

LIFE TRAJECTORIES OF BLACK TEACHERS AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF UBERLÂNDIA, MG, BRAZIL: EXPERIENCES WITH RACISM¹

TRAJETÓRIAS DE VIDA DE DOCENTES NEGRAS DA UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA, MG, BRASIL: EXPERIÊNCIAS COM O RACISMO

TRAYECTORIAS DE VIDA DE DOCENTES NEGRAS EN LA UNIVERSIDAD FEDERAL DE UBERLÂNDIA, MG, BRASIL: EXPERIENCIAS CON EL RACISMO



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ABSTRACT: This paper approaches aspects of black teachers' life stories, who work in Teacher Training Courses at the Federal University of Uberlândia. As a methodology, a qualitative approach was used, as it allows researchers to establish a language to express their discoveries about certain phenomena and processes. Seven teachers were interviewed. In carrying out the research, we sought to produce an investigation centered on the construction of the daily life and professional history of the interviewed female teachers. It is a work to perform subjectivity, to recognize black women, particularly black teachers, as protagonists. The narratives revealed the adversities and prejudices that the teachers, protagonists of the research, experienced during their school and/or academic life. They explained the everyday racism experienced since childhood that permeates school and professional life.

KEYWORDS: Black Teachers. Life Trajectories. Racism. UFU.

RESUMO: *Esse artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre aspectos das histórias de vida de professoras negras que atuam nos Cursos de Formação de Professores na Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU). Recorreu, como metodologia, a uma abordagem qualitativa, pois, permite aos pesquisadores(as) estabelecer uma linguagem para expressar suas descobertas sobre determinados fenômenos e processos. Foram entrevistadas sete professoras. Na realização da pesquisa, buscou-se produzir uma investigação centrada na construção da história de vida e profissional cotidiana das docentes mulheres entrevistadas. É um trabalho para performar a subjetividade, para reconhecer mulheres negras, particularmente docentes negras, como protagonistas. As narrativas revelaram as adversidades e preconceitos que as professoras, protagonistas da pesquisa, experienciaram durante a trajetória da vida escolar e/ou acadêmica. Explicitaram o racismo cotidiano vivenciado desde a infância que perpassa a vida escolar e profissional.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Docentes Negras. Trajetórias de Vida. Racismo. UFU.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre aspectos de las historias de vida de profesoras negras que actúan en los Cursos de Formación de Profesores de la Universidad Federal de Uberlândia (UFU). Como metodología se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo, ya que permite a los investigadores establecer un lenguaje para expresar sus descubrimientos sobre determinados fenómenos y procesos. Se entrevistó a siete docentes. Al realizar la investigación, se buscó producir una investigación centrada en la construcción de la vida cotidiana y la historia profesional de las docentes entrevistadas. Es un trabajo para realizar la subjetividad, para reconocer a las mujeres negras, particularmente a las maestras negras, como protagonistas. Las narrativas revelaron las adversidades y prejuicios que los docentes, protagonistas de la investigación, vivieron durante su vida escolar y/o académica. Explicaron el racismo cotidiano vivido desde la infancia que impregna la vida escolar y profesional.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Maestras negras. Trayectorias de vida. Racismo. UFU.*

Introduction

This article presents results of research carried out in the educational context, at the higher education level developed in the Educational Knowledge and Practices Research Line of the Postgraduate Program in Education (PPGED/UFU). Its thematic approach is the life trajectory of black teachers who work in teacher training courses. The investigation began with the following questions: Who are these black university professors? What are your experiences with racism in your school and academic life?

The objective of this article is to reflect on aspects of the life stories of black teachers who work in Teacher Training Courses at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU). The article is organized into subtopics. In the first, we record the methodology adopted. In the second, we present the profile of the teachers interviewed. In the third, we highlight the teachers' experience with racism. Finally, we make our final remarks.

The methodological perspective

As a methodology, we use a qualitative approach, as it allows researchers to establish a language to express their discoveries about certain phenomena and processes. These positions are presented according to the understanding of the world of the subjects involved, and the socio-historical configuration of society. In qualitative research, the analysis procedure becomes relevant in the need for organization, interpretation of data, building new interpretations and generating new complementary or specific questions to the researched topic.

We base it on Oral Life History which, according to Grotta (2000, p. 39, our translation):

In the life story, the person who directs the testimony, who decides WHAT should be narrated and HOW, is the informant. He is the one who coordinates the narrative according to his reminiscences and judgment of what is interesting to tell. In this sense, it is added not only as the one who contains the information - in the case of the testimony, but also as the one who controls the narration. The researcher's interference is minimal, because, in data collection, what matters is the subject's (informant's) experience. And everything that is reported is of interest to the researcher, as it helps to explain and contextualize the existence of the interviewee.

When carrying out the research, we pointed to the need to produce an investigation focused on the construction of the life and daily professional history of the female teachers interviewed. It is a work to perform subjectivity, to recognize black women, particularly black

teachers, as protagonists. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and textualized. In this article, we have chosen some excerpts for the dialogue.

The teachers were identified through access to data requested from the Dean of People Management (PROGEP) at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU). The University has 2000 professors, 912 of whom are women, 95 of whom are mixed race and 23 black. Therefore, in our efforts to investigate, we subsequently carried out an active search on the official *websites* of the institutions or faculties, selecting black teachers by photo through access to the Lattes Curriculum *link*, available on the permanent teaching staff of each academic unit by area of knowledge.

With regard to teachers who work in Teacher Training Courses, 11 teachers were identified on the different University Campuses. Of these, seven teachers agreed to participate in the research. In order to preserve the identity of the participating teachers and honor black women, who historically fought against racism, we used the following pseudonyms ⁴: Maria Firmina dos Reis, Aqualtune, Luísa Mahin, Na Agontimé, Esperança Garcia, Maria Felipa, and Tereza de Benguela.

We consider that giving visibility to the voices of black teachers is an opportunity to hear other stories. We agree with Grosfoguel (2008) in defending the importance of moving the locus of enunciation. In this sense, we listened to black teachers, who narrated about their childhoods, their choice to teach, their educational trajectories, the marks of racism in their life stories.

The purpose of the investigation was to understand, reconstruct, recover and record the experiences of black teachers. Stories lived and told are ways of understanding experience.

We remember that experience is not what passes through us, but it is what passes us, crosses us and, thus, leaves marks. We align ourselves with Kilomba (2019) in stating that writing these stories emerges as a political act, a possibility of decolonizing.

⁴The pseudonym suggested to the teachers interviewed was based on the reference to the book “Brazilian black heroines: in 15 cordéis” (Arraes, 2017).

The profile of black teachers: aspects of life and training

All teachers interviewed declared themselves black. Regarding age, there are similarities considering the year they were born in 1966 (4), 1965 (1), 1976 (1) and 1978 (1). They are native to the southeast region, most of them from Minas Gerais (4) and others from São Paulo (3). Two teachers are from the city of Uberlândia - MG, where the Federal University of Uberlândia is located. Four teachers are married, one is divorced and two are single. Regarding motherhood, five have children and two do not have children.

When discussing the family, we consider the formation of the family nucleus if they had siblings. Five have and two do not have a brother, being only daughters. Another relevant issue is the presence of teachers in the family nucleus and kinship, with only one teacher not having family members who are teachers and six teachers having education professionals in the family nucleus, which includes relatives of mother, sisters and aunts. In relation to the area of training and activity, what prevails among the teachers interviewed is the area of human sciences in which five have training, two in the area of Languages and Arts, one in the area of Mathematical and Natural Sciences.

There were similar paths in the professional training trajectory. We observed, at graduation, that the teachers completed their courses in their home state. In the postgraduate stage, the majority of teachers migrate to other regions and/or institutions, with the exception of three teachers. We found that they attended undergraduate and postgraduate courses in private and public institutions, at federal and state level, two professors with sandwich doctorates and three professors with postdoctoral degrees in universities abroad.

The undergraduate and postgraduate periods vary by an average of five years, with the exception of one teacher who completed her undergraduate degree and then completed her master's degree and then her doctorate. In their reports, they highlight the challenge of completing postgraduate studies. Some completed their master's and doctorate degrees at a time when the duration of both was 3 and 5 years, respectively. Consequently, as the duration of the postgraduate course was longer, the dedication, challenges and research studies went through an arduous journey of resignations, reconciling work and research, which was also a period of achievement. Motherhood is reported in this undergraduate and postgraduate course in which some teachers experienced it during learning and research in academic life.

Another important aspect of the professional trajectory that we analyzed through the narratives was that, in the higher education process, the majority already worked during graduation. At the time of postgraduate studies, only two professors did not carry out research

with a grant. The teaching fellows were linked to the following funding institutions: São Paulo State Research Support Foundation (FAPESP); Dean of Postgraduate Studies at the University of São Paulo (PRPG-USP); National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). There were five professors with scholarships for their master's degree, four for their doctorate and one for a post-doctorate, with a CAPES Senior Internship scholarship.

From 2008 to 2016, three professors joined UFU, a federal higher education institution. We highlight this period of time because it represents the historical moment of expansion of the public university. Through the approval of Decree No. 6,096 in 2007, the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of federal universities (REUNI) was established. This measure increased the number of universities, student enrollment and, consequently, vacancies for teachers. Another three teachers joined in 2009 and one in 2018.

In relation to our work after joining UFU, we have the following characteristics: 1- In postgraduate studies: there are three teachers who work in *stricto-sensu postgraduate studies* and the others have experience with *lato-sensu postgraduate* studies and continuing education with extension project courses. The teachers interviewed are very involved in extension projects at UFU, which made it possible for them to hold coordination and advisory roles. 2- In Coordination positions: In relation to this criterion, we evidence that the teachers act/acted as Advisor and Coordinator in UFU extension projects; UFU Extension Directorate; Coordination of teacher training courses for ethnic-racial relations; Coordination of the project support division – UFU-PROEXC-DIREC-EDIPEX; Head of administrative services of the secretariat of the extension directorate of the Dean of Extension and Culture (PROEXC); Coordination of the division for promoting equality and educational support (DIPAE/PROAE/UFU); NEAB-UFU teaching coordination; Coordination of PIBID Interdisciplinary; Coordination of laboratory for theoretical and practical studies of play – Labrin /Toy Library of the Pedagogy course. In their role as Course Coordinator, only two teachers reported such an experience. 3- Participation in a research group: all seven teachers are linked, with the majority already participating/participating in GPs that involve ethnic-racial relations at the Center for Afro-Brazilian Studies-NEAB/UFU and two teachers are part of the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers (ABPN), with only one professor not participating/participating in GPs on ethnic-racial issues, but working on the topic in projects and extension courses.

We can identify the powerful action in different spaces, particularly those that refer to issues related to ethnic-racial themes. They are teachers who, within their space, fight to build an anti-racist society.

When analyzing the profile of the teachers with regard to self-declaration, the seven interviewees self-identify with the “black” category. We identified in three reports the dilemmas of asserting themselves as black and the process of becoming black for themselves, as these teachers often had their black identity denied by the “other”. These teachers, because their skin was dark, were associated with the ideal of whitening and the myth of racial democracy. According to Gomes (2005):

The myth of racial democracy can be understood (...) as an ideological current that intends to deny racial inequality between whites and blacks in Brazil as a result of racism, stating that there exists between these two racial groups a situation of equal opportunity and treatment. This myth intends, on the one hand, to deny racial discrimination against black people in Brazil, and, on the other hand, to perpetuate stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination built on this racial group (Gomes, 2005, p. 57, our translation).

In this way, black people are constituting themselves in society, experiencing together the myth of racial democracy, which does not recognize their own identity. We highlight two narratives that reveal the complexity of being black in Brazil:

[...] On my birth certificate it says white, but I understood very early on that I wasn't white, since I was very little I had already understood that there was a problem there because it said one thing, I looked in the mirror and saw something else. I looked much more like my mother, who is a black woman, than the white children, so I understood that I was much more in the group of black people than in the other group, from an early age I understood that there was some reason for Why would someone look at me and write white, because this notary decided to do that (Esperança Garcia, 2022, our translation).

About color and race according to IBGE, black or brown? This is very complex, it's not a simple answer because you may have already read about “Becoming Black”, this work is very important, so for some time I even wanted to express myself as black, but people said, “ you are so light, say brown because you are almost white”, so on several occasions I responded that I was brown largely because of the orientation of the people I lived with. Today, a little more autonomous, I always try to place myself as black, but based on a whole construction that I made throughout my formative and affirmative process (Maria Firmina dos Reis, 2022, our translation).

The narratives state about racial belonging defined by the “other”, the (un)certainly between recognition and denial of their identity. In some cases, black people do not identify themselves and deny their racial origin, expressing a fragmented identity.

According to Gomes (1995),

The black woman who does not self-identify as such and sees herself through the socially introjected classification as “mulatto” and “brunette”, is offended by another who points out her black origin. This fact can be considered as an aspect of a fragmented racial identity. The big issue is that “mestizos” generally do not accept their black racial origin, but rather deny it. However, for Brazilian society, these will never be considered white, rather an undefined type, created by the long process of whitening to which black people are subjected (Gomes, 1995, p. 181, our translation).

In short, their stories and memories are marked by the reality of prejudice at their origins. However, in their speeches, the teachers point out their black origins, in order to recognize and self-identify as black women, based on their existence and experiences. From the next topic onwards, we focus our analyzes on the issue of racism.

Experiences with racism...

First of all, we want to record that racism is a crime! Issues involving ethnic-racial relations are marked by inequality and privileges that encompass power relations. We can understand the privileges contained in white racial identity as symbolic and material. Inequality is denying equal treatment and rights. Since we often hear the phrase “we are all equal” in common sense, we can consider it evasive, as it is claimed to have privileges and racism still exists, but its practice is denied, with the “other” always being the prejudiced individual. In Brazil, you can have social and emotional relationships with black people and still be racist.

From this perspective, based on studies on racism by author Kilomba (2019), the term everyday racism refers to all vocabulary, speeches, images, gestures, actions and looks that place the black subject and People of Color not only as "Other".

The difference against which the white subject is measured – but also as Otherness, that is, as the personification of aspects repressed in white society. Every time I am placed as "other" – be it the unwanted "other", the intrusive "other", the dangerous "other", the violent "other", the passionate "other", the dirty "other", the "other" "other" excited, the "other" wild, the "other" natural, the "other" desirable or the "other" exotic I am inevitably experiencing racism, because I am being forced to become the embodiment of that which the white subject does not want to be recognized. I become the “Other” of whiteness, not the self – and therefore I am denied the right to exist as an equal (Kilomba, 2019, p. 78, our translation).

In this sense, the construction of difference and the differences constructed in society determines the idea of being the other. The author highlights that the term "everyday" refers to

the fact that these experiences are not punctual. Everyday racism is not a "single attack" or a "discrete event", but rather a constellation of life experiences", a "constant exposure to danger", a "continuous pattern of abuse" that repeats itself incessantly throughout the biography from someone – on the bus, in the supermarket, at a party, at dinner, in the family.

Kilomba (2019) defines racism through three characteristics: the first is the construction of difference. The person is seen as “different” due to their racial origin and/or religious affiliation. Here, we have to ask: who is "different" from whom? Is the black subject "different" from the white subject or the opposite, is the white subject "different" from the black subject? It only becomes "different" because it "differs" from a group that has the power to define itself as the norm – the white norm. All those who are not white are then constructed as "different".

Second characteristic: these constructed differences are inseparably linked to hierarchical values. Not only is the individual seen as "different", but this difference is also articulated through stigma, dishonor and inferiority. Such hierarchical values imply a process of naturalization, as they are applied to all members of the same group who come to be seen as "the problematic", "the difficult", "the dangerous", "the lazy", "the exotic", "the colorful", and "the unusual". The construction of difference and its association with a hierarchy form what is also called prejudice.

Last characteristic: structural racism and institutional racism are evident. The first is racism revealed on a structural level, as black people and *People of Color* are excluded from most social and political structures; and the second, an ideological phenomenon, but also institutionalized. The term refers to a pattern of unequal treatment in everyday operations such as educational systems and agendas, labor markets, criminal justice, etc. (Kilomba, 2019, p. 75-78, our translation).

Thus, starting from the author's definition of racism, we derive from everyday racism that is present in daily practices in a veiled, institutionalized and structural way. In this way, the reports of black teachers reveal to us the subjective experiences with racism that mark their life and professional trajectories. We highlight two narratives from the teachers interviewed:

When I was a teenager I already knew what racism was. I discovered racism at school. Once there, I felt what real racism was. At school I suffered a lot! I felt alone, I was the only black student in the entire school. The students called me a burnt donut, they passed by and pulled my braid. I no longer suffered because I was a good student, I had wonderful grades, so the teachers protected me because I was really good, I was a top student! But my classmates at school, being upper middle class, were very prejudiced against racist actions. I didn't understand much, but I felt the pain! Racism was notorious! (Luísa Mahin, 2021, our translation).

At the time of the Festa Junina, the girls also never wanted to dance with my brother because he was black, I still have the photos, as we studied at the same school, every Festa Junina is my brother and I, even though we are from different classes, I always I was left without a partner and so was he, but I never stopped participating in any school event, only if it was due to some economic factor and it hadn't been possible at that time, but I danced with my brother and I had no idea that boys weren't They wanted to dance with me because I was a black girl and the girls didn't want to dance with my brother because he was a black boy (Aqualtune, 2022, our translation).

Educational institutions and other social segments mark the lives of individuals. The experiences with racism that Luísa Mahin and Aqualtune report are experienced, in large part, by black children within early childhood school environments, permeated by the reproduction of ideologies that characterize the domination of one group over the “other”: white x black is the most reproduced.

Another point highlighted in the narratives of the interviewed teachers was in relation to the absence of black teachers in their training trajectories. We highlight:

[...] throughout this journey from preschool to doctorate I lived with the absence of other black people. I remember that I had a black teacher in the equivalent of what is now elementary 2, but she stayed for a short time and left. I also had a black professor who stayed with us for a short time, but then left and went to work on other things. In higher education I also only had one black professor (Esperança Garcia, 2022, our translation).

From childhood to adolescence before arriving at college, I had black teachers at UFU, only at UFU, it was the first time I had a black teacher, I thought it was beautiful. [...] in my pre-school school there were no black teachers, in elementary and high school I also didn't have black teachers (Aqualtune, 2022, our translation).

I had a black teacher, Professor Miranda, I only remember this teacher in teaching, I have no memory of other teachers, on the contrary, I went to study at the first school, an elite school, the second school was a state school, there was even, but she was not my teacher and in teaching I went to meet Professor Miranda (Maria Firmina dos Reis, 2022, our translation).

I never had black teachers at the base, this segment of education in São Paulo has always been for white women. In high school I started to have History

teachers and then black teachers started coming, but they didn't come in Mathematics, in Portuguese. (Na Agontimé, 2022, our translation).

Gomes (1996) states,

School is not a neutral field where, once we enter, social and racial conflicts remain outside. The school is a sociocultural space where conflicts and contradictions coexist. Racism, racial and gender discrimination, which are part of the culture and structure of Brazilian society, are present in the relationships between educators and students. (Gomes, 1996, p. 69, our translation).

Even individuals having the family and private space as the first social group that establishes initial social interactions and having this as a reference, the moment they start to live in public space, in the non-inclusive educational model that reproduces ideas from the social imaginary, they will be influenced in their formation. We can think that racial and gender issues remain in common sense, without establishing relationships with the theories that maintain them. Therefore, many educators and students may have prejudices towards black individuals and, as a result of these clashes, there is no time for discussion and clarification of racial and gender issues.

From this perspective, Gomes (1996, p. 69) alludes to the fact that school institutions are decisive in the subject's life, as it is through them that the child forms or has the notion of what it is to live in society; It is at school that she learns or not respect for differences, for the subjectivities and particularities of each person. It is there that she sees herself and is represented.

Teacher Esperança Garcia tells us about the lack of diversity in higher education institutions and the stereotypes that are reaffirmed in the reports of teachers Maria Felipa and Maria Firmina dos Reis and Na Agontimé. In the field of racial and ethnic relations, a stereotype is often defined as an overgeneralization about the behavior or other characteristics of members of certain groups. Ethnic and racial stereotypes can be positive or negative, although they are more often negative. Even ostensibly positive ones can commonly imply a negative evaluation. Thus, saying that black people are musical and have good rhythm comes close to the more overtly negative stereotype of saying that they are childish and eternally happy.

In other words, a stereotype is a simplified, value-laden view of the attitudes of a person or a social group. These views may be based on sexist, racist or prejudiced cultures and are highly resistant to change. The stereotype, according to some studies, is most striking in mass

media products, in education, at work and in sports (when the intention is to direct individuals towards activities considered appropriate to the stereotyped group).

Some phrases collected in research in schools exemplify forms of stereotypes: “He is black, but he works hard”; “She’s poor, but she’s smart”, “He’s black, but he’s polite”, “Is he from the Silva family? Oh! So there’s no way.” The stereotype, as Bento (1998) points out, “is something that works like a stamp, from which the person is always seen through a brand, regardless of what it really is”.

In this way, we can understand that stereotype is a concept very close to prejudice, that is, racial or ethnic stereotypes are generally expressions of prejudice against the groups in question. Prejudice is a pre-established opinion, which is imposed by the environment, time and education. Based on stereotypes, people judge others. Therefore, prejudice is a psychological phenomenon.

“Stereotyping is the practice of prejudice. It is your behavioral manifestation. The stereotype aims to (1) justify supposed inferiority; (2) justify maintaining the *status quo*; and (3) legitimize, accept and justify: dependence, subordination and inequality”. (Munanga, 2005, p. 65).

In this sense, we address the concept of stereotype present in the social imaginary of Brazilian society as a stereotypical consequence of the black subject.

We record, below, excerpts from the teachers’ narratives that, in different circumstances, reveal the stereotypes experienced:

My sister and I studied at USP and there were very few black people, very few black students in the History and Geography course. There were so few black students that the librarian thought my sister and I were one person. Near the end of the course, one day we both went to the library together and the librarian said “wow, you are two, I thought you were one”, as if it were “black people are all the same” [...]. I remember a teacher who one day spoke about the urban geography of the city of São Paulo. She said: we are here at USP, this city is very big and it would simply be impossible for a person from the north to study here due to how far it is. And I was exactly a person from the north zone, I attended this class with the Geography class, I looked at my sister, she looked at me and we thought “we are impossible people to be here”. (Esperança Garcia, 2022, our translation).

[...] The school I attended had a “spring queen” tradition, I applied, sold tickets, my mother thinks they put someone else in my place because the other one was blonde. At Maria Conceição, I don't remember, but I remember that when I was going to get the vaccines and they asked what color I was, I said I was black, they said I wasn't black, it seems like they were trying to protect me, but I think it was a way of saying that being black was ugly. (Maria Felipa, 2022, our translation).

I got my first job as a master teacher over the phone, sent my CV to the college and when I got there the director said “wow, I thought you were different” [...] (Maria Firmina dos Reis, 2022, our translation).

The narratives reveal the daily racism experienced by teachers. Esperança Garcia, in addition to experiencing the stereotype that black women are equal, experienced prejudice about the place in which they live. According to Almeida (2019, p. 22-23), racism is a systematic form of discrimination that has race as its foundation, and that manifests itself through conscious or unconscious practices that culminate in disadvantages or privileges for individuals, depending on the group race to which they belong. Racism differs from racial prejudice and racial discrimination.

Racial prejudice is the judgment based on stereotypes about individuals who belong to a certain racialized group, and which may or may not result in discriminatory practices. Considering black people to be violent and untrustworthy, Jews to be greedy or Orientals to be “naturally” prepared for the exact sciences are examples of prejudice. Racial discrimination, in turn, is the attribution of different treatment to members of racially identified groups.

The author also clarifies that discrimination can be direct or indirect. Direct discrimination is the overt rejection of individuals or groups, motivated by racial condition, an example of what occurs in countries that prohibit the entry of black people, Jews, Muslims, people of Arab or Persian origin, or, also, stores that refuse to accept serve customers of a certain race. Indirect discrimination is a process in which the specific situation of minority groups is ignored – de facto discrimination, or in which rules of “racial neutrality” are imposed.

Such concepts about racism, namely prejudice and racial discrimination, are related, but they differ. Educational institutions and other social segments mark the lives of individuals, as well as the experiences and experiences with racism that are recorded in memory and (re)tell the story of life as we observed in the accounts of the lives of black teachers in relation to racism.

We asked the seven teachers about their experiences with racism. One teacher, Tereza de Benguela, did not want to report on such experiences, but recognizes that she also experienced people's cruelty towards the “other” who is racialized. The teacher states:

During my undergraduate studies, as it was an exact sciences course, I do remember some adversities or prejudice due to being a woman and black. The people are horrible, I studied at USP. But, I don't want to report such facts, but there are a lot of things, people are very racist. (Tereza de Benguela, 2022, our translation).

Based on the teacher's speech about prejudice in relation to being a woman and black, we refer to Kilomba (2019), stating that the processes of racism and sexism are similar, as both ideologically construct common sense, through reference to natural and biological differences. That is, there are connections between “race”, gender, and racism, with race and gender being inseparable and interconnected. According to the author “people suffer discrimination because they are different, when in fact it is the opposite: people become different through the process of discrimination. In other words, being black reveals itself because of its black body through discourses fixated on skin color” (Kilomba, 2019, p. 166, our translation).

Tereza de Benguela's narrative allows us to associate the concept of intersectionality. Author Carla Akotirene in his work entitled “What is intersectionality?”, he presents us with the concept that emerged in 1989, by Kimberlé Crenshaw:

Intersectionality can provide the means to address other marginalizations as well. For example, race can also be a coalition of heterosexual and homosexual people and thus serve as a basis for critique of churches and other cultural institutions that reproduce heterosexism (Crenshaw *apud* Akotirene, 2018, p. 66, our translation).

This concept establishes the need to study the overlaps between race and gender to adequately understand certain forms of discrimination, which traditional feminine theories have not included. According to Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality allows us to see the collision of structures, the simultaneous interaction of identity avenues, in addition to the failure of feminism to contemplate black women, as it reproduces racism. Likewise, the black movement fails due to its sexist character, offering methodological tools reserved for the experiences of black men only (Crenshaw *apud* Akotirene, 2018, p. 14).

The horrors of racism and sexism produce scars and wounds and, consequently, trauma through their violence and damage involved in the experience of everyday racism. In this sense, we understand professor Tereza Benguela when she chooses not to report such experiences. It would be like commemorating the wound of everyday racism, by telling stories of violence and silencing to which the black body is subjected.

Kilomba (2019, p. 40) points out the wound of everyday racism through the work of author Franz Fanon (1967) who states:

(...) the trauma of black people comes not only from family-based events, as psychoanalysis argues, but from the traumatizing contact with the violent barbarity of the white world, which is the irrationality of racism that always places us as the/ o "Other", as different, as incompatible, as conflicting, as strange and unusual. This irrational reality of racism is described by Frantz Fanon (1967, p. 118) as traumatic (Kilomba *apud* Fanon, 1967, our translation).

According to the author, when quoting Fanon, she says that the thinker uses the language of trauma, as most black people do when talking about everyday experiences of racism, indicating the painful bodily impact and loss characteristic of a traumatic breakdown, as in racism the individual is surgically removed and violently separated from any identity she/he may truly have. Such separation is defined as a classic trauma, as it deprives the individual of their own connection with the society unconsciously thought of as white. (Kilomba, 2019, p. 39, our translation).

Teachers Aqualtune, Luísa Mahin, Tereza Benguela, and Esperança Garcia report on racism in the Professional locus:

Once I was going to teach and there was a professor who at the time was finishing his master's degree, he was also a tenured professor, he asked me, "are you also a professor here at UFU?", I said yes, and he asked me "but, do you at least have a master's degree?" I said no, I already finished my doctorate and I knew he was doing a master's degree, but I asked "and do you at least have a master's degree?", to this day he doesn't look me in the face, it's that thing, people poke you, but when you respond they think it's an insult. (Aqualtune, 2022, our translation).

[...]since when I arrived at the Pedagogy Course I heard those 'little jokes' "the racial quota here is increasing, plus one black woman". That little joke thing that we know that we are arriving in an environment that is saying "this environment here is white", so, I had difficulties at the beginning in relation to my colleagues too, to arrive and really feel like a group, I just went to feeling accepted and respected when I started doing the extension and then I started approving projects and more projects and then I no longer needed to be with the teachers, I was with the students and the community. (Luísa Mahin, 2021, our translation).

Among my colleagues I experienced a situation that has no other name, it can only be called racism, it wasn't here at UFU it was at a university in São Paulo. The possibility arose of anchoring a course for teachers in the municipality, so a group of teachers came forward to coordinate this course, they would have scholarships and they approached me, the speech went exactly like this: "Esperança Garcia, we need you to put together the menu for the course for us, but you won't be part of the team or receive a scholarship, no one here

knows how to put together this menu, the person who knows this best is you, will you put together the menu for us?" (Esperança Garcia, 2022, our translation).

In the reports of the teachers named above, we can highlight veiled racism, recreational racism, the invisibility of black people especially in the academic space and underestimation of the "other". In our country, discrimination, exploitation and racial oppression are implicit, in which the black population was the most affected by social problems and facing experiences of racism. And yet, black women have had experiences of racism and sexism.

Teachers Aqualtune, Luísa Mahin, and Esperança Garcia report the subtleties of racism in the academic and professional sphere. These reports that we highlight show us the absence of black women in certain spaces and, also, the naturalization of racism.

Historically, black women perform subordinate jobs; when they work as higher education professors, they break, in the academic space, with this imaginary of the black female domestic worker.

Studies by Santos, Matos and França (2020, p. 3, our translation) that address the profile of higher education teaching report that:

The data presented on the profile of teaching at higher education, based on Social Psychology, reveals an unequally structured society that, in its specificities, reinforces a hierarchy of power and domination that does not include women or black people. This critical positioning allows us to question whether women are in greater numbers in the education scenario, and whether they really dominate prestigious spaces in education. Furthermore, why, in a country with a black majority, are black people not present in spaces of power and prestige?) And, specifically, why are black people not present, in a significant way, in the areas of higher education teaching, since they are the numerical majority in the Brazilian population?

The authors add that such hypotheses clarify that black people are underrepresented in higher education teaching spaces and women are not in the most prestigious spaces in Brazilian education. From this, we must constantly question the existing and naturalized racial reality in society, as such action allows and induces us to adopt anti-racist practices.

When Aqualtune is asked whether she is also a professor at UFU and her level of qualifications, we see how racism projects the "other" in the social imagination. The "other" questions the "other" who is questioned and has to explain himself, but in this case Aqualtune manages to change this power relationship that defines the presence of the "other" who must

question and control. When Aqualtune questions the “other” accustomed to controlling and questioning, she tries to deconstruct the common sense of the “other” that has as a reference to naturalize the differences in the “other”. According to Kilomba (2019), racism is not the lack of information about the “other”, as common sense believes, but rather the white projection of undesirable information onto the “other”.

Professor Luísa Mahin reports on the “jokes” regarding black professors who become permanent staff at the institution. Such “jokes” between the lines question the space occupied by black teachers in higher education.

We can conceptualize these “jokes” as recreational racism, which, according to the concept of Adilson Moreira (2019), is racist humor that makes stereotypical representations linked to racial minorities, with the aim of inferiorizing and always determining subordinate positions. At the same time, it allows the maintenance of the cultural *status* that privileges a hegemonic racial group. Thus, apparently harmless “jokes” or “plays” in social interactions, when having a racial nature, associate the physical and cultural characteristics of black individuals with something inferior and unpleasant.

The authors Brasil and Brito (2022, p. 116), when analyzing the work on recreational racism by Moreira (2019), emphasize that humor involving racist jokes has an impact on the lives of people harmed by these jokes, sculpting their argument. Thinking of the joke as a message, it conveys several meanings, not just the funny one. Thus, “jokes” or racist humor only delegitimize people who are not white.

When thinking about black women, starting from their uniqueness, their experiences are not unique. Teacher Maria Felipa reports that, for her, racism in the workplace was peaceful. When considering veiled racism, she did not go through extreme situations, giving an example of the subtleties of racism in everyday views and situations that permeate the fact of being black and a woman.

In this aspect, we refer to Kilomba (2019, p. 162) who addresses the game of bitter and sweet words: the game of sweet and bitter words not only makes it difficult to identify racism; it is also a way of producing racism. The difficulty of identifying racism is not only functional to racism, but is also an important part of racism itself. In this sense, racism has the capacity to naturalize and normalize its practices of violence by determining representations of black women in the imagination of those who are not black, representing what it is to be black.

Aware of the challenges and the importance of their representation, the teachers, protagonists of the research, emphasize, in their work, the political act of addressing themes

relating to ethnic-racial issues, thus contributing to the process of decolonization, for a positive identification which, according to Kilomba (2019), leads to reparation. The process reaches a state of decolonization, that is, internally, it no longer exists as the Other, but as the self. We are me, we are subjects, we are the one who describes, the one who narrates, we are the author(s) and authority of our own reality.

Final remarks

Kilomba's (2019) statement that writing is a political act of decolonization. The narratives revealed the adversities and prejudices that the teachers, protagonists of the research, experienced during their school and/or academic life. They explained the daily racism experienced since childhood, which permeates school and professional life. Among the testimonies, we can highlight the denial of black identity, which is reinforced through the myth of democracy, but the teachers recognize themselves as black and declare themselves, as well as fighting for the recognition of black identity. In this dilemma, we can consider that, in the challenge of recognizing their identity in school and professional spaces, these women, in their trajectories, become black.

When teaching, the teachers highlighted that they seek to emphasize themes related to ethnic-racial issues, both in extension projects and in studies in Research Groups. Through participation in study groups such as Neabs and associations such as ABPN, teachers articulate their work with teaching, extension and research within the university by relating issues pertinent to the theme of ethnic-racial relations. By inserting black teachers into the academic world and in a space that makes their condition of being a woman and black invisible, the development of ethnic-racial themes in this space, by proposing to deconstruct knowledge, goes further, as it breaks with the place designated by racism and machismo.

Their voices become references as black teachers to black and non-black students, women and men, when reporting their life stories that can be reflections and positive references to other black women who have the desire to follow different paths and, in the course of their trajectories, can be models and/or examples of a life of overcoming and achievements.

The voices reveal the importance of representation. Black women who inspire us. They lead us to agree with Kilomba (2019) when stating that “positive” and not “idealized” images of blackness created by black people themselves, in literature and visual culture, can dismantle

this alienation. They are speaking subjects who can contribute to the transformation of the reality in which we live.

By having access to the life trajectories of black teachers, subjects of this investigation, we were able to reinforce the importance of their life stories and training that contribute to anti-racist education. It makes us believe that by writing the life stories of black teachers, we contribute to transforming, not just being the “Other”, but being a speaking subject!

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