

## **Foreword to the Thematic Section – Education and Ethnic-Racial Relations**

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Ó mar!  
Esquecer dói mais que lembrar.  
Lembrar é assegurar novos dias.  
Jorge Froés, Mar, 2016<sup>3</sup>

Sharing thoughts on *Education and Ethnic-Racial Relations* through the organization of a Thematic Section includes our efforts *to remember and ensure new days*. Inspired by the poet, we assume that the thematic highlighted in this publication is connected to academic productions associated to what we call sensitive or controversial issues, such as racism, prejudice and racial discrimination. In Brazil, Education on Ethnic-Racial Relations is part of a State policy, considering that the country has signed international agreements providing human rights protection, among them the recognition of the right to difference and its correlate equality and equity promotion from the ethnic and racial point of view.

This publication is aimed to elaborate on the complexity of themes, problems and perspectives that are created in plural contexts, through the sharing of socially relevant and academically located reflections on Ethnic-Racial Relations in the Education field, in Brazil and other countries. Proposed 13 years and 8 years after Laws 10639/2003 and 11645/2008 were promulgated, respectively, the Thematic Section stimulates the debate concerning challenges and perspectives of their practice, as it considers the limits found by education professionals for their effective and critical implementation. The proposal is confluent

with the so-called “politics of difference” (Hall, 2003) in the core of social thought and, in particular, in the educational agenda, addressing the access to equal rights to minority or made-invisible groups. The questioning of univocal collective identities put at stake the stipulated normativeness, establishing the right to black, *quilombola*<sup>2</sup>, female, indigenous, and genre self-representation as a conquest. In this renewed and complex context, new struggles emerge in the educational field, stimulating a comprehensive and conscious curricular (re)elaboration in the light of this radical alterity. New meanings are produced in face of this rupture of silencing and subordination that historically marked the educational field regarding difference and universalization of human right access, essentially achieved through social struggles to overcome inequalities, deviations and the State policies in relation to a society that is no longer univocal. Among these, we highlight what supports our proposition: the interface between ethnic-racial relations and education.

Contemporary education is understood in a context of coping with naturalization processes that conventionally have been part of standardized curricula, anodyne methods and universalizing didactics. New approaches are established, as well as new ways to feel and experience sciences, arts and History in the educational field, through pluralistic images and expanded meanings that are open to distinct words. Therefore, these thirteen years that have passed since the establishment of the law that obliges the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African cultures and History and of ethnic-racial relations allow us to elaborate – even minimally – some appreciation of the trajectory, and essentially to analyze with which scenarios Brazilian teachers and managers face for a qualified, brave and pluralistic approach of ethnic-racial relations. However, why insist on the potency and force of an education focused on ethnic-racial relations? Fundamentally because, unfortunately, there was little advance in that area. If, on one hand, there are numerous ongoing experiences in the country, research has been also showing irreducible limits, at least considering the given reality, to achieve its full accomplishment. Isolated teachers, without support or supervision from managers – besides intolerance and the precarious situation of the profession – create scenarios in which there are no democratic mechanisms to manage schools and teaching networks. There is certainly a fundamental role to be played and strengthened by universities where teachers graduate, since this is a challenge not only for continuing education, but also for in-service training.

The proposal of the Thematic Section comes to facilitate, on one hand, the necessary understanding of challenges to the effectiveness of Law 10639/2003, with its specificities, as well as to the Law 11645/2008, which establishes the teaching of indigenous cultures and History as mandatory in Brazilian schools. On the other hand, the contributions from different realities – such as the Spanish, Argentinean, Chilean and Portuguese cases – provide contextual differences and similarities, as they introduce new reflections to the teachers training and to the aca-

demographic research on education issues. The conflicts faced by educators nowadays also allow to elucidate the possibilities of action they have and how teachers training is primarily linked to interactionist foundations from the sociocultural point of view. Thus, it is in the exchange of experiences between teachers and researchers and in face of horizons of expectations, struggles and action that the authors/collaborators of the Thematic Section present their contributions to the contemporary debate concerning the relation between education and ethnic-racial relations. The approaches of the texts now presented are original, even though addressing a recurrent set of problems linked to a still ongoing social agenda through struggles and confrontations, since it is situated within a markedly unequal context. Brazil still experiences – unfortunately, it is not unusual – situations of racial discrimination, and schools are part of this context. This situation happens at a time of urgencies, in which it is required from teachers a reflective confrontation based on sensitive and socially unresolved issues – for instance, topics related to racism, xenophobia or religious intolerance. These are topics that mix urgencies and contingencies, building relations with time, memories and the socially shared imagery, all of them capable of creating, at times, political-pedagogical and epistemological obstacles for the construction of proposals in the field of formal schooling. Therefore, these topics emerge from individual and collective experiences that are marked by pain and suffering, tenderness and affection, and from the social commitment for knowledge production based on justice, peace, equality and equity.

In the light of the justifications presented, these are the objective of our publication: to analyze the challenges related to education on ethnic-racial relations in different contexts and social/educational realities in Brazil and other countries; to understand the limits and possibilities of contextual and detailed practice of Laws 10639/2003 and 11645/2008 in different realities of our country; to know and to problematize theoretical and methodological aspects related to the topic in different Brazilian realities, considering different didactic and pedagogical resources, different approaches and strategies of action and training of teachers implemented in educational centers; to bring to discussion the relation between education aspects of ethnic-racial relations and related topics such as religious intolerance; to bring back the discussion about racial democracy and representation policies, considering the limits and possibilities of education to overcome inequalities, discrimination and silencing.

Although having theoretical approaches or diverse empirical fields, all texts here gathered have in common the fact that they create reflective bases for the link between education and defense of human rights – among them the recognition of the right to difference and equality from the ethnic and racial point of view. In the case of Brazil, these reflections were pressured by public policies linked to affirmative actions and, in the field of education, to curricular policies resulted by Laws 10639/2003 and 11645/2008. These political and curricular move-

ments created actions and reactions that were built and are built by several ways, such as production of didactic materials, individual and collective educational practices, training processes within and outside academic spaces, educational managers' responses or new relationships with school communities in their religious practices, for instance. Our authors seek to reflect on these tensions and invite us to a reflective reading.

Luciano Magela Roza, in his essay *Approaches to Racism in History Textbooks (2008-2011)*, analyses racism following the slavery abolition period in Brazil, dated in time and focused on books of *Plano Nacional do Livro Didático* (PNLD – National Textbook Program). The author questions ethical and political purposes of History teaching, when they are tensioned by the implementation of curricular policies related to Education on Ethnic-Racial Relations.

Maria Telvira Conceição, in the article *Africa's Racialization Discourses in Brazilian History Textbooks: 1950 to 1995*, uncovers the assumption of a racializing dimension in discourses that allude to African and Afro-Brazilians people in this dated educational production, also questioning the discourses of the current didactic elaboration that is taking place in the country.

Carla Beatriz Meinerz, in her article *History Teaching, Intercultural Dialogue and Ethnic-Racial Relations*, while presenting research results on the reception of curricular policies concerning Education on Ethnic-Racial Relations in a municipal school network of Rio Grande do Sul, points out to two specific elements: on one hand, the affection to the cause, as a more individual and less institutional response to legal regulations; on the other hand, the tendency of creating new stereotypes in the collective practices of reception of this legislation and related guidelines.

Waldecir Ferreira Chagas analyses in *Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture in K-12 Education in Paraíba* actions taken by teachers who work at K-12 education and municipal public schools located in towns of three regions of Paraíba, Brazil. The author also points out that the practices developed are initiatives of teachers without articulation or links to public policies developed by municipal departments of education, revealing that such education management institutions have not yet taken the duty to implement contents of Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture in the curriculum as a public policy, which makes teachers actions in schools still limited, discontinuous and restricted to isolated individuals or groups.

In *Secularization and Religious Intolerance: challenges for the History taught*, Júnia Sales Pereira and Sonia Regina Miranda address the theme of education for religious coexistence at school, starting from the mandatory teaching of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous cultures and history, inserting such reflection in a context of discussion about citizenship construction challenges in a secular State. The authors reiterate that the entire agenda is linked to politics of difference and the right

to diversity in its maximum expansion, putting in evidence the little known educational, democratic and public laity aspects, which requires combined actions among educators, politicians and social movements.

In *Slavery and Afro-descendants: a proposal for teachers training*, Marisa Massone and Manuel M. Muñiz present a series of experiments with K-12 education teachers training in Buenos Aires. They analyze representations about the concepts of slavery and Afro-descendants in various educational materials, reflecting on the potential such topics have in teaching Argentina's History.

Amilcar Araujo Pereira and Marta Araújo, in their article *Race, History, and Education in Brazil and in Portugal: challenges and perspectives*, propose a dialogue between political and academic debates about race, identity and history in the Brazilian and the Portuguese contexts. The authors examine how the "myth of racial democracy", as it is known in Brazil, relates to the idea of a national vocation for "interculturality" in Portugal, connecting both with the contemporary debate about racism and Eurocentrism and focusing on education as a stage of important political struggles.

Finally, Joan Pagès, Gabriel Villalón and Alicia Zamorano, in *History Teaching and Ethnic Diversity: the Chilean and the Spanish cases*, discuss the ethnic and racial diversity as a characteristic of the current world, but not yet solved in the school curriculum, particularly regarding the teaching of history and social sciences. Their conclusions point out the need to persevere in the search for a solution based on diversity and equality as fundamental requirements for global citizenship.

We hope this Thematic Section become a field of questioning that instigates the formulation of new reflections, problematization, research and practices in the field of Education on Ethnic-Racial Relations, all of them related to efforts for the realization of new days.

Translation Proofreader: Ananyr Porto Fajardo

## Notes

- 1 *Oh sea! To forget hurts more than to remember / To remember is to ensure new days* (Jorge Froés, Mar, 2016, our translation).
- 2 *Quilombola* is a Brazilian community founded by fugitive African slaves during the slavery period in Brazil.

## References

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