

EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND WHITENESS – THE PRESENCE-ABSENCE OF BLACKS AND ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL REFORMS



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ABSTRACT

Although the official discourse on racial equity has gained ground in recent decades, Brazilian educational policy still persistently reveals a structural pattern of invisibility of the black population. In this context, this article investigates how whiteness operates silently in educational reforms, naturalizing the absence of blacks as an epistemic subject and depoliticizing the proposal of an anti-racist education. Although legislation such as Law 10.639/2003 represents important milestones, it is notable that its implementation, in many cases, is diluted between the lines of curricula, official documents and training policies, which continue to be centered on a Eurocentric and monocultural logic. In view of this, we propose as an object of study the critical analysis of recent educational reforms in Brazil, with emphasis on the ways in which these policies reinforce or silence the centrality of confronting structural racism in schools. We start from the assumption that whiteness is not presented only as the absence of the other, but as the active presence of a project that excludes, normalizes and legitimizes certain forms of knowledge, existence and belonging. From this reflection, the starting question that guides the research is: how has whiteness shaped Brazilian educational reforms, affecting the presence of the black population and the advancement of anti-racist education in the country? Theoretically, we made use of the works of Almeida (2019), Bento (2022), Billings (2009), Brookfield (2019), Casey (2020), Dabiri (2021), DiAngelo (2018), Dijk (2020), Fanon (2008), hooks (2013; 2019), Husband (2016), Ignatiev (1995), Kendi (2019), Ladson (2009), McManimon (2020), Rankine (2022), Ribeiro (2019), Saviani (2018; 2021), Schwarcz (1993; 2019; 2022; 2024), Stephen (2019), Van Dijk (2020), among others. The research is qualitative from Minayo (2007), descriptive and bibliographic according to Gil (2008) and with the comprehensive analytical bias of Weber (1949). The research revealed that, although diversity and inclusion discourses are

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increasingly present in educational legal frameworks, whiteness continues to operate as a silent normative structure that empties the critical power of anti-racist education. Educational reforms maintain a Eurocentric logic, which marginalizes the black presence and prevents the rupture with exclusionary patterns. It was found that diversity is often treated as appeasing rhetoric, while confronting structural racism is avoided or diluted. In addition, the "absence" of whiteness as an analytical category was observed in the documents, which contributes to the maintenance of its invisible epistemic power.

Keywords: Anti-racist Education. Educational Reform. Structural Invisibility. Whiteness.

BETWEEN SILENCES AND NORMS: WHITENESS AS A HIDDEN ARCHITECTURE OF BRAZILIAN EDUCATIONAL REFORMS – INTRODUCING

Brazilian education, from its roots, was shaped under the aegis of an exclusionary and racialized colonial project, structured to maintain hierarchies and privileges. As the institutionalization of education was consolidated, black bodies were systematically excluded from the right to formal education, reinforcing the logic of submission inherited from slavery. As Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (2024, p. 17) denounces, "[...] whiteness corresponds to an internalized system of material and symbolic privileges that is anchored in the past, but exercises its prerogatives in the present." At the same time, bell hooks observes that "[...] the school, when founded on authoritarian principles, tends to reproduce inequalities and not to question them" (2013, p. 42). Thus, we understand that the Brazilian educational structure was born based on deeply rooted racial exclusions.

Whiteness corresponds to an internalized system of material and symbolic privileges that is anchored in the past but exercises its prerogatives in the present. [...] Whiteness also creates standards of beauty and sociability, at the same time that it is a great producer of images and, therefore, of national imaginaries. These, in their own way, and as we will see in this book, help to stabilize this scenario – as if they were natural. [...] Despite the fact that white society is a relative category, since it is crossed by other social markers of difference such as race, gender/sex, region, generation, and social class, belonging to it in general means a kind of passport of privilege (Schwarcz, 2024, p. 15-16).

Not only the educational indices reflect this exclusionary heritage, but also the symbolic production of school knowledge, which is still marked by the absence of blacks as an epistemic subject. Since the first schools were founded in Brazil, the exclusion of the black population has been legitimized by discourses of inferiority, reinforcing marginalization. As Djamila Ribeiro (2019, p. 22) states: "[...] Movements of black people have for years debated racism as a fundamental structure of social relations, creating inequalities and abysses." Likewise, Silvio Almeida (2019, p. 37) points out that "[...] Structural racism¹⁷ is not a failure of the system, but one of its main foundations." Thus,

¹⁷ Structural racism does not manifest itself only in individual actions or isolated episodes of discrimination, but constitutes a deep logic that organizes institutions, practices, and social relations. It operates in a diffuse way, crossing the educational system, the labor market, the media, and the justice system, naturalizing inequalities and dehumanizing black bodies. In education, this structure is evidenced in the symbolic exclusion of African and Afro-Brazilian history and epistemologies, in the low representation of teachers and in the absence of effective policies for valuing black identities. As Silvio Almeida states, "[...] structural racism is that which organizes society in such a way as to reproduce and justify racial inequality as something natural" (2019, p. 57), making racial injustice a constitutive part of the functioning of institutions and social norms. Thus, the fight against racism requires actions that go beyond the individual level, requiring profound transformations in the

Brazilian education, far from being universal, has served as one of the main devices for maintaining racial inequalities.

Throughout the twentieth century, especially in the post-abolition period, the barriers to the black population's access to formal education were maintained through omitted public policies and Eurocentric curricula. On the other hand, access to education was instrumentalized as a tool for symbolic whitewashing and cultural assimilation. According to Ibram X. Kendi (2019, p. 48): "[...] racist ideas cause people of color to think less of themselves, which makes them more vulnerable to other racist ideas." In addition, Teun A. van Dijk (2020, p. 3) points out that "[...] racism in Brazil is a specific form of domination based on imagined and socially reinforced racial differences." Thus, the educational structure continued to exclude, silence and delegitimize black voices, in the name of an alleged neutrality.

The coloniality of power¹⁸ is rooted in the school organization itself, which continues to operate under an exclusionary, disciplinary, and white logic. Although the legal guidelines proclaim education for all, the school routine reveals the permanence of epistemologies and pedagogical practices that ignore Afro-Brazilian history and culture. Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009, p. 12) shows that "[...] the absence of black teachers and culturally responsive curricula contributes to the school failure of black students." And Zachary A. Casey (2020, p. 27) argues that "[...] white teachers are trained in contexts that reinforce racial fragility and avoid confronting whiteness as a power structure." In other words, the Brazilian school still reproduces the colonial and racist logic under the veneer of formal equality.

Coloniality of power, since the school spaces reproduced in their microsphere the structural racism present in the macrostructure, that is, the people who occupied the spaces of power in the schools had the same phenotype as those who occupied the spaces of power in society as a whole. White people ran the schools and were also the coordinators, teachers, psychologists and administrators, while black people

normative, curricular and institutional frameworks of Brazilian society. See: ALMEIDA, Silvio. Structural racism. São Paulo: Pólen, 2019.

¹⁸ The coloniality of power, a concept formulated by Aníbal Quijano, refers to the persistence of patterns of racial, economic, and epistemic domination established during colonization and that continue to structure social relations in contemporary societies. It is not only about the historical presence of colonialism, but about the way in which racial and cultural hierarchies continue to operate as a logic of control of work, knowledge and subjectivity. In the field of education, coloniality is expressed in the centrality of Eurocentric references and in the devaluation of the knowledge produced by native peoples and Afro-descendants. As Quijano (2005, p. 123) points out, "[...] the coloniality of power is based on the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the world's population as an instrument of social domination." Therefore, breaking with this logic requires the decolonization of curricula, epistemes, and pedagogical practices, in order to affirm other historically marginalized forms of existence and knowledge. See: QUIJANO, Aníbal. Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism and Latin America. In: LANDER, Edgardo (Org.). The coloniality of knowledge: Eurocentrism and social sciences. Latin American perspectives. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005. p. 117-142.

were in school spaces that, as important as they were for the development of the environment, were discredited mainly from an economic point of view – it was black people who cleaned the school floor and the children's buttocks, They were the ones who served the coffee, who cooked, who opened the gate, who maneuvered the cars. From this reading, three-year-old children were already able to construct their subjectivities by understanding that, in the world, white people command while black people obey (Carine, 2023, p. 58).

The emergence of anti-racist agendas in educational policies is a direct result of the mobilization of black movements, which denounced the historical omission of the State in the face of racial inequality. Even with occasional advances, such as Law 10.639/2003¹⁹, the implementation of the curricular guidelines remains a concrete challenge. As Djamila Ribeiro (2019, p. 29) points out: "[...] It is necessary to recognize that anti-racist practice takes place in the most everyday attitudes, and not only in terms of laws." Likewise, Cida Bento (2022, p. 17) reports that "[...] In the high positions of companies, universities, public power, in short, in all social spheres, we have [...] an unexplained quota of 100% for whites". In order for such policies to take shape, it is essential to confront the structures that perpetuate institutional racism²⁰.

However, the legal recognition of racial diversity occurred late and often symbolically, as demonstrated by Laws 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008²¹. Although they represent a milestone in the anti-racist struggle, their effectiveness is conditioned to the transformation

¹⁹ Law 10.639/2003 represents a legal milestone in the struggle for the valorization of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in the educational system, determining the mandatory teaching of the history of Africa and black populations in Brazil in the curricula of basic education. This legislation emerged from the mobilization of black movements and educators committed to racial justice, seeking to break with the historical invisibility imposed on black contributions to the formation of Brazilian society. However, its implementation still encounters several obstacles, such as the absence of adequate teacher training, the scarcity of teaching materials committed to the anti-racist perspective, and the resistance of sectors of society to the valorization of non-Eurocentric narratives. As provided for in the legislation, "[...] the syllabus will include the study of the history of Africa and Africans, the struggle of blacks in Brazil, black Brazilian culture and blacks in the formation of national society" (Brasil, 2003). Thus, the implementation of Law 10.639/2003 is fundamental for the construction of a democratic, plural and anti-racist education. See: BRAZIL. Law No. 10,639, of January 9, 2003. Amends Law No. 9,394, of December 20, 1996, which establishes the guidelines and bases of national education, to include in the official curriculum of the Education Network the mandatory theme "Afro-Brazilian History and Culture", and provides other provisions. Federal Official Gazette: section 1, Brasília, DF, p. 1, 10 jan. 2003.

²⁰ Institutional racism refers to practices, norms, policies and structures that, even when not explicitly racist, produce systematic effects of racial exclusion and inequality. It operates silently and persistently within institutions such as schools, hospitals, universities, and state agencies, naturalizing inequalities and hindering black populations' access to basic rights and opportunities. In education, for example, it manifests itself in the school dropout of black students, in the low expectations about their performance and in the absence of representation in teaching materials and in the teaching staff. As Silvio Almeida (2019, p. 59) points out, "[...] institutional racism concerns the way in which public and private institutions operate to maintain racial inequality, even without the declared intention to discriminate." Therefore, confronting institutional racism requires affirmative action policies, anti-racist training, and critical review of the institutional structures that sustain it. See: ALMEIDA, Silvio. Structural racism. São Paulo: Pólen, 2019.

²¹ The concept of "institutional racism" will be developed later in the article. See references.

of a deeply resistant school culture. Lilia Schwarcz (2019, p. 41) warns: "[...] official history erased the black presence, restricting their participation to secondary or folkloric roles." In turn, Stephen Brookfield (2019, p. 54) points out that "[...] developing critical racial awareness implies recognizing the role of whiteness in the control of curricula and pedagogical practices." Therefore, more than legislating, it is necessary to guarantee teacher training and epistemological review.

At the same time, it is essential to highlight the contradictions between legal advances and the reality of classrooms, where racism still manifests itself in a veiled and daily way. In the same way, schools continue to reproduce stigmas, making the black legacy invisible and reinforcing white privileges. Emma Dabiri (2021, p. 66) reflects that "[...] As long as whiteness is not named, it will continue to operate as a universal norm." Claudia Rankine (2022, p. 37) adds: "[...] white silence is the mechanism by which racial hierarchies are naturalized." Thus, the dissonance between legislation and practice reveals that racism is not dissolved with decrees, but requires deep ruptures in the institutional culture.

In schools, for example, there are always white teachers and managers, toys and textbooks, lesson plans, political-pedagogical projects that dialogue exclusively with whiteness. It is in the organization of the institution, throughout history, that the racist structure is built. It is in the exclusive choice of Eurocentric theoretical and methodological perspectives that whiteness manifests itself. Elements of black and indigenous culture, when present in the curriculum, are not recognized as such or are stigmatized (Bento, 2022, p. 88).

On the other hand, whiteness remains an invisible and normative structure in the formulation and conduct of educational reforms. Since it is rarely named, it is configured as a place of privilege that naturalizes the exclusion of racialized subjects. Lilia Schwarcz (2024, p. 21) points out: "[...] whiteness becomes the norm that does not need to be named, that classifies and studies the 'others', but that is not classified". Likewise, Robin DiAngelo (2018, p. 12) observes that "[...] white fragility prevents the recognition of racism as a structure that benefits whites on a daily basis." In this way, the criticism of whiteness is a central element for the construction of truly egalitarian policies.

Not only as an absence, but as a hegemonic presence, whiteness organizes the curricular guidelines, teaching materials and models of educational excellence. According to the analysis of Terry Husband (2016, p. 44), "[...] Anti-racist education requires the dismantling of whiteness as a pedagogical norm." Kenneth Fasching-Varner (1992, p. 31) states that "[...] teachers need to recognize themselves as racialized agents so that they can, in fact, act against racism." In summary, thinking about anti-racist education implies

denaturalizing the foundations that sustain the epistemicide of the black population in schools.

The presence-absence of blacks in Brazilian education is a direct result of this normative regime of whiteness that silences, erases and instrumentalizes racial diversity. According to Noel Ignatiev (1995, p. 87), "[...] whiteness is a political project, not a biological identity." Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (1993, p. 59) recalls that "[...] The idea of miscegenation has historically been manipulated to erase the violence of racism." Therefore, the recognition of blacks as epistemic subjects continues to be a process in dispute, permeated by institutional and cultural resistance.

The concept of institutional racism was a huge advance in the study of race relations. First, by demonstrating that racism transcends the scope of individual action, and, second, by emphasizing the dimension of power as a constitutive element of racial relations, not only the power of an individual of one race over another, but of one group over another, something possible when there is direct or indirect control of certain groups over the institutional apparatus. [...] In a society where racism is present in everyday life, institutions that do not actively treat racial inequality as a problem will easily reproduce racist practices already considered 'normal' throughout society (Almeida, 2019, p. 82).

Given this panorama, the object of this research is to critically analyze how recent Brazilian educational reforms have been shaped by this logic of normative whiteness. The analytical focus is on the curricular and legal policies implemented from the 2000s onwards, especially after the approval of laws that make the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture mandatory. According to Dermeval Saviani (2018, p. 31): "[...] Brazilian educational policy oscillates between formal advances and structural setbacks". And Lilia Schwarcz (2009, p. 68) summarizes: "[...] there is an insistent absence of black perspectives in the decision-making spaces about what should be taught." With this, the analysis of the reforms reveals both their potentialities and their limits.

In conclusion, the central problematization that guides this investigation is: how has whiteness shaped educational reforms in Brazil, affecting the presence of the black population and the advancement of an anti-racist education? Because public policies are not neutral, it is urgent to analyze the discourses and practices that sustain pedagogical and curricular choices. According to Cida Bento (2022, p. 61), "[...] The pact of whiteness is operated daily in institutions that, even well-intentioned, maintain exclusion." Bárbara Carine (2023, p. 47) emphasizes that "[...] Teacher training needs to be racially aware so that anti-racism does not become just rhetoric." Thus, this research intends to contribute to

a critical reading of educational reforms and to the construction of a school that recognizes, values and repairs historical inequalities.

BETWEEN SILENCES AND PRESENCES: METHODOLOGICAL PATHS TO UNVEIL WHITENESS IN EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

As it sought to understand the mechanisms by which whiteness operates in Brazilian educational reforms, a critical-comprehensive qualitative approach was adopted, with Weberian influence, suitable for the investigation of complex social phenomena that involve symbolic and epistemological disputes. This methodological choice was based on the premise that social research requires not only analytical rigor, but also political engagement with the transformations that are intended to be studied. As Minayo (2007, p. 27) explains: "[...] qualitative research works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes". Likewise, Stake (2011, p. 24) observes that "[...] qualitative research is concerned with understanding how things work in specific contexts, recognizing the central role of experience."

The essence of the qualitative approach is equally known [...] for the integrity of its thought. There is no single form of qualitative thought, but a huge collection of forms: it is interpretive, experience-based, situational, and humanistic. Each researcher will do this differently, but almost all of them will work interpretation. They will try to transform part of the story into experiential terms. They will show the complexity of the history and treat individuals as unique, even if in similar ways to other individuals (Stake, 2011, p. 41).

At the same time, it was recognized that educational policy is not neutral, but deeply marked by class, race, and power interests. Therefore, a critical documentary analysis of legislation, curriculum guidelines and public education policies was chosen, with special attention to Law 10.639/2003, the BNCC and the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations (DCNERER). As Gil (2008, p. 51) points out: "[...] documentary analysis allows us to know both the explicit contents and the structural silences that the texts carry". Likewise, Prodanov and Freitas (2013, p. 126) argue that "[...] the systematic examination of documents must be guided by critical questions and categories of analysis consistent with the objectives of the research".

Since it was understood that the curriculum is a field of political and symbolic dispute, it was sought to identify, in official documents, the meanings attributed to racial diversity and the black presence in school. To this end, the intersection between studies on whiteness, epistemologies of the South and critical pedagogies was adopted as a

theoretical framework. As Djamila Ribeiro (2019, p. 64) reminds us: "[...] all subjects have a place of speech, but it is necessary to recognize the hierarchies that define which speeches are legitimized as knowledge". In consonance, Cida Bento (2022, p. 34) points out that "[...]the narcissistic pact of whiteness is realized precisely when diversity is affirmed without redistributing power."

As the analysis deepened, it was realized that the mere presence of the term "diversity" in the legal frameworks did not guarantee an anti-racist commitment. The investigation therefore required a reading that articulated discourse and structure, form and content, naming and absence. For this, it was essential to resort to authors such as hooks (2019, p. 58), who denounces that "[...] schools prefer to teach black culture devoid of conflict, ignoring racism and its function of domination." In the same way, Ladson-Billings (2009, p. 89) emphasizes that "[...] It is not about teaching about black people, but about teaching from a black consciousness."

Although the documents analyzed often presented a lexicon of inclusion, the structural erasure of blacks persisted in the logic of epistemic silencing. For this reason, the research did not only seek to identify mentions of blackness, but to understand to what extent such mentions contributed to the maintenance or rupture of racial hierarchies. Ribeiro (2019, p. 59) warns that "[...] Many people who consume black culture do not care about the ills that the black population lives in the country." Likewise, Dabiri (2021, p. 74) states that "[...] There is a cultural consumption of blackness that does not translate into redistribution of power."

Since the research focused on the normative structures of education, the choice of a critical theoretical-methodological approach implied recognizing that knowledge is situated and politically crossed. Thus, dialogue with authors committed to racial justice and the decolonization of knowledge was privileged. As Minayo (2007, p. 30) argues: "[...] there is no neutral research: every research process is crossed by the researcher's theoretical, political and ethical choices". And as Flick (2009, p. 21) points out, "[...] the qualitative researcher interprets the social meanings produced in the relationships, and not just the data themselves."

Another important observation is about the conceptual differences between analysis and interpretation. [...] In qualitative research, interpretation assumes a central focus, since 'it is the starting point (because it begins with the actors' own interpretations) and it is the point of arrival (because it is the interpretation of interpretations)'. [...] In relation to these three forms of qualitative data processing, it is important to note that they are not mutually exclusive. [...] This means, for

example, that when we describe research data, we can do so from an analysis scheme, which in turn already reflects a certain interpretation (Minayo, 2007, p. 104).

Since the commitment to build a critique of whiteness in public education policies was made, it has been necessary to adopt strict criteria for the analysis of the documents. Four main categories were established: a) presence-absence of blacks as an epistemic subject; b) mentions of racial diversity and its contexts; c) structural silencing of racism; d) approaches to teacher training and curriculum. As stated by Prodanov and Freitas (2013, p. 39): "[...] the clear definition of the analytical categories is what confers objectivity and consistency to the methodological path". In the same sense, Gil (2008, p. 126) emphasizes that "[...] the clarity of the analysis categories is essential for the coherence between the objectives and the results of the research".

Thus, in order to ensure the rigor and coherence of the analysis, the selection of documents followed criteria of topicality, normative scope and impact on teacher training. The choice of documents such as the BNCC, the DCNERER and the LDB was justified by the fact that they are among the most influential instruments in current educational policies. As Minayo et al. (2007, p. 64) observe: "[...] the choice of the corpus must be articulated with the research problem and the hypotheses formulated, in order to allow pertinent inferences". Gil (2008, p. 51) reiterates that "[...] the documentary material must be pertinent, representative and subject to critical interpretation".

In this way, the methodology adopted sought to articulate criticality, coherence and ethical-political commitment to racial justice. By investigating how whiteness operates in the texts of educational reforms, it was sought to show that the exclusion of blacks is not just a gap, but a structured project. Therefore, the methodology was not only a technical path of research, but a situated and insurgent epistemological stance. As Stake (2011, p. 22) recalls: "[...] qualitative research is driven by questions that matter, not just techniques that work." And, to conclude, Minayo (2007, p. 29) reinforces that "[...] research is a political act: it is choosing what one wants to reveal to the world".

EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND WHITENESS – THE PRESENCE-ABSENCE OF BLACKS AND ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

As we analyze the architecture of Brazilian educational policies, we realize that whiteness operates not only as a silent backdrop, but as an active cog in the normative

production of what is meant by curriculum, excellence, and neutrality. As Lilia Moritz Schwarcz points out, "[...] whiteness hides under the appearance of universality, as if its point of view were everyone's point of view" (2024, p. 33). Likewise, Gloria Ladson-Billings emphasizes that "[...] the school is not only a pedagogical space, but a repository of racialized hegemonic values" (2009, p. 58). Therefore, recognizing whiteness as a matrix of meaning is crucial to deconstruct the pillars that sustain racial exclusion in the field of education.

At the same time, whiteness is reproduced by the subtlety of its daily practices and by the institutionalization of an aesthetic, language, and curriculum that make other forms of existence and knowledge invisible. Barbara Carine observes that "[...] the neutrality intended in official documents is, in fact, the disguised face of normative whiteness" (2023, p. 62). Not only that, but also Emma Dabiri denounces that "[...] whiteness builds for itself the right not to be questioned, creating a symbolic shield that presents itself as common sense" (2021, p. 94). Therefore, the construction of truly plural policies requires naming what has historically been hidden under the name of "universal".

Whiteness can be defined as [...] a position in which subjects who occupy this position were systematically privileged with regard to access to material and symbolic resources, initially generated by colonialism and imperialism, and which are maintained and preserved in contemporaneity. [...] White supremacy is a form of hegemony, that is, a form of domination that is exercised not only by the brute exercise of power, by sheer force, but also by the establishment of mediations and the formation of ideological consensus. Racial domination is exercised by power, but also by the cultural complex in which inequalities, violence, and racial discrimination are absorbed as components of social life (Almeida, 2019, p. 82-83).

It was perceived, over time, that the school curriculum serves as one of the main devices for maintaining this white normativity. Since the educational system was structured, black and indigenous knowledge has been relegated to the field of folklore or exception. As Cida Bento states, "[...] whiteness shapes the guidelines and the content to be taught, as if it were only reproducing the natural" (2022, p. 48). Likewise, Robin DiAngelo points out that "[...] white pedagogy is based on the denial of white privilege itself, reinforcing the idea that everyone starts from the same place" (2018, p. 37). In this way, the curriculum becomes a mirror that reflects only a racial and epistemic profile.

Not only the curricular content, but also the practices of evaluation and organization of school time and space are impregnated by racialized criteria. Kenneth Fasching-Varner explains that "[...] markers of school competence and discipline are, in fact, shaped by expectations of white performance" (1992, p. 55). On the other hand, bell hooks recalls that

"[...] black bodies in school are taught to perform obedience, not critical thinking" (2013, p. 73). Given this, it is essential that anti-racist criticism goes beyond content and extends to the ways in which knowledge is taught and regulated.

At first glance, it may seem that educational legislation is moving towards overcoming these structures, especially with laws that recognize Afro-Brazilian history and culture. However, Teun A. van Dijk warns that "[...] institutional racism does not disappear with laws, as it is rooted in everyday practices and representations" (2020, p. 19). Likewise, Djamila Ribeiro observes that "[...] whiteness is protected by a pact of silence that is reproduced even among progressive subjects" (2019, p. 41). Therefore, even in the face of normative advances, the structure of whiteness continues to operate behind the scenes of educational policy.

Racism constitutes a whole social imaginary complex that is constantly reinforced by the media, the cultural industry and the educational system. [...] 'Normal' life, affections and 'truths' are inexorably permeated by racism, which does not depend on conscious action to exist. [...] Racism is part of the social structure, and therefore does not need intention to manifest itself. Even if individuals who commit racist acts are held accountable, the structural look at racial relations leads us to conclude that legal accountability is not enough for society to stop being a machine that produces racial inequality (Almeida, 2019, p. 82).

Although the black presence in public schools is the majority, the management and formulation of educational policies remain hegemonically white. Zachary Casey argues that "[...] white teachers are taught to think of their whiteness as neutral, which makes them unable to see the racism they help to reproduce" (2020, p. 105). Likewise, Dermeval Saviani denounces that "[...] the discourse of formal equality masks historical inequalities, making them invisible in educational planning" (2018, p. 68). To this end, it is urgent to racialize the debate about who formulates, implements, and evaluates public policies.

Over time, the imaginary of the ideal school was built under Eurocentric references, associating whiteness with civility, discipline and merit. According to Noel Ignatiev, "[...] the invention of white as a political category was one of the pillars of the construction of the modern school system" (1995, p. 112). Likewise, Rankine warns that "[...] the gaze that watches at school is always a white gaze, trained to suspect what is black" (2022, p. 39). In other words, the school is built as a place where one learns to be white – or to be punished for not being white.

Since the hegemony of meritocracy was consolidated as a pedagogical justification, whiteness has become synonymous with competence and intellectual superiority. According

to Terry Husband: "[...] educational whiteness does not need to assert itself: it is already the standard" (2016, p. 59). And Stephen Brookfield reinforces that "[...] pedagogical structures that do not question themselves racially always operate in favor of whites" (2019, p. 84). In order to deconstruct this pattern, it is necessary for educators to review the ethical-racial foundations of their practice.

Meritocracy manifests itself through institutional mechanisms, such as university selection processes and public exams. Since educational inequality is related to racial inequality, even in public and universalized education systems, the racial profile of those occupying prestigious positions in the public sector and of students in the most competitive universities reaffirms the imaginary that, in general, associates competence and merit with conditions such as whiteness, masculinity and heterosexuality and cismativity. [...] In Brazil, the denial of racism and the ideology of racial democracy are sustained by the discourse of meritocracy. If there is no racism, the blame for one's own condition lies with black people who, eventually, did not 'try hard enough' (Almeida, 2019, p. 84).

However, resistance to the racialization of educational policies is revealed in constant practices of silencing, such as the erasure of black intellectuals in teacher training programs. According to Frantz Fanon, "[...] there is no neutrality in knowledge: all knowledge carries a racial perspective, even when it is said to be technical" (2008, p. 99). Likewise, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz points out that "[...] the stories taught are always the stories of those who won, and in Brazil, who won was whiteness" (1993, p. 77). Therefore, it is not just about including black authors, but about transforming the structures that choose who should be read and taught.

Educational whiteness is not content with excluding: it is also reconfigured to absorb and control anti-racist discourses, emptying their transformative potential. According to Claudia Rankine, "[...] whiteness is capable of performing anti-racism as long as it does not affect its privileges" (2022, p. 52). And Emma Dabiri emphasizes that "[...] liberal anti-racism is one of the most sophisticated forms of reproduction of white power" (2021, p. 79). In summary, combating whiteness requires vigilance over its mechanisms of adaptation and co-optation.

Therefore, recognizing whiteness as a hidden matrix of educational policies is not an exercise in moral denunciation, but an analytical and historical requirement. As Ibram X. Kendi states: "[...] it is not enough not to be racist: it is necessary to be actively anti-racist, which includes fighting whiteness as a structure" (2019, p. 103). And Cida Bento endorses that "[...] the pact of whiteness is only broken when there is real discomfort and

redistribution of power" (2022, p. 66). In this way, confronting whiteness in educational policies is confronting the very project of the nation that still insists on imagining itself white.

Whiteness is a dialectical concept that articulates the place of white universal subject with the privileges that benefit all members of this collective. As anti-racist as the white person is, he benefits from racism, even unintentionally. And this is what every white educator needs to be aware of, at the very least. In this sense, we advocate the end of whiteness and, I reinforce, this is not about the extermination of white people, but about the end of the social system that privileges them. [...] The anti-racist struggle is not against white people, but against a system that benefits them to the detriment of the dignity of other racial groups (Carine, 2023, p. 64-65).

Thus, as organized black movements advanced in the twentieth century, especially after the 1988 Constitution, a new understanding of the educational rights of the black population in Brazil emerged. Not only that, but it was also possible to observe a growing recognition of the urgency of revising school curricula, incorporating ethnic-racial diversity as a constitutional right. As Eneida Oto Shiroma states: "[...] educational policy does not materialize in a neutral way, but expresses social interests in dispute" (2021, p. 58). Likewise, Silvio Almeida points out that "[...] structural racism is present in the very mechanisms of public policy development" (2019, p. 117). Therefore, the struggle for an anti-racist education in Brazil is, above all, a struggle for historical justice.

As Brazil became committed to international human rights treaties, internal pressures intensified for the State to implement anti-discrimination measures, including in the field of education. Since Law 10.639/2003 was enacted, making the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture mandatory in schools, this legal framework has become a watershed. Lilia Moritz Schwarcz comments that "[...] This law, although late, carries an enormous symbolic potential for transforming the Brazilian racial imaginary" (2019, p. 96). Likewise, Bárbara Carine emphasizes that "[...] it is not a concession from the State, but a political victory forged in the struggle of the black people" (2023, p. 133). As a result, the educational field has become one of the main arenas for the dispute against racism.

However, although these laws have gained legal status, their implementation comes up against numerous institutional, cultural, and epistemological barriers. On the other hand, there is still strong resistance to the presence of the racial issue in the curricula of the areas of exact sciences, natural sciences and mathematics. As Carine denounces: "[...] the ERER

approach²² must be present throughout the curriculum, and not only in history and the arts" (2023, p. 146). Likewise, Lilia Schwarcz observes that "[...] the risk of an essentialist approach to a mythical Africa remains high, especially in the face of low teacher training" (2022, p. 57). Therefore, the effectiveness of the legislation depends on a process of teacher and curricular training that goes beyond formal compliance with the norm.

I say this because it is very common for people to disassociate the law from the areas of natural and exact sciences, as if EREER were only for the humanities disciplines. But, if we look at the letter of Law 10.639/2003, it does not have this specificity. The obligation is for the entire curricular extension. So, we need to deal with black, African and Afro-Brazilian culture in biology class, in chemistry class, in mathematics class. We need to tension the curriculum as a whole, because that's where the greatest silences are. The Eurocentric logic of science is an immense barrier to the black presence as a producer of scientific knowledge (Carine, 2023, p. 91).

At the same time, the daily school life reveals profound contradictions between legal advances and real pedagogical practices. Although many schools claim to comply with the legislation, they do so in a superficial way, reducing Afro-Brazilian culture to one-off events. Eneida Oto Shiroma argues that "[...] educational reforms are often implemented as instruments of governance, more focused on management than equity" (2021, p. 103). In consonance, Djamila Ribeiro warns that "[...] school practices are still organized by a racial logic that insists on making black people invisible or folkloric" (2019, p. 69). To this end, it is essential to rethink the curriculum policy based on the reality of the school floor.

Since Law 11.645/2008 included the mandatory teaching of indigenous history and culture, the challenge of intersectionality between ethnicity, territory, and ancestry has expanded. However, legal recognition has not eliminated the obstacles that hinder the full application of these laws. According to Bárbara Carine, "[...] it is necessary to demand that higher education institutions include EREER in teacher training courses" (2023, p. 147). Bell

²² The National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (ERER), approved in 2004, constitute a fundamental normative instrument for the implementation of Law 10.639/2003. They establish parameters for schools and education systems to develop pedagogical practices committed to valuing ethnic-racial diversity, overcoming racism and promoting anti-discrimination education. The EREER propose the transversality of the racial theme in the curriculum, the continuing education of teachers and the production of didactic materials that contemplate the contribution of African and Afro-Brazilian peoples. However, its implementation still faces obstacles, such as the lack of knowledge of the guidelines by managers and teachers, in addition to the absence of effective inspection and evaluation mechanisms. As the guidelines state, "[...] the challenge is to build an educational proposal that recognizes, values and includes Afro-descendants as a constitutive part of Brazilian society" (BRASIL, 2004, p. 16), breaking with the historical silence surrounding ethnic-racial relations in school. See: BRASIL. National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture. Brasília, DF: Ministry of Education, Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity, 2004.

hooks adds that "[...] the school that refuses to rethink its curriculum based on multiple voices, reaffirms its function as a space of domination" (2019, p. 44). Thus, without adequate training and political commitment, laws become a dead letter.

In addition, it is important to note that the performance of the private publishing sector still limits the plurality of teaching materials. According to Bianca Santana, "[...] The books that reach schools continue to be produced mostly by white authors from the Southeast, which reinforces stereotypes and makes diversity invisible" (2012, p. 88). Likewise, Silvio Almeida argues that "[...] affirmative action must include measures that decentralize the production of knowledge and democratize authorship" (2019, p. 163). Therefore, an anti-racist public policy also needs to invest in the production of educational content outside the market logic.

On the other hand, the concrete examples of educational reforms show how managerial logic often nullifies the emancipatory power of the anti-racist agenda. According to Shiroma, "[...] the technical-bureaucratic rationality of the reforms reduces the role of educational policies to the improvement of indexes, obscuring the struggle for social justice" (2021, p. 89). This criticism is echoed by bell hooks, who denounces "[...] the colonization of the curriculum by the demands of the market, which relegates critical and ethical training to the background" (2019, p. 38). Thus, a reform that ignores the racial dimension of inequality perpetuates the problems it claims to want to tackle.

The essays in the first part – 'Managerial barbarism' – expose the deception of corporate educational agendas, which are increasingly capillary and indistinguishable from official educational policies. [...] What is presented in education as 'new', 'modern', 'efficient', 'effective' and 'responsible' – produces the dismantling of public education systems, the downgrading of the school education of the poorest, the disqualification of teaching activity, the reduction of public funding, the pauperization of schools and the expansion of privatization processes (hooks, 2019, p. 17).

Although there are more robust affirmative policies in higher education, such as racial quotas, basic education still operates under a meritocratic logic that penalizes black and indigenous students. Lilia Schwarcz reports that "[...] black children continue to hear that angels are white, or that they cannot play central characters in school plays" (2019, p. 95). Silvio Almeida, in turn, states that "[...] racial democracy is not a reality in schools, but a fiction sustained by those who have never been the target of exclusion" (2019, p. 141). In other words, structural racism continues to cross the school as a pedagogy of silencing.

Since the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC)²³ was approved, the challenges of articulation with the EREER laws have intensified. While the document mentions diversity, it does not guarantee the protagonism of black and indigenous epistemologies. Eneida Oto Shiroma observes that "[...] the BNCC absorbs discourses on diversity, but keeps the neoliberal foundations of assessment and curriculum unchanged" (2021, p. 77). Likewise, Bárbara Carine warns that "[...] it is not enough to mention diversity: it is necessary to reorganize the curriculum around a pedagogy that values other rationalities" (2023, p. 155). In order to comply with racial laws, it is necessary to review the very foundations of the BNCC.

Thus, the school spaces that have put the anti-racist agenda into effect are those that break with the logic of repetition and create innovative curricular practices. As Carine reports, "[...] the reinvention of the school calendar, the use of Afro-Brazilian references, and everyday racial literacy transform the school environment" (2023, p. 167). This is corroborated by hooks, who states: "[...] Teaching for freedom requires institutional courage, not just good intentions" (2019, p. 51). In summary, anti-racism in schools is only achieved when there is a break with the Eurocentric and colonial tradition of teaching.

Transformative pedagogical practice does not occur spontaneously in systems that have been shaped to maintain the dominant order. When educators commit themselves to a liberating pedagogy, they face institutional and cultural barriers that do not disappear with simple goodwill. It takes institutional courage to create spaces for listening, exchanging and reinventing curricula, especially when the proposal is to break with the authoritarian and Eurocentric tradition of teaching. The challenge is not only to include new content, but to review the way we teach and why we teach (hooks, 2019, p. 63).

Therefore, recognizing the contradictions between legislation and practice is the first step to building a truly anti-racist educational policy. As Eneida Oto Shiroma states: "[...] educational policies need to dialogue with the subjects and their territories, otherwise, they

²³ The National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC), approved in 2017, establishes the rights and learning objectives for all stages of basic education in Brazil, being presented as an instrument of equity and guarantee of educational quality. However, despite its discourse of inclusion and diversity, the BNCC has been criticized for omitting to effectively confront racism and for dealing with the ethnic-racial issue in a fragmented and superficial way. In many passages, cultural plurality is addressed in generic terms, without making explicit the centrality of the anti-racist struggle in citizen education. This contributes to the permanence of the Eurocentric and monocultural logic in school curricula. As provided for in the document, the ethical formation of the student must be guided "[...] in valuing diversity and respecting human rights" (BRASIL, 2017, p. 9), but this principle lacks concrete mechanisms that guarantee the transversality of the racial theme and the fight against historical inequalities in the school environment. See: BRAZIL. National Common Curricular Base. Brasília, DF: Ministry of Education, 2017. Available at: <http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br>. Accessed on: 23 Mar. 2025.

will always be perceived as an imposition and not as a right" (2021, p. 118). Given that racism is not just a matter of content, but of structure and practice, transformation requires listening, critical training, and the courage to shift the center of normativity. In this way, laws can cease to be just formal achievements and become, in fact, tools for social transformation.

As Brazil recognized its historical debts to the black population, on January 9, 2003, Law 10.639 was enacted, which amends the LDB to make the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture mandatory in basic education. At first glance, this legal framework represented an important step in the fight against epistemicide historically practiced in Brazilian schools. As Lilia Moritz Schwarcz explains, "[...] Law 10.639/2003 [...] aims to recover the diversity of our education and do justice to the richness of our hybrid history" (2019, p. 95). Likewise, Bárbara Carine emphasizes: "[...] the letter of the law is explicit in saying that it creates the obligation in the entire curricular extension [...] from group IV to the university" (2023, p. 63). However, the school reality is still far from complying with this legal determination in its entirety.

As the debate on the effectiveness of the law expands, it becomes evident that its emancipatory potential has been emptied by institutional resistance and by a logic of merely symbolic adherence. Although the law represents a historic achievement of black movements, it is often treated as a peripheral requirement and not as a structuring axis of education. As bell hooks warns: "[...] it is not possible to talk about educational freedom when racist structures remain intact" (2019, p. 41). Bianca Santana adds that "[...] white authors, from the Southeast, for the most part, do not have the repertoire to account for the diversity of the country" (2019, p. 71). This demonstrates how much the application of the law has been marked by a superficiality that perpetuates black invisibility.

A law like this is not easy to apply. It has been necessary to have extensive training of teachers in, for example, the History of Africa, or in the universe of Afro-Brazilian cultures, so that very essentialist views about a mythical Africa, or about a single and even more exoticized culture, are not disseminated. Nor are the difficulties faced when it comes to studying complex religious conceptions such as Candomblé known, especially in view of the predominance of Christianity in our country. This law, however, aims to recover the diversity of our formation and do justice to the richness of our hybrid history in peoples and cultures (Schwarcz, 2022, p. 95-96).

Since it was sanctioned, the implementation of Law 10,639 has faced omissions and disguised forms of resistance. Not only are teacher training insufficient, but also the teaching materials used in schools continue to reproduce stereotypes and historical

erasures. Bárbara Carine denounces: "[...] it is very common for people to disassociate the law from the areas of natural sciences and mathematics, as if Africa had no history in these fields" (2023, p. 117). On the other hand, Lilia Schwarcz points out that "[...] this law [...] requires broad teacher training to avoid essentialist visions of a mythical Africa" (2019, p. 97). Silent resistance, therefore, acts not only by omission, but also by the deformation of contents.

At the same time, many managers and teachers claim to "comply" with the law through specific projects, thematic weeks or commemorative events in the month of November. However, such actions do not integrate the curriculum in an organic way and do not challenge the Eurocentric epistemologies that continue to dominate school content. As Eneida Oto Shiroma points out: "[...] educational policy must be understood as a field of symbolic and material disputes, whose effects directly affect the constitution of school subjects" (2021, p. 111). Bell hooks, on the other hand, states that "[...] it takes more than good intentions: it is necessary to break with the structure that chooses what should be remembered and what can be forgotten" (2019, p. 49). With this, we see a pedagogical practice that simulates diversity without committing to transformation.

Since the legislation came into force, the so-called "symbolic inclusion" has become a frequent strategy in schools: inclusion without changing. Symbolic inclusion presents itself as a way to neutralize demands for racial justice while preserving white normativity in the curriculum and school management. Bárbara Carine explains: "[...] inclusion means being invited to a party where they have already chosen the music, food, and clothes you should wear" (2023, p. 138). Silvio Almeida adds that "[...] whiteness is the unnamed standard that regulates spaces and bodies" (2019, p. 157). Therefore, symbolic inclusion does not alter structures, it only stages an opening that does not actually happen.

Inclusion means being included/invited to a party where people have already established what you can wear, eat, what music you should dance to. It is a false openness that does not recognize these subjects as social agents, who all the time transform the social reality around them. What I am calling here the pedagogy of implosion destroys/implodes the white-centric Western edifice and builds, with several hands, the new feast of diversity, each one choosing their partner, their clothing, their food, their way of dancing... a true celebration of human existence and its broad potentialities (Carine, 2023, p. 138).

Although Law 10.639/2003 determines the integration of Afro-Brazilian content in all subjects, most schools restrict its application to the areas of history and arts, completely neglecting science, mathematics, geography and even literature. Bianca Santana reports:

"[...] the books that reach schools continue to be produced mostly by white authors from the Southeast, which reinforces stereotypes and makes diversity invisible" (2019, p. 73).

Likewise, Bárbara Carine denounces: "[...] schools treat black history as something apart, detached from national history" (2023, p. 121). Therefore, the non-transversality of the content transforms the legal obligation into a curricular exception.

Not only that, but it is also recurrent the report of black students who do not recognize themselves in the content taught, neither in the books, nor in the teachers. The absence of representation remains a central factor of symbolic exclusion. As Cida Bento states: "[...] the impact of racial discrimination on the lives of black children and adolescents is evident in school dropout [...] and in impaired educational performance" (2022, p. 82). Lilia Schwarcz reinforces: "[...] if racial democracy is not a reality, it is at least a utopia that the law tries to imagine" (2019, p. 96). In this way, the law finds an institutional field unprepared – and often uninterested – in putting its proposal into effect.

On the other hand, the field of teacher training still lacks structural changes to incorporate, in fact, EREER (Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations) as an epistemological foundation. According to Bárbara Carine, "[...] it is in initial training that the silencing of black contributions in the production of knowledge must be broken" (2023, p. 156). And Eneida Oto Shiroma points out: "[...] the absence of black intellectuals in universities compromises the democratization of knowledge and pedagogical practice" (2021, p. 89). To this end, it is essential to blacken the university, the curricula and the theoretical frameworks.

Daily experience in many schools reveals the permanence of racist practices even after the enactment of the law. Black children are still called "exotics", excluded from leading roles at school parties and seen as "outside the standard" aesthetic of the school. Bianca Santana laments: "[...] As much as progress has been made, textbooks still do not reflect the diversity of the country" (2019, p. 72). Bell hooks reinforces: "[...] the school continues to be a place where hierarchies are taught and normalized" (2019, p. 45). As a result, inequality is reproduced under the guise of legality.

However, although the school seems like a bubble in the face of the social chaos in which we are immersed, there is no way to escape the structural oppression that subjectively shapes us every day, so not even Maria Felipa was exempt from racist experiences. Once, a little black girl with less dark skin and curly hair came to a black girl with curly hair and said that her hair was ugly. The child's mother came to us and said that the little girl was feeling ugly and didn't want to go to school anymore. In this episode, we stopped all the projects that were being developed and started the anti-racist project "Meu crespo é de rainha" (Carine, 2023, p. 75).

Likewise, the discourse of meritocracy continues to be an obstacle to the full application of Law 10.639/2003. By stating that "everyone is equal", many schools and educators erase the historical inequalities that the law rightly tries to repair. Cida Bento states: "[...] the diverse is defined from the comparison with the white, which is considered 'the reference', 'the universal'" (2022, p. 91). Silvio Almeida points out that "[...] structural racism creates a standard of humanity from which black people are excluded" (2019, p. 124). Therefore, implementing the law requires confronting the myth of neutrality that inhabits traditional pedagogical discourse.

In summary, Law 10.639/2003 is more than a legal norm: it is a civilizing milestone that requires the Brazilian school to thoroughly review its foundations. However, its effectiveness still comes up against conservative structures, white-centered curricula and administrations that opt for the convenience of inertia. As Bárbara Carine points out: "[...] anti-racism needs to leave the symbolic plane and structure the political-pedagogical project of schools" (2023, p. 149). And Lilia Schwarcz warns: "[...] resistance to the teaching of black history is the pedagogical face of institutional racism" (2019, p. 101). In this way, complying with the law is not only a legal requirement, but an act of historical reparation and commitment to justice.

Thus, as Brazil advanced in educational reforms, such as the implementation of the National Common Curriculum Base (BNCC), an effective inclusion of ethnic-racial diversity was expected. At first glance, this legal framework represented formal progress; however, the BNCC, in many ways, perpetuates the silencing of blackness. According to the document, "[...] the BNCC establishes the rights of learning and development for each stage of Basic Education", but there is no explicit mention of Afro-Brazilian history and culture as a mandatory component (BNCC, 2017). This erasure reflects what Sueli Carneiro calls "epistemicide", that is, the systematic destruction of the knowledge of subalternized groups. She states: "[...] epistemicide is the destruction of the knowledge of subalternized groups, such as blacks, indigenous people, women, the poor" (2005, p. 89).

The denial of blacks as subjects of knowledge, through the devaluation, denial or concealment of the contributions of the African continent and the African diaspora to the cultural heritage of humanity; by the imposition of cultural whitening and by the production of school failure and dropout. This process is called epistemicide. [...] The signs of erasure of black production are evident. It is rare for course bibliographies to indicate women or black people; rarer still is that they indicate the production of black women, whose presence in the university and intellectual debate is extremely erased (Ribeiro, 2019, p. 72).

Since Law 10.639/2003 was sanctioned, making the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture mandatory, a significant change in school curricula was expected. However, the effective implementation of the law still faces challenges. Opinion CNE/CP 03/2004 highlights: "[...] the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in school curricula seeks to correct historical injustices, combat discrimination and emphasize social inclusion" (CNE/CP, 2004, p. 2). Despite this, many educators report the lack of adequate training to address these issues. As Ana Célia da Silva observes: "[...] specific training for elementary school teachers should be provided, with the objective of providing them with a pedagogical practice, with the necessary conditions to identify and correct the stereotypes and invisibility found in pedagogical materials" (2003, p. 113).

At the same time, the absence of black epistemologies in official documents is evident. The BNCC, for example, emphasizes competencies and skills aligned with a Eurocentric perspective of knowledge. The document states: "[...] the BNCC establishes the rights of learning and development for each stage of Basic Education" (BNCC, 2017), but does not recognize knowledge from African and Afro-Brazilian cultures. This gap is criticized by authors such as Walter Mignolo, who proposes that "[...] epistemic disobedience" as a way of breaking with the hegemony of Western knowledge. He argues: "[...] epistemic disobedience is a way of decolonizing knowledge and making room for other epistemologies" (2008, p. 287).

In addition, the maintenance of Eurocentric references in school curricula reinforces epistemic exclusion. The contents privilege historical narratives centered on Europe, marginalizing African and Afro-Brazilian contributions. As the article "Eurocentrism and curriculum" highlights: "[...] Eurocentric rationality is hegemonic in the organization of school curricula" (Silva, 2019, p. 178). This perspective is criticized by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who states: "[...] the epistemology of the global North is presented as universal, while the epistemologies of the South are disqualified" (2007, p. 45).

It was thought of and reproduced from a Eurocentric perspective, in which white people founded all forms of knowledge – only they had potent ancestors (thinkers, scientists, kings and queens); black people, even though they were the first human, had their histories barred in the last four centuries of subservience programmed within the modern slave logic; Indigenous people were placed in an understanding of savagery, deprived of territory, history, and narrative (Carine, 2023, p. 39).

As observed, Brazilian educational reforms, by not effectively incorporating black epistemologies, perpetuate historical inequalities. The lack of representation in teaching

materials is an example of this. A study on Geography books²⁴ for Youth and Adult Education in Rio de Janeiro reveals that "[...] there is a predominance of negative or stereotyped representations of the black population" (Oliveira, 2016, p. 92). This limited representation contributes to the construction of an exclusionary national identity. As Nilma Lino Gomes states: "[...] the absence of positive representations of the black population in teaching materials contributes to the construction of a national identity that excludes blacks" (2003, p. 167).

Although there are guidelines that guide the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in curricula, their effectiveness is still limited. The National Plan for the Implementation of the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations highlights the need for teacher training and the production of specific teaching materials (Brasil, 2009). However, many educators report a lack of institutional support to implement these guidelines. As Petronilha Gonçalves observes: "[...] the implementation of the guidelines depends on political will and concrete actions by educational institutions" (2004, p. 12).

On the other hand, resistance to the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian content in curricula is also manifested in discourses that question the relevance of these themes. Some argue that Afro-Brazilian history and culture are not pertinent to all regions of the country. This perspective ignores the presence and contribution of the black population throughout the national territory. As Kabengele Munanga points out: "[...] the black presence is a national reality and cannot be ignored in school curricula" (2003, p. 58). In addition, this resistance reflects the structural racism present in Brazilian society. As Silvio Almeida states, "[...] racism is not only in individual attitudes, but in the institutional mechanisms that organize social life" (2019, p. 87).

²⁴ A study conducted by Dionísio and Stribel (2020) on the Geography didactic material of the "Nova EJA" program in Rio de Janeiro revealed that "[...] there is a predominance of negative or stereotyped representations of the black population" in the contents analyzed. The research highlights that, although the majority of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) students are black people, teaching materials often neglect or distort their identities, reinforcing stigmas and contributing to the perpetuation of institutional racism in the school environment. The authors argue that this inadequate representation compromises the construction of a truly inclusive and anti-racist education, emphasizing the need for a critical review of pedagogical content to promote the appreciation of ethnic-racial diversity and combat the historical inequalities present in the Brazilian educational system. See: DIONÍSIO, Tiago; STRIBEL, Guilherme Pereira. Representativeness of the black population in the geography didactic material of the "Nova EJA" program: beyond the denunciation, another look. *Horizontes*, v. 38, n. 1, p. e020067, 2020. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.24933/horizontes.v38i1.935>. Accessed on: 23 Mar. 2025.

As the discourse of diversity becomes institutionalized in educational reforms, the need to question what is effectively transformed in the daily life of schools also grows. At first glance, documents such as the BNCC present the idea of inclusion and cultural plurality as guiding the formation of citizenship. However, as Djamila Ribeiro warns, "[...] racism is constantly reproduced by structures that feign neutrality" (2019, p. 72). Likewise, bell hooks points out that "[...] reforms that do not address racial power relations are just a new name for the same type of exclusion" (2019, p. 61). Therefore, the presence of the term "diversity" often glosses over the absence of real anti-racist commitment.

Organizations construct narratives about themselves without considering the plurality of the population with which they relate, who use their services and who consume their products. Many say they value diversity and equity, including placing these goals as part of their values, mission, and code of conduct. But how does this diversity and equity apply if the majority of its leadership and staff are almost exclusively white people? [...] This phenomenon has a name, whiteness, and its perpetuation over time is due to an unspoken pact of complicity between white people, which aims to maintain their privileges (Bento, 2022, p. 34).

Since the BNCC was approved in 2017, it has started to guide curricula throughout the national territory. However, the approach to ethnic-racial relations in the BNCC is vague, marginal and disconnected from a project of emancipatory formation. As Bárbara Carine states: "[...] diversity has become a commonplace emptied of meaning, which does not alter structures or contents" (2023, p. 143). Likewise, Lilia Schwarcz denounces that "[...] the erasure of the black presence in curriculum documents is as systematic as the racism that structures Brazilian society" (2019, p. 91). Therefore, the supposed inclusion does not translate into practices that destabilize white hegemony in the production of school knowledge.

As the National Education Plan (PNE) defines goals for the decade, progress in racial equity policies was expected, especially after the enactment of Law 10.639/2003. However, the PNE (2014-2024) does not make the black population explicit in its goals and guidelines, making the urgency of historical reparation invisible. As Silvio Almeida observes: "[...] the omission of the black subject in public policies is a political choice and not a technical oversight" (2019, p. 133). Likewise, Claudia Rankine states: "[...] absence is a form of structured presence – a way of maintaining power where it has always been" (2022,

p. 59). Given that the PNE proposes to guide national educational policy, its neglect of racial inequalities perpetuates the pact of whiteness²⁵.

Although teacher training is one of the pillars pointed out to ensure the implementation of the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations (DCNERER), teaching degree courses continue to resist an epistemological change. As Petronilha Gonçalves points out: "[...] it is not enough to address the racial issue in elective or isolated disciplines: it is necessary to integrate this perspective into the curricular structure" (2004, p. 27). In addition, Kenneth Fasching-Varner points out that "[...] To train teachers without racial awareness is to prepare educators to perpetuate the status quo" (2016, p. 111). In order to combat structural racism, it is essential to break with the logic of education that treats race as complementary content.

Unfortunately, the initial teacher training courses (pedagogies and licenciates) in Brazil do not fulfill this role, even after twenty years of Law No. 10,639/2003. We did this punctually with our educators, who developed locally and then became seeds, improving the knowledge acquired not only in school practices at Maria Felipa, but in their other workplaces and in their lives as a whole. It is also worth noting that, with the growth of the school, people from all over Brazil started to ask us to tell a little about our pedagogical processes. We saw there that there was a gigantic need in educators across the country (Pinheiro, 2023, p. 169).

At the same time, the language present in educational guidelines and reforms invokes diversity as a universal value, but rarely names racism as a concrete problem. However, the denial of racism as a structure prevents educational policies from advancing beyond rhetoric. Emma Dabiri points out: "[...] the idea of diversity has become a shield to maintain privilege, because it allows us to talk about difference without confronting power" (2021, p. 87). Similarly, Teun A. van Dijk states: "[...] the discourse of diversity can become a trap, when it serves to mask inequalities instead of confronting them" (2020, p. 94). In other words, a policy that doesn't name the problem is part of the problem.

²⁵ The pact of whiteness, a concept developed by Cida Bento, refers to the implicit agreement between white people who, even without deliberate action, maintain racial privileges by naturalizing the exclusion of black people from spaces of power and decision. This pact operates silently in institutions, ensuring the reproduction of racial inequalities through omission, apparent neutrality, and selectivity in opportunities. In the educational field, this pact is manifested in the maintenance of Eurocentric curricula, in the invisibility of black epistemologies, and in the resistance to the implementation of anti-racist pedagogical practices. As Bento (2022, p. 20) states, "[...] The narcissistic pact of whiteness is a pact of silencing and denying inequalities, signed between white people to maintain their privileges to the detriment of the black population." Thus, unveiling this pact is essential to confront structural racism and promote racial equity in public policies, especially in education. See: BENTO, Maria Aparecida Silva. The pact of whiteness. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2022.

Since the term "equity" began to appear in official documents, the association between educational quality and inclusion has become frequent. However, the logic of evaluation by results and meritocracy prevents schools from recognizing and addressing the historical inequalities that affect the black population. As Gloria Ladson-Billings denounces: "[...] the school failure of black students is the result of policies that feign equity, but operate based on white parameters of success" (2009, p. 54). Similarly, Robin DiAngelo states that "[...] white fragility transforms any criticism of racism into a personal attack, blocking any real progress" (2018, p. 88). To this end, it is necessary that the language of equity be accompanied by concrete commitments to racial justice.

Although there is talk of multiculturalism²⁶, black culture is still treated in a peripheral way, as an exception and not as the foundation of knowledge. The presence of blacks is tolerated, as long as it is depoliticized. As Emma Dabiri observes: "[...] there is a cultural consumption of blackness that does not translate into redistribution of power" (2021, p. 74). And bell hooks reinforces that "[...] schools prefer to teach black culture devoid of conflict, ignoring racism and its function of domination" (2019, p. 58). With this, educational reforms naturalize the presence-absence of blacks, as if their participation were symbolic, but not structural.

The crucial issue in this debate is that interest in the culture of certain peoples does not go hand in hand with the desire to restore the humanity of oppressed groups. Thus, many people who consume black culture do not care about the ills that the black population lives in the country. Or even, they don't care about the whitening of these crops. [...] The issue of cultural appropriation is about a power structure. There is a power instituted in society since colonization that delegates to the dominant the right to define who is inferior in this structure and how their cultural productions and even their bodies can be disposed of (Ribeiro, 2019, p. 59).

Since debates on ethnic-racial relations gained space in academic and militant production, it has become clear that the anti-racist struggle requires a profound reorganization of school curricula. However, educational reforms do not absorb this historical accumulation. As Barbara Carine explains: "[...] Black production on education is

²⁶ Multiculturalism, while presented as a discourse of valuing diversity, often acts as a strategy of symbolic inclusion that does not confront the racial hierarchies and power structures that underpin exclusion. In educational contexts, multiculturalism tends to celebrate cultural differences in a superficial way, emptying the historical and political conflicts that cross race relations. When not articulated with a critical and anti-racist perspective, this model can reinforce the idea of tolerance of difference without redistributing power or questioning privileges. As Candau (2008, p. 17) warns, "[...] multiculturalism can be appropriated as a strategy that reaffirms the status quo, rather than promoting profound changes in school and social structures." Therefore, it is essential to go beyond the celebratory approach to diversity, seeking pedagogical practices that destabilize exclusionary logics and promote an education committed to social justice. See: CANDAU, Vera Maria. Multiculturalism and education: challenges for pedagogical practice. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2008.

vast, but it is rarely part of official documents" (2023, p. 151). Likewise, Cida Bento denounces that "[...] the pact of whiteness is renewed when decisions about curriculum policy are made without the black presence in spaces of power" (2022, p. 83). In this way, it is not just a matter of quoting black authors, but of transforming the criteria that define what should be taught.

At the same time, educational reforms promote an idea of citizenship that does not incorporate the historical experiences of the black population. The abstraction of the universal subject continues to dominate legal texts, disregarding the marks of coloniality in Brazilian education. As Frantz Fanon argues: "[...] the experience of the black person is an experience of forced absence – of social invisibility despite physical presence" (2008, p. 77). And Djamila Ribeiro observes: "[...] the universalization of the white subject in school is the most sophisticated mechanism of exclusion" (2019, p. 68). In order to overcome this logic, it is necessary to build policies anchored in the concrete experiences of those who have historically been silenced.

Although the current guidelines mention the importance of respecting differences, this neutral language prevents structural advances. Neutrality, in this context, operates as a disguise for exclusion. As Zachary Casey states: "[...] white teachers are often taught to see their own whiteness as irrelevant, which prevents them from recognizing racism as a structure" (2020, p. 93). Likewise, Gloria Ladson-Billings denounces that "[...] depoliticized teacher training transforms anti-racism into an optional topic, and not a pedagogical principle" (2009, p. 78). Therefore, without a radical change in language and content, diversity will continue to be an unfulfilled promise.

Thus, the presence-absence of blacks in educational reforms is not a technical error, but a political project that needs to be unveiled. The simple mention of racial diversity does not change the structures if the normative and curricular frameworks continue to be based on whiteness. As Barbara Carine concludes: "[...] An anti-racist school is not built with inclusive discourses, but with ruptures and repositioning" (2023, p. 167). And Silvio Almeida reinforces: "[...] racial justice requires confrontation, not conciliation with structures that benefit from inequality" (2019, p. 139). In summary, the challenge of educational reforms is to abandon empty symbology and assume a pedagogy committed to real social transformation.

The book shows us how colonial, western, full of dichotomies, binarisms our school and curricular practices are. It is not enough just to analyze, produce articles and books that denounce this reality. We already have many productions like this and I

don't deny its importance. But we are in the twenty-first century and there is a historical struggle of the black movement and black and non-black anti-racist educators that demands the creation of educational proposals that oppose the Eurocentric school and the colonial curriculum with which we live. A radical change in this situation is urgent (Pinheiro, 2023, p. 225).

As the mobilization around racial justice grows, the need to rebuild school curricula from an anti-racist and decolonial perspective emerges more strongly. Since education was structured along Eurocentric lines, black knowledge has been systematically silenced. As bell hooks recalls: "[...] The decolonization of the curriculum requires more than adding black names: it requires removing the center of power" (2019, p. 57). Likewise, Barbara Carine observes that "[...] a curriculum that does not think about racism can only continue to produce it" (2023, p. 144). Therefore, the starting point is the active refusal of neutrality that maintains racism as a pedagogical substrate.

As the awareness that racism is not just a theme, but a structure that crosses school daily life grows, pedagogical practices need to be reformulated based on black and indigenous epistemologies. At the same time, the punctual insertion of contents is not enough: it is necessary to displace the logic of the hierarchy of knowledge. As Frantz Fanon argues: "[...] colonized knowledge needs to be disarticulated before it can be reconstructed" (2008, p. 88). Cida Bento adds: "[...] The absence of the black population in spaces of curricular power is not accidental – it is a continuity of the pact of whiteness" (2022, p. 79). Thus, breaking with the colonial model requires including and decolonizing at the same time.

Although legislation advances in the language of inclusion, educational praxis still falls far short of what a racial justice project requires. On the other hand, curricular transformation requires more than thematic adjustments: it requires a new ethical matrix. Walter Mignolo proposes "[...] an epistemic reorientation that allows us to think from the global South" (2008, p. 290). Petronilha Gonçalves, on the other hand, warns that "[...] curricular change needs to recognize the places from which racialized bodies speak" (2004, p. 35). Therefore, any anti-racist curriculum policy must begin by recognizing the place of speech as an epistemological axis.

Thus, we understand that all people have places of speech, because we are talking about social location. And, from this, it is possible to debate and critically reflect on the most varied topics present in society. The fundamental thing is that individuals belonging to the privileged social group in terms of social locus are able to see the hierarchies produced from this place, and how this place directly impacts the constitution of the places of subalternized groups. [...] We are saying, mainly, that

we want and claim that the story of slavery in Brazil be told from our perspectives, and not only from the perspective of those who won (Ribeiro, 2019, p. 64).

At the same time, the teaching materials and guidelines continue to operate under a logic that treats the history of the black population as a supplement and not as a foundation. Although Law 10.639/2003 has established milestones for an education of ethnic-racial relations, its effectiveness depends on structural curricular transformation. As Emma Dabiri warns: "[...] the black presence in didactic content must be critical, radical, and not celebratory" (2021, p. 93). Teun A. van Dijk adds: "[...] racism is also reproduced by the selection of what is taught and what is silenced" (2020, p. 107). Thus, it is necessary to place racism and anti-racism as central epistemological disputes in school curricula.

Not only in content, but also in the organization of the school and in time management, the logic of whiteness still defines what is considered good, useful and effective. However, the anti-racist curriculum policy requires the recognition of other ways of teaching, evaluating and relating to knowledge. Gloria Ladson-Billings insists: "[...] critical pedagogy needs to be articulated with anti-racism so as not to become emptied" (2009, p. 81). Barbara Carine, on the other hand, proposes that "[...] teaching from black references is not a complementary act, but a foundational one" (2023, p. 154). In order to break with the monoculture of knowledge, it is necessary to pluralize the ways of teaching and learning.

Since curricula have been organized by competencies and skills, the space for insurgent epistemologies has been further reduced. As the BNCC becomes the norm, the anti-racist struggle faces standardization as a new obstacle. Zachary Casey states that "[...] to standardize is also to whitewash knowledge: to remove its tensions and territorialities" (2020, p. 97). Similarly, Robin DiAngelo observes that "[...] white universality is implicit in the ways we structure what is called school knowledge" (2018, p. 92). Thus, thinking about an anti-racist curriculum also implies destandardizing and reterritorializing knowledge.

On the other hand, the daily practices of the school reveal the limits of reforms if they are not accompanied by critical teacher training. Not only the curricular structure, but the ethos of teaching needs to be reformulated. As bell hooks points out: "[...] the teacher who does not recognize his own raciality reproduces domination without realizing it" (2019, p. 63). Silvio Almeida reinforces: "[...] confronting racism requires knowledge, but it also requires a position" (2019, p. 106). In order for racial justice to be a living practice, faculty need to be willing to revisit their beliefs and convictions.

Although the legislation proposes the approach to diversity, teacher training still disregards racism as a training axis. The approach often remains on the level of good intentions, ignoring the concrete effects of racialization. Gloria Ladson-Billings states: "[...] it is not about teaching about blacks, but about teaching from a black consciousness" (2009, p. 89). Kenneth Fasching-Varner points out: "[...] training that ignores racism prepares educators for ethical failure" (2016, p. 112). Therefore, the anti-racist struggle in the curriculum necessarily involves teacher training committed to rupture.

More than an option, it must be a historical commitment, a duty of the school, to be anti-racist. The school and, in turn, the teacher need to guide racial equity in all its structure: in the professional body, especially in the occupation of school power spaces; in the curricular construction, guiding African and indigenous ancestral knowledge outside a place of stereotyping and debasement; [...] organize teacher training programs in schools from the perspective of racial literacy (Pinheiro, 2023, p. 171).

At the same time, it is essential to reimagine school spaces as environments of meaning-making, in which Black experiences are not only tolerated, but celebrated, analyzed, and placed at the center of the pedagogical process. As Djamila Ribeiro points out, "[...] the anti-racist struggle requires the valorization of black subjectivities in their complexity" (2019, p. 74). Likewise, Cida Bento observes: "[...] it is in the recognition of blackness as a power that the possibility of a transformative school resides" (2022, p. 87). In short, it is not just a matter of repairing absences, but of affirming presences.

Since coloniality was installed as a logic of the curriculum, the epistemic exclusion of the black population has been systematic. Today, the challenge is not only to insert, but to build a new paradigm. Walter Mignolo proposes: "[...] a decolonial curriculum needs to be built outside the matrix of colonial power" (2008, p. 294). Barbara Carine concludes: "[...] Black pedagogy is a pedagogy of coping and creating new possibilities" (2023, p. 169). Therefore, reversing the effects of epistemicide requires political courage and collective imagination.

CONCLUSION

As the legal and epistemological frameworks of Brazilian educational reforms were revisited, it became evident that whiteness is not a peripheral datum, but a normative structure that organizes hegemonic educational thought. Not only the documents analyzed, but also the silences that cross them indicate a systematic logic of exclusion of blacks as an epistemic subject. The recurrence of absence – camouflaged under the rhetoric of diversity – demonstrated that whiteness continues to be the parameter of neutrality, universality and competence, even when not directly named.

At the same time, it has become evident that the repeated use of the language of inclusion in legal texts has not necessarily resulted in structural changes. The Brazilian school, even when it adopts terminologies such as "plurality" and "equity", often does so without deconstructing the pillars that support the Eurocentric logic. Thus, educational reforms end up operating as devices for maintaining the status quo, reinforcing a racial hierarchy that is perpetuated under new names.

On the other hand, the critical analysis revealed that the problem lies not only in the lack of explicit mention of the black population, but in the absence of concrete policies that reorient the curriculum, teacher training and pedagogical materials based on black epistemologies. Law 10.639/2003, for example, although it represents a historic achievement, is often reduced to punctual and symbolic actions, far from an effective curricular reorganization. This mismatch between legislation and practice confirms that the anti-racist struggle requires more than standardization: it requires confronting institutional structures.

In addition, the presence-absence of blacks in educational reforms reflects a deep dispute for recognition, belonging, and historical reparation. Whiteness, by presenting itself as universal, delegitimizes other forms of knowledge and existence. The school curriculum, in this sense, continues to be a political arena where it is defined who has the right to teach, to learn and to be represented. The resistance to the full inclusion of ERER demonstrates that the problem is not technical, but political and epistemic.

The research also pointed out that educational policies, even if disguised as neutrality, are crossed by interests that favor the maintenance of whiteness as a structure of privilege. Documents such as the BNCC evidence this logic by promoting a supposed appreciation of diversity that does not translate into ruptures with the colonial matrix of

knowledge. In other words, diversity has become a conciliatory term, which hides conflict and preserves historically constructed privileges.

Likewise, it was found that the absence of black representation in the formulation and implementation of reforms contributes to the persistence of content and practices that make the black population invisible. White hegemony in universities, government agencies and school publishers perpetuates a cycle of exclusion that cannot be broken without radical changes. Thus, including the black population in political decisions is not only a demand for justice, but a condition for the real democratization of education.

Despite the difficulties, the research also identified school experiences that challenge this logic and propose anti-racist curricula as a daily and collective practice. These experiences show that it is possible to transform the school space into a territory of listening, reexistence and construction of other futures. However, these cases are still exceptions and often operate in defiance of official policies, being supported by the militancy of educators committed to racial justice.

In summary, whiteness remains as the invisible organizing axis of educational reforms, shaping contents, practices and structures based on a racialized logic of exclusion. To overcome it, it is necessary to recognize that anti-racist education is not limited to the addition of themes to the curriculum, but requires the deconstruction of a pedagogical project based on domination. It is a work of political, ethical and epistemic reorientation, which involves all the subjects of the school.

Therefore, to confront whiteness in educational reforms is to recognize that the school, as it is, was built to exclude. It is to understand that public policies, even well-intentioned ones, can be captured by a logic of maintaining inequality. And, above all, it is to affirm that another education will only be possible when racial justice is assumed as the central and non-negotiable axis of any pedagogical proposal.

Finally, this research reiterates that the presence of blacks in the curriculum, in the management and in the production of knowledge can no longer be negotiated as a symbolic concession. It must be structuring, plural, insurgent. Only in this way will it be possible to build an educational policy that not only names diversity, but that is committed to the radical transformation of the structures that sustain racism in our society.

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