

## Como construir um currículo negro? Uma reflexão sobre a presença negra nas áreas do saber

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### Resumo

Discorre-se sobre a necessidade de uma reconfiguração no currículo do ensino superior. Tem-se como problema que o currículo universitário brasileiro não considera pessoas negras nas distintas áreas do saber, algo que dificulta a representatividade. A hipótese se baseia no fato de haver inúmeras personalidades negras brasileiras, as quais possuem notoriedade em suas respectivas áreas do saber. Fundamenta-se esta pesquisa na noção de currículo em Sacristán (2000); representação em Arroyo (2015) e decolonialismo em Colaço e Damázio (2012) e Gomes (2019). Metodologicamente o estudo é bibliográfico e documental de cunho qualitativo e exploratório. Objetiva-se apresentar autores negros que são influentes em oito áreas do saber, utilizando-se, para isso, oito ementas de universidades federais. Os resultados indicam que é possível ser representatividade uma via de transformação social. Espera-se promover a reflexão sobre o porquê da ausência de negros no currículo da universidade brasileira.

**Palavras-chave:** Racismo. Representatividade. Universidades.

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# How to build a black curriculum? A reflection on the black presence in areas of knowledge

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the need for a reconfiguration of the higher education curriculum. The problem arises from the fact that the Brazilian university curriculum does not consider Black individuals in various fields of knowledge, hindering their representation. The hypothesis is based on the existence of numerous Black Brazilian personalities who are prominent in their respective fields of knowledge. This research is grounded in the notion of curriculum by Sacristán (2000); representation by Arroyo (2015); and decolonialism by Colaço and Damázio (2012) and Gomes (2019). Methodologically, the study is qualitative and exploratory, relying on bibliographic and documentary research. The objective is to present influential Black authors in eight areas of knowledge, using the curricula of eight federal universities. The results indicate that representation can be a pathway to social transformation. This study aims to foster reflection on why Black individuals are absent from the Brazilian university curriculum.

**Keywords:** Racism. Representation. Universities.

# ¿Cómo crear un currículum negro? Una reflexión sobre la presencia negra en áreas del conocimiento

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## Resumen

Se discute la necesidad de una reconfiguración del currículo de educación superior. El problema es que el currículum universitario brasileño no considera a los negros en diferentes áreas del conocimiento, algo que dificulta la representación. La hipótesis se basa en que existen innumerables personalidades brasileñas negras, que son reconocidas en sus respectivas áreas de conocimiento. Esta investigación se basa en la noción de currículo en Sacristán (2000); representación en Arroyo (2015) y decolonialismo en Colaço y Damázio (2012) y Gomes (2019). Metodológicamente el estudio es bibliográfico y documental de carácter cualitativo y exploratorio. El objetivo es presentar autores negros influyentes en ocho áreas del conocimiento, utilizando ocho programas de estudios de universidades federales. Los resultados indican que es posible que la representación sea un camino hacia la transformación social. Se espera promover la reflexión sobre el motivo de la ausencia de personas negras en el currículum universitario brasileño.

**Palabras clave:** Racismo. Representatividad. Universidades.

## Introduction

This study proposes a theoretical approach aimed at assisting individuals whose capabilities and potential are often diminished simply due to their skin color. Racist acts will not naturally subside, as they were not naturally constructed in people's lives but are taught explicitly and implicitly in various social spaces through different discourses. For example, the idea that a person is worth less in society due to their appearance. However, if individuals are taught to devalue, they can also be taught and learn to value.

In this context, it is necessary to (re)learn that only difference adds value, as it prompts an individual to reflect and recognize the existence of something unknown. Thus, the question arises: what is learned? The known or the unknown? Therefore, difference provides constant opportunities for (re)assessment, as highlighted by Rosa (2009, p. 177): "[...] for us to accept ourselves and for the 'other' to be a source of knowledge and life, not an object of contempt and fear, a scapegoat for historical guilt and imbalances.

The relationship between teaching and learning is dynamic, where it is understood that by teaching, one also learns, as the educator, while formulating lessons in the classroom, inevitably needs to formulate and reformulate concepts based on students' questions. It is based on this dialectical process of teaching and learning, which facilitates the construction and deconstruction of content, that the inclusion of the topic of racism and related issues becomes relevant, as they can be (re)configured through the curriculum, aiming for a more just and equitable society.

With these preparatory reflections, it is raised as a problem that the curriculum does not consider Black individuals across various fields of knowledge. This hampers the establishment of representation to inspire and uplift the self-esteem of this group within Brazilian society, perpetuating the unfounded thesis of superiority based on skin pigmentation. So, how can adequate representation for Black individuals be provided?

The hypothesis starts with the notion that there are numerous renowned Black Brazilian personalities in various fields of knowledge. However, these figures are not included in university curricula, which hinders a Black student's positive identification with their group and, consequently, with themselves due to a lack of knowledge, history, or reference to the past, present, or future. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss a curricular reconfiguration, addressing new times from a decolonial perspective.

This research is based on the concept of curriculum as discussed by Sacristán (2000); curricular representation according to Arroyo (2015); and decolonialism as outlined by Colaço and Damázio

(2012). From these authors, the premise is that the curriculum is dynamic, representing the cultural project of a dominant group during specific historical periods. Thus, through daily struggles, it is possible to achieve a change in curricular representation to meet the demands of social minorities.

However, to achieve this objective, it is necessary to move away from an Eurocentric perspective and focus more on national demands and their particularities, directing attention toward an intercultural approach, which “[...] involves recognizing differences as well as fighting against various forms of discrimination and social inequality (MOREIRA; CANDAU, 2014, p. 12).

Methodologically, this study is a qualitative and exploratory bibliographic and documentary research. Its general objective is to present influential Black authors in their fields of knowledge who are not included in selected syllabi, thereby providing reflections on indicators of social inequality based on skin color. In this way, it is considered that a society committed to economic, social, cultural, and intellectual development should not subjugate more than half of its population (Black and Brown individuals) to conditions of subcitizenship, thereby justifying the relevance of this research.

To achieve this objective, the text is organized into three parts. Firstly, the research problem is contextualized, developing the notions of curriculum, decolonialism, and representativity. In the second part, in line with the specific objective, eight fields of knowledge (classification for research production) approved by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) are presented, using eight syllabi from federal universities, one for each field of knowledge. Finally, in the third part, the possibility of incorporating Black authors who are researchers in each respective field into the examined syllabi is explored, with the aim of facilitating an equitable curriculum.

## **Contextualização do problema**

The starting point is the problem of the lack of representation of the Black population in higher education curricula. In this context, the objective is to present authors whose inclusion would result in a more equitable and, consequently, less racist curriculum. Considering an intercultural curriculum is the first step in this process, and the notion of decoloniality is used to recount, reinterpret, and resignify history in the Latin American context rather than from a Eurocentric perspective (COLACO; DAMÁZIO, 2012). Such reconfiguration is necessary to break away from the perception that the knowledge transmitted through the curriculum is natural and should be reexamined as power relations narrated by the dominant groups (SILVA, 1995, p. 201).

In this sense, decoloniality is more than a term or theoretical notion detached from practice,

How to build a black curriculum? A reflection on the black presence in areas of knowledge as evidenced by recent research from Galvão (2018), Araújo (2019), Simões Junior (2019), and Santos (2020). These authors propose ways to restructure curricula to better include social minorities. Thus, decoloniality can be understood as a process of breaking away from a view of superiority of one group over another, based on the concept of race. However, race is a political construct, ideological in nature and not biological (MUNANGA, 2003), and therefore lacks scientific basis (SCHWARCZ, 1994).

One way to configure a curriculum from a decolonial perspective is to include representatives from social minorities equitably. After all, who are the representatives of indigenous people, Black individuals, the LGBTQIA+ community, members of Afro-Brazilian religions, women, refugees, and other social minorities in the curriculum? If students are consistently presented with a narrow view of a single group from an early age, with limited reflections on the existence of diverse groups, how can they develop social empathy for differences? (LISBOA; LOPES; OLIVEIRA, 2023).

Thus, from a decolonial curricular perspective, it is crucial that pedagogical practices aim to create “[...] conditions in which learners, in their relationships with each other and with the teacher, practice the profound experience of assuming themselves” (FREIRE, 1996, p. 42). For this “assuming oneself” to be realized, the notions of multiculturalism, interculturalism, and decolonialism must be effective; that is, differences need to be present, respected, and redefined.

It is important to emphasize that the curriculum “[...] is not an innocent and neutral element of disinterested transmission of social knowledge [...] it is implicated in power relations” (MOREIRA; SILVA, 1995, p. 8). It is a “[...] selective program of culture, socially, politically, and administratively conditioned, which fills the school activity and becomes reality within the conditions of the school as it is configured” (SACRISTÁN, 2000, p. 36). In this sense, the curriculum is a complex phenomenon that must be critically analyzed. It is not just a tool for transmitting knowledge but an element that participates in the construction of society.

It is assumed that this political conditioning can be reconfigured by non-hegemonic groups, aiming to provide “[...] curricula that reflect the conceptions, knowledge, cultures, and values produced and subject to social movements” (ARROYO, 2015, p. 48). Curriculum is a struggle within historical spaces and contexts, where some have managed to prevail over others, leading to a “[...] sedimentation within a particular cultural, political, social, and educational framework; it is therefore laden with values and assumptions that need to be deciphered” (SACRISTÁN, 2000, p. 17). Thus, the curriculum is implicated in power relations, being used either to reproduce or to challenge existing social inequalities. For example, a curriculum that favors the culture and history of a particular social

class or ethnicity can be seen as an instrument for reproducing the status quo.

In this way, as long as social minorities are able to raise awareness and organize themselves, they can be equitably represented in the curriculum, given that it concentrates “[...] particular social views” (MOREIRA; SILVA, 1995, p. 8). By altering the groups and their representations, new perspectives on the world are brought to light. Indeed, the curriculum is a selective program that chooses some knowledge and skills while ignoring others based on criteria that can be political, economic, cultural, or ideological.

In light of these considerations, this study aims to contribute to the process of curricular theoretical change as a foundation for shifting thinking. It is believed that by modifying pedagogical practices (daily practical tools in the classroom based on the content presented), an anti-racist reconstruction of the curriculum can be achieved. The curriculum is “[...] an object that is constructed in the process of configuration, implementation, concretization, and expression of certain pedagogical practices [...]” (SACRISTÁN, 2000, p. 101).

Despite the complexity of the issue, this redirection is feasible, as there are individuals in all social layers willing to make changes toward a more equitable society, considering that “[...] curriculum is a practice [...] this means that all those who participate in it are subjects, not objects; that is, active elements” (SACRISTÁN, 2000, p. 165). If they are active, they are cultural agents capable of leading new forms of public policy. Generally, it is noted that the curriculum is a tool that can be used to promote social equity. Through the curriculum, it is possible to select knowledge and expertise that represent the diversity of society and contribute to the development of conscious and critical citizens. In this sense, the next section will present some considerations on racism and representativity in the university curriculum.

## Considerations on Racism and Representativity in the Curriculum

A person should be valued based on their capacity for differentiation, regardless of their social contribution, because "adding something to, or for" is subjective. Everyone interprets this differently, so it is an element that involves moral judgment. Therefore, a person should be valued simply (or complexly) for their existence, not for what they do, have done, appear to be, or actually are. Skin color is not a valid basis for devaluing a person, as it is a physical attribute that does not diminish the right to existence.

The absence of explicit inclusion laws immediately after slavery reinforced the image for

How to build a black curriculum? A reflection on the black presence in areas of knowledge Brazilians and for the world that racism does not exist in Brazil, as in the United States or South Africa (ORTEGAL, 2018). Racism is notably present in Brazil, though with particularities. It can be understood as a process of “[...] hierarchization, exclusion, and discrimination against an individual or an entire social category [...] defined as different based on some external physical mark (real or imagined)” (LIMA; VALA, 2004, p. 402). Thus, racism is not only an individual problem but also a structural one, deeply rooted in the institutions and social relations of society.

Racism transcends and overlaps with economic aspects, so it cannot be said that a Black person experiences discrimination solely because they lack financial resources or social status. While having resources might protect an individual from being exposed to humiliating situations due to their potential influence and power to confront issues, it does not exempt them from being a victim of racist actions, as skin color does not change with wealth or social influence. Therefore, it can be inferred that racism is a problem that must be addressed comprehensively, including actions to combat prejudice and discrimination as well as to transform the social structures that sustain racism. Among these structures, the university and school curriculum are particularly notable.

It is plausible to understand racist acts in Brazil in three ways: racism without racists, pigmentocracy, and cordial racism; here is a brief mention of these forms. In racism without racists (Bonilla-Silva, 2017), it is believed that racism is stratified within society but is social rather than individual. Therefore, it is rarely admitted by individuals, as each person views their own actions in daily life as consistent and ethically appropriate, regardless of someone's skin color.

Pigmentocratic racism focuses on the idea that the less pigment a person has, the less exclusion they will experience (Filho; Vieira; Rocha, 2019). It is based more on phenotype (Nogueira, 2007), meaning that racist acts depend on the intensity of melanin and how this is perceived by an individual or group. Thus, pigmentocratic or phenotypic racism leads to discrimination based on "colorism," which is a subjective distinction in particular relationships based on skin color. This can influence a person to desire being seen or referred to as brown, mulatto, or light-skinned, with the aim of avoiding everyday racist violence. Consequently, it creates the illusion that racism does not exist, as not all black people face explicit or implicit discrimination, leading to the social perception that racist acts are isolated cases.

Cordial racism can be interpreted as the everyday concessions of courtesy from privileged individuals to those who accept a condition of subservience and do not demand, question, or advocate for full citizenship rights in society. Thus, there will be "courtesy" as long as there is a relinquishment of equitable demands in social relationships. This is considered a private matter, without collective

interest and, consequently, without demands on public authorities. In other words, it is conveniently believed that racism is merely a failed form of communication (TURRA; VENTURI, 1995).

It is assumed that mechanisms to protect the human dignity of Black people should be created to counteract the types of racism discussed—pigmentocratic, cordial, and racism without racists. This is explained by the fact that most people learned in school, through the curriculum, textbooks, examples, and behaviors, that the condition of Black individuals in Brazil is normal. This supposed normality can lead to complacency and a lack of reflection on the scarcity of Black professionals in high-status positions such as doctors, diplomats, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, auditors, university professors, politicians, and other professions with above-average salaries and high social influence.

Given the context, the question arises: how can universities contribute to addressing this issue? One plausible alternative is to present inspiring examples through an equitable curriculum that includes Black representation. To this end, this study aims to present influential Black authors in eight fields of knowledge, using eight syllabi from federal universities. Here, representation is treated as a reflection on how to engage with people, reorganize the sense of learning and teaching, and reconsider the relationships of appreciation and devaluation of individuals. Why have some people been valued while others have been marginalized and belittled?

Here, representation is understood as an implicit, symbolic, and subjective process of identity and emotional connection between a person or group and a figure with a solidified and legitimized identity. Thus, "[...] representation is, like any system of meaning, a way of attributing significance. To represent means, in this case, to say: 'this is the identity'" (WOODWARD, 2000, p. 91).

In this context, what is sought in a curricular proposal is a positive representation of Black identity, considering identity as a subjective, reflective analysis of the individual towards themselves and society. What is emphasized here is that identity changes "[...] as identity shifts according to how the individual is addressed or represented [...] [and] it can be gained or lost" (HALL, 2003, p. 21). Thus, if representation changes, identity can also change, since identity is in the process of construction.

No identity is built in isolation. On the contrary, it is negotiated throughout life through dialogue, partly external and partly internal, with others. Both personal identity and socially derived identity are formed in open dialogue. They depend vitally on the dialogical relationships established with others (GOMES, 2002, p. 39).

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Based on the premise that identities are dynamically constructed, this research is deemed relevant. Indeed, increasing the representativity of a group can help reduce racism. Therefore, it is possible to provide a redirection towards oneself, as identification among people allows for a more significant appreciation of oneself. This is explained by the fact that internal characteristics that are not valued can be redefined when seen in another person.

Consequently, when seeing a person who stands out in society and possesses characteristics that could be present in others, there is likely a chance for identification, which can lead to greater tolerance and acceptance. Thus, representativity is a pathway, among others, to recognizing oneself as a person and, consequently, as a citizen endowed with rights and duties in society. Showcasing the capacities and potentialities of one's life history enables people, especially those who are in formation, to choose intellectual, personal, and professional positions and to project themselves into the world. However, how can one project themselves if there are no references for doing so? How can one believe in their potentials if, at a young age, they were led to believe they belong to an inferior group?

When all one's "representatives" are concentrated in the poorest, marginalized, and stigmatized segments of the population, there is a high probability that the individual will believe their natural destiny will be the same, perceiving this as "natural." In this sense, how can we create mechanisms to eradicate, or at least mitigate, a prejudice that has been reinforced over time, crystallized, and naturalized believing that black individuals are inherently inferior? It is considered that once the stereotype is gradually challenged, there should be a reduction in the institutionalized racism within society.

The curriculum can be a vital tool for this purpose, as it fosters the transformation and internalization of imagination, values, cultures, and, consequently, everyday social behaviors, through the authors who serve as references for assimilating new perspectives or revising established beliefs and knowledge. In the current context, there is noticeable progress with the legal requirement for the inclusion of ethnic-racial studies, through Law No. 10,639, enacted in 2003, which amended the LDB of 1996 to establish the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture. However, legal mandates alone do not alter popular imagination, which requires time and curricular pedagogical practices to achieve equitable conditions (ARROYO, 2007). After all, the way Black individuals are presented in the curriculum always subjugated and segregated is not inspiring.

At the moment when popular sectors repoliticize the role of these historically marginalized representations, marked by segregation, subordination, and denial of rights, the field of social representations becomes a site of both political and

pedagogical struggle. The ways in which we think about students condition the ways in which we educate them (ARROYO, 2012, p. 125).

Mandatory inclusion in the curriculum is a legal requirement. However, it is necessary to advance the implementation of this norm, as under-representation does not meet the objectives for Brazil's Black population. Thus, "[...] one of the first tasks will be to clear the curricula of these representations [...] deconstruct them and open spaces for positive identities" (Arroyo, 2015, p. 61). Deconstructing and reconstructing the curriculum for a just society must consider values and traditions across all areas. According to Arroyo (2015, p. 66), "[...] the knowledge and representations that social movements, in their diversity, have been affirming should be the references for designing curricula," because the aim is not merely curricular inclusion but an ethical commitment to minorities. Therefore, it is essential to understand how and why the discussion about the curriculum is being framed.

From this perspective, combating racism through the curriculum is a short-, medium-, and long-term project. Once modified, the curriculum can have an impact on current students, influence their professional practice in the medium term, and, consequently, create conditions for the internalization of the absorbed content. In other words, the education of hatred will gradually give way to the teaching of love and social equity. Simultaneously, under-representation can be transformed into a locus of political action for a movement of active, engaged, and organized individuals with full civic participation.

It is implausible that Black individuals are either absent from the curriculum or, when included, are depicted in a degraded manner within social relations. One likely explanation for this lies in the history of Brazilian slavery, which was only recently abolished. The most valued and contested geographic, social, political, and cultural spaces were evidently reserved for the more privileged. If this explanation is reasonable, it naturally follows that the curricular space would be no different, as, from Sacristán's (2000) perspective, the curriculum is a reflection of society.

Thus, those who are notable in society are also prominent in the curriculum, while the marginalized are similarly marginalized in their curricular representations. Under this logic, Black representation is crucial for sensitizing people to a shift in perspective regarding racial discrimination. This is a simple fact: how can we alter value patterns based on the values of the colonizer themselves? Including representative Black authors in the curriculum likely offers the opportunity for redirection. This is a slow and gradual process of observing a scenario of domination rather than harmony, as one

How to build a black curriculum? A reflection on the black presence in areas of knowledge cannot overlook the crystallization, internalization, and naturalization of a harmonious society portrayed in Gilberto Freyre's classic work, where individuals identify their condition of sub-citizenship as normal (SOUZA, 2005).

This referred sub-citizenship will continue as long as the " [...] effectiveness of objective structures that build the hierarchy of value" (SOUZA, 2005, p. 93) is ignored. These structures are reflected in the curriculum and, being constituted and maintained by dominant groups, lead to " [...] theoretical and political invisibility of the true causes of the massive marginalization of expressive sectors of these societies" (SOUZA, 2005, p. 93). It is therefore necessary to demand curricular visibility on a theoretical level so that it becomes practical, by introducing new names and Black references in curricula.

It is also evident that if these figures in a new possible curriculum are not activists and advocates of the cause, they will at least serve as a face, a new standard of beauty, which reformulates the imagination of those who see them, leading to an identification, at the very least, with skin color. This identification can quickly lead to a perception of harmony and connection, awakening emotions and allowing others to see the possibility of reinvention, viewing themselves through the other as a reference. Thus, knowing that the standard is a social construct within a given context, it is possible to remake it, and " [...] this is the role of the discussion about Black culture in education: to re-signify and build positive representations of Black people, their history, their culture, their corporeality, and their aesthetics" [...] (GOMES, 2003. p. 81).

## Methodology

The analysis of data available on the websites of selected universities was conducted from April to May 2022. This involved examining the Pedagogical Project of Courses (PPCs) and the basic and supplementary references of specific syllabi, which outline the objectives of the courses at eight federal Brazilian universities located in eight different federal units, covering the five Brazilian regions (North, South, Northeast, Southeast, and Central-West). The study aimed to address eight areas of knowledge classified and approved by the CNPq (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development), namely: Human Sciences, Social Sciences, Health, Agrarian Sciences, Biological Sciences, Exact Sciences, Engineering, and Linguistics.<sup>4</sup>

The criteria for including universities were based on the availability of data in their pedagogical

<sup>4</sup> Available at: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/documents/11871/24930/TabeladeAreasdoConhecimento.pdf/d192ff6b-3e0a-4074-a74d-c280521bd5f7>. Accessed on: May 10, 2022.

projects, specifically those that explicitly listed authors and their respective works. Thus, eight courses were included: Philosophy, Chemical Engineering, Medicine, Agronomy, Mathematics, Law, Literature, and Biology. It is emphasized that, for privacy and data protection reasons, the universities have been named with randomly assigned letters of the alphabet, without any connection to the actual names of the respective institutions.

**Table 1** – Fields of Knowledge, Courses, and Subjects

Regions	UF	Name	PPC	Areas of knowledge	Courses	Subjects
SOUTHEAST	SP	A	2020	Humanities	Philosophy	History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy
	MG	B	2019	Engineering	Chemical Engineering	Biochemistry
NORTHEAST	CE	C	2018	Health Sciences	Medicine	History of Medicine Psychiatry
	BA	D	2015	Agricultural Sciences	Agronomy	Rural Politics and Development Rural Extension.
SOUTH	RS	E	2019	Exact and Earth Sciences	Mathematics	Sociocultural Mathematics Mathematics Education Laboratory
MIDWEST	MS	F	2020	Applied Social Sciences	Law	Education on Ethnic-Racial Relations Comparative Law
NORTH	RN	G	2017	Linguistics, Literature, and Arts	Literature	Estudos avançados de Literatura Africana in Portuguese
	AC	H	2017	Biological Sciences	Biology	Cellular Development: Evolutionary, Molecular, Tissue, and Structural

Source: Prepared by the authors from the research data.

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

In the Philosophy course at University "A", the essential nature of existence is discussed with the aim of dissolving or establishing concepts within society and across all fields of knowledge. It is vital to have thinkers engaging in discussions on the foundations that provide a reconfiguration of social and existential values, which guide daily behaviors. In this context, reassessing formulations in the abstract realm necessarily provides analytical tools for practical life, offering theories of life that can be applied across all social sectors, particularly in fields of knowledge with immediate execution, where constant reflection is not readily facilitated in their activities.

The aforementioned analytical tools, which speak broadly about life, are concepts externalized by authors, especially those known as classics, who directly or indirectly address all existential planes, formulating social constructs. Specifically regarding the equitable curricular reconstruction, the Philosophy undergraduate curriculum at University "A" includes works by renowned figures in this field of knowledge.

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In this context, it is possible that the same works appear in any other Philosophy syllabus, as they are widely recognized. Some of these philosophical classics, exemplified here by Kant, Heidegger, Marx, Tocqueville, and Comte, depending on the approach taken, do not contribute to a re-signification or re-standardization of social values, nor do they help create a more equitable curriculum. On the contrary, they reinforce the status quo and do not promote decolonial perspectives (PRAXEDES, 2008; PANSARELLI; PIZA, 2017). One of the reasons for this is that these thinkers are voices of their own time and context, as distinct contexts would scarcely give rise to alternative reflections.

However, to eradicate or at least mitigate acts of racial discrimination, it is essential to incorporate other thinkers into curricula focused on contemporary themes, as well as the history of 20th and 21st century thought, in an interdisciplinary manner. The goal is to bring representativeness to philosophical thought from the perspective of Black individuals. In this sense, two authors are presented here: Milton Santos and Lélia Gonzalez, whose influences are notable in the fields of legal and social philosophy. Due to their representativeness, they could be considered as part of the curriculum at University "A", which already includes Sueli Carneiro, a significant figure in the Black movement.

Milton Santos (1926-2001), a Brazilian, did not have formal training in Philosophy, yet he is considered a prominent figure in the humanities. He was a geographer, jurist, and journalist, and earned a PhD in Geography from the University of Strasbourg, France, under the supervision of Prof. Jean Tricart. In 1994, he won the Vautrin Lud Prize, considered the Nobel Prize of Geography, and in 1997, he won the Jabuti Prize for the best book in the humanities with *The Nature of Space*. Milton Santos had extensive theoretical contributions in Brazil and around the world, working as a university professor at various national and international institutions, including the University of São Paulo, Toulouse, Bordeaux, and Paris-Sorbonne, while also engaging with the United Nations (UN). He left behind a vast body of work, including dozens of books and countless texts, articles, and chapters, many of which critically address anti-globalization movements.

Lélia de Almeida Gonzalez (1935-1994) held academic degrees in History, Geography, and Philosophy from the University of the State of Guanabara (now UERJ), as well as a master's and doctorate in anthropological and political studies, focusing on gender and ethnic issues. She taught at the elementary level and at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, as well as the State University of Rio de Janeiro. In 1985, Lélia joined the first National Council for Women's Rights and represented Brazil in the 1980s in debates about the Black movement at events in the United States,

Africa, and Latin America. Among her works, *For an Afro-Latin American Feminism*, organized by Flavia Rios and Márcia Lima, stands out as it compiles the main writings of the philosopher.

University "B", located in the state of Minas Gerais, is examined here in the field of engineering, specifically through its Chemical Engineering undergraduate program. Among the many subjects studied in the field of engineering are atoms, gases, biochemistry, particle characterization and dynamics, and new technologies, all included in the syllabus that was developed in 2019. However, there is no mention of Viviane dos Santos Barbosa, who developed an award-winning project in the Netherlands on catalysts for reducing pollutant gases.

Viviane dos Santos Barbosa's expertise lies in nanotechnology, a multidisciplinary field that can be considered part of chemical engineering. Therefore, it would be relevant to include her name in the curriculum. One important point to highlight about this scientist is her role in promoting the creation of a space for Black identity. In the case of Viviane, this role is extremely significant, as it inspires students to follow similar paths, re-signifying ideals of beauty, intelligence, capability, and each person's place in society.

In other words, people tend to follow pre-established patterns; if there are no Black individuals to inspire, there is no reason to aspire to become a model. Thus, one might ask: why aren't there any? This comment is illustrated by a project conducted by *Nova Escola* magazine in 2014 with students aged 13 and 14 about the scientist. In these shared videos, each teenager presents a brief segment of Viviane's life, highlighting personal, academic, and professional aspects. The elements mentioned by the students change behaviors and perceptions of others, demonstrating that there is no basis for qualifying or disqualifying a person based on the color of their skin.

At University "C", located in the state of Ceará, the Medicine undergraduate program was chosen to represent the field of health sciences. In the curricular component dedicated to the history of medicine, there is no mention of knowledge acquired from Black or Indigenous peoples. The only reference made to Black individuals is when the curriculum's commitment to the guidelines on ethnic-racial relations education is highlighted, also encompassing people with disabilities, environmental education, and the teaching of Brazilian Sign Language (Libras).

In the Medicine curriculum at University "C", although there is a specific work on the history of medicine written by Albert Lyons and Joseph Petrucelli (1997), it makes no reference to any contributions by Black minorities to medicine. This raises the question: is there truly no participation by Black individuals in the history of this science? One of the areas covered in medicine is psychiatry. In the 48-hour curricular component dedicated to this field, two compendiums and one work on

How to build a black curriculum? A reflection on the black presence in areas of knowledge psychiatric emergencies are mentioned. However, there is no reference to the Black physician Juliano Moreira, considered by some theorists to be the founder of the psychiatric discipline, as revealed by scholars Paulo Dalgalarrodo and Ana Maria Galdini Raimundo Oda:

Juliano Moreira (1873-1933), born in Salvador, Bahia, is often regarded as the founder of the psychiatric discipline in Brazil. His biography justifies this distinction: of mixed race (mulatto), from a poor family, he was exceptionally precocious, entering the Bahia School of Medicine at the age of 13 and graduating at 18 (1891) with a thesis titled *Early Malignant Syphilis*. Five years later, he became a substitute professor in the section of nervous and mental diseases at the same institution. From 1895 to 1902, he attended courses on mental illnesses and visited numerous asylums across Europe (Germany, England, France, Italy, and Scotland) (ODA; DALGALARRONDO, 2000, p. 178).

The Medicine course was highlighted here due to its traditional status in Brazil and its significant national and international visibility. If the syllabus included a reference to a Black figure in the field, it could serve as an inspiring role model, an icon for future Brazilian and foreign doctors. At University “D”, the 2009 pedagogical project, ratified by the 2015 curriculum, examines the Agronomy course, which falls under the field of Agricultural Sciences. The challenge in this field, broadly speaking, is to balance land exploitation with environmental conservation. One of the relevant topics in our country is agrarian reform, a matter of fundamental collective interest that should therefore be discussed interdisciplinarily, making it a key topic in the Agronomy undergraduate program, as it pertains to both professors and students. To directly address the topic, the syllabus at University “D” offers two subjects: *Politics and Rural Development* and *Rural Extension*. One specific book provided to students is *Brazilian Agriculture and Agrarian Reform: A Macroeconomic View*, published in 1999. The author, Ary Burger, graduated in Economics in 1950 and was a professor at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Furthermore, Burger served as the director of the Central Bank under General Costa e Silva’s government, among various other positions in Brazil and abroad, and authored several works related to his core academic field.

To strike a balance, a Black author is introduced: Elson Borges dos Santos, a member of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), holds a master's degree in Agronomy from the State University of Maringá (UEM), and is a member of the national coordination of the Ecovida Network of Agroecology and participatory organic certification. Santos discusses the topic in various articles and publications, such as in *The Direction of Agrarian Reform Settlements in the State of Paraná* (2001); *An Ecologically and Politically Correct Work Experience: The Vitória Cooperative in an Agrarian Reform Settlement* (2000); and *Development of Living Yards in Agrarian Reform Settlements* (2010).

In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, University "E" stands out, selected to examine the exact sciences through its Mathematics undergraduate program. In this course, the fields of study include, among others: arithmetic, algebra, geometry, trigonometry, statistics, and calculus. The development of logical reasoning, creativity, investigative skills, and problem-solving is emphasized, and this is present in every aspect of daily life. The precision and rigorous language common to mathematics contribute to making this field of knowledge highly esteemed and respected. Consequently, professionals are admired and valued in their political and social positions, and, as such, this is yet another field where prejudice must be dispelled, as there is no scientific precision in racism.

One of the subjects included in the syllabus is "Sociocultural Mathematics," which studies mathematics through the lens of anthropology and sociology. Among the basic references for this course component is *Ethnomathematics in Motion* (2012), co-authored by Gelsa Knijnik, a professor at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos). The author discusses ethnomathematics, whose central proposal is "[...] that different cultures have different ways of dealing with everyday situations and problems, and of providing explanations for natural and social facts and phenomena" (D'AMBROSIO, 2018, p. 189). To combat racism and promote effective mathematics teaching, the curricular component "Mathematics Education Laboratory" teaches the development of mathematical games. In this regard, one can consider African games such as *Ntxuva*, popular in Mozambique (BAQUETE, 2020), and *Sona* geometry (Lusona), sand drawings traditional in Angola (OLIVEIRA, 2015).

Regarding representative authors for Black individuals, three PhD professors and researchers from public higher education institutions come to mind: Eliza Maria Veras da Silva, Manuela da Silva Souza, and Josefa Itailma Rocha. Silva is considered the first professor at the Institute of Mathematics and Statistics at the Federal University of Bahia, and could be seamlessly integrated into the curriculum component titled *History of Mathematics*, which aims, among other things, to study the contributions of non-European peoples. Likewise, Souza, also from Bahia, currently serves at the Federal University of Bahia and works in the field of algebra, specifically in polynomial functions. Lastly, in the same field of algebra, Rocha, from Rio Grande do Norte, is a professor at the Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG) in Paraíba. This way, students can see that, given adequate social and economic conditions, there would not be such a large disparity in representation across any field of knowledge, as observed in the exact sciences.

In the syllabus at University "F", the field of Applied Social Sciences is examined. In this area, the racial issue has been framed within legal parameters through the course *Education of Ethnic-*

How to build a black curriculum? A reflection on the black presence in areas of knowledge *Racial Relations*. However, with regard to a curricular reconfiguration, the contribution of African countries' legal systems to the course *Comparative Law* could be reconsidered, as this discipline is extremely relevant in providing future members of the judiciary with knowledge about the legislations of African countries.

This inclusion in the curriculum is timely, given that the syllabus compares the Brazilian Federal Constitution with the laws of countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and Russia, covering the American, European, and Asian continents, but without mentioning any African countries. The question then arises as to why the legislations of these African countries are excluded, as they could serve as a basis for Brazilian law. With this potential restructuring, the aim is to demonstrate that there is legal consolidation and foundation in African countries, promoting curricular public policies for the social inclusion of Black people into society through a theoretical reconstruction in the legal realm, which will gradually influence the decisions of Brazilian judges and courts.

It is also worth pointing out some representative names in the field of legal ideas that could be included in the syllabus of the Law program at University "F", particularly in the *History of Law* course: Luiz Gonzaga Pinto da Gama (1830-1882), José Rubino de Oliveira (1837-1891), Pedro Augusto Carneiro Lessa (1859-1921), and Antônio Ferreira Cesarino Júnior (1906-1992). All of these authors are notable for their legal work, have achieved distinguished and renowned positions in Brazilian society, and studied at the main center for legal education in Brazil, the prestigious Largo de São Francisco School, part of the University of São Paulo.

Solely based on their professional achievements, these authors should be included in the syllabus of the aforementioned university. However, it is also important to highlight that they are Black authors, a vital element in demonstrating to society that skin color has no bearing on intellectual capacity. Furthermore, they serve as an inspiration for young students in the judiciary, as examples of individuals who used their social influence to reduce racial prejudice.

At University "G", the undergraduate program in Literature, which falls under the field of Linguistics, Literature, and Arts, stands out for its inclusion of African Literature as a specific subject, though it is limited to elective courses, meaning it is not guaranteed that students will choose it. The courses on this theme are electives and cover nations such as Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guiné-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola, but without highlighting their authors, merely referring to the study of the literature of these countries.

In the curricular offerings for students, the course *Advanced Studies in African Literature in*

*Portuguese* is notable, with a workload of 60 hours. However, due to the lack of emphasis on Black authors, at least two nationally influential names could be considered, which would serve as inspiration for students and provide opportunities for equity.

One of these authors is Domício Proença Filho, a retired professor from the Federal Fluminense University (UFF), with a PhD in Literature and a habilitation in Brazilian Literature from the Federal University of Santa Catarina. He has more than 60 publications and was the second Black person to hold the presidency of the Brazilian Academy of Letters (2016/2017), following Machado de Assis. The second reference for an equitable curriculum is Maria da Conceição Evaristo de Brito, from Minas Gerais, with a PhD in Comparative Literature from the Federal Fluminense University. She is a professor in the basic education system of Rio de Janeiro, with publications that have had an impact in Brazil, Germany, England, and the United States a trajectory that positioned her as a candidate for the Brazilian Academy of Letters.

At University "H", the focus is on the Biological Sciences, represented here by Biology. In this institution's program, both mandatory and elective courses cover various fields related to cellular development: evolutionary, molecular, tissue, and structural. There are numerous authors who contribute to these areas, and one of them is Simone Maia Evaristo. Although not present in the institution's Pedagogical Project, she is essential for topics in biological sciences and for the decolonization of the Biology curriculum. Evaristo holds a master's degree from the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO), is the president of the National Cytology Association (Anacito), and serves as a professor and researcher in the Integrated Section of Cytopathology Technology in the Pathology Division at the National Cancer Institute (Inca). She studies cytotechnology, a diagnostic technique for diseases such as cancer.

In summary, to emphasize the points previously discussed, here are the Black authors presented in this research, along with their respective fields of knowledge: Milton Santos and Lélia de Almeida Gonzalez in the human sciences; Viviane dos Santos Barbosa in engineering; Juliano Moreira in the health sciences; Elson Borges dos Santos in agricultural sciences; Eliza Maria Ferreira Veras da Silva, Manuela da Silva Souza, and Josefa Itailma da Rocha in mathematical sciences; Luiz Gonzaga Pinto da Gama, José Rubino de Oliveira, Pedro Augusto Carneiro Lessa, and Antônio Ferreira Cesarino Júnior in applied social sciences; Domício Proença Filho and Maria da Conceição Evaristo de Brito in Linguistics, Literature, and Arts; and Simone Maia Evaristo in biological sciences.

These Black authors, briefly mentioned in their respective fields of expertise, represent only a sample of the intellectuals who could significantly contribute to a more just and equitable society. It

How to build a black curriculum? A reflection on the black presence in areas of knowledge is unnecessary to emphasize that they are merely a few examples of many other highly skilled professionals in their respective areas, with both national and international reach. Thus, it is important to question the absence of these intellectuals in university curricula, considering that their research is vital for the country's development.

## Final considerations

This research sought to contribute to the understanding that racism is a reality in Brazil. The absence of prominent Black individuals in eight areas of knowledge was analyzed in order to point out that this lack of representation in syllabi is not the result of incompetence, but rather of discrimination. The research results suggest that, to build a more just and less racist society, it is necessary to combat structural racism, which manifests in different spheres of social life, specifically in Brazilian university curricula.

Brazil is a country marked by a history of racism and racial inequality, a fact that reaffirms the constant need to combat racism in a broad and consistent manner. Consequently, the findings of this research are guided by a path of hope, if they can contribute, along with others of the same perspective, to an understanding that the lack of Black representation in areas of knowledge is not due to incompetence but to circumstances. Once this condition is addressed, there will be a more just and less racist society.

When a society fails to recognize everyday acts of racism and there is no identification of a cohesive group with political organization and clear demands, there is substantial difficulty in creating public and affirmative policies aimed at social justice. It is important to note that expecting natural social equity to dissipate racism without state intervention is unfounded, as this would shift the responsibility to the private sphere. Thus, the commitment to eradicating racism would fall on ordinary people.

From the presented perspective, it is understood that the subject of areas of knowledge can serve as a path to contributing to equity between Black and white individuals in Brazil. This, in turn, encourages new research that highlights the importance of people in their respective fields of knowledge, regardless of their skin color.

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Recebido em: 15/06/2022

Aprovado em: 03/06/2024