

# Anti-racist education in the political and academic context: tensions and displacements\*

Marcos Antonio Batista da Silva<sup>1</sup>

ORCID: 0000-0003-2701-0316

## Abstract

The purpose of this article is to discuss the actions of social movements, particularly the Brazilian black movement, and Afro-Peruvian social movements in Peru targeting anti-racist education. Attention is drawn to the contemporary discussion about race and anti-racism in the production of knowledge and in the public educational policies in Brazil and in Peru. In addition to an approach to the use of ethnic-racial categories in census contexts in both countries. A comprehensive way of addressing the issue starts with thinking about the dimensions involved in the phenomenon subject to measurement and how they are operationalized by the State and by society. This work is based on the theoretical perspective of contemporary authors covering ethnic-racial relations and educational inequalities. In methodological terms, Teun Van Dijk's critical analysis of discourse is utilized. The first part presents a discussion about the social construction of race under the standards of domination and power. The second part proposes a discussion about ethnic-racial categories in the census contexts of the Brazilian and the Peruvian societies. It is understood that such categories may be culturally and politically elaborated drawing from complex historical processes. The third part addresses reflections on the emergence of some anti-racist education in the contemporary societies with an emphasis on Brazil and Peru. The article concludes with the idea that it is essential to dialogue with alternatives that have been formulated by the black social movements, especially in the Brazilian and Peruvian societies, which raise questions regarding the production and dissemination of the Eurocentric knowledge, unveiling racism and taking power relations, especially those occurring in the educational realm, into consideration.

## Keywords

Education – Anti-racism – Race – Brazil – Peru.

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**1-** University of Coimbra, Center for Social Studies, Coimbra, Portugal. Contact: marcos.psyco@yahoo.com.br



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## Introduction

My own participation in this debate comes from two main reasons: over the last years, I have been researching the educational opportunities under the racial perspective in Brazil; I have been a member, since 2017, of the project POLITICS<sup>2</sup> and, in such project, the intent is to gain more detailed knowledge of anti-racism and search for greater understanding about the way historically enrooted injustices have been put into question by institutions and grassroots social movements. Between the two lines of investigation, the highlight is the knowledge of race and anti-racism being produced in the spheres of (inter)national policies by the government, the public universities, and the social movements.

This article utilizes the concept of race in the perspective adopted by contemporary authors (GUIMARÃES, 2002; SCHUCMAN, 2010; BENTO; CARONE, 2002). The concept of race is understood as a social construct and an analytical concept to comprehend socio-structural and symbolic inequalities observed in the Brazilian society. Schucman (2010, p.48) emphasizes that, in this sense, “the relational process results in inequalities of symbolic and material goods for the black population, in contrast with privileges and omission of the white population”. Yet, says the author:

Race as social category is an important component in the social structures, since [...] although the idea of a biological race no longer echoes amidst the scientific discourses, race is a category that differentiates, ranks, and subjugates different groups that are phenotypically marked [...], both whites and blacks are racialized on a daily basis in a relational process. (SCHUCMAN, 2010, p. 48).

The choice to discuss this research subject has to do with my academic trajectory as a “black researcher” and with the reduced attention this theme has been granted, despite its importance in the academy. The decision to consciously go down this intellectual road has always been an exceptional and difficult option. Generally, a black person who seeks higher education and graduate studies comes from an underprivileged background and, with a few exceptions, does not presents in their education a shortage of elements. I quote, as an example, mastering foreign languages. The case of the language raises other questions about its role in the education of someone. Gordon (2008), referring to Fanon (2008), argues that colonization requires more than the material subordination of a people. It also provides the means through which the individuals will be able to understand each other. “He identifies it in radical terms in the core of the language and also in the methods with which sciences are constructed. This is epistemological colonialism”. (GORDON, 2008, p. 15).

The claim for access to higher education for the racialized population in the contemporary societies is a political mobilization of visibility. Over the last decades, in

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**2** - <https://ces.uc.pt/pt/investigacao/projetos-de-investigacao/projetos-financiados/politics>. (Project: 725402 - POLITICS - ERC-2016-COG).

Brazil, there has been a crucial moment in the agenda of educational policies demanding policies of affirmative action in higher education (BRASIL, 2012).

Affirmative actions are special and temporary measures, taken by the State and/or by the private sector, spontaneously or compulsorily, with the purpose of eliminating historically accumulated inequalities, [...] [to ensure] equal opportunities and treatment, as well as offset losses caused by discrimination and e marginalization, due to racial, ethnic, religious, gender reasons. (ROSEMBERG, 2010, p. 4).

Affirmative action is understood as an intervention by the State or the private sector, for a limited time, with the purpose of rapidly increasing the racialized population (black, indigenous, Roma<sup>3</sup> population), in spheres of social life such as education, politics, and employment. The affirmative action policies “bring about significant changes in profile of college students, especially in the most selective institutions” (HERINGER, 2018, p. 15).

Upon entering the academy, new dilemmas are faced, that is, conflicts that have not developed when black students face a Eurocentric model of intellectual activity that makes us defensive. “The weight of this inescapable burden for black students in the white academic ambience has often determined the content and the nature of the black intellectual activity”. (HOOKS, 2005, p. 471-472). Efforts to boost the representativeness of the racialized population in the academy has given rise to specific programs in some universities. An example to be quoted is support program<sup>4</sup> for racialized students in their academic careers (resources, training, support), to a better collective understanding of diversity in higher education /graduate studies, at a university in the United States of America (CASSUTO, 2019). It is understood that, in social competition, the starting point of blacks is factually detrimental due to legacy of enslavement, which is case, for example, of education.

However, this paper has been guided by raising questions about how to make anti-racist education considering the central role education has historically acquired in the anti-racist struggles, and it also proposes to discuss the concept of race in the Latin American context. “The discussion on race in Brazil in a variety of contexts is not done in isolation. Rather, it must be intertwined with broader historical, social, cultural, political, and economic issues”. (GOMES, 2012, p. 729).

## Methodology

For this article, documents in public domain have been consulted which include, first of all, census surveys in the Brazilian context: “Ethnic-racial Characteristics of the population: classifications and identities” (PETRUCCELLI; SABOIA, 2013), and from

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**3-** In this paper, I chose to use the category Rome, following Maeso (2019, p. 2039). “Since the 1970’s there has been an increasing rejection of the word ‘gypsy’ as a category to call the Rome population because it is considered a category of foreign denomination, a result of the racist domination system”.

**4-** See: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/News/All-News/Detail?id=47533>: “How to Increase Diversity in the Graduate School the Right Ways”, which describes the undergraduate and graduate programs Pipeline Fellows of the *Graduate Center* in order to diversify graduate studies in human and social sciences (my translation).

Peru, by means of documents from the National Institute of Statistics and Computing (INEI in its original acronym), *National Census 2017: XII of Population, VII of Housing and III of Indigenous Communities* (INEI, 2018). A review of the literature was also conducted covering ethnic-racial relations (race, racism, and anti-racism) produced in Brazil and in Peru, whose marker is the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. There are also information from a series of debates in the Peruvian context, in which the topic of ethnic-racial issues in the academy (anti-racist education) was discussed. In addition to preliminary analyses of the POLITICS project, still in progress (2017-2022), (SILVA; COELHO, 2020).

These analyses seek to reflect on the anti-racist educational policies, especially in higher education (QUIJANO, 2005; ARAÚJO; MAESO, 2013; GOMES, 2012). The discussion about the text is also based on the perspective given by the critical analysis of discourse by Van Dijk (2001).

The Critical Analysis of Discourse is an analytical research on discourse which studies [...] the way the abuse and inequality of social power are represented, reproduced, legitimated and resisted by the text and by the speech in the social and political context. (VAN DIJK, 2001, p. 466).

## **The social construction of race in the domination and power patterns**

As Schucman (2010, p. 47) puts it, the concept of race “is not about biological data, but ‘social constructs’, forms of identity based on a mistaken biological idea, but socially effective, to construct, keep and reproduce differences and privileges”. Moreover, says the author, “the category of race which operates in the people’s imagery and produces racist discourses is still the idea of race produced by modern science in the 19th and 20th centuries”. (SCHUCMAN, 2010, p. 48).

In turn, as Quijano (2005) sees it, one finds that before America was discovered the idea of race in its modern sense was unknown. This idea may have originated as a reference to phenotypical differences between conquerors and conquered and assumedly differential biological structures were constructed between those groups. The making of social relations underpinned on the idea of race produced in the Americas new social identities (black, indigenous, half-breeds), while redefined other identities. Thus, for Quijano (2005, p. 117) “terms such as Spanish and Portuguese, and later European, which so far indicated just geographical provenience or the original country, since then also acquired, regarding the new identities, a racial connotation”. That is, “race and racial identity were established as instruments of basic social classification of the people”. (QUIJANO, 2005, p. 117).

Over time, colonizers coded the color as the phenotypical traits of the colonized and took it as the emblematic mark of the racial category. The subsequent constitution of Europe with a new identity, after its contact with the Americas, and the expansion of European colonialism in the rest of the world, led to a Eurocentric perspective of

knowledge and, so there was also the theorization of race as a naturalization of those colonial relations of domination between Europeans and non-Europeans. Since then race has shown to be an instrument of universal social domination. Thus, the phenotypical traits were associated with cultural, mental, and sexual issues (QUIJANO, 2005). The link between race and culture, or rather, the racialization of culture and the political manipulation of culture and the political manipulation of this situation are essential to understand how the race system works. (LENTIN, 2018).

Drawing from a decolonial perspective, the word race is seen in its central role regarding the formation of power structures and, as a result, it was possible to observe the intersecting relation between race and the capitalist liberal order in contemporary society. For Quijano (2005, p. 136), “the coloniality of power established over the idea of race must be assumed as a basic factor in the national concern and the Nation-state”. As the author sees it, it is problematic that in Latin America the Eurocentric conception has been adopted by dominant groups as their own, thus imposing the European model the Nation-State onto power structures organized around the colonial relations. The historical, political and sociological contribution presented by Quijano (2005), and by the post-colonial studies, focusing on the Americas, are important to theoretically enhance the analysis of the social construction of race in Brazil as well as in the Peruvian society.

Araújo and Maeso (2013) add that “contemporary to democratic political regimes which advocate for human rights, the effective reproduction of power relations based on ‘race’ results from a game of making things in/visible – anchored in Eurocentrism”. The authors underline that, on one hand, this reproductive activates excluding imageries and practices, and on the other hand, “it naturalizes the power configurations underpinning them – that is, naturalizes a specific ‘history of power’” (p. 147).

Gomes (2012), when discussing the role of the Brazilian black movement in re-signifying and politicizing the idea of race, stresses that “race is understood here as a social construction that marks, in a structural and structuring way, the Latin American societies” (p. 727). The author, thinking about the actions of the black movement, draws from the claim that “this social movement, by means of its political actions, especially on behalf of education, re-educates itself, the State, society and the educational field about the ethnic-racial relations in Brazil, moving towards social emancipation” (GOMES, 2012, p. 727).

## **The racial and ethnic variable in the contemporary census contexts**

Paixão and Carvano (2008), discussing race in the contemporary world, indicate two major vectors for this discourse: 1) the term race remains being underpinned by the racist ideology in its several forms of expression (ostensive, intolerant, aggressive). That is, they “assign individuals with certain physical appearance and/or cultural backgrounds corresponding to some characteristics, either stigmatized or valued [...]; including the entire ancestral legacy of such collectivities” (p. 31). The authors draw attention to the vestiges of European ascendance, that is, the racist vision that runs across more or less tolerantly

and selectively the intermediate types, sometimes valuing those with lighter colored skin, sometimes able to recognize and discriminate based on criteria of appearance and origin. Therefore, this perspective ends up being decisive in personal, academic, professional trajectories, and consequently influencing their social and educational mobility; 2) the current persistence of the term race comes also from the perspective evinced by the black social movements (black movement) and others, in advocating for the historically discriminated populations. Thus, such conception understands that rescuing the term race, taken in its sociocultural variant, benefits the collective action (defending the physical, legal and/or territorial integrity) by adopting measures to promote racial equality (quality of life, schooling, ancestry, aesthetical/body standards).

For Paixão and Carvano (2008, p. 31-32), “when the anti-racist] social movements retrieve the term race, it is about re-creating a perspective of thought that, yes, it is racialized, however it aims to promote its contrary, that is, fighting racism and its harmful [consequences]”. For these authors, all racist thinking has racialized grounds, yet, not necessarily some kind of racialized thinking is racist, “[anti-racist] racialism acknowledges that the reality of the races is first of all social, political and cultural, it generates corresponding social dynamics that produce unfairness according to the holders of the different racial appearances or marks”. (PAIXÃO; CARVANO, 2008, p. 31-32, my emphasis).

The anti-racist racialized line retrieves an original concept utilized by the Europeans colonizers, race, and re-create it in the sense that it seeks to overcome the terminology itself. Will the term race ever cease to exist? For Paixão and Carvano (2008), the term “may only cease to exist when an effective equality is established for the life conditions of the several contingents with the societies where the problem occurs” (p. 32). This explains the importance of the presence of the category race within demographic survey systems (censuses), “either in an exclusive manner; or blended with the ethnic variable; or associated with the racial appearance in the case operating through the indicator of the skin color”. (PAIXÃO; CARVANO, 2008, p. 32).

These authors also suggest some motivations for including, or not, the ethnic-racial question in the census surveys, namely: counting the ethnic-racial contingents for the purpose of political control of such groups; not including on behalf of national integration; strengthening the discourse of hybridism or crossbreeding amidst the population, which lead to either including or excluding the category; counting for the purpose of adopting affirmative strategies. Agreeing with Paixão and Carvano (2008), I have observed that, according to the survey by UN Statistics Division<sup>5</sup>:

[...] between the 1990's and the 2000's, in 121 countries and territories around the world [...], within their respective statistical systems there was some kind of question about ethnic belonging (including derivations in terms of tribal or native belonging; linguistic group, ancestry), national (beyond the prevailing nationality), religious or racial (or skin color) to their inhabitants. (p. 33).

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**5** - The United Nations Statistics Division is the main agency on the international level in charge of gathering official data on the ethnocultural characteristics of the population, including national groups and/or those related to ethnicity, religion, and language. Data on these topics have been collected from the Demographic Yearbook since 1948.

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/popchar/popcharMeta.aspx>

It is worth recalling that one of items in the Durban Review (held in Geneva in 2009), called by the UNO, was the proposal of new benchmarks in the national agendas, arising from the advancements and challenges to implement the Durban Action Plan and, among other, the commitment of the Americas to improve the gathering of race and ethnicity data for the census database. Thus, according to the Durban Review Conference Outcome Document<sup>6</sup>, it is suggested that the State that have not so far done it, set up mechanisms to collect, analyze and publicize statistic data and take the relevant measures necessary to thoroughly assess the situation of people and/or groups that are victims of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. Next, a brief historical report is presented about the census in Brazil and in Peru.

### **A brief report of the Brazilian census context**

Since the first census in Brasil in 1872, a system of color classification was established in the nation, utilizing the following categories: white, black, *pardo*<sup>7</sup>, and *caboclo* (mixed Brazilian native and European white)<sup>8</sup>. The second national census took place in 1890 when the category brown was replaced with *mestizo*<sup>9</sup> in the classification. Crossbreeding as a category was associated with the theory of “whitening”, along decades in the early years of the Republic (PETRUCCELLI; SABOIA, 2013). In the 1900 and 1920 census, the racial classification was not included. In 1930, once again, the census was not performed and was resumed in 1940. Thus, that year the category yellow was added to the classification, due to the Japanese immigration that took place from 1908 through 1929. In the 1940 demographic census, the accepted answers to racial classification were the terms white, black and yellow. It should be added, also, that this census was the only one in Brazil’s statistical history which did not utilize the category brown (PETRUCCELLI; SABOIA, 2013). In the first demographic census conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE in its original acronym), the item, now denominated “color”, was once again researched and the spoken language was investigated to identify the existence of other origins, such as the indigenous people. In turn, the 1950 and 1960 Demographic Census retrieved the Brown group as a color category, as a unit for collection and analysis, as well as the investigation of the spoken language. (PETRUCCELLI; SABOIA, 2013).

In 1960, censuses have now two questionnaires: the basic one (with a few questions and responded by all households) and the sample questionnaire (more comprehensive and responded by just around 10 percent of households). The item “color” was in the

**6-** [https://brazil.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/revissao\\_declaracao\\_durban.pdf](https://brazil.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/revissao_declaracao_durban.pdf)

**7-** *Pardo* means someone whose skin color lies between white and black, as explains Cunha (1982), quoted by Petrucelli ((2000, p. 13).

**8-** The term *caboclo*, defined as a noun, may be used either to refer the “indigenous” or the “mixed breed of indigenous and white” or, also, “an individual of coppery color and straight hair”, seems to derives the Tupi language: *Cauoucolo*, 1645, *cabocolo*, 1648. (CUNHA, 1982), quoted by Petrucelli (2000, p. 14).

**9-** *Mestizo* is an Iberian word, in Spanish, which is define as “born from parents of different races” (Cunha, 1982). It seems to have appeared in the Portuguese language (as *mestiço*) in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (PETRUCCELLI, 2000, p. 14).

basic questionnaire, who lived in villages or indigenous posts was classified as “indian” (an term not included in the item “color”) and those who declared themselves “indian”, but do not lived in such places, was classified as brown. In the 1970 census, a period when the military rule was in force in Brazil, neither color nor race were investigated. However, in the 1980 census, the item “color” was once again investigated and was included in the sample questionnaire using the categories white, black, yellow and brown. In 1991, the category “indian” was included item that now had the name of “color or race”, since, “allegedly”, indigenous would be a race and not a color, as the other categories. Thus, in the 1991 census, there were five categories: white, black, yellow, brown and indigenous and indigenous.

In 2000, there were again five categories currently utilized in the surveys, in the order they appear in the questionnaire – white, black, yellow, brown and indigenous – which also are included in 2010 Demographic Census. The latter, in turn, presents two novelties in relation to the previous one: the classification question was applied to the totality of households in the country, and not only those included in the sample, as it has happened in the surveys conducted in 1980, 1991 and 2000; and, for the first time, people who identified themselves as indigenous were asked about their ethnicity and spoken language. (PETRUCCELLI, 2013, p. 24).

It must be stressed that, according to IBGE (2010) the structure of the population changed in relation to the last Censuses in terms of color or race, and the highlight is a greater proportion of people who declared themselves black and brown.

A new census had been scheduled in Brazil for the year 2020, however, due to the guidelines issued by the Health Ministry related to the emergence status of public health caused by COVID-19, IBGE decided to postpone the Demographic Census to 2021 (IBGE, 2020). It should be mentioned that the item “color or race” is adopted in administrative records, registers, forms and databases of the Federal Government. This request intends to guide the federal public agencies when conducting actions to promote racial equality as set forth by Act Nº 12,288/2010 (BRAZIL, 2010) which institutes the Statute of Racial Equality, meeting one of the oldest claims of the Brazilian black movement.

## **Censuses in Peru: some reflections**

Several authors have dwelled on the history of the censuses in Peru. Valdivia (2011) says Peru has shown some advances in gathering ethnic-racial data but, in comparative terms, it is one of the countries still out of step in this subject. Through the history of Peruvian censuses, the author identifies some points that deserve to be highlighted, namely: first, going from the beginning of the Republic and including efforts to conduct census records, a few examples are given, the 1876 and subsequent censuses conducted along four decades in the 20th century, in which the category race was utilized to address the problems of ethnic and cultural differences in the country. As the 1940 census was held, this stage is ended, it is the last nation to include a question about race.

The second stage corresponds to the 1940’s and 1960’s and Valdivia (2011) underlines that at this time there was an influence of anthropology, which began to take up space



in the country as a modern science that had been approaching the ethnic studies. This becomes evidenced when a module was included within the 1961 census with questions intended to seize ethnic markers (indigenous culture and native language). In the third stage, after the last census in 1961, there comes a period of four decades along which the ethnic-racial issue was somehow missing. Although the censuses proceeded to absorb the mother tongue as a piece of information, the original motivation for such inclusion was connected to an effort to identify problems of illiteracy and access to formal education, that is, it did not have the purpose of setting indicators for the ethnic cultural condition.

In the fourth stage (21st century), for the first time Peru introduces issues related to ethnic-racial identity in the official inquiries, going beyond the limitation of the linguistic universes, mainly due to the influence of proposals and projects from international organizations, such as UNO. Thus, in the 2000's, INEI included a question about ethnic self-identification in the National Inquiry to Family Aggregates. It can also be seen that the Intercultural Health Center with the Health Ministry of Peru started a pilot experience to include information about ethnicity in the information systems. This means that investigating the role of color/race in producing health differentials may yield important information and contribute in the making of policies intended to reduce social inequalities in contemporary societies.

In this sense, it is important to mention that in 2017 Peru conducted for the very first time in its history a national census that, in order to gather information, included more specific ethnic-related questions. For example, considering traditions and ancestors, it was asked if people declared themselves as: *"1) Quechua. 2) Aimara. 3) Native or indigenous from Amazonia. (Specify). 4) Belonging to or part of another indigenous or original people (Specify). 5) Black, dark, zambo, mulatto / Afro-Peruvian people or Afro-descendant. 6) White. 7) Mestizo. 8) Other (Specify)"*.

Also, according to information from INEI (2018), it is noted that:

Out of 23,196,391 inhabitants aged 12 year and over, 60,2 percent (13,965,254 persons) declared they perceive themselves as Mestizo, 22.3 percent (5,176,809) from Quechua origin; 5.9% (1,366,931) feel they have a White origin; 3.6 percent (828,841) Afro-descendant and 2.4 percent (548,292) from Aimara origin. The Census recorded 79,266 people who consider themselves native or from Amazonia; 55,489 people who identify themselves as Ashaninka; 37,690 people from Awajún origin; 25,222 as Shipibo Konibo, and 49,838 people as part of another Indigenous or Original People. (INEI, 2018, p. 214).

Villasante (2017), when discussing the inclusion of the ethnic question in Peru's census, emphasizes that in order to achieve positive effects, the results must be followed up, discussed and analyzed by different scientific areas as well as by the ethnic groups identified in the several regions of the country. As a result, this debate may allow to reach real knowledge of the current situation faced by such groups in terms of housing, economic activities, education, health, in addition to retrieve the history and culture of this population. This would identify and reduce, for example, social gaps as those found in education. In this perspective, studies reveal that the access rate of Afro-Peruvian young people is still disadvantaged in relation to the national average rate of access to higher

education. Thus, through information from INEI, one learns that only 11,5 percent of Afro-Peruvians have gone to college, while this percentage is 22,1 percent for the white and mestizo population (INEI, 2018, p. 142 -143).

In this sense, Villasante (2017) quotes Brazil as an example, as the country implemented policies of affirmative action in higher education. It is understood that, singly, the information collected for sure from the censuses do not “benefit” the fight against social and racial inequalities, but if associated with other data, they may turn out to be important information for new studies racial relations e to implement public policies for equity.

The discussions presented allow to underpin an analytical and political perspective for the field of ethnic-racial relations with the purpose of describing and interpreting the structural racism operates to produce and sustain social inequalities as well as to reflect on strategies that would overcome it. For Almeida (2019, p. 32) “Racism is a systematic form of discrimination underpinned by the idea of race, and it is expressed by means of practices [...] which culminate in disadvantages or privileges for the individuals, depending on the social group they belong to” (p. 32).

It is expected that including the item ethnicity in the 2017 census in Peru may allow an in-depth analysis of these groups identified by the ethnic categories and their socioeconomic status, and thus generate, for example, public policies in the field of education to develop actions whose purpose is to assert the principles of equality and of citizenship, acknowledge and value the ethnic plurality that marks the Peruvian society, especially the Afro-Peruvian population (VALDIVIA, 2011; INEI, 2018; DORIVAL CORDOVA, 2019).

## **About the emerging anti-racist education**

Gomes (2017), in his book *The educating Black Movement: knowledge constructed from the emancipation struggles* presents the central role played by the Brazilian black movement as an educating process which, as such, has been producing emancipatory knowledge about the racial issue in Brazil. It then can be seen that the understanding of the knowledge produced by the black movement is capable of subverting the educational theory, construct the pedagogy of absences and emergences, in an effort to rethink the school, the university and to de-colonize the curricula. In this sense, examples are Acts N° 10.639/2003 (BRAZIL, 2003) and N° 11,645/2008 (BRAZIL, 2008), which set forth that the Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture are compulsory in the curriculum, coupled with an education for the ethnic-racial relations (SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2019).

Highlights are also the “black collectives”, many of them created to tackle the invisibility of the racial issues in the academic curriculum, either as a discipline or as transversal topic in the school programs. According Guimarães *et al.*, (2020):

The curriculum, therefore, turns out to be the object of a great deal of discussion in the collectives, as they get support from reading authors who are de-colonial, post-colonial, subordinate, Fanonians, Afro-centered, PanAfricanist, feminist and queer; they will provide

ballast for a new political discourse and subsidies to the demands for epistemological changes in the academy. (p. 321).

Moreover, according to Guimarães *et al.*, the “Black collectives begin to play a decisive role in receiving racial quota students and in monitoring affirmative actions in the public universities, thus becoming key actors in fighting systemic racism in higher education” (GUIMARÃES *et al.*, 2020, p. 309). The black collectives have made room in the media (newspapers, social networks) to disseminate black narratives in the cultural area, and mainly to expose and denounce racism in the Brazilian society. Other items in the agenda of these black collectives seek to enhance visibility to the racial quota system in graduate studies, expand college cafeterias and organize events. The same goes for promoting debates and talking circles about the commissions for racial hetero-identification (racial quota system) in the universities to discuss the importance of such commissions and how they should work, among other issues.

Another example comes from the several black collectives at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). “The UFRJ campuses have collectives that teach classes on racial awareness and show that racial diversity strengthens the production of knowledge and public policies”, as argues Silvana Sá<sup>10</sup> (2019, p. 3). Also, according to her:

Since 2013, implementing racial quotas in the federal universities has made UFRJ advance towards democratizing higher education. Despite the achievement, the academic daily life is barren land for black students. They are the most dependent on permanence policies such as scholarships, housing, transportation, and food. Students also come across subjective violence, such as the lack of representativeness in the teaching staff. Difficulties have given rise to black collectives at the institution. First, among undergraduates; then among graduate students. “Today, we have 19 collectives”. (SÁ, 2019, p. 3).

It is worth highlighting some actions conducted by these black collectives, as underlined by Sá (2019):

[The] *Negrer* Collective, from the Medicine course. The group discusses the health of black people and has managed to introduce the theme in three moments of the course [...]. “We want to fight racism as future health professionals” [...]. Despite the advancement, the official curriculum has not yet included disciplines about the subject [...] Collective *Guerreiro Ramos* [...] set up a preparatory course for the graduate admission process. “It is aimed at black students from UFRJ and other universities” [...]. “Our actions are in two dimensions: strengthen who is already in a graduate program and expand the access for black people. (p. 3).

In turn, in the Peruvian context, highlights are the initiatives by Afro-Peruvian undergraduates who draw attention to the invisibility of the ethnic-racial issues at the university. An example can be quote: the event held in June 2019, at *Universidad Nacional*

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**10-** Newsletter of AdUFRJ, nº 1109, 19 Nov 2019. [www.adufrj.org.br](http://www.adufrj.org.br)

*Mayor de San Marcos, whose title was Afro-descendants in Latin America: Dialogue of experiences between Peru and Brazil*<sup>11</sup>, organized by the Center of Sociology Students B18. The Seminar had the presence of students, activists and researchers and was a pioneering initiative addressing the theme at the university.

Gomes (2017) raises the question: what do the educational curricula have to learn from the educative processes devised by black social movements in Latin America? In her own words, talking about the emancipatory knowledge produced by the black population and systematized by the black movement, “it is a way of getting to know to the world, the production of a rationality marked by the lived experience of the race in a racialized society and directed at the black population throughout history”. (GOMES, 2017, p. 67-68). Having Brazil in mind, the author emphasizes that such issues are the fruits of learning and represent, on one hand, “a tribute to the intellectual, political, and life investment and, on the other hand, the persistent and tense trajectory made by activists from the black movement”. (GOMES, 2017, p. 67). And she adds up: “we may say that, as I see it, the black community and the Black Movement produce knowledge which are different from the scientific knowledge but under no circumstances should be considered inferior or residual knowledge”. (GOMES, 2017, p. 67).

Because race is so important in the making of the Brazilian society, knowing these issues is something that must be included in schooled education, in educative projects outside the schools, and in all academic fields. Such issues are: the knowledge produced by the black community and systematized by the Brazilian black movement; identity knowledge (the black movement, especially in the context of affirmative action policies, retrieves the debate on race in Brazil and gives it a new meaning); the political knowledge, represented by the State, mainly the Ministry of Education, which starts to address the issues of ethnic-racial inequalities; and the aesthetic-bodily knowledge, concerning the aesthetics of art, aesthetics as a way of feeling the world, as a way to experience the body.

For Gomes (2017, p. 77), all these sorts of knowledge “are interconnected in a dynamic manner, despite their specificities”. This means that the black movement has come up with several items in the agenda for the Brazilian society: an agenda that combines the policy of acknowledgement, the policy of identity, the policy of citizenship and the redistributive policy. The author also reasserts that the black movement constructs an emancipatory educative project and, within it, all the knowledge developed by the black people throughout their history is shared and socialized (GOMES, 2017; SANTOS, 2009-2017).

## Final comments

This article has addressed the actions conducted by the black social movements in Brazil and Peru, taking into consideration the debate on race and anti-racism in the

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**11-** Highlights are the contributions by the authors Luis Reyes Escate, Sharún Gonzales, Rocío Muñoz, (Afro-Peruvian) and Marcos Silva (black researcher, Brazil), concerning the anti-racist debate. And an additional and special thank to the young Afro-Peruvian Fiorella Solis Baez and to support by Center of Sociology Students from the School of Social Sciences at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM) and Sociology B18. <https://www.facebook.com/events/facultad-de-cienciasociales-unmsm/afrodescendientes-en-am%C3%A9rica-latina-di%C3%A1logo-deexperiencias/867322026978355/>

production of knowledge and in the educational public policies. It is also an approach to take a look at the use of ethnic-racial categories in census surveys held in both countries. Taken separately, the information gathered in the censuses do not benefit the struggle against social inequalities and racism; however, if associated with other data, they might turn into crucial information for new studies of ethnic-racial relations and to implement public policies aimed at equality.

In contemporary societies, it is crucial to engage in a dialogue with the alternatives that have been formulated by the black social movements in Brazil and in Peru. They raise questions concerning the production and dissemination of the Euro-centric knowledge, and unveil racism in the perspective of power relations, especially in the educational field. The critical analyses involving Latin American identities often bear in mind the discourses based on Euro-centric narratives, and do not pay due attention to the history and culture of the local populations, especially the racialized population. For a long time, these discourses have contributed to form an ideology of the “whitening” of such populations, in the sense that they devalue and erase their historical roots (black, indigenous, Afro-Peruvian and Roma people).

Over the last decades fighting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and a variety of forms of intolerance has been absorbed by the agenda in different countries and world forums as emphasize Hesse (2004), Lentin (2011), Araújo and Maeso (2016), Gomes (2017), strengthening the inclusive and anti-racist issues, on global and local level, backed by a public debate that involves governmental and non-governmental organizations, social movements and universities, all of them interested in analyzing the dynamics of racial relations in different countries, as is the case in Brazil and Peru. In this perspective, the highlights are the initiatives developed by the Ethnic Development Center (CEDET)<sup>12</sup> in Peru, among other organizations. CEDET has contributed to boost the ethnic-racial identity of the Afro-Peruvian community, especially in the field of education. The institution has been investigating the consequences of racism, discrimination and exclusion on the several stages of schooling and has been fostering debates and publications around issues regarding the Afro-Peruvian population.

In the Brazilian educational field, for example, public policies have been implemented with the purpose of expanding the access of black and indigenous people to higher education (racial quotas, teaching about Afro-Brazilian and indigenous history and culture). On the one hand, such educational policies as well as their curricular guidelines concerning ethnic-racial relations represent an important step against racism and indicate changes in the practices and in the need to review educational curricula under a critical perspective towards Eurocentrism, which is still quite spread in teacher training. On the other hand, the path remains slow, except for a few universities, in the effort to provide compulsory disciplines covering ethnic-racial relations in higher education.

Education in contemporary societies has been historically considered a crucial sphere in the anti-racist struggle; the universities have increasingly made room for resistance, triggered and boosted by tensions and disputes gradually leading to the understanding

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**12-** <https://cedetperu.org/index.php/publicaciones>

of race and racism. Thus, it is fundamental to re-think the conceptual framework, the discourses and the practices that have underpinned the actions of the State and the social movements regarding educational public policies that are allegedly intended to include black and indigenous people.

While education is seen as a crucial field due to the possibility of fostering changes in the social representations and of introducing narratives which include peoples historically excluded from the production of knowledge (Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture) and what has been achieved by the social movements, especially the black movement, on the other hand, education still mirrors an institutional domain where inequalities and Euro-centric benchmarks have been historically produced. (ARAÚJO; MAESO, 2016, SILVA; COELHO, 2020).

Is there continuity and/or ruptures of the Euro-centric logic that upholds racism in higher education? Fighting for anti-racist education reflects the tension found throughout the history of the educational policies in the country. That is why, on one hand, there are policies intended to maintain structural racism untouched, as reveal the invisibility of race and the myth of democracy, on the other hand, there are policies arising from social struggles that are meant to break up with those policies.

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**Marcos Antonio Batista da Silva** is PhD in Social Psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo. He is taking post-doctoral studies in the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. He is a member in the project POLITICS – (Project: 725402 — POLITICS — ERC-2016-COG).