

Um relato sobre a trajetória da mulher negra no Brasil: proposições decoloniais para um percurso antirracista e de empoderamento feminino

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RESUMO

O texto descreve uma prática educacional focada na promoção da igualdade racial e de gênero, numa perspectiva decolonial. A disciplina "Trajetória da mulher negra no Brasil" teve como meta o combate ao racismo e à misoginia, iniciado em 2018, com o projeto "Cuide-se". As atividades incluíram leitura de artigos, debates, produção de bonecas Abayomi, ensaios fotográficos e visitas a uma comunidade quilombola. O objetivo foi contribuir para uma educação antirracista, destacando trajetórias de mulheres negras e promovendo debates sobre padrões de beleza. A prática abordou a Lei n.º 10.639/2003, enfatizando a importância de desconstruir a visão eurocêntrica nos currículos. Atividades como árvore genealógica decolonial e produção de poemas contribuem para o empoderamento dos alunos, promovendo a conscientização sobre a cultura afro-brasileira. Assim, a prática constitui-se num esforço para suscitar a igualdade racial e de gênero, empoderando os estudantes e desafiando estereótipos por meio de uma abordagem educacional abrangente e consciente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Decolonialismo. Eletiva. Estereótipos. Mulher Negra.

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The trajectory of black women in Brazil: decolonial propositions for an anti-racist and female empowerment path

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ABSTRACT

The text describes an educational practice focused on promoting racial and gender equality, from a decolonial perspective. The subject "Trajectory of black women in Brazil" aimed to combat racism and misogyny, starting in 2018 with the "Take Care" project. Activities included reading articles, debates, production of Abayomi dolls, photo shoots and visits to a quilombola community. The objective was to contribute to anti-racist education, highlighting the trajectories of black women and promoting debates about beauty standards. The practice addressed Law 10.639/2003, emphasizing the importance of deconstructing the Eurocentric vision in curricula. Activities such as decolonial family tree and poem production contribute to the empowerment of students, promoting awareness about Afro-Brazilian culture. Thus, the practice was an effort to promote racial and gender equality, empowering students and challenging stereotypes through a comprehensive and conscious educational approach.

KEYWORDS: Decolonialism. Elective. Stereotypes. Black Woman.

Un informe sobre la trayectoria de las mujeres negras en Brasil: propuestas decoloniales para un camino antirracista y empoderamiento femenino

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RESUMEN

Este texto describe una práctica educacional enfocada en la promoción de igualdad de género, en una perspectiva decolonial. Este tema lleva por nombre "Trayectoria de las mujeres negras en Brasil" su objetivo es combatir el racismo y la misoginia comenzando en el año 2018 con el Proyecto "CUIDATE" las actividades incluyeran lectura de artículos, debates, producción de muñecas abayomi, ensayos fotográficos y visitas a la comunidad de quilombola. El objetivo era contribuir para una educación antirracista, destacando trayectorias de mujeres negras y promoviendo debates sobre la belleza Femenina. Esta práctica va de acuerdo con la ley 10.639/2003, enfatizando la importancia de desconstruir la visión eurocéntrica en los planes de estudio. Realizando actividades como el árbol genealógico decolonial y la producción de poemas que contribuyan al empoderamiento de los alumnos, promoviendo la concientización sobre la cultura afro brasilera. Esta práctica fue un esfuerzo para promover la igualdad racial y de género de esta forma Empoderando a los estudiantes y desafiando los estereótipos por medio de un enfoque educacional integral y consciente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Decolonialismo. Electivo. Estereotipos. Mujer Negra.

Introduction

The experience report presented here results from a practice conducted in a school located in the municipality of Aracruz, Espírito Santo, Brazil, where most students self-identify as Black or Brown. Similar to society at large, the school reflects deeply-rooted prejudices in its social relations, choices, and perspectives. In this context, this intervention aims to combat racism and contribute to building a more equitable society.

Focused on everyday conflicts, particularly the low self-esteem experienced by Black girls, the project's proposal aims to address misogyny and racism, both present within the educational environment. The elective⁴ course entitled "The trajectory of Black women in Brazil" thus emerges, addressing themes such as beauty standards, the histories of Black women in Brazil, public policies for Black women, hypersexualization, and women's empowerment.

The central issue is how this elective course can contribute to an anti-racist and non-misogynistic education within the new secondary education framework of Espírito Santo. The general aim is to provide readings, debates, and reflections on the role of Black women, highlighting their trajectories, debating beauty standards, combating violence, and promoting specific policies.

Recognizing our historical heritage urges us to overcome a past marked by violence, subjugation, exclusion, and silencing. Understanding historical concepts such as modernity, colonization, and decolonialism is essential for mapping out the territory we strive to transcend. Students' testimonies reveal critical and analytical capacities, underscoring the media industry's influence in defining beauty standards and diminishing the value of female characters in audiovisual productions.

Gomes (2008b) emphasizes that including discussions about Africa and the issue of race in basic education goes beyond simply adding curricular content. She highlights that the primary goal of this inclusion is to encourage debate, disseminate information, enable political analyses, foster ethical stances, and provoke a transformation in how we perceive diversity. Thus, the author stresses the importance not only of factual knowledge but also of the social and cultural impacts that addressing these issues can have on student development and society at large.

⁴ In essence, an elective subject is a curricular component that the student is free to select and which does not form part of the core curriculum or training itinerary they are taking.

By bringing visibility to the historical trajectory of Black women in Brazil, within the context of incorporating debates about Africa through the elective course, we adopt a stance of confrontation and encouragement aligned with decolonial epistemology.

Throughout the project's implementation, several opportunities are provided for students to share personal experiences or those of individuals close to them, stimulating reflective thinking and decision-making abilities. Additionally, structured activities that can be replicated in other classes and contexts were developed, aiming to foster these discussions. These activities were accompanied by narratives and poems produced by participants. Such an approach aims to cultivate a critical and active stance, enabling students to analyze conflict situations thoughtfully. Consequently, the elective discipline creates scenarios where students prepare to address conflicts, empowering them to express themselves through dialogue and empowerment.

Being a Black Woman in Brazil: Toward a Decolonial Choice of Resistance to Coloniality

According to Balestrin (2013), decolonialism emerged as a current of thought organized through study groups in Latin America in the late 1990s, known as the Modernity/Coloniality group. To understand this pedagogical concept, it is necessary to establish its relationship with three other concepts: modernity, colonialism, and coloniality. From this perspective, it becomes possible to analyze the importance and necessity of mobilization to strengthen the implementation of Law No. 10.639/2003.

Modernity is understood as the effort undertaken by Europeans to promote the political, economic, and cultural development of so-called uncivilized peoples through colonial initiatives. As Walhs, Oliveira, and Candau (2018, p. 3) state, it is “an invention of the European ruling classes following their contact with the Americas.” Sousa (2020) reinforces this view by asserting that

modernity is seen as synonymous with development, rationality, and, above all, as a rupture with humanity's archaic and primitive past through its economic, social, and political model. Thus, under the idea of progress, a temporal hierarchy was established in which Europe is regarded as superior, legitimized by science itself through the universalization of knowledge (Sousa, 2020, p. 66-67).

Through this temporal and geographic hierarchy, values and concepts deemed valid or invalid are established subjects with rights, and subjects silenced through the universalization and imposition of European legitimacy to the detriment of the “othered” subjects.

The trajectory of black women in Brazil: decolonial propositions for an anti-racist and female empowerment path
Contributing to the deconstruction of modern thought are the propositions of Vergès (2020), who frames feminism as a right to exist.

To call oneself a decolonial feminist and to advocate for decolonial feminist politics today is not merely to wrest the word “feminism” from the eager hands of an opposition lacking ideology it is also to affirm our fidelity to the struggles of the women of the Global South who came before us. It is to recognize their sacrifices, to honor their lives in all their complexity the risks they took, the hesitations and discouragements they faced. It is to receive their legacies.

It is also to recognize that the current offensive against women now publicly justified and defended by state leaders is not merely an expression of unnuanced masculinist domination, but rather a manifestation of the destructive violence generated by capitalism. Decolonial feminism is the de-patriarchalization of revolutionary struggles. In other words, decolonial feminist politics contribute to the centuries-long struggle of part of humanity to assert its right to exist (Vergès, 2020, p. 27).

Presenting these theoretical contributions and relating them to the theme of Black women strengthens our understanding and highlights the need to historically overcome the silencing and neglect endured by Black women in Brazil. It reinforces the historical, social, and cultural significance of the topic by recognizing the struggles and achievements of countless women—both anonymous and well-known within the national context.

The acknowledgment that we are shaped by our past encourages us to overcome the cruel legacy of violence, subjugation, exclusion, and silencing. Hence, the importance of engaging with historical concepts in order to better map the terrain we aim to transcend. We will therefore turn our attention to modernity, colonization, and decolonialism.

The construction of modernity unfolded through a vast project of territorial expansion initiated in the 16th century with the conquest of the Americas. This political and economic enterprise involved the interests of various social classes and led to enormous changes in the political, economic, social, and cultural relations of the subjugated peoples.

From the harmful effects of colonization arises the concept of coloniality. It represents the legacy of this “colonial venture,” as it is “a historical and cultural event with roots in colonialism, yet one that remains active in knowledge systems and ways of life even after the decolonization of colonized territories” (Madoxx, 2021, p. 56). As such, it operates through the naturalization of power and racial hierarchies (Quijano, 2000).

Awareness of this legacy deliberately calls for a process of rupture and liberation, which is reflected in the testimonies of students from the elective course, who demonstrated a critical and analytical awareness of reality: “the industry has always tried to dictate to us what is most beautiful

and acceptable, but there is nothing more liberating than choosing what we like about ourselves,” and also, “it is evident, for example, in audiovisual media in general, the devaluation of female characters; content in which women are only portrayed as sexual objects, placed there merely for the enjoyment of their breasts and curves.”

From this polycentric proposition emerges a praxis of resistance, transgression, ontological refusal, and confrontation of racist ideologies, which Walsh (2009, p. 27) defines as decolonialism. This posture of rupture aligns with the purpose of Law No. 10.639/2003, a result of the struggle of the Black movement in Brazil, particularly from the 20th century onward. The law is also guided by the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture.

With the polycentric discourse in mind, students in the elective course express their opinions and share their experiences in a context of active listening and critical reflection on the issues addressed, in line with the DCNs. These moments emphasize the importance of both scientific knowledge and the development of attitudes, emotional skills, and pride through the recognition of their ethno-racial identity. This practice of cultivating polycentric discourse occurs in all classes but is especially emphasized during the PDCA sessions, when proposals are collectively developed and evaluated by the students.

The DCNs (National Curriculum Guidelines) present a political and curricular orientation with historical, social, and anthropological dimensions, committed to combating racism and fostering the construction of a democratic nation. The document proposes:

(...) the dissemination and production of knowledge, the development of attitudes, behaviors, and values that educate citizens to be proud of their ethno-racial backgrounds whether of African, Indigenous, European, or Asian descent so they may interact in the construction of a democratic nation in which everyone, equally, has their rights guaranteed and their identity valued (Brasil, 2004, p.10).

Beyond being a regulation to be followed, Law No. 10.639/2003 represents an ethical and political commitment that is part of a broader pact to strengthen our democracy. In this sense, Gomes (2012) emphasizes that the implementation of the law should not be understood merely as the introduction of new subjects or new content.

[...] The structural change proposed by this legislation paves the way for the construction of an anti-racist education that entails both an epistemological and curricular rupture, as it makes the discussion of Afro-Brazilian and African issues public and legitimate. However, this is not just any form of discourse it is a discourse grounded in intercultural dialogue. And it is not just any intercultural dialogue it is one that seeks to be emancipatory within the school environment; that is, it

The trajectory of black women in Brazil: decolonial propositions for an anti-racist and female empowerment path presupposes and recognizes the existence of the “other” as an active and concrete subject, someone with whom and about whom we speak. In this sense, it embraces conflict, tension, and divergence (Gomes, 2012, p. 105).

However, as it concerns educational legislation, one cannot overlook the curriculum as a territory of dispute (Arroyo, 2011). Therefore, the challenge is particularly significant when it comes to overcoming a monocultural view of knowledge and deconstructing the ideology of racial democracy, which often neutralizes the need for debate on ethnic-racial relations.

Silva (2011) emphasizes the long path between the enactment of the law, a change in mentality, and effective action. Nonetheless, she highlights the critical importance of social movements and Brazil’s international commitments to combating racism and racial prejudice, noting that “(...) there is growing clarity in the understanding that multicultural societies will struggle to become just and democratic (...)” (Silva, 2011, p. 27).

By reflecting on the need for dialogue between curriculum and social reality, this elective course has been and continues to be developed as a praxis of deconstruction and visibility, shedding light on a history filled with struggles and achievements of Black Brazilian women.

The Ethical Dimension in Research Involving Human Beings

Within the broader conversations surrounding ethical regulation in research particularly those involving human subjects and with potential implications in the fields of Human and Social Sciences it becomes essential to address the topic. This is crucial for fostering reflection in studies related to education. But what do we mean by ethics? How do we define this concept? As Hermann (2017) points out, ethics is a philosophical domain that explores the concepts of good and evil, grounded in norms established by society and culture, and serving as a guide for human actions. Moreover, it is vital to consider the debate around research integrity, as discussed by Vieira (2010) and Orlandini (2013). These authors emphasize that integrity has become an increasingly relevant topic among scholars. In this regard, ethical values such as honesty in the handling and disclosure of data, both during the research process and in the presentation of results are fundamental to the genuine production of knowledge.

As established by Resolution No. 466/12 and Resolution No. 510/16, any research involving human subjects requires evaluation by a Research Ethics Committee (CEP). Data collection can only begin after obtaining approval from the committee, as stipulated in the resolution.

Thus, throughout the development of the elective course, ethical issues related to the disclosure of names were carefully considered, especially due to the psychological nature of the subject.

Furthermore, the use of images was avoided to ensure the protection and integrity of the participating students.

Resolution No. 510, dated April 7, 2016, of the National Health Council provides clarifications in its Article 1.

Article 1. This Resolution establishes the regulations applicable to research in the Human and Social Sciences whose methodological procedures involve the use of data directly obtained from participants or identifiable information, or that may pose greater risks than those encountered in everyday life, as defined in this Resolution. Sole paragraph. The following will not be registered or evaluated by the CEP/CONEP system:

- I – public opinion research involving unidentified participants;
- II – research using publicly accessible information, as defined by Law No. 12.527, of November 18, 2011;
- III – research using information in the public domain;
- IV – census research;
- V – research using databases with aggregated information, with no possibility of individual identification;
- VI – research conducted exclusively with scientific texts for the purpose of literature review;
- VII – research aimed at theoretical deepening of situations that arise spontaneously and contingently in professional practice, provided that no data capable of identifying subjects are revealed;
- VIII – activities carried out exclusively for the purpose of education, teaching, or training, without the intent of scientific research, involving undergraduate students, technical course students, or professionals in training programs (Brasil, 2016, p. 1-2).

Resolution No. 510, of 2016, issued by the National Health Council, establishes specific criteria for research in the Human and Social Sciences. Notably, its sole paragraph outlines scenarios that are exempt from evaluation by the CEP/CONEP system, including studies such as unidentified public opinion research, studies based on publicly accessible information, and specific educational activities, among others. Therefore, the methodology adopted in the development of the elective course activity is aligned with the guidelines of this resolution, in full compliance with the established ethical and legal standards.

The Course of the Practice

The practice was carried out in a school located in the municipality of Aracruz, where the majority of students self-identify as Black or Brown. Much like society at large, the school continues to reflect the deep-rooted prejudice present in our social relations, in individual choices, and in our worldview. In this sense, the practice fits into a broader effort to combat racism and to contribute to

The trajectory of black women in Brazil: decolonial propositions for an anti-racist and female empowerment path the construction of a more just and equitable society. According to data published by the SEGES⁵ portal and also by Educacenso⁶, our institution has:

Box 1 – Data Collection Based on Educacenso

Modality	Grade	Yellow	White	Indigenous	Brown	Black	Not Declared	Total
Integrated Secondary Education	1°	0	5	1	32	3	2	43
Integrated Secondary Education	2°	0	8	0	20	2	0	30
Regular Secondary Education	1°	1	45	4	129	19	14	212
Regular Secondary Education	2°	1	75	3	174	8	0	261
Regular Secondary Education	3°	0	78	4	198	20	4	304

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Grounded in everyday conflicts and struggles particularly in response to the well-known cases of low self-esteem among Black girls this elective course emerged as a proposal to confront both misogyny and recreational and institutional racism⁷, experienced by these students across various social settings.

Thus, the elective course “The Trajectory of Black Women in Brazil” has been and continues to be developed as a means of sustaining a practice and a stance of resistance within the classroom against the legacy of more than three centuries of exploitation and enslavement of the Black population in our country.

5 State School Management System through which families, students, and teachers can monitor school activities.

6 It is a tool that allows access to both collective data (by grade, class, or school) and individual data of students and teachers from the municipal, state, and federal education networks.

7 According to Almeida (2019), structural racism refers to the way society, through its very organization, privileges certain races or ethnicities to the detriment of others. In this way, both individual behaviors and institutional processes are regulated. Regarding recreational racism, Moreira (2015) points out that it is a form of racial oppression disguised as humor. It consists of jokes and comments that ridicule the physical, cultural, or behavioral traits of racialized groups such as Black, Indigenous, and Asian peoples. This form of racism is subtle but powerful, as it normalizes prejudice and makes it more difficult to identify and combat discrimination.

A Historical Retrospective of Anti-Racist Practice

The need to focus specifically on this group arose in 2018, during discussions about beauty standards in a History class. Although we attempted to address the topic within regular lessons, we felt challenged to develop something more targeted for Black and Brown female students experiencing low self-esteem. From this need, the project “*Take Care of Yourself*” (“*Cuide-se*”) was created an initiative offering psychological support through discussion circles mediated by volunteer psychologists between 2018 and 2020.

From that point forward, the idea emerged to organize a space that, beyond offering emotional and affective support, could also promote intellectual engagement, the development of affective listening skills, racial empowerment, and argumentative capacity. As a result, the first edition of the proposal took place during the first trimester of 2022. Due to high demand and feedback from the students themselves, a second edition with the same theme was launched in the second trimester of 2023.

As an integrative component, the elective course is not graded with numerical marks, but attendance is recorded. Therefore, enrollment is based on voluntary participation, meaning students choose the theme out of personal interest. In this context, the use of the PDCA cycle (Plan, Do, Check, Act) which, according to Campos (2009), is a methodology designed to support the diagnosis, analysis, and prognosis of organizational problems can and should be applied in education as a tool to gauge interest and guide the development of student-centered initiatives.

This project culminated in the publication of a section highlighting the activities carried out, featured in an e-book by the APOIE/SEDU group⁸. The proposal encompasses various areas, including research, reading, group study, socialization, and artistic and media production.

The central question guiding this proposal is: How can an elective course a subject that forms part of the diversified curriculum of the new Secondary Education model in the state of Espírito Santo contribute to an anti-racist and non-misogynistic education through youth-led initiatives?

As a response to this guiding question, the overall objective of the course was to create spaces for reading, debate, and reflection on the role of Black women in Brazilian history, focusing on their social and cultural contributions as well as their struggles and processes of re-signification. More specifically, the course aimed to present the trajectories of both anonymous and officially recognized

⁸ The Psychosocial Action and Interactive School Guidance program (APOIE) is a sector of SEDU (the State Department of Education of Espírito Santo) aimed at ensuring the right to access and remain in an inclusive and quality education system.

The trajectory of black women in Brazil: decolonial propositions for an anti-racist and female empowerment path Black women; to promote debates and reflections on Eurocentric beauty standards; to combat all forms of violence inside and outside the school environment; to reject all forms of sexualization of Black women's bodies; and to present data that demonstrate the need for public policies specifically targeting Black women.

Initial Provocations

What is the social position of Black women in Brazil? Are Black women acknowledged and valued in the cultural, social, and political construction of our country? To what extent are Black women still viewed exclusively through the lens of sexuality? Does the ideology of the "fragile woman" apply to Black women? What beauty standards do the media and industry impose on Black women?

Reflecting on these issues calls for acts of resistance that can only be questioned through a historical and decolonial lens. Through this critical posture built on knowledge and reflection it becomes possible to open pathways toward the construction of a less exclusionary and less racist society, in which Black women continue to be daily targets of neglect and all forms of physical and psychological violence.

Taking on the challenge of proposing actions that advance racial education and dismantle racism requires a confrontational stance toward many conflict-laden situations. When the issue of race is kept silent, interracial relations tend to be subtly organized around a "pact of coexistence." However, demanding that the school environment engage in dialogue about racism and the history of struggle and achievements of the Black movement in Brazil means preparing the ground for significant confrontations.

Several situations that took place within the school context underscored the urgent need to develop strategies capable of eliminating remarks such as: "you're a clever little Black girl," said to a Black teacher pursuing her doctorate; "you stink like a monkey," said by a student to a Black girl after she stopped him from cutting in the school lunch line; "you're a fat Black woman," said by a student to a teacher in disagreement over a grade; and "Black people should die," a phrase that was written in multiple places around the school (before the installation of security cameras), right after a school-wide discussion on racial quotas had taken place.

What should be done in the face of these and so many other cases? Remain silent to promote a so-called "racial appeasement"? Or take on the responsibility of endorsing moments of dialogue,

reflection, and also the dissemination of knowledge about affirmative and punitive actions hard-won achievements of the Black movement in our country?

For these and so many other cases, the struggle does not belong solely to Black people, nor only to those who claim not to be racist (given that Brazil's entire historical process has been shaped by racism); rather, it depends on everyone committing themselves to an antiracist struggle.

In this sense, the elective course was seen, within the school context, as an opportunity to make the curriculum more flexible creating spaces to give greater visibility to voices that have been historically silenced. The propositions of Santomé (2015) support this bold goal of adopting a non-hegemonic and non-Eurocentric stance, both in the curriculum and in pedagogical practice.

When one closely examines the content explicitly developed in most educational institutions and what is emphasized in curricular proposals, what stands out is the overwhelming presence of cultures that can be described as hegemonic (Santomé, 2015, p. 161).

Illustrating the importance of curriculum flexibility through the inclusion of subaltern and silenced cultures, we present the testimony of a student: *"I learned many things about Black culture that are present both in my family and in our country, (...), dolls used to soothe children, and even stories about what Black women were like in my state in the past."*

This reflection aligns with the aims of the elective course and with the implementation of Law No. 10.639/2003, further supported by the perspective of Gomes(2008).

Far more than a curricular topic, the inclusion of discussions about Africa and the issue of Black identity in Brazil within basic education aims to promote debate, circulate information, enable political analysis, foster ethical stances, and transform our perspective on diversity (Gomes, 2008b, p. 81).

Bringing visibility to the historical trajectory of Black women in Brazil, as part of the inclusion of debates on Africa, thus becomes a stance of resistance and empowerment grounded in decolonial epistemology, which will be presented in the following section.

Methodological Approach: A Space for Dialogue and Reflection Toward the Construction of Critical Consciousness and Resistance

The elective course began in partnership with a psychologist, who introduced the proposal of constructing a decolonial family tree distinct from the Eurocentric model, in which written documents are prioritized over memories and oral narratives.

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The experience proved highly meaningful, as it revealed many shared elements in the memories of students participating in the elective course: stories of birthday celebrations, recollections of comforting foods, but also numerous accounts of abandonment, separation, and conflicts related to alcoholism and drug abuse.

This initial activity, proposed by the psychologist, was inspired by the concept of oraliture, coined by Afro-Brazilian linguist and writer Conceição Evaristo (2013). Her proposal challenges homogenized narratives of the past, breaking with the notion that written sources are the most reliable or the only means of constructing and analyzing history, including one's personal history.

In her novel *Beco da Memória*, Evaristo (2013) affirms that memory acts as the guiding thread of the narrative, through which the past is recalled. It is through memory that representations are constructed, allowing individuals to recognize themselves as historical subjects.

In addition to this activity, the proposal was carried out through a variety of actions, including: reading articles that promote reflection on beauty standards; analyzing situations in which Black beauty is either sexualized or perceived as “exotic”; holding debates based on the films *Nappily Ever After* and *The Hate U Give*; reading the story *The Eternal Struggle of Black Mothers* by Maciel de Aguiar; reading the book *Who's Afraid of Black Feminism?* by Djamila Ribeiro; crafting *Abayomi* dolls; researching and presenting stories of Brazilian Black women; conducting a photo essay featuring female students and school staff in partnership with photographers; creating a memory book with class reflections and testimonies; producing digital content to be shared on social media as a form of awareness-raising; creating lapbooks; organizing an African doll contest; and taking a field trip to the São Cristóvão Quilombola community and the Constância de Angola House in São Mateus, Espírito Santo.

Throughout the development of the course, several moments were created to encourage the exchange of experiences, during which students shared personal stories or those of people they knew. These exchanges fostered reflective thinking, decision-making skills, and the development of a critical and active stance through the analysis of conflict situations.

In this way, the elective course mobilized scenarios in which students were prepared to face conflict and empowered to assert themselves through dialogue and self-empowerment.

Carrying out this type of intervention during the school year represents a viable possibility for any educator willing to engage with the education of racial relations. Aimed at empowerment, knowledge, and the appreciation of ancestral wisdom, as well as the fight against racism, this approach seeks to move beyond the reductionist view of “Black Consciousness Day” as a stand-alone event. This is not to delegitimize the date, but rather to ensure it reflects the outcome of a year-long process of sustained action and engagement.

Some Possibilities for Replicability

The elective course, like any subject in its constitution, is composed of various elements which, according to Chervel (1999, p. 207), include “instruction through exposition, exercises, practices of encouragement and motivation, and an evaluative framework.” When it comes to exercises a key component of the elective thought was also given to the potential for replicability. This is based on the understanding that the course fosters the ability to reflect on both its scope and its limitations, allowing its practices to be adapted and applied in other educational settings.

The possibility of replicability refers to the ease with which a given activity can be applied in order to achieve the specific objectives for which it was developed. It is understood that the creation of a replicable activity allows for broad applicability. When an activity is replicable, it enables other researchers, educators, or professionals to reproduce it and reassess the outcomes. This not only strengthens the reliability of the findings by confirming or challenging previous results but also facilitates comparison and critical analysis across different contexts.

Proposals 1, 2, and 3 were carried out during the elective course and serve as examples of actions that can be implemented within any curricular component and in a variety of educational settings.

Proposal 1: Construction of a Decolonial Family Tree

Objective: To support the organization and construction of family memory based on recollections and oral narratives from close relatives.

Materials: colored pens, paper, cutting materials, and blank sheets.

Classroom arrangement: chairs in a circle to facilitate dialogue and allow the teacher to move easily among the students.

Implementation: The teacher may begin by explaining that a decolonial family tree is organized differently from the conventional model: instead of focusing strictly on written documents to indicate

The trajectory of black women in Brazil: decolonial propositions for an anti-racist and female empowerment path degrees of kinship, it emphasizes memory and oral storytelling. The teacher can start by drawing on the board, placing their own name at the center of a circle. Using arrows or other visual elements, they highlight meaningful memories that were fundamental in shaping their personality and character. Next, students are encouraged to create their own trees on blank sheets of paper. After allowing time for this activity, the teacher initiates a dialogue, inviting some students to share their trees with the group and then takes on the role of mediator during the presentations, fostering respectful listening and reflection.

Proposal 2: Poem Writing

Production of a poem/text on empowerment, based on the reading of Djamila Ribeiro's text⁹.

What Is Female Empowerment?

Highlighted below are Poems 1 and 2, written by students.

Poem 1

*On the Wings of Strength, women dwell there, never retreating,
Empowered and free, destined to fight for respect and equality, unceasing.
With courage and passion, they write their destiny, breaking barriers, tracing a new path.
Uniting voices and dreams in a single chorus of song, female empowerment a legacy to be made
strong. Breaking stereotypes, defying norms,
women empower themselves through their actions and forms.
With courage, they claim what they rightfully deserve,
after so much suffering they've had to preserve.
Bell hooks teaches us, with a resilient voice,
empowerment is struggle a persistent choice (Student 1)*

Poem 2

*They never taught me how to have self-love,
but they told me how to act so a man would like me.*

⁹ The text is available at: <https://linguadinamica.wordpress.com/2018/03/07/sequencia-didatica-empoderamento-feminino/>.

*They never taught me how to love myself,
but they taught me how to act so a man would like me.
And why should I care? I've asked myself that since I was little—
Shouldn't the choice be mine?
I grew up, matured, and still I always hear,
"If you keep being this way, you'll never get married."
And why should that concern me? I am who I am because I choose to be.
I fight for what I believe in because I am strong on my own.
I don't need a man to tell me what to do or when to do it.
I am not just a woman I am a woman.
I carry the blood of an Indigenous ancestor
who fought for her freedom, who was cast aside,
given no choice over what she could do.
I don't pity her I am proud of her strength.
She and so many other women couldn't fight for their rights,
but today, we women do fight.
We find pieces of ourselves in the powerful women
who cross our paths.
We've learned that we are not rules.
We are not standards.
There is no manual for perfection.
We are what we choose to be.
Even in fear, we are strong.
We carry a strength that doesn't fade,
a brave and tender love,
a nameless feeling.
We are people.
We are simply who we want to be—
and that is how we shall remain.
(Student 2)*

Proposal 3: Social Experience with the Abayomi Dolla

Materials: assorted fabrics, scissors, and ribbons for making the dolls.

Implementation:

Step 1: Present the symbolic and ancestral meaning of the abayomi doll;

Passo 2: Crafting of their own abayomi dolls;

Passo 3: Students who wish to do so will take a doll home, choose a family member, and ask a few simple questions, such as: Have you seen this doll before? What do you think of it? What does it represent to you? After asking the questions, the student will listen attentively to the responses and then explain the true meaning of the doll. Additionally, they will write a brief report or entry in a logbook describing the experience, which will be shared with the class in the following lesson.

Some Narratives Collected Throughout the Process

Based on the text presented by Bruner (1997), the intention behind using narratives arising from the development of the elective course is to understand them as interpretations of reality shaped by the social conventions in which they are embedded, as well as by human needs. The author also emphasizes that, just as our understanding of the natural world is shaped by the scientific categories we adopt, our understanding of human relationships is influenced by the narratives we use to describe them. In other words, the stories we tell and that are socially accepted shape and inform how we perceive and make sense of human relationships and experiences.

With the aim of analyzing the narratives described by the students, Bruner (1997) proposes the existence of two distinct modes of cognitive functioning: the paradigmatic and the narrative. Each mode offers different ways of structuring experience and constructing reality. In this context, the narrative mode of cognition is adopted, in which knowledge reflects a more practical understanding, encompassing knowledge built through biographical and narrative means. This method stands out for portraying concrete human experience as a narrative of intentions, outlining a sequence of events anchored in lived time and space experiences that are unique and particular to each individual.

In analyzing the film *Nappily Ever After*, we can see how difficult it is for Black women to confront their own hair and features, and how challenging it is to go through hair transition. This process is always complicated, as it deeply affects self-esteem and how we see ourselves. After so much time wearing our hair the way society deems “beautiful and acceptable,” it becomes a daily struggle because throughout the transition, countless unpleasant comments arise, which often make us want to give up. But above all, we must prioritize ourselves and focus on what truly makes us happy. The beauty industry has always

CAPRINI; SANTOS; SILVA

tried to dictate what is most beautiful and acceptable, but there is nothing more liberating than being able to choose what we like about ourselves (*Student 1*).

During my time online for entertainment, it's not hard to notice situations that hurt me as a woman. It's clearly visible, for instance, in audiovisual media in general, the devaluation of female characters the way women are portrayed only as sexual objects, existing just to be admired for their breasts and curves. Alongside this is the "edgy humor" in which these characters are always dumb, overly naive, and dependent on the male protagonist. [...]

(Student 2)

When I joined the elective, I was looking to gain more knowledge about Black figures, due to the lack of historical personalities with these characteristics in social media to serve as inspiration. In the classroom, we were able to watch films, personal accounts, and explanatory videos on the topic, while also embracing other causes related to these women, such as feminism. In addition to debates, essays, and slides, we also had the opportunity to make dolls and learn more about the cultures of other peoples who are still discriminated against by society today. To me, the most important topic discussed in this elective was definitely racism and the societal standards imposed on women engaged in this struggle. The closing of the elective and the photo session featuring members of our school community gave Black women a space of their own after so long without representation in the school environment.

(Student 3)

At first, I was really happy when the teacher invited me to participate in a photo session for her elective "The Trajectory of Black Women in Brazil." We scheduled the date and time, and when I arrived, I saw there were other girls taking photos too. Amid the camera clicks, I felt joy in being a symbol of Black representation at school. On the day of the elective showcase, the photos were being displayed and I almost cried with joy to be part of such a beautiful project. The teacher did an amazing job showing how important Black women have been in Brazilian history and in the world as well!

(Student 4)

Participating in the elective "The Trajectory of Black Women in Brazil" was, just like the name suggests, a journey. I learned many things about Black culture, both within my family and in our country foods with different names, dolls used to soothe children, and even stories about what Black women were like in my state. I made new friends whom I'm still close to, and I believe the girls in the class grew closer to one another. Mentally speaking, I think I grew a lot in terms of how and what to think about Black women in Brazil a group so rarely discussed in a positive light. At school, we often only learn about how much they suffered, so discovering that some led revolutions and saved their families was an eye-opening experience. I can define the elective with two words: respect and growth. Words that are often not put into practice, but which, through the elective, even if no one notices, truly increased.

(Student 5)

At first, I decided to join the elective because I felt represented. I had never seen any elective course about Black people especially about women. I like the elective because it gives the attention women need, especially Black women.

(Student 6)

These testimonies transcribed here and many others heard throughout the school year—regarding empowerment suggest that the elective course is not a magical formula capable of dismantling centuries of ingrained conditioning, continually reinforced by the practice of recreational racism in the country. However, we point to this action as a practice of resistance, grounded in the

The trajectory of black women in Brazil: decolonial propositions for an anti-racist and female empowerment path understanding that education plays a fundamental role in challenging stereotypes, particularly those that affect Black women.

The relationship with Afro-textured hair, for example, as portrayed in the film *Nappily Ever After*, served as a catalyst for discussions on hair transition. At no point was the intention to romanticize the transition process; rather, it was approached as a theme for dialogue, with an emphasis on the benefits of freedom of choice. During hands-on activities, such as the photo sessions in which Black girls were being photographed, they received many compliments regarding their beauty and, above all, their hair offering a powerful counterpoint to the comments and jokes that still persist in labeling their hair as "bad," as seen in Student 3's reflection on the photo session: "*Black women had a space of their own after so long without representation in the school environment.*".

Gomes (2008a, p. 9) points out that

afro-textured hair or Black hair when perceived as "bad," is an expression of racism and racial inequality imposed on Black individuals. Viewing Black hair as "bad" and white hair as "good" reveals a deep-rooted conflict. Therefore, changing one's hair may reflect an attempt by Black people to escape the place of imposed inferiority, or it may indicate the internalization of this perception. It can also represent a sense of autonomy, expressed through bold and creative ways of wearing one's hair.

Bringing the ancestral significance of Afro-textured hair into the discussion—as a symbol of Black identity—and questioning beauty standards as singular models to be copied by all proved to be a meaningful activity in a practice centered on rupture and transformation. In this sense, the elective also aimed to support the hair transition process, allowing beauty standards to be critically discussed and analyzed as racial impositions rooted in white norms.

Another clearly evident aspect in the students' narratives that reflects a collective maturation is the recognition of Black representation. Student 1 affirms: "*The industry has always tried to dictate what was most beautiful and acceptable, but there is nothing more liberating than choosing what we like about ourselves.*" Student 3's narrative also supports this perspective: "*The most important topic discussed in this elective was definitely racism and the societal standards that surround women in this struggle*".

Identifying the representation of Black women in the antiracist struggle within media and social networks is a decolonial achievement that challenges and deconstructs the standards imposed by colonization what decolonial studies refer to as the "coloniality of being"¹⁰. Thus, recognizing oneself as a Black woman is part of a process of breaking away from misogyny and the silencing and

10 Understood as the way the effects of colonization are experienced by peoples subjugated by colonial powers, coloniality is identified by Mignolo (2003, 2010) and Maldonado-Torres (2007) as a process of the dehumanization and inferiorization of people particularly in terms of gender and sexuality pushing their existence away from the very notion of humanity.

stereotypes that have been historically imposed. It is a process of individual liberation, as seen in the narrative of Student 4: *“Amid the camera clicks, I felt the joy of being a symbol of Black representation at school.”*

These narratives suggest that the elective course served as a practice that contributed to the deconstruction of preconceived notions, values, and stigmas. It therefore became a decolonial praxis a form of resistance against the harmful effects of colonization

Final considerations

And now? Does one reach the end of the process with satisfaction, as a surgeon might after successfully removing a metal object from a patient’s body? The answer is no. And this is said without sadness because there is beauty in the ongoing process of confronting racism and all forms of discrimination.

This process is not meant to be romanticized, but along this path marked by many conflicts and acts of resistance it is indeed possible to harvest both flowers and fruits. The testimony of a school cleaning staff member stands as proof of this. Overcome with emotion while being made up by another professional, she confided: *“I haven’t felt like this in years!”*

At the beginning of this text, the pedagogical experience was framed around a guiding question: *How can the elective course contribute to an antiracist and non-misogynistic education in the context of the new High School curriculum in Espírito Santo?*

The experience report presented clearly highlights the importance of addressing ethnic-racial themes within the discipline, grounded in solid theoretical foundations and contextualized within the everyday lives of young people. Approached from a critical and decolonial perspective, this discussion enabled the unveiling of dominant Eurocentric social representations in their lives and fostered the construction of a new perspective one of emancipation and affirmation of their Afro identity. In this way, the elective contributed to the emancipation of the participants from misogynistic and racist stereotypes and practices, empowering them—as evidenced in the words of one student, who stated

the diversity of the quilombola house was enchanting. The way they told their stories and also shared with us the stories of past generations... seeing the gentleness, the expression, and the joy of someone proud of the fruits of their labor. Learning a bit about how they make beiju and about the community’s culture—how singing is a

The trajectory of black women in Brazil: decolonial propositions for an anti-racist and female empowerment path part of their daily life, and how they work together, collectively, as a family—gave us knowledge and a new way of seeing what we had previously discussed in the classroom ”(Student, 2nd year of high school).

Thus, based on the detailed account of the implementation of the course presented in this text, it is clear that the objective to foster readings, debates, and reflections on the role of Black women through the highlighting of life stories, the questioning of beauty standards, the fight against violence, and the promotion of specific policies was fully achieved. It is also possible to affirm that this course can (and should) be replicated and used as inspiration for other schools, projects, and initiatives. The experience report has demonstrated both its importance and its viability.

In this sense, the elective described here stands as a concrete example of the possibility of implementing an education for ethnic-racial relations grounded in a decolonial perspective.

The feeling of witnessing empowerment take root in students who were once shy and had low self-esteem through each dialogue, each testimony of newly faced challenges, each act of critical reflection, and every smile captured in a photograph reveals the hope that it is indeed possible to live in a country where skin color is no longer a condition for exclusion, violence, or discrimination.

Here we recall the lyrics of the song “*Está Escrito*” by Grupo Revelação: “*Sometimes happiness takes time to arrive/That’s when we must not stop dreaming/A warrior does not run from the fight and cannot back down/No one can delay someone who was born to win...*” Engaging in practical and reflective activities like those in this elective course encourages and fills the educator with hope. Each testimony, each new proposal led by the teacher or suggested by the students, reinforces the sense that, as a school, we are on the right path fighting racism, dismantling the myth of racial democracy, and breaking the silences and stereotypes imposed throughout our history.

We are living the process. Perhaps the best fruits will not be harvested by this generation. We plant trees, knowing we may never sit in their shade. Even so, change is taking root. Rupture is underway. We are resisting the statistically proven data imposed by the harmful legacy of colonization in our country. Be the resistance.

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