



# Popular feminist education in a latin american decolonial perspective

Márcia Alves da Silva

Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Rua Alberto Rosa, 154, 96010-770, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. E-mail: profa.marciaalves@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT.** For poor Brazilian women, in addition to the prejudices typical of a society that bears deep marks of the racist and oligarchic model of an enslaver elite, there is added gender discrimination fueled by patriarchy. We know that they face enormous difficulties on a daily, as data indicate that Brazilian women have lower wages than men, accumulate formal work with domestic work and suffer from violence of various types. For rural women, this reality may be even more emblematic, as work in the domestic space gets confused with field work. Also we can't forget the huge number of women who are outside the formal labor market. This text makes a theoretical reflection, seeking to contribute to the construction of another epistemology that points to a process of autonomy and emancipation for poor women. For this, it seeks a dialogue between decolonial thought, popular education and feminism, with the objective of contributing to the construction of a Latin American feminist educational thought.

**Keywords:** feminisms; decolonial thinking; women.

## Educação popular feminista numa perspectiva descolonial latino-americana

**RESUMO.** Para as mulheres pobres brasileiras, além dos preconceitos típicos de uma sociedade que carrega marcas profundas do modelo racista e oligárquico de uma elite escravocrata, se soma a discriminação por gênero alimentada pelo patriarcado. Sabemos que enfrentam enormes dificuldades cotidianamente, pois dados apontam que as mulheres brasileiras possuem remunerações mais baixas do que os homens, acumulam o trabalho formal com o trabalho doméstico e sofrem com a violência de vários tipos. Para as mulheres do campo, essa realidade ainda pode ser mais emblemática, pois o trabalho no espaço doméstico se confunde com o trabalho realizado no campo. Também não podemos esquecer o enorme número de mulheres que está fora do mercado de trabalho formal. Este texto faz uma reflexão teórica, buscando contribuir para a construção de uma outra epistemologia que aponte para um processo de autonomia e emancipação das mulheres pobres. Para isso, busca um diálogo entre o pensamento descolonial, a educação popular e o feminismo, com o objetivo de contribuir na construção de um pensamento educacional feminista latino-americano.

**Palavras-chave:** feminismos; pensamento descolonial; mulheres.

## La educación feminista popular em uma perspectiva descolonial latinoamericana

**RESUMEN.** Para las mujeres brasileñas pobres, además de los prejuicios típicos de una sociedad que lleva marcas profundas del modelo racista y oligárquico de una élite propietaria de esclavos, se agrega una discriminación de género alimentada por el patriarcado. Sabemos que enfrentan enormes dificultades a diario, ya que los datos indican que las mujeres brasileñas tienen salarios más bajos que los hombres, acumulan trabajo formal con el trabajo doméstico y sufren violencia de varios tipos. Para las mujeres rurales, esta realidad puede ser aún más emblemática, ya que el trabajo en el espacio doméstico se confunde con el trabajo realizado en el campo. Tampoco podemos olvidar la gran cantidad de mujeres que están fuera del mercado laboral formal. Este texto hace una reflexión teórica, buscando contribuir a la construcción de otra epistemología que apunte a un proceso de autonomía y emancipación para las mujeres pobres. Para ello, busca un diálogo entre el pensamiento descolonial, la educación popular y el feminismo, con el objetivo de contribuir a la construcción de un pensamiento educativo feminista latinoamericano.

**Palabras clave:** feminismos; pensamiento descolonial; mujeres.

Received on March 14, 2020.  
Accepted on April 17, 2020.

## Introduction

This writing brings some reflections that refer to an academic journey of biographical research that I have been carrying out with women of different age groups for at least ten years. What these groups have in common is the fact that they are women belonging to the popular classes. Here we are talking about women from urban and rural areas, from women waste pickers from the city, residents of urban peripheries, artisans and settled women producers. This class cut in itself already carries with it several marks of suffering and 'dororidade'<sup>1</sup>. In Brazil, referring to the popular classes is, to a large extent, saying that we are dealing with people with low education and who face major financial difficulties of all kinds, which can range from extremely precarious housing to difficulties in accessing basic public services, such as health, among others.

For poor women, this reality of suffering and enormous difficulties tends to be increased, as they suffer, in addition to the typical prejudices of a neoliberal society that has very deep marks of the racist and oligarchic model that maintains an enslaver elite<sup>2</sup>, gender discrimination, fed by patriarchy that, in an intersectional way, feedback on other social markers, such as class, race/ethnicity, generation, etc. We know that poor women face enormous difficulties on a daily basis, how data show that Brazilian women who are in the labor market have lower wages than men<sup>3</sup>, with variations that can exceed 50%. In addition, they accumulate formal work with housework, besides to the responsibility for caring for the children. We must also not forget the huge number of women who are outside the formal labor market. For peasant women this reality can be even more emblematic, because the work in the domestic space is confused with work carried out in the field.

From these complex contexts, this text makes a theoretical reflection, seeking to contribute to the construction of other epistemology that can effectively contribute to a process of autonomy and emancipation of poor women, not only in Brazil, but also in Latin America. I seek an approach and a dialogue with references from a Latin American decolonial thought, popular education and feminism, with the aim of contributing to the construction of a popular feminist educational in the South.

## Why approach decoloniality and feminism?

When we talk about feminism, we fall directly into a great imprecision, that's why today we speak of feminisms in the plural, given the huge range of elaborations and interpretations that the term can refer to. Therefore, it is essential to define which feminism we are dealing with.

The feminism I am dealing with here is a feminism with a decolonial character. That's why I bring Latin American authors and productions who perceive the patriarchy allied to the process of colonialism or, more than that, coloniality. Aníbal Quijano was a Peruvian sociologist, known for having developed the concept of the 'coloniality of power'. His work has been influential in the decolonial studies and critical theory.

In his concept of coloniality of power, Quijano (2005) developed the idea that, although colonialism is a historical fact dated in time and space, it inaugurated the process of coloniality, which did not end at that historical time, but which maintained over time, until contemporaneity. In this way, his concept updates the forms of oppression of the colonizers over the colonized, from an ethnic-racial hierarchy, based, until now, on a Eurocentric model of knowledge and society. Thus, even knowing that peripheral peoples are currently no longer under the control of colonial power, this power remains based on parameters based on a Eurocentric and patriarchal view of the world.

The author also perceives the importance in the construction of this model in the idea of race, which was based on a perception of differences based on a biological conception that placed native peoples in a position not only of subordination, but of inferiority. In this way, all cultures and knowledge of traditional peoples came to be considered inferior through European knowledge (or, better, of the white and male European elite).

Thus, the construction of Latin societies, after the process of colonialism, used the notion of race as a way of legitimizing the relations of domination imposed by conquest. The expansion of European colonialism took to the elaboration of a Eurocentric perspective of knowledge. This thought proved to be the most effective and durable instrument of universal social domination, because the conquered and dominated peoples were placed in a natural situation of inferiority, including their physical traits, their mental, intellectual capacities and their cultural patterns (Quijano, 2005). In this way,

<sup>1</sup> Concept brought by Wilma Piedade (2017), aimed at black women. Piedade develops the concept of 'dororidade' from the concept of 'sororidade', through the perceives the pain caused by racism in black women. Here I take the liberty of borrowing the concept to refer also to the pain of poor Brazilian women of the most diverse races/ethnicities.

<sup>2</sup> About the Brazilian elite, see studies by Jessé Souza, such as *The elite of delay* (2017) and *The middle class in the mirror* (2018).

<sup>3</sup> About this, see Cavalline (2018).

The new historical identities produced on the idea of race were associated with the nature of roles and places in the new global structure of labor control. Thus, both elements, race and division of labor, were structurally associated and mutually reinforcing, although neither was necessarily dependent on the other to exist or to transform itself (Quijano, 2005, p. 118).

However, it is important to emphasize that the decolonization process should not be confused with a direct and explicit rejection of all construction that comes from the North. By this means, the decolonial perspective must be seen as a counterpoint and a response to the trend of building science based on Eurocentrism. With regard to the critique of Eurocentric science, I highlight the work of Ramón Grosfoguel (2016), who denounces coloniality as the cause of 'epistemicides' of knowledge, caused by what he calls epistemic racism/sexism. He denounces that the vast majority of scientific productions use references coming from five countries in the world, namely: USA, Italy, Germany, England and France, including in the global South.

Thus, we can infer that the elaboration of Southern epistemologies can be a response to the construction of knowledge based on European contexts. Santos (2010) bases his thinking on what he called the ecology of knowledge. The ecology of knowledge is based on the idea that there is an epistemological diversity, because recognizes the existence of a plurality of knowledge, where the scientific is just one of them. Taking this perspective, we renounce a single epistemology. For him,

In the ecology of knowledge, the search for credibility for non-scientific knowledge does not imply discrediting scientific knowledge. It simply implies its counter-hegemonic use. It is, on the one hand, to explore the internal plurality of science, that is, the alternative scientific practices that have become visible through feminist and postcolonial epistemologies and, on the other hand, to promote the interaction and interdependence between scientific knowledge and other non-scientific knowledge (Santos, 2010, p. 57).

Paulo Freire also denounced the power structures of the colonization process in Brazil and the disastrous consequences of this process in the construction of what he called our 'democratic inexperience'. For him, the causes of this situation were due to the conditions of our colonization process. In the book *Education as a practice of freedom*, Freire affirms that,

The Brazil was born and grew up in conditions that were negative to democratic experiences. The strong sense of our colonization, strongly predatory, based on the economic exploitation of the great domain, in which the 'power of the lord' extended 'from the lands to the people as well' and from slave labor initially by the native and later from African people, would not have created conditions necessary for the development of a permeable, flexible mentality, characteristic of the democratic cultural climate, in the Brazilian man (Freire, 1999, p.74-75, emphasis added).

Our colonization, based on a enslaving and land ownership structure, would not have a democratic basis. In no way did our colonizers intend to invest in the creation of a colonization, integrating themselves into the colony, respecting it. In fact, the intention was, as Freire said (1999, p. 76), "[...] to stay on top of it. Not to stay in it and with it". In the same book, Freire presented an excerpt from a letter written by the Jesuit Father Manuel da Nóbrega, which denounced the colonizers antipathy and aversion for the new land and their commitment to just enriching themselves and then returning to Portugal (Freire, 1999).

In that historical and social context, Freire (1999) identified characteristics that constituted our culture and became obstacles to the development of a democratic nation. A characteristic cited by him refers to the context of dependence that leads to the development in the population for a affection to 'protectionism'. That's because, in the context of colonization in such vast lands, the protection of the lords was necessary.

Another characteristic emphasized by Freire (1999) refers to what he called 'mutism', which is the lack of dialogue and communication, from hierarchical and authoritarian power relations. To these characteristics added another, emphasized by Freire, which is the extreme exercise of authority, constituting strong power relations.

It will not be an exaggeration to speak of a center of gravity in our private and public life, situated in external power, external authority. From the lord of the lands. Of representations of political power. From the Crown inspectors, in Colonia Brazil. Of the representatives of the Central Power, in Empire Brazil. What these circumstances brought to the people was the introduction of this external, dominating authority; the creation of a host conscience of oppression and not a free and creative conscience, indispensable to authentically democratic regimes (Freire, 1999, p. 79).

In this aspect highlighted by Freire, I kept thinking about the relationship of this historical context with the great rate of violence against women in the country. Today, Brazil is the fifth country in terms of femicide<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> About this, see Agencia Brasil (2018).

in the world and, at the beginning of this year, the data already show concern<sup>5</sup>, but we know that this reality is not a recent fact. The patriarchy has always manifested itself in a very intense way in our culture and the data only corroborate this context. Thus, I return to my ideas presented at the beginning of the text, when I dealt with the context of poverty and 'dororidade' of poor Brazilian women.

With regard to the theoretical construction of the feminist field, women authors who produced reflections on blackness, building a field of knowledge called black feminism, had (and still have) the merit of unveiling the limits of white European and North American feminism, even then marked by the agendas of white women from the elite and the middle classes. North American researchers such as Patricia Hill Collins (2016), Audre Lorde (undated), Angela Davis (2016; 2017; 2018) and bell hooks<sup>6</sup> (2017; 2018) are among the great exponents of this construction. The latter, an American black woman teacher, knows Paulo Freire's thought and dialogues with the work in one of his books. She recognizes that her work was strongly influenced by Freire's production.

We can say that the possibility was opened to think about other forms of feminism, which included other groups of women who did not identify with the guidelines of feminism in the North. In Brazil, we had important names such as Lélia Gonzalez (1988), who developed the concept of 'Amefricanidade', showing sensitivity to see aspects of local culture that build a specific context in the experience of racism, and Carolina de Jesus (1960) who, in the 1960s, transgressed social rules and became a writer, describing her routine as a black woman from the favelas. Thus, in the dependence these constructions, was developed a context that made it possible to think about Brazilian and Latin American feminism.

In Latin America, we will have great references from the perspective of building a Latin American feminist thought. Some important exponents of this trend are Francesca Gargallo (2004; 2007), Margarita Pisano (2004), Maria Galindo (2013), Maria Lugones (2014), Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos (1997; 2015; 2016), Ochy Curiel (2007), just to name a few. Curiel (2007) including criticizes the construction of postcolonial theory for disregarding the contributions of the struggles and practices of feminist movements. For her, academic postcolonialism has maintained an elitist and androcentric position. According to her,

Without using the concept of 'coloniality', racialized, Afro-descendant and indigenous feminists, since the 1970s, have plunged into the fabric of patriarchal and capitalist power, considering the intertwining of various systems of domination (racism, sexism, heteronormativity, classism) from where they defined their political projects, all based on a post-colonial critique (Curiel, 2007, p. 93-94, author's emphasis, my translation)<sup>7</sup>.

Although she recognizes that there are efforts by some academic sectors to approach popular sectors, however occurs from patriarchal and androcentric elitist positions. This is caused by the separation between theory and practice, which leads to the recognition of European and North American theories. We know that colonialism produced a process of coloniality that built a history of Latin American subalternity, which fed an equally subaltern theoretical thought.

Lugones (2014) also makes a criticism, when he confronts the coloniality of Quijano's power with the gendered coloniality that it develops. We beginning to see a construction of a Latin American feminist theory, largely based on the construction of feminist social movements, which demands the recognition of a scientific epistemology. In general, we can say that the women authors that was mentioned, although approaching different categories and giving different contributions, have the merit of developing studies with the aim of giving visibility to the different sociocultural contexts of Latin American women. These are researches carried out with Latino women, committed to these specific realities and recognizing in these women subjects of knowledge.

I emphasize the work of Julieta Paredes (2010) and Paredes and Guzmán (2014), when she develops her notion of community feminism. Although Paredes refers to indigenous Bolivian women and her work is committed to fighting for the recognition of knowledge of women belonging to traditional peoples, her proposal can greatly contribute to the construction of a Latin American feminism that will add to the epistemologies of the global South, as it recognizes and values local knowledge. For her, community feminism is

[...] an instrument to recover our conceptualizations from the clutches of academic colonialism, the superficiality and opportunism and fad, fundamentally, to demand the construction of a movement based on political trust, theoretical and ethical production and creation in our actions (Paredes & Guzmán, 2014, p. 60, my translation)<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> About this, see Sindicato Nacional dos Docentes das Instituições de Ensino Superior (2019).

<sup>6</sup> Purposely written with lowercase letters, as the writer herself identifies.

<sup>7</sup> In the original: "Sin utilizar el concepto de 'colonialidad', las feministas racializadas, afrodescendientes e indígenas, han profundizado desde los años setenta en el entramado de poder patriarcal y capitalista, considerando la imbricación de diversos sistemas de dominación (racismo, sexismo, heteronormatividad, clasismo) desde donde han definido sus proyectos políticos, todo hecho a partir de una crítica pós-colonial".

<sup>8</sup> In original: "[...] un instrumento para recuperar nuestras conceptualizaciones de las garras del colonialismo académico, de la superficialidad y el oportunismo de las modas y

She highlight that community feminism is not just for women who live, for example, in rural communities, as that is not what it defines. What defines this proposal is the idea of community that this thought has. It is a movement that was born from Bolivian feminist women, but that seeks to expand to the whole world, breaking the hierarchies of knowledge based on the notion of communities, decolonizing women's bodies, their knowledge and their cultures.

Galindo (2013), in his work "No se puede decolonizar sin de patriarchalizar" (You cannot decolonize without de-patriarchalizing), as the title itself indicates, makes explicit the need to incorporate the theme of gender (more specifically, the necessary overcoming of patriarchy) in decolonial studies.

For the deconstruction of patriarchy, the concept of 'limit-situations' developed by Freire can help to understand the materiality that patriarchy assumes, as we perceive in it the limit-situation imposed on women. For Freire (1987), extreme situations are situations understood by individuals as inevitable, constituents of life in society, normalized and naturalized in daily social life. This is how we perceive patriarchy and not just it, but also in the intersectionality with racism and capitalism, how its great allies. Thus, the patriarchy naturalizes the processes of oppression experienced by women, configuring itself in the extreme situation faced daily by Brazilian women. In this sense, the liberation of the oppressed through an emancipatory pedagogical proposal is to understand the oppression of women as it provokes what feminists call "sororidade".<sup>9</sup>

### For a popular feminist educational thought at Abya Yala

Abya Yala, in the language of the Kuna people, means Mature Earth, Living Earth or Flowering Earth and is synonymous with America<sup>10</sup>. The Kuna people originate from northern Colombia and are currently located on the Caribbean coast of Panama, in the Comarca of Kuna Yala (San Blas), in an archipelago comprising more than thirty islands.

The term has been used by traditional peoples from the Latin American continent as a counterpoint to the homogenizing construction of the term America. Although this expression was used much earlier, it only expanded at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century, as a way of struggle and resistance in the independence process, in counterpoint to the European conquerors. Thus, the expression Abya Yala has been increasingly used by the original peoples of the continent with the purpose of building a feeling of unity and belonging and denouncing the process of coloniality. Thus, I use the term again with the objective to emphasize the notion of cultural and political belonging, as a founding element in the construction of a decolonial feminist epistemology, because, in the same way that the original peoples suffered with the process of colonialism, women belonging to these peoples they also suffered the same process, allied to the establishment of a Eurocentric patriarchal system, often aggravating the process of domination and oppression.

With regard to the area of education, an educational theory that incorporates the demands of gender and incorporates what feminist thought has built is fundamental. In this way, support the idea of a feminist pedagogy based on the foundations of popular education. We know that feminist pedagogy, of a popular nature, is not something totally new. We have known for sometime of the existence of numerous popular experiences carried out with groups of women. My experience with settled women is also one of these. However, what we see recurrently are numerous educational initiatives performed in non-formal educational spaces, which constitute practices of workshops, conversation circles and other pedagogical activities that, several times, lack a deeper theoretical reflection that points to for the construction of a Latin American feminist theory of education. Thus, it is essential to systematize these experiences in order to build a theoretical, methodological and epistemological basis of a popular feminist pedagogy.

Some important works already point to this path and have made enormous contributions in this regard. We can cite the trajectory of the Popular Education Network among Women [REPEM], as part of the Latin American Adult Education Council – CEAAL. Present in several Latin American and Caribbean countries, with more than 60 organizations, it has contributed to the development of thought and practice of popular education in Latin America and the Caribbean, seeking to consolidate the perspective of 'feminist popular education' in the region, constituting an important space for the political formation and struggle of women.

fundamentalmente para convocar a la construcción de un movimiento con base en la confianza política, en la producción y creación teórica y la ética en nuestras acciones".

<sup>9</sup> About "sororidade", see Lagarde y de los Ríos (2016).

<sup>10</sup> Porto-Gonçalves (2009).

In Argentina, we can mention the trajectory of the group of popular educators, called Pañuelos en Rebeldía, who also believe in the legacy of popular education for the construction of a 'feminist popular pedagogy'. Finally, we can say that, with somewhat different terms and trajectories, we glimpse, in several Latin American countries, some important pedagogical constructions of popular education allied to feminism. These constructions are examples and inspiring for our work.

An important name to highlight in the Pañuelos en Rebeldía group is the popular educator Claudia Korol. She has built an important path in the construction of a popular feminist pedagogy. She emphasizes that this pedagogy is not a limit, but an opening, which demonstrates the unfinished nature of her proposal. For her, feminism contributes to the construction of this pedagogy, especially in the following aspects: the criticism of capitalism and patriarchy; the critique of androcentric culture; the deconstruction of binary categories; the search for horizontality and autonomy; the enhancement of dialogue in political practices; and the radicalism in the struggle against disciplining those who resist domination (Korol, 2007). For Korol,

It is a pedagogy that assumes from Marxism its critique of capitalism and domination, and the capacity to become a material force as a philosophy of praxis, analysis methodology, guide for action; which assumes from liberation theology the valorization of mysticism in the people's struggles, the criticism of a religion that oppresses and reinforces obedience, and the attempt to make the people's different religiosities become a material force in resistance and emancipations; which rescues from native peoples their relationship with nature (Korol, 2007, p. 18, our translation)<sup>11</sup>.

I also highlight the work of the Mexican Luz Maceira Ochoa (2008), which seeks to substantiate the anthropological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological bases for the construction of what she calls 'feminist pedagogy'.

Ochoa (2008) develops the foundations of a feminist pedagogy from two foundations: 'philosophical-political and theoretical-conceptual'. The first refers to the set of ideas that refer to different philosophical, epistemological, political and ideological aspects of feminist educational projects and has the following characteristics developed by the author: (a) 'identity and sense of a feminist pedagogy', which implies a fairer society with men and women, is a pedagogy whose political-pedagogical character is clearly assumed and explained in the search for the construction of a project for a different society, without female oppression or subordination, without any type of discrimination and with greater freedom for all people; (b) 'vision about human beings', where men and women are conceived as beings in construction, and the focus is that the human is, above all, a sexed and gendered subject. Recognizing subjects in their sexual and gender dimension implies recognizing that they have a specific social position in the world and also in educational processes; (c) 'conceptions about learning', in which 'the educational process is part of the life experience, involves recognizing differences, emotions, pains; it implies different training processes; it implies breaking with different things in order to recover itself as a person, to be the one to decide and do from myself; and (d) 'the ethical perspective', as the ethical dimension is fundamental because the feminist project implies a horizon of justice, equality, freedom, solidarity which is not only an ideal to be achieved, but which presupposes that educational processes seek to generate and learn values from an ethical perspective.

On the theoretical-conceptual foundations, feminist pedagogy does not have a finished theory, but it is a field under construction. It is in the definition of the theoretical reference where there are more differences in educational projects. However, three major discourses can be identified: 'feminism, gender democracy and popular education', in which feminism appears as a reference that has content and views about reality and the subjects, that define the horizon of the educational project, which represents a conceptual network to develop a useful language and terminology to form the women.

About gender democracy, the author proposes the incorporation of new dimensions, such as the historical conditions of men and women, gender relations, the conceptions and practices of society and not just the dimensions referred to the political regime. Associated with this idea are, among others, the issue of political participation and the legitimization and exercise of rights in each action and social and institutional relationship, which should be expanded to include women as political subjects, to include them in representations symbolic, in discourse and norms, as well as in social practices.

<sup>11</sup> In the original: "Es una pedagogía que asume del marxismo su crítica del capitalismo y de la dominación, y su capacidad de volverse fuerza material en tanto filosofía de la praxis, metodología de análisis, guía para la acción; que asume de la teología de la liberación, la valoración de la mística en las luchas del pueblo, la crítica a una religión que oprime y refuerza la obediencia, y el intento de que las distintas religiosidades del pueblo puedan volverse fuerza material en las resistencias y en las emancipaciones; que retoma de los pueblos originarios su relación con la naturaleza".

It perceives popular education as the only educational discourse in which there is a dialogue with feminist educational projects, as feminism and popular education are identified as converging perspectives, especially from the perspective of social construction of reality with an emancipatory objective for the participating groups.

## Final considerations: problematizing the post-coup and post-election Brazilian context

There is no way to end these reflections without minimally problematizing the current political situation in the Brazilian context. The moment presents a complexity that will not be viable or possible in these few pages to embracing the dimension that the situation presents. However, it is urgent to face the challenge of understanding the current historical moment in an attempt to propose viable and possible alternatives.

In Brazil, currently, after the 2016 coup and after 2018 presidential elections, we have some huge challenges to overcome, as we live in a period of great setbacks, especially in the areas of education and gender, since that the group that won the elections in the country and took over the government if he was elected explicitly assuming a sexist, racist and elitist posture; therefore, with a discourse based on the perspective of patriarchy, racism and capitalism.<sup>12</sup>

Santos (2010) calls this movement the 'return of the colonizer', which implies a return to forms of colonial government, even if symbolically. Today we see in Brazil a visibly colonialist government, taking positions of submission to the US government<sup>13</sup>. Santos describes this return as the rise of what he calls 'social fascism', which is characterized as "[...] a social regime of extremely unequal power relations that grant the stronger part the power of veto over life and the way of life of the weaker part" (Santos, 2010, p. 45). The author distinguishes three forms of social fascism, which I think can collaborate here in our analysis of the current Brazilian context. The first form is the fascism of social apartheid, when it refers to a social segregation that excludes from a cartography divided into civilized zones and wild zones, as occurs in many metropolises located in the global South, where exist civilized zones as cloistered and castellated, like closed condominiums, etc., where the elite meet; and the wild zones, where the popular layers are found in the urban peripheries, this reality constituting a new space-time that reveals social fascism.

The second form of social fascism is what Santos calls contractual fascism. It occurs when materialize, in social contracts under civil right huge differences in power. We can cite as an example the employment contracts in the neoliberal perspective. In the country today, we have the social security reform proposal as a concrete example of this fascism.

And, finally, the third form of social fascism brought by Santos refers to territorial fascism, which occurs when groups with strong patrimonial capital manipulate social institutions, exercising the regulation of the State linked to their own interests, constituting a new coloniality of power. Thus, in Brazil today, it is possible to see what Santos points out:

As a social regime, the social fascism can coexist with neoliberal political democracy. Instead of sacrificing democracy to the demands of global capitalism, it trivializes democracy to the point where it is not necessary, or even convenient, to sacrifice democracy to promote capitalism. It is a pluralist fascism and, therefore, a form of fascism that never existed. In fact, it is my conviction that we may be entering a period in which societies are politically democratic and socially fascist (Santos, 2010, p. 47).

In the area of education, especially with regard to the precepts of popular education, the setback has been no different. Neoconservative projects like *Escola Sem Partido*<sup>14</sup> (Non-party School) materialize elitist strategies to fight the popular classes. A fact that demonstrates this is the direct attack on Freire's educational thought, as its construction points to an epistemology of the margins, of transgression, of popular knowledge, with an explicitly placed class cut. The life and work of Paulo Freire were coherent and concrete examples of a theoretical, epistemological, methodological praxis construction aimed at building an educational proposal for the emancipation and awareness of the popular classes, something that a neoconservative government that uses violence as one of its supports, not tolerate.

We know that the proposition of a 'non-party school' is not so recent. The movement with that name was

<sup>12</sup> A triad already denounced in the thesis by Heleith Saffioti (2013), defended in the 1970s and where the researcher defends the idea that we can only think about overcoming patriarchy, combined with a proposal to overcome racism and capitalism, because we have three poles that the operation is interdependently.

<sup>13</sup> An example of this occurred recently, when, on a visit to the United States, President Bolsonaro announced the end of the need for visas for North Americans to enter Brazil. Reciprocity does not occur. In addition, Bolsonaro signed an agreement to allow commercial use of the Alcântara launching pad. Under the terms of the agreement under negotiation, the US will be able to launch satellites and rockets from the Maranhão base (BBC News Brasil, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> About this, see Frigotto (2017).

created in 2004, but has gained strength precisely in this context of conservative offensives. The first project of law that proposed the creation of the 'non-party school program' in a school system was the result of a partnership between the movement's creator, Miguel Nagib, and state deputy Flávio Bolsonaro.

This project has benefited from the false dichotomy imposed by the movement's very name, which causes sympathy when delivering a non-partisan school. It is important to reaffirm that, when we talk about the 'non-party school' program, what is at stake is a school project that resumes the character of mere transmitter of knowledge, from the perspective of banking education, so denounced by Paulo Freire, especially in his most famous book: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1987). In this perspective, students are seen as mere empty pots of knowledge, in which knowledge must be deposited by the teacher. Freire, besides to denouncing this authoritarian posture of knowledge, unveils it when he links this perspective to the interests of domination by the oppressive classes over the oppressed. Maybe never, until this moment in the country's history, had the interests of the conservative Brazilian elite and the great fear that education could be a powerful tool for the emancipation of the Brazilian oppressed class been so clear. The elite have always been afraid of the school, for recognizing its transformative potential. Freire was brilliant in bringing this out. And that's why his thought becomes the target of this project.

Within this context of conquests at risk, the 'non-party school' movement incorporated other conservative agendas that, initially, were not part of its banners. This was the case of the fight that starts to combat against any kind of approach to the gender theme in schools. The term 'gender ideology' has been used as a political form of manipulation of fear based on false information and grotesque distortions of the practices that take place in schools. In this way, important agendas of the feminist struggle come to be strongly opposed, such as the fight against the patriarchal family, women's sexuality, domestic violence, among others.

Therefore, we must be clarity that it is not a simple coincidence that we live today in a context of serious attacks on feminist struggles and agendas and also on popular education, as both represent the defense of knowledge of a group that has been historically oppressed and excluded, which are the women.

That's why, a scientifically viable proposal maybe is we walk towards the construction of a popular and feminist education.

## References

- Agencia Brasil. (2018, 7 de agosto). Taxa de feminicídios no Brasil é a quinta maior do mundo. *Exame*. Recuperado de <https://exame.com/brasil/taxa-de-feminicidios-no-brasil-e-a-quinta-maior-do-mundo/>
- BBC News Brasil. (2019). *Bolsonaro nos EUA: 5 temas na pauta do primeiro encontro com Trump*. Recuperado de <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-4760930>
- Cavaliere, M. (2018, 17 de março). Mulheres ganham menos que os homens em todos os cargos e áreas, diz pesquisa. G1-Economia. Recuperado de <https://g1.globo.com/economia/concursos-e-emprego/noticia/mulheres-ganham-menos-que-os-homens-em-todos-os-cargos-e-areas-diz-pesquisa.ghtml>
- Collins, P. H. (2016). Aprendendo com a outsider within: a significação sociológica do pensamento feminista negro. *Revista Sociedade e Estado*, 31(1), 99-127. DOI: 10.1590/S0102-69922016000100006
- Curiel, O. (2007). Crítica pós-colonial desde las prácticas políticas del feminismo antirracista. *Nómadas*, 1(26), 92-101.
- Davis, A. (2016). *Mulheres, raça e classe*. São Paulo, SP: Boitempo.
- Davis, A. (2017). *Mulheres, cultura e política*. São Paulo, SP: Boitempo.
- Davis, A. (2018). *A liberdade é uma luta constante*. São Paulo, SP: Boitempo.
- Freire, P. (1987). *Pedagogia do oprimido* (17a ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Freire, P. (1999). *Educação como prática da liberdade*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Frigotto, G. (2017). *Escola 'sem' partido: esfinge que ameaça a educação e a sociedade brasileira*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: UERJ, LPP.
- Galindo, M. (2013). *No se puede descolonizar sin despatriarcalizar: teoría y propuesta de la despatriarcalización*. La Paz, BO: Mujeres Creando.
- Gargallo, F. (2004). *Las ideas feministas latino-americanas*. México, MX: Fem-e-libros.
- Gargallo, F. (2007). Feminismo latino-americano. *Revista Venezolana de Estudios de la Mujer*, 12(28), 17-34.
- Gonzales, L. (1988). A categoria político-cultural da amefricanidade. *Revista Tempo Brasileiro*, 92(93), 69-82.



- Grosfoguel, R. (2016). A estrutura do conhecimento nas universidades ocidentalizadas: racismo/sexismo epistêmico e os quatro genocídios/epistemicídios do longo século XVI. *Revista Sociedade e Estado*, 31(1), 25-49. DOI: 10.1590/S0102-69922016000100003
- Hooks, B. (2017). *Ensinando a transgredir: a educação como prática da liberdade*. São Paulo, SP: Martins Fontes.
- Hooks, b. (2018). *O feminismo é para todo mundo: políticas arrebatadoras*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Rosa dos Tempos.
- Jesus, C. M. (1960). *Quarto de despejo: diário de uma favelada*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Edição Popular.
- Korol, C. (2007). La educación como práctica de la libertad: nuevas lecturas posibles. In Pañuelos in Rebeldía, & C. Korol (Orgs.), *Hacia una pedagogía feminista: géneros y educación popular* (p. 9-22). Buenos Aires, AR: America Libre.
- Lagarde y de los Ríos, M. (1997). *Claves feministas para el poderio y la autonomía de las mujeres: memoria*. Manágua, NI: Puntos de Encuentro.
- Lagarde y de los Ríos, M. (2015). *Los cautiverios de las mujeres: madresposas, monjas, putas, presas y locas*. México, MX: Siglo XXI.
- Lagarde y de los Ríos, M. (2016). Sororidad. In A. Castro, & R. C. Machado (Eds.), *Estudos feministas, mulheres e educação popular* (p. 25-33). Curitiba, PR: CRV.
- Lorde, A. (s/d). *Textos escolhidos de Audre Lorde*. Recuperado de <https://bitlybr.com/nKqQh>
- Lugones, M. (2014). Rumo a um feminismo descolonial. *Estudos feministas*, 22(3), 935-952.
- Ochoa, L. M. (2008). *El sueño y la práctica de sí - pedagogía feminista: una propuesta*. México, MX: El Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Sociológicos, Programa Interdisciplinario de Estudios de la Mujer.
- Paredes, J. (2010). *Hilando fino: desde el feminismo comunitario*. La Paz, BO: Mujeres Creando.
- Paredes, J., & Guzmán, A. (2014). *El tejido de la rebeldía: qué es el feminismo comunitario?*. La Paz. BO: Comunidad Mujeres Creando.
- Piedade, W. (2017). *Dororidade*. São Paulo, SP: Editora Nós.
- Pisano, M. (2004). *El triunfo de la masculinidad*. México, MX: Fem-e-libros.
- Porto-Gonçalves, C. W. (2009, 11 de julho). *Povos Originarios de Nuestra America – Abya Yala* [Blog]. Recuperado de <https://iela.ufsc.br/povos-origin%C3%A1rios/abya-yala>
- Quijano, A. (2005). Colonialidade do poder, eurocentrismo e América Latina. In E. Lander (Ed.), *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais - perspectivas latino-americanas* (p. 117-142). Buenos Aires, AR: CLACSO.
- Rede de Educação Popular entre Mulheres [REPEM]. (2018, 22 de dezembro). *Por uma educação digna, inclusiva y permanente para las mujeres y niñas de América Latina y El Caribe*. Recuperado de <https://www.repem.org/index.php>
- Saffioti, H. (2013). *A mulher na sociedade de classes: mito e realidade*. São Paulo, SP: Expressão Popular.
- Santos, B. S. (2010). Para além do pensamento abissal: das linhas globais a uma ecologia de saberes. In B. S. Santos, & M. P. Meneses (Eds.), *Epistemologias do sul* (p. 31-83). São Paulo, SP: Cortez.
- Sindicato Nacional dos Docentes das Instituições de Ensino Superior. (2019). *Número de feminicídios aumenta em 2019*. Recuperado de <https://bitlybr.com/mVZYFu3F>
- Souza, J. (2017). *A elite do atraso: da escravidão à Lava Jato*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Leya, 2017.
- Souza, J. (2018). *A classe média no espelho - sua história, seus sonhos e ilusões, sua realidade*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Estação Brasil.

### INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Márcia Alves da Silva:** Bachelor in Social Sciences (1996) and Master in Education (2002) by the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel). PhD in Education (2010) from the University Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS) and Post-Doctorate in Education (2018) from PUC-RS. She is an Associate Professor and works in the Post-Graduate Program in Education, Master's and Academic Doctorate level, at the Faculty of Education at the Federal University of Pelotas. She has experience in the field of Education, with several publications and working in teaching, research and extension, mainly on the following topics: Gender Studies and Feminist Theory, Decolonial Epistemologies, Narratives and Life Stories, Popular Education, Non-Formal Education and Education Teachers. She worked on the team of the Pro-Rector of Extension and Culture at UFPel between 2014 and 2016, being the founder and coordinator of the Observatory of Gender and Diversity at UFPel during this period. She is the leader of the D'Generus Research Group: Nucleus of Feminist and Gender Studies, and works in the Education, Gender and Craftwork Research Group, both at CNPq.

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4727-2623>

E-mail: [profa.marciaalves@gmail.com](mailto:profa.marciaalves@gmail.com)

#### Note:

Márcia Alves da Silva was responsible for conception, analyzing and interpreting the data; writing and critically reviewing the content of the manuscript and approving the final version to be published.