


## ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION: POSSIBILITIES OF HEALING IN BELL HOOKS' PROPOSAL OF AN ENGAGED PEDAGOGY

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### ABSTRACT

This article is the result of a research that aimed to understand the proposal of the engaged pedagogy of bell hooks as a possibility of healing the pain caused by racism. This is a qualitative research of a bibliographic nature, and its main analysis was the work of bell hooks entitled "Teaching to transgress: education as a practice of freedom". To this end, we proposed to problematize the concept of race; to reflect on racism and the processes of illness it causes; To know the proposal of Bell Hooks' engaged pedagogy as a possibility of cure. In this text, we present the historical contextualization, exploring the invasion of the Portuguese in Brazil, with the objective of colonization through the enslavement and extermination of native peoples, as well as the trafficking and enslavement of African peoples for the exploitation of natural resources in favor of the accumulation of capital. The study recognizes that the colonial process persists in the form of coloniality, re-editing strategies of exploitation, inferiorization and silencing of blacks and indigenous people, with an emphasis on racist practices. The results obtained indicate that the engaged pedagogy of bell hooks can be a significant contribution to the promotion of an anti-racist education. However, for this to occur effectively, the need for the active involvement of the faculty, students and their families is highlighted. This participation can occur through discussions anchored in theorization that highlights racism and the need to confront all forms of racial, gender, and class oppression.

**Keywords:** Bell Hooks, Anti-racist education, Engaged pedagogy, Education of ethnic-racial relations.

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## INTRODUCTION

This article aims to discuss how the engaged pedagogy proposed by bell hooks can contribute to confronting racism. To this end, we propose to discuss the concepts of race and racism in the process of social illness and the possibilities of cure for the pains of racism in the classroom, present in the engaged pedagogy proposed by bell hooks.

Inspired by bell hooks' readings, our research focus is to understand how the engaged pedagogy proposed by her can contribute to the construction of an anti-racist education. With this purpose, we seek to answer crucial questions: How can anti-racist education positively impact the self-esteem of black children in the classroom? How can an anti-racist educational approach promote a solidary coexistence between children from different backgrounds?

Our reflections are based on narratives experienced by children who face stigmas and social pressures related to hair aesthetics. The practice of straightening, influenced by discriminatory aesthetic standards, not only impacts the texture of the hair, but also shapes the identity itself. This process, in addition to being painful and expensive, limits freedom, even to the point of preventing the practice of sports and other games for fear of impairing the straightening. When we listen to the narratives of children and adolescents who experience the tyranny of what is understood as beautiful hair, we are reminded of what bell hooks announces about his experience with hair straightening by indicating the challenges arising from the integration process experienced when entering schools for whites. Hooks tells us that:

Straightening was clearly a process in which black women were changing their appearance to mimic the appearance of white men. This need to look as close as possible to whites, to look innocuous, is related to a desire to succeed in the white world. Before integration, blacks could worry less about what whites thought about their hair (hooks, 2005, p. 3).

Often, in adolescence, many young women face embarrassing and painful situations. Situations experienced through a dictatorship of a white ideal of beauty and that, when directed at the hair of a black woman, aim to depreciate and inferiorize, through comments and/or statements that indicate straight hair as the ideal of beauty (Gomes, 2002; Teixeira, 2021).

In this sense, bell hooks (2005) tells us about one of her conversations about the issue of the social identity of black women, indicating how this issue is complex and does

not place it in only one sphere of life in society, but is entangled by different discursive fields. The author narrates that:

In one of my conversations that focused on the social construction of black women's identity within a sexist and racist society, a black woman came up to me at the end of the discussion and told me that her seven-year-old daughter was dazzled by the idea of blonde hair, so much so that she had made a wig that mimicked goldilocks. This mother wanted to know what she was doing wrong in her conservatorship, since her home was a place where blackness was affirmed and celebrated. But she hadn't considered her straightened hair to be a message to her daughter: We black women aren't accepted unless we change our appearance or hair texture. (HOOKS, 2005, p.6).

Questions that also permeated our reflections and help us to look at the various aspects present in the racist, sexist and classist practices that have guided us as a society, beyond the speeches given. Hair is not just hair, it is history, self-esteem, life, culture, joy. It is a marker of recognition of who we are, what we believe, what we desire and what we have become. To be silent about the hair, therefore, is to be silent about racism.

To understand racism, we propose to understand the concept of race, a term that intended to justify the barbarism practiced by Europeans in the new world. When addressing the concept of race, we are based on the teachings of Professor Munanga (2004), who challenges the biological validity of the term, highlights its historically harmful use, and also states that: "the content of race is social and political" (2022, p. 121). Structural racism in Brazil, based on the idea of hereditary superiority of white people, is perpetuated through stereotypes and prejudices. Understanding these concepts is essential to dismantle existing discriminatory structures.

Kabengele Munanga (2004) allows us to reflect on how racism in Brazil, constituted under the false belief that white people are naturally (hereditary) above other people, whether black, indigenous or others. A superiority that is sustained by physical, moral, intellectual, economic and psychological characteristics, as well as by the fact of having a religion, a language and a culture different from white society, places this non-white group in subordination, subject to reprisal and violence. We understand the concept of racism as the practice that differentiates and inferiorizes the other by darker skin color, frizzier hair and negroid features. Munanga (2004) also says that structural racism in Brazil is guided by the concept of race, and manifests itself consciously or unconsciously in favor of white individuals, privileging them due to the racial group to which they belong, consequently those who suffer are blacks, indigenous people, etc. The author, when addressing racial prejudice, indicates that this is the judgment that is based on stereotypes about individuals

who belong to a group racialized, which may or may not result in discriminatory practices. Some examples are the stereotypes that blacks are violent, Jews avaricious, that Orientals are more intelligent for the exact sciences. Racial discrimination, on the other hand, is a differential treatment of racially identified groups, an example is countries that prohibit the entry of blacks, Jews or Muslims.

The illnesses caused by this evil that is racism that destroys self-esteem, hinders original identity or in the case of children who go through emotional dependence, denial and massacre of their features, their color, their hair. hooks (2017) talks about being impossible to separate the body from the soul and the essence, which presupposes that there is no way that a female teacher cannot talk in class about the struggle of women, or a black woman teacher, not talk about what it is like to be a black woman, about the obstacles she experiences in her daily life and not praise her ancestral belonging.

Neusa Santos Souza (2021), a woman, psychiatrist, black militant who built a very rich work, which was the book becoming black, says that the anti-racist struggle belongs to everyone, it is a collective struggle. The author talks about the emotional difficulty of blacks with their own image over time, caused by the history of racism, which refers to the need to create an image that can be loved, about the denial of their image and their values so that they can ascend socially, which, through a racist society, they can only achieve by becoming white and "becoming people". The author presents some reports of people who ascend socially, but does not specify in which, she does not mention values because it was not the main objective of her text, showing how these black people cancel themselves out in an attempt to ascend socially, so that they can survive in this racist society. Reports of people who submit to relationships in which they are not introduced to family members, who as children looked in the mirror and saw themselves ugly and then started not to look at themselves anymore, which indicates that racism is a factor of illness that needs cure. The illness caused by racism, from the perspective of the reflections we propose in this text, needs a healing process through an anti-racist education.

In addition, we explore the Brazilian legislation, represented by Law No. 10.639/2003, which seeks to integrate Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture into the school curriculum, promoting the appreciation and recognition of the Afro-descendant population. This legal framework aims to combat structural racism by presenting a diversity of cultures, contributing to the construction of a positive identity. In this text, we also intend to contribute to the understanding of the importance of bell hooks' engaged pedagogy in

promoting an anti-racist education, fostering the appreciation of diversity and the construction of positive identities in the school environment.

### **WHAT IS THE ENGAGED PEDAGOGY PROPOSED BY BELL HOOKS?**

Engaged pedagogy as a bell hooks proposal emerges to counteract banking education, to deconstruct what is old, to encourage the production of students' own thinking, so that they get out of passivity in the classroom. hooks, inspired by Paulo Freire (Brazilian teacher, thinker of liberating education) emphasizes the need to change the ways of learning, seeking to problematize more through this pedagogy so that, in addition to the critical view, we seek to transform education. She highlights the importance of "praxis", understood as action and reflection on the world to transform it, as an essential approach (hooks, 2017, p. 26).

To make engaged pedagogy effective, the well-being of the teacher is necessary, which is materialized through their self-actualization. This implies breaking with conventional teaching methods in favor of a liberating education, where students take control of their choices. The teacher's self-actualization occurs by innovating, collaborating with students in the production of knowledge that makes sense to them, connecting the content with their life experiences. The teacher's passion for the profession is vital, because, as bell hooks points out, "the pleasure of teaching is an act of resistance" (hooks, 2017, p. 21) against the boredom and apathy that often permeate the educational environment. In this sense,

Progressive and holistic education, "engaged pedagogy", is more demanding than critical or conventional feminist pedagogy. Unlike these two, it emphasizes well-being. This means that teachers must have an active commitment to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being. Only then will they be able to teach in a way that strengthens and empowers students. Thich Nhat Hanh points out that "the practice of the healer, the therapist, the teacher or any care professional must be directed first to himself. If the person who helps is unhappy, he will not be able to help many people. (HOOKS, 2017, p. 28).

By continuing with this thought, hooks (2017) emphasizes that a teacher who is dedicated to self-actualization, improving his didactics and way of thinking, finds satisfaction in the act of teaching. This approach, according to the author, contrasts with the indifference and disinterest common in the dynamics of teaching and learning. For the author, "[...]the pleasure of teaching is an act of resistance that is opposed to the omnipresent boredom,

disinterest and apathy that so characterize the way teachers and students feel in the face of learning and teaching, in the face of the classroom experience [...]" (HOOKS, 2017, p.21).

Bell hooks' childhood, marked by incessant questioning about family and social dynamics, led her to the constant search for understanding. His experiences, including the feeling of not belonging to his own family, shaped his critical thinking from an early age. When facing rejections and misunderstandings, hooks found refuge in theorizing, using critical thinking as a tool to explain her pain and start a healing process (hooks, 2017, p. 84-85).

Because he was a child who questioned a lot, he states that "[...]no wonder Mother would say to me every now and then, angry and frustrated, 'I don't know where you came from, but I'd like to send you back there!' [...]" (HOOKS, 2017, p.84). This experience reveals that hearing this comment from her mother was not only painful at that moment, but also left a lingering mark throughout her life. In his words:

Imagine, too, please, my childhood pain. I didn't really feel connected to these strange people, to these family members who not only couldn't understand my worldview, but also didn't even want to hear about it. As a child, I didn't know where I had come from. And when I wasn't desperately trying to be a part of this family community that seemed like it would never accept me or want me, I was desperately trying to figure out where I fit in. (HOOKS, 2017, p. 85).

The engaged pedagogy, forged in the concrete experiences, both positive and challenging, throughout all phases of bell hooks' life, reveals itself as a liberating and revolutionary approach. For hooks, critical knowledge not only led her to a deeper understanding, but also guided her to a space of personal healing. She shares that this journey was shaped by a "lived experience" of critical thinking, reflection, and analysis, transforming into a place where she confronted and elaborated on her pains, seeking to dispel them. Fundamentally, this trajectory taught hooks that theory is not just an intellectual exercise, but a fertile ground for personal healing, as she expresses when she states that: "[...] This experience taught me that theory can be a place of healing" (HOOKS, 2017, p. 85).

The similarity between bell hooks' engaged pedagogy and Paulo Freire's (2015) liberating pedagogy is evident, as hooks' ideas emerge with his readings of Freire's works who, by employing generative words as a teaching method, uses elements of people's daily lives, incorporating them as a starting point for adult literacy in his project in Angicos. In turn, hooks adopts an approach that is based on the students' life experiences to improve

their classes, highlighting that it is possible to learn through the sharing of pain and that, from this process of theorizing, healing is built. In his work, Freire (2015) rejects mechanical education in favor of a critical approach, stating:

From the outset, we had ruled out any possibility of a purely mechanical literacy. From the outset, we thought of the literacy of the Brazilian man, in a position of awareness, in the emergence that he had made in the process of our reality. In a work with which we tried to promote naivety in criticality, at the same time that we taught literacy. We thought of a direct literacy that was really linked to the democratization of culture, which would be an introduction to this democratization. In a literacy that, for this very reason, had in man not this patient of the process, whose only virtue is to have the patience to endure the abyss between his existential experience and the content they offer him for his learning, but his subject (FREIRE, 2015, p. 100).

The engaged pedagogy of bell hooks, grounded in lived experiences and critical thinking, resembles the liberating pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Both educators share the view that learning should be a mutual process between teacher and student, and education should involve critical awareness and the democratization of culture.

hooks' engaged pedagogy, however, stands out by addressing racial issues more strongly, aiming at recognizing the prior knowledge of black students and promoting learning from their experiences (hooks, 2017). In this way, bell hooks' engaged pedagogy follows a liberating and revolutionary proposition, rooted in concrete experiences, offering a transformative perspective for teaching and learning. The emphasis on the importance of praxis, pleasure in teaching and teacher self-actualization emphasizes the search for a more inclusive, critical education aligned with the needs and experiences of students.

## **FROM EXPERIENCE TO TRANSFORMATION: THE GENESIS OF ENGAGED PEDAGOGY**

Initially, we accessed hooks' proposal of engaged pedagogy, in the book *Teaching to Transgress: education as a practice of freedom*. In this work, based on her childhood experiences, bell hooks reports her experience as a student in elementary school, high school, graduation, and later her experiences as a teacher and lecturer. hooks (2017) also narrates how important it was to have read works by Paulo Freire, which directed her to education as a practice of freedom, from a critical perspective. Freire made it possible for hooks to understand the education he obtained in childhood, in order to elaborate his own pedagogical practice, which he named as an engaged pedagogy.

Recalling her learning process in elementary school, bell hooks explains that she attended a neighborhood school for blacks only, in which people were generally closer. Soon, teachers sought to get closer to their students and parents. hooks talks about the devotion that her teachers had in relation to getting to know each student, knowing their interests, knowing their parents, where they lived, what their economic condition was, so that through this information they could awaken in the students, the interest in studies, enabling them to understand that it was from education that a revolution could be made, because "[...] We learned early on that our devotion to study, to the life of the intellect, was a **counter-hegemonic act**, a fundamental way of resisting all white strategies of racist colonization. [...]" (HOOKS, 2017, p.10 emphasis added).

Still in elementary school, the author narrates the process of transition to an integrated school, after the end of apartheid. Thus, from a segregated school, she starts to attend a school for white people. This exchange experience made her realize that there were different ways of teaching, both in one school and in the other. If in a school the teachers sought to get to know their students, their families, to know how they were treated, in the new school, their teachers did not have this same interest. In this new school environment, hooks could not open discussions in the class. Silence was imposed on all students who had the obligation to receive the contents passively. Later, based on Paulo Freire's reading, she named this form of teaching banking education. This education consisted of an apathetic education for students, there was no interest on the part of teachers in getting to know their students in their individualities, there was no longer interaction between students and teachers. In his words: "[...] Suddenly, knowledge came down to pure information. It had nothing to do with the way of living and behaving. It no longer had any connection with the anti-racist struggle [...]" (HOOKS, 2017, p.12). Teaching there assumed a merely technical function of passing on ready-made knowledge from those who knew (the teachers) to those who did not know (the students) in an authoritarian relationship of subservience.

Hooks (2017) criticizes the educational system, because this system requires the separation of the body, soul and mind of the teacher, that is, a person could be hired to teach, as long as this professional was trained, even if he had an immoral personal life. This aspect reveals a dualistic idea, with which they treated public life, separate from the teacher's private. For this reason, they did not take into account the nature of this professor, what mattered to the academic environment was that his intellect, his mind worked as



expected, regardless of whether his habits were good or bad, outside the academic environment. The system promoted the disappearance of the teacher's personal life, because "[...]It was implied that the self disappeared the moment we entered the room, leaving in its place only the objective mind, free from experience and bias. It was feared that the conditions of the self would harm the teaching process [...]". (HOOKS, 2017, p. 29). In Brazilian education, it happens in a similar way to what hooks analyzes. The priority that educational systems dedicate to technical aspects (training) to the detriment of a humanized education, designed and organized to ensure learning processes with autonomy for both learners and teachers, is increasingly intense.

### **TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS IN HOOKS' CLASSROOM**

After the aforementioned criticism, hooks presents us with the ideals that a classroom should have, for a better quality of teaching and learning. When talking about the need for more willingness and participation in classes by teachers and students, he indicates that the **enthusiasm** of both students and teachers is an act of transgression and of exceeding the limits of conventional classes. She emphasizes this through her experiences, as follows:

Entering a college classroom armed with the desire to share the desire to stimulate enthusiasm was an act of transgression. It did not only require the crossing of established borders; it would not be possible to generate enthusiasm without fully recognizing that didactic practices could not be governed by a fixed and absolute scheme. The schemes would have to be flexible, they would have to take into account the possibility of spontaneous changes of direction. Students would have to be seen according to their individual particularities (I was inspired by the strategies that elementary school teachers used to get to know us), and interaction with them would have to follow their needs (hooks, 2017, p. 17).

The author emphasizes that the teacher needs to understand, value and recognize each student in their **individuality**, as this influences the participation of students in classes and contributes to better teaching and learning. About this, he tells us that:

To begin with, the teacher needs to truly value the presence of each one. It needs to permanently recognize that everyone influences the dynamics of the classroom, that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources. Used constructively, they promote the ability of any class to create an open learning community (hooks, 2017, p.18).

This movement of mutual interaction between teacher and student, where the student starts to be valued and participative through his criticism in the classroom and the

teacher to be more enthusiastic when teaching, is a good way to exemplify engaged pedagogy, but both are necessary for learning to occur, working together. However, this interaction cannot always be achieved, either by the class or by the teacher. Hooks emphasizes that several factors hindered one of his experiences in the classroom for this pedagogy to work, among them were:

The schedule was just one of the factors that prevented this class from becoming a learning community. For reasons I can't explain, it was also full of "resistant" students who didn't want to learn new pedagogical processes, didn't want to be in a room that somehow deviated from the norm. These students were afraid of transgressing borders. And though they were not the majority, their rigid spirit of endurance always seemed stronger than any disposition to intellectual openness and pleasure in learning. This class, more than any other, led me to abandon once and for all the idea that the teacher, by the sheer force of his will and desire, is capable of making the classroom an enthusiastic learning community (hooks, 2017, p.19).

Education can be done from the new content, which instigates children and young people, but it can also be done in **tune with the students' daily lives**, where they feel free to expose themselves, including the teacher himself, detaching himself from the common sense they carry with them. School spaces were historically built to control the beings who attend there through traditional education. These spaces deny the existence of social problems when they do not discuss them in the classroom, linking them to contents, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. Corsino (2020), helps us to understand a little about this silencing of institutions:

Even with the growth of studies on education of ethnic-racial and gender relations in school in recent years (SILVA, 2018; AUAD, 2004), it must be considered that the democratization of relations in the school environment requires, as a first step, knowing it. The Brazilian public school is not yet known, especially with regard to its daily life, marked by complex power relations, which often escape the understanding of its actors and fail to be evidenced through multiple silencing that occurs within a process of denial and non-recognition of certain subjects as belonging to that space (AUAD, 2004; CAVALLEIRO, 2000 apud CORSINO, 2020, p. 6).

In institutions, the study of ethnic-racial education often falls on only a few interested teachers, which, in reality, is a mistake. The understanding of the relevance of this theme should be shared by all teachers, allowing the approach and interrelation of these issues in different disciplines. In this sense, Corsino (2020) developed a doctoral research in a public school in the north of São Paulo, with the title *Black youth, High School and democracy: the struggle for school*, which aimed to highlight how the presence of black culture in the school curriculum in a high school institution, along with other policies of appreciation and

recognition of this culture, may have contributed to the articulation of these young women in the decision about the movement. In the observations made by Corsino (2020), he can see that during an event held by the management on Black Consciousness Day, how the distancing of most teachers occurred in relation to ethnic-racial education. From this event, the distancing that bothered three teachers observed in the research was observed. The author tells us:

Professor Antonieta questions the attitude of the teachers who did not participate in the organization neither before nor after the event. This fact reinforces the current idea that Afro-Brazilian history and culture has been addressed within the school only by those teachers who already have some familiarity with the theme or who do so out of militancy, which seems important to us, but which should not be the only motivation. On the other hand, those who do not have any approach to the theme, do not see themselves in a position or even know the need to address this theme and often think that only the disciplines of history and sociology should address it. (CORSINO, 2020, p.10).

Another author who criticizes the educational system is Rodrigues (2022), who produced the research entitled *Negra de pele clara: whitening and affirmation of blackness in Brazil*, based on the thinking of authors such as bell hooks and Gloria Anzaldúa, among others who deal with the non-separation between life and writing. Starting from her memories about ethnic-racial issues in different periods of her life trajectory as a light-skinned black woman, she aimed to make visible aspects of the socio-historical processes of whitening and genocide of the Brazilian black population, which cross racial self-declaration and the affirmation of blackness in Brazil. In this sense, the author, when reflecting on black authors that she did not have access to during her academic life, states:

Today it no longer surprises me to think that, from the beginning of my undergraduate studies until I entered the academic doctorate (in a space of ten years), I only received the indication of one text by a black intellectual: the geographer Milton Santos. The second text – Tornar-se Negro, by Souza (1983) – came to me through the recommendation of a colleague from the work team in which I participated, in a university project, where I was already completing the second year of my doctoral course (RODRIGUES, 2022, p. 4).

If the educational system of elementary and secondary education does not address ethnic-racial education, in higher education it is no different. With rare exceptions, as already mentioned in this text, ethnic-racial education is put into practice by one or another teacher who works in a line of research in this area. Costa (2021), in an article on the adoption of affirmative actions approved for all graduate courses at the University of Brasília in 2020, entitled *Um projeto decolonial antirracista: ações afirmativas na pós-graduação da*

*Universidade de Brasília*, indicates that affirmative actions had, and have, as an objective, not to expropriate black and white professors and students from their achievements, highlighting that the approval of this policy was the product of the anti-racist activism of these agents and indicates the importance of exploring the potential of affirmative actions approved at the university, committed to diversity in graduate studies, relating it to a decolonial and counter-hegemonic political project. In this sense, the silencing of the experiences of black and indigenous peoples is also silent about their knowledge, which is more oral. Knowledge that is not necessarily registered, but that exists and is not valued. Costa (2021) goes on to say that:

In advance, it is worth mentioning that the erasure and silencing of indigenous and black experiences, worldview and cosmologies during the formation of universities in Brazil are, in themselves, the materialization of a mental colonization that has as a constitutive element what we call epistemic racism, namely, the hierarchization and devaluation of possible black-indigenous contributions to the formation of pluriversal knowledge (COSTA, 2021, p. 3).

Returning to the observations made by Corsino (2020) during her research in high school, it is important to indicate her observations by pointing out that Antonieta, the sociology teacher, was a professional who had a different methodology, which captivated students more, as she did not judge or exclude them when they behaved differently. They were interested in their classes mainly because of the content and way of teaching that attracted them, immediately identifying themselves when it came to combating racism in school environments. This educator ended up being recognized and considered by the students, because in the discussions in the classroom she sought the best of each student, respecting their individualities and believing in their potential. As the author points out:

Contrary to what was observed in the work developed in most of the school's curricular components during the school year, the pedagogical work of teacher Antonieta occupied a place of resistance and dialogue with the young students and the community. Students who were recognized as terrible students said they loved the sociology class, one of the only ones they insisted on entering and actively participating in (CORSINO, 2020, p. 9).

Corsino (2020), also explains that teacher Antonieta worked with the students, the theme of ethnic-racial education throughout the school year, in fact, and when they thought of a Black Consciousness Day event, this Antonieta suggested that it would be better to have 3 days of the event instead of just one. Regarding this position of Professor Corsino (2020), points out that:

The sociology teacher was known at school for her involvement and for the way she approached the contents towards the implementation of the teaching of Afro-Brazilian culture in her high school classes. The teacher's work goes beyond what is known as the "tourist curriculum" (SANTOMÉ, 1998) or "racial micareta" (ALMEIDA, 2020), that is, activities that are only developed on Black Consciousness Day in a superficial way (CORSINO, 2020, p. 9).

The author indicates, based on interviews with students and the teacher herself, that Professor Antonieta's sociology classes had a good frequency in relation to other subjects of that school, because their contents dealt directly with the needs of these students who were mostly black, and sought to understand more about the pains and forms of struggle against racism. As presented by the author, about the presence of students in relation to the subjects that approached the students, he indicates that:

In contrast to the daily life of classes of various disciplines observed during the school year – in which the number of students in each class varied between 8 and 15 and were discouraged by the proposed activities – Sociology classes were marked by the presence of a greater number of students, who entered with a willingness to participate in it. However, it was possible to observe that the black consciousness week took place in an even more fruitful way, from the point of view of quantitative and qualitative participation of young people than the entire school period (CORSINO, 2020, p.11).

The researcher highlights the enthusiasm of the students in relation to the Black Consciousness Day event. He says that the adhesion to the activity was impressive, both in terms of the number of students present and the enthusiastic participation during the debates on documentaries and films. The students seemed genuinely excited, contrasting with the posture they often demonstrated in regular classes, where they seemed to be there for a grade or obligation. During the debates, they made connections with what they had studied in Sociology classes (CORSINO, 2020, p. 11).

These observations made by Corsino (2020) reinforce what hooks (2017) addresses in "Teaching to Transgress: education as a practice of freedom" about the importance of teaching and learning with enthusiasm. This enthusiastic approach was evidenced both in the Black Consciousness Day event and in the Sociology classes of a professor mentioned in Corsino's research (2021).

The relevance of the participation of the management in such events is highlighted, because, as highlighted by the researcher, the presence of the school principal in one of the activities had a significant impact. She enjoyed a documentary on racial issues and encouraged the teachers present (from the disciplines of Geography, Sociology, and

Philosophy) to take advantage of the momentum of this debate to address the issue of identity in the next school year (CORSINO, 2020, p. 11).

Another author who highlights the relevance of valuing ethnic-racial education and the anti-racist stance adopted by the management is Cíntia Diallo (2022), author of the article entitled "History of Afro-Brazilians, Africans and anti-racist education: the view of teachers of the teaching degrees". Its objective was to expose the understanding of higher education professors about the incorporation of the theme related to the teaching of African history and culture, as well as the education of ethnic-racial relations in the curricula of the degree courses in human sciences in the central-west region of Brazil. In this context, she points out:

Thus, anti-racist education in everyday school life requires actions that recognize racism as a structuring phenomenon of Brazilian society, producing exclusions, invisibilities and subordinations for black women and men (ALMEIDA, 2016). In this sense, it is important that the teaching and administrative staff adopt a position that repudiates racial discrimination and, at the same time, values the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity present in the school, promoting equality and encouraging the participation of all. To this end, we highlight the need to adopt a school curriculum that contemplates the knowledge and ways of being, existing, and feeling of Afro-Brazilians and Africans (DIALLO, 2022, p. 5).

In addition to the role of socialization and democratization of knowledge, the school plays a crucial role in individual development through relationships and interactions. A significant interaction that took place at the Black Consciousness Day event, observed by Corsino (2020), caused changes in students' perceptions of straightened hair, leading them to rethink the image they wanted to project through the acceptance of natural hair and to understand the expectations imposed on non-white people, especially women, in accordance with Eurocentric standards. Corsino points out that:

The events mentioned revealed the school as a place where variations on black beauty emerged; Many girls assumed curly hair, for example, and this often sounded like an insult, as if they were "abused" to assume their hair and show everyone their beauty. The activities carried out in these three days confronted an established order, confronted a socially accepted standard of beauty today. During the school year in this school, it was noticed that the bodily presence of the students, the black, the poor, the feminine presence, the one that deviates from a heteronormative order, bothered them. This presence, in itself, was resistance, resistance to an institutionalized form of racism, sexism, homo-lesbo-transphobia and, therefore, an aesthetics based on a perspective of decolonization of school spaces. (CORSINO, 2020, p.12).

The results evidenced by Corsino (2020) reinforce the understanding of engaged Pedagogy, as proposed by bell hooks, highlighting the importance of enthusiasm as a fundamental component for the effective occurrence of teaching and learning.

## **PATHS OF HEALING: ENGAGED PEDAGOGY AS A POSSIBILITY OF HEALING AND CONFRONTING RACISM**

In childhood, hooks (2017) did not name this critical thinking process as theorizing, because I would not have this knowledge yet, but not naming did not mean not practicing. In her work, she highlights the importance of theorizing in depth about the origin of your pains as the main step to understand them and direct these studies in order to exterminate them. She completes by saying "[...]Theory is not intrinsically curative, liberating, and revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask it to do so and direct our theorizing to that end. [...]" (HOOKS, 2017, p.86).

From the accumulation of pains and anguish experienced during a lifetime, hooks arrives at an answer to these pains based on theorizing. He explains in what emotional conditions he arrived at the theory and what was the purpose of using it:

I came to the theory because I was hurt—the pain inside me was so intense that I couldn't go on living. I came to the theory in despair, wanting to understand—to grasp what was going on around and inside me. More importantly, I wanted to make the pain go away. I saw in theory, at the time, a place of healing. (HOOKS, 2017, p.83).

Regarding the possibility of salvation from theorizing, which can be done anywhere, hooks (2017) reports a situation she experienced one afternoon in a restaurant where the owners were black, the environment was very diverse and everyone was willing to listen to her and discuss issues of race, gender and class. After a very intense conversation with everyone present, where some had some degree of education and others did not, one of those women spoke to bell hooks at the end of the debates saying: "[...] ' I had such a pain inside me.' He thanked him that our meeting, our theorizing about race, gender and sexuality that afternoon had eased his pain. She testified that she felt the pain go away, felt a healing happening inside her. [...]" (HOOKS, 2017, p.102). This report emerges as a message that tells about someone who needed some themes seen as taboo to be discussed, some 'wounds' to be touched, since not everyone has the courage that bell hooks had in exposing their experiences.

By demonstrating her experience as a teacher, bell hooks (2017) shows us that in institutions, marginalized groups are not heard when they discuss formal content, nor when they discuss their personal experiences. In this discussion, it is important to indicate that the author does not defend the authority of experience as the only possible path of teaching and learning, but is a possible pedagogical strategy. In this sense, with the intention that the "authority of experience" is not oppressive and/or exclusionary, hooks uses a pedagogical strategy that is based on the fact that all individuals bring to the classroom a "[...] knowledge that comes from experience and that this knowledge can, in fact, improve our learning experience [...]" (HOOKS, 2017, p.114).

hooks (2017) expresses, in general, that in education, teachers do not value the use of students' personal experiences when inserted in the classroom. Regarding the use of experience, he states: "[...] I see that the experience and narration of personal experiences can be incorporated into the classroom in a way that deepens the discussion. And what excites me the most is when the narration of experiences links the discussions of facts or more abstract constructs with concrete reality [...]". (HOOKS, 2017, p.116). By defending the importance of personal experiences as an important element to deepen the discussions, he warns us that it is important not to consider it to be a unique condition, avoiding falling into an essentialism that could be characterized as "authority of experience". He proposes, as a counterpoint, the "passion of experience", stating that

When I use the expression "passion of experience," it encompasses many feelings, but particularly suffering, because there is a particular knowledge that comes from suffering. It is a way of knowing that is often expressed through the body, what it knows, what has been deeply inscribed in it by experience (hooks, 2017, p. 124).

The sharing of experiences makes it possible for the pains that cross us since childhood and later during adult life, allowing reflection on them, because as the author indicates, it is not easy to name our pains and still be able to make them a place of theorizing. When talking about naming pain, it refers to the idea of understanding that as an individual we can be part of a minority, that we think is being attacked in a subtle way in their work, in the school where they study and we have no idea why this is happening or what it is, we just feel that it hurts. From a reading that bell hooks makes of "[...] Patricia Williams, in the essay *"On Being the Object of Property"* (in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*), tells us that even those who are 'conscious' are bound to feel the pain engendered by all forms of domination (homophobia, class exploitation, racism, sexism, imperialism)



[...]" (HOOKS, 2017, p.102). Therefore, the importance of sharing experiences, which also makes it possible to understand the intersections that cross us when we live in a society that is built under different forms of domination.

The engaged pedagogy of bell hooks invites us to consider the possible cure for the pains inflicted by institutionalized dominations, highlighting the importance of theorization as a healing tool, whether through reading or meaningful discussions with other individuals. The passionate exchange of experiences plays a crucial role in this process, emerging from suffering and guiding a critical and reflective journey towards change. The author emphasizes that targeted theorizing can be a powerful weapon against various forms of domination, including racism and sexism.

### **PATHS OF TRANSFORMATION: FINAL REFLECTIONS ON BELL HOOKS' ENGAGED PEDAGOGY**

The reflections we made in this text provoked us to rethink the teaching and learning processes for an anti-racist education. As highlighted, although the legislation supports the teaching of African History and Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Cultures in public and private schools, we have not yet achieved its effective implementation in all institutions. The practice of this teaching has still occurred in a very incipient and quite punctual way, as a result of a social constitution that was carried out under the pillars of colonialism, in which, even freed from the political domination of Portugal, as a society, we continue to reproduce the forms of colonial domination as coloniality. The concept of race was constructed and used as an instrument to strengthen the ideas of inferiority of non-whites, with the intention of justifying the enslavement of these peoples. Racism, founded on the concept of race, contributed to the segregation of people and the maintenance of white supremacy. The legacy of colonialism is also manifested in cultural representations, which reinforce stereotypes and marginalize ethnic groups. Groups that suffer the impacts of racism that transcend individual spheres and install themselves as structuring in institutions and social relations that develop based on silencing, oppression, exclusion. The lack of representation and inclusion in the various instances of society contributes to the perpetuation of this cycle of racial inequality. In this context, education plays a fundamental role in the deconstruction of these hegemonic patterns of extermination of different forms of existence. It is imperative to rethink school curricula, incorporating an approach that promotes the appreciation of

ethnic-racial diversity, and to provide tools for new generations to question, resist and transform racist structures.

In addition, public policies that effectively address racial inequalities are essential to break the continuity of structural racism. The promotion of equal opportunities, the implementation of affirmative actions, and society's awareness of the impacts of racism are necessary steps to build a more just and equitable society. A society in which illness caused by discrimination is not allowed.

The engaged pedagogy of hooks presents itself as a possibility of cure, as it proposes change from the root of the problem. Racism must be faced, especially in schools, by intellectually trained teachers regarding ethnic-racial education. It is necessary that we learn about engaged pedagogy to practice an anti-racist education, using the experiences lived in the daily life of the student and teacher in connection with the contents studied. The pedagogy of bell hooks emerges as a possibility of healing from theorizing, when directed to this end. Hooks' theorization consists of the in-depth study of racism. In the discussion about this subject in conversation circles, she makes it explicit how difficult it is to expose the wounds, but it is necessary for the pain to decrease and one day it can heal, and those who are going through the same things can have the courage to let out their pain too.

In the ways of thinking about Engaged Pedagogy as one of the other forms of transformation, it is imperative to take it as a possibility of healing in the face of racial oppression not only in schools, but also by the community, by students and by each individual, considering us all as interconnected extensions of society. By recognizing that we are part of a society permeated by racist elements, it becomes essential to confront and overcome the racially discriminatory attitudes and thoughts that may be rooted in our everyday behavior. This collective awareness and action are key to dismantling dominant structures and building a more equitable and inclusive environment.

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