

## **Women's Education in Latin America: a decolonial look**

**Adriane Santana Lima<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA), Belém/PA – Brazil

**ABSTRACT – Women's Education in Latin America: a decolonial look.** This article analyzes the conception of education for women that are present in the works of Nísia Floresta and Soledad Acosta, and relates to this conception to the Latin American independence and decolonization movements. It is grounded in decolonial feminist genealogy and methodologically, in cultural and comparative history. The results show that the authors debate the educational formation of women in close relationship with the decolonization political movements of the Latin American continent. Their writings constitute a frontier thought that emerges in the dense web of decoloniality.

**Keywords: Women's Education. Latin America. Decoloniality.**

**RESUMO – Educação das Mulheres na América Latina: um olhar decolonial.** Este artigo analisa a concepção de educação para as mulheres presente nas obras de Nísia Floresta e Soledad Acosta de Samper e relaciona esta concepção com os movimentos de independência e descolonização da América Latina. Fundamenta-se na genealogia feminista decolonial e metodologicamente na história cultural e comparada. Os resultados revelam que as autoras debatem a formação educacional das mulheres em estreita relação com os movimentos políticos de descolonização do continente latino-americano. Os seus escritos constituem um pensamento fronteiro que emerge na densa trama da decolonialidade.

**Palavras-chave: Educação de Mulheres. América Latina. Decolonialidade.**

## Introduction

In this article, we compare the conception of education present in the works of Brazilian Nísia Floresta (1810-1885) and Colombian Soledad Acosta de Samper (1833-1913), which are both situated in the context of the independence process of their respective countries. We understand that these women writers<sup>1</sup> present a conception of education for women in intrinsic relation with the decolonization movements of nineteenth-century Latin America. The article seeks to draw a path that allows the rereading of a part of the history of Latin American education<sup>2</sup>, considering the prism of the difference of gender, culture and ethnicity in the construction of the writing of history, emphasizing the narratives and conceptions taken from the writings of women, invisible so far by the official history of education.

The demarcation of the historical period is closely related to the delimitation of the object of this study, considering that it was in the nineteenth century that Latin American nations assumed their struggles for independence from the Spanish and Portuguese metropolises, thus constituting at least in the political sphere, independent countries. Independence, freedom, progress, justice and equality were also affirmed as utopian values of the period, with education being an instrument for its realization. Araújo (2011, p. 3-4), more broadly, highlights five reasons why the study of this historical period in Latin America is justified:

1) At this moment the countries of the continent are already independent and begin a frank process of formation of national identity, where education takes a prominent place.; 2) the nascent nations become laic and begin their liberal education projects by instituting (in some cases on the merely rhetorical level) public instruction; 3) liberal education, in terms of literary and sociological discourse, initiates models and policies of education articulated to the mixed cultural formation, denying it (education for the formation of an elite) or incorporating it (popular education); 4) it covers the same ideas assimilated at different times in the continental extension of the territory - while Enlightenment ideas are strongly incorporated into the discourses of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in the first quarter of the 18th century, when the first struggles for independence take place, they will only appear in Brazil in its last quarter; 5) in 1819 the Republic of Colombia is proclaimed by Simón Bolívar, still composed of New Granada and Venezuela, and in 1928 Oswaldo de Andrade's Anthropophagic Manifesto is published - two symbolic events for the understanding of discourses in defense of education.

Another reason for choosing this period is due to the effective, though not always prominent, contribution of women in the processes of independence and decolonization, understood not only as a rupture moment with the colonial order, but as a far-reaching movement that

went beyond the nineteenth century, which includes the defense of the Republic, the expansion of public education, the democratization of rights and the expansion of female participation in social life<sup>3</sup>.

We seek to inscribe this study, methodologically and epistemologically, in the field of cultural history as a possibility of rewriting history from the place occupied by Latin American women writers. The purpose is to bring to the history surface the voice of a group of subjects, women in this case, who in the midst of adversity and violence have overcome invisibility and prove that, contrary to what Spivak (2010) says, the subordinate can speak.

The writings of Floresta and Samper reveal not only their subjective thoughts and individual emotions, but also the political-cultural struggles and the structures of feelings immersed in their respective realities. It is in this sense that the cultural process becomes an indispensable fabric for social reality in constructions. With this, we affirm the centrality of cultural history as a promising way to enable the achievement of the objectives of this study contributing to read and interpret in different places and moments the construction of a given social reality (Chartier, 1990). The study of history is not restricted to the identification or understanding of a fixed meaning of the dead past and exhausted in itself, nor a way of rescuing the immobile past, but is a way of rereading and rewriting this same past, reframing it by the prism of those who look at it, in this case, by a feminist prism.

This paper is organized into two central parts beyond this introduction and the concluding remarks: one in which we present the conceptions of education of Nísia Floresta and Soledad Acosta de Samper, and the other in which the comparison between the thought of these two writers is made, highlighting some reflections in light of decolonial and boundary theory, dialoguing with authors of this theoretical field, such as Maria Lugones, Gloria Anzaldúa, Walter Dignolo, among others.

## **Education for Women Present in the Writings of Nísia Floresta and Soledad Acosta de Samper**

### *Nísia Floresta*

The author was born in 1810, on October 12, daughter of the Portuguese lawyer Dionísio Gonçalves Pinto Lisboa and the Brazilian Antônia Clara Freire, in Sítio Floresta Papari<sup>4</sup>. She has died in 1885 in Europe, but had her remains brought to Brazil, on the grounds that it would be unfair to keep her body away from her homeland, above all for the courage she had to call herself Brazilian, an undeniable ufanist gesture also present in Nísia's productions.

Part of Nísia Floresta's works can be found at the National Library of Rio de Janeiro. In our survey, we found 15 titles written by Floresta that were also published in other languages (Italian, French and Eng-

lish). Among these titles, we highlight (Dussel, 1847a; 1847b; 1850; 1857; 1859; 1864; 1989; 1997a; 1997b; 2008): 1. *Women's rights and men's injustice* (1832); 2. *Advice to my daughter* (1842); 3. *Fany or the Maidens Model* (1847); 4. *The tear of a Caeté* (1849); 5. *Friend's Dedication / Historical Romance* (1850); 6. *Humanitarian booklet* (1853); 7. *Itineraire d'un Voyage en Allemagne/ Itinerary of a Trip to Germany* (1857); 8. *Scintille d'un'Anima Brasiliana/ Scintillations of a Brazilian Soul* (1859); 9. *Trois Ans en Italie, Suivis d'un Voyage en Grèce / Three Years in Italy, Followed by a Trip to Greece* (1864); 10. *Le Brésil/Brazil* (1871).

In 1837, she moved to Rio de Janeiro with her family and two children, due to the Farroupilha Revolution, which makes it difficult to stay in Porto Alegre. On February 15, 1838, she founded the Augusto College in Rio de Janeiro and kept it in operation for 17 years (Duarte, 2010).

The opening of the Augusto College was an opportunity that the author found to put into practice the education for women that she defended in her writings. The Augusto College adopted as pedagogical practice the teaching of disciplines that until then were reserved to men, as: the study of Sciences, Latin, French, Italian and English, with their respective grammars and literatures, the study of Geography and History of Brazil, the practice of Physical Education. It also advocated limiting the number of students per class as a way of ensuring the quality of education (Castro, 2010). Obviously, this pedagogical proposal was considered immoral at the time, because the education of women could not go beyond the learning of sewing and needlework. Nísia received severe criticism from conservative families and some of these criticisms were published in newspapers at the time. However, even under heavy attacks, the author continues to disclose the opening of her school, including in the newspapers, such as the *Jornal do Comércio*, which was a bold and courageous action by Nísia, as well as subverting the romantic and domestic education then intended to women, and publicly discloses an innovative pedagogical proposal.

Nísia faced the criticism and slander of her opponents simply by presenting herself as headmaster of a college that offered instruction to women beyond what was allowed by that conservative society. However, she was not intimidated by the offenses and made a statement defending the importance of women's education and pointing to the need to overcome the conservatism of the time. For the attitude of defending his position, Floresta was accused of expressing male behavior, which earned him severe personal offenses. Let us look at one of the reviews published by *O Mercantil* newspaper of 1846:

The director's audacity, her *sui juris* (sic) character, her already known ideas for the rehabilitation of women, caused discomfort among the frightened rivals, and among the severe ones, who annoyed this man-like woman, preaching the emancipation of their sex, fighting for the extinction of the hateful male tyranny, writing in the newspapers, stigmatizing slaveholders, outrageously facing secular prejudices. (Sharpe-Valadares, 1989, p. 12).

The criticisms directed at Nísia were all from representatives of the dominant and conservative ideology, which did not admit such audacity, as mentioned in the above excerpt, especially coming from a woman. The comments disqualified the Augusto College and its program of progressive studies, besides there have been slanders about her director's personal life. The theme of education in Nísia Floresta appears both as a denunciation of a model, and as the announcement of a proposal, which she herself tried to implement, at Augusto College, despite the resistances faced.

Because of the rebuttal to their positions, the denunciations assumed a fundamental trait in their writings. In the book *Opúsculo Humanitário* the author makes her main arguments for an educational reform, including its proposals for changes in education and its educational principles, guaranteeing women's right to a broader education and disregarding domestic education, restricted to corsets (Floresta, 1989). The work begins with a tone of denunciation that the author impresses by referring to the education of the Empire, criticizing the weak education that was aimed at Brazilian women.

As the old and new world echoes through the cry – the emancipation of women – our weak voice rises in the capital of the Holy Cross Empire, crying out: educate women! Peoples of Brazil, who call yourselves civilized! Government, that you call yourselves liberal! Where is the most important gift of this civilization, of this liberalism? (Floresta, 1989, p. 2).

The author draws the government's attention to the education of Brazilian women. It questions the ideals of civility, progress, and freedom so much called for by the independentist movements, but denied to women who still preserved the submissive and incapable condition. The author is also emphatic in the criticism of the Brazilian government, which she says does not innovate in women's education. It defends the importance of a feminine, moral, instructive and equal education for men and women. The reforms the country was undergoing required advances in women's education, but were not observed in life by the author. Unfortunately, Brazil's progress was not based on women's education, which was inadmissible for her.

We have witnessed the commitment of the thinking men of educated nations to harmonize the education of women with the grand future that is preparing for humanity. Nevertheless, nothing, or almost nothing, we have seen done to remove the obstacles that slow the progress of our women's education, so that they can overcome the darkness that obscures their intelligence, and know the infinite sweetness of intellectual life that women in a free and civilized nation are entitled (Floresta, 1989, p. 44).

The intellectual development of women meant an overcoming of darkness, as the author said, because intellectual life would provide women with infinite possibilities to collaborate in the formation of a free and civilized state.

Through all this arduous struggle for the education of women, we can consider Nísia Floresta as one of the pioneers not only of Brazilian and Latin American feminism, but also in the dissemination and formulation of the right to an education that respects the intellectual capacity of women promoting equality of rights, breaking prejudices and overcoming the subordination historically imposed on them, including education. The author also contributes to the critique of colonialism, offering elements both to understand how traditional education served to maintain the coloniality of power and to glimpse the role of female education in the emancipation of society.

### *Soledad Acosta de Samper*

Soledad Acosta de Samper was born on May 5, 1833 and died on March 17, 1913 in the city of Bogota. She lived 79 years, being 60 years dedicated to writing, which is why she leaves a vast and impressive production. Despite presenting a considerable production, according to Ordóñez (2000), the author is placed on the fringes of the history of Colombian literature, as it is rarely mentioned and does not systematically present reissues of her works.

According to Ordóñez (2000), despite this silence of history, Soledad Acosta de Samper is the most important Colombian writer of the nineteenth century and the most outstanding in Latin America, due to her significant contribution to Latin American historical thinking.

Contrasted with this importance is the difficult access to her works and the lack of interest of publishers, universities and research centers in socializing their productions. Soledad produced many and varied works, which we highlight some of them: 1. *Aptitud de la Mujer para Ejercer Todas las Profesiones: memoria presentada en el Congreso Pedagógico hispano-Lusitano-Americano reunido* (Samper, 2011); 2. *Diario Íntimo y Otros Escritos de Soledad Acosta de Samper* (Samper, 2003); 3. *Novelas y Cuadros de la Vida Sunamericana* (Samper, 2004); 4. *La mujer ha concluido su carrera* (Samper, 1881); 5. *Una Holandesa en América* (Samper, 1888); 6. *Memorias Presentadas en Congresos Internacionales que se Reunieron en España Durante las Fiestas del IV Centenario del Descubrimiento de América* (Samper, 1893); 7. *La Mujer: revista quincenal exclusivamente redactada para señoras y señoritas* (Samper, 1879); 8. *La mujer en la Sociedad Moderna* (Samper, 1895).

The author begins in 1883 her first publication on history with the biography of *General Joaquín París*. This publication gave Soledad the prize for literary history, which took place in commemoration of Bolívar's centenary. However, we can see that most of Samper's works are crossed by the two central themes *education* and *women*. We understand that these are the focuses of the intellectual work of our writer, by addressing the customs, ways of life, the history of Latin America, indigenous values and those that are mixed<sup>5</sup> and the presence of women in the history of Western modernity. The idea of education that emerges from the writer's works is related to the importance of women's intel-

lectual and professional education, that is, an integral and egalitarian education, linked to the conviction that women are capable of performing any professional and intellectual activity.

For Samper, education should cater for all poor and rich women, an education that offered the learning of a trade and allowed it to live in freedom. In line with the independentist thinking of his day, she considered that the discourse of freedom and progress should be combined with the practice and guarantee of the right to education of the socially excluded, such as women. But it was not home education that taught women how to embroider, sew, and cook. Soledad defended an education for women's autonomy, based on the same intellectual guidelines as men's education. She saw in education a path to freedom, independence and a respected life for Colombian women. The development of the nation, according to Samper (1878), depended on the intellectual advance of women. It is in this sense that *La Mujer* magazine is dedicated to Colombian women, in order to encourage a taste for literature, studies and the pursuit of a career (profession / work). She made this evident in her thanks at the end of the journal in the article *La Mujer ha concluido su carrera*<sup>6</sup>.

Con la presente entrega de *La Mujer* concluirá el primer semestre del tercer año de la Revista. Damos las más expresivas gracias á los suscritores que nos han favorecido con su apoyo y acogido con benevolencia, y nos despedimos de ellos por algún tiempo [...] Cuando en septiembre de 1878 emprendimos la tarea de fundar un periódico destinado particularmente á la mujer colombiana, nuestra intención era, en cuanto estuviera á nuestro alcance, procurar aconsejarla, instruirla, defender sus derechos y entretenerla. Nos proponíamos además recibir con gratitud las producciones que nos enviaron las ya conocidas escritoras colombianas que nos quisieran ayudar, y al mismo tiempo, que *La Mujer* fuera un campo abierto á los nacientes ingenios femeninos para estimularlos en el camino de la buena y sana literatura (Samper, 1891, p. 285)<sup>7</sup>.

For the writer, the woman of the nineteenth century, despite the culture of oppression, could transit through all human activities, being an example in all areas of knowledge, such as science, art, patriotism, heroism and others. To do so, they had only to have access to a solid education, which is the way for the development of women. She emphasized that education should not masculinize women, making them *men in skirts*, as well expressed in this excerpt: "*El buen gusto y la instrucción sólida son el fondo de la educacion de las mujeres, sin que por eso se hagan masculinas y pretensiosas*" (Samper, 1895, p. 152)<sup>8</sup>.

Despite having religion very present in his life and formation, following the predominant Catholic tradition in Bogota and throughout Latin America, the author gradually subverts the religious conservatism associated with hegemonic pedagogical thinking, proposing a broader and more equal education for men and women, without ever losing sight of the particularity of the Latin American context, because

she also refused to transplant educational experiences from Europe to Colombia.

En los países hispanoamericanos las costumbres son tan diferentes de las francesas, alemanas e inglesas que es preciso que el sistema de educación sea adecuado a sus necesidades Morales y los elementos físicos de que dispone. Así como sería una empresa absurda edificar en la helada Siberia una ciudad cuya construcción fuera propia sólo para los ardientes climas de la India, así sería locura procurar aclimataren Hispanoamérica sistemas de educación que sólo han tenido bueno resultado en Alemania, en Suiza, en Inglaterra. Todas las naciones no se encuentran, aunque lo parezca en la superficie, igualmente maduras para recibir la misma educación: su situación geográfica, su historia, su sistema de Gobierno, sus costumbres, las fuerzas físicas y morales de los individuos que las componen, todo en ellas es diferente; y se necesitaría una gran perspicacia y conocimiento íntimo de todas las capas sociales que componen la población de cada país<sup>9</sup> (Samper, 1892, p. 170).

It also advocated an education that respected cultural, geographical (climate, vegetation, physical and other) and historical differences. In her pedagogical thinking, there is a defense of educational planning, which, according to her, should be built based on intimate local knowledge, respecting regional diversity.

Aún mayor delicadeza demanda el sistema de enseñanza que se debe dar a la mujer español y americana. Para dar fuerza, valor y emulación a las mujeres cuyas madres y abuelas han carecido casi por completo de educación, en mi humilde concepto creo que debería empezarse por probarles que no carecen de inteligencia y que a todas luces son capaces de comprender lo que se les quiera enseñar con la misma claridad que los comprenden los varones. Además se les debería señalar con ejemplos vivos y patentes, dado que, en el presente siglo al menos, muchísimas mujeres han alcanzado honores, y distinguiéndose en todas las profesiones a las cuales se han dedicado con perseverancia y ánimo esforzado; debería demostrárseles que si hasta ahora las de raza española son tímidas y apocadas en las cosas que atañen al espíritu, la culpa no es de su inteligencia sino de la insuficiente educación que se les ha dado (Samper, 1892, p. 170)<sup>10</sup>.

Soledad Acosta is therefore a precursor to the Latin American debate on women's right to education. More than that, she defended the strategic place of intellectual and professional formation for the progress of the Colombian nation and, consequently, for its strengthening as a free and independent country.



## **Education for Women in the Decolonial Perspective: by Nísia Floresta and Soledad Acosta**

Colonization uses masks to hide the domination, exploitation and violence of bodies. The ideological justifications contained in the *myth of modernity* (Dussel, 2008) seek to cover up the brutal violence against colonized women. It is worth highlighting the difference between colonization and coloniality, because for Mignolo (2007), colonization is centered on the dominant action of violent conquest, whereas coloniality is an ideological production, a pattern of power that carries with it the rhetoric and the project of salvation of the colonized *barbarians* and which crosses the ages.

La colonialidad es constitutiva de la modernidad, puesto que la retórica salvacionista de la modernidad presupone ya la lógica opresiva y condenatoria de la colonialidad, esa lógica opresiva produce una energía de descontento, de desconfianza, de desprendimiento entre quienes reaccionan ante la violencia imperial. Esa energía se traduce en proyectos decoloniales que, en última instancia, también son constitutivos de la modernidad. La modernidad es una hidra de tres cabezas, aunque sólo muestra una: la retórica de salvación y progreso (Mignolo, 2007, p. 26)<sup>11</sup>.

We understand coloniality, according to Quijano (apud Lugones, 2010), as a pattern of power that is made in the modern and colonial world, as the rationality proper to capitalist exploitation, which in Latin America articulates with racism and the social classification of human groups.

La colonialidad del poder como la forma específica que toman la dominación y la explotación en la constitución del sistema mundial capitalista del poder. 'Colonialidad' se refiere a: la clasificación de las poblaciones del mundo en términos de razas - la racialización de las relaciones entre colonizadores y colonizados; la configuración de un nuevo sistema de explotación que articula en una estructura todas las formas de control del trabajo alrededor de la hegemonía del capital, donde el trabajo está racializado (tanto el trabajo asalariado como la esclavitud, el sistema de siervos, y la pequeña producción de productos; todas eran formas nuevas en la medida en que se constituyeron para el servicio al capitalismo); el eurocentrismo como el nuevo modo de producción y control de la subjetividad; un nuevo sistema de control de la autoridad colectiva alrededor de la hegemonía del estado-nación que excluye a las poblaciones racializadas como inferiores, del control de la autoridad colectiva (Quijano; Wallenstein, 1992 apud Lugones, 2010, p. 4)<sup>12</sup>.

The colonizing mission thus hierarchized humanity, generating a set of social classifications about people that involved not only their social position, race and class, but also gender relations. It is in this

sense that we use the idea that there was a colonization of the sexes that served the power project of modernity / coloniality.

Quijano's (2000) concept of coloniality of power, while important for analyzing the relations between class and race that constitute modernity / coloniality ends up neglecting the deeper dimensions of gender. This is also the evaluation of Lugones (2010), for whom coloniality does not only refer to racial issues, but rather a phenomenon that encompasses all control of sexuality, work, subjectivity / intersubjectivity and the production of knowledge. Lugones (2010) states the importance of studying the intersection of gender / race / class categories, which produced the concept of *gender coloniality*. Thus, to think of the coloniality of gender is to broaden the historical understanding of coloniality, as colonized women are not considered in this perspective of modernity / coloniality as the standard gender, the author's proposal is to think about the resistance of women from their colonial difference, consequently, with the significant difference between women, who bear the marks of their race and class and sexual orientation.

It is in this sense that the writings of Nisia Floresta and Soledad Acosta are located in the fissure of the historical thought of the Latin American decolonization process, presenting an intellectual production on the frontier of political, historical, cultural and theoretical events. Nisia and Soledad are two Latin American writers who represent a resistance to colonial difference and lead us to understand that their writings constitute true decolonial clefs, from which they thought a decolonizing education focused on women and subordinates. Nisia and Soledad's conceptions of education generated criticism of the structural patriarchy, capable of repositioning women in the nascent Latin American nations. Thus, we highlight some central categories, such as: mestizo-colonized women, decoloniality, frontier and women's education. These are categories that are in dialogue with the authors' theoretical productions and that guide our analysis and reflection. The intellectual productions of Nisia Floresta and Soledad Acosta de Samper made it possible for us to understand, even in the face of so many limitations, that writers are located on the frontier of educational knowledge for women, defending more broadly the concept of freedom so claimed in the nineteenth century. This is why the education of women advocated by them is understood as a significant contribution to decolonial theory as well as to a decolonial education.

Regarding public education at the time, despite a considerable expansion of the access, the educational model continued to be monocultural and homogenizing, based on a white, Eurocentric, literate and patriarchal national identity. The *others*, that is, women, the poor, blacks, indigenous people, remained denied. Colonial ideology was thus updated in the post-independence period, and social, racial, and gender divisions remained largely intact.

The writers' thoughts engender criticism of both colonial ideology and hegemonic independentist discourse, introducing fissures in these elitist and phallogocentric discourses. On the other hand, we are aware

that both, because they reflect the structure of feelings of the time, are situated between *permanences* and *ruptures*, which leads us to reflect that the concept of *frontier* is fertile to locate their writings. We understand the concept of boundary as a beginning, the possibility of a new beginning, not an end or as an obstacle in itself. The frontier leads us to revise the imposed social logic, acting as a revisionary time of history itself (Bhabha, 2005), as a possibility of overcoming binary thinking, as a strategy for affirming identities and *other* epistemologies. From the border reality experienced by Nisia and Soledad, it is possible to make some notes in order to decolonize gender, to overcome white feminism, to break with the logic of coloniality so prevalent, not only in independent national states, but also in Eurocentric western feminism that continues to guide subaltern, mixed-race Latin American women in their struggle for freedom.

The authors present, in their productions on women's education, contributions to the process of consolidating the independence of their countries, Brazil and Colombia. However, the writers' thinking is in a place ahead of the hegemonic independentist discourse, which was centered on the mere political-administrative achievement of their countries, as well as on the almost exclusive understanding of men and progress, leaving aside debates such as gender, abolition and the indigenous issue.

The educational analysis of the two writers also reveals the thinking about the specificities of *third world women*, of *mixed race women* from Gloria Anzaldúa (2000) and other decolonial or postcolonial theorists. This stems from the fact that the writings of Nisia Floresta and Soledad Acosta de Samper go beyond our understanding of the field of the history of education. Her reflections present epistemological questions that help us rethink feminism. However, the debate about this *postcolonial* or *decolonial feminism* was not yet in the life of our authors, so we now need to move from past tense to present tense, in order to point out ways for the creation of a new feminism, which contemplates not only the ideas of Nisia and Soledad but also of other women located in the south of Ecuador.

The postcolonial or decolonial feminism proposed by Anzaldúa (2000) is accepted in the writings of Nisia and Soledad from the following aspects: 1. In both, writing is used as a resource for contesting the oppressive order, therefore, as an emancipating instrument; 2. Their biographies and their thoughts are located on a frontier, from the territorial, political, theoretical or cultural point of view; 3. Think of women as historical, autonomous subjects, present in political and social events; 4. Question traditional female education and advocate for broad and critical educational, vocational and cultural education for women; 5. They elaborate a geo-historically situated thought, concerned with the burning themes of its time and context, particularly with the independentist question.; 6. Women think not in isolation, but in articulation with other subordinate subjects, such as black and indigenous, bringing together categories such as gender, race and class.

Thinking about education for Latin American, colonized, and mixed-race women implies overcoming not only the machismo and patriarchy historically present in the dominant historiographical and scientific discourse, but also the constitutive Eurocentrism and racism of Western, white and bourgeois feminism. Against this, we need to invest in the construction of an education and feminism of subordinate, colonized women, a feminism of differences, postcolonial or decolonial, capable of thinking women in a complex and concrete way, articulating the categories gender, race, class and others. For this reason, we highlight the importance of the thought of the chicanist feminist Gloria Anzaldúa (2000), who contributes significantly with her conceptions of border, mestizaje and hybridism. The writings of Nísia Floresta and Soledad Acosta are, therefore, examples of mestizo thinking, as defined by Anzaldúa (2000), temporally situated in the cultural, political, social and educational correlations in which they were historically inserted.

### **Final Considerations**

Brazilian Nisia Floresta and Colombian Soledad Acosta de Samper should be seen as precursors of the Latin American debate on women's right to education. The productions of both contribute to the consolidation of the independence of their respective countries: 1- By criticizing patriarchy as a survival of colonialism; 2 - The announcement of an emancipatory education as a decolonizing resource; 3 - By historical studies, in the case of solitude, about the independence processes of several Latin American countries, highlighting the role of women in these social struggles.

The thought of these writers lies further ahead of the hegemonic independentist discourse, which was centered on the mere political-administrative achievement of their countries, as well as on the almost exclusive understanding of men and progress, leaving aside debates such as gender, abolition and the indigenous question. Nisia and Soledad faced these debates and criticized not only colonization but also the hegemonic elitist projects of the groups that mobilized independence.

Thus, the thoughts of the writers Nísia and Soledad present significant representations in the historical process of Latin American decolonization, representing an intellectual production on the frontier of political, historical, cultural and theoretical events. Nisia and Soledad are two Latin American writers who represent a resistance to colonial difference and lead us to understand that their writings constitute true decolonial slits, from which they thought a decolonizing education.

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## Notes

- 1 In this article I use the term *women writers*, rather than *female literature* or *female writing* because it is the one that best represents the theme addressed, encompassing the writings of Latin American women on education in the nineteenth century and emphasizing writing as an act of freedom. Instead of giving exclusivity to the writings – literature as a cultural product – we want to emphasize the agents, the women, as protagonists of this writing.
- 2 The authors who are being analyzed in this paper consider education to denied subjects (women, blacks and indigenous people). It is for this reason that we consider the perspective of difference as fundamental to demarcate the present study.
- 3 We refer the reader to the work *Las mujeres en los procesos de independencia de América Latina*, organized by Sara Beatriz Guardia (2014), containing papers presented at the International Congress of the same name, held in 2013, in Lima, Peru. The book's studies address the role of women in Latin American independence processes in different perspectives and thematic fields, namely: 1. Dialogues with the independentist historiographies; 2. The discursive construction of gender in independence processes; 3. Women's participation in independence processes; 4. Allegories and representations of women in the theater, painting and iconography of independence; 5. Spaces for reflection: halls, gatherings, press and literary discourse; 6. Women in the independentist imagination; 7. The representation of women in literature; 8. Female education: culture, identity and perspectives.
- 4 Papari is a city in Rio Grande do Norte, today known as Nísia Floresta, in honor of its illustrious daughter.
- 5 The term *mixed* is very present in the writings of Soledad Acosta, and she uses it to refer to the result of the mixture between indigenous and Spanish culture.
- 6 Quotations in foreign language were translated into endnotes in this article.
- 7 “With the present installment of *La Mujer* will conclude the first half of the third year of the Magazine. We give the most expressive thanks to the subscribers who have favored us with their support and welcomed with benevolence, and we say goodbye to them for some time [...] When, in September 1878, we undertook the task of founding a newspaper destined particularly for Colombian women, our intention was, as far as it was within our reach, to seek to advise it, instruct it, defend its rights and entertain it. We also intended to receive with gratitude the productions sent to us by the well-known Colombian writers who would like to help us, and at the same time, that *La Mujer* be a field open to the nascent female mills to stimulate them in the way of good and healthy literature” (Samper, 1891, p. 285).
- 8 “Good taste and solid instruction are the background of women’s education, without it becoming masculine and pretentious” (Samper, 1895, p. 152).
- 9 “In Hispanic American countries, the customs are so different from those of the French, German, and English, that the education system must be suited to their moral needs and the physical elements at their disposal. Just as it would be absurd to build in a cold Siberia a city whose construction was suitable only for the fiery climates of India, so it would be foolish to try to acclimate in Hispanic America education systems that have only worked well in Germany, Switzerland, England. All nations are not, even though they appear on the

surface, equally mature to receive the same education: their geographical situation, their history, their system of government, their customs, the physical and moral forces of the individuals who compose them, everything in them is different; and it would require a great insight and intimate knowledge of all the social layers that make up the population of each country”.

10 “Even more delicacy demands the education system to be given to Spanish and American women. To give strength, value, and emulation to women whose mothers and grandparents were almost completely uneducated, in my humble concept, I think we should start by showing them that they lack intelligence and that they are all capable of understanding whatever they want to be taught to them as clearly as men understand. Moreover, it should be pointed out by living examples and patents, since, at least in the present century, many women have achieved honors, excelling in all the professions to which they devoted themselves with perseverance and hard work; It should be shown that if so far Spanish women are timid and small in spirit matters, it is not their intelligence but their inadequate education that is their fault”.

11 “Coloniality is constitutive of modernity, since the salvationist rhetoric of modernity presupposes the oppressive and condemning logic of coloniality; this oppressive logic produces an energy of discontent, distrust, detachment among those who respond to imperial violence. This energy translates into decolonial projects; ultimately they are also constitutive of modernity. Modernity is a three-headed hydra, but it shows only one: the rhetoric of salvation and progress”.

12 “Coloniality of power as a specific form that takes domination and exploitation in the constitution of the capitalist world system of power. ‘Coloniality’ refers to the classification of the world’s populations in terms of race-racialization of relations between colonizer and colonized; establishing a new operating system in a structure that articulates all forms of labor control around the hegemony of capital, where labor is racialized (wage labor as well as slavery, servitude, and small product production; all were new paths in that they were formed for service capitalism); Eurocentrism as the new mode of production and control of subjectivity; a new system of collective authority over nation-state hegemony that excludes populations from racialized control as inferior, the control of collective authority”.

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**Adriana Santana Lima** holds a PhD in Education (Education, Culture and Society) from Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA), with a sandwich doctorate at Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (Colombia). She is currently a teacher at UFPA.

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4102-9104>

E-mail: [adrianelima29@yahoo.com.br](mailto:adrianelima29@yahoo.com.br)

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