

Teacher, I know I'm going to hell! The uneasiness in the face of tension between dominant and marginal morality in two schools in the outskirts of São Paulo

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ABSTRACT

This paper has as object the final report of the project *The ancestor and the contemporary in schools: recognition and affirmation of Afro-Brazilian histories and cultures* that was developed by the research group Multiculturalism and Education (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico) in two different public schools on the outskirts of São Paulo between the years 2016 and 2017. The shared teaching strategy led local teachers and students to enjoy esthetics and artistic experiences that were deep rooted in the African ancestry and its outcomes in the culture of São Paulo outskirts: the hip-hop, the funk, the capoeira, the rap, the grafitti, among others. The reports showed that these elements, although intersected in the midst of the field of interest of teenagers and young people, are absent of the classrooms because they are motivators of a discontentment caused by the tension between a dominant morality and a marginal one that bursts from the worked artistic expressions, essentially critical and disruptive.

KEYWORDS

discontentment; tension; morality; African ancestry; school.

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PROFESSOR, EU SEI QUE VOU PARA O INFERNO! O MAL-ESTAR DIANTE DA TENSÃO ENTRE A MORALIDADE DOMINANTE E A MARGINAL EM DUAS ESCOLAS DA PERIFERIA PAULISTANA

RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objeto o relatório final do projeto *O ancestral e o contemporâneo nas escolas: reconhecimento e afirmação de histórias e culturas afro-brasileiras*, que foi desenvolvido pelo grupo de pesquisa Multiculturalismo e Educação (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico) em duas escolas municipais da periferia paulistana, nos anos de 2016 e 2017. A estratégia de docência compartilhada levou os professores locais e os estudantes a desfrutarem de experiências estéticas e artísticas enraizadas na ancestralidade africana e em seus desdobramentos na cultura das periferias paulistanas: o *hip-hop*, o *funk*, a capoeira, o *rap*, o grafite, entre outras. Os relatos demonstraram que esses elementos, embora interseccionados em meio ao campo de interesse dos adolescentes e jovens, encontram-se ausentes das salas de aula por serem motivadores de um mal-estar, potencializado pela tensão entre uma moralidade dominante e uma marginal que irrompe das expressões artísticas trabalhadas, essencialmente críticas e disruptivas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

mal-estar; tensão; moralidade; ancestralidade africana; escola.

PROFESOR, ¡SÉ QUE VOY A IR AL INFIERNO! EL MALESTAR POR LA TENSIÓN ENTRE LA MORAL DOMINANTE Y LA MARGINAL EN DOS ESCUELAS DE LA PERIFERIA DE SÃO PAULO

RESUMEN

Este artículo trata del informe final del proyecto *El ancestro y lo contemporáneo en la escuela: reconocimiento y afirmación de las historias y culturas afrobrasileñas* (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico) que fue desarrollado por el grupo de investigación Multiculturalismo y Educación en dos escuelas municipales de la periferia de São Paulo en 2016 y 2017. La estrategia de enseñanza compartida llevó a profesores y alumnos locales a disfrutar de experiencias estéticas y artísticas enraizadas en la ascendencia africana y sus desdoblamiento en la cultura de las periferias de São Paulo: *hip-hop*, *funk*, *capoeira*, *rap*, *graffiti*, entre otros. Los informes presentes en el material analizado mostraron que estos elementos, aunque se cruzan en medio del campo de interés de los adolescentes y jóvenes, están ausentes de las aulas porque son motivadores de un malestar, causado por la tensión entre una moral dominante y una moral marginal que irrumpe desde las expresiones artísticas trabajadas, esencialmente críticas y disruptivas.

PALABRAS-CLAVE

malestar; tensión; moralidad; ascendencia africana; escuela.

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the final report of the project “The ancestral and the contemporary in schools: recognition and affirmation of Afro-Brazilian histories and cultures”, registered at Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP) under the number 2015/50120-8. Professor Mônica Guimarães Teixeira do Amaral, PhD, a senior researcher at the University of São Paulo (USP) School of Education, coordinates the project. The project was also developed by the Multiculturalism and Education study group (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico — CNPq).¹ For over 15 years, our group has systematically produced didactic strategies and interventions with students and teachers from public and peripheral schools in São Paulo. These strategies are especially to collaborate with the implementation of Law No. 10.639/2003 (Brasil, 2003),² which established the mandatory teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture. The interventions occur as co-teaching and combine anthropological, artistic, philosophical, and cultural elements. In addition, they refer back to other perspectives on collectivity, social solidarity, society, and the world, considering African ancestry as the primary reference that dialogues simultaneously with the Afro-Brazilian hybrid and multicultural contemporaneity in the Brazilian suburbs. These cultures include hip-hop, *nagô* hip-hop, Brazilian funk, *capoeira*, *maculelê*, rap, break, graffiti, and black theater, among other aesthetic expressions and forms of resistance. Many of these elements are intersected amidst the field of interest of adolescents and young people but are little or not explored as pedagogical resources. Officially, they are outside the curricula and the school gates. However, they are present surreptitiously, in the headphones, and in the festive gatherings of the students after the bell rings.

The report we analyzed in this article refers to the set of research conducted in the years 2016 and 2017 in municipal schools located in different regions of the periphery of São Paulo. One of the schools was EMEF³ Roberto Mange, located in the west zone, and the other, the EMEF Saturnino Pereira, located in the east zone. The analyzed material contains 759 pages organized as follows: in the introduction,

- 1 This group has been expanded and currently counts with the participation of researchers from Rio de Janeiro (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro — UERJ — and Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro — UFRRJ) and Paraíba (Universidade Estadual da Paraíba — UEPPB). It is now called Grupo de estudos e pesquisas Educação e Afroperspectivas [Study and Research Group on Education and Afroperspectives] (CNPq/2022).
- 2 “Art. 26 - A. Teaching about Afro-Brazilian History and Culture is mandatory in public and private elementary and secondary schools. - § 1st The syllabus referred to in the caput of this article shall include the study of the History of Africa and Africans, the struggle of black peoples in Brazil, Brazilian black culture, and black peoples in the formation of national society, recovering the contribution of black peoples in the social, economic, and political areas pertinent to the History of Brazil.” (Brasil, 2003, n. p., our translation)
- 3 EMEF stands for “Municipal Elementary School” in Brazil. It refers to public schools that provide education for children in the fundamental level, which typically includes grades from 1 to 9. These schools are operated and funded by the municipal government.

we read the composition of the entire research team involved throughout the two years and in the two schools, as well as the objectives of the work that are in line with those of the implementation of Law No. 10639/03 (Brasil, 2003). A chapter on page 21, entitled “The destabilization of subjective and cultural identities”, gathers the main theoretical discussions underlying the production of the shared teaching plans. Right after that, we find a chapter with detailed descriptions of teacher training strategies prior to teaching. The training included several meetings between teachers and researchers, a field class at the Ivaoporunduva Quilombo, located in Vale do Ribeira, and several seminars given by different researchers from the group. As an example, we highlight a seminar on adolescence⁴ that was given to a teachers and researchers audience at a meeting at USP. PhD professor Mônica do Amaral, the coordinator of the project, was responsible for that seminar. The third chapter presents the report of the operative groups held with the teachers, coordinated by psychologists Samanta S. da Fonseca (who coordinated six meetings) and Ohara de Souza Coca (who coordinated 14 meetings). Then, starting in chapter 4, we read a sequence of 22 shared teaching reports produced by the researchers involved with the following standard structure: names of the participating researchers and the teachers of the classes, lesson objectives, description of the interactions carried out, materials used, texts, poems, lyrics used, photographic records of these interactions and some activities performed by the students. At the end of each report, the researchers recorded the students’ most relevant reactions, highlighting how they were affected by the prepared contents. Generally, the shared teaching projects focused on content related to African ancestry, which emerges in the artistic and cultural expressions of the young people on the periphery of the city: *Capoeira and the history of the black man in Brazil: art, culture, education, and citizenship*; *Digital griot: resignifying ancestry in education*; *The potential of rap as a teaching strategy in public schools in São Paulo*; *Capoeira and the history of the black man in Brazil: art, culture, education, and citizenship*; *Black theater*, among others. All the lectures were filmed and edited by technical fellows. The video records contributed significantly to our analysis of the entire project. In the final considerations, a request was made to FAPESP to extend the validity of the fellowships. Otherwise, it would not be possible to continue the project.

Usually, schools can offer little to adolescents and young people who live in the Brazilian peripheries. Due to discrimination and lack of perspective, many feel seduced or even condemned by drug trafficking. However, with the researchers’ constancy and approach, the students understood that their aesthetic preferences would not only be understood but would be prerequisites for transformative and emancipatory learning. Furthermore, the contact with ancestral knowledge resignified by peripheral art gave the students a new perception of the value and potency of their existence, which is in complete agreement with Axel Honneth’s (2003) analysis, that society’s possible moral advancement can only occur through recognizing

4 International Colloquium Young Afro-Brazilian American Cultures: meetings and mismatches (2012).

historically disadvantaged populations. However, despite the strength and positivity of the proposed strategies, the affirmation of ancestry, and the recognition of the cultural value present in the peripheral communities, some excerpts from the report show that many teachers and some students had difficulties in joining the project:

Our research with black youth living in what is conventionally called the peripheral regions of large cities like São Paulo have rightly found meaning in their lives and recreated themselves through juvenile aesthetics, such as hip-hop and Brazilian funk, in which their bodies and minds have been resignified through dance and rhythms that precisely echo the black diaspora of the Atlantic [...]. This is a difficult point of view to be recognized by some teachers, even after more than two years of collaborative teaching and workshops, notably carried out at EMEF Saturnino Pereira. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 23)

This paper aims to promote a critical reading of the report from the discourse analysis perspective (Foucault, 2007). The choice of this methodology is justified by the possibility of linking discourse, subject, history, language, and ideology, among other elements, in an attempt to understand the nature of the tensions felt by the teachers and students at these schools in the context of the project. The result derived from the analysis of the teachers' and students' discourses, described by the researchers, showed that these tensions are expressions of uneasiness, an image that is situated in the Freudian interpretative horizon and that presents the following vectors: the demonization of African knowledge derived from interpretations of certain neo-Pentecostal evangelical strands of which many teachers and students are part; the inhibitions in the face of the sexual appeal of the lyrics of songs and choreographies particularly of Brazilian funk, which are seen as immoral, sinful and vexatious, and the belief in an education marked by resignation and obedience, given the perception that conformed and docile young people do not need to be afraid of the police and, in addition, they would conquer a good place in the job market. These findings are analyzed in light of Nietzsche (2003a; 2003b), Foucault (2007), Fanon (2008), Freud (2010a; 2010b), Munanga (2015), Amaral (2016), and Bourcier (2017).

We understand that, when schools open their doors to ancestral knowledge, they become a complex field of tensions between dominant and marginal morality. This tension impinges on artistic expressions that present themselves as potentially critical and disruptive when occupying a place in the classroom. Therefore, we see with great concern the absence of training that prepares teachers to bravely weave theory, body, and ancestry into their daily pedagogical practices.

THE POTENCIES OF MARGINAL MORALITY AT SCHOOL

“But there could be no greater or more disastrous misunderstanding than for the happy, the successful, those powerful in body and soul to begin to doubt their right to happiness in this way.” (Nietzsche, 1998, p. 114, our translation)

The Congolese anthropologist and professor Kabengele Munanga (2015), in his article “Why to teach the history of Africa and the black group in Brazil today?”, reveals that the history taught in school does not contemplate the ethnic and cultural diversity that expresses the reality and the indigenous and African roots of the Brazilian people. According to him, this orientation has created a “Eurocentric monoculturalism,” which we call the dominant morality, bolstered by a false notion of cultural syncretism. Hence the importance of laws and the defense of resistance education, one that comes from the margins with strength and power to subvert the dominant structures.

Rap and hip-hop have spread worldwide, particularly among poor young people in big cities. These musical styles, combined with other marginalized political and cultural expressions, such as the Brazilian funk, have made it possible to elaborate new meanings for the existences and bodies of the peripheral youth. As a result, their identity, culture, and territoriality have been resignified beyond that which is official and transmitted by the dominant morality symbolized by the colonial system. Therefore, these marginalized expressions can be understood as a fundamental part of a resistance education referred to by Munanga (2015). Professor Mônica do Amaral (2016, p. 27, our translation), in her work *O que o rap diz e a escola contradiz*, explains that “[...] the irreverence and criticality of some rappers and the joyful *gingar* of the erotic body proposed by funk suggest a new scenario for the country’s metropolises, in which the plurality of youth art emerges as a way to confront the marks left by social fractures.

When these expressions are inserted in the classroom, the students become curious, involved, and enthusiastic because of their strength, irreverence, and positivity. They naturally seek knowledge about Brazilian funk, *pagode*, and hip-hop culture. They quickly access this content, memorize the lyrics and choreographies, download data, and share this knowledge. The students’ interests happen at an opposite pace compared to how the school culture treats knowledge — in an uprooted way, loaded with discourse, order, and finality. Some reports from the researchers prove this involvement:

Teacher M. told us about her experience with the students and that it was exciting how they got involved, created lyrics, and presented themselves to the other students, initiating a form of literacy that she had never seen before. The meeting ended with the performance of an orchestra of *berimbaus* and *atabaques* led by the *capoeira* masters and students, who made us enter the *roda* [circle] and play with them. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 333)

The students engaged in the dialogue. A student from another class, who is black, made several reflections about what she saw. She said she was more aware. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 382)

It was a very enjoyable class in which the students were involved from beginning to end. Only one student did not want to speak. There was no need to get the students’ attention, and everyone contributed to the discussion. T., who was

a very resistant student last year and is now in this class, was very participative. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 638)

Through the lyrics of the songs, the students understand the place they occupy. They were able to criticize the police authority, express and problematize their religions, and the government, unravel sexuality, and discover affirmative values of a potency of life subsumed by coloniality⁵ that insists on being represented by the most retrograde ways of being in school.

We started the rhythmic dynamic with a Tanzanian children's song. I played the song to the children, who began to read the words and ask what they were about while reading, laughing, and discovering, little by little, that the translation was just below. I talked to them about the lyrics sung by children from Tanzania, a country on the African continent, some resisted dancing but then joked. Of course, some of the funniest students always want to create their own choreographies. P., however, stole the scene; besides dancing in the group, he danced alone and let loose without any prejudice, having a beautiful participation in the African song. [...] One more day of our lives when we marked the joy of teaching and learning in time and space. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 435)

Peripheral music styles, mainly rap and Brazilian funk, return to an ancestry marked by strength, struggle, and resistance. Moreover, these styles collaborate to *overthrow idols*. That is, they resignify the ideas of authority and tradition in contemporary society, notions intensely criticized by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (2001), particularly in *The Twilight of the Idols*: "One thinks one is in danger of a new slavery whenever the word 'authority' is merely uttered" (Nietzsche, 2001, p. 83, our translation). However, in the work *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Nietzsche, 1998), the notions of force, the morality of the masters, and the will to power appear as subsidies for describing marginal knowledge or moralities. The author argues that morality generates the firm aims to conserve life in its character of permanent struggle and affirms its most fundamental instincts. It is a positive morality configured under the sign of plenitude, of addition, of the capacity for creation, of the affirmation of the potency of the human beings guided by it. Nietzsche believes that every human has been granted, by nature itself, an aptitude, a gift, that can be discovered, put "out there" through a formative pedagogical project: "The role of education is, then, to liberate the inner forces that nature has placed in men for their elevation and fulfillment: the instinctive and plastic forces that allow them to perform their works, especially the higher ones." (Melo Sobrinho, 2003, p. 34, our translation).

5 Gomes (2019), drawing inspiration from Maldonado-Torres (2019), points out that the coloniality of power imposes itself on subjective structures and that, in the field of education, it operates through curricula and pedagogical practices distanced from the interests of students, we would say.

In his time — some theorists consider Nietzsche's thought the border between modernity and postmodernity — the German philosopher perceived the seeds of an education that was pernicious to the development of individuals that he would call robust. The author saw that the belief in Western reason was blind, cruel, and alienating. The opposite of the morality of the strong would be the morality of the weak or the slaves. In this condition, the weak subject settles for the state of being dominated, remains humble, is ashamed of his idiosyncrasies and powers, and does not question the social place assigned by the dominant. Thus, for the philosopher, the success of education lies not in its technical or pragmatic character but in its emancipatory potential (Nietzsche, 2003a). However, such an emancipating, empowering education would depend primarily on the moral greatness and character of the teacher. In the final report of the project, we find the following description by a researcher about a speech by teacher R.:

We started today's class by having a round of conversation and reflection. We pointed out the importance of studying history for constructing the imaginary; for this, we take the example of the lyrics of "Antigamente quilombo, antes periferia", by the group Z'África Brasil. The theme led teacher R., who is black, to share some of her experiences with the class, especially after noticing that in the previous lesson, student E., who is black, was uncomfortable with some of the discussions that were brought up. "Many people feel uncomfortable when the subject of Africa, the subject of prejudice, the subject of racism, is brought up... And I say this discomfort is felt by the black people themselves, from the descendants who suffer prejudice, racism... And I have noticed this a lot, and it is not only in adults, no, children, teenagers; even here I see this: "No, this is not my thing, it is not part of my universe, so I prefer not to discuss it", and also they do not give themselves the right to know, to see that Africa, that our ancestors were not only enslaved people, they had many other cool things, beautiful things and that were not shown. They don't know and are not allowing themselves to know... they are stuck in their comfort zone even an acceptance of continuing in the current quilombo, continuing in the periphery and not changing that." — Teacher R. (Portuguese). (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 621-622)

Nietzsche (2003b) argued that the teacher's first task would be to put the students on guard against themselves, awakening in them essential strength in the face of the vision of new trends, which should, in turn, overcome the mediocrity of the present times. In the context of this project, the current mediocrity is expressed by prejudices and demonization of ancestral knowledge. The instinctive and positive forces generate the knowledge of the body that seem chaotic and disordered, and the subjects themselves must have the task of ordering/interpreting these impulses. Were it not for conservatism, the school could constantly be a space for the emergence of this content and the liberation of subjects to understand the experiences of discovering themselves and the world of knowledge.

We know that in Africa under domination, the body was a powerful tool for aesthetics, struggle, and faith (transcendence). Nowadays, for peripheral young people, ancestral aesthetics resists, and the body continues to be an expression of celebration, communication, thought, and criticism primarily directed at the limits imposed by the capitalist mode of production. The potency of this new pedagogical perspective imbued with this marginal morality clashes with traditional colonialist academicism and the moral values of many students and faculty members, causing what Freud (2010b) called uneasiness.

THE UNEASINESS

We will now briefly discuss the meaning and significance of *uneasiness*. This feeling was noted in the teachers' and students' discourses reported by the researchers when working with Afrocentric content and its unfoldings in the school space. In general, school is where children, young people, and adults develop the socialization process and manage the transmission and assimilation of the knowledge historically constituted by previous generations, as well as the set of value references society has established as fundamental to its own maintenance and continuity. However, this transmission is far from peaceful since the school environment is the scenario for a game of conscious and unconscious forces that seek affirmation, that cross and oppose each other, experiencing, for example, happiness and suffering, instinct and civilization. This tense picture, or the play of forces, produces what Freud calls *uneasiness*.

Civilization and its Discontents (Freud, 2010b) can be read as an ethical reflection, given its tendency to think about the subject that transits between the search for pleasure and happiness and the restrictive barriers to this pleasure that are imposed by culture. Freud believes that education would not be effective in preparing people to live in society since it conceals the role that sexuality⁶ plays in the lives of young people. It does nothing more than replace the repressed/inhibited drives by others that would be, according to Freud, equally harmful to the subjects, contributing only to the production of neuroses and, in this case, to the production of substitute satisfactions that the school insists on protecting and binding to a tradition that *needs* to be maintained.

Religion is an example of this substitutive satisfaction. Freud believes that the foundation of religion is an illusory defense against childhood uneasiness or helplessness that does not go away until adulthood; moreover, it holds the idea of

6 According to Antônio Quinet (1991), the notion of sexuality in Freud cannot be understood as synonymous with coitus or genitality but rather as something much simpler and, at the same time, broader. Freudian sexuality, correctly interpreted, appears as any form of pleasure-seeking and gratification that necessarily imply language. Language is essential to structure the universes of representation and regulation of both the pleasure principle and reality itself. Freud redefines sexuality and explains that libido is the energy that presides over human acts and is present in the relationship between the object and the represented word.

a zealous and protective father who will guarantee security and a whole life, if only after death. The individuals become so attached to this idea that they end up giving up themselves, their drives and powers, and sacrificing themselves in the name of this illusion created to deny the fact that suffering and incompleteness are part of our constitution. Often, believing in the redemptive character of this *truth*, the individuals turn it into a whole idea for themselves and the entire group, and see every force that stands in opposition as threatening.

Freud warns that this process does not occur without consequences. He points to the decrease in aggressiveness necessary for self-protection and in sexuality itself, understood as libido or the will to live, as sequels. When these factors are found in the school space, we have the formula that generates the morality of the weak, described by Nietzsche (1998), of docile, servile, and neurotic individuals who neither identify nor rebel against oppression. In his work *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud (2011) expands the discussion by pointing to state coercions as means of eliminating aggressiveness, understood as a death drive put in favor of life. It is against this apathy, against the formation of a herd of the weak, that Freud himself advocated, in 1927, in *The Future of an Illusion*, an “education for reality”, that is, an education that provides the conditions for individuals to recognize systems based on illusions and the unattainable nature of desire, thus escaping from the “psychological misery of the masses” (Freud, 2010a).

TEACHER, I KNOW I’M GOING TO HELL! RELIGION AS A CAUSE OF UNEASINESS

Franz Fanon (2008), the Martinican thinker and psychiatrist in *Black Skin, White Masks*, works from a fundamentally critical perspective on how the black man is viewed in contemporary societies of Judeo-Christian religious tradition. The author (Fanon, 2008, p. 160, our translation) uses the notion of “moral filth” in reference to the Eurocentric idea that black people represent sin and evil and thus offer risks to the maintenance of Christian monotheism:

Will this statement be susceptible of understanding? In Europe, the black man is the symbol of Evil. One must move softly, I know, but it is not easy. The torturer is the black man, Satan is black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty one is black — whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness. It would be astonishing, if the trouble were taken to bring them all together, to see the vast number of expressions that make the black man the equivalent of sin. In Europe, whether concretely or symbolically, the black man stands for the bad side of the character. As long as one cannot understand this fact, one is doomed to talk in circles about the “black problem.” Blackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone’s reputation; and, on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light.

After centuries of exploitation and association of the black as a moral evil, this perception has already become structural; that is, the depreciation of the black is so deeply rooted that it shapes contemporary social relations. In school, this structure is clearly manifested by the uneasiness of many black evangelical students in their first contact with African culture and ancestry in the classroom:

We also did a singing activity. A song of the children of Tanzania. Simama Ka. One student resisted dancing because she didn't know the song. Although she had the translation of the lyrics, she saw *macumba* there. The prejudice and lack of information are so great that just because they come from an African country, cultural manifestations are seen as *macumba*, something of the devil. We must have a lot of courage, patience, and willpower to explain these issues to the students; for two years working on the project, many changed schools, others arrived, and the repetition of prejudice is constant. Those who stayed in school are already more relaxed and no longer refer to these facts in this way; *only the evangelicals are quieter*. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 601, our emphasis)

Due to the structural racism, many young black peripheral people do not develop pride in their culture and even doubt the greatness of their ancestry. At school, these students resist the pedagogical practices that intend to rescue this perception. Despite having received the distorted and colonized information that associates black people with "moral dirtiness", as pointed out by Fanon (2008), others surrender to the power of culture and achieve what Nietzsche (1998) named the transvaluation of values:

In this rehearsal, one of the students caught my attention because she really likes to play the *atabaque*. However, her family is evangelical, so she played the *atabaque* and whispered to me: *Teacher, I know I'm going to hell, teacher, I know I'm going to hell*, but she didn't stop playing, nor did she leave the rehearsal. I believe that she, being of African descent, feels a strong call from her ancestry, for she identifies with the *atabaque* and the songs, not only from the *Puxada de Rede* but also from *capoeira*. However, she suffers the dilemma of the pressure made by the evangelical family that may have discriminatory orientations towards the activities of African and Afro-Brazilian Cultures. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 363, our emphasis)

For some teachers, working on the dimension of the body in the school space is very challenging. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the body carries the dimension of the sacred and untouchable, which makes any action that cultivates its multiple senses and powers sinful. The school confirms this vision of what is forbidden when it treats the body as taboo and censors' specific topics of high interest and curiosity for adolescents. While most teachers' values are about reproducing and conserving, the students experience confrontation and overcoming traditional values by discovering the body's potentialities through peripheral art.

As observed by the researchers, there are songs enjoyed by young people that are not considered appropriate for the classroom by some teachers because they deal with “vexatious” themes. These topics, however, are of great interest in adolescence, the stage that students are at in 8th-grade, class A. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 393)

In the following excerpt, we can see a demonstration of how students perceive the teaching uneasiness and the limitations of school. They hide or protect certain peripheral artistic manifestations because they understand that certain demands of life are not desirable in the school context:

At the end of the class, the coordinator, the teacher, and the researcher proposed an improvisation to the students. P. stood up, challenging W. to do an improvisation battle. H. suggested that they sing a funk song. It was a funk song by MC Livinho, Oliver Decesary Santos, a Brazilian singer from a new type of funk called funk *ousadia* [boldness]. [...] MC Livinho’s theme revolves around love relationships during adolescence, their conflicts, mismatches, doubts, and discoveries. T. was standing next to P. and noticed a strategy used by the students at school. P. started the song, clapping his hands and singing alone, surrounded by his classmates, who dance excitedly. It is not the case here to interpret the content of the lyrics, but to highlight that *in a particular part of the song, everyone claps very loudly to cover up the singing and make it difficult to understand the words*. The important thing was to see the form used by the students in the Brazilian funk circle that was formed there. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 393-394, our emphasis)

Some teacher’s colonized perspective and moral/religious positioning, in the face of actions that are considered rebellious, confirm that the origin of uneasiness lies in the friction between such different moral positions: the dominant, colonizing morality and the disruptive force that is imposed by marginal morality in the form of peripheral art. For example, during an activity carried out by the psychologists who conducted the operative group, the teachers had to choose an object that they were carrying/wearing and describe its symbolism:

AN went on to talk about her choice, which was a rosary, representing faith, family, and the teachings and values to which she has always had access. Asked what was easiest to think about her choice, she replied believing, and the hardest was faith. She added that she was afraid to talk about her choice among the group because of the long discussion about the school being secular. However, MC, her pair, encouraged her to speak her mind no matter what. AN stressed how important this was for her, to be brave and open up to the group. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 210)

Besides religion and moral values shattered by marginal moralities, the following reports bring a new element to our analysis: the behavior and “indiscipline”

of students who challenge the teacher's authority. As much as there is a force that wishes to dominate, to quieten the bodies by making them docile, peripheral art erupts from all sides. This art infiltrates where it is not expected, restoring the bodies' natural potency, drive, libido, and freedom, subverting the disciplinary logic.

[...] the researcher T. brought the instruments so that the students could rehearse. The young participants were divided into those who would play, dance, and sing. These roles were not fixed, meaning they were open to taking turns. We also agreed that the researchers would provide support but would not be in the scene because the students would be the ones to play the main role, since they had already developed autonomy for acting. With the sound of instruments played by the young people, the environment was transformed into a space of expression. The students who were going to dance asked C. [researcher] for some basic movements (of rap/Brazilian funk). *They really got involved. But even though everyone was trying their best, the uneasiness in the group was clear.* Some students were angry, and teacher R. was upset with them. It is this kind of situation, *this uneasiness between students and teachers, that should be observed and taken into account* when creating strategies to solve the lack of communication and hasty conclusions about the real motivation of young people in presenting behaviors considered "inappropriate" in schools. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 396, our emphasis)

Other situations reported by the researchers denote uneasiness in the face of behaviors interpreted as undisciplined and rebellious by adolescents.

J. said that they were raised in an authoritarian regime, so they thought: why should they change now that they are teachers? (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 318)

J. believed that sometimes teachers did not know how to use authority and limits to act as teachers since there were situations in which students did not cooperate to their satisfaction. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 197)

The projects designed for the two schools followed the logic of student protagonism and autonomy. Thus, the students could own the theoretical notions that permeated the projects, having the right to recreate the notions in their own way. The choreographies, the black theater, and the *capoeira*, among other strategies, could not be performed in a classroom with the class lined up in silence. The knowledge of the body, worked out from the logic of peripheral art, is dynamic, noisy, and unpredictable. In other words, the entrance of peripheral art into the school brings about another kind of uneasiness because of the shock that springs from the creative and disruptive impulse and action, as well as in the face of the needs of the obedient and conservative movement that we will now analyze.

UNEASE: FORMAT TO SURVIVE

In another meeting of the operative group, the teachers were asked to think about the main difficulties they faced and the anxieties inherent to their working conditions. In this part of the conversation, there is a reflection on the meaning of training and school formatting:

One of the teachers emphasized that the school is an ideological apparatus for formatting students: AR stressed that “school is a space for discussion of conceptions, of conflicts of interests, of knowledge, of sociability, ‘formatting and shaping’ the student, so that, by ninth grade, he knows what his role is as a citizen” (sic). J. quickly ironized the use of the term “formatting” as suggesting that it is something authoritarian that frames rather than forms. He understood the term used by his colleague as something negative but stated that sometimes they end up doing both. K. added that he understands “formatting” as synonymous with discipline, with teaching methodology, for example, steps that a student needs to pass a contest. A.R. explained that, for him, the school is an ideological apparatus and that ‘formatting’ did have a negative connotation. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 205)

Aligned with the official discourse of education for citizenship, teacher A.R. believes that, by the end of elementary school II, in the 9th grade, students should know their role as *citizens*. We do not have more elements to understand the meaning that the teacher attributed to this concept. However, based on this meeting with the teachers, it is possible to infer that it would be linked to fulfilling a specific social role for which school education/training would be necessary. The report reveals no agreement among the faculty members about the difference between training and formatting. In general, the official documents reveal that education objectives in this age group are twofold: the exercise of citizenship and insertion in the job market.⁷ We will not problematize here what “citizenship” means in the context of a country that never managed to free itself from the inauspicious effects of the exploiter/colonizer impetus. Still, we will make some considerations to understand the project of training for work that basic education emphasizes so much, which contributes to the technification of the bodies. Nevertheless, unfortunately, this neoliberal project is not always clear to public school teachers, as we see in many of the speeches transcribed in this article.

Other teachers participating in the project recognize that the discipline for obedience and “formatting” of these young people in the molds of the neoliberal market would not be so bad since it would guarantee them a possibility, at least a

7 The Law of Directives and National Educational Bases (Brasil, 1996, n. p., our highlights) guarantees, in Article 1, § 2, that “*School education must be linked to the world of work and social practice.*” The article 2 guarantees, in the same way, that education “[...] is aimed at the full development of the student, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship, and qualification for work.”

hope, of being accepted, of getting a job and thus achieve the dignity that they are denied in the periphery: “MI. -Elementary School, six years at EMEF, [...] added that she had been to some students’ homes and many of them did not have basic conditions to live with dignity and that it was difficult to deal with this in the classroom.” (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 198).

Without a proper diet, without a clean, warm, and rested body, one does not have the minimum conditions for schooling. Primary education schools do what they can to welcome these students and educate them since they know that if this school education fails, there will be new forms of surveillance and control over the peripheral bodies that are much more violent than those that can take place symbolically in the classroom.

Teacher M. told us that three young men from the neighborhood had been murdered during the early morning hours because of a dispute between drug dealers. Therefore, the community had obstructed police access, not allowing the removal of the bodies. The community of Cidade Tiradentes knows that the police, although they did not participate directly in the killings, are not neutral and could increase the number of deaths. At school, everyone was overcome with an anxious expectation, for if the police entered, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and friends would be at risk. As a result, there was no mood for classes, which were replaced by solidarity among students, teachers, staff, and researchers. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 144)



For this student, the periphery is marked by police violence because, as he himself told me, “in the periphery, they only arrest black people, and many times it’s the white guy who does the wrong things, and who takes the blame is the black guy.” (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 722)

However, for many peripheral lives, not even *formatting* — adapting students to the neoliberal project — effectively guarantees survival. Being black and living in the periphery is already a kind of condemnation. The teachers themselves,

whether conscious or alienated, are subjectivized by the system. As Bourcier (2017, p. 108, our translation) explains, “Capitalist subjectivation, neoliberal subjectivation requires, above all, the death of the body as subject and the putting of the body into operation.”⁸ In the specific case of the school, the bodies are daily on the borderline between the historical need to work with the construction and liberation of consciences through knowledge, and the instrumentalization of their function to contain the insurgence of dissident figures. Another paradox carrying uneasiness:

The teachers have several demands, which denote an inevitable exhaustion of their functions. Once the roles get confused, the institutional limit seems to be lost, and they accumulate their personal anguishes with those of the teaching practice. (Analysis of the psychologist — Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 201)

[...] faced with the various functions that public schools have assumed, teachers are forced to deal with demands beyond their fundamental training. Sometimes teachers become, besides teachers, public agents, nurses, and psychologists, among other functions. This accumulation of functions generates in teachers a feeling of devaluation, of loss of professional identity, leaving them dazed, not knowing what to prioritize: the act of teaching or dealing with everyday social ills. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 219)

After a few minutes, ARN pointed out that it was the so-called “dangerous classes”. That is, the needy population is taken as the population inclined to be gangsters. And in this scenario, the school entered as an instrument of control that, because of so many demands, ends up alienating the teachers, who find themselves lost. And the school is the apparatus that will have to account for all the social ills; with this, “teachers no longer recognize themselves”. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 216)

French thinker Sam Bourcier demonstrates that the generation of a *vita laborativa*, of a *bourgeois body*, requires education, discipline, and self-discipline. Giving up the drives that generate authentic expressions is necessary in the name of survival. The author refers to Silvia Federici’s⁹ thought to explain that the appropriation of bodies by the state is conceptually grounded in 18th-century Cartesian thought. In order for the “machine body” to emerge that will be used by capital as the “labor force” body, the idea of a “magical body” had to be destroyed. It is clear, then, why the forces that emerge from Afro-centered strategies, such as the *gingar* of *capoeira*,

8 Free translation of the passage: “Comme la subjectivation capitaliste, la subjectivation néolibérale requiert avant tout la mort du corps, la mort du corps en tant que corps sujet et la mise du corps au travail.” (Bourcier, 2017, p. 108).

9 Silvia Federici is an Italian philosopher, teacher, and feminist activist living in the United States. Sam Bourcier refers to this author’s research, particularly to the works *Caliban and the Witch: Women, Bodies, and Primitive Accumulation* (Federici, 2017) and *The Patriarchal Capitalism* (*idem*, 2019).

the joyful choreography of hip-hop, and the energy of funk cause strangeness in the school space, since it was designed to prepare the body-machine. Bourcier (2017, p. 113) further points out that “[...] the university is one of those public spaces in which neoliberalism now exercises its power of predation.”¹⁰ It is in the universities that the teachers are trained — teachers who, in turn, will promote the education of a new generation in conformity with the regime.

ABOUT TEACHER TRAINING

Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions — a movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom. (hooks, 2013, p. 23-24, our translation)

Bourcier (2018) denounces that the French disciplinary structure rejects the entry of marginalized knowledge in many ways. Most gender studies in the literature do no more than historiography and statistics. No knowledge with strength and resistance comes from the margins. The absence of marginal knowledge makes the school a place for reproducing Western epistemology and Judeo-Christian values, contributing to maintaining the capitalist mode of production. In Brazil, the difficulties in basic education teacher training are noticed and denounced by many teachers open to understanding and including marginal knowledge.

A.R. argued that the content about teaching African culture and history is still incipient since a ‘caricature’ of the continent still prevails, which has not yet been overcome due to what the media broadcasts, alienating the public opinion. The teacher added that the media educated students more than their parents and even the school itself. They spend too much time focusing on other matters that disperse everyone. He himself contemplates the study of Africa in his classes with an emphasis on the colonial period. J. added that teacher training also contributes in positive and negative ways. Some teacher training sessions do not contemplate such a study, nor its dissemination in the classroom. *However, if African Culture and History was something discussed since the teachers’ college education, indeed, it would be easier to deal with such a topic with the students.* (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 203, our emphasis)

Even after the law became mandatory, the precariousness of teacher training meant that the knowledge of African ancestry kept appearing in schools as folklore or as a mere appendix to a stereotyped and caricatured curricular contribution, re-

10 Free translation of the passage: “[...] *l’université fait partie de ces espaces publics dans lesquels le néo-libéralisme exerce désormais son pouvoir de prédation.*” (Bourcier, 2017, p. 113).

ducing the greatness of the African continent to the ills of slavery. Moreover, there are few formative experiences capable of introducing affective, sensory, and cultural backgrounds, experiences in the classroom, which would be capable of promoting recognition and emancipation of young black peripheral people.¹¹ The movement for the implantation of African and Afro-Brazilian studies centers in universities was an initiative that sought to fill these gaps. The Parecer CNE/CP n.º 03, implemented on June 17, 2004 (Brasil, 2004), which establishes national curricular guidelines for the education of ethnic-racial relations and the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture, encourages the existence of these centers.

Art. 4 The systems and schools may establish communication channels with groups in the Black Movement, Black cultural groups, teacher-training institutions, and study and research centers, such as the Nuclei of Afro-Brazilian Studies, to seek subsidies and exchange experiences for institutional plans, pedagogical plans, and teaching projects. (Brasil, 2004, n. p.)

These centers, named Nuclei of Afro-Brazilian Studies (NEAB), act as poles for the dissemination of political training against discrimination and racism in education through the implementation of affirmative action and the promotion of research and outreach projects. They also work on the dissemination of a decolonial epistemology and the valorization of traditional knowledge. Some teachers in the analyzed report show that the proposals and partnerships also encouraged by these centers effectively reach the communities, giving new meanings to teachers' perspectives and transforming their practices, as can be seen in this teacher's report:

M.I. went on to say that she never stopped to think about ethnic/racial issues and that today she realizes the importance of reflecting on them. S. asked her when she started to develop this perspective. M.I. answered that it was from the start of the University's project [...], in partnership with the school, through the co-teaching practice. Before, she didn't understand that black people didn't see themselves as subjects in society; today, however, she realizes the importance of thinking outside of the box. M.I., in a way, even criticized herself for having taken so long to understand black people's struggles in our country. (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 223)

Likewise, the report presents consistent evidence about the reach of formative action on students. For example, the following excerpt demonstrates how a visit to the Afro Museum, followed by a discussion promoted by the museum's monitors with local researchers and teachers, was able to destabilize prejudices structured in the education that many children receive even before they get to school:

11 We strongly suggest another work by Mônica do Amaral (2018), *Culturas ancestrais e contemporâneas na escola: novas estratégias didáticas para implementação da Lei 10.639/2003* [*Ancestral and contemporary cultures at school: new teaching strategies to implement Law 10.639/2003*], which presents a compilation of didactic subsidies for primary and high school.

The monitor [of the Afro Museum] resumed her speech and introduced the conversation about religions by asking the teenagers to play instruments such as the *reco-reco* and *agogô*. She then informed the students that the wood in which those instruments were made was called *macumba*. The students were amazed and started asking several questions. Then, she gradually tried to deconstruct the students' conceptions who stated during the dialog: "No way, there is only one God! – "This religion is devil because it is bad for people, while the Holy Spirit is not bad for anyone!" – "This offering of food is not of God. He doesn't need that." In short, it was a very fruitful discussion that significantly impacted the students. Even after we left the museum, they kept talking about it, *unsatisfied and, at the same time, appalled at having to put their own convictions to the test.* (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 489, our emphasis)

The uneasiness felt by the students upon leaving the museum denotes the installation of a counterpoint to the structured discourse, derived from prejudice and intolerance. The work of welcoming this uneasiness in the following classes was fundamental for everyone to subjectively, historically, and socially evaluate the meanings and relevance of this counterpoint. In the following excerpt, the result of the formative work that has already operated positively on the change in students' perceptions:

[...] during the visit to the [Afro] Museum, the weight of the Pentecostal and even Catholic versions that tend to demonize Yoruba religiosity became apparent, with the fear surrounding the figure of Exu, the *candomblé* rituals, and even the drums, the *agogô*, associated with *macumba*. Other students who had participated in the shared teaching experiences in which instruments of African origin were produced in a handmade way brought their experiences, *demythifying this distorted view of African religiosity.* (Amaral, Reis, and Vieira, 2018, p. 30, our emphasis)

As we have seen, the school will be able to stop being a space of reproduction when the entire educational community — from the teachers of basic education to the university professors and researchers who work and research the education of educators — become aware of the significance of the patterns and mentalities that they reproduce and all the violence that operates over the subjects who do not accept the colonial schooled value referential as legitimate in the context of their peripheral existences.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our analysis of the discourses of teachers and students transcribed by the researchers of the project *The ancestral and the contemporary in schools: recognition and affirmation of Afro-Brazilian histories and cultures* allowed us to validate the idea that the discomfort of these agents is, in theory, an uneasiness. Such feeling results mainly from the friction between a dominant and a marginal mentality or morality.

By dominant morality, we mean the Eurocentric values that structure Brazilian society and, consequently, the school curricula and pedagogical practices offered

to peripheral youth. The most evident manifestations of this morality appear in the school in the form of Neo-Pentecostal evangelism (practiced by many students and teachers), inspired by the Judeo-Christian monotheistic tradition, from which ascetic ideals derive, that is, the denial of life in its strength and power in favor of the promise of reward in another life, understood as legitimate and eternal. Resignation, obedience, and docility also result from this same assumption.

By marginal morality, we mean the practices of peripheral urban culture such as rap, hip-hop, and Brazilian funk, recreated from African ancestry, notably present in the active participation of bodies, improvisation, songs, and swaying in circles, which rarely occupy a place in curricula and pedagogical practices. This evaluative referential understands that the body is not an individual “place” but a participative one; it has the collective identity when carrying the colors, paintings, gestures, and postures. Moreover, bodies mark social places and communicate between the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual worlds.

The perspective that is still colonized by the dominant morality sees the body as flesh that quickly deteriorates or perverts. Exalting the body’s power, celebrating its strength, and rejoicing in its energy are practices seen as shameful and impure. For this reason, they have been historically annulled, dominated, and relegated to the margins. However, the knowledge of the body has never been annulled. Ancestry has crossed the Atlantic and resists as peripheral urban art. The analyzed excerpts in the final report showed the importance and the need for teacher training for the effective deconstruction of stereotypical and intolerant images concerning Afro-Brazilian cultures and to be able and have the courage to problematize, question, and subvert the values of the dominant morality that legitimizes and sustains the marginalization of black and peripheral culture. It was possible to recognize that the project was an essential instrument of recognition and restitution of ancestral ties by rescuing the “self-confidence, self-respect, and of self-esteem” (Honnet, 2003, p. 266) of the peripheral black youth.

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