

RACISM AGAINST INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses racism against indigenous peoples in Brazil in a context of coloniality. It uses bibliographic research and documentary analysis techniques to deal with the historical origins of this racism in order to contribute to its confrontation; presents its current manifestations; and discusses ways in which education can address it. The considerations of this work place the origins of racism against indigenous peoples at the beginning of the European colonization process; it emphasizes that this is manifested through actions, omissions and/or restrictions of rights; and discusses the potential of education in order to highlight the forms of racism and combat them in the quest to decolonize curriculums through epistemological ruptures, the construction of new paradigms, the realization of an intercultural education and differentiating pedagogical practices.

Keywords: racism; minority rights; education.

RESUMO

RACISMO CONTRA POVOS INDÍGENAS E EDUCAÇÃO

O artigo discute o racismo contra indígenas no Brasil num contexto de colonialidade. Faz uso de pesquisa bibliográfica e de técnicas de análise documental. Trata das origens históricas deste racismo; apresenta suas manifestações atuais; e discute maneiras pelas quais a educação pode enfrentá-lo. As considerações do trabalho situam as origens do racismo contra indígenas no início do processo de colonização europeia; enfatiza que este manifesta-se através de ações, omissões e/ou restrições de direitos; e discute o potencial da educação no sentido de evidenciar as formas do racismo e de combatê-las, na busca por descolonizar currículos através de rupturas epistemológicas, da construção de novos paradigmas, da realização de uma educação intercultural e de práticas pedagógicas diferenciadoras.

Palavras-chave: racismo; direitos das minorias; educação.

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RESUMEN

RACISMO CONTRA LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS Y LA EDUCACIÓN

El artículo discute el racismo contra los pueblos indígenas en Brasil en un contexto de colonialidad. Hace uso de técnicas de investigación bibliográfica y análisis de documentos. Aborda los orígenes históricos de este racismo; presenta sus manifestaciones actuales; y analiza las formas en que la educación puede abordarlo. Las consideraciones de la obra sitúan los orígenes del racismo contra los indígenas en los inicios del proceso de colonización europea; destaca que ésta se manifiesta a través de acciones, omisiones y/o restricciones de derechos; y discute el potencial de la educación en el sentido de resaltar las formas de racismo y combatirlos, en la búsqueda de currículos descolonizadores a través de rupturas epistemológicas, la construcción de nuevos paradigmas, la realización de una educación intercultural y prácticas pedagógicas diferenciadoras.

Palabras clave: racismo; derechos de las minorías; educación.

Introduction¹

Racism against indigenous peoples has often been denied or interpreted through prejudice and/or discrimination, as if these terms operated as a kind of euphemism for the racist situations to which these peoples have been historically subjected to. The existence of racism has been denounced by the indigenous peoples themselves and by researchers on the subject. According to Peixoto (2017, p. 28-29): “In the Brazilian context, racism against indigenous people is explicit, but it is rarely identified as such. [...] When it came to be recognized, racism was related to violence that affects the Afro-descendant population and not the indigenous people”. According to this author’s considerations, this is due to the fact that indigenous peoples “are not understood in the socially constructed category of race”² (PEIXOTO, 2017, p. 54). In her study with uni-

versity students at the Federal University of Western Pará (UFOPA), the researcher found that:

Indigenous peoples, especially from their university placements, begin to name and denounce racism historically rooted in society. They denounce the institutional racism that left them on the sidelines of public policies of racial equality and denounce the violence they suffer daily. Indigenous people nominate to denounce and thus contribute to a fairer society. (PEIXOTO, 2017, p. 54).

Milanez and others (2019, p. 2161) analyze racism against indigenous peoples as “one of the most invisible aspects of racism in Brazil”. These authors discuss the void in Brazilian literature regarding this type of racism and present testimonies and reflections of a practical and theoretical nature on the part of indigenous authors in order to contribute to recognizing racism as a structured system against indigenous populations.

According to considerations by Bonin (2016, p. 10), “racism concerns a process of producing hierarchies based on the human and from which categories of superiority and inferiority are established”. Adopting Bonin’s (2015) perspective, Brighenti (2015) situates racism against indigenous peoples from the violence

¹ Text translated by Christopher James Quinn.

² According to Munanga (2003), the term race was related to the establishment of physical and/or biological criteria in the supposedly scientific classification of human groups consolidated in the 19th century and questioned/surpassed/invalidated in the 20th century. “We can see that the concept of race as we use it today is not biological at all. It is a concept loaded with ideology, because like all ideologies, it hides something not proclaimed: the relationship of power and domination. Race was always presented as a biological category, that is to say natural, but it is in fact an ethnosemantic category” (MUNANGA, 2003, p. 6).

(physical and symbolic) practiced against these peoples through actions and omissions of the State in a coloniality context of power. For this author, “symbolic violence also results in physical violence, because by belittling the other, they become vulnerable to the actions of third parties, who justify their practices by the power exercised over the alleged inferiority of the other” (BRIGHENTI, 2015, p. 106).

Given the above, racism against indigenous people certainly exists! From this perspective, prejudice, discrimination, violence, mistreatment, omission or restriction of rights are understood as manifestations of racism.

Democracy is affected when the fundamental rights of individuals or groups are affected, as the exercise of democracy presupposes the creation, maintenance and expansion of fundamental rights related to life, subsistence, political participation and social organization. I like to think, in paraphrasing Miguel Arroyo (2008, p. 71), that indigenous peoples are “subjects of rights”. They have rights to: “land, justice, equality [of opportunities], freedom, work, dignity, health, education...”. Above all, they have the right to be themselves. The right to difference. Right to the diversity of histories, languages, epistemologies and cultures. As there are more than three hundred (different) peoples that inhabit this soil, there are so many possibilities of affirming their historical, sociocultural, and linguistic differences (among others), and there are also so many possibilities of extension/expansion of their rights.

History has revealed that indigenous peoples numbered millions at the time of the European conquest, and there are currently 896,917 people in Brazil according to the last census (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E STATÍSTICA, 2010); 572,083 live in rural areas/reserves/indigenous lands and 324,834 live in urban areas – more than one third (1/3) of the population. There are more than 300 different ethnic groups or peoples, speaking 274 languages, and there are also isolated peoples who avoid contact with society. There are more

than 80,000 indigenous peoples in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul alone,³ present in 29 municipalities, represented by 8 ethnicities: Guarani, Kaiowá, Terena, Kadwéu, Kinikinaw, Atikun, Ofaié and Guató (SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DE CIDADANIA E CULTURA DO MATO GROSSO DO SUL, 2019). Chamorro and Combès (2015, p. 20) also identify the Chamacoco, Ayoreo and Camba as indigenous peoples living in the state, but which are generally omitted from official data, adding up to 11 indigenous ethnic groups in Mato Grosso do Sul. The Dourados Indigenous Reserve has around 17,000 indigenous people from 3 ethnic groups in its two villages of Bororó and Jaguapirú: Kaiowá, Guarani and Terena (TROQUEZ, 2019).

These peoples are subjects of rights. They won the guarantee of the right to difference in the Federal Constitution of 1988, after many struggles and social movements. The territories of traditional occupation of indigenous peoples, the right to health and differentiated education were also protected in the 1988 constitution. Article 231 of the Constitution guarantees human, cultural, social and political rights to indigenous people (BONIN, 2016). In this way: “their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions, and their original rights over the lands they traditionally occupy, are recognized, and it is incumbent upon the Union to demarcate them, as well as protect and ensure respect for all their assets.” (BRASIL, 1988).

Indigenous peoples have the right to differentiated healthcare and differentiated education, with recognition of their own pedagogies and learning processes (BRASIL, 1988). This provision of the Constitution was regulated in other legal documents in order to create the Indigenous School as a specific category of school located in indigenous areas with the participation of indigenous communities,

3 According to data from the Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health, the indigenous population of Mato Grosso do Sul totaled 80,459 inhabitants in 2019 (SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DE CIDADANIA E CULTURA DO MATO GROSSO DO SUL, 2019).

with indigenous teachers and managers, as well as specific and differentiated teaching materials (BRASIL, 2012). The guarantees related to health and education are related to the territorial issue, as it is in the territory that communities realize their way of being and/or existing. Thus, the issue of land is always linked to other agendas when it comes to indigenous themes (OLIVEIRA, 1995).

We are currently experiencing a series of violence against the territories of indigenous peoples in Brazil, often invaded by illegal loggers and miners who damage the environment, pollute their waters, deforest forests and, in times of Covid-19, contaminate their families. Conflicts involving ruralists and indigenous people end up in physical aggressions and even deaths, and the State is often omitted. Conflicts, violence and omissions reveal/show the perverse face of racism against indigenous peoples in Brazil (BONIN, 2016).

In this work, I discuss racism against indigenous people in Brazil in a context of coloniality using bibliographic research and document analysis techniques. To this end, I use the following documents and/or sources: Note of repudiation against racism and censorship to COIAB coordinator Nara Baré (APIB, 2020); Federal Constitution of 1988 (BRASIL, 1988); Bill No. 490 (BRASIL, 2007); Extraordinary Appeal 1,017,365/SC (BRASIL, 2020); Platform for monitoring the indigenous situation in the new Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in Brazil, from the *Instituto Socioambiental* (2021), among others. I deal with the historical origins of racism against indigenous people, going back to colonial times; I present its current manifestations through contemporary examples; and discuss ways in which education can address it. I place the origins of racism against indigenous people at the beginning of the European colonization process; I emphasize that this is manifested through actions, omissions and/or restrictions of rights; and I discuss the potential of education in the sense of highlighting the forms of racism and combating them in

the search for decolonizing curricula through epistemological ruptures, the construction of new paradigms, the implementation of intercultural education and differentiating pedagogical practices.

The questions which guided this work were: what are the origins of racism against indigenous peoples in Brazil? How is it manifested? How can education combat it?

Therefore, I have organized the text in order to answer these questions as follows: first, I talk about the historical origins of racism against indigenous people; below, I present some of its manifestations; then, I discuss ways in which education can make its contribution to tackling the problem; and, finally, I present the final remarks.

The work sought to pay attention to ethical precepts in research on human beings, as it is not research with human beings, but refers to specific human groups, which in this case are indigenous peoples. Care was taken to avoid concepts and/or generalizations that harm or damage the image of the target population and other groups involved.

Origins of racism against indigenous peoples

Racism is not a recent phenomenon. Its roots go back to very remote periods. At the advent of the European conquest, the hundreds of peoples originating in the Americas were generically called "Indians" by the colonizers. From the beginning, this term brought the marks of prejudice, discrimination, and the concealment of differences. In addition, the actions and omissions that followed in the colonization process revealed ethnocentric practices marked by the colonial difference from which Europeans treated native peoples as inferior and savage. The Europeans sought to demonstrate their cultural, religious and racial superiority over the other. There was a restriction of humanity, virtue and rationality

in the medieval Christian conception to European Christians (FERREIRA NETO, 1997; MELIÁ, 1990; MIGNOLO, 2013; TROQUEZ; NASCIMENTO, 2020).

Racism was constituted from the false idea that there would be biological differences between human beings and that these differences would mark certain “races” as superior and others as inferior. This idea was built within a colonialism and coloniality project that profoundly marked the encounter/confrontation with Europeans and hundreds of indigenous peoples.

Mignolo (2013) related the process of classification, inferiorization/subalternization/relegation and/or hierarchization of populations originating from coloniality (of power, being and knowledge). Thus, classification and hierarchy became “an epistemic issue in the construction of coloniality power” (MIGNOLO, 2013, p. 24). From this project, cultural differences were transformed into “values and hierarchies: racial and patriarchal on the one hand, and geopolitical on the other” (MIGNOLO, 2013, p. 24). Also according to this author: “The colonial difference is a fundamental strategy, then and now, to downgrade populations and regions of the world” (MIGNOLO, 2013, p. 24). With the colonization process and the institution of colonial difference, indigenous peoples began to be classified, ranked and subordinated. And, under the European gaze, they were seen as: inferior, savage, primitive, black people of the land who (if civilized) could be used for the workforce (TROQUEZ; NASCIMENTO, 2020).

Ferreira Neto (1997) discusses the question of alterity and ethnocentrism in the West, which has long marked Western and, particularly, Brazilian historiography. It should be noted that the iconographies (paintings, drawings), letters and/or reports of travelers produced during the Colonial times for the most part showed an exotic picture of the native peoples of the Americas, highlighting punctual and decontextualized characteristics to present them as primitive, wild and/or cannibalistic.

Mancini and Troquez (2009) denounce the construction of stereotypes and prejudices against native peoples in the writing of traditional Brazilian history. In this direction, the production of the historiographical and identity project of the nation was marked by ideas of eugenics, through which the indigenous were represented as “hostile”, “backward”, “lazy” and seen as an obstacle to the development of civilization. Official history omitted the violence of European conquest and colonization, erased the indigenous people as agents of their histories, showing them as victims placed in the past, and linked to an idea of primitivism. On the other hand, Brazilian literature to a large extent romanticized and presented the indigenous as “the good savage” through stereotyped images related to an idea of folklore, placed in a magical/imaginary and/or fictitious world. According to Brighenti (2015, p. 109), “Associated with the area of science, literature and the arts also had their participation in the creation of racist thinking about indigenous peoples, contrasting the ‘noble savage’ to the ‘fearsome cannibal *botocudos*’”

These stereotyped images constructed by traditional historiography and literature were the repertoire on indigenous peoples which compose books and teaching materials for a long time, which helped to reinforce prejudice and discrimination. On the other hand, the diversity of histories, epistemologies and/or knowledge and cultures of the native peoples were also systematically omitted from the curricula and school materials through “a process of hierarchizing knowledge, cultures and peoples” (GOMES, 2012, p. 102).

This process still needs to be broken and overcome and takes place in a tense context of clash between paradigms in which some cultures and ways of knowing the world have become dominant to the detriment of others through explicit and symbolic forms of force and violence. This process resulted in the hegemony of one knowledge to the detriment of another, and the establishment of an imagination which views the cultures, peoples and ethnic-racial groups that

are outside the paradigm considered civilized and cultured in a hierarchical and inferior way, namely, the axis of West, or the colonial 'North' (GOMES, 2012, p. 102).

Under this same paradigm, schooling projects historically aimed at indigenous people sought to stifle differences between peoples through civilizing and integrationist practices that aimed to pacify them, colonize their minds and bodies and integrate them into non-Indian society. The educational processes imposed on native peoples for a long time disregarded their epistemologies, their ways of being and living, as they intended to shape bodies and minds with notably civilizing objectives, whose main purpose would be to transform them into national workers. In this process, indigenous resistance was interpreted as indolence or laziness.

The denial of their own histories, of their sociocultural practices, of their ancestry, related to territorial occupation and the realization of their own ways of existence has been used to expropriate and invade their lands. However, indigenous peoples resisted as differentiated peoples and continue to resist through social movements, articulating themselves locally, nationally and internationally in the search for their rights, especially respect for difference.

Racism was produced from a colonial project of denying the other and denying their differences. Misconceptions, generalizations, simplifications, stereotypes and prejudices have crossed the centuries, conveyed in principles handcrafted by drawings, paintings and travellers' reports, and more contemporaneously by books, the media and school materials, supporting racist manifestations against indigenous peoples.

Manifestations of racism

Racism is manifested through violent acts, contempt, mistreatment, the dissemination of stereotypes and prejudices, expressions of hatred, attacks, restrictions and/or omissions

of rights related to territory, health and food, among others. According to Peixoto (2017, p. 30), "racism can occur through: (1) discrimination externalized in explicit attitudes; (2) prejudice, conceived within people, which naturalizes perceptions and subtleties; and (3) in the segregation of groups in certain environments".

Cases of veiled or explicit racism in violent acts committed against indigenous territories and bodies are daily and frequently reported by the media, especially through channels linked to the Indigenous Movement on social networks (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook). The indigenous themselves post news and various texts that denounce violence and various forms of racism against their people. For example, on August 7, 2020, the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (*Coordenação das Organizações Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira - COIAB*) published the "Note of repudiation against racism and censorship to the coordinator of COIAB Nara Baré", on the official website of the *Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil* (2020). According to the article: "The Brazilian Government vetoes the participation of COIAB coordinator Nara Baré in a meeting of the OAS [Organization of American States] on indigenous peoples and Covid-19, which would have taken place on 08/09/2020."

In Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul, a city marked by agribusiness and the indigenous presence in its surroundings, manifestations of racism against indigenous peoples are constant. The first cases of Covid-19 in the city in 2020 were related to the slaughterhouses located in the municipality where some indigenous people from the Dourados Indigenous Reserve worked. At the time, prejudiced/racist manifestations appeared in the local media against the indigenous people, as if they were to blame for the spread of the disease in the city.

Many indigenous young people have entered universities or other higher education institutions with the inclusion policies in specific training courses in intercultural colleges or

in different courses. In the latter case, indigenous students are more exposed to racism situations, as they are more isolated from their group within the institutions. There are many reports of prejudice/discrimination and/or concealment/invisibility suffered by indigenous students in higher education courses, and in this context teachers have a fundamental role, especially in the sense of intervening in certain situations, such as those described by a student interviewed by Silva (2018, p. 120):

I never felt part of the university, I was there because I had to complete the four years, but I never said to myself: 'No, you are part of this group, you belong'. But now, in my course, in my class, until I managed to identify myself. But here is something else I was going to tell you. There was the group of Indians, it was the four of us, what kind of work, it was all the four of us, so it was there! Then, even on the day of our graduation, our speaker identified the groups and there was the group of Indians, it was there in her speech.

I agree with this author's considerations in saying that professors "could intervene so that such discrimination does not occur, since their omission symbolizes or represents a form of institutional racism practiced by an agent of the academic structure" (SILVA, 2018, p. 120).

Historically, indigenous peoples have been attacked in terms of their basic rights, especially with regard to the territorial issue, as their territories have been invaded and plundered since the first European caravels arrived here. The land policies of the Empire and the Republic, such as the Land Law of 1850 and the processes of creation of indigenous reserves from 1910 were extremely unfavorable to indigenous peoples, restricting their territories of traditional occupation and forcing them to live in restricted spaces, often unsuitable for the reproduction of their material and cultural/symbolic dynamics.

Indigenous lands or territories are where indigenous peoples reproduce their existence, their languages, their own ways of life, their cultural traditions, and it is the responsibility

of the State to demarcate, protect, and ensure respect for their limits. The usufruct is exclusive to indigenous communities. According to the Constitution: "acts which have the occupation, dominion and possession of the lands referred to in this article as their object, or the exploitation of the natural wealth of the soil, of the rivers and lakes in them" (BRASIL, 1988). However, in our country we have been witnessing attacks on indigenous territories on a daily basis, whether by miners, loggers or squatters, among other invaders, and what is worse, the State seems to be inert or even participate in all this. When dealing with the action/omission of the State with regard to the struggle for the land of indigenous peoples in Brazil, Bonin (2016, p. 2) points out that: "Despite the set of guarantees related to the exclusive possession and usufruct of lands traditionally occupied by indigenous peoples, it is precisely the land that sparks conflicts and many of the forms of violence practiced against them today."

On June 23, 2021, at the Constitution and Justice and Citizenship Commission in the Brazilian Congress, we followed the vote on Bill No. 490 (BRASIL, 2007), which defends the Temporal Framework according to which only Indigenous lands for demarcation purposes are those that indigenous peoples can prove that they were in their possession on October 5, 1988, at the time of the promulgation of the Federal Constitution. Even under protest from indigenous leaders from practically all indigenous areas of the country and from several segments of society favorable to indigenous people, for violating rights conquered in the Federal Constitution, Bill No. was analyzed on June 30, 2021 at the Federal Supreme Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal - STF*) through Extraordinary Appeal No. 1,017,365/SC (BRASIL, 2020),⁴ which did not happen because other agendas took precedence and the vote in the STF was postponed. This project deals with the "*Marco*

⁴ This is the case involving the Xokleng Indigenous Community of the Ibirama La Kľaño Indigenous Land, which has general repercussions for other peoples/areas.

Temporal”, according to which only those lands that were already in the possession of indigenous peoples on the date of the promulgation of the Constitution on October 5, 1988, can be considered indigenous lands. This project is totally unfavorable to indigenous peoples, since it ignores that many indigenous territories were in dispute on that date, disregards isolated peoples, prohibits the expansion of lands which have already been demarcated and allows the exploitation of indigenous lands by miners. And, as bizarre as this may seem, indigenous people were attacked in Brasília when they were demonstrating peacefully against the vote on Bill 490 (BRASIL, 2007) in 2021.

During demonstrations by indigenous peoples on several highways across the country in 2021, called “*Levante pela terra*”, in defense of the guarantee of their territories and for the vote in favor of their cause with regard to the “*Marco Temporal* thesis”, we witnessed several racist reactions on the part of segments contrary to their demands. The reactions were not infrequently crossed by speeches loaded with everyday stereotypes, according to which the indigenous people were “lazy”, they would be “hindering development/progress”, “they want too much land”, and “they live at the expense of social benefits from the government”. These lines have been recurrent and have already been deconstructed by Oliveira (1995).

The generalizing and racist statements reveal, among other things, ignorance and/or lack of knowledge of the cause, as they show that most people who discriminate against indigenous peoples are unaware of the real historical reasons for their manifestations. They do not know the rules for distributing social benefits, nor do they know the history of the struggle for land and the rights conquered by indigenous peoples. It is remarkable how some stereotypes are recurrent and demonstrate the ignorance of the people who use them. It is important to mention the indigenous people who were exploited in their labor as “blacks of the land”; the Terena who fought bravely in the

Paraguayan War and those who helped build telegraph lines in southern Mato Grosso; the Guarani and Kaiowá who were exploited in the sheds of the farms and in the herb fields of Companhia Mate Laranjeira and still suffered from the violent expropriation of their traditional occupation territories. The heavy and cheap labor in many places is still indigenous. Just take a look at the Guarani and the Kaiowá picking apples today in the south of the country, or collecting the garbage in our cities, making asphalt, digging graves in the cemeteries... studying and occupying space in university institutions, among others, in our country.

With regard to the right to health, there were many complaints against the State about negligence and neglect of indigenous health during the coronavirus pandemic (2020-2021). The precariousness of living and subsistence conditions to which some indigenous areas are subjected with a scarcity of water and food is notorious. In these cases, the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (*Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil - APIB*) has denounced the deficiency of State action in favor of guaranteeing the fundamental rights of indigenous people nationally and internationally. On August 3, 2020, Eloy Terena, an indigenous *APIB* lawyer spoke at the *STF* when he filed a lawsuit for non-compliance with a fundamental precept (DPF, 2020). According to him, there is a systemic failure by the federal government to implement health measures aimed at protecting the lives of indigenous peoples. At the time, he also called for the immediate removal of loggers and prospectors from indigenous lands. In response, the Federal Supreme Court (*STF*) determined in a unanimous vote of the ministers that the Federal Government adopt measures to protect indigenous peoples during the new coronavirus pandemic. Among other things, the elaboration and fulfillment of a plan to face Covid-19. However, they left out the withdrawal of the invaders from the decision who are in 7 illegally invaded indigenous lands/territories.

There are illegal invaders on indigenous lands who bring the disease to their families. In the context of the pandemic, there was no health control or barrier promoted by state agencies in some areas. The indigenous themselves and their allies mobilized and tried to protect their areas. Many young and old indigenous leaders in several areas of the country lost their lives as a result of Covid-19. The situation became so critical that the current Brazilian government came to be considered as “genocidal” by most segments sensitive to indigenous peoples. We can understand that this omission on the part of the State and its rigging is configured as a type of institutional racism. As discussed by Brighenti (2015, p. 103):

Violence in contemporary times is fundamentally institutional, whether in the action of the Brazilian State reducing rights such as the non-demarcation of territories and the implementation of developmental works that affect these peoples, or in the omission, interfering in and allowing murders and invasion of indigenous lands.

In order to channel and leverage material and symbolic resources to make up for the absence of the State and help indigenous peoples to face the Pandemic in the indigenous areas of the southern cone of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, a group of university professors, health professionals, liberal professionals, indigenous and sensitive to the cause created a large support network in 2020. The group is mainly articulated by WhatsApp to pass on information, campaign, discuss strategies to face the Pandemic and raise resources.

According to information obtained from the Platform for Monitoring the Indigenous Situation in the New Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic in Brazil from the Instituto Socioambiental (2021):

Monitoring the evolution of the new coronavirus among indigenous populations represents a major challenge. Although the official numbers report on the reporting dynamics, they do not necessarily reflect the extent of the pandemic. Furthermore, the lack of disaggregation of the

data makes it difficult to recognize the most affected regions and peoples. Another serious problem is the lack of data on indigenous people living outside of approved Indigenous Lands, which includes both citizens and populations awaiting the completion of the long process of demarcating their lands.

In this context, ISA makes data from the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (*APIB*) available which consider other data sources in order to better measure the consequences and extent of the Pandemic among indigenous people. According to information available on the website, on April 15, 2022, according to official data, cases in indigenous lands totaled 65,065 and deaths in indigenous lands totaled 904; and, according to data recorded by *APIB*, confirmed cases among indigenous people totaled 70,962; the indigenous people killed by Covid-19 totaled 1,300 people and 162 peoples or ethnicities were affected by the disease (data updated on April 15, 2022).⁵ “The numbers are higher than those reported by *SESAI*, which has only recorded cases in approved indigenous lands” (ISA, s.d.).

With the advent of vaccines against Covid-19 and the prioritization of indigenous people in the line, an irritating fact was the initial announcement by the health authorities that they would only vaccinate indigenous people who were located in demarcated areas or in indigenous reserves. As a form of control and/or invisibility/erasure strategy, only those who were “subjected” to the regime of “guardianship” of the State in the imposed molds within the reserves were “recognized”.

Concomitant to all this, indigenous people are victims of mockery, prejudice and defamation on a daily basis, which are subtle forms

5 “The compilation of *APIB* data has been carried out by the National Committee on Indigenous Life and Memory and by *APIB*’s grassroots indigenous organizations. Other fronts to fight Covid-19 organized in Brazil have also collaborated with the initiative. Different data sources have been used in this effort, in addition to *SESAI* itself, the committee has analyzed data from the Municipal and State Health Departments and the Federal Public Ministry” (INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL, 2021).

of racism. In view of all this, we ask: what can education do?

Education in the fight against racism

In the sense of thinking about the role of education in confronting racism against indigenous people towards the realization of racial equity and a society of rights, I agree with Garcia (2006, p. 15) in stating that:

[...] we always have a school dream, despite all the criticism of utopias, we do. When we educate, we are always guided by a utopia, a dream to be realized. It is not a dream that satisfies us for the dream and paralyzes us. It is a dream, a utopia that moves us to action [...]. So... if we dream of a more democratic, fairer, more respectful, richer, more plural society, in which differences can be expressed... [...] our militancy is above all at school, it is in the effort to make a better school.

Some questions fall on education or its professionals: what can education do? How can education contribute to combating racism against indigenous people? I like to think of Freire's *Pedagogy of Autonomy* (1996), which more than giving ready answers, or indicating "a path", presents us with challenges in the face of the "utopian dimension of education". That challenges us to place ourselves, as ethical subjects, subjects "of demand" and "of decision". For Freire (1996, p. 17), confronting discriminatory treatments of "race, class and gender" (read racism) is a matter of "ethical rigor", which must be "inseparable from educational practice, no matter if we work with children, youth or adults".

Its transformative potential is always an imperative imposed on education. We need to believe in it as a possibility and process of training people to build a better society, without the illusion that it is the savior of the world.

This teleological and dynamic dimension – the 'for what' it serves – is the essence of being of education; the justification by which it is asso-

ciated with the idea of progress. In this sense, we tend to imagine education overloaded with possibilities, secular salvation, the means to overcome the status quo that is given to us, break limits and push the reality of each individual beyond the possibilities they are given (GIMENO SACRISTÁN, 2002, p. 10).

We cannot give up on this "utopian dimension of education" and here we highlight the need for anti-racist education. If "the school curriculum in Brazil historically legitimized the epistemologies of the colonizer who promoted the subjugation, subalternization and inferiorization of the knowledge of traditional African and indigenous peoples" (MARQUES; CALDERONI, 2016, p. 301), we need to promote educational processes capable of breaking with this premise. According to Gomes (2012, p. 102), "Only by understanding the radical nature of these issues and this context can we change the register and paradigm of knowledge with which we work in education. This is one of the steps towards curricular innovation at school and towards an epistemological and cultural rupture."

In this sense, it is important that racism is recognized and evidenced in order to combat it. According to Milanez et al. (2019, p. 2178), "For indigenous peoples, it is extremely important to recognize racism as a structured system against these populations. This system is constituted in several dimensions, such as epistemic, political, cosmological, institutional, and so on." Peixoto (2017, p. 27) also argues that "Racism Against Indigenous Peoples: to recognize is to fight." Then, we have the following challenge ahead: to highlight the forms of racism and fight them.

Mancini and Troquez (2009) discuss aspects of an educational practice ethically committed to indigenous issues. According to these authors, this practice involves the idea of deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices about indigenous people; and this must be done by offering adequate information and knowledge about indigenous populations in

the direction of building new paradigms. And in this sense, we think of decolonial education (WALSH, 2009).

If we think about the problem of racism from the point of view of the colonization process and the idea of coloniality, it is important that we point out, according to Walsh (2009), an education focused on critical interculturality, which presupposes respect for existing and resisting and which allows for thinking in decolonial education processes. This author defends critical interculturality as a “political, social, epistemic and ethical project”, as a “strategy that tries to build relationships – of knowledge, being, power and life itself – that are radically different” (WALSH, 2009, p. 21-23). For this author, the term “decolonial”,⁶ without the dis-, marks a distinction with the meaning of decolonizing in its classical historical sense and provokes a continuous positioning of transgression, insurrection and struggle (WALSH, 2009).

The spaces for teacher training (initial and/or continuing) are privileged places for this. However, for this to be possible it is necessary to start from a methodology that is capable of accessing subjectivities and awakening decolonial consciousness and producing a decolonial attitude. Thus, in addition to obtaining theoretical knowledge, it is essential to develop a pedagogy committed to values bequeathed by the ancestral wisdom of the different peoples that make up our country (and not just one of them) (SILVA, 2021, p. 129).

In this direction, we need to think about studies and research projects; about curricular and teacher training policies; about curricula and pedagogical practices; and about the

production of school materials and textbooks which give visibility to indigenous peoples, their historical, sociocultural, linguistic, epistemological differences, that give visibility to indigenous productions, as there is a rich production made by intellectuals, teachers, artists and other indigenous authors available on websites/portals, books, among other supports.

Educators have already been developing some ways of confronting racism and its various manifestations. As a result of the struggles of certain social segments in favor of indigenous and Afro-descendant causes, Law No. 11, 645, of 2008 was enacted, which established the obligation to teach Afro-Brazilian and indigenous histories and cultures in Basic Education schools throughout the country (BRASIL, 2008). This is a curricular policy that must be used in favor of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, in the sense of “decolonizing curricula” and giving visibility to their protagonism, their rights, their diversity, their cultural productions; in the sense of contributing to knowledge construction, meanings and more favorable discourses in relation to indigenous peoples.

According to considerations by Apple (2009), the official knowledge that constitutes school curricula often does not include historical experiences and cultural expressions related to women, blacks, indigenous people and other less powerful groups. The inclusion of this implies developing an education committed to equity, with the visibility of all people and with the deconstruction of stereotypes and recurring prejudices in the official knowledge traditionally conveyed, especially through books and didactic manuals (MANCINI; TROQUEZ, 2009). An education which enables voices “silenced in the curriculum” to be heard. Thus, the discussion about differentiated education processes is a challenge to be faced, especially with regard to the training of educators.

Indigenous people are subjects of rights and have the guarantee of the right to difference conquered from the Federal Constitution of

⁶ As explained by Troquez and Nascimento (2020, p. 13): According to Ballestrin (2013, p. 108), “Catherine Walsh uses decolonization (not dis...) to help mark the identity of the M/C group.” “In the educational field, and especially here in Brazil, not all authors make this distinction. The terms discolonial and decolonial, and derivatives, have been used synonymously; with the form with the “dis” predominating in Brazil to indicate processes related to decolonizing education, the curriculum and the school; and also in the sense of explaining the constant struggle for the construction of a decolonizing education” (CANDAUI, 2009, 2016).

1988 (BRASIL, 1988), after many struggles and social movements. An important right is differentiated education, which must be carried out in specific schools, in indigenous areas, in their mother tongues, by teachers and managers of their ethnic communities, with differentiated school materials that respect their sociocultural and historical differences.

With regard to indigenous people who study in urban schools and universities, appropriate curricular and pedagogical proposals should be considered that include interculturality and the same respect for differences desired for indigenous schools, in the sense of producing positive discrimination (CORTESÃO; STOER, 2006). According to these authors, this can be done through practices of pedagogical differentiation. Practices which not only enable the inclusion of historical and cultural content about Afro-Brazilians and indigenous people in the curriculum, but also the management or treatment (in the sense of care) of differences in educational institutions based on the idea of interculturality (TROQUEZ; SILVA, 2020). The school must diversify itself internally to meet the differences of individuals from “differentiating pedagogies” in order to break with hegemonic curricular prescriptions and practices (GIMENO SACRISTÁN, 2002, p. 228).

According to Cortesão and Stoer (2006), the development of these practices requires a certain type of teacher: the inter/multicultural teacher. Teachers make use of “pedagogical differentiation devices” guided by the principle of equal opportunities for access and success in the schooling process of diverse groups. Examples of pedagogical devices are the construction of genealogies, the telling of stories by children, the use of sports and games, among others. For Candau (2009, p. 9):

[...] interculturality points to the construction of societies that accept differences as constitutive of democracy and are capable of building new, truly egalitarian relationships between different sociocultural groups, which supposes to empower those who have been historically inferior.

In this perspective, it is important to highlight the importance of intercultural education in the fight against racism against indigenous people.

Final considerations

Racism against indigenous people, commonly denied or interpreted through prejudice and/or discrimination, is a recurring fact today that needs to be recognized in order to be fought. Even approximately 521 years after conquest, colonization and processes (subtle or explicit) of coloniality which resulted in classification, hierarchization, subjugation and inferiorization of bodies, epistemologies and diverse cultural systems of hundreds of native peoples, racism persists. Such peoples remain resilient and resistant, fighting and facing different manifestations of racism.

As discussed, racism against indigenous people has historical roots, already present in the first drawings or paintings of travelers, in the historiographical project of the “white” nation, in books and teaching materials, in the current media: stereotyped images, generalizations and simplifications or omissions help to produce generalized, institutional, and individual racisms.

In turn, racism manifests itself in the subtlety of a “damned” or unspoken word, in the actions, aggressions and/or omissions of the State or of an unhappy individual who also carries with them the rancidity of ethnocentrism – that haughty look of those who think they “have the king in their belly”, but who, in this case, only have worms.

In view of what was possible to discuss within the limits of the article, we ask: what can education do? And we do not give up believing in its formative (or deforming) and transforming potential in the sense of promoting a decolonial education capable of highlighting the forms of racism and of fighting them. That enables the construction and implementation of public policies and teacher training which aim to

decolonize curricula through epistemological ruptures and the production of new paradigms. In this direction, we bet on critical interculturality and on the “construction of relationships – of knowledge, being, power and life itself – radically distinct” (WALSH, 2009, p. 23).

Thus, a premise that we cannot give up is that of democratic society and the affirmation of indigenous peoples as subjects of rights. We need to fight for the construction of public policies, projects and critical intercultural practices that materialize the legal achievements aimed at the aspirations/interests, knowledge and values of indigenous peoples. And that their rights may be respected and democracy will prevail in this country.

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