PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM EDUCAÇÃO
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A imagem que os(as) estudantes quilombolas constroem de si a partir do olhar dos *outros*[1]

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Resumo

O artigo teve como objetivo problematizar a imagem que os(as) estudantes quilombolas da comunidade do Chumbo constroem de si e de seu território, a partir do olhar dos *outros*, e como a escola tem se posicionado diante do negativismo que perpassa essa autoimagem heteroatribuída. A pesquisa se inseriu na abordagem qualitativa etnográfica e teve, como instrumentos de coleta, a observação e as entrevistas com gestores(as) e professores(as) da Escola Nossa Senhora Aparecida. Os resultados apontaram que o olhar dos *outros* são definidores, por excelência, da imagem negativa que os(as) estudantes constroem de si e de seu território. Percebeu-se o esforço da escola em reverter esse processo de negativismo, mas ainda é um trabalho não sistemático e representa um desafio à educação escolar quilombola.

Palavras-chave: Comunidade quilombola do Chumbo. Corpo. Educação. Educação escolar quilombola. Identidade.

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The image that quilombola students construct of themselves from the look of *others*

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Abstract

The article aimed to problematize the image that quilombola students from the community of Chumbo construct of themselves and their territory, based on the look of *others*, and how the school has positioned itself before the negativity that permeates this hetero-attributed self-image. The research is inserted in the qualitative ethnographic approach and had observation and interviews with managers and teachers at Nossa Senhora Aparecida School as collection tools. The results pointed out that the look of *others* is the main definer of the negative image that students build of themselves and of their territory. The effort of the school to revert this process of negativism was perceived, but it is still a non-systematic work and represents a challenge to quilombola school education.

Keywords: Quilombola community of Chumbo. Body. Education. Quilombola school education. Identity.

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Imagen que los estudiantes quilombolas construyen de sí mismos a partir de la mirada de los otros

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Resumen

El artículo tuvo como objetivo problematizar la imagen que los estudiantes quilombolas de la comunidad Chumbo construyen de sí mismos y de su territorio, desde la perspectiva de los otros, y cómo la escuela se ha posicionado frente al negativismo que permea esa autoimagen hetera atribuida. La investigación se insertó en el enfoque cualitativo etnográfico y tuvo como instrumentos de recolección la observación y entrevistas con directivos y docentes de la Escuela Nossa Señora Aparecida. Los resultados mostraron que la mirada ajena es, por excelencia, la que define la imagen negativa que los estudiantes construyen de sí mismos y de su territorio. Se notó el esfuerzo de la escuela por revertir este proceso de negativismo, pero aún es un trabajo asistemático y representa un desafío para la educación escolar quilombola.

Palabras clave: Comunidad quilombola de Chumbo. Cuerpo. Educación. Educación escolar quilombola. Identidad.

Introduction

This article aims to problematize the body image that quilombola students from the rural black community of Chumbo construct of themselves and their territory, from the gaze of others, external to the territory, and how the school has positioned itself in relation to the negativity that permeates this heteroidentification[4] , affecting the self-image of the students. This study becomes relevant and necessary for understanding that, in and through the body, subjective and social symbolisms are inscribed, phenotypically marked on black people and objectively felt by them.

Reflecting on this topic requires some theoretical elaboration on the body, as it is through it that we communicate, first and foremost, with others. The body is our most beautiful trace of life's memory (SANT'ANNA, 2001) and represents the cultural and social forms produced throughout history. Soares (2001) adds that it is our means of contact with the world, as it is through the body that we move and socially learn to have a sense of belonging.

In this perspective, bodies are educated according to the realities that surround them, with those they live with and in the relationships that are established. From this approach, we can understand that the way we conceive the body is marked by the knowledge socially constructed about it. As a result, it is the subjectivities inscribed on and through the body that underline social and cultural diversity and, more emphatically, the differences.

Thus, we can consider that, in the body, differences are marked and perceptibly inscribed phenotypically, after all, the skin color; the texture of the hair; the shape of the face, nose, and eyes; and certain measurements, such as being short, tall, thin, or overweight, are highlighted and inscribe the singularities of the person. Beyond the biological specificities, the body, when it does not conform to the dominant social aesthetic ideal, becomes a conflicted terrain.

According to Gomes (2008), phenotypic distinctions, such as skin color and hair texture, established through a historical, cultural, and political Brazilian process, have maintained and continue to maintain a power relationship between bodies in our society, especially the bodies of whites over the bodies of blacks. The differences inscribed in the black body were historically produced to spread racist ideologies related to images and negative attributes for being "differentiating signs that further attest to the black and African reference"(GOMES, 2008, p. 236).

[4] The prefix hetero in the word heteroidentificação comes from Greek, meaning "other." In this case, heteroidentificação is understood as an ethnic-racial identification carried out by someone else, and it is strongly marked by the "phenotypic" characteristics of the other, such as skin color, hair texture, and lip shape, among others. It contrasts with auto, meaning "self." The term is commonly discussed by the Black Movement, along with researchers of ethnic-racial relations, and stands out for its use in affirmative action policies, where candidates undergo a stage of heteroidentification carried out by a Heteroidentification Committee (PETRUCCELLI, 2001).

In light of this issue, this article seeks to problematize the negative vision imposed on the Black body, specifically in the body image that Black students from the Quilombola community of Chumbo have constructed of themselves through the gaze of others who are non-Black and non-Quilombola, and the consequences that arise from this, considering, according to Schilder (1999), that the body image developed by an individual is the result of a social phenomenon based on interpersonal relationships and the learning of cultural values that are socially transmitted, created, and recreated.

In this sense, it is pertinent to ask: what body image does the Black and Quilombola student construct of themselves and their territory through the gaze of others? What are the consequences of this for their self-concept, self-esteem, and self-confidence? How has the school positioned itself in relation to the denial/affirmation that permeates this self-image?

In this context, the article emphasizes the need to focus on Quilombola school education, the environment in which the students in this study are immersed. It is a specific form of education, created through the historical struggles and claims of Black and Quilombola social movements, who advocate for an anti-racist education that reaffirms Black and Quilombola identities and cultures, and demand the right and recognition to be different and to participate in the sharing of all the symbolic, cultural, bodily, and material goods that other non-Black individuals or groups have access to.

To this end, the arguments are presented in five parts: the first corresponds to this introduction, which outlines the objectives of the text and the questions that shape it. Next, we present the locus of the research and methodological clarifications. The third part elaborates on the theoretical assumptions that support our understanding of the object under study. In the fourth part, we describe the results of the interviews conducted with teachers and administrators and provide analyses. The fifth and final part is dedicated to reflections on what has been written in the text as a whole.

The field of research and methodological clarifications

Before describing the research site, it is important to revisit the conceptual understanding that has been intellectually developed regarding the quilombo. According to Munanga (1995), the term quilombo originates from Bantu culture a contiguous geographical area and a specific cultural complex located within Black Africa, between the countries of Zaire and Angola.

According to the author, the presence of the quilombo in Brazil and its meanings are related to the members of this group who were brought to and enslaved in the country. For him:

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> The word quilombo carries the connotation of an association of men, open to all regardless of lineage affiliation, in which members underwent dramatic initiation rituals that removed them from the protective scope of their lineages and integrated them as co-warriors in a regiment of superhuman beings invulnerable to the weapons of their enemies. The fully developed quilombo is a transcultural institution that received contributions from various cultures [...]. (MUNANGA, 1995, p. 60).

The concept of *quilombo* as defended by the author conveys the idea of a territory occupied by a collective of social actors, organized in a racially and culturally heterogeneous manner, and composed of brave and fearless warriors from diverse peoples who came together to defend their land. Munanga (1995, p. 63) further asserts that the Brazilian *quilombo* resembles, in many ways, the African *quilombo*: "[…] they transformed these territories into kinds of initiation camps for resistance, camps open to all of society's oppressed (Black, Indigenous, white, and mixed-race people)."

In Brazil, the concept of *quilombo* has undergone reconceptualization since the 1988 Federal Constitution, which, through Article 68 of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions Act (ADCT), recognized the land ownership rights of *quilombo* descendants for the lands they occupy (BRAZIL, CF, 1988). Prior to this historic act, the prevailing definition was the one attributed by colonizers and formalized by the Overseas Council in 1740, which stated: "*quilombo* is [...] any dwelling of runaway Blacks numbering more than five, in an unpopulated area, even if they have no mortar and pestle there."

In contemporary times, scholars such as O'Dwyer (2002), Almeida (2002), Reis and Gomes (1996), among others, have contributed to the redefinition of the term *quilombo* to better reflect the realities of these communities today. O'Dwyer (2002) describes them as attributive ethnic groups, defined based on symbols and emblems considered socially significant by the group itself—markers selected through processes of inclusion and exclusion that define who is considered an insider or outsider.

Almeida (2002), in turn, argues that understanding *quilombos* today requires breaking with outdated notions and rigid concepts. Not all current *quilombos* originated from escapes from slavery; many have diverse origins, such as occupying unclaimed lands, lands donated to saints, purchases, inheritances, or exchanges. Nevertheless, they are resistance groups that fight to maintain their ways of life and their territories.

The *quilombola* community of Chumbo, the locus of this research, is one such community that did not originate from escaped enslaved people. It is located along the Adauto Leite Highway, at kilometer 16, in the city of Poconé, in the state of Mato Grosso. It was officially certified by the Fundação Cultural Palmares in 2005 and is currently home to 380 families.

According to residents, the territory was acquired through a purchase made by the community's founder, Manoel Metelo, a descendant of enslaved people who had lived in the region. The Chumbo community is over 150 years old and has, as part of its infrastructure, the Nossa Senhora Aparecida Municipal School, the Vovó Teófila Daycare Center, a post office branch, a health clinic, and a community center. The community also includes retail businesses such as grocery stores and bakeries. The main source of income for residents comes from jobs in local businesses, farms, and public institutions. Other families benefit from federal social programs, such as *Bolsa Família*, currently renamed *Auxílio Brasil*.

The *Nossa Senhora Aparecida Municipal School*, which hosted this research, was established on May 30, 1974. For much of its operation, it followed a multigrade system (1st to 4th grade), but in recent years, it began offering elementary education from 1st to 9th grade in a graded system (PPP/EMNSA, 2015). At the time of the study, the school had a teachers' lounge, a computer room (deactivated due to lack of computers and internet access), restrooms, a coordination office, a video room, a cafeteria, and a covered sports court.

The teaching staff included 20 teachers with degrees: 8 tenured (civil service) teachers, 11 temporary (contracted) teachers, and 1 teacher on a job exchange. Of these, 13 were classroom teachers, 2 worked in pedagogical support, 1 was in charge of coordination, and 1 served as the school principal.

The school was primarily staffed by teachers from outside the *quilombola* territory. This is a significant point, as the *quilombola* school, as a specific modality of education, should preferably be staffed by *quilombola* teachers, according to the National Curriculum Guidelines for Quilombola School Education (2012) and the Curriculum Guidelines for Quilombola School Education in the State of Mato Grosso (2010).

These curricular documents are based on the understanding that local teachers are more likely to develop a contextualized educational approach that values the identities and cultures of the local students, given that the teacher would be rooted in the community and would share in its knowledge and practices.

The school principal informed us during an interview that 90% of the students attending the school were *quilombolas*. *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* School was the main educational destination for students from neighboring communities, and it also welcomed external students, whether from other *quilombos* (Campina de Pedra, Água Vermelha, Campo Limpo, Laranjal, and Jejum) or from settlements and the children of rural workers from nearby farms.

Methodologically, the research follows a qualitative approach and was grounded in the ethnographic method proposed by Geertz (2008). For this author, what defines ethnography is the effort to produce a "thick description." It is about trying to understand experiences and the meanings attributed to them from the perspective of those who live them. The requirement of the ethnographic text "does not lie so much in the author's ability to capture primitive facts in distant places and bring them home like a mask or a carving, but in the degree to which they are able to clarify what happens in such places" (GEERTZ, 2008, p. 26). "In doing so, they transform the past event, which exists in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscription and can be consulted again" (GEERTZ, 2008, p. 29).

The purpose of the observation was to grasp the community and the school in their contours, compositions, and dynamics. The semi-structured interviews aimed to uncover how the teachers and administrators of *Nossa Senhora Aparecida* School perceive the students in their corporeality and in relation to their territory. Field data were collected throughout 2016, and the recordings, as well as the observations, were made with the participants' consent, formalized through the signing of the Informed Consent Form[5].

The analyses outlined here are based on the interpretative framework proposed by Geertz (2008), whose ethnographic analysis, according to the author, consists in choosing among structures of signification and determining their social grounding and relevance. This was combined with the content analysis technique proposed by Bardin (1979).

The former guides the researcher in understanding the meanings that groups construct and attribute to their actions. The latter offers guidance on how to organize data into categories, aiming to understand its content through rhetorical devices, silences, between-the-lines messages, as well as its explicit meanings.

Body, Image, Ethno-Racial Identity, and Education

Following the line of thought proposed by Medina (1987), we can understand that Descartes' dualism by conceiving body and soul as distinct dimensions led to a fragmented view of the human being. However, new epistemologies that reexamine this perspective have made it possible to see the human as indivisible, as expressed in Freitas' critique (1999, p. 62): "Between essence and existence, or reason and feeling. The brain is not the organ of intelligence, but rather the whole body is

[5] In order to ensure the rights and responsibilities of the research participants, this study was submitted to and approved by the Ethics Committee under Opinion No. 1.367.040.

intelligent; nor is the heart the seat of emotions, for the entire body is sensitive. Man has ceased to have a body and has become a body."

Thus, it becomes clear that new discoveries and ways of seeing the body shed light on the human being as a whole, rather than as a fragmented entity. In this regard, being a body entails a much deeper understanding, since it "exists in its immediate shell as well as in its representative references: 'subjective' logics, which also vary according to the culture of the groups and the moments in time" (CORBIN; COURTINE; VIGARELLO, 2009, p. 9). Consequently, within it are inscribed the meanings and subjectivities shaped by external factors such as objects, clothing, media influences, family, religion, among others thus, social and cultural aspects are embedded in the actions of the contemporary body.

In this sense, it must be acknowledged that, as social subjects, within the scope of culture, history, social and media representations, and in the context of everyday lived experiences, multiple and distinct social identities are constructed: racial identity, gender identity, sexual identity, class identity, and national identity (GOMES, 2012).

With regard to Black people, it is impossible to dissociate colonial violence from the domination of Black bodies. The power of the slavery system denied Black people their identity. After all, when they were dehumanized and brutally enslaved, their bodies carried their histories, lived experiences, memories, knowledge, and above all, the symbolic marks of identity and belonging (SALES, 2012). "In slavery, hair type and skin tone served as classification criteria for enslaved men and women within the slave system, helping to determine their assignment to fieldwork, domestic chores in the manor house, or urban labor activities" (GOMES, 2008, p. 244).

The aforementioned author offers insights into understanding the deep-seated negativity and social representations surrounding the Black body. She further clarifies that the historical roots of identity acceptance/denial and racism, "the slave practices legitimized by the legislation of the slavery era, shaped an imaginary of the African and Afro-descendant filled with stereotypes" (GOMES, 2008, p. 163).

According to Seyferth (1995), phenotypic traits such as skin color, hair type, eye shape, height, cranial and facial contours, and measurements like brain weight and volume were used in Eurocentric and racist speculations to evaluate distinctions between races since the 19th century. These representations have not disappeared, as historically, strategies of domination and denial have reinforced the idea of an evolutionary gap between Black and white species, to the detriment of the former.

Based on this assumption, Black people were transformed into symbols of physical, intellectual, moral incapacity, and aesthetic inferiority. Thus, the Black individual does not go unnoticed, as their body is marked by diacritical signs perceptible in skin and eye color, hair texture, and the shape of their lips and nose. As a result, any or all of these features are enough for Black individuals to be devalued, while the white person is overly idealized. These effects can, for instance, be felt in the socially imposed beauty standards.

> [...] the mark of the 'Black body' expresses, *eschatologically*, the repertoire of the abject that culture rejects through processes of negation. As a victim of social representations that attribute to their appearance meanings that are socially repudiated, the Black person finds themselves condemned to bear, in their very appearance, the mark of social inferiority (NOGUEIRA, 1998, p. 44).

In this sense, the Black body is devalued, regarded as improper, dirty, and impure. This perception was reinforced by the whitening policies[6] implemented in Brazil in the 19th century, as pointed out by Paixão (2014), through a political project of the nation-state based on racial eugenics, which, while demeaning Black people, simultaneously strengthened the idea of white superiority. For its proponents, this policy aimed to "improve" the ethnic traits of Brazil's population, as well as to discipline bodies and instill moral, physical, hygienic, and psychological values in Brazilian.

According to Soares (2001, p. 119), this historical moment imprinted "[…] on the body a visibility never seen before and composed a broad aesthetic project of appearance [...], the whitening of the race." For Diwan (2014), Brazilian bodies had to be scrubbed, twisted, and whitened as if they were dirty laundry.

In this historical context of emerging capitalism, according to Foucault (2001), the body also became the primary means of control and power. The focus was on the individual's body "through strategies to extract and divert each person's potential toward institutions such as the family, school, police, medicine, among many others" (DIWAN, 2014, p. 97).

On the other hand, symbolic relations of power and domination deepened the stigmatization of the Black population, allowing racism and prejudice to be experienced in the Black body through its physical features, which reveal differences historically internalized as inferior. This way of thinking creates a feeling of aversion both from those who stigmatize the Black body and from those who possess it, enabling racist and prejudiced reinterpretations from both sides.

[6] Thesis advocated by Brazilian intellectuals such as João Baptista de Lacerda, who embraced the idea of the overvaluation of the white European man and argued that miscegenation was the viable solution for the improvement of the Brazilian race, defending that, as a result of this mixing over several generations, the population would be "purified." (SANTOS, 2014).

After all, according to Freitas (1999, p. 30), the construction of body image is also a social phenomenon and "[…] is thus a constant reconstruction of what the individual perceives about themselves and of the unconscious determinations they carry from their dialogue with the world […]".

This author is influenced by the ideas of Schilder (1999), who conceives body image in three dimensions: physiological, libidinal, and sociological. In the physiological dimension, body image is formed through mental representations. The libidinal dimension is linked to sensory interferences, such as desire. It is important to note that these images are attached to the hypersexualized conception attributed to the Black body, as seen in the stereotypes of the sensual *mulata*, constructed around the Brazilian Black woman, and the sexual virility of the Black man corporeal representations bordering on the animalistic that were frequent in 18th-century Brazilian literature. Finally, in the sociological dimension, Black body image has a profound relationship with these and other social constructions.

In this conception, the media, in its political and institutional expressions, builds and rebuilds the image of the Black body not only through the exacerbation of its allegedly transgressive sexuality, but also through denial and repression, by disseminating a body of common-sense knowledge fed by history and by a long-standing Western tradition of prejudice and rejection. These images grow in the shadow of Euro-American cultural diffusionism and the mass-oriented entertainment industry, shaping a semiotic-imagistic construction (SODRÉ, 1999).

From this perspective, and with focus on the body image of Black individuals, it must be considered that these semiotic-racist constructions are inseparable, since the Black body lives with and within the constant creation and recreation of representations of inferiority. After all, their body image is the negation of what is recognized as the ideal, given that the white body is classified as the standard of purity, beauty, nobility, aesthetics, morality, and scientific wisdom. As a result, the Black subject, influenced by this ideal image, is driven to deny their own body, aesthetics, and culture (NOGUEIRA, 1998; COSTA, 1984).

In this sense, the self-image constructed by the quilombola individuals surveyed both of themselves and their territory is based on these same premises. This situation leads to what Cuche (1999) calls the development of a "negative identity," created through the overvaluation of the dominant (white European) reference, resulting in a shameful and rejected identity for the Brazilian Black population.

From this perspective, it is worth asking: how can we reconstruct a positive identity of Black individuals and their bodies in a society that has historically denied and devalued them? Drawing from Freire (1987), we understand that education offers a path forward, as it allows for new ways of

seeing, enabling the deconstruction and revision of concepts thus becoming a liberating and emancipatory force. According to Gomes (2012), schools, through their educational practices, also bear the responsibility of teaching respect and contributing to the identity-building process, so that learners can engage with their identities in a positive way.

In this sense, educational practice must mediate ethical reflections that address issues such as diversity, plurality, solidarity, dialogue, and critical thinking elements that are essential to the formation of the subject. From this understanding, the school is seen as a space capable of influencing the construction of plural identities.

In quilombola school education, this discussion is central and foundational, as it is rooted in an ethnic, Black, and rural territoriality and is therefore specific. In other words, this mode of education must adopt an anti-racist perspective, seeking to deconstruct negative stereotypes, give visibility to suppressed histories, and affirm the racial and cultural identity of quilombola people, which has long been repressed or denied.

Quilombola school education, as a form of basic education, was formally established through CNE/CEB Opinion No. 07/2010 and CNE/CEB Resolution No. 04/2010. According to these documents, quilombola educational units must adopt a pedagogy of their own, responding to the unique ethno-cultural characteristics of each community, and require specific training for their teaching staff, while also observing constitutional principles, the national common core, and the foundational principles guiding Brazilian basic education (BRASIL, 2010).

Therefore, the regulation of this type of education must ensure the recognition of the lived experiences, realities, and histories of quilombola communities and their populations. Furthermore, it should serve as a space for dialogue between knowledge and local reality, as well as between culture and the struggle for the right to land and territory (ONOFRE, 2014).

From this perspective, when we consider that the curriculum is the foundation of the school, it becomes clear that it offers a viable path for the deconstruction and reconstruction of identities where teacher education, both initial and continuing, plays a critical role in advancing these missions.

Silva (1999) argues that it is impossible to think of curriculum merely through the technical lens of how to teach. For him, curriculum is a place, a space, a territory, a text, a discourse, and a document that is politically, culturally, and ideologically committed. It is a document of identity subject to contestation, and thus, we can understand that the school curriculum contributes to shaping who we are and must reflect the actions surrounding teaching, learning, and relearning.

Conversely, the quilombola school, with programs loaded with systematized information rooted in dominant ideologies, identities, and cultures, may lead quilombola students to learn content that holds no meaning for them or fails to provide what they truly need, making such content sterile. "Learning becomes knowledge when it has meaning for the one acquiring it, which means that it illuminates something new from the deep meaning of what is already known through experience" (SACRISTÁN, 2002, p. 211).

From this viewpoint, as Sacristán emphasizes, teaching and learning do not happen arbitrarily; the act of teaching must reflect on key propositions: what to teach, how to teach, and for whom to teach. Thus, curriculum must hold meaning that bridges the real and the practical that is, it must not only make sense to the learner but must also give significance to the knowledge imparted.

It must be remembered that curriculum involves the materialization of social, identity, and cultural goals and should therefore be a collective construction shaped by both educators and students. Within this framework, having a school curriculum that represents the specificities and singularities of its context allows for the inclusion of the identities that belong to the community. Hence, it is desirable that schools not recreate spaces of routine and repetition, but rather spaces of reflection, critique, reinvention, and affirmation (MOREIRA; CANDAU, 2003).

Moreover, when envisioning a school education with a curriculum that embraces diversity and difference, it is also pertinent to acknowledge the educational potential of the body, as it is educated both formally and informally, inside and outside of school settings. Thus, understanding this bodily perspective in education enables us to view educational acts as opportunities to create new meanings for human existence (PORPINO, 2006).

The Body Image Constructed by Quilombola Students from the Chumbo Community Through the Gaze of Others

Among the student population enrolled at the school under study, 90% are quilombolas, originating from the local Chumbo community and other neighboring quilombo settlements, most of which are composed of Black men and women. This scenario, therefore, provides fertile ground for understanding how the images of quilombo, of being quilombola, and of being Black are constructed by these students.

It is essential to consider the historical processes and the stigmatizing precepts deeply rooted in Brazilian society regarding these peoples. For the teachers and the principal of Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida, the research site, such conceptions are entangled in how quilombola

students see themselves and how surrounding society perceives the quilombo. “Because what people understand is just that, in terms of, when you talk about quilombo, people think it's only slavery, Blackness, and suffering. That’s all they see. So, that’s what society imposes” (principal of Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida).

The school principal’s statement reveals the image that society cultivates of the quilombo distorted and laden with prejudice crafted around representations of escape, slavery, and suffering. This perception overshadows the political and cultural dimensions of quilombo formation in contemporary Brazil.

To understand this view, we follow Munanga’s (2001) insights, which assert that the formation of quilombos extends into the political and militant realm and must be recognized as a social movement by Black people in pursuit of their own path and liberation—one of the many forms of resistance to a system that has historically oppressed and continues to oppress them (FREITAS, 1971).

However, what persists is a stereotyped, frozen, and solidified image of quilombo, perpetuated through representations in textbooks and other conservative literature that either deny it, silence it, or caricature it reinforcing epistemological misconceptions that have long been, and often still are, presented as truth. In the words of Oliveira (2017, p. 28):

> The history of Afro-Brazilian populations becomes invisible within a national rhetoric that denies Afro resistance to slavery and colonial violence. This kind of narrative prevents the understanding of present-day racial inequalities as the result of a colonial and slaveholding past.

According to the aforementioned author, the very word *slave*, often used in literature, reinforces a colonial discourse in which the Black person is not seen as human, but rather as an object. Critical and/or decolonial studies in fields such as History, Anthropology, Sociology, and Education, among others, have undertaken important revisions of these Eurocentric and colonialist constructions that legitimize the slave-as-object view, by repositioning enslaved populations as historical subjects, highlighting their resistance to oppression and their struggles for freedom and alternative societal projects during and after slavery.

Other clear examples of this movement include the formation of quilombos during the slaveholding period and the reorganization of contemporary quilombos, which today are configured as alternative communities to both the slaveholding society of that time and the current exclusionary capitalist society. This dimension of quilombola resistance gains political, cultural, and identity-based significance (REIS; GOMES, 1996; MUNANGA, 2001; O’DWEYR, 2002).

It is thus evident that the Black struggle has gained new meaning and that the enslaved individual is now recognized as both an agent of their own freedom and a fundamental actor in a broader sociopolitical movement. However, although this re-signification has had a significant impact on earlier studies of enslavement, much of the population still clings to the conception of the enslaved as submissive—someone who did not resist slavery and to all other negative attributes historically associated with them. By naturalizing this image, contemporary generations are prevented from understanding the process of subalternization of these identities and the racist Euro-colonial power relations that created and reinforced such negative perceptions of these populations.

One of the teachers interviewed, when asked how the students perceive themselves in relation to their quilombola identity, reiterated the same image previously brought up by the school principal: *"I think they don't fully understand yet [what it means to be quilombola]. Because they still have that mindset that being quilombola means being enslaved, Black [...]"* (teacher at Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida).

In this context, it becomes clear how harmful such prejudiced images those that are passed down to these youth about their own identity and their territorial belonging can be to the self-esteem of quilombola youth. This process results not only in the denial of their sense of belonging to their community, but also extends to the body image they internalize, shaped by delegitimizing and inferiorizing perspectives, as the following statements reveal:

> Some students are quilombolas and feel ashamed to say they are or to express it, even in their appearance. So, it's like, "Oh, I'm ashamed of being quilombola." But why? Because society imposes that stigma I mentioned earlier—this idea of suffering, skin color, being formerly enslaved, and so on. So these perceptions create differences that eventually cause harm down the line, because the student becomes intimidated. But we also have students who do identify as quilombolas and remain firm in that identity, and they say it with pride, "I am quilombola," and they take pride in being quilombola. (Principal, Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida).

> There are many who don't consider themselves [quilombola]. Some students are Black, but they don't like to be called Black [...] (Pedagogical Coordinator, Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida).

The emblematic narratives of the school administrators point to a deeply rooted perception within the imagination of Black and quilombola individuals an internalized view of inferiority, unworthiness, and historical ugliness, forming an identity that must be denied. This is because acknowledging oneself as Black and descended from enslaved Africans means belonging to an undesirable group, one that has been historically stigmatized by the surrounding society.

In the words of Costa (1984, p. 6), "an individual's identity depends largely on the relationship they establish with their body. The image or identifying statement that a person has of themselves is

based on the experience of pain, pleasure, or displeasure that the body forces them to feel and to think about." From this perspective, we may understand that the symbolically constructed sense of inferiority results in a negatively charged body image and a source of shame, as evidenced in the educators' narratives: *they are ashamed to say they are quilombola or to express it; they don't like to be called Black.*

According to Gomes (2003, p. 171), "constructing a positive Black identity in a society that has historically taught Black individuals, from a very early age, that in order to be accepted they must deny themselves, is a challenge faced by Black Brazilians." This challenge must also be embraced by the school, as if we consider it a specific space for shaping new mindsets and historically aware and emancipatory subjects, as Freire (1987) asserts it becomes a valuable tool for rebuilding the self-esteem, self-confidence, and positive self-image of these students.

One of the teachers interviewed understood the path that quilombola education must follow: *"So, they do feel a bit ashamed, and we as educators need to work on that and show that it's nothing to be ashamed of. They should be proud."* (Teacher at Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida). Another teacher added:

> *We have to keep talking to them, telling them that they were the ones who lived through the past. That it was the Black people who escaped slavery and went on to form the quilombos. They say, 'Oh, teacher, but we are not black. We are negro. We are of the Black race. So that's what we are.' Then I said, 'Being quilombola, children, is not just about being black, it's about having your culture. You have your culture, your customs.'" (Teacher from Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida*).

However, the deconstruction of this inferiorized image is not a simple process. It is not the role of quilombola education to determine the identities of the students in their pedagogical actions, but it must consider the processes of their historical construction or even crises and conflicts as content for questioning. And this requires a lot of work, starting with the research into the history, culture, symbolic values, and ancestral knowledge that permeate the community, relating it to both the past and the present.

The teachers and school managers, certain that pedagogical actions are allies in the process of deconstructing the negative image of Black and quilombola people, seek, in their pedagogical practices, to raise awareness and re-signify this stereotypical bodily image. The school coordinator revealed her attempts:

> *But I really enjoyed working like this with the children. We had a siriri group and an African dance group. Even for the purpose of valuing, of working on racial ethnic issues with them [...]. Every year, we develop the project 'Breaking the Barriers of Prejudice.' Starting in August, we begin the work. Then come the workshops, hairstyles, doll making, posters. Then the teachers work. And when November*

> *comes, it's the traditional festa of the quilombola communities. So, we make the presentation." (Pedagogical Coordinator of Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecid*a).

The director of Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida highlighted this action of the coordinator: 'Her project was focused on the quilombo remnant area and its culture. Afro culture. Even when she was the principal, in the 'Mais Educação' program, they included the African dance modality. Other actions for the valorization of Afro culture were also recalled:

> *But we know that there is Afro culture, hairstyles, so many good things, so many beautiful things that can bring benefits to our students, to our society, to our community. I refer to communities, everyone around, those who participate here at the school. Because often this kind of thing is missing from our curriculum. Because if the school involves everyone, class, religion, race, then, from the moment everyone is there, one will have to respect the other to live and grow in peace. Understanding each other and learning. Because how can you like something of the other if you don't understand, if you don't know, if they don't express it?" (Director of Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida)*

> *"Last year, we worked on quilombola culture. We held a workshop. A pedagogical showcase, typical foods, meat with banana, meat with rice, typical dances, then we brought the pilão (mortar), brought rice with husk [...], so, we were working, searching, and we found it. We brought paintings, dances, typical foods, and their dances and customs." (Teacher from Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida*).

These actions developed in the school were initiated by some teachers and were not part of the school or subject curricula, as the director mentioned. However, even though they were sporadic, they sought to positively develop the cultures and identity of the students and are of significant importance for a liberating education. According to Carril (2017, p. 551), 'the school can no longer continue acting ideologically toward its students as if they were all the same, reproducing an abstract ideal of subjects, while simultaneously transmitting neutrality in its curricular contents.'

In this sense, the quilombola school cannot deny the specificities present in its geographical and historical context and must not be complicit in the various forms of discrimination and exclusion. Such discriminations need to be problematized, uncovered, and de-naturalized. Otherwise, the school will be serving to reproduce behavior patterns that reinforce discriminatory processes present in society (MOREIRA; CANDAU, 2003).

In light of this, the differences inscribed in the Black body must be worked on in pursuit of self-identification, where the subject apprehends, in the singularities of the other, their own specificity. In this perspective, the body:

> [...] The body acts, recording in itself the memory in various ways, whether through dance, play, drawing, writing, speech [...] The body is life, it is here and now, it is power, possibility. With the body, life is armed, existence is lived, individually and

> The image that quilombola students construct of themselves from the look of others collectively. It carries an individual and collective history, a memory to be preserved, inscribed, and shared. The body tells a story (BRANDÃO, 2006, p. 61–62).

Based on the above, we believe that the educational practice that takes into account the singularity of Black corporeality enables the individual to learn more about themselves and the numerous possibilities of their aesthetic beauty and value. The Curriculum Guidelines for Education in the State of Mato Grosso establish that quilombola education should value 'cultural elements and bodily expressions coming from racial-ethnic groups; sports practices within quilombola cultural diversities; games, play, capoeira, and others' (MATO GROSSO, 2010, p. 26).

One of the teachers from the Chumbo community reported how the school's actions are contributive: 'Sometimes, a person arrives and you notice them singing a little song, and the classmates look. This is their culture, it's a circle dance, a cururu song, a siriri song. They live it, this is not shameful, you have to preserve it [...]' (Teacher from Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida).

The work of the school can provoke, as Cuche (1999, p. 190) says, '[...] the revolt against stigmatization, which will result in the reversal of the stigma [...]', meaning 'the more they emphasize my difference, the more I affirm myself as an individual and collective subject.'

However, for the teachers and the school manager of the Chumbo community, despite the actions they have developed, there is still much to be done: '[...] The PPP is being restructured because of the curriculum. So I think we're going to have to sit down again to reformulate our PPP' (Coordinator of Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida). Both the director and the teacher emphasized that:

> But here I see it this way: because we are from a quilombo region, we cannot forget the traditional cultures that were left behind. And today, everything is being left behind. I see that the public authorities, the higher competent bodies, are not really making an effort to include these things in the students' curriculum. Because we are here, registered, it's fine, as a quilombo remnant area. But if we look at the curriculum matrix, there is no specific matrix for a quilombo school. [...] We are already making several changes. Not just in the quilombo remnant area issue, but, in fact, it has been said, but it has never been implemented [...]. And now there are many things that need to be reformulated because today, with modernity, new things, changes, they need to be incorporated into the school's PPP" (Director of Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida).
>
> "The school's planning, its internal calendar, it works not just on Black Consciousness Week, but every year, it works on it. We don't emphasize it every day, but we are always looking for ways to work on it" (Teacher from Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora Aparecida).

The narratives allowed us to understand the image that students construct of their territories and of themselves and point to the need for systematic work by the school concerning the development

of a curriculum suited to the context of quilombola education, enriched by local culture, its knowledge, expressions, and practices, as well as its ways of producing life, felt through the students' bodies. The perspective is that they will begin to self-affirm their identity and reinforce their sense of belonging to the territory in a positive way.

Final considerations

This article aimed to problematize the image that quilombola students from the Chumbo community, in the city of Poconé, Mato Grosso, construct of themselves and their territory, from the perspective of others, and how the school has positioned itself in response to the negativism that permeates this self-image.

The results revealed that the images students have of their territories and of themselves are tied to social constructs inherited from a cruel and racist slave system, whose impressions are daily reinforced in the present by the media and other institutions.

This situation allowed us to highlight that the students of the Chumbo community school construct a stereotyped and rejected body image of themselves, projected through a representation of a suffering, ugly body, and therefore, denied. Regarding their territory, they showed that they have internalized the image that social imagination and educational materials convey about these territories, which are seen as places of enslaved and former enslaved people, suffering, and devoid of historical, social, and cultural content.

As for the educational actions of the Chumbo community school, it was observed that the administrators and teachers recognize the problem and understand what the path should be to carry out a liberating work with the students. It is possible to recognize the institution's effort to deconstruct the negative view and recover the valorization of the quilombola student’s ethnic-racial identity. However, this effort was found to be somewhat unsystematic.

In light of this, teachers need support from institutions and public policies, such as continued professional development, re-conceptualized teaching materials suited to the quilombola rural context, and improvements in the school’s structural conditions as a whole.

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