, but it fits into the current debate on the history of Portuguese colonialism, where it is still possible to find strands that defend a supposed softness in the relations of the Portuguese colonizer with the African natives, when, in reality, colonial relations were marked by racism and processes of racial and sexual discrimination.

Some other contributions on how this racist memory was produced and what has been the responsibility and contribution of fiction in reinforcing and overcoming it can also be found in Foster (2015), among others, where the author presents traces of mythical, scientific, literary, and popular fiction that still resonate today as a reinforcement of racism and racial inequality in Brazil and the world.

The questions raised by the film, both in its narrative in the past and in the present, lead us to the need to understand that the residues of this history of colonial subalternization still challenge us, but they are being continuously tensioned by movements instituting a new rationality and another history. It is worth pointing out that the instituting movements are not ready-made objects to be discovered by brilliant and accurate researchers; we are all makers in these and these instituting/instituted processes, because they depend on the way we perceive them, on how we desire them, intensifying the conditions and possibilities of their construction paths, which do not despise the use of gaps (LINHARES, 2010, p. 801-818).

Reflections on diversity, difference, racism, and education in these dark and pandemic times

As pointed out, the movie *Tabu* puts us before burning issues in the contemporary world, whose unfoldings in education are visible and can be assessed when we take a less biased look at them.

Thus, as researchers of race and intercultural relations in education, we must ask ourselves: what bridges can we establish between the questions suggested by the taboo film and the theoretical debate on the issues of diversity, differences, racism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia present in the contemporary world and even in Brazil?

In this sense, how can we think the school for this new scenario that is being outlined or intensified, when, on one hand, the demands of the call for diversity and difference become more convincing, and, on the other hand, there is a stimulus to individualism, homogenization and commercialization, and a growing process of privatization of education?

How to (re)think the school and teacher training to work the issue of cultural and racial plurality, in a changing world, when we are forced to face curriculum reforms that place us in front of a National Curriculum project contained in the Common National Curricular Base (BNCC), and that presents a clear emptying of issues related to racial issues? How to account for this process, when in addition to emptying the debate, it also overvalues a policy of competencies that hierarchize vertically and tend to horizontalize differences? and finally, what hints of change, of instituting movements can be glimpsed in this scenario, somewhat nebulous?

It is certain that, despite these attempts to impose a much-criticized memory, many paths lead us to believe that we are currently experiencing a crisis that is constituted by the questioning of the use of unified and universalizing categories in the understanding of differences among peoples, imposed by Western rationality. In this context, the issues of differences and otherness acquire new vigor, gaining "voice for those who normally do not have one: the forgotten, the excluded, or [...] the 'defeated'" (JOUTARD, 2000, p. 33). We highlight, thus, the appeal to the memories and identities of "those from below", which (re)emerge, in the world scenario, mainly, with the fragmentation of artificially constituted nations, upon the crushing of ethnicities and identities⁷.

⁷ Conception of identity. Hall (2015), in his book "Cultural Identity in Postmodernity" addresses the issue of changes that have been operated in cultural identity, which would be formed through belonging to a given national culture, from the displacements operated by force of globalization.

The dispute of memory that Pollack (1989) talks about, the fight against the dilution and emptying of lived experiences in an assimilative collective memory, the search for a political space of rescue and affirmation of silenced and subterranean memories, but also the increase of racism and racial discrimination of black men and women, of migrants and excluded people in general, are facts to be considered and that directly interfere in the directions we want to give to education.

Despite all these tensions and conflicts, and despite these problems being part of the agenda of social movements and of several international organizations, according to Sodré (1999), the issue of "cultural differences" has not been taken seriously as a significant theme by a certain type of philosophical reflection underway in Europe.

In reality, points out Sodré (1999), tolerance, a very fashionable discourse nowadays, would be a camouflaged way of asserting our superiority over the other, the different. I tolerate the one who is different from me, based on my references and my scale of values. Tolerating, thus, implies making certain concessions to the other, not in respect to him or in a position of equality. Tolerating ends up constituting an ethnocentric and xenophobic position.

In fact, this position is emblematic of a type of thinking about human diversity that intends to determine as universal the values of Western and European culture, still very present in our education. Values that reflect convictions and beliefs and, therefore, are not neutral. This kind of thinking does not allow the recognition of the concrete differences, of the real ethical-political practice, and ignores the exclusion to which this other is submitted, its internal struggles and disputes, as well as the concrete specificities of its existence.

Behind the culturalist logic that places cultural differences as the causes and consequences of deep cultural differences and conflicts hides a political and economic logic that emphasizes cultural differences, but monitored, so that they do not threaten the capitalist hegemony. The emphasis on cultural differences would contribute, precisely, to justify inequality, segregation, assimilation, and disregard for the rights of the different to respect and value their own differences and identities.

Sodré's (1999) critique of the positioning on the issue of human diversity and the universalism that supports Western thought instigate us to try to understand a little more this relationship and its repercussion on the construction of a racial ideology - in Brazil as well as in Cape Verde, Portugal, and/or in any other country - that is at the base of the idea of national identity that for a long time disqualified other ethnic identities. That is, we also need to understand the complexity/discussion of this debate beyond our country.

The re-signification and reinterpretation of differences in the current context of crisis of a mode of reason and politics are aspects to be considered and one of the ways used by movements that "usually see culture as the set of symbolic mediations (language, arts, laws, customs, ways of thinking) to address their singularity and affirm their differences" (SODRÉ, 1999, p. 24). However, it is important to be aware of the risks of closing the "cultural identities", in order to avoid distorting the political analysis of the meanings that this universality has acquired in the relations among people. The important thing is not to close ourselves culturally, preventing dialogue with the other. It is this dialogue that gives us the dimension of our similarities, without losing the foundation of our differences.

Political, ideological, cultural divergences can generate conflicts, however, as long as we do not conceive of difference as something whose basic premises are intrinsically wrong, reality is not absolute. In fact, what generates divergence is not the existence of difference but the attitude we adopt of accepting and/or rejecting the basic premises of this difference.

Being different, in this perspective, does not mean being unequal, even if one analyzes difference based on certain "evidences" of an unequal reality. It is not the domains of existence of the different person that make him unequal, because the conditions of his difference in themselves do not imply inequality; they are neither inferior nor superior, they are different. Difference is only presented as a synonym of inequality for those who think they hold a truth before which there are no other truths.

The racial issue, as any social phenomenon, be it in Brazil, Portugal, or any other part of the world, cannot be reduced to a single dimension, which is the economic one. It involves an interdependence of relations that go from the sphere of material production to the political, cultural dimensions that involve the economy of affections and others. Therefore, in this perspective of analysis, we do not share the position defended by a certain common sense that the racial issue, in Brazil and/or anywhere else, is merely economic.

As a matter of fact, there is an interesting discussion about the "race" issue. Some studies emphasize the need to use the term as a central category in the analysis of the black issue, racial inequalities and racism in the countries that are part of our research universe, arguing its intertwining with a negative meaning, attributed to the phenotypical characteristics of blacks, which, in turn, combined with moral concepts, ended up defining racism in these societies. The use of the term "race" today is being made from a new interpretation, in a re-signified perspective, political and not biological. Other intellectuals, however, reject it, proposing the use of the category ethnicity, based on the argument that its historical

antecedents and its connection with biology are unacceptable, since biology does not consider the existence of races, but only one race, the human race.

Notwithstanding this debate, along with other authors, we adopt its use, not assuming a biological meaning, but because we believe that it is the only one that really gives us the dimension of racism in these societies, and also because we believe, like other studies, that racism is not only related to cultural aspects, but that it is based on the interweaving of cultural aspects with an inferior vision of the characteristics that define African ancestry. Therefore, in this text, whenever we refer to the term "race", we will be doing it from this perspective.

If we bring this debate to the understanding of the Brazilian reality we realize how important it is to enter into this discussion, because we tend to look outside, to be indignant about racist practices that occur in other countries, but we don't see what actually happens on Brazilian soil. To understand this debate as it relates to Brazilian society, it is important to enter into the intricacies of a discussion around the concept of "race" and, as we will see, this is a discussion that involves both the questioning of the "biological" bases of the concept and a critique of capitalism. Talking about racism in capitalism deserves a more careful study that draws attention to the processes of privatization and the emptying of the recognition of the other. For Mbembe (2018), the concept of race should not be understood as a natural physical, anthropological, or genetic fact. The author expresses that the loss of Europe's centrality in the world order at the end of the 20th century did not totally empty racial discourses, they are still very present in our days. About race, Mbembe (2018, p. 73) further expresses that:

It matters little that it does not exist as such, and not only because of the extraordinary genetic homogeneity of human beings. It continues to produce mutilating effects, because originally it is and always will be that in whose name gaps are made within society.

One of the elements to explain this reality is provided by Guimarães (1995). According to him, the racial problem in Brazil is related, among others, to the construction of a racial ideology that has color as one of its supports. Racism has a certain specificity in relation to other nations where the problem is present, and one of them refers to the construction of a nationality that involved an ideal of homogeneity, whose objective was, precisely, to suppress differences. A conception of a mixed nation, supported by the notion of birthplace and not by ancestry. An effective way to erase "uncomfortable ancestry" based on premises that associate difference with inferiority. In short, a strategy that, to a certain extent,

has proven effective in the elaboration of a homogeneous representation that Brazilians have of themselves and of their country.

Thus, the analysis of the process of construction of the Brazilian national identity is of great importance in understanding racism. It is where it could be said that the first stones were laid for the construction of cordial racism, disguised, always camouflaged; a rejection of black men and women disguised by friendly phrases, but which seek to hide hostile coexistence policies. Racism that gains strength with the myth of racial democracy (FOSTER, 2015).

Studies indicate - from authors already mentioned in this text, among others - that despite the policies that have been seeking to institute new ways of facing and working with differences, they come up against the idea of a homogeneous national identity that disqualifies differences, as well as as the myth of racial democracy, which prevents giving due value to the specificities of the black condition in Brazilian society, to the influences of African culture in Brazilian culture and in other domains.

The 21st century marks the collapse of the myth of racial democracy – although quite restricted to the theoretical plane – according to data from the research by Oxfam Brasil and the Datafolha Institute, called the “We and Inequalities” Research, which brings perceptions about inequalities in Brazil in different ways. 2019. The survey had the contribution to the debate on the topic of 2,086 people interviewed in 130 Brazilian municipalities, from all regions of the country, between February 12 and 18, 2019. The data reveal that: 1) for 72% of the Brazilian population, skin color defines the chances of being hired by companies; 2) for 81%, race defines the level of police approach; 3) for 71%, justice is tougher for blacks; and 4) for 81%, poor blacks suffer more than poor whites, that is, we witness the demolition of the myth and racism coming out of the closet; 5) 52% agree that black people earn less for being black (OXFAM BRASIL, 2019).

The murder of black citizen George Floyd in the United States on May 25, 2020 produced a worldwide wave of protests. Anti-racist demonstrations have taken place around the world since his death, when he was suffocated by a white police officer in Minneapolis, USA. before losing consciousness. However, explicitly racist episodes like this are not unprecedented in Brazil and in the world. Racism is a much older and more complex problem.

And this reality remains much more vivid and haunting, especially from March 11, 2020, with the pandemic context (new coronavirus, named as SARS-CoV-2)⁸, that caused panic in all humanity, when it was characterized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as

⁸ Designated as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus, a disease that promotes acute infection.

a pandemic, whose indicators of death and vulnerability indicate that the black population is the most affected. And, in this scenario, we realize that throughout this health crisis that continues to spread, racism and social inequalities remain rampant. According to a survey carried out by Barbon (2020), until May 8, 2020, blacks and browns corresponded to 35% of deaths from Covid-19, according to epidemiological data released by the Ministry of Health.

Against this background, can we say that racism has gotten worse? No, it has always existed. It has only become more publicized/denounced due to the technological advances and the access to information by a large part of society. What we are witnessing in the last few months are only reflections in an increasing scale of worldwide repercussion of a violence present in society as a form of control and racist maintenance that the State puts on the black population. According to Mbembe (2017), in a current global context marked by the constant production of "politics of enmity," racism, in its multiple dimensions, presents itself as a technology of power capable of regulating relations.

In Brazil, for example, this issue is quite evident when we look at the data released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) on social inequalities, where the indices reveal a clear ethnic demarcation (BRAZIL, 2019). As a consequence of economic policies, still following Brazil's example, educational policies suffer from the policy of funding restrictions for education. At the same time, the critical participation of professionals and the diversity of students are limited by the emphasis on a system of "scores" and evaluation based on standardized exams, such as the *Prova Brasil*, the National High School Exam (Enem), and the National Basic Education Assessment System (SAEB, in the Portuguese acronym), in which the large majorities of poor whites, blacks, and indigenous people are certainly the most affected.

In this path of dismantling public policies in the last two years, particularly in the current Brazilian political scenario, we recall the advance of conservative and extreme right-wing policies from 2019, such as: 1) dissolution of the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion (SECADI), created in 2004 by demands of social movements, an organ responsible for programs, actions and policies, such as Quilombola School Education, Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations, Human Rights Education; 2) creation of the Undersecretariat of Fomenting Civic-Military Schools⁹, This proposal became part of the general competencies of the Ministry of Education (MEC), since it was one of the main issues raised by Jair Bolsonaro during the presidential campaign; 3) extinction of the

⁹ Remember that the expansion of military schools in Brazil is nothing new. Between the years 2013 and 2018 there was a significant increase in the number of units offered.

Ministry of Culture (Minc) etc. These attitudes/discourses/behaviors, among others, only show the lack of commitment and sensibility in the implementation of inclusive policies in order to mitigate the historical inequalities present in the country.

However, in another direction, anti-racist discourses and multicultural analyses propose educational actions that emphasize the political aspect of differences, since the emphasis on "score", so common today, presupposes behaviors and abilities that would be located in the individual. Thus, issues such as intellectual quotient associated with school performance, which have sustained discourses that reinforce inequality and prejudice, based on "biological" differences between men and women, racism itself, or the use of skin color as a justifying element of academic performance, are replaced by practices that are more integrative of differences. In short, reinforcing the political aspect of differences and not their mere location in the individual would be one of the ways to think about a more egalitarian education.

Recently, in July 2020, the Federal Public Ministry (MPF) sent a recommendation to the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) and the Federal Institute of Pernambuco (IFPE) to adopt measures that would allow the creation of the discipline of Ethnic-Racial Relations in their undergraduate courses. These recommendations are made because of the mandatory implementation of Federal Laws n. 10.639/2003 and n. 11.645/2008, as well as because of the Racial Equality Statute, which provides for the incorporation of themes that involve values about ethnic and cultural plurality of the Brazilian society in the curricular matrix of initial and continuing education courses for teachers (BRAZIL, 2020a).

Our research has indicated that, in order to promote an effectively racially and ethnically inclusive education, it is necessary to think beyond the "score" system. We know that although difficulties still persist, the advances are great and already quite perceptible in the educational field, in the sense of helping black students to value themselves as blacks, and to feel proud of belonging to a quilombola community, with its histories, traditions, experiences, and narratives.

The pedagogical experiences, although still permeated with contradictions and slipping, sometimes towards the acceptance of the Black as equal in their difference, sometimes strongly anchored in discourses of negation, suggest, however, fractures and breaches through which other movements of valorization of African and Afro-Brazilian culture and the oral memory of the African ancestors may be potentiated.

In short, we agree with Heckert (2004) that it is imperative to glimpse with our research the various forces at play in the educational field, since they involve both the

normative prescriptions contained in official policies that claim to be hegemonic, as well as a diversity of ways of thinking and acting that have the power to destabilize the established: anonymous and unpredictable processes that promote instability and rupture with this racist imaginary still strongly established in education.

We know that we have a long way to go - mainly because of the dark times we are living through - in the creation and/or valorization of other ways of acting in education, beyond the attempts to elaborate an exempt, neutral, and politically correct discourse. Education is being called to take a stand.

Final remarks

We take for granted the deep connections that Brazil has with Africa. Africans brought their cultures, knowledge, traditions, religiosities, music, dance, cuisine, and cosmovisions that enriched Brazilian culture. Despite the process of devaluation of these contributions, which have been well documented by studies and research, today we see a growing process of recognition and preservation of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in the country, with the remaining *quilombo* communities giving new meaning to their festivities, religious traditions, and other cultural manifestations. We also notice that, although lacking greater recognition and expansion, these movements have reverberated in the school. They are projects that indicate possibilities of overcoming racism in school and outside it, also through the appreciation of the contributions of African and Afro-Brazilian culture in the construction of the Brazilian identity.

The instituting projects in education, according to Linhares (2006, 2010), are ways of announcing reversals in the dominant rationality and politics, in order to fill gaps and voids left by a form of organization of hierarchical knowledge that excludes other knowledge, other corporality, and other memories. Finally, transforming the school, reinventing it, reviewing its methods, its rules, its objectives, its epistemological bases, are some of our greatest challenges.

We cannot fail to highlight important works such as those by Gomes (2000, 2010), Munanga (1999, 2008), and others on citizen education, which raise the need to focus on the centrality of the racial issue in our pedagogical practice, in educational projects and policies, in the struggle for a democratic society that guarantees everyone the right to citizenship. Our educational system needs to "discern the specificity of race as an element of our human condition and the social construction of race throughout the history of our society. Thus, it is

urgent to consider the interference of ethno-racial differences in the living conditions of the Brazilian people, in order to overcome the level of concern only with economic inequalities, and face another aspect of this inequality, which is the issue of cultural and racial diversity.

Recognizing and respecting the diversity of the students is desired by all, as long as our efforts are not undermined by structural conditions that degrade the individual and place him/her in marginality. The important thing here is to consider the issue of difference within a broader issue, which is the eradication of poverty and racial inequality that a neoliberal society project, as studies and research on the subject show us, is unable to offer us. Therefore, it is urgent to pay more attention to the discourses contained in official documents and in teaching practices.

Therefore, in order to fight racism or any other discriminatory and/or prejudiced form, we need actions, practices, and continuous exercise of what we consider to be pertinent, such as: 1) realize and understand that racism is present in all social practices, whether in an explicit, subtle, and/or camouflaged way; 2) understand that the fight against racism is everyone's responsibility, regardless of skin color, economic and/or social status; 3) not to be silent, denouncing any racist, discriminatory, and/or prejudiced practice; among others. It is the movie *Tabu* reverberating today and inviting us to brush our stories against the grain. Reflections that are increasingly urgent about our realities, whether in Brazil, Cape Verde, Portugal, or any other African country.

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