

## ART AND THE BODY AS ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION: IMPLEMENTING SLAM, AMAPIANO AND THEATER IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

### *A ARTE E O CORPO COMO EDUCAÇÃO ANTIRRACISTA: IMPLEMENTANDO O SLAM, O AMAPIANO E O TEATRO NO AMBIENTE ESCOLAR*

### *EL ARTE Y EL CUERPO COMO EDUCACIÓN ANTIRACISTA: IMPLEMENTANDO SLAM, AMAPIANO Y TEATRO EN EL AMBIENTE ESCOLAR*



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**ABSTRACT:** This article presents the study and practice of an antiracist education project conducted at a Municipal School in Rio de Janeiro, utilizing art and the body as essential pedagogical tools to address the project's central themes: racism and liberating education. Theoretical concepts such as Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, African cultural expressions like Amapiano, and Afro-diasporic artistic manifestations such as Slam Poetry and Black Literature underpin and guide the project's main educational practices. Aimed at raising students' awareness of racial issues, valuing their ancestry, and deconstructing prejudices associated with Afro-Brazilian cultural expressions, interactive dynamics, and classroom activities were implemented to combat racism. This experience highlights the urgency of pedagogical practices that inspire cultural, social, and subjective changes from an early age, fostering a liberating, conscious, and antiracist education.

**KEYWORDS:** Anti-Racist Education. Liberating education. Art. Body. Slam.

**RESUMO:** O presente artigo apresenta o estudo e a prática de um projeto de educação antirracista realizado em uma Escola Municipal do Rio de Janeiro, que utiliza a arte e o corpo como ferramentas pedagógicas essenciais para abordar os temas centrais do projeto: racismo e educação libertadora. Conceitos teóricos, como o Teatro do Oprimido, de Augusto Boal, expressões culturais africanas, como o Amapiano, e manifestações artísticas afro-diaspóricas, como a Poesia Slam e a Literatura Negra, fundamentam e orientam as principais práticas desse projeto educacional. Com o objetivo de sensibilizar os educandos para questões raciais, valorizar sua ancestralidade e desconstruir preconceitos associados às manifestações culturais afro-brasileiras, foram realizadas dinâmicas e atividades interativas em sala de aula, visando ao enfrentamento do racismo. Essa experiência destaca a urgência de práticas pedagógicas que inspirem mudanças culturais, sociais e subjetivas desde a idade escolar, promovendo uma educação libertadora, consciente e antirracista.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação Antirracista. Educação libertadora. Arte. Corpo. Slam.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo presenta el estudio y la práctica del proyecto de educación antirracista realizado en una Escuela Municipal de Río de Janeiro, que destaca el arte y el cuerpo como herramientas pedagógicas esenciales para abordar los temas básicos del proyecto: el racismo y la educación liberadora. Conceptos teóricos, como el Teatro del Oprimido de Augusto Boal, expresiones culturales africanas como el Amapiano y artes afrodiáspóricas como la Poesía Slam y la Literatura Negra apoyan y actúan como herramientas principales de este proyecto educativo. Con la iniciativa de sensibilizar a los estudiantes sobre cuestiones raciales, valorando su ascendencia y deconstruyendo prejuicios asociados a las manifestaciones culturales afrobrasileñas, se realizaron dinámicas y actividades interactivas en el aula con el objetivo de combatir el racismo. La experiencia destaca la urgencia de que las prácticas pedagógicas inspiren profundos cambios culturales, sociales y subjetivos desde la edad escolar en adelante, para promover una educación liberadora, consciente y antirracista.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación Antirracista. Educación liberadora. Arte. Cuerpo. Slam.

## Introduction

Anti-racist education, in its practical and theoretical nature, is an essential element in the formation of more egalitarian societies, providing children and young people with opportunities to recognize and value the cultural diversity that permeates their realities. In the school environment, especially in multicultural and low- and middle-income communities, art and the body offer effective tools for tackling sensitive issues such as racism, prejudice, and discrimination that can affect students in more intense and urgent ways. This article, entitled "*Educação Antirracista: a Arte e o Corpo como Instrumento de Aprendizagem no Ambiente Escolar*"<sup>8</sup>", reports on the experience of a project developed by the Tutorial Education Project (PET) Social Movements, which studies Body, Race and Gender, in partnership with LADERCOGEM - UFRJ's Anti-racist Education Research Laboratory. The project was carried out in a municipal school located in the Irajá neighborhood, in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro.

The initiative is based on the idea that the fight against racism and prejudice should go beyond texts and discussions restricted to academic spaces, reaching children and pre-teens through creative, accessible, artistic, and inclusive activities. The project, run by undergraduates from the Tutorial Education Project (PET) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, who come from different courses and are guided by research professors, uses artistic expressions such as spoken word poetry, dance, and theater to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. These practices aim to show children the strength, richness, and beauty of black culture, deconstructing deep-rooted stereotypes and challenging narratives that often associate Afro-Brazilian cultural expressions with structural, social, and religious prejudices. As a conceptual basis, the *Theater of the Oppressed* was applied in the activities, along with artistic productions of African origin, such as the Amapian musical style, the film "*Kiriku e a Feiticeira*"<sup>9</sup>, and Afro-diasporic manifestations, such as *Slam Poetry* and *Black Literature*.

The project was carried out with 5th and 6th grade classes in the afternoon, involving a diverse audience of black and white children, the majority of whom were black. Both classes were large, with more than 30 students each, including students from different socio-economic backgrounds and some with neurodivergent characteristics. Despite the interest and curiosity of the students in the meetings held, challenges arose in relation to some beliefs and values based on prejudiced, stereotyped, and often offensive thoughts, but they were always worked

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<sup>8</sup> Antiracist Education: Art and the Body as a Learning Tool in the School Environment.

<sup>9</sup> Kiriku and the Sorceress.

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on and unraveled following the object of the project. In view of this, the project faced resistance, which was overcome with strategic planning and the construction of careful pedagogical dialogues.

Therefore, the main aim of this article is to demonstrate that there are ways of effectively introducing sensitive topics such as racism and discrimination to different age groups, especially in the school context. The educational proposal prioritized the appreciation of black culture through art, promoting body awareness, the appreciation of literature and music, and contact with Afro-diasporic arts. It also sought to stimulate constructive debates on racial awareness, respect for diversity, and combating the prejudices present in the society around them. Throughout the project, the work was developed with cultural productions such as Slam, Rap, films, and African artistic styles, which proved to be an effective approach for children aged 10 to 12, allowing for a deeper and more meaningful connection with the themes presented.

Finally, the motivation for carrying out this activity is based on the urgent need to combat the forms of symbolic and structural violence that are reproduced in society and schools. Understanding that children tend to reproduce the behaviors they observe at home and in various places, the project seeks not only to raise awareness of issues of prejudice and discriminatory values, but also to promote citizen education that contributes to building a more inclusive and respectful society. It also sought to provide in-depth contact with different artistic languages, with the aim of promoting an education that frees them and makes them the protagonists of their realities.

## **The importance of anti-racism education in schools**

The article and the project start from the principle that the fight against racism, although not recent, is structural and explicit, although often disguised, and is a critical issue in the Brazilian context. Cases of discrimination and racial prejudice are largely veiled in school environments.

This is precisely why schools have a duty to deconstruct this space and promote anti-racist education based on the implementation of Law 10.639/2003, which makes it compulsory to teach Afro-Brazilian and African history and cultures in basic education, based on the assumption that racism is also perpetuated through education and educators, whether

voluntarily or involuntarily. Only from this understanding can we move towards the construction of an anti-racist and more truly liberating education. Racist practice is based on a set of attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that discriminate against, marginalize, or subjugate people on the basis of their race or ethnicity. This is rooted in ideologies that assume the superiority of one race over others and justify exploitation, exclusion, and prejudice.

Racism can manifest itself in individual attitudes, institutional practices, or social structures that perpetuate inequalities and injustices, with structural discrimination through stereotypes that reinforce racial inequalities. It can occur in actions or words that are clearly discriminatory, either explicitly or implicitly. Therefore, anti-racism is the stance and actions that oppose racism in order to combat racial discrimination and promote equality and social justice. Anti-racism is not limited to individual attitudes, but also involves structural and political changes that combat historical and systemic inequalities between races. Being anti-racist implies recognizing racism as a collective problem and actively working to deconstruct racism, whether on a personal, community, or institutional level. In contrast, while racism reinforces racial divisions and hierarchies, anti-racism seeks to deconstruct these divisions and promote equity and inclusion.

Therefore, it is understood that racism in elementary school manifests itself in various ways and can have a significant impact on the development of children, especially those belonging to marginalized ethnic-racial groups, such as black, Indigenous, and other minority children. In schools, racial discrimination can occur both explicitly and implicitly and is often influenced by stereotypes, prejudices, and the lack of an inclusive education that values and respects racial differences from an early age. As Grada Kilomba points out in her studies, certain stereotypes are attributed to races in order to make their voices unavailable and preserve a colonial and white order of society, culture, and thought.

the colonized as incapable of speaking, and our discourses as unsatisfactory and inadequate and, in this sense, silent. They also meet the common suggestion that oppressed groups lack motivation for political activism because of a flawed or insufficient awareness of their subordination (Kilomba, 2019, p. 48 – 49, our translation).

Recognizing and valuing different cultures and racial identities in pedagogical practices is essential for combating structural racism. This implies building an inclusive environment that promotes respect for differences and the celebration of ethnic and cultural diversity in the classroom. Creating spaces for dialog, in which children can talk about diversity and racial

identity respectfully and constructively, is an effective way for them to understand the importance of mutual respect from an early age, contributing to the fight against discrimination. Teaching children to be anti-racist from early childhood is a crucial step in tackling racism in society. Children are at stages of development where they learn mainly through observation, social interaction, and experiences. Educators, therefore, play a central role in promoting racial diversity among them. As educator bell hooks points out, it is essential to respect the student as an active subject and recognize the educator's importance in this construction process.

All of us in academia and culture as a whole are called to renew our minds to transform our educational institutions - and society in such a way that our way of living, teaching and working can reflect our joy in the face of cultural diversity, our passion for justice and our love of freedom (hooks, 2013, p. 50, our translation).

Starting at an early age, schools can help raise a generation of children who understand issues of race, value diversity, and are committed to fighting racism in everyday life. This is an essential step towards building a fairer and more equal society, capable of deconstructing the ties and conceptions of race, inferiority and superiority, violence, and dehumanization, which are deeply rooted and attributed to non-white people in Brazilian society.

Starting work early in school is fundamental for implementing Law 10.639/2003. According to Pereira Mota and Santos Cruz (2023), there are four main challenges to the effective implementation of the Law: the textbook, continuing teacher training, the curriculum, and the current political context.

This difficulty in implementing anti-racist education results in the formation of a negative subjectivity in relation to black people, meaning that they are constantly seen and led to believe in derogatory stigmas. In this sense, Costa, Queiroz, and Muniz (2024) state that teachers and managers must be attentive and act in an anti-racist way. The law should serve as a pedagogical guideline for applying anti-racist education (Ferreira; Teles; Araujo, 2023).

School practices must be based on meaningful anti-racism actions, such as micro-affirmative action (Ferreira; Vieira, 2020), and with a decolonial perspective in all educational spheres (Milagres; Peixoto; Vieira, 2023).

## Art and the body: a path to change

Body expression, when seen from an artistic perspective, can communicate to the world as much as words in a sonnet. A movement of a hand, flattened and directed towards another person in circular and continuous gestures, may not express the same feeling if a rhyme represented it. With this in mind, the body is present in every artistic creation and representation, even if the art manifests itself as a combination of brushstrokes on a papyrus. For these brushstrokes to happen, a hand guided them, guiding the colors. In the visual arts, the body is necessary; in cinema, when holding the camera and presenting scenes and angles to tell a story, the body is also used; in music, when using the phonation apparatus, and in literature, likewise. The body is intrinsically present in every artistic creation. However, there are times when art is born from the body, when the body is the artistic creation itself. In this context, some artistic languages will be discussed where the body is the main subject of this creative process, acting as a tool for liberation and subjectivization of the oppressions that this body may have experienced. They are: dance, theater, and embodied poetry.

The writer Leda Maria Martins, in her study "*Performances no tempo espiralar, poéticas do corpo-tela*<sup>10</sup>", presents the body as a means of transportation to the past, representing a heritage and ancestry that may have been lost or erased by colonial and oppressive philosophies. For the author, the body is also a canvas for healing the present and rewriting the future.

(...) the embodied event includes individual and collective experiences, personal memory and historical-social memory. The body-screen is thus also a *corpus* cultural that, in its varied scope, adherences and multiple profiles, becomes the locus and privileged environment of countless poetics intertwined in aesthetic making (Martins, 2021, p. 82, our translation).

The human body would be an instrument of self-expression, which indicates how our human body is thus an instrument of self-expression, reflecting how we position ourselves in the world and how we behave and feel. Art, in dialogue with the body, works on perception and notions of meaning, often leading the individual to understand and recognize feelings and impasses recorded in their bodies, and even in those of their ancestors. In her work, Leda reflects on how art, using orality and the body, can subjectivize groups marked by inhumanity, oppression, pain, and lack of speech. She highlights the social and transformative nature of art,

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<sup>10</sup> Performances in spiral time, poetics of the body-screen.

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which, by rescuing ancestral cultures and traditions, contributes to Brazilian history and the formation of culture, thought, and the space that the Brazilian people occupy.

In theater, the body is the actor's main tool. It is through him that the story is told, often without the need for large scenic objects or elaborate sets to convey the desired emotions and lines to the audience. Often, just working on body expression, vocal modulation, and facial acting is enough for theater to communicate effectively. In the 1960s, playwright Augusto Boal developed a concept and project called *Theater of the Oppressed*, in which, through theatrical games and interventions, the *oppressed* would leave the place of spectator, in which they would have been relegated, to become an actor, subject of their destiny, spokesperson for their emotions and revolutionary of their life and society. Within the Theater of the Oppressed, there are games and sub-concepts, such as *Image Theater*, in which feelings, problems, and situations are transformed into theatrical scenes without the use of verbal language, providing more space for the development of body expression and offering the actor a new way to understand their feelings and dilemmas. When Boal takes this project to low-income groups and places, in political contexts of oppression and inequality, he transforms art into a tool of intimate transformation and social revolution for these people.

Thinking about the African ancestry of the Brazilian people, one of the most striking traits and a strong inheritance of the culture of African peoples stands out: orality. This essential practice is one of the main means of disseminating knowledge, teaching, literature, and art. The figure of the "Griot", who transmits knowledge to his people orally, represents one of the most important figures in the history of orality. Considering this and analyzing our country's literacy framework, access to writing and reading has always been very restricted to high-income groups, so even in the current context, the body and voice have become the main canvas and pen for poor, black, and marginalized artists. An emerging art form that speaks to this emerged in the 1980s, called *Poetry Slam*, and was brought to Brazil as an artistic movement in the genre of spoken word poetry. This movement not only uses the voice to communicate poetry but, above all, the body, which, by being one of the protagonists, embodies poetry and transforms the word into art.

Slam poetry, which has spread throughout Brazil in the form of championships (local, state, and national) of spoken word poetry, put on stage the voice, the body, the gaze, and the experiences of "outremized" subjects, as Toni Morrison called those who experience processes of exclusion, marginalization or subalternization (Pimentel; Souza; Costa, 2023, p. 9, our translation).

Slam is known in the poetry battle circles of Brazil as a strongly and mostly black art of denunciation. In the road and the performance space, the poet sees himself in a space of his own, where his body can exist and shout, remember, and rescue ancestral pains, struggles, memories, and speeches, which his body shares because it is of the same color, ethnicity or gender. Vocal and body performance offers a path to liberation and subjectivation, providing individuals with a space to speak, feel, and listen to their emotions, characteristics that are often denied to oppressed and exploited people.

In addition to poetry and theater, dance has an extremely profound capacity for liberation, especially when it talks to cultures that are not part of a colonial, westernized order of art. The *Amapian* is a musical style typical of the southern region of Africa, which accompanies a style of dance that is very characteristic of the body movements that are most recurrent in the bodily expression of African peoples. The looseness of the hips and neck and the intense movement of the lower back deconstruct many movement patterns imposed by Western dance productions. In addition to promoting greater contact with people who are part of Brazil's history, this style of dance offers new ways of gaining self-knowledge and new forms of expression.

To providing a path to liberation, whether from pain, repression, cultural ignorance, or deep-rooted prejudices, all these artistic forms also provide a way for the individual to become a subject, to get in touch with their feelings, desires, and to understand that they have a critical sense and that they should use it. This process is defended by educators such as bell hooks, who say that education and the formation of human beings should be centered on this: listening, seeing, liberating and making the person being educated a subject. Only in this way can students transform their society and the people around them.

Sometimes I walk into a room full of students who feel terribly wounded in their psyche (...) but I don't think they want me to be their therapist. What they do want is an education that cures their uninformed and ignorant spirit. They want meaningful knowledge (...) education is the practice of freedom (hooks, 2013, p.32 – 35, our translation).

The educational potential of art manifests itself in various instances, often simply by allowing the body to express itself, an instrument that is often restricted, limited to a chair, in a fixed position, for hours in the school routine.

From a scientific point of view, the body is the fundamental and basic instance for articulating concepts that are central to a pedagogical theory. We perceive the body as an integral and fundamentally important part of development and it should never be disregarded from the teaching and learning process (Assman, 1998, p. 113, our translation).

In order to teach the subject, we need to consider and embrace the whole of them, everything that affects them, their psyche, their feelings, their body, what changes them, and what stimulates them. The educational process should not print facts and information, but rather talk to the subject who is being educated, opening doors for that subject to talk back, to think and construct their thinking, to understand and liberate their body, which many oppressive and standardized philosophies of gender, race and education can restrict.

### Art and body workshops: classroom experiences

As part of the project, art workshops were offered, which included theater games, contact with dance, the basics of theater, and poetry at school. The project was carried out in both classes (5th and 6th grade) over 9 weeks, with 9 meetings, one a week in each class, culminating in a final presentation to family members and the teaching staff.

### Methodology

Combined methodologies were used, such as the Triangular Approach (Barbosa, 2010), where people can reflect and create their knowledge using art as an expression. This approach consists of reading a particular work, contextualizing it, and making art as a result. In the latter case, the body also plays a leading role, as artistic endeavors necessarily include it. The methodology developed by Ana Mae Barbosa is innovative and seeks to integrate different dimensions of learning, especially in early childhood education, using affectivity and knowledge to promote an education that considers human beings in their individualities.

The triangular approach was applied, for example, when the movie "*Kiriku e a Feiticeira*"<sup>11</sup> was shown. The students were already interacting with the images and creating assumptions based on them. After watching the film, the contextualization, which began with

<sup>11</sup> Kiriku and the Sorceress.

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the students' perceptions, showed the educators how they saw certain situations. From this, it was possible to introduce themes such as anti-racist education and anti-bullying. At the end of the contextualization, the students created a work along the lines of the methodology, synthesizing their learning. The works created demonstrated the content discussed in class, focusing on the decolonization of knowledge and promoting education against social prejudices. It also encouraged the students to become subjects of their teaching-learning process.

In combination with this methodology, we also used the *Theater of the Oppressed*, specifically in the 6th grade class, created by Brazilian playwright and director Augusto Boal in the 1960s. Its aim is to use theater as a tool for social transformation, allowing the oppressed (marginalized groups or those in situations of subordination) to express themselves, reflect on their conditions, and, through theatrical action, propose alternatives to change reality. This methodology seeks to actively involve the audience, transforming them from passive spectators to active spectators/actors, i.e., someone who participates in the scene, suggesting solutions and interventions in the conflicts. Theater ceases to be a performance and becomes an experience of awareness and collective action.

In addition, contact was made with literature by black and African authors, promoting greater racial awareness and a change in the literary canon in the classroom. In all these methodologies and tools, a crucial point is to encourage the student to become the subject of their history and to understand their capacity for autonomy.

## Reports and activities developed

At one of the meetings, the 5th-grade students were shown the visual work "*Kiriku e a feiticeira*" by Michel Ocelot (2016), an animation based on an African legend that takes place in Guinea and highlights the cleverness and courage of an African boy who is always looked down on by the members of his community. However, this doesn't stop him from continuing to believe in his potential to one day save his tribe from the possessions of a sorceress who is holding them prisoner. After watching the film, it was time for contextualization by means of a questionnaire to get them to reflect on the scenes. Some provocative questions were asked: How did you identify with the movie? What did you like and dislike? Is the character pretty or not?

The feedback was positive in terms of approval of the film, but one student said he didn't like it because he didn't feel identified, he thought it was strange that there were no non-black people in the film, which led to another question: Where does the movie take place? The feedback given to the student was that in Guinea, the population is mostly black. It is a fact that the majority of Brazilian and international media show white people. The lack of black representation and the excess of white representation in the media have become normative, which explains the student's strangeness, a doubt that was clarified by the educator.

When asked about the character, whether she was pretty or not, everyone disagreed, which comes directly up against what we recognize as the racist reproduction of unconscious bias. When asked again, the students began to reflect, and new answers emerged, such as "She has a nice body," they said. The film does not sexualize the character, but this type of comment is still very present in social discourse, which tends to reduce the qualities of black women to physical attributes and their bodies, while their features or subjectivity are often seen in a negative light. This thought is reinforced by Lélia Gonzalez, in her book "*Por um feminismo Afro-latino-americano*<sup>12</sup>" which points out:

"White to marry, mulatto to fornicate, black to work" - has become a privileged synthesis of how black women are seen in Brazilian society: as a body that works, and is over-exploited economically, she is a cleaner, cook, laundress, etc., who does the "heavy lifting" for the families she is employed by; as a body that generates pleasure and is over-exploited sexually, she is the mulatto in Carnival parades for tourists, in pornographic films, etc? whose sensuality is included in the category of the "erotic-exotic" (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 154, our translation).

These issues were discussed at length with the class until they identified the origin of these statements and were able to rethink some criteria. Finally, art-making consisted of creating a work of art, either a drawing or a painting, depicting a situation in the fight against racism. The corporeal experience involved a performance rehearsed over 10 weeks. The choreography was based on elements taken from the movie, which addressed issues in the project. The music chosen to bring the performance to life was "*Mnike*" by Tyler ICU, an opportunity to introduce the students to a new musical genre, *Amapiano*, originating in South Africa, which relates to the visual work "*Kiriku*" because it deals with the insertion of African cultures.

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<sup>12</sup> For an Afro-Latin American feminism.

In the rehearsals, it was possible to see that dance was able to involve the body in a playful and creative way, providing an experience of self-discovery, letting go, and overcoming rigidity, such as shyness. The students gained confidence and began to present themselves in front of the class, promoting body awareness as the meetings progressed. In addition, the trainee educators, by including themselves in the dynamic, encouraged the students to want to take part too.

There was a vote between the dynamics to map the musical tastes of the class, and we introduced them to various musical genres. The result was a significant split between Trap and Rap, with fewer votes for funk, k-pop, *samba*<sup>13</sup> and *pagode*<sup>14</sup>. The aim was to merge the winning genre with the style of *Amapiano* to compose the final choreography, establishing a relationship with the film they had worked on. One of the relevant dynamics consisted of creating two groups and starting a competition, in which a representative from each group came to the center of the room to act out a song that the educator whispered in their ears. Using body movements, they had to get their group to guess what the song was just by observing the movements.

The expectation and result of this activity was that their bodies would loosen up for the introduction to dance, and the students would become uninhibited and gain confidence in themselves so that they could dance in front of others. They were shown videos of *Amapiano* dances, which they approved, although they found them difficult. In this same dynamic, the division that the students made was perceived as negative by the educators, who left them free to separate as they wished. This resulted in a division of girls against boys. Another point that stood out was the teamwork. The students were committed and worked together to show their qualities. Perhaps they didn't even know they were helping each other, as some members of the same group didn't maintain friendly relations, but they still overcame this in order to win in the dynamic.

On the day of the final presentation to the parents and the whole school, the students were very anxious and nervous about the number of people present to watch them. However, with a few words of encouragement, they were soon confident, after all, they had worked hard during the preparation. At the start, the graduate educators introduced themselves and explained the work they had done with the students over the past two and a half months, pointing out that the result was a dance performance that summarized the content worked on in class and highlighted anti-racist and anti-bullying education.

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<sup>13</sup> *Samba* is a musical genre that emerged in Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of the 20th century.

<sup>14</sup> *Pagode* is a very characteristic musical genre in Brazilian culture.

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In many situations, the project has shown what a challenge it is to be an educator. Often, dealing with children and teenagers involves unusual situations, such as restless behavior, anxiety, distraction, and even shouting. For this reason, the PET (Tutorial Education Program) meetings held throughout the project were necessary, as they discussed practices and challenges. In these exchanges, solutions emerged from other fellows who also work in education, as well as project supervisors who were always willing to help their students.

In the 6th grade, the aim of the project was to produce 6 theatrical sketches at the end of 10 weeks of meetings. These plays were adapted from texts selected by the trainee educators, all short stories by black Brazilian and African authors, such as Conceição Evaristo and Carolina Maria de Jesus, and African authors, such as Angolan Luandino Vieira and Mozambican Luís Bernardo Honwana. The stories adapted for the sketches were: *Quarto de Despejo*; *Lumbiá*; *Sulwe*; *A Frontera do Asfalto*, and *A mão dos pretos*.

Before the scripts and plays were produced, there was a time of laboratory, discussion, and creation of socio-cultural baggage and body development. From the very first meeting, they were taught the basics of theater, such as what a script is, what theater is, what a scene is, what acting is, and who can act. The theoretical foundation was based on Boal and the Theater of the Oppressed, aiming to remove the students from the role of passive spectators without action, and take them to the place of the subject who acts, who has autonomy over themselves and the scene they are in.

From then on, the class played theatrical games used in professional theater to uninhibit the actors and develop improvisation, body looseness, and scenic creativity. Some of these games came directly from Boal, such as the *Image Theater*, in which the students created scenes without vocalizing any words. Activities were also proposed in which a provocative situation was presented, and they had to enter the scene, take on the role of an actor, and change the scene according to what they agreed or disagreed with. There were also memory and facial interpretation games, many of them on the court and outside. This movement and change of routine were essential for the perception of the body. Elements such as interpretation, expression of feelings, and self-knowledge of one's body were worked on. The students' reaction was extremely positive. Aged between 11 and 12, still in the transition from second childhood to pre-adolescence, the games captivated the class as a whole. They responded very well, which gave them more background for the stage performance they would have to construct.

The other aspect worked on in the lab, in parallel to the games, was the debate on race, class, and gender, with an in-depth look at racial issues. From the first week, videos of *Poetry Slam* were shown to the students, and the feedback was profound and immediate because of the very language of Slam, with its shouting and emotional performance, the intense gestures of the poets, and the current denunciations that dialogue with the reality of many minorities, the understanding and reaction of the class were very positive. Slammers Carol Dall Farra, with a performance in the poetry collective "*Slam das Minas*", and WJ, in his performance in the collective "*Slam Resistência*" were presented. Both dealt with blackness, racial inequality, the daily difficulties of color prejudice, as well as the importance of ancestry and the struggle for human rights and the right to be human, an urgent struggle for minority classes and groups.

Finally, in the dynamic with the 6th grade, one of the educators, who is also a Slammer, performed a poem with a similar theme, so that the energy of Slam and the exchange with the audience could be experienced more genuinely by the class. The feedback was just as positive as the videos. In the debates, many prejudiced beliefs and persistent bullying attitudes among classmates emerged, but the understanding of the topics was always very favorable. When it came to producing the pieces, the challenge was greater, as there wasn't much of a partnership or sense of collectivity between the groups. Although the students had taken on the characters, their lack of contact with the theater and its elements hindered the process of creating the sketches.

Points that drew attention in both classes included discriminatory behavior linked to religious morality, observed by educators in the classroom in 5th grade. During a discussion, one student repudiated the comment of another who said that rolling around, doing "*quadrado*"<sup>15</sup> was a form of dancing, just like "*Bonde das maravilhas*"<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand, the other said she didn't approve and would never consider rolling over a dance, as she believed that a woman should respect herself. The speech may have been loaded with religious ideologies or traditional and prejudiced beliefs, which, at their base, define the body as a vehicle that must be controlled and molded according to pre-established principles and norms.

In 6th grade, a striking situation arose in relation to two students, both of whom were dealing with emotional issues and the search for affection. The first was touched by some of the racial slurs we saw and shared with the class a situation of racism that happened to her

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<sup>15</sup> The *quadrado* is a funk dance step that involves rolling your buttocks in a synchronized way.

<sup>16</sup> *Bonde das Maravilhas* is a Brazilian funk group from Rio de Janeiro created in 2011 in Niterói. The group achieved national prominence with the songs "*Quadrado de Oito*" and "*Aquecimento das Maravilhas*".  
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mother. Although she did not identify as black, and had not experienced the situation directly, she expressed feeling the pain and injustice of what had happened. In the second event, a student who was having trouble getting along was welcomed by one of the teachers, found a space to exchange ideas, listened to advice, and vented some of her anxieties.

## Final considerations

There were various challenges in both classes, but in every dynamic, there was a sign that this pedagogical proposal could be freeing them, making them aware, and helping them take their place as subjects of their own. In 5th grade, the students showed a growing understanding of the subject over the course of the project, getting involved, taking the content home, sharing it with their families, and bringing questions and concerns to the classroom. This shows how the learning process takes place not only in the classroom but also in spaces such as the home, the street, and the family. Education is not limited to the walls of the school but expands into the students' daily lives. The initial objective of this project was achieved: the desire for intervention. Other surprising results were also achieved: the profound affectation that occurred in the researchers of this work throughout the project.

The contact with little human beings in formation, who are still in the process of understanding their feelings, identity, and emotional, intellectual, and spatial demands, was enriching. The possibility of opening up in the classroom, as a subject, with feelings and their demands, helped to build sincere contact and a solid exchange between two subjects, the students and the project's research teachers. As bell hooks emphasize in her work, the educator also needs to place himself in the classroom to find a way back for the student. These students also came into contact with different representations through audiovisuals, poetry, rap, speech, and the possibility of being and being in art. It was in the body and in the art of the body that the educational process was constituted and made present, which became a seed in each student present in this project.



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