

ARTIGO

CRITICAL INSUBORDINATION OF THE BRAZILIAN BLACK INTELLIGENTSIA: A GLANCE AT THE PERFORMANCE OF THE NEABI/CPII

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ABSTRACT: From a black decolonial perspective (GOMES, 2020), this article aims to discuss the paths taken by the Center for Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Studies of the Colégio Pedro II (NEABI/CPII), in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in the (re)production of emancipatory and anti-racist practices and knowledge. In methodological terms, the research was structured based on the narratives of four black intellectuals committed to anti-racist education, who actively participated in the creation process of the NEABI/CPII, in 2013, and who had a recognized role in the constitution of practices based on (re)education for ethnic-racial relations and the fight against racism. In summary, we observed that the black intelligentsia underlying the group establishes a position of insubordination in relation to typical coloniality practices in the (re)production of knowledge, with actions that unfold into four dimensions: political-institutional, political-epistemological, political-identity and political-pedagogical. We understand that these dimensions, which are articulated with each other, are crucial for the constitution of educational spaces that are more democratic, racially diverse and politically positioned in the fight against inequalities.

Keywords: black intelligentsia, decoloniality, NEABI, associativism.

INSUBORDINAÇÕES CRÍTICAS DA INTELLECTUALIDADE NEGRA BRASILEIRA: UM OLHAR A PARTIR DA ATUAÇÃO DO NEABI/CPII¹

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RESUMO: Partindo de uma perspectiva negra decolonial (GOMES, 2020), este artigo tem como objetivo discutir os caminhos trilhados pelo Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros e Indígenas do Colégio Pedro II (NEABI/CPII), no Rio de Janeiro, na (re)produção de práticas e conhecimentos emancipatórios e antirracistas. Em termos metodológicos, a pesquisa foi estruturada com base nas narrativas de quatro intelectuais negros/as comprometidos/as com a educação antirracista, que participaram ativamente do processo de criação do NEABI/CPII, em 2013, e que tiveram reconhecido protagonismo na constituição de práticas calcadas na (re)educação para as relações étnico-raciais e no combate ao racismo. Em suma, percebemos que a intelectualidade negra que compõe o NEABI/CPII situa-se em posição de insubordinação em relação às práticas típicas da colonialidade na (re)produção do conhecimento, com atuações que se desdobram em quatro dimensões: político-institucional, político-epistemológica, político-identitária e político-pedagógica. Entendemos que essas dimensões, que se articulam entre si, são cruciais para a constituição de espaços educativos que sejam mais democráticos, racialmente diversos e politicamente posicionados no combate às desigualdades.

Palavras-chave: intelectualidade negra, decolonialidade, NEABI, associativismo.

INSUBORDINACIÓN CRÍTICA DE LA INTELLECTUALIDAD NEGRA BRASILEÑA: UNA MIRADA EN LA ACTUACIÓN DEL NEABI/CPII

RESUMEN: A partir de una perspectiva negra decolonial (GOMES, 2020), este artículo tiene como objetivo discutir los caminos del Núcleo de Estudios Afrobrasileños e Indígenas del Colégio Pedro II (NEABI/CPII), en Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, en la (re)producción de prácticas y conocimientos emancipatorios y antirracistas. En términos metodológicos, la investigación se estructuró a partir de las narrativas de cuatro intelectuales negros comprometidos con la educación antirracista, que participaron activamente del proceso de creación del NEABI/CPII, en 2013, y que tuvieron un papel reconocido en la constitución de prácticas basadas en la (re)educación para las relaciones étnico-raciales y la lucha contra el racismo. En suma, notamos que la intelectualidad negra que conforma este colectivo se encuentra en posición de insubordinación frente a prácticas de la colonialidad en la (re)producción de saberes, con acciones que se desarrollan en cuatro dimensiones: político-institucional, político-epistemológico, político-identitaria y político-pedagógica. Entendemos que estas dimensiones, que se articulan entre sí, son cruciales para la constitución de espacios educativos más democráticos, racialmente diversos y políticamente posicionados en la lucha contra las desigualdades.

Palabras clave: intelectualidad negra, decolonialidad, NEABI, asociativismo.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to discuss the work of the Nucleus for Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Studies at the Pedro II School (NEABI/CPII), located in Rio de Janeiro, based on the experiences and narratives of the black intellectuals who give life to this group and who lead important spaces and actions of critical insubordination to racist, colonialist, and neocolonial realities that impose themselves in the educational context.

Associating the postulates of decoloniality (QUIJANO, 2010; ARROYO, 2013; CARVALHO, 2020; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2020) and, more specifically, of the Brazilian decolonial black perspective (GOMES, 2020) with the actions of NEABI/CPII, we seek to show how the insurgencies that arise from black associativism in one of the oldest institutions in the country, born in an imperial and 'slavocratic' context, take place.

Here we must make a brief digression in order to understand the history of CPII and, consequently, the relevance of NEABI's actions in this space. In the period following Brazil's Independence (1822), there was a need to reestablish the monarchic authority and the symbolic figure of the emperor in order to ensure the continuity of the elitist character of the Brazilian society. In this context, the institution was created by the acting minister of the Empire, Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcellos, on December 2, 1837. According to Cunha Júnior (2008, p. 23):

It would be necessary to create an institution that was under the control of the State and that would provide a comprehensive and distinctive secondary education, suitable for the children of the elite, young people who, in the future, after passing through the Higher Academies, could occupy the world of the imperial government.

Although it was born for the children of the elite, over the years the CPII was urged to follow the policies of universalization and democratization of public education. Currently, it has 14 campuses and more than 13 thousand students (PEDRO II College, 2021). However, it should be noted that, despite the various strategies of the institution to enable access and permanence - such as the reservation of openings for black and indigenous students, student assistance and the extinction of jubilation - the student profile of the institution reveals how the arrival of black individuals in this space is still discrete (COUTINHO; ARRUDA; OLIVEIRA, 2021).

The creation of NEABI/CPII, on December 8, 2013, through Ordinance No. 1934, was very relevant because it represented the multiplication of spaces for racial literacy (FERREIRA, 2015; MOSLEY, 2010) at the College. Among them, we highlight the Permanent Forum for Discussion of Ethnic-Racial Relations, founded in 2014; the Group of Studies, Research and Actions on Racism and Ethnic-Racial and Indigenous Relations (GEPARREI), created in 2015; the Extension Course of Introduction to Nagô-Yorubá Culture and Mythology, also started in 2015; the Extension Course on Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations in Basic Education (EREREBA), created in 2017 and converted into a specialization in 2018; in addition to the inclusion of the indigenous theme in the group's discussions as of 2018.

Although there are several fronts of action, we highlight in this article the critical insubordination promoted through the Extension Course of Introduction to Nagô-Yorubá Culture and Mythology and the Specialization in Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations in Basic Education (EREREBA), in the scope of CPII. This focus is given not only because these two fronts are based on the teaching-research-extension tripod, but also because they sustain forms of social participation committed with the transformation of social and racial relations inside and outside the school community, through the continued formation of teachers.

According to Quijano (2000, p. 342), coloniality "is based on the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the world's population as the cornerstone of the so-called pattern of power and operates in each of the plans, spheres and material and subjective dimensions, of everyday social existence and social scale". To deal with decoloniality in Education from a Black Brazilian perspective means, then, to

give centrality to Black narratives "that make up the epistemic diversity of the field of scientific knowledge, with learnings built in history and in cultural, political and social practices and experiences, which are part of the processes of internal and external plurality of science" (GOMES, 2020, p. 244). In this work, we have chosen the concept of decoloniality in its broad sense, which encompasses the long tradition of resistance and struggle for political and epistemic reexistence of the Afrodiasporic populations, with special emphasis on the black Brazilian population.

NEABI/CPII, despite its name, is not only a study center, because its fields of action go far beyond academic research. In order to understand these multiple movements, we present four paths walked daily by the Center: the political-institutional, the political-epistemological, the political-identity, and the political-pedagogical. Looking at these paths individually, and at the dialog that is established at the crossroads between them, allows a deeper analysis of the thinking and doing of this group.

In order to understand the insubordination of the black intellectuals of NEABI/CPII, it is necessary, preliminarily, to consider that coloniality is (re)produced in a triple dimension: that of power, knowledge, and being. The concept of the coloniality of power refers to the interrelationship between modern forms of exploitation and domination and in it is the reading of race and racism as the organizing principle that structures all the multiple hierarchies of the world-system (GROSFUGUEL, 2008); The concept of coloniality of knowledge is related to the roll of epistemologies and theories that act in the (re)production of colonial regimes of thought and in the concealment of cultural identities that are outside the hegemonic axis (CASTRO-GOMES, 2005); the concept of coloniality of being refers to the lived experience of/in colonization and its impact on subjectivities (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007). The discussion proposed in this research encompasses, therefore, the analysis of how the actions of the NEABI/CPII contribute to the deconstruction of coloniality in the three ways indicated above.

In this way, we defined the following research question as a guide for the reflections of this article: after all, how do the black intellectuals that make up NEABI/CPII promote discussions and experiences of combat against racism, discrimination and erasures that concern black Brazilian history and the African Diaspora?

Thinking about the Black Brazilian intellectual experience from the perspective of the actions of a NEABI inserted in a centennial basic education school, which still carries to some extent the insignia of elite formation, is of utmost importance for us to become capable of re-signifying the marks of coloniality that are still present in school discourses and practices.

METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In order to carry out this research, oral individual interviews were conducted during the month of August 2021 with four Black intellectuals, members of NEABI/CPII. In Table 1, we characterize the people interviewed with fictitious names (allusive to black personalities and intellectuals), also mentioning their gender, color/race, education, position held, and year they joined CPII. It is worth mentioning that due to the pandemic context of COVID-19, these interviews were carried out remotely and recorded with the consent of the participants, who signed a Free and Informed Consent Form (TCLE) fully agreeing with the terms of the investigation.

In summary, the following criteria were used to identify the narrators who participated in the research: (i) being a CPII employee, actively and permanently working in the institution's NEABI; (ii) developing research in the field of ethnic-racial relations; and (iii) having actively participated in the process of creation and implementation of NEABI/CPII and/or its several fronts of action.

It is worth mentioning that not all members of NEABI/CPII are professors. There are also students, students' parents, managers, technicians, and student assistants in the group. However, in this analysis, we will focus on the narratives of intellectuals who work or have worked as teachers in one of the Center's fronts.

Chart 1 - Characterization of the narrators

Fictitious name	Gender and race	Academic background	Position held at CPII	Year of entrance at CPII
Beatriz	Black Woman	Ph.D. in Literature	Portuguese Language Teacher	2014
Lélia	Black Woman	Doctor of Education	Technician in Educational Matters	2004
Solano	Black man	Doctor of Literature	Portuguese language teacher	2008
Joel	Black man	Master of Education	History teacher	1995

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2022)

To meet the research objective, four moments were fundamental: the preparation of the topic guide mapping relevant issues to be addressed in the interviews; the interviews with audio and video recording; the transcription of the interviews; and the segmentation of the narratives by thematic axes.

Following the premises of interpretivist qualitative research (OLIVEIRA, 2015), we seek to understand the phenomena from the meanings that people attribute to them. We do not pursue an objective reality because we understand that it is impossible to capture it. The interpretative structure achieved in this research is based on the dialogue between the microsocial - in the understanding of the facts through subjective aspects of the narrators - and the macro sociological levels.

It is also important to highlight that "the locus of study is not the object of study" (GEERTZ, 2008, p. 16). Therefore, it is evident that the purpose of this work is not to study the institution itself, but to investigate the work of NEABI/CPII based on the experiences of Black intellectuals in this singular instance, with emphasis on interpretation in context, considering the history and the general situation of the institution at the time of the research.

It is also worth mentioning that the spheres of action of NEABI/CPII, described and analyzed in the fourth section of this text, were mapped, and developed based on the analysis of the narratives that emerged from the interviews. As we consider the centrality of the narratives, we begin the analytical sections with excerpts from the interviews, highlighting the views and voices of the black intellectuals of NEABI/CPII.

BLACK ASSOCIATIVISM, CREATION AND EXPANSION OF THE NEABIS

The forms of black associativism, which constitute themselves for a collective purpose, are part of Brazilian political, religious, and cultural history and figure in the social landscape, organizing networks of solidarity and exchange of ideas, accompanying the struggle for rights (SILVA, 2021). In this sense, it is possible to understand black associativism as

the senses of the collective will and doing of men and women of social fractions of the black ethnic group (this political and historical construction), organized under an activity or entity in the public space, aimed at the interests of the group they seek to represent, largely claiming citizenship rights and respectability of the social difference of existence (SILVA, 2021, p. 446).

In Brazil, the practices of black associativism are present, with different facets, in various historical contexts, since the imperial period (SILVA, 2021). However, we highlight the associations that began to appear after the identity social movements of the 1970s, as the black movement. With an emancipatory, claiming, and affirmative character, the black movement is characterized as an important political actor and as an educator of people, collectives, and social institutions (GOMES, 2017).

The struggle for resignification and politicization of race gains prominence not only in the political sphere but also in academia. According to Gomes (2010), from the 1990s on, the black intellectual emerges; the one who articulates the political ethos of the racial issues discussion, to the academic-scientific ethos. It is also in this period that a significant number of research and extension centers emerge, as a gradual consequence of a new cadre of intellectuals who begin to integrate public and private universities in the country, engaged in the struggle to overcome racism. It is these same intellectuals who, from the mid-1990s on, began to find, coordinate, and integrate the various Nuclei of Afro-Brazilian Studies (NEABs) or related ones.

The expansion of the quantity of research centers founded and coordinated by this group that integrates the academic-based Black movement from the 1990s onwards culminates in 2000 with the formation of Black student collectives in several Brazilian universities and the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers (ABPN) at the end of the First Brazilian Congress of Black Researchers (COPENE) (RATTS, 2009). At COPENE in 2008, the National Consortium of Nuclei of Afro-Brazilian Studies (CONNEABs) was established.

The NEABs, therefore, constitute strategic formative spaces of struggle and resistance against racism and discrimination. Moreover, they promote, in the institutions where they are inserted, the multiplication of research and training spaces for ethnic-racial relations. According to a survey we conducted in 2021, there are a total of 136 NEABs in Brazil that are linked to CONNEAB, not only in universities, but also in secondary, technical, and technological institutions, 15 of which are located in the North, 32 in the Northeast, 20 in the Midwest, 37 in the Southeast, and 32 in the South.

FIELDS OF ACTION OF NEABI/CPII

In order to systematize analytically the actions of NEABI at CPII, we organized the narratives of the black intellectuals that make up the Center according to four politically positioned fields of action that emerged from the speeches and experiences of the research interlocutors:

- (1) the political-institutional, in which the Nucleus acts promoting the racial debate in decision-making instances, such as meetings of departments, higher councils, and rectory of CPII, seeking bureaucratic changes, implementation and improvement of affirmative action policies, institutional recognition, besides acting in the creation of training courses related to the re-education of ethnic-racial relations;
- (2) the political-pedagogical, in which the Center works to centralize race in the educational debate, questioning the existing coloniality in the curricula and teaching practices, proposing - and going through - concrete paths for the application of Laws 10.639/2003 (mandatory teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture) and 11.645/2008 (which included, in the elementary school curriculum, aspects of indigenous history and culture);
- (3) the political-epistemological, in which the Nucleus politicizes the field of knowledge, promoting ruptures in the structures that sustain the hierarchies of knowledge, giving new meaning to spaces and experiences, evoking new civilizing values for the school space; and
- (4) the political identity, in which the Center works to highlight the discussion about racial identities, making a critical evaluation of the relations and roles historically established among racialized groups, mainly in academic/school spaces.

We reiterate that the fields of action systematized in this research are deeply intertwined and that, in the school daily reality, it is impossible to dissociate them. The discussions that involve curriculum, for example, can be approached in these four axes. However, in this text, divisions have been established for didactic purposes only.

Political-institutional action: "what is the place of NEABI within the school?"

There were initiatives within the school, but they were very isolated initiatives (...) So, the process remained in a drawer until the election of Professor Silva. In 2013, exactly 10 years after [the sanctioning of Law 10.639/2003], that I presented a project directly to Professor Silva. (...) And

I left the professor's office with the promise of the ordinance. And, in fact, the ordinance was issued that week. The Research Center was created (Interview with Joel, 2021).
(...) What is the place of NEABI in the school? NEABI has to make the school respect it as an instance that goes beyond research. In fact, of all the research centers that exist today [at CPII], NEABI was the first. So, we have these two fronts, with the institution to be recognized, and these juvenile minds and hearts. We have to have institutional projects. It has to branch out. It has to become a rhizome root, it has to spread through the land (Interview with Joel, 2021).

To understand how the political-institutional struggles of NEABI/CPII take place, we begin with Joel's reminiscences about the context of the creation of the Nucleus in the institution. In the interview, he reported that, starting in 2008, he began to represent the College before SECAD (Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity), in national meetings of teachers interested in the implementation of Law 10.639/2003. Then, in 2009, Joel presented a project for a Center for Afro-Brazilian Studies (CEAB) to the former CPII Secretary of Education. The project presented by Joel was not institutionalized until the election of Professor Silva (fictitious name) as dean.

About the institutional process of creating the NEABI in CPII, it is possible to see that the simple issue of the law and related guidelines was not enough. There were isolated initiatives from some educational professionals, but nothing that structured institutional actions in the sense of applying the legislation. It was necessary for a CPII employee directly connected to the black social movements to bring pressure to bear on the decision-making bodies.

The institutionalization of NEABI in CPII occurs, therefore, by the connection of three factors: (i) force of law and legal pressure; (ii) arrival of new bodies in the institution, even if in a discrete way, made possible by affirmative action policies; and (iii) plea made by members of the black social movement already existing within the school. Even so, it was necessary to have people sensitive to the theme in the deliberative sectors.

The fact that NEABI/CPII is institutionally "sheltered" is also an important advance in internal policies. We borrow the thought of Arroyo (2013, p. 123) when he states that it is necessary to "recognize the advances in order to go beyond". And, in the case of the performance of a NEABI, the first condition to go beyond is to understand that, at the institutional level, there are mechanisms of concession or interdiction of black literacy, which can facilitate or hinder the existence and multiplication of important spaces that agency the construction of subjectivities and black identities.

By understanding that the school/academic space is marked by power relations, it is understood, consequently, that dealing with issues of political-institutional nature means moving the internal structures of this space, shifting focuses of power from place (GOMES, 2010). The intellectuals that make up NEABI/CPII, besides understanding the power relations that are established in the institution, have their subjectivities crossed by these relations. As Gomes (2010) explains, Black intellectuals are inscribed in a double dimension in the relationship with power: in the struggle against it and in the struggle for it. In this sense, when they point out the structural racism and coloniality that runs through institutions and education, NEABI/CPII intellectuals are fighting against power. Now, when these individuals create strategies of institutional recognition to expand their possibilities of acting towards the decolonization of education in this space, they are fighting for power.

Also, in the excerpt compiled at the beginning of this subsection, Joel divides NEABI/CPII's political-institutional action into two fields. To battle for the minds and hearts of the youth means to transform the school/academic thinking and doing through a decolonial black perspective, so that the students are crossed by an emancipatory and affirmative anti-racist educational conception.

The battle to be recognized as "an instance that goes beyond research" means to understand that it is imperative that the NEABIs act beyond the areas of teaching, research, and extension. The proposition and execution of the NEABI/CPII training fronts in line with Laws 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008 are, without a doubt, fundamental for the deconstruction of the colonial patterns that permeate education. However, the decolonial project is inseparable from the racial literacy versed in public policies. In this sense, NEABI/CPII acts fostering discussions with the school community, and especially with the decision-making instances, in order to sensitize the higher administration about the needs of expansion of affirmative action policies.

Political-pedagogical action: the daily "guerrilla war" in basic education

In daily practice one separates the story that is part of education from the story that is an addendum, an event, a day of lectures, a little program, an asterisk on the lesson plan below "remember to talk about so-and-so". There, I said it. I've already combated all racism in literature. (Interview with Lélia, 2021)

Individual initiatives end up being the main strategy in the guerrilla war, not the war of confrontation. What did we manage to do with the NEABI training projects? To get teachers from different departments to take it to their practice. Practices can be changed much faster. They are what will reflect in the curriculum. (Interview with Joel, 2021)

The relevance of a NEABI focused on basic education is precisely in fostering permanent changes in curricula and pedagogical practices. However, we need to emphasize that there is a fundamental difference between welcoming and centralizing a certain theme. In the case of Laws 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008, centralizing means making this a structuring content of the school, its curriculum, and the political-pedagogical project, beyond a space-time delimitation.

Santomé (2009) and Noguera (2017) conceptualize as "tourist" curriculum participation when the mandatory content of Afro-Brazilian, African, and Indigenous history and cultures are welcomed only to expand the racial-ethnic representativeness in a structure that is all Eurocentric. The "rest" appears eventually, and diversity is treated by the biases of trivializing, 'souvenizing', disconnecting, stereotyping, and prevaricating.

When reflecting on the implementation of NEABI/CPII, Pio and Baptista (2017, p. 50) report that when they visited the institution's campuses and asked about compliance with Laws 10.639/2003 and 11.645/2008, they received the name of someone in the unit who "dealt with these issues", who "demonstrated affinity with the theme and, therefore, sought to insert it in their daily work, alone or with some partnership". This type of positioning evidence that the legislation remains at the margin of the legitimate/legitimate times and spaces of the classroom; that activities that encompass the racial theme are considered "out-of-class events" that do not enter the hard core of the curriculum (ARROYO, 2013).

Aware of the difficulty of this grandiose undertaking of decolonizing education, the NEABI/CPII intellectuals use strategies that, according to Joel, are characteristic of "guerrilla warfare". Typically, the guerrillas come from local groups that establish a close relationship with the population, unlike what happens with the official armies, which usually remain quartered. It is, therefore, a matter of mobilizing the agents involved in basic education to make the revolution and depose an educational regime that is riddled with coloniality. As Joel explains, this revolutionary movement does not necessarily occur through explicit confrontation, but through alliances that favor the multiplication of a Black perspective in education.

Gloria Anzaldúa's (2005, p. 705) formulation regarding the mestiza consciousness in feminist studies can be transposed to this discussion about Black intellectuals' teaching when she states that "it is not enough to position oneself on the opposite bank of the river, shouting questions, challenging white patriarchal conventions". According to the author, every reaction is limited by what one is reacting against, and counter positioning - or the "war of confrontation," in Joel's words - is not a way of life.

A pedagogy that claims to be critical and emancipatory, that proposes ruptures in the teaching guidelines within a conservative context, will have conflict as a presupposition. However, what these intellectuals do is to establish a dialogue - to cross the bridge to the opposite side - between NEABI and the various departments, and this happens mainly through the training courses and the other activities of the Nucleus.

Political-epistemological action: "the *Ijexá* echoing in the noble hall of Pedro II College"

We always end up with a big party, as Africans we really like. And at the end it is always a big party. Since 2017 we have held a big *ajeum*, which is a big dinner with the food of the *orixás*. They [the students] are the ones who prepare it. It is nice because in 2016 we did the saint's one, from several houses. It was a wonderful party. Imagine, the *Filhos de Gandhi* entering with *ijexá*, which is one of the Candomblé rhythms. But *ijexá* is a rhythm that fell into popular culture and became carnivalized. So *Olodum* plays it, *Ilê Aye* plays it. And it is also played inside the houses [of

Candomblé]. So, the *ijexá* echoing in the noble hall of the Pedro II School. Can you imagine what ancestral power this had? (Interview with Joel, 2021)

You mentioned Africa, it has to be in the [campus] Center. Because we are in the middle, we are in the heart of Little Africa, right? (...) The Center is the *Valongo* campus. That is *Valongo*, that was the slave market. The Pedro II School was created for the slave traders' children to study. This is no small thing. (...) Today it is *Camerino* Street, but it used to be *Valongo* Street, and at the end of it was *Valongo* Pier. That was a slave complex. You have the *Valongo* Pier, you have the *Pretos Novos* Cemetery, you had the old leprosarium. And *Camerino* Street, which was the old *Valongo* Street, was the street where the *Largo do Depósito* Square used to be. Only it is not a box depot. It is an African depot. Do you understand? That street was where the warehouses were, the fattening houses. Look at this, what a thing. Today they are commercial establishments, and the people who work there may not know the ancestral cargo. Some still have the old timber that supports the building. So, it has to be in the Center. (Interview with Joel, 2021)

At the epistemological level, NEABI/CPII acts as a producer, articulator and systematizer of emancipatory knowledge that carries destabilizing meanings for curricula and educational conceptions, bringing other interpretations and re-signifying institutional spaces and discourses.

The event described by Joel in the first excerpt of this subsection - referring to the closing of one of the classes of the Introduction to Yoruba Culture and Mythology course - is structured from Afro-Brazilian civilizational values (TRINDADE, 2005), that is, it is based on specific cultural references that incorporate, create, and reinvent the social uses of language. In this sense, it is necessary to look at experiences like this and understand that they are configured as strategies of racial literacy that are established in the midst of negotiations and subversions, exposing religiosity as a cultural expression of the black diaspora and, for this very reason, as a way of doing politics and sustaining the literacies of re-existence (SOUZA, 2011).

Souza (2011, p. 37) defines re-existence literacy as the “reinvention of practices that activists perform, referring to the matrices and traces of a still little told history, in which the uses of language bear a history of dispute for schooling or not”. Thus, the CPII's Great Hall, which once housed graduation ceremonies in which the students swore to defend the religion of the emperor (CUNHA JÚNIOR, 2008), becomes a space of racial literacy, giving centrality to other social uses of language, such as gestures, images, and music, making knowledge visible through these reinvented experiences.

When asked about the location of NEABI/CPII activities, Joel points to the history involving the region where CPII's Center campus is located, at the corner of *Camerino* Street and *Marechal Floriano* Avenue. The old *Valongo* Street - today *Camerino* Street - led to the *Largo do Depósito* Square, where enslaved Africans were kept in fattening houses to increase their prices until they were ready to be sold in the *Valongo* slave market, the most active slave market in Rio de Janeiro. During the operation of the *Valongo* Wharf between 1774 and 1831, an estimated 500,000 to 700,000 Africans were forced to cross the Atlantic Ocean and disembark at this wharf. Located in the same region is the cemetery where 20,000 to 30,000 captured and enslaved men and women were buried – those who did not survive the forced voyage from the African continent to Rio de Janeiro, or who died soon after arrival.

This entire region became known as Little Africa after the slave trade became illegal in Brazil in 1831. Between 1850 and 1920, freed slaves remained working in the region, which also became a colony of migrants from Bahia who arrived looking for work and a sense of community (BASSO, 2016).

In the territory described by Joel, which today integrates the Historical and Archaeological Circuit of African Heritage, several resistances emerge that use the racial dimension as the motto of their action, operating policies of resignification of the region, through black history and culture, instituting what Pierre Nora (1993, p. 9) calls "places of memory".

According to Santos et al. (2018, p. 484), geographical places are objects of disputes to be transformed into places of memory, "receptacles of symbolic charges through the articulation between history and cultural practices - therefore, politics." Memory is always a construction, the result of social dispute. In this way, places of memory are not only constituted as geographical places, but also as places in the material, symbolic, and functional senses, simultaneously, in different degrees (NORA, 1993). This reinvention of ways of existing, acting, and being in the social fabric characterizes a place-based political dispute (MASSEY, 2000). This dispute for the memory of (and in) place has also been established in the context of the centennial building of CPII - currently the Center campus of the institution -, which housed

the São Joaquim Seminary in the eighteenth century and was transformed into the *Imperial Collegio de Pedro Segundo* School in 1837, by Minister Bernardo Pereira de Vasconcellos.

Besides the fact that the place chosen for the College was conventual in style, its first rectors were religious - Friar Dom Antônio de Arrábida and Father Leandro Rebello Peixoto e Castro. Strong proof of the position that the Church took in the institution are the oaths taken by the undergraduates, which revolved around the promises to respect and defend the country's institutions, to maintain state religion, and to obey and defend the emperor. These ceremonies took place in a place known as *Salão Nobre* (Noble Hall), inaugurated in 1875, with the presence of the Minister of the Empire, the Emperor, and the Empress, who conferred prestige to the ceremonies (CUNHA JÚNIOR, 2008).

The intellectuals that compose NEABI/CPII and that integrate the teaching staff of the formative fronts of the Center, the students, and the guests to the events held as a result of these formative fronts are subjects in these disputes for meanings about the space of CPII's Center campus and wage a battle for the reading of territorial history in the field of geopolitics of knowledge (MIGNOLO, 2020). This flow of resignification is inscribed in dialogical relations of re-existences that involve negotiation, reinvention, and subversion of asymmetrical power relations (SOUZA, 2011). They are, therefore, symbolic struggles for the attribution of meanings to spatial clippings that thus become carriers of values constitutive of identity repertoires.

Political-identitarian action: “black professors within a whitened institution”

This [the EREREBÁ faculty being mostly black] is something that we perceive that generates a very big impact on the interactions with the students (...) And we have there the possibility of interacting with teachers from other networks, I think this is very important, from a practice of black teachers within a whitened institution (Interview with Beatriz, 2021).

This is one of the things I am most proud of [the EREREBÁ faculty being mostly black] because I didn't have any black professors at the university. I had them in elementary school, in high school very little. In the history of education in Brazil there has been a disappearance of black teachers (...) And we look at the undergraduate courses, which are the last phase of graduation, generally, and we also see these black teachers becoming scarce. But then you go to the state [the state school system], you see black teachers in the majority. But when you get to a school that has a much more complex competition, like Pedro II, they are not in the majority. It's a very big impact. Nobody knows how hard I worked, as Simonal would say. I think the impact comes from individual efforts in connection with public policies, especially in the 2000s, from the PT government, quota policies, affirmative action (Interview with Solano, 2021).

Let's consider, in the political-identity dimension, Beatriz's speech, which mentions the relevance of the "practice of black teachers within a whitened institution". In this sense, Carvalho (2020) explains that decolonizing means intervening in the structure of the school space at all levels, including the constitution of the teaching staff. It is through the engaged presence of black teachers, who help to reformat the environment from a complex and ultracasual logic, evidencing multiple parameters of knowledge transmission, that the base that sustains teaching will move.

Still according to Carvalho (2020, p. 81), if the change in terms of ethnic and racial diversity occurs only in the constitution of the student body, there is a risk of “passing the surreptitious message that now finally black and indigenous youngsters will have the opportunity to learn with whites the knowledge that matters, or the only valid knowledge in fact: the Eurocentric knowledge”. In a decolonizing perspective, the school must act to make the entrance of black and indigenous students and teachers, who will confront traditional Eurocentric knowledge through self-representation, articulating knowledge about themselves and their ethno-racial universe to a wider social reality (CARVALHO, 2020).

According to the assumptions of Souza (1983, p. 23), the structure of race relations in Brazil is in the tripod continuum of color, ideology of whitening, and racial democracy. The idea that the greater the whiteness, the greater the chances of success and acceptance, associated with the idea of the non-existence of racial segregation in the country results in the "history of a renounced identity, in attention to the circumstances that stipulate the price of recognition to the black man based on the intensity of his denial." The opposition of the "renounced identity" is, according to the author, the identity claimed from the self-representation that is established based on the practice of Black teachers in a whitened College.

Solano also addresses the relevance of the practice of black teachers within a whitened institution such as CPEI, however, his narrative is structured from the reflection on the processes of ethnic-racial exclusion that occur in universities and in the College, on the differences between educational networks and on the relevance of affirmative policies.

The significant segregation and ethno-racial inequality that marks all our universities, called by Carvalho (2020, p. 94) as "chronic academic racism", directly affects the arrival of black people at the university as professors. These subjects are not found in significant numbers in the CPEI or in other federal public institutions. In the Rio de Janeiro state school system, as Solano explains, they are the majority. This difference may be related to the structural dimensions of the state and federal school systems - the number of students they serve and the consequent number of teachers they convene. However, even considering the different proportions of the networks, we must also call attention to the fact that public institutions that stand out for their tradition present much more complex competitions, according to Solano's words, that is, they have a very selective character in terms of access, both of students and teachers, generating a tendency to reproduce the exclusion patterns of society.

It is interesting to note that Solano does not construct a narrative based on individualistic meritocratic credo, but rather on the connection between individual efforts and affirmative policies. Moehlecke (2002), meanwhile, explains that affirmative policies are not contrary to the idea of individual merit, because their goal is to make it possible for merit to actually exist, in a scenario where opportunities are evenly distributed among subjects, regardless of their identity characteristics.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Decoloniality and, more specifically, the decolonial Black perspective as a project of intervention in the educational reality are organized on the basis of multiple resistances and re-existences. In the context of CPEI, they resist because they are founded on the Black intellectuals' contesting identity, and they re-exist because they develop objective and practical strategies of recognition and validation of the knowledge constructed by the Black community in its social, historical, and political experience.

In this sense, we perceive that the political-institutional performance directly confronts the coloniality of power - which vertically crosses the other spheres to a greater or lesser extent -, since it points to the colonial structures that sustain Brazilian public educational policies. The political-pedagogical and the political-epistemological dimensions are related to the necessary dismantling of the coloniality of knowledge, that is, of the cultural models, values, habits, and patterns of knowledge acquisition imposed by coloniality/modernity. The political-identitarian action goes through the deconstruction of the coloniality of being, since it is based on the struggle undertaken by black social movements for human, ethnic, intellectual, and cultural affirmation of the black population, in opposition to the hierarchical patterns of whiteness.

In short, in the political-pedagogical sphere, the decolonial Black perspective is developed through structural changes in curricula and teaching practices that centralize a political and affirmative re-reading of the Black body; in the political-epistemological sphere, it occurs through the recognition and valorization of other rationalities beyond the hegemonic one; in the political-identity realm, it operates by pointing paths to interracial collaboration and also by building spaces of "quilombamento"² that have as a fundamental characteristic the valorization of blackness; in the political-institutional realm, it develops as a function of the advancement of affirmative policies.

Political action permeates all these axes, and every group that engages politically provokes tensions in the spaces in which they are inserted. This occurs, especially, when we deal with associations of black intellectuals that take a stand against the racism that historically structures established inequalities. This posture of critical insubordination to racist, colonialist, and neocolonial realities configures the battle of black social movements in education, which has taken place for many decades to

² N/T: If in the past, the quilombos were places of refuge for enslaved Africans and African descendants against oppression, today the concept is gaining new meaning to symbolise what is very important: self-care and the protagonism of one's own life

re-signify the idea of race, using it as a tool to fight for rights and to affirm ethnic values (PEREIRA, 2021).

Given the current scenario of cultural, political, and economic crisis that plagues Brazil and Education, in addition to the currents of Pentecostalism and fundamentalism that increasingly invade schools, it is increasingly imperative to advance pedagogically, epistemologically, identitarily, and institutionally through a political localization of race. The reflections resulting from this research are the expression of a small part of the multiplicity of practices of tensioning and critical insubordination promoted by the black associativism inherent to NEABI/CPII and indicate the relevance of the diverse Centers spread in school and academic spaces in Brazil, as well as the protagonism of black intellectuals in the development of a decolonial educational perspective.

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Author 3 - Conceptualization, original writing, and review of final writing.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest with this article.