

UNIVERSITY POLITICS AND CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY FOR THE ETHNIC-RACIAL DEBATE: A STUDY ON THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF MINAS GERAIS



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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION: This paper aims to present and reflect on some actions and policies of a university institution considered a reference in the country for the debate on ethnic-racial issues and anti-racist education. We intend to characterize some aspects that we consider as conditions that contributed to the emergence of this debate and the demands related to ethnic-racial issues in its context. The material used is an excerpt from a doctoral thesis in education, defended in 2018.

Keywords: University Policy. Ethnic-Racial Debate. Federal University of Minas Gerais.

INTRODUCTION

This work aims to present and reflect on some actions and policies of a university institution considered a reference in the country for the debate on ethnic-racial themes and anti-racist education. We intend to characterize some aspects that we consider as conditions that contributed to the emergence of this debate and the demands related to ethnic-racial issues in its context. The material used is an excerpt from a doctoral thesis in education, defended in 2018.

The Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) has a great tradition in the Brazilian university context, whether in teaching, research or extension activities. Recognized nationally and internationally as an academic institution of excellence, this university is also, compared to other institutions of the same academic size, among those that stand out in terms of its multicultural/intercultural focus and the acceptance of cultural diversity, either as a theme or as an inclusion of subjects, although with certain limits. We can affirm that progressively, especially in the last two decades, the racial theme at UFMG has found space to enter the agenda of debates, as well as in the implementation of projects and actions, both within the institution itself and beyond it. A large part of these actions is largely due to an active militancy of professors, students and employees, in interface with the broader society, but also to the Brazilian political and social scenario, which has favored and has favored displacements and changes in the debate on issues that involve Brazilian society, even though there are setbacks and moments of great difficulty and/or confrontations. We can say that the phenomena that occurred in the political and social context of Brazil after 2016, despite representing stagnation or setbacks, in different dimensions, were not enough to deconstruct a process that has been consolidated for some time.

Characterizing the reality of the institution analyzed is, in our understanding, essential to understanding the choices and trajectories made in our reflection. More specifically, we will focus on the experiences, actions, activities and subjects linked to the Faculty of Education (FaE) of UFMG, although other units of the university may be involved. Our focus of analysis was initially concentrated on the experiences institutionalized by the central management of the university in question and the participation of members of this academic unit became evident in documents and observations. However, we emphasize that it is necessary to locate it in a broader social

and institutional reality, something that has become indispensable to the development of our analysis.

EXTERNAL CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY AND REPERCUSSIONS AT UFMG: FROM THE (CRISIS OF) THE UNIVERSITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY TO THE POLICIES OF RACIAL EQUALITY

Because we act as teachers in teaching degree courses and know the dynamics of the functioning of universities, we have considered the existence of multiple training spaces within the HEIs that favor or not the learning of future teachers, with regard to the ethnic-racial theme, a requirement of the current Law of Basic Guidelines for Education (Law 9.394/1996). From this, we inquired about the *conditions of possibility*¹ for the existence of this training, since the issue was not considered relevant to the university context, in general².

In other words, a priori, we were interested in knowing if this training focused on the racial theme was and is favored by other factors, external and/or internal to the HEI, so we dedicated ourselves to understanding it, facing the institutional context in a broader way. We understand it as essential to know and understand what these factors would be, external and internal, and how these *conditions of possibility* arose or were created. In this way, we perceive the existence of teacher training focused on the education of ethnic-racial relations as an effect and not as a condition. An effect of political actions within society, which question the place of power of different subjects and the place of power of knowledge. As Gomes (2011) stated,

The Brazilian black movement has stood out in the history of our country as the political subject whose claims have managed, since the year 2000, to influence the Brazilian government and its main research bodies, such as the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). This political recognition has made possible, in recent years, a change within various sectors of the government and, above all, in public universities, such as, for example, the process of implementing affirmative action policies and practices aimed at the black population (p. 134-135).

¹ Understanding of the conditions that enabled the emergence and permanence of certain statements and discursive practices (Foucault, 1998; 2002).

² When we deal with the history of achievements related to the racial issue in Brazil, we mention how this debate was centered on some areas of knowledge, some research groups or the figure of some intellectuals linked to the university, such as Florestan Fernandes, for example.

We understand that there were *conditions of possibility* for the emergence of the debate on the racial issue in the institutional context of UFMG, generated by different factors. Some of these factors have their origin in issues, problems and gaps of the contemporary university, which also exist in different institutions of the same nature, in other parts of the world. Other factors are consequences of broader social changes and demands from public policies and government regulations, which were driven by these same social changes and which are also manifested within the university institution itself. To build our reflection, we started from factors external to the institution, which may have had direct effects on it, contributing to the emergence of the ethnic-racial debate in its various spaces.

The modern university is one of the most important institutions of modernity. Over the last two centuries, it has been the privileged center of the production and reproduction of indolent reason, of the monocultures of scientific knowledge, of the dominant scale, of the naturalization of differences and the hierarchy between them, of linear time and of capitalist productivity. (...) the social and cultural contradictions that are at the basis of the construction of the university have also allowed it to be a center of critical and independent thought, often in conflict with authoritarian political power (Santos, 2013, p. 15-16).

The transition from the twentieth century to the twenty-first century has been marked by a change in perspectives and paradigms. In the last decades of the last century, more strongly in the 1990s, and in the first years of this century, the debates around consolidated models in different sectors intensified: the productive, the scientific, the cultural, among others. The great narratives (metanarratives) about the modern world, centered on the existence of universal consensus and (almost) absolute truths, then began to be questioned by different scholars, but mainly by changes in/in society, in social relations, in the world of work and in the production of knowledge.

One of the questions noted in this period refers to the university and, more specifically, to its social function and its role in the production of knowledge. Created as part of an exclusivist system and isolated from a large portion of the world's population, the university, as an educational institution and instance, was faced with a considerable increase in demands, ranging from diversification and increase of functions to opening up to other segments of the population, still on the margins of this social place, as well as to their demands and issues. Santos (2013b) argues that the expansion of the university's functions generated a set of tensions and contradictions, which he calls *the university crisis*. Within this crisis, the author identifies three types of contradiction, which manifest

themselves through the *crisis of hegemony*, the *crisis of legitimacy* and the *institutional crisis*. The university crisis would thus lead the university to be questioned by society and the State, which led to a questioning made by the university itself and, consequently, by the discourse of reform.

For Santos (2013b), the three crises cited are, therefore, the expression of the contradictions experienced by the university institution in the transition between the twentieth century and the twenty-first century. The *crisis of hegemony* is the manifestation of the contradiction between "exemplary knowledge and functional knowledge", where the former are "necessary for the training of the elites that the university has been concerned with since the Middle Ages" and the latter are "useful for the tasks of social transformation and in particular for the training of the qualified workforce required by industrial development" (p. 375).

The *crisis of legitimacy* arises from the contradiction between hierarchization and democratization of knowledge and knowledge. The aforementioned author states that there is a crisis of legitimacy whenever "a given social condition is no longer consensually accepted" and there is a "failure of collectively assumed objectives". This crisis manifests itself through the contradictory hierarchization of the so-called specialized knowledge and the restrictions on access to it, in conflict with social and political demands for the democratization of access and equal opportunities (p. 375).

Finally, the *institutional crisis* of the university is directly related to the contradiction between university autonomy and its external control, mainly through evaluation processes. Santos (2013b) points out that "the growing submission to criteria of effectiveness and productivity" calls into question the organizational specificity of the university and, consequently, the way it outlines its objectives and values. The market view of effectiveness and efficiency overlaps with the more academic view of productivity and social return (p. 375-376).

The phenomenon to which Santos' analysis refers has been present in the university context for some time. Although Brazil has some specificities regarding it, compared to other countries, with the recent expansion of access and diversification of activities, the country has also been affected by this crisis. We believe that the debate on the contradictions mentioned above and their consequences and developments may have contributed to the emergence of different social demands. This scenario may have been opportune to point out gaps and difficulties present in the institution, as well as the

questioning of the contradictions that are peculiar to our reality. The ethnic-racial issue in Brazil and, more specifically, the denial or alienation of the factors that generate social and racial exclusion may have had space in this debate on the university crisis.

In the case of UFMG, it seems to us that this is a true statement, because when we verify the institutional changes that foster social inclusion and the promotion of racial equality, in recent years, we realize that there has been room for debate and for the incorporation of these demands. Obviously, we are not disregarding the pressure exerted by entities and social movements or even by the academic community itself. We consider, however, that the questioning of the weaknesses present in the contemporary university context, mainly related to the right and the conditions of access of the diversity of the population and related to the production and validation of knowledge, may have been a *condition of possibility* for other discussions and demands to be present in a context of change/reform, a theme that we will not delve into here. However, throughout the text we will talk about some of the institutional changes that have occurred, which are more directly related to the ethnic-racial theme.

It is necessary to note that, in line with the so-called *university crisis* pointed out by scholars in different countries, Brazil already had a broad debate on the role of the university as a social institution, which included questioning the mode of admission of undergraduate students and the restricted number of vacancies in institutions. In this debate, the idea was defended, among other things, of a structural change in the Brazilian university system and the modification of the forms of access, the expansion of institutions and the creation of forms of student assistance, in order to also guarantee the permanence of students and minimize dropout rates.

The issues related to the expansion of the federal system of higher education were foreseen in the National Education Plan (PNE) of 2001 and triggered the creation of programs for the expansion of federal universities, starting in 2003. The Support Program for the Restructuring and Expansion Plan of Federal Universities – REUNI, created by the Federal Government, had the adhesion of UFMG, which prepared its own project, following the rules defined by the official document and incorporating the discussions pertinent to the implementation of the plan. Among the items included in the project, widely disseminated in the academic community and approved by the University Council, one draws our attention: "4. Social Commitment of the Institution / 4.1 Inclusion Policies".

Focusing more specifically on the discussion about the difficulties of access to university for students coming from public schools and working students, we realize that the issues raised by this document may have favored the debate on the issue of quotas and, consequently, on the situation of black students. Although the existence of this debate is not explicit, from the reading of the project related to REUNI, we believe that this phenomenon of restructuring and expansion of UFMG can also be considered a *condition of possibility* for the racial issue to emerge in the academic context.

As mentioned, the actions of social groups, especially the organized black movement, from the twentieth century onwards, played a fundamental role in expanding the rights of Afro-descendants in Brazil. From non-governmental and localized actions, to participation in the public sphere and politics, we can see how the actions of social movements had repercussions in the Brazilian context. Although gradually and slowly, the right of access to public services, at first, and the right of recognition and affirmation, in more recent moments, are, to a large extent, the result of a social demand of the black population.

In the early years of the new century (century. This demand has materialized through a set of social public policies, which have repercussions in different sectors, especially in education and the world of work. We understand that some of these policies generate direct effects within the HEIs, which are called for changes, in the sense of both meeting the legal definitions and incorporating the changes that have occurred in society.

We do not mean by this that the university is exclusively a reflection or a consequence of society and social changes. Obviously, we consider that this institution both influences and is influenced by the context of which it is a part. However, we also consider that changes within educational institutions are usually slow and gradual processes, and can be motivated by external factors. Thus, we are starting from the assumption that there are needs and conditions explicitly defined calling on HEIs to change. Some of these needs and conditions may have been configured as *conditions of possibility* for the existence of the debate on ethnic-racial relations within UFMG, the *locus* of our analysis.

One of the most visible demands, perhaps, are those of legal origin. In recent years, we can say that the university has been faced with the challenge of debating and implementing actions that could meet laws 10.639/2003 (expanded by law 11.645/2008), 12.288/2010 and 12.711/2012. The first law (10.639/2003) instituted the obligation of

Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations and the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture in Basic Education, with direct consequences on the initial and continuing training of teachers, as well as on the production of knowledge related to the theme, both focused on teacher training and on their performance in the daily life of schools. Subsequently, the proposal of this law was expanded by Law 11.645/2008, which also incorporated the history and culture of indigenous peoples.

The second (12.288/2010) instituted the so-called Statute of Racial Equality which, according to its own text, is a document that aims to "guarantee the black population the effectiveness of equal opportunities, the defense of individual, collective and diffuse ethnic rights and the fight against discrimination and other forms of ethnic intolerance". At the university, this document provoked and expanded questions about the access and permanence of blacks in higher education and about the creation of affirmative action policies in HEIs. It also explained the need to expand the production of knowledge related to this portion of the population, in order to identify, understand and problematize the main characteristics of racial inequality in Brazil.

The third law (12.711/2012), in turn, instituted the reservation of 50% of vacancies in federal public universities for people with a profile of experience of social exclusion, with a socioeconomic and ethnic-racial cut. This has placed the HEIs before the challenge not only of welcoming and ensuring the permanence of these students, but of promoting the debate on social exclusion and inclusion, on the promotion of social and racial equality, and also on the overcoming of prejudice and racism, with emphasis on institutional racism³. In addition, considering the context of the university crisis, the legislation in question explained the importance of debating the role of the university in the construction of social justice and what actions to implement in this regard, which has still been discussed and revisited⁴.

With regard to the demands generated by Law 10.639/2003, we have to consider that the implementation of the law evidences the direct relationship between the "what" the

³ The Program to Combat Institutional Racism (PCRI) defined institutional racism as "the failure of institutions and organizations to provide a professional and appropriate service to people by virtue of their color, culture, racial or ethnic origin. It manifests itself in discriminatory norms, practices and behaviors adopted in daily work, which are the result of racial prejudice, an attitude that combines racist stereotypes, lack of attention and ignorance. In any case, institutional racism always puts people from discriminated racial or ethnic groups at a disadvantage in accessing benefits generated by the State and other institutions and organizations" (CRI, 2006, p.22).

⁴ Law 12.711/2012 has been the subject of controversy in Brazil, mainly due to the growth of right-wing conservative sectors in the national legislature. At times, it ran the risk of being extinguished.

Basic Education teacher teaches and the "what" the teacher learns to teach, in a process called *inverted symmetry*. Following the principle of inverted symmetry, we understand that in order to teach certain knowledge and make the necessary interventions with the students, it will be necessary for the teacher to become familiar with the themes in advance, in a systematized way. This perspective of understanding presupposes an active formative posture and in accordance with the theoretical-practical needs of future teachers on the part of the HEIs, since the initial training of teachers and, often, also continuing education takes place in them. Teacher training thus became the target of changes and the ethnic-racial debate became a necessity.

For universities, more than rethinking teacher training, based on this new demand for teaching, there was also another need: to produce and/or re-elaborate knowledge about Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture, and also to rethink the knowledge that can be used in initial training courses. This knowledge includes a range of knowledge, considered quite complex, as it involves several dimensions of human formation. Education for ethnic-racial relations is, in our understanding, quite demanding, if taken from an anti-racist perspective. In addition to historical data, definition and redefinition of concepts, definition and redefinition of methodologies, it requires a change in attitude, for most people, as it is necessary to question and deconstruct values and beliefs, rethink the world and social and educational relations.

Following a chronology, we have to mention that the creation of Law 12.288/2010, in turn, when it instituted the Statute of Racial Equality, brought the debate to society, in a more incisive way, about the practices of racism and racial discrimination. This legislation, which although it has a more comprehensive character than that of the educational field, as it deals with various areas or sectors of public policies in the country, typified racism, raising questions about values and beliefs rooted in Brazilian society. The law outlined some elements that can guide actions aimed at the eradication of racial inequality in Brazil, which also has a direct effect on educational institutions, especially higher education institutions, which are forced to think about their role in the mechanisms of exclusion. The Statute of Racial Equality had the role of, first of all, questioning the reasons and effects of racial inequality, including issues about racism, discrimination and intolerance of difference in public environments, such as universities, including the forms of production, selection and distribution of knowledge.

If the HEIs and some of their members (faculty, students and employees) insisted on justifying inequality by the bias of the social and economic issue, with the Statute they were faced with legal notes that go in another direction and justify inequality by racial bias. If the HEIs did not consider themselves agents of racial inequality, they began to be in this place, being an active character of exclusion, simply because they did not treat racial equality as an agenda. Although not the entire academic community of an HEI felt motivated to debate on the subject, the promotion of racial equality became a goal to be incorporated and, even with the divergences, the institutions had to debate how to make this objective feasible in the midst of their regular activities. The main path is the creation of affirmative action policies, however, it would not be possible to create them without facing the problem head-on.

Regarding the effects of the creation of Law 12.711/2012, we need to say that it is perhaps the legislation with the greatest impact on HEIs. This law, known as the "Quota Law", instituted the quota system throughout the federal higher education system. Federal HEIs now have to allocate 50% of their vacancies to students who graduated from public schools, were black, and/or had a family income of up to one and a half minimum wages, *per capita*. It is important to note that the percentage of vacancy reservation has been gradually increased over the last few years, in the different HEIs, starting with a percentage of 25% and increasing until reaching the 50% defined by law.

The quota law changed the routine of entering the university and each institution needed to analyze its own system for selecting candidates. UFMG, on the verge of the approval of this law, had already started the debate with the community. The Rector between 2006 and 2010, prof. Ronaldo Tadêu Pena, made available an information portal⁵ on the issue of quotas, which included, in addition to a message signed by himself, a set of questions and answers on the subject. The portal also had a collection of articles and testimonies from members of the academic community and other archives that could enrich the debate. The portal was entitled "Social Inclusion – a necessary debate.

With arguments against or with arguments in favor, the debate on quotas and other affirmative action policies and the promotion of racial equality was definitively implemented by the quota law. Educational institutions were faced with a legal determination that caused a lot of controversy. This entire process also took place within the scope of UFMG.

⁵ To access the portal, enter the following address: www.ufmg.br/inclusaosocial/.

Normative Ordinance No. 13, of May 11, 2016, created by the Ministry of Education seems to have reignited this controversy, but, due to the political conditions of the country at that time (between October and December 2016), the debates, at first, did not have a great repercussion at the university. The ordinance in question, approved and sanctioned by the Minister of Education, Aluísio Mercadante, in the last days of the Dilma Rousseff administration, established that the Federal Institutions of Higher Education (IFES) should submit proposals for the creation of Affirmative Actions in Graduate Programs within 90 days.

The document alluded to the Statute of Racial Equality (law 12.711/10) and law 12.990/14, which established the percentage of 20% of vacancies reserved for black candidates in public exams at the federal level, for entry into the public service. With this reference, the Normative Ordinance argued in favor of defining the same percentage of vacancies reserved in Graduate Programs, promoting the "inclusion of blacks (blacks and browns), indigenous people and people with disabilities". Although the graduate programs of the analyzed HEI had different positions on the subject, with some positions emphatically opposed to quotas for admission to master's and doctoral degrees, the debate was instituted, even without definitive institutional positions.

CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITY INTERNAL TO UFMG: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ACTION IN ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE ETHNIC-RACIAL THEME

Inside the university there is movement and action. We tend to focus on the formal aspects of the functioning of a university, forgetting that these formal aspects are also a reflection of the university movement. We call here movement the various political actions that permeate the institutional daily life and, yes, we start from the assumption that the choices of teachers and students are also directed by their beliefs and collective and personal struggles. With this in mind, we decided to survey the activities focused on the racial theme that take place in the context of UFMG. If we understand that the curriculum is an arena of struggle, a space of disputes (Santos and Paraíso, 1996; Silva, 2004), we also know that the functioning of an HEI is marked by these same disputes.

We would like to highlight that we are not restricted to the understanding that curriculum is synonymous with curriculum matrix. We consider the curriculum in a broader sense, which includes the diverse and different possibilities for learning and dialogue. Thus, we consider that the curriculum within the university is also composed of the actions,

activities, knowledge and experiences lived within it and in interface with it. It is something in constant movement, with advances and retreats. It is also made by the senses and meanings it produces and by those that are attributed to them. It is a practice of signification. It is a productive practice, which dynamically produces something. In addition, it expresses a social relation and its power relations.

The social relations within which the practices of signification take place are not simply social relations; they are more than that: they are social relations of *power*. The different social groups are not situated in a symmetrical way in relation to the process of cultural production, here understood as the process of production of meaning. To signify, in the final analysis, is to assert particular meanings, proper to a social group, over the meanings of other groups, which presupposes a gradient, a differential of power between them. (Silva, 2003, p. 23).

We considered three specific moments as *conditions of internal possibility* of the HEI for the emergence of the racial issue and the subsequent incorporation of the theme into the curricula. The first was the creation of the study and research group "Affirmative Action Program at UFMG", located at the Faculty of Education, in 2002, and led by Professor Nilma Lino Gomes and Professor Luiz Alberto de Oliveira Gonçalves. The group was created with the objective of bringing together professors and students from different academic units of the university around the debate on race relations in Brazil and, mainly, affirmative action in higher education. It is the result of some discussions promoted in the institution, especially from the end of the 1990s, which reflected a national movement of diverse sectors of society, especially those linked to the black movements that had long demanded the creation of mechanisms to overcome racial inequalities in Brazil⁶. According to the group itself, its objective was to create a space for studies on the subject, from an interdepartmental, inter-unit and interdisciplinary perspective. Throughout its history, it has also incorporated researchers from other institutions into its different actions.

It is important to note that the creation of this group is not an isolated action in Brazil. In the same period, other higher education institutions sought to institute or consolidate groups of the same nature, aiming to take the debate on affirmative action to a purposeful level, with proposals for the creation of these actions within the HEIs. Later, in the 2000s, this movement to create study groups became known as the National Network of NEAB's – Afro-Brazilian Studies Centers. It is hard to believe that this whole debate has passed by within universities, even though it may have found limits in its performance with

⁶ We deal with this theme when we address the phases of struggle of the black movement in Brazil, with regard to education.

the creation of university policies. The existence of public events, the participation of great names in research and black militancy in conducting the debates and the creation of spaces for study and production of knowledge may have constituted a *condition of possibility* for the racial issue to be at UFMG, as well as in the curricula of its courses.

The Affirmative Action Program was involved with different activities related to the racial issue, promoting from extension activities, such as specialization and improvement courses, mainly with the continuing education of basic education teachers, to research actions of national projection, such as the survey and analysis of pedagogical practices aimed at the Education of Race Relations in Brazil, according to the group's own data⁷. We also highlight the importance of the preparatory course for black students for admission to graduate school (Affirmation in Graduate Studies) and the academic mobility actions of undergraduate and/or graduate students (also for blacks), through agreements with the Federal Government.

Another specific action within UFMG that we can consider as *a condition of internal possibility* for the emergence of the debate on the racial issue refers to the creation of the Connections of Knowledge project, in 2005. The creation of the proposal for this project was carried out by SECADI/MEC, which had the following objectives:

1. To stimulate greater articulation between the university institution and popular communities, with the proper exchange of knowledge, experiences and demands;
2. To enable young university students from popular backgrounds to develop the capacity to produce scientific knowledge and expand their capacity to intervene in their territory of origin, offering financial and methodological support for this;
3. Carry out diagnoses and continued studies on the university structure and the specific demands of students from popular backgrounds. Based on the diagnosis, the members of the project should propose measures that create conditions for greater access and permanence, with quality, of students from favelas and peripheries in higher education institutions.
4. To stimulate the creation of methodologies, with the priority participation of young university students from these communities, aimed at: monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies, particularly those in the social area; mapping economic, cultural, educational and sociability conditions, in order to develop projects to assist social groups in critical situations of social vulnerability; in particular children and adolescents (SECADI/MEC, 2005)⁸.

UFMG's participation took place through a public notice and, initially, the project was coordinated by two professors from the Faculty of Education: Juarez Dayrell and Nilma Lino Gomes. The announcement of the beginning of the activities of Conexões de Saberes, made to the entire academic community, argued that:

⁷ Available at: <http://www.acoesafirmativasufmg.org/>

⁸ <http://portal.mec.gov.br/conexoes-de-saberes/apresentacao>

A new project aimed at favoring the exchange of knowledge between young people from the University and from poor communities has just been implemented at UFMG. It is the Connections of Knowledge, which aims to expand opportunities for students interested in developing research projects, while stimulating their reinserction in the periphery. (UFMG Notícias, 2005)⁹element.

We believe that this project has a relevant role not only in the discussion of the racial theme, in particular, but also in the debate on the existence and nature of diverse knowledge, as well as on the issue of the hegemony of academic knowledge. This debate is related to the so-called *crisis of the legitimacy* of the university, a subject addressed above, and rekindles one of the great controversies of our time: the dichotomous relationship between popular knowledge and academic knowledge. For the MEC, the project aimed to establish a dialogue between universities and popular communities, through the insertion of young people from popular backgrounds in the academic dynamics of knowledge production and in dialogue with the issues and problems of their daily reality. The profile of the young people awarded the project's scholarships was, in itself, a great differential, since the candidate's social origin was as important as his academic development, a criterion traditionally privileged in the university space. The project was also coordinated by professors from FAFICH, an academic unit that brings together courses in the areas of humanities and social sciences.

The third event that we believe may have favored the presence of the racial theme in undergraduate curricula refers to the creation and performance of the MAD – Affirming Rights Movement at UFMG. Created in 2007, MAD was a collective of black students (university and high school), graduates of public schools, which had the support of teachers from community pre-university courses and teachers from the university itself. Many of the members of MAD were involved with the different study/research groups of the university, such as the Affirmative Action Program (FaE), the Youth Observatory (FaE) and the Knowledge Connections project (FaE/FAFICH).

The group's main demand, together with the university, was the institutionalization of affirmative action policies in and at UFMG, which would serve black students, especially those who graduated from public schools. His argumentation questioned, above all, the meritocratic logic of the institution, a reflection of a university model consolidated in the country, since the creation of the first higher education courses, still in the nineteenth century. in order to problematize the issues under discussion. A letter with MAD's

⁹ <https://www.ufmg.br/online/arquivos/001300.shtml>

arguments and claims was disseminated among the academic community and later forwarded to the Rector of UFMG. Although long, we believe that her exposition in this text is of great relevance, since it expresses and exemplifies what we have called here the *conditions of possibility* for the presence of the racial issue within the university and has become a symbol of a moment of collective learning, which we believe is also an aspect of the curricula of this university. The verbatim transcription follows:

Belo Horizonte, August 13, 2007

Magnificent Rector Prof. Dr. Ronaldo Tadeu Pena

Dear Sir,

In the third millennium, we are experiencing an international and national conjuncture of increasing inequalities and worsening social exclusion that affect the various sectors of society. In this process, the articulation between class, race, and gender inequalities becomes more complex, revealing a new picture of inequalities amply attested by official IPEA surveys, IBGE data, and scientific production, especially in the area of Social Sciences and Humanities.

UFMG stands out in the national scenario for its academic contribution and for the critical analysis of this situation, produced by its intellectual staff. Many of our professionals, nationally and internationally renowned, contribute to the analysis and understanding of new inequalities, not only at the research level, but also through social intervention projects and the formulation and evaluation of public policies.

It is in this context that the demand for the implementation of access and permanence policies is configured as a new reality in Brazil. It is also in this context that affirmative action policies aimed at the black population are urgent. We can no longer escape the alarming picture of racial inequality that affects black youth.

According to IPEA, in 1999, only 2% of young blacks were able to access higher education (IPEA, 1999). Faced with this situation, several universities, public and private, have presented solutions even though they understand that it is not the role of the university to formulate public policies or assume the role of social movements, but rather to know how to listen to the main demands of society with regard to Higher Education, especially when they come from a portion of the population historically excluded from this level of education. Exclusion that reveals the reproduction and expression of social, racial and gender inequality, as well as its imbrication with Higher Education. We understand that one of the ways to take a stand against these inequalities is to understand access to university as a right of this portion of the population and to promote ways to democratize it from the outside and from the inside.

The seriousness of this moment has produced debates and initiatives among the various public institutions of Higher Education in the country. Some have already positioned themselves and presented proposals for inclusion in the perspective of affirmative action to society and the federal government. In this context, we also witnessed measures from the Ministry of Education itself, such as the project for the Expansion of Face-to-Face Higher Education in IFES. From now on, public universities are called upon to develop and present expansion projects. We understand that any expansion project to be presented by UFMG and the other IFES cannot disregard the broader debate on the processes of inequality that more directly affect certain social and ethnic-racial groups in our country. In this case, when preparing its expansion project, UFMG should incorporate forms of access and permanence that contemplate racial inclusion. We hope that UFMG does not omit itself in this debate and presents a coherent and fair proposal, which promotes entry and guarantees the successful permanence of black students and students from the popular sectors.

It is important to remember that, in 2006, UFMG held a seminar that aimed to map the various experiences of inclusion promoted by some Brazilian public higher

education institutions. Such an initiative demonstrated a posture that it is necessary to know, analyze and exchange experiences with those who readily understood that one of the functions of the university is to be attentive to social demands, especially those related to the democratization of access to knowledge. The expectation of part of the university community, especially those who believe that the democratization of access and successful permanence represent one of the most serious functions of the university of the third millennium, was that the rector would open a debate with the academic community and social movements, going beyond the realization of the aforementioned seminar, presenting a proposal. After the seminar, it was also expected that the Teaching, Research and Extension Program for Affirmative Actions at UFMG, which has been carrying out, since 2002, several actions and permanence projects aimed at young black people at this institution, especially those from low-income backgrounds, would be considered as a privileged interlocutor in this process. This desired and necessary dialogue is not limited to this Program. Other professionals, groups and nuclei at UFMG - some of whom signed this letter - who have competence, knowledge and work focused on the processes aimed at the struggle for democracy and the problematization of inequalities were also not considered as interlocutors and partners for the construction of the debate.

UFMG remains silent at a time when the public university and the processes of democratization of access have been put to the test by official data on racial and social inequalities and by the demands of social movements. In several forums, inside and outside Minas Gerais, this position has been questioned. After all, UFMG, in its 80 years of existence, has always been recognized as a vanguard in the national academic and political scenario, maintaining positions that marked the history of public higher education in the country, such as: resistance to the military dictatorship, reorganization of UNE, reception of African refugee students, among others.

The current context of democratization of access and permanence of black students and students from public schools to Higher Education is also an important political, social and academic moment. We hope that, at this moment, UFMG will not abdicate its vanguard position and present to the academic community and society a response consistent with the history of seriousness and political and social commitment always assumed. Moreover, that this response is publicly debated with the academic community and society in general, and not simply formulated by a cabinet team.

In the previous administration of the rectorship, this discussion fell short of expectations. Meetings and conversations with the rector were held, seminars were promoted by the Affirmative Action Program at UFMG, the UFMG Bulletin covered the theme, however, no concrete initiative was implemented. We hoped that the current management of the rector would present an effective proposal to the academic community. However, no such initiative was taken.

While UFMG remains silent, several Brazilian public universities have already spoken out and presented proposals and effective practices of affirmative action. Most of them develop the modality of quotas aimed at blacks, indigenous people, people with special needs and/or students from public schools. They are federal and state universities, whose quota policies were defined through the decision of their university councils or state laws, as is the case of UERJ, UENF and UEMG. Some of these proposals resulted from intense debates and joint actions carried out by the university and social movements. Among the institutions that proceeded in this way, we mention: University of Brasília (UnB), Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL), Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), Federal University of Recôncavo Baiano (UFRB), Federal University of ABC (UFABC), Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCAR), Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Federal University of São Paulo/Paulista School of Medicine (UNIFESP/EPM), Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), Federal University of Pará (UFPA), State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), State University of Norte Fluminense (UENF), State University of Bahia (UNEB), State University of Goiás (UEG), State University of Ponta Grossa

(UEPG), State University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UEMS), State University of Londrina (UEL), State University of Mato Grosso (UNEMAT), State University of Rio Grande do Sul (UERGS), State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE), State University of Maranhão (UEMA), State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG), State University of Maringá (UEM), State University of Rio Grande do Norte (UERN), University of the State of Amazonas (UEA), Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) and Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), among others. The Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) has a proposal in progress. There is also the case of the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), which does not reserve vacancies, but assigns additional points to students from public schools and to blacks in its entrance exam. The implementation of the quota policy in the various Brazilian public and private universities has been accompanied by constant evaluation processes and some results are already beginning to be made public. They reveal that the school performance of students from the quota policy is equal to or higher than that of students who enter through the so-called universal entrance exam. Data from UNB, UERJ, UNEB, UFBA, and even PROUNI (another type of affirmative action aimed at the private sector) prove this situation. These results and others that are beginning to be tabulated and disseminated contradict the meritocratic discourse formulated in academic circles. They reveal that there is, in Brazilian higher education, social and racial inequality, which results in a situation of disadvantage for students from different social and ethnic-racial groups.

In view of this fact, we would like to register that the Affirmative Action Program at UFMG, the professors of UFMG and other nuclei and groups that sign this letter have suggestions and proposals for this rectory. It is our intention to see, in practice, the effectiveness of a democratic and concrete intervention by UFMG with regard to the access and permanence of groups historically excluded from the university. We believe that an institutional measure based on dialogue between the university, the State and social movements is possible, aiming at the democratization of access and the implementation of a successful permanence policy from the perspective of affirmative action.

It is with this objective that we propose:

- that the racial and social criterion be incorporated in the formulation and implementation of a policy of access and permanence at UFMG as of 2008;
- that the University Council of UFMG discuss, at the beginning of the second semester of 2007, an effective proposal for the implementation of an affirmative action policy aimed at the access and permanence of black students and students from public schools at UFMG;
- that a commission be established in the University Council composed of its members and other professionals from the academic community with conditions to make effective contributions on this topic to prepare and present the proposal for racial quotas and for students from public schools to the academic community of UFMG;
- that the proposal to be prepared by the University Council includes a policy for the permanence of students who will be served by the quotas;
- that UFMG carry out an ethnic-racial census, with resources from the FUNDEP fund, so that we have accurate data on the ethnic-racial and social reality of UFMG, by the end of 2007;
- that the data from this census be disclosed in a seminar open to the academic community and the general public and be made available on the UFMG website;
- that UFMG adopt the color/race item, according to the IBGE color categories (black, brown, white, yellow and indigenous), in the enrollment forms of all undergraduate and graduate courses, as of 2008;
- that, as of 2008, the implementation and monitoring of UFMG's access and permanence policy has an institutional place in the organizational structure and budget of the rectory, which allows it to carry out periodic evaluations, resources for scholarships, opening of public notices, from the perspective of affirmative action;

- that part of the resources destined to FUMP and collected in the entrance exam be invested in the permanence of students served by the quotas, as of the year 2008;

- that the above-mentioned initiative does not reduce affirmative action to student assistance, but is understood as a political and social development of the character of this Foundation.

We believe that, only in this way, UFMG will be able to present a proposal to the academic community and to society in which it is consistent with the current moment of struggle for social and racial equality that we are experiencing. UFMG, due to its seriousness and commitment to the public, cannot avoid a social and academic response of relevance at such an important moment for society. We believe that this institution is able to present this answer, which should be the result of a democratic debate between the university, society and social movements.

MAD - AFFIRMING RIGHTS MOVEMENT AT UFMG

This letter was signed by students, professors and employees, who voluntarily joined the movement of demands or who agreed with it. The debate around the demands was tense, according to members of the group itself, who we had the opportunity to talk to in our surveys. According to data from UFMG itself, this context favored the emergence of a set of social inclusion policies within the university and the creation of a commission to evaluate, support and monitor the process unleashed there.

On September 22, 2008, the Rector of UFMG appointed a group of civil servants to compose the Commission for the Study and Monitoring of Social Inclusion Measures in the Student Body of UFMG (CAIS), through ordinance 64/2008, later modified by ordinance 079/2009. (CAIS/UFMG, n.d.)¹⁰element.

Also in 2008, the so-called Bonus Policy was instituted at UFMG, which can be considered a first attempt to promote inclusion and social justice. Initially, the bonus policy provided for the use of the system among students from public schools. Like the movement triggered by the MAD, the individual ethnic-racial characterization was also incorporated as a criterion for the distribution of bonuses. The bonus policy worked from the 2009 Vestibular and provided for the addition of a 10% bonus in the score of students who had studied the last seven years of basic education in public schools. For students who declared themselves black (black and brown) and were in the same condition as other public school graduates, an additional 5% bonus would be added to the entrance exam score. The system was extinguished after the adoption of the quota system and the SISU – Unified Selection System, a computerized system of the Ministry of Education through

¹⁰ <https://www2.ufmg.br/cais/cais/home/A-POLITICA-DE-BONUS-NA-UFMG/HISTORICO-DO-BONUS-NA-UFMG>

which public institutions of higher education offer vacancies to candidates participating in the ENEM – National High School Exam.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Concluding this study, it is evident that the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) has played a crucial role in promoting the ethnic-racial debate and in the implementation of social inclusion and affirmative action policies. The analysis shows that the internal and external conditions enabled the progressive insertion of these agendas in the academic environment. Externally, social changes and public policies, such as the Quota Law and the Statute of Racial Equality, created a favorable scenario for UFMG, as well as other institutions, to adopt inclusion measures aimed at historically marginalized populations.

Internally, the mobilization of groups such as the Affirmative Action Program and the Affirming Rights Movement, along with initiatives such as Conexões de Saberes, played a key role in bringing the issue of racial equality to the center of academic discussions. These actions contributed significantly to the creation of affirmative action policies and the promotion of diversity, favoring the entry of black and low-income students into higher education.

With this, we can say that UFMG stands out as an institution that, despite challenges and resistance, has managed to integrate the ethnic-racial issue into its practices and curricula, advancing in the construction of a more inclusive education focused on social justice. These efforts reflect the university's commitment to the democratization of access and permanence of historically excluded groups.

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