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Is it Enough to Talk about Women? Law 14,986/24 from a decolonial feminist approach

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ABSTRACT – Is it Enough to Talk about Women? Law 14,986/24 from a decolonial feminist approach. This essay problematizes Law nº 14,986/2024, which mandates the inclusion of feminine approaches in school curricula, and other norms that target basic education curricula under the banner of promoting equality between men and women. The neoliberal and neoconservative context of the law's production and approval instigates us to question what, a priori, is interpreted as "progress." Based on theories from black and decolonial feminisms, articulated with the notion of functional and critical interculturality (Walsh, 2012), we problematize the scope of said law for Brazilian basic education curricula. We argue in favor of a feminist, intercultural, and decolonial approach in Brazilian school curricula.

Keywords: **Legislation. Women. Decolonial feminism. Interculturalism. Curriculum.**

RESUMO – Basta Falar de Mulheres? A Lei 14.986/24 sob uma ótica feminista decolonial. Este ensaio problematiza a Lei nº 14.986/2024, que determina a inclusão de abordagens femininas nos currículos escolares, e outras normas que visam os currículos da educação básica sob a rubrica da promoção da igualdade entre homens e mulheres. O contexto neoliberal e neoconservador de produção e aprovação daquela lei nos instiga a suspeitar daquilo que, *a priori*, é interpretado como "progresso". Com base em teóricas dos feminismos negro e decolonial, articuladas à noção de interculturalidade funcional e crítica (Walsh, 2012), problematizamos os alcances da referida lei para os currículos da educação básica brasileira. Argumentamos em prol de uma abordagem feminista, intercultural e decolonial nos currículos escolares brasileiros.

Palavras-chave: **Legislação. Mulheres. Feminismo decolonial. Interculturalidade. Currículos.**

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Introduction

On September 25, 2024, Law No. 14,986 was enacted, amending the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB) to make mandatory “the inclusion of approaches grounded in women’s experiences and perspectives within curricular content” (Brasil, 2024) in both Elementary and Secondary Education. The law also establishes “the Week for Honoring Women Who Made History, a campaign to be held annually during the second week of March in basic education schools throughout the country” (Brasil, 2024). Article 26-B was added to the LDB through this legislation, which came into force in 2025. This measure follows the precedent of Law No. 10.639/2003, which introduced Article 26-A, mandating the inclusion in the official curriculum of the education system of the theme “History and Culture of Afro-Brazilian Peoples” into the LDB in 2003 (Brasil, 2003).

The law originated from Bill No. 557/2020, authored by Congresswoman Tábata Amaral (Brazilian Socialist Party – São Paulo). The bill originally provided only for the establishment of the celebratory week. In its justification, the proposal stated, among other objectives, the intention to encourage girls to pursue education, political leadership, and multiple career paths, such as scientific research, as well as to educate boys “about the existence of strong and prominent women, fostering greater respect and empathy and combating the culture of violence against women” (Brasil, 2020, p. 2). It also referred to the intention of solidifying and specifying what had already been established under the Maria da Penha Law (Lei Maria da Penha, LMP), particularly in its Article 8, Item IX.

Indeed, the recently approved legislation is not entirely new. Brazil has enforced legal provisions related to the inclusion of issues aimed at reducing inequality between men and women since 2006. That year, the LMP (Law No. 11,340/06), among the guidelines for public policy to combat domestic violence against women, established “the emphasis on content relating to human rights, gender and racial or ethnic equality, and the problem of domestic and family violence against women in school curricula at all levels of education” (Brasil, 2006). Later, in 2021, Law No. 14,164/21 added Paragraph 9 to Article 26 of the LDB, which provides that:

> § 9 Content relating to human rights and the prevention of all forms of violence against children, adolescents, and women shall be included, as cross-cutting themes, in the curricula referred to in the *caput* of this article, in accordance with the guidelines of the corresponding legislation and with the production and distribution of teaching materials appropriate to each level of education (Brasil, 2021).

Furthermore, this law created “the School Week for Combating Violence Against Women, to be held annually in March, in all public and private basic education institutions” (Brasil, 2021), with objectives that include, among others, promoting: knowledge about the LMP; critical reflection “among students, education professionals, and the school community on the prevention of and fight against violence toward women"; community engagement in developing strategies; the training of education professionals; and "equality between men and women, so as to prevent and curb violence against women" (Brasil, 2021).

That is to say, the rule approved in 2024 adds yet another layer to the legislative framework emphasizing the need to integrate into curricula topics related to women and their rights. However, the three laws have a notable difference. On the one hand, the LMP—a global reference in addressing domestic violence and the result of intense debate and advocacy by women's movements—brings a gender perspective that approaches intersectionality by highlighting the need to include in curricula topics concerning human rights, *gender, race, and ethnicity*. On the other hand, the laws enacted in 2021 and 2024 employ a different vocabulary: they refer, respectively, to violence against *women* (in the singular) and to equality between *men and women*, as well as to *female* approaches.

Such details hint at the sociohistorical and political contexts in which they were developed and sanctioned. LMP was enacted in 2006, during the first term of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government (Workers' Party – São Paulo), in a pre-2008 financial crisis context and, therefore, prior to the most recent reconfiguration of neoliberalism. Dardot and Laval (2016) explain that (neo)liberalism in Western societies has not always taken the same form, which makes the current model distinct in its specific features.

The more recent pieces of legislation, in turn, were approved in a context marked by the advance of a neoconservative and neoliberal alliance in the country, through which the naturalization of social inequalities, the reinforcement of the cisheteropatriarchy system, and the financialization of all forms of life have become increasingly pervasive. Law No. 14,164/21 was enacted by then-President Jair Bolsonaro (elected by the Social Liberal Party and later affiliated with the Liberal Party – Rio de Janeiro), a leading figure of the Brazilian far right, whereas Law No. 14,986/24, although sanctioned during the third term of President Lula's administration, was approved by a mostly neoconservative and neoliberal National Congress[1].

In academic terms, neoliberalism and (neo)conservatism have traditionally been examined separately within Political Science. However, with the rise of the far right, we are compelled to examine the alliance between these movements and their shared agendas of opposing the Welfare State and mobilizing society through moral panic directed at the rights of Black, Indigenous, LGBTI+, and cisgender women populations, among others (Silva, Ferrari, Caetano, 2022). Wendy Brown (2019) points out that neoliberalism is characterized by an empty sense of morality. Among other goals, it seeks to deterritorialize life and turn it into consumption, together with desire, whereas neoconservatism is oriented toward the regulation of morality, the preservation of specific ways of life, and, above all, the repression and control of desire.

Regarding the role of the state, Brown (2019) argues that neoliberalism equates governmental function with that of corporate management, assigning it the task of regulating life through the mechanisms of the economy. Within this logic, neoliberalism encourages the production of self-interested subjects—entrepreneurs of the self. When considering neoconservatism, the author notes that its structure seeks to form an active, charismatic, and popular governmental leadership, akin to that of a religious authority, to whom the people owe subordination and, above all, loyalty. On one side lies the model of the State as a business enterprise, and on the other, that of a theological State.

Despite appearing contradictory, a government that grants freedom to the economy can still be conservative in matters of customs and may even exploit them as a means of mobilizing popular support for its political agenda. It is important to note that such rationalities do not conceive the confrontation of inequality through universal social policies as a function of the State. On the contrary, neoliberalism is grounded in the belief that inequality is a natural, desirable condition governed by free competition, and its proximity to neoconservatism is revealed precisely in the unconditional defense of differences as natural—understood as complementary in their asymmetries, as in the case of men and women. Such rationalities are inherently opposed to projects of social justice, since the promotion of equality through public policy would be regarded as an offense to the natural and divine order of bodies.

Within this logic, so-called crises serve as ideal scenarios for the institution of moral panic, with neoconservatism proposing the intensification of moral regulation as its solution. In the face of unemployment, precarious living conditions, and the intense competition of all against all produced by neoliberalism, the defense of the heteropatriarchal family as the social nucleus of support and security is invoked, while the figure of the *upright man and head of household* is summoned and instrumentalized to ensure social cohesion. Regardless of whether grounded in economic or moral reasoning, neoliberal and neoconservative agendas converge in their defense of family-centered policies (Silva, Ferrari, Caetano, 2022). The family emerges as the last bastion of humankind amid the intense competition of capitalism. It is, thus, promoted as the entity responsible for ensuring the survival of its members. In other words, familism arises as a reaction to the neoliberal privatization of public goods and services (Silva, Ferrari, Caetano, 2022).

Within this context, although such legislative changes may seemingly represent a step toward greater visibility for women in school curricula, their conditions of production and approval—deeply shaped by the neoconservative hegemony of the Brazilian legislature—lead us to question what might initially be interpreted as progress. First, because they do not necessarily break away from the neoliberal logic that has been encroaching upon education, school management, and curricular content, aiming at the production of individuals who are entrepreneurs of the self. Second, because, in the way it was written, the law may even align with and reinforce conservative discourse.

The purpose of this article is to discuss the possible impacts of this legislation on basic education curricula, presenting an essay on the issues surrounding Law No. 14,986/2024, particularly in the context of countries in Latin American, such as Brazil. Drawing on Black and Latin American feminist scholars as a theoretical framework, we argue in favor of a feminist, intercultural, and decolonial approach to Brazilian school curricula.

Is it Enough to Talk about Women?

Women are not absent from basic education curricula, although the scientific thinking that informs school subjects is still shaped by a predominantly male perspective, which means textbooks commonly feature a higher number of male physicists, mathematicians, chemists, biologists, sociologists, philosophers, artists, and writers, while the gender used to name the described subject is most often masculine. This is related both to the historical process that favored men's participation in science, art, and philosophy while restricting most women to caregiving roles, and to the persistent misogyny of the society we live in, which still continuously disregards women's intellectual contributions. It is worth emphasizing that "the gender structure defined Men as the subjects of knowledge. Therefore, the skills and characteristics necessary to produce Science are regarded as masculine, of which women are 'naturally' deprived" (Magalhães et al., 2019, p. 111).

Nevertheless, it cannot be said that women are completely absent from the current teaching materials distributed to public schools in Brazil through the National Textbook Program (Programa Nacional do Livro Didático, PNLD). It is not uncommon, for example, to find colored panels separated from the main text in History textbooks, presented as "extra" activities that invite reflection on a woman "ahead of her time" who lived during the historical period covered in that chapter. Likewise, it is common to find female authors among a much larger list of male writers in Portuguese language textbooks—particularly when it comes to contemporary literature.

The National Common Curricular Base (Base Nacional Comum Curricular, BNCC) itself already provides some guidance for incorporating women into the basic education curriculum, though such references remain scarce. In its contents regarding Physical Education for Elementary School, it states that students should discuss "the reasons why sports practiced by men have different visibility and media treatment from those practiced by women" (Brasil, 2018, p. 222).

Most issues related to women are covered in the History curriculum, which includes the skill of "describing and analyzing the different social roles of women in the ancient world and medieval societies" for the 6th grade of Elementary School (Brasil, 2018, p. 421). In the 9th grade, among its learning objectives, the curriculum comprises the study of “anarchism and women’s protagonism” within the historical period of the first half of the twentieth century in Brazil (Brasil, 2018, p. 428). For the same grade level, the document proposes the following skill: “Discuss and analyze the causes of violence against marginalized populations (black people, indigenous peoples, women, homosexuals, peasants, the poor, etc.) with a view to raising awareness and building a culture of peace, empathy, and respect for others” (Brasil, 2018, p. 431).

It does not go unnoticed that the presence of women does not permeate the learning objectives across all stages of Basic Education or in all curricular components. Even within the subject of History, the BNCC does not address the issue of women in the competencies related to every historical period or sociocultural context covered in History classes.

Although the possibility that Law No. 14,986/24 may contribute to expanding the presence of women in the various curricular components of Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Secondary Education must not be dismissed, we argue that far more is required for any change that might significantly impact Brazilian education and truly empower girls and women.

An effective policy is needed to reform the school curricula so that “talking about women” is not addressed as an addendum to the main content—a kind of parenthesis—but rather as an integral, organic, and indispensable part of the approaches developed in schools. Furthermore, curricula must be reorganized not only in terms of official documents but also through the enacted curricula of everyday school life, following an intercultural logic. This is essential to ensure that the women who do and will have a voice in these curricula are not always white, elite, and/or European.

Decolonial Feminist Perspectives and Interculturality

Sueli Carneiro (2019) argues that national identity in Brazil and other Latin American countries is linked to the colonial period and the violence exercised by white men against indigenous and black women. Although Europe’s political domination over the Americas represents a specific historical period that we no longer live in, and although slavery, as a legally sanctioned institution, also belongs to the past, the legacy of that era endures. Thus, Carneiro contends that the colonial sexual violence perpetrated against black and indigenous women was the “cement of all gender and racial hierarchies present in our society” (Carneiro, 2019, p. 313).

Similarly, Lélia Gonzalez (2020) argues that the actions of the Iberian metropolises in their colonies established a classification of society based on sexual and racial parameters, leading Latin American societies to become stratified in such a way that white, male individuals established themselves as dominant. In this sense, racism in Latin America works through the subordination and exploitation of black and indigenous peoples, while simultaneously reinforcing Western cultural superiority.

Using the concept of *Amefricanas* to refer to Black Latin American women, Gonzalez (2020) argues that, for these women, the understanding of oppression arises first and foremost from racial oppression. The author notes that the presence of Amefrican and Amerindian women in ethno-racial movements is both frequent and significant, and that it is precisely their participation that brings awareness to gender-based violence, as they face discriminatory practices even from their fellow activists—that is, black and indigenous men. However, when seeking representation in women's movements, they find their agendas rendered invisible in the face of white protagonism within feminism.

The author therefore draws attention to the need for an Amefrican, Latin American feminism that engages with the struggles and histories of both black and indigenous women. Gonzalez (2020) argues that these women experience conditions distinct from those of white women, such as heightened sexual exploitation and the objectification of their bodies, as well as the dehumanizing appropriation of their labor power.

Likewise, feminist theorist bell hooks (2019) examines how mainstream feminism has tended to focus on the sexist oppressions experienced by white, middle- and upper-class women, as Western feminism has historically emphasized the confinement of these women to the domestic sphere and maternal functions, as well as their exclusion from professional achievement. However, labor has always been a reality for nonwhite and/or poor women.

According to hooks (2019), white feminists often fail to consider the role of "white supremacy as a racial politics, ignoring the psychological impact of class position as well as their political status within the capitalist, racist, and sexist reality" (hooks, 2019, p. 31). The notion that all women share a common form of oppression clashes with the differing social statuses allowed for various groups of women.

It is the rhetoric of white women, hooks (2019) argues, particularly those with access to higher education, that has been disseminated as the legitimate feminist discourse through the media and academia. In another of her works, the author underscores that privileged women are often regarded as the voices of feminism—many of whom are, in some way, aligned with or beneficiaries of the capitalist patriarchy. She, thus, argues that what is needed is a feminism removed from elitism, "a radical, grassroots feminist movement [...] that would base its work on the concrete conditions of working-class and poor women" (hooks, 2021, p. 87).

Postcolonial and decolonial feminist theorists[2] also critique academic production and activism grounded in an Anglo-Saxon, hegemonically white feminism that presents itself as universal. Yuderkys Espinosa Miñoso (2020) contributes to this discussion by arguing that there is a "feminist reason" with universalist pretensions, rooted in modernity, coloniality, and racism. According to the author, "to gain a place within the production of truth about 'women,' gender, and sexuality, feminism had to resort to certain forms of knowledge validation" (Miñoso, 2020, p. 114). Within this logic, "global" feminist agendas were established—agendas that often take on an imperialist character and fail to recognize distinct cultural traditions.

From a decolonial perspective, Curiel contends, new interpretations arise that enable us "to decentralize the classical normative subject of feminism while breaking with the theoretical, conceptual, and argumentative framework produced by it" (Miñoso, 2020, p. 118). In this regard, Ochy Curiel (2020) affirms that decolonial feminism "provides us with a new analytical perspective through which we can understand, in a more complex way, the relationships and interconnections among 'race,' sex, sexuality, class, and geopolitics" (Curiel, 2020, p. 124). For her, decolonial feminism problematizes feminism itself, recognizing the need for new concepts and discussions.

The postcolonial feminist Chandra Mohanty (2020) directs her critique at attempts to homogenize women's experiences through the discursive use of the concept of *woman* as if it were fused with the material realities of women. This dynamic leads to a generalization of oppression that fails to reveal the multiple layers and contexts in which it takes place. According to Mohanty (2020), it is within social relations that women are constituted; therefore, their constitution—and, consequently, their material realities and the social phenomena they experience—can only be understood through an intersectional reading of those relations.

Decolonial feminist María Lugones (2020) sets out to examine the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality through the conceptual framework of the coloniality of power[3]. For her, coloniality, as an organizing axis of Eurocentric global capitalism, was not only responsible for creating racial categories but also for structuring social relations through the naturalization of sexual differences and their codification into the genders "man" and "woman." In the modern colonial context, she argues, gender was imposed in the colonies with characteristic traits such as sexual dimorphism, compulsory heterosexuality, and patriarchal relations—in other words, the subordination of those designated as women in all areas of life. The creation of racial and binary gender categories is therefore intertwined, forming part of a single colonial project of domination which, together with the production of knowledge in modernity, has served—and continues to serve—the logic of global capitalism.

In light of this, Lugones further argues that intersectionality allows for the perception of that which is rendered invisible when race and gender are conceived as separate categories. She asserts that the homogenization of the *woman* category ultimately elevates one dominant reference within the group as the norm. Thus, when speaking of *woman*, what one conceives as normative are "bourgeois white heterosexual females," just as, when speaking of *black*, the normative reference becomes “black heterosexual males.” This categorical separation, therefore, obscures and distorts “beings and social phenomena that exist at the intersection,” such as the dehumanization and violence imposed upon black and indigenous women by the coloniality of gender (Lugones, 2020, p. 66). Intersectionality, then, implies recognizing that gender, race, class, and sexuality must be read as interwoven, co-constitutive categories that shape diverse experiences of oppression.

Lugones (2020) further argues that the co-construction between the advancement of the colonial project and the modern colonial gender system contains both a visible and a hidden side. The visible side establishes hegemonic models of gender and of gender relations —that is, the social norms organizing the lives of white and bourgeois men and women, giving meaning to the categories *man* and *woman*. Within this framework, purity and sexual passivity emerge as defining traits of white women, regarded as the reproducers of class and race, while they remain excluded from political life, knowledge production, and control over the means of production. Patriarchal and racialized control over production and politics, in turn, is both permeated by and dependent upon heterosexuality (Lugones, 2020).

Lugones (2020, p. 85) further states that the hidden side of the gender system “was and is completely violent”: it excluded nonwhite and intersex people from participation in social life, dehumanizing them and reducing them to animality, to forced sex with white colonizers, and to labor exploitation. Both sides of this system reverberate in the material experiences of women’s and men’s lives until today, distributing varying degrees of privilege and exclusion according to the social markers that intersect them.

Particularly in the field of political action, community and autonomous feminists, originating from Indigenous peoples in Latin America, also challenge the homogenization of the *woman* category. They critique both the invisibilization of patriarchal, ancestral, and Western forms of oppression to which Indigenous women have been and continue to be subjected, and the Eurocentrism of Western feminists in interpreting women’s lived experiences and desires (Cabnal, 2010). Their approach is less about theorizing than about social practice—a feminist intentionality that seeks to challenge and transform patriarchal, colonial, capitalist, and racist relations of oppression through social and political mobilization, which is directed toward the joint defense of women’s territory-land and territory-body, grounded in the understanding that these struggles cannot occur separately (Cabnal, 2021). These movements thus entail questioning universalizing narratives and confronting the specific forms of subjugation experienced by indigenous women—oppressions directly tied to those inflicted upon nature and their communities.

Within this panorama, interculturality emerges as a perspective deeply intertwined with Black, decolonial, and community feminisms, and more broadly with decolonial thought. This is because it involves the denaturalization of hierarchies socially constructed through the coloniality of power; the promotion of plurality; coexistence among differences; the affirmation of the rights to equality and to difference; and the confrontation of intersectional forms of discrimination. Interculturality thus concerns the political, social, and legal recognition of ethnic, racial, cultural, gender, class, and sexual diversity, among others. Focusing on South America, this category brings to light the historical diversity that constitutes the nations of this region, one that is

> [...] enraizada en políticas de exterminio, esclavización, deshumanización, inferiorización y también en la supuesta superación de lo indígena y negro – ésta última parte de la mestización (o 'creolización') y, en países como Brasil, República Dominicana y el Caribe colombiana y venezolana, la mal llamada 'democracia racial' (Walsh, 2012, p. 62).

Thus, interculturality is a perspective that could help build other forms of relationships that seek to fracture the capitalist, colonial, and patriarchal structures upon which Latin American societies continue to rest.

However, as Catherine Walsh (2012, p. 62) emphasizes, it is essential to distinguish between "*una interculturalidad que es funcional al sistema dominante*" and an interculturality "*concebida como proyecto político, social, epistémico y ético de transformación y decolonialidad.*" Drawing on Fidel Tubino, Walsh (2012) explains that *functional* interculturality is instrumentalized by the State in a way that empties it of meaning, due to the absence of any critique of the power relations that construct inequalities through difference. In other words, even when diversity and cultural difference are formally recognized, the objective remains the integration of such differences into an already established social structure without confronting the root causes of their asymmetries and inequalities. As such, functional interculturality aligns with the neoliberal logic that currently governs both States and subjects, since its aim is not the creation of a socially just society but rather the management of conflict "*y la conservación de la estabilidad social con el fin de impulsar los imperativos económicos del modelo (neoliberalizado) de acumulación capitalista*" (Walsh, 2012, p. 64). Consequently, ethnic, racial, gender, and sexuality agendas, among others, are incorporated into public policies—including educational ones—as mechanisms to ensure social cohesion, which in practice serves to temper dissent and homogenize aspirations in accordance with market interests.

> La interculturalidad aquí es funcional no solo al sistema, sino también al bienestar individual, al sentido de pertinencia de los individuos a un proyecto común, y a la modernización, globalización y competitividad de "nuestra cultura occidental", ya asumida como cultura propia latinoamericana (Walsh, 2012, p. 65).

On the other hand, *critical* interculturality centers on "*el problema estructural-colonial-racial y su ligazón al capitalismo del* *mercado*" (Walsh, 2012, p. 65). According to Vera Candau (2020a), critical interculturality can be understood as an approach that

> questions the differences and inequalities constructed throughout history among different sociocultural, ethno-racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious groups, among others; it is grounded in the assertion that interculturality aims to build societies that recognize differences as constitutive of democracy and that are capable of constructing new, genuinely egalitarian relationships among diverse sociocultural groups—something that presupposes empowering those who have been historically marginalized (Candau, 2020a, p. 680).

Critical interculturality does not operate within or in favor of the currently prevailing social model; rather, it challenges it, adopting the very goal of transforming it as its project (Walsh, 2012). As Walsh (2012) explains, this project and process aim to intervene *in*—and *act upon*—the matrix of coloniality in order to transform the structures and mechanisms of power that sustain inequality and devalue forms of life that diverge from neoliberal capitalism.

This is the perspective of interculturality that aligns with decolonial thought. It enables the questioning of coloniality, Eurocentrism—particularly epistemic Eurocentrism—and the binarism that hierarchizes and privileges one pole of the relation—European, rational, white, male, Judeo-Christian— (Candau, 2020a) while constituting the other as its subordinate remainder. From this standpoint, Candau (2020a, p. 281) contends that it is possible to envision a critical intercultural education, whose fundamental aim is "to unveil the forms of coloniality present in the everyday life of our societies and schools."

But how can this be put into practice? Clearly, interculturality emerges as an epistemological–ethical–political stance that, within education, invites us to embrace curiosity and the invention of new ways of *learning-teaching*. According to Candau (2020b), the development of educational processes from this perspective must begin with the recognition of differences—and such differences must be regarded as positive rather than as problems to be solved—thus breaking with homogenizing and invisibilizing processes.

As a consequence, education must draw upon a diversity of knowledges and epistemologies from multiple sources, such as the life stories of students and teachers, as well as by opening schools to sociopolitical groups within local communities through diverse activities and materials for knowledge sharing (Candau, 2020b). The author underscores the need to "'de-fossilize' the classroom, multiplying spaces and times for teaching and learning" (Candau, 2020b, p. 15). Valuing and de-hierarchizing pluralities makes room for a perspective capable of denaturalizing oppression.

This approach resonates with the ethical–political orientation of the feminisms discussed earlier—particularly within the field of community-based political action. For Cabnal (2021), the key to broadening the feminist horizon of interpretation and fostering dialogue among feminists lies precisely in plurality. Different life experiences and experiences of oppression, distinct ways of producing and circulating knowledge, the occupation of diverse spaces, and the engagement in varied fronts of struggle all highlight and affirm difference, creating a *continuum* of resistance. In doing so, they assist us in the task of creating and valuing diverse modes of reflection and action aimed at questioning, exposing, and unsettling the interwoven structures of oppression. In this direction, these approaches contribute to creatively shaping education within a critical intercultural framework, as they call for the approximation and integration between situated and embodied experiences and what we *learn-teach* in educational spaces.

For all these reasons, as Candau (2012) points out, interculturality in education enables us to "destabilize the supposed 'universality' of the knowledge, values, and practices that shape educational actions and to promote dialogue among diverse knowledges and ways of knowing" (Candau, 2012, p. 246). We therefore understand that intercultural education involves the denaturalization of gender relations and of the very categories of *man* and *woman*, which must be understood within their historical and cultural contexts, moving beyond the modern and Western-centered perspective.

Law No. 14,986/2024: a feminist proposal?

In light of the articulations developed thus far—drawing from both decolonial feminist and critical intercultural perspectives—Law No. 14,986/2024 can be problematized. Although its approval was publicly celebrated as a victory for women's rights, this perception must be approached with caution.

From a decolonial feminist standpoint, it becomes evident that the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender permeate not only social relations but also the State and its institutions. Indeed, in its structural form as we know it, the State itself was founded upon modern colonial premises. Hence, the State itself remains, to this day, a perpetrator of institutional racist and misogynistic violence, as well as of policies that facilitate the flows and accumulation of capital. In this sense, drawing on Oyèrónké Oyě wùmí (2021), Lugones (2020) points to the direct connection between the emergence of woman as an anatomically defined category subordinated to man and the imposition of a patriarchal colonial State. The capitalist system—particularly in its current configuration of neoliberalism in alliance with conservative forces—is sustained by the naturalization of gendered, racial, class-based, ethnic, and sexual inequalities. Such structures of oppression are not incidental; rather, they are constitutive of capitalism itself, providing the ideological scaffolding that legitimizes its contradictions.

For this reason, black and decolonial feminists (Akotirene, 2023; Vergès, 2021; Segato, 2012) challenge the impulse to depend on the State for protection and policy interventions against gendered and racialized violence and inequality. This skepticism arises from the understanding that the State is also a propagator of the *status quo*, perpetuating women's subordination and racial hierarchization.

In this sense, through her work with Indigenous women on the Maria da Penha Law, Rita Segato (2012) highlights how domestic violence against them is closely connected to the unraveling of the community fabric by the colonial and patriarchal State, which imposed new dynamics on the social relations of the village world. Thus, even when the State provides legal protection through law, it remains complicit in reproducing the very logics that create the conditions for such violence. That is why the anthropologist argues that the State "gives with one hand that which it has already taken from those women by other means" (Segato, 2012).

Françoise Vergès (2021) invites reflection on the contradiction between, on the one hand, enacting laws purportedly aimed at protecting or promoting women's rights and, on the other, dismantling laws designed to safeguard working-class and racialized populations—as if these forms of oppression were not structurally intertwined with experiences of violence and discrimination. Following Vergès (2021), the silence surrounding race, class, and sexuality in legislation ostensibly devoted to gender equality (or to "equality between men and women," as in the laws cited in the introduction) reveals which women the patriarchal State deems worthy of protection. Similarly, Lugones (2020) demonstrates that invoking the *woman*—or *women*— category without an intersectional perspective inevitably universalizes women's realities, taking white, cisgender women as the implicit standard.

Vergès (2021) also comments on how heads of State sometimes adopt a "soft feminist and humanist patriarchy" and, at other times, a vulgar, racist, and homo-transphobic patriarchy that discredits institutions. Both forms are clearly observable within the Brazilian political landscape and in the context of the laws under discussion. The same president who enacts a law "in defense of women" proceeds to publicly declare that his own daughter was "the result of a moment of weakness." The same Congress that passes a law theoretically aimed at a supposed equality between men and women is the one that debates measures such as Escola sem Partido ("School Without Party"), in opposition to the so-called "gender ideology," homeschooling, and the militarization or privatization of schools and curricula—deepening processes of individualization and self-entrepreneurship, as well as the annihilation of coexistence amid differences and the possibility of cultivating critical thought.

For Vergès, both the "soft patriarchy" and the vulgar one sustain the same political project, which is clearly neoliberal, extractivist, and grounded in the Western narrative of infinite progress, achieved through the exploitation of the peoples and resources of the Global South. In every case, contempt for the working classes prevails (Vergès, 2021). In this regard, it is always worth recalling that within the Eurocentric, colonial, and patriarchal logic, the bodies of cis and trans women, especially those who are nonwhite, poor, and migrant, are viewed less as potential holders of resources than as resources themselves to be appropriated and exploited (Lugones, 2020).

From this, we may ask: what can be said of laws such as those enacted in 2021 and 2024—products of a National Congress that is predominantly neoliberal and conservative? They may purport to protect women and, at first glance, appear to express genuine concern for women's conditions; yet, within a broader context of support for neoliberal policies and the resurgence of neoconservative agendas, they ultimately function as instruments of pacification. As Jules Falquet (2021, p. 126) observes, "capitalism has a whole dimension of improving women's conditions, but through—or in order to cover up—colonial-racist relations, or else to ensure the tightening of capitalist exploitation."

Legislation that fails to consider the interconnections among multiple and mutually reinforcing oppressions ultimately adopts a reformist bias, one that can never effectively confront gender inequalities precisely because it disregards the other systems of domination upon which those inequalities depend. The form of feminism implicitly embedded in such legislation carries what Vergès (2021) identifies as a "civilizing" and pacifying feminism. In other words, it entails actions that, through the universalization of the *woman* category, promote a "calming of spirits" around the so-called women's cause. It thus remains complicit with the racist and patriarchal logic of capitalism. We thus identify here an instrumentalization of feminist language that serves to justify and perpetuate a colonial logic that is both cis-heteronormative and white.

The original bill's aim—to include, empower, and combat discrimination against women—operates within the framework of functional interculturality. That is, it does not challenge the matrices that compose and sustain unequal power relations between men and women; instead, it merely seeks to integrate *women*—albeit: white women—into the neoliberal dynamic. Economic advancement or access to traditionally masculine spaces are portrayed as an implicit goal, while crucial questions, such as the sexual and racial division of labor, or the valuation and redistribution of care work as essential democratic issues.

It is also noteworthy that the very terms *feminism* and *feminist* are absent from the text of the law under discussion, as well as from other legislative texts mentioned here and from the BNCC. Speaking about women in education without invoking the word *feminism* may constitute a neoliberal and/or conservative strategy aimed at erasing the historical struggles of the movements for women's rights. Whereas feminisms are stigmatized—and women who identify as feminists are often depicted as unlovable, rebellious, inexplicably combative, unattractive, or contrary to Christian and family values—women, in general, can still be protected and even celebrated, provided they conform to hegemonic ideals of femininity.

It is no coincidence, then, that Law No. 14,986/24 refers to female perspectives rather than feminist perspectives. As noted by Marcia Tiburi (2021), "'the feminine' is the term used to safeguard the negativity that patriarchy seeks to assign to women. Praised by poets and philosophers, the feminine is nothing more than the demarcation of an aesthetic–moral regime for women defined by negativity" (Tiburi, 2021, p. 53).

We believe it is a valid concern—considering the rise of conservative movements in Brazil and Latin America more broadly—that the "female perspectives" mentioned in Law No. 14,986/24 may align less with Latin American and decolonial feminisms and, conversely, may become part of conservative strategies within the curricular field, naturalizing women's social roles, fixing the woman category within a universal Western model, and upholding as legitimate and acceptable only one normative form of femininity.

When the law refers to an approach that highlights "women's achievements in the scientific, social, artistic, cultural, economic, and political spheres" (Brasil, 2024), nothing suggests that its references to scientific thought or artistic production should transcend the colonial and Eurocentric model of modernity. Nor does the text specify what constitutes women's "achievements" and "contributions" to politics and economics—leaving open the possibility that such "contributions," when addressed in Brazilian public and private schools, may align with political conservatism, neoliberalism, and/or religious fundamentalism. Perhaps this is precisely why such a succinct piece of legislation was approved by the current National Congress.

Law No. 14,986/24 also establishes a "Week for Honoring Women Who Made History," to be held annually in all schools across the country in March—the same month in which the International Women's Day is celebrated. It is a concerning possibility that this educational week may be co-opted and redefined in the same manner as March 8 itself: a date that, for many, has become an occasion to pay tribute to an idealized image of womanhood, to praise hegemonic femininity, and to romanticize—under an affective veneer—the overwork that burdens women, rather than to critically challenge it. Leaving aside the fact that addressing such topics during a single week of the year does not necessarily imply ongoing engagement with gender issues, it also raises the question: which women are to be celebrated as active agents in history? White, elite, Western women? Or will the curricula make room for working-class, black, Amerindian, and African women—many of whose names and faces remain unknown, yet whose roles in historical processes are undeniably foundational?

We understand that the official curricular guidelines do not point toward a feminist, decolonial, critical, or intercultural curriculum. Instead, we observe a rigidity and universality structuring the very woman category, as the texts of Law No. 14,986/24, Law No. 14,164/21, and the BNCC fail to reflect its polysemic nature. This rigidity is bound by the interests of conservative sectors, which insist on addressing *men* and *women* in ways disconnected from gender and feminist studies. It is therefore no coincidence that the word gender itself is absent from all recent official documents. The notion that education should promote *gender equity* and play an active role in social transformation does appear in the LMP; however, it is worth recalling that this legislation dates back to 2006, when the Brazilian political landscape was markedly different.

Since then, anti-gender rhetoric—especially within schools—has become central to the platforms of numerous parties and politicians aligned with the conservative right, supported by various sectors of society. According to Junqueira (2018), those who claim that a dangerous "gender ideology" is being propagated are often religious groups, including Catholics and neo-Pentecostal Evangelicals. However, Junqueira argues that such discourse has become so widespread that it has effectively secularized and laicized. Believers of this view advocate that sectors of society composed of feminists, leftists, and LGBTI+ groups:

> […] would promote the dissemination and ideological imposition of a new, dangerous, and imprecise term: *gender*/gênero. Its purpose, they argue, would be to eliminate the "natural sex difference" between men and women, heterosexuals and gay people, spreading the mistaken belief that such differences are merely the result of oppressive social constructions and could therefore be reduced to an individual choice (Junqueira, 2018, p. 453).

This notion would not be as concerning were it not for the widespread social support it enjoys—including among teachers. In their analysis of comments posted on the social media platform Instagram, in response to content about the so-called "gender ideology" in schools, Segat, Vieira, and Santos (2024) found that some teachers have endorsed the rhetoric that gender ideology poses an educational problem. They report expressing this stance publicly in cyberspace, claiming to warn parents about the actions of colleagues or school administrators whenever they observe educational initiatives that address gender discussions. Some also assert that "it is not their role 'to engage in activism' or to propose topics related to gender and sexualities" (Segat; Vieira; Santos, 2024, p. 18).

In this current climate marked by opposition to the denaturalization of gender, the advance of conservative agendas, and a politically divided country, we remain wary, and perhaps somewhat pessimistic, about the potential outcomes of Law No. 14,986/24 in advancing a feminist, decolonial, and intercultural curriculum. Also, because the law does not appear to have been conceived with such a purpose. Nevertheless, within the everyday realities of education won the school floor—as often said—in each specific context, it is possible that different interpretations and uses of the law might open more hopeful paths. It is in this sense that we would like to bring this article to a close.

New Horizons? In Defense of a Feminist, Decolonial, and Intercultural Curriculum

Reflecting on everyday practices, Nolasco-Silva and Soares (2015) argue that "everyday life is, therefore, a site of knowledge production (including the production of values) and also of the invention of existence" (Nolasco-Silva; Soares, 2015, p. 117). From this perspective, we can understand that the daily experiences lived within each school institution—by the subjects who inhabit those spaces—generate distinct knowledges, values, and ways of being.

Inês Barbosa de Oliveira (2013) further emphasizes that, even though official curricular trends claim universality, school daily life is not homogeneous. There are values, knowledges, and practices that persist within the unique *space–time* of each school. Everyday life is inherently inventive—a point made by Certeau (2013) and reaffirmed by other scholars engaged in studies of everyday practices.

As Certeau (2013) reminds us, the intended meaning of a cultural product in its primary production does not necessarily coincide with the meanings it acquires for those who live and practice the everyday. Thus, the consumption of cultural artifacts can serve both to reinforce the *status quo* and to subvert it, through networks of antidisciplinary practices that take shape within daily routines—particularly within schools.

In this sense, Law No. 14,986/24 and the other legislative and official documents discussed in this article may indeed have been drafted and approved with specific intentions—or even as the outcome of tensions among multiple political interests. Here we add a note to emphasize that, during its proceedings in the Chamber of Deputies, after the bill was introduced by Deputy Tábata Amaral, then affiliated with the PDT, the text was first sent to the Committee on the Defense of Women's Rights, in which Tereza Nelma (PSDB–AL) served as rapporteur. It was then forwarded to the Committee on Education, under the rapporteurship of Professor Marcivania (PCdoB–AP), and subsequently to the Committee on Constitution, Justice, and Citizenship, under Tadeu Alencar (PSB–PE), before the final wording was placed in the hands of Deputy Sâmia Bomfim (PSOL–SP). In the Federal Senate, the rapporteurship passed to Senator Soraya Thronicke (PODEMOS–MS). Among the senators, only Cleitinho, Hamilton Mourão, Esperidião Amin, Flávio Azevedo, and Sergio Moro voted against the bill, despite the Senate's substantial representation from right-wing and center-right parties aligned with conservative discourses on moral and social issues.

Thus, from the bill's introduction to its sanction by President Lula, multiple political groups—each with distinct positions and interests—were involved in shaping and approving the law's final text. Nevertheless, following Certeau (2013), our understanding is that the intentions that guide and enable a piece of legislation or public policy do not necessarily correspond to the uses that will be made of it in everyday life.

The standardization of official curricula—an expression of coloniality that seeks to determine what occurs in schools by prescribing how and what should be taught and learned—does not define the curricula as they are lived and practiced. As Nolasco-Silva and Soares (2015, p. 117) write, everyday life "constitutes a stage that shelters singular and collective subjects, subjects in transit—those who are and who become—practitioners who weave and articulate networks of knowledge and meanings, who imagine subjectivities and orient their actions through them."

In this light, we understand that in certain school contexts—or perhaps even within specific classrooms, since pedagogical practice depends on the encounter between the teaching subject and the learning subjects—it may be possible to resist gender universals and their modern/colonial designations. Within everyday practices, educators and students can produce, enact, and re-create decolonial and feminist curricula, weaving them through interculturality and fostering small ruptures with paradigms that claim hegemony. Through such practices, education may advance toward embracing and valuing other knowledges and other cultures.

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Notes

1 As an example, the Liberal Party (PL)—currently Jair Bolsonaro's party—holds the largest number of seats in the Legislature, with 99 representatives and 13 senators. This number alone is sufficient, for instance, to block initiatives for Constitutional Amendments, which require three-fifths of the votes from both representatives and senators for approval after two rounds of voting.

2 Curiel (2020) highlights the differences between postcolonial and decolonial feminisms stemming from the diverse forms of colonization experienced by societies and from the geopolitical and theoretical perspectives adopted, as well as the *space-times* inhabited by these groups. The former relates to emancipatory processes in India, Africa, and Asia, draws inspiration from postcolonial theories, and is primarily found in academic contexts. The latter takes Latin America as its reference point, emerging from the decolonial turn and grounded mainly in collective political practices.

3 The term was coined by Aníbal Quijano to describe the power relations established in Latin America following European invasions. It refers to the imposition of a Eurocentric, capitalist, and modern logic upon colonized peoples. The coloniality of power structures social organization hierarchically through the creation of new geocultural and racial identities ("America" and "Europe"; "European," "Indian," "African"), which legitimized the dehumanization and the social, material, and intersubjective domination of peoples classified, within that logic, as "inferior" (Lugones, 2020).

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