

## **Approaches to Racism in History Textbooks (2008-2011)**

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**ABSTRACT – Approaches to Racism in History Textbooks (2008-2011).** The article discusses the ways through which aspects of the historical dimension of racism are addressed in the proposed activities of a set of History textbooks approved in the 2008 and 2011 PNLD [National Textbook Program] editions. In the activities analyzed, we aimed to understand how the subject of racism was approached and which dialogues were established between the post-abolition history and the teaching of History. The results obtained show that a variety of approaches have characterized the addressing of the issue, especially its ethical, political and cultural purposes.

**Keywords: History Teaching. Law 10639/2003. Activities. Textbooks. Post-Abolition Period.**

**RESUMO – Abordagens do Racismo em Livros Didáticos de História (2008-2011).** O artigo discute as formas pelas quais aspectos relativos à dimensão histórica do racismo são abordados em atividades propostas em um conjunto de Livros Didáticos de História aprovado nas edições do PNLD 2008 e 2011. Nas propostas de atividades analisadas se buscou perceber como o tema do racismo foi abordado e quais diálogos foram construídos com a história do pós-abolição e o ensino de História. Os Resultados obtidos demonstram que uma diversidade de abordagens tem caracterizado o tratamento do tema, especialmente, no que tange às finalidades ético-político-cultural.

**Palavras-chave: Ensino de História. Lei 10.639/03. Atividades. Livros Didáticos. Pós-Abolição.**

## Introduction

The reflection concerning ethnic-racial relations in the school context and the need to reposition black people in the country's history and in the historical memory, both addressed by educational legislation through the Law 10639/2003<sup>1</sup> and later through the National Curricular Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture derive from considerations formulated by intellectuals who are black and/or who are committed to the need of incorporating issues of ethnic-racial diversity into the curriculum of K-12 education<sup>2</sup>.

One of the areas selected by the government to implement the aforementioned legislation is the teaching production aimed at K-12 education, more precisely the production of textbooks evaluated and distributed by the National Textbook Program (*Programa Nacional do Livro Didático – PNLD*). In the attempt of contributing to the reflections about the comprehension of the forms through which the strategies for implementing Law 10639/2003 have been carried out in teaching production, this text presents considerations based on results obtained through a doctorate research in Education, which aimed at analyzing how the post-abolition Afro-Brazilian History is discussed as a curriculum content in the textbooks produced after the publication of Law 10639/2003. Our purpose is to discuss how the activities proposed by History textbooks, which have as part of their content episodes of racist practices in the Brazilian post-abolition period, are being used. However, two warnings are essential. First, it is important to consider that the reception of public policies, as well as of the many curricular and legal directives, is not in accordance with the suggestions of the institutions that propose them. In general, the reception is a result of a comprehensive process of appropriation of both content and proposed actions. The second warning is related to the topic discussed in this article (racism as a content in activities in history textbooks), and it is important for us to highlight that, in order to understand the historical experience of black people, both in Africa and in the diaspora, it is necessary to understand the formation of the resistances created by those people in societies characterized by asymmetry in their social relations and power relations, as well as the racism against Africans and their descendants. Nonetheless, it is also important to problematize racism and understand it as a historical practice which is socially and temporally constructed, and therefore susceptible to deconstruction, which is *sine qua non* for equity and the right to diversities.

The selection of the empiric material considered several factors, such as: 1) works of the school subject History aimed at elementary and middle school. This option is a result of the position occupied by the subject History in Law 10639/2003, which together with Art Education and Literature is considered a favored area for the implementation of an education aimed at ethnic-racial relations, in a clear definition of the *Place of History* as a privileged *locus* for the formation of values and

behaviors that are essential to the exercise of citizenship, even when the latter is understood as a commitment of all areas of knowledge present in the school curriculum. The choice for middle school is justified by the fact that it is the segment of K-12 education with the highest number of enrolled students; 2) works which were edited for the first time after Law 10639/2003 and approved in the public bid that succeeded the PNLD. This option is based on the hypothesis that, due to the verification that with the compulsoriness of the African and Afro-Brazilian themes in the selection of the PNLD for the textbook production for the last years of middle school, which occurred only after the 2008 selection of the PNLD, the collections approved in the PNLDs (2008 and 2011) may be understood as two generations of textbooks targeted at middle school in which the instructions of Law 10639/2003 and correlated guidelines became mandatory, allowing a diachronic analysis about the possible approaches of Afro-Brazilian history after Law 10639/2003; and 3) the way how the ethnic-racial theme is discussed in the works. The *Guia do Livro Didático 2011*<sup>3</sup> (*Textbook Guide 2011*) informs that the approved collections had two types of approach for the African, Afro-Brazilian and indigenous histories: the informative approach and the critical-reflective approach. According to the Guide, the informative perspective discusses the aforementioned theme

[...] in a way that is linked specially to the approach of the planned historical contents, without necessarily linking this discussion to a comprehensive critical reflection aimed at questioning the present time or even the complex and longitudinal discussion of temporal relations, whether it is the History of indigenous populations, the History of Africa and the situation of African descendants in Brazil. With that, what prevails for the student is the relation of possibility of informative acquisition and a condition of analysis of those themes, which are still predominantly linked, directly or indirectly, to the Eurocentric chronology (Brasil, 2010, p. 24) (our translation).

As for the critical-reflexive approach, which organizes itself supposedly through “[...] a complex problematization between the past and the present with respect to the themes involved in the legal requirements and directives” (Brasil, 2010, p. 24), it aims at analyzing the ethnic-racial themes in a way that goes beyond a simple incorporation of information and/or facts. Thus, the objectives of the critical-reflexive approach aim at the student constituting

[...] a reflection which is more comprehensive and dense with respect to the understanding of historical contradictions, changes and continuities, of the actions of the subjects and of the emergence of behaviors that result from a historical conscience capable of generating social change (Brasil, 2010, p. 24) (our translation).

Hence, when facing the two perspectives of analysis for the ethnic-racial issues, we chose to investigate only the collections that had

a critical-reflective analysis, as a possibility of a renewed approach for the Afro-Brazilian historical experience in textbook pages.

With respect to the criteria elaborated for the selection of the works, from a total of 19 and 16 textbook collections approved by the PNLD 2008 and 2011, respectively, the universe of analyzed works was composed of the following collections: *História – Das Cavernas ao Terceiro Milênio* [History – From the Caves to the Third Millennium] written by Myriam Becho Mota and Patrícia Ramos Braick (published by Editora Moderna); *História em Projetos* [History in Projects] written by Maria da Conceição Carneiro de Oliveira, Carla Miucci Ferraresi and Andréa Paula dos Santos (published by Editora Ática); and *História, Sociedade e Cidadania* [History, Society and Citizenship], written by Alfredo Boulos Júnior (published by Editora FTD). Before we move on, it is important to point out that, as defined by the selections of the PNLD, presently the textbook collections can only take part in the selection of the PNLD (in the case of works aimed at the final years of middle school) with collections formed by four volumes, each volume organized for a year of the aforementioned mandatory schooling. In the developed research, all volumes were investigated, with a total of 24 books.

Another choice was related to the theme defined, Afro-Brazilian History. Since it is a very comprehensive topic, we decided to select the period/theme of Afro-Brazilian history after the abolition. The purpose of this definition was to overcome the affirmation of Mattos (2003) concerning the position historically constructed for black people and their descendants in the collective memory of the country and in the national narrative. According to the author, the historical path of black people in Brazil is understood in a limited way, *encapsulated* in the context of slavery. In this context, the action of the Afro-Brazilian gains visibility, whether as essential labor for the colonial economy, whether as an element that disturbs the social order with rebellious acts, supposedly blind and without any political project, something that Mattos (2003) calls *the encapsulated place*. However, according to Mattos, Abreu, Dantas and Moraes (2009, p. 318), *historiographical ammunition* already exists to overcome the hegemonic way of interpreting the Afro-Brazilian past.

In the analysis of the exercises, we start from the assumption that the activities correspond to the textbook content considered essential for the teaching-learning process of school knowledge. Moreover, we consider that problematizing the activities, as a considerable part of the proposal of the History that is to be taught (in this case, especially Afro-Brazilian history), is important to understand how formative objectives aimed at the construction of values are still very little explored and very important for the understanding of the approaches adopted for the ethnic-racial theme in the current production of textbooks.

## **Considerations about the Historiography of the Post-Abolition Period and its Consequences for Teaching**

The understanding of the historical path of Brazilian black people, considering the indicated period, which began right after slavery ended (1888) and lasts until today, is a research concern relatively recent in historiography. From the 1950s on, issues about the constitution of ethnic-racial relations within the Brazilian society, as well as about the insertion of former black slaves and their descendants in the workplace organized by capitalist production relations, emerged in Brazilian sociology. However, it was only in the mid-1990s that researches were developed by historians with the goal of studying the strategies elaborated by Brazilian black people in the context after 1888, which were aimed at dealing with discriminatory practices, both in the material and in the symbolic field, in a society strongly characterized by the racialization of social relations and by asymmetric relations of power.

In a bibliographical overview, Mattos and Rios (2004) point out a change in the way of approaching the Afro-Brazilian past in the context after slavery. Until the beginning of the 1990s, in the researches performed by historians, the central role of black people, their forms of resistance, their feelings and challenges generally did not represent significant historical problems. According to Mattos and Rios (2004), when considering history, both analytical paths enabled a way to historically silence and erase black people, which could refer to the understanding that “[...] with the abolition of slavery, the slaves seem to leave their quarters and History, replaced by the mass arrival of European immigrants” (Mattos; Rios, 2004, p. 170).

As a result, the historiographical production ended up contributing to a certain extent to the reproduction of stereotypical and simplified representations of the Afro-Brazilian experience. When revisiting the intellectual production about the place of African descendants in the post-abolition period, Petrônio Domingues (2013, p. 47-48) observes that:

[...] the Brazilian historiography argued for a long time that, after the abolition of slavery, black people were excluded from the labor market, socially marginalized, left out of the world of institutionalized politics, prevented from accessing formal education. Without income, power and prestige, on one hand, and destitute of cultural and technical qualification to compete against white people during the dawn of the Republic, on the other hand, they began to live in the condition of pariahs, with unstructured families, in a state of social inadequacy and anomy. This generalizing, schematic and reductionist explanation needs to be problematized. There is no doubt that black people, in the period after abolition, went through a series of social, cultural, political and economic difficulties, but their paths were not linear, typical or standardized. History is guided by contradictions, ambivalences;

by dissonant, multidimensional and multifaceted experiences, thus it is not precise to state that they were universally unemployed (or underemployed), vagabonds, illiterates, wild, alienated, irresponsible and promiscuous (our translation).

Although historiographical production did not consider the central role of the black person as a central issue of analysis until the 1990s, a relevant aspect of this production is the visibility given to racism as an extremely influential social practice, directed at the marginalization of the Afro-Brazilian descendants in the post-abolition period. By highlighting racist practices of symbolic and material nature, the writing of history, carried out in the aforementioned moment, *encapsulated* the Afro-Brazilian within marginality and exclusion.

The notion of post-emancipation or post-abolition is understood as a long process which went beyond the construction of Brazil's modern ideal, but without being located in a precise time configuration such as days, years or decades (Gomes; Domingues, 2013). With respect to this issue, this notion cannot be understood outside the historical context of what is called the *History of Brazil*. On the contrary, considering the post-emancipation period within the context of the Brazilian history is essential for the writing of History, since it opens up the perspective of "[...] invading other paths of the history of republican Brazil, involving many spaces, times and plans" (Gomes; Domingues, 2011, p. 9-10). Hence, the objective is not limited to providing visibility to the path of the Afro-Brazilian in a specific time or historical period, but also to resize the space given to black people in the national narrative, without losing the specificity of the particular type of history – in this case, the Afro-Brazilian history – in addition to questioning the dominant interpretations of the national past<sup>4</sup>.

The development of historiography on the post-emancipation period has contributed to the incorporation of new historical subjects into the interpretations about the Brazilian past, highlighting, in particular, the Afro-Brazilian experience as one of the fundamental aspects for reflecting about the conflicts over the meaning and sense of race, work and citizenship built by those subjects starting from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil.

The studies about the post-abolition period, as a research field which is still being consolidated, have been characterized by the presence of several approaches, analytical perspectives, subjects who are worth remembering, theoretical-methodological choices and definitions of themes, as well as a series of dilemmas and challenges<sup>5</sup>. This production focuses on the role of Afro-Brazilians in different contexts and spaces, such as non-institutionalized spaces of political activities as theaters, musical performances and the phonographic industry (Abreu, 2010), the so-called *black press*<sup>6</sup>, and the urban and rural rebellions, the generically called *black associations*<sup>7</sup>, such as recreational clubs, carnival groups, schools, soccer teams etc.; in the world of institutional politics (Albuquerque, 2009); in the formation of the labor movement;

in groups concerned with education issues and in organized social movements (Pereira, 2012; Alberti and Pereira, 2010). As a whole, this production brings many contributions which are fundamental to understand the central role of black people in different historical contexts, usually characterized by social practices that exclude black historical subjects (racism, discrimination, social invisibility etc.) and by asymmetrical and hierarchical ethnic-racial relations in a period after slavery. Thus, these contributions are necessary to reposition black people within the national history and the historical memory, as assumed by Law 10639/2003.

In spite of the advances observed in the production of historiography about the post-abolition period, it is important to point out that this research field has a short lifespan. A substantial part of the production about the post-emancipation period dates from the last decade. Thus, as the subject is still new to the historiography, the theme risks not becoming a part of the curriculum content of the teaching material currently used, as well as not being incorporated to the teaching practice. However, it is important to highlight that school subjects do not use only the results of intellectual production from the university as a reference, and it does not have a relation of superiority of knowledges between these fields of knowledge.

The researches aimed at understanding the links and exchanges between the teaching of History and the post-abolition History are not very developed. Works that connect the school history with the historiography about the post-emancipation period are still rare, but one of the examples is the text *Qual a condição social dos negros no Brasil no fim da escravidão? O pós-abolição no ensino de História* (Nascimento, 2005) [What is the social condition of black people in Brazil in the end of slavery? The post-abolition period in the teaching of History]. The author, based on what he experienced while correcting tests for university admissions in 2001, discusses how the reproduction and circulation of representations about black people in the post-emancipation period occurs in teaching practices and in the teaching material used in the school context. Thus, through the answers given by the students about the social condition of the Afro-Brazilians in the post-abolition period, which indicate an understanding that these subjects were represented as “homeless, vagabonds, drunks, prostitutes, poor, outcast, thieves etc.” (Nascimento, 2005, p. 12), the author infers about the circulation of negative representations of black people in History textbooks. However, the textbooks described by Nascimento were produced in 2001, thus they had not incorporated the legal determinations determined by Law 10639, from January 9 2003.

Another work that discusses the absence of teaching resources for teaching the post-abolitionist period during middle school is *Já raiou a liberdade: caminhos para o trabalho com a história da pós-abolição na Educação Básica* [Liberty has risen: paths to work with the post-abolition period in K-12 education]. In an attempt to overcome this absence, the historian Giovana Xavier proposes the work with historical docu-



ments that enable the discussion and problematization of the central role of black people in the post-abolition period. This choice is based on the purposes of contraposing and deconstructing prejudiced representations, which is also pointed out by Nascimento (2005), and of allowing the circulation of the multiple identities of those historical subjects. Thus, for Xavier (2013, p. 100):

[...] working with the post-abolition period in the classroom is important [to] stimulate students to think about something that may seem obvious but isn't: the descendants of slaves were multiple subjects, with diverse world-views and personal interests, which converged to form many forms of mobilization in the free world (our translation).

The few researches that discuss the relations between the Teaching of History and the post-abolition period, which were previously mentioned, identify the problems and limitations of the analysis of the post-abolition theme in teaching-learning contexts. However, at the same time, the absence of analytical investments may be a substantial opportunity for researches aimed at understanding the strategies built for the implementation of curricular directives.

## **Reflections about Activities in School History and in Textbooks**

The exercises proposed for the students in the teaching-learning of history, whether in semi-structured curricula such as teaching material, whether in curricula in action, are a constant in the history of this school subject since the mid-1800s. André Chervel (1990) theorizes about research possibilities within the History of Subjects, considering handbooks an especially relevant resource to the understanding of school contents. Chervel (1990) points out that textbooks present a structure in which the contents are supposedly organized according to pedagogical assumptions of nature, bringing sets of exercises aimed at consolidating the teaching-learning of a school subject. Thus, through these materials produced for school use, it would be possible to identify some of the pedagogical and teaching traditions adopted by teachers who, in their turn, often encourage them. As a result, activity proposals built for a certain school subject represent the pedagogical contents considered socially relevant to learning in the process of acquisition of school knowledge. Therefore, they are fundamental to understand the nature of a school subject.

According to Silva (2006, p. 212), the elaboration of activities is a part of the process of elaborating textbooks that receives special attention from authors and editors, "[...] who often delegate to assistants or consultants the development of this part of the work". In the production of the textbooks currently in circulation in Brazil, activity proposals are present in all works, thus constituting a structuring element in the conception of history that is taught through textbooks. In this sense, it is



important to highlight that the conception of activity as a simple and mechanical verification of information through reading seems to have been discontinued in textbooks. As Silva (2006, p. 212) reminds us:

[...] over the last years, the shift of the focus of the History Teaching from information to learning was greatly motivated by the growing dissemination and appreciation of pedagogical issues, especially those associated with the cognitive development of the students, according to which the learning to learn, which provides students with an active role, should be the center of the schoolwork. Thus, more than memorizing data, students should learn to use this information to solve problems, answer questions, build new knowledges. And that is done through many activities (our translation).

Faricelli (2005), when trying to understand how the pedagogical content of History has been altered over time in the textbooks of the subject, concludes that the perspective of learning has become a central factor for authors and editors in the production of handbooks; it is no longer just the perspective of teaching. Hence:

The issue of developing operational skills, understood as the set of mental operations that promote cognitive development, expanding its own capacity, has gained special attention from educators. In the specific case of our subject, the purpose is to overcome the association between the teaching of History and memorization, which is as ancient and traditional as the struggle against it. However, dissertation/expositive texts did not stop playing the same important role they had in the past because of that, and at times they occupy a central position (Faricelli, 2005, our translation).

In this process of expanding the central role of learning, the author highlights the increasing importance of textbook exercises to be performed by students in the classroom, possibly indicating a school practice in which classes become less and less oral. As many of the proposed exercises are group exercises, it is implied that most of them should be performed in the classroom.

The appropriation of documents of diverse nature in the composition of the activities to be performed by the students in History textbooks is an important aspect which is usually indicated by researchers of the field. It is verified that the information to be learned no longer have the explanatory text as its only source. Journalistic texts, music, movies, advertising and photos have become objects of reading and analysis of the students during History classes.

Another important reflection is the understanding that the activities created and proposed for the school environment usually demonstrate that school knowledge is a social construction carried out in/for the school environment, indicating an understanding of the school as a production environment instead of a space for the passive reproduction

of the knowledge produced in other spaces. As Faricelli (2005, p. 135) reminds us,

[...] the activities elaborated for the learning of History are elaborated fundamentally for school use – we do not use exercises for the learning of History in higher education nor will we use them after that, for the understanding of the social reality (our translation).

Another important factor to be understood is related to the link between the selected purposes of learning and the construction of a sense of organization of the pedagogical work in the process of elaborating textbook activities. Gérard and Roegiers (1998), in their reflections about the stages and process for the conception of handbooks, argue that the creation of exercises is connected to the selected learning purposes, bringing a sense of organization of the pedagogical and cognitive work. Thus, it is through the activities that the curricular contents chosen as fundamental for teaching-learning become evident. The activity proposals are elaborated in school handbooks with several objectives (fixation, consolidation, improvement, reflection about a theme or content, development of cognitive and practical skills, as well as the construction of values that are fundamental for student learning). However, in addition to the aspects listed by Gérard and Roegiers (1998), the activities produced for teaching handbooks suggest that they are also a possibility for the teacher to formulate evaluations, as well as to manage school time in the classroom. The considerations of these authors indicate the existence of a type of cultural selection in the elaboration of the exercises for students, since there are choices of elements considered necessary and socially relevant to teaching-learning in a school context. In this selection, aspects related to the social needs and objectives imposed to the school usually become evident.

Chervel (1990) brings attention to the objectives of school teaching. For the author, the school has a direct connection to society that is historically maintained in a more comprehensive aspect, in the sense of maintaining with it a dialogue to define its objectives. As a result, school teaching has social-political, psychological (cognitive) and cultural purposes, in addition to the goals related to the socialization of the individual, the learning of social discipline and others, which are socially constructed over time.

When focusing History Teaching, in particular the activities formulated to be performed by students, a reflection about the expectations of learning in History stated by Moniot (1993) is required. The author classifies three perspectives of learning that are present in the construction of *history* as a school subject. The first is aimed at the teaching-learning of factual information and knowledge, with the teaching-learning focusing on the simple verification of facts, characters, dates and events. *Historical reflection* is the purpose of the second expectation listed by Moniot, and the learning is structured based on issues inherent to properly historical premises, such as the understanding of temporalities, the comprehension of the historical dynamic in-

herent to each society and the use of historical documents as a pedagogical resource to teach history. The last perspective of learning would be aimed at the social and cultural uses of history, i.e., the expectations for the use of history and its teaching, aimed at formative needs of an ethical-political-cultural nature. In this text, Moniot's (1993) formulations are essential to understand the analysis of the activities, especially since these activities discuss the theme of racism, which has strong political, social, cultural, ethical, historiographical and pedagogical meanings. Hence, it is an area in which there is a great dispute between the meanings related to the social control of what should be considered legitimate for the teaching of young people (Anhorn, 2009, p. 250).

### **The Use of the Historical Path of Racism as a Theme in Pedagogical Activities in History Textbooks**

The approach of the historical experience of the post-abolition period in the analyzed collections, especially with respect to the elaboration of activities which are focused on a theme related to the historical dimension of racism, is an issue verified in all the analyzed collections. Different teaching strategies were built, such as: comparison between two different historical realities, as a resource to understand differences and similarities; the appropriation of excerpts from current journalistic texts, which discuss modifications in the profile of ethnical-racial relations among Brazilians; the construction of a set of texts formed by teaching texts, excerpts from academic texts and poems, images, song lyrics, poems excerpts, with the goal of composing a set of references about the construction of racialized social practices in Brazil, starting from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the constitution of historical empathy among students and historical characters who were victims of racism (Roza, 2014).

The resource of revealing the existence of racist practices in different historical contexts, especially in the past and the present, is a constantly used approach. Some observed passages indicate that racism was a social practice that existed in Brazilian society throughout the entire colonial period, the Brazilian empire and the Republican contemporaneity. An example is found in the collection *História: sociedade e cidadania* [History: society and citizenship] from the PNLD 2011, which was produced for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. In its activity proposal entitled *Texto como fonte – A luta dos negros nos anos 1920 e 1930* [Text as source – The struggle of black people in the 1920s and 1930s], there is the appropriation of an historiographical text that discusses the politically-oriented action of black people in social movements of the post-abolition period, more precisely the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (FNB) – [Black Brazilian Front], and it also mentions examples of discriminatory practices adopted by official proposals and by the population in general, revealing the historicity of the social construction of racism in the Brazilian society, a perspective which was reinforced by the proposed activities. According to the text:

In the Brazil of the 1920s, racism against Afro-Brazilians was intense and manifested in many forms: whether through discriminatory expressions, gestures and looks, or through job offers that requested that the candidates had “good looks” (in other words: white skin). Moreover, there were prohibitive laws. The state government of São Paulo, for instance, issued decrees that prohibited black people from entering the state’s Civil Guard and that prevented black babies from entering the public annual contests that elected the most “perfect” babies. The idea of the authorities was to prove that, year after year, the “Brazilian race” was becoming more whitened (Boulos Júnior, 2009, p. 130, our translation).

Immediately following the text which was partially reproduced above, the questions elaborated aimed to verify the knowledge of the students about the actions of the black movement in the 1920s and 1930s, especially regarding the history of racism (question 1) and the history of the social movement discussed, revealing the existence of a central role played by the FNB as one of the pedagogical contents that are socially relevant to learning in contemporaneity. However, as we will see in the excerpt below, the objective is to locate the racist practices which are temporarily circumscribed to the 1920s, without extending it until today:

1. How did racism manifest itself in Brazil in the 1920s?
2. Name and comment the main achievement of the black movement in the 1920s.
3. Elaborate a fact sheet about the *Frente Negra Brasileira* – FNB [Black Brazilian Front] with the following information: a) place and date of its foundation; b) objectives; c) main leaders; d) date and reasons of its extinction (Boulos Júnior, 2009, p. 131).

Another example of this approach can be seen in the book for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade called *História: sociedade e cidadania* [History, society and citizenship], approved in 2008. An excerpt from the work *Cidades em tempos modernos* [Cities in modern times], written by historian Maria Ângela Borges Salvadori, discusses how black people were prohibited of participating in soccer teams in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil. Together with a photograph of the player Leônidas da Silva, activities that are to be answered based on the text are elaborated. The exercises ask students to answer individually how soccer was initially developed in the country and the association between the soccer world and racist practices (Boulos Júnior, 2009, p. 65-66).

As for racism presently, the collection *História. Das cavernas ao terceiro milênio* [History. From the caves to the third millennium] develops the theme in two moments. In the book for 7<sup>th</sup> grade, the section *Leitura Complementar* [Complementary Reading] uses fragments of journalistic texts which discuss the alterations in the ethnic-racial relations of Brazilian people. The text *Em 10 anos, desigualdade entre negros*

*e brancos caiu, diz estudo* (Braick; Mota, 2006, p. 254-255)<sup>8</sup> [In 10 years, the inequality between black people and white people decreased, says study] is used as complementary reading for the student to understand that the process of racial inequality was socially constructed among us, presenting continuities and ruptures. Thus, the proposed questions ask students to point out in the text itself the comparative indexes between black people and white people, what new researches indicate about the current situation of ethnic-racial relations in the country and whether these conclusions should be associated to the process of slavery that occurred in Brazil. It also asks the student to give their opinion concerning which measures the government and society can develop aiming at racial equality. As for the complementary reading from the book for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, edited in the same year, it is titled *Diminuem as manifestações de preconceito* (Braick; Mota, 2006, p. 239) [Prejudice expression is decreasing] and brings news about the decrease of prejudice expression among Brazilian citizens. The text shows information about two researches carried out by Instituto Datafolha in 2008, which fifteen years before had tried to investigate how racism was displayed in Brazil. The text does not provide definitive answers about the reason supporting this decrease, but it quotes experts on the theme such as Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, an historian from the University of São Paulo, and the sociologist Marco Chor Maio, from Fiocruz. As for the exercises, it is requested that:

1. The article discusses the result of a research conducted in two years (1995 and 2008). Concerning the answers given by the interviewees:
  - a) What changed from one research to the other?
  - b) What result was seen in 1995 and was repeated in 2008?
2. In the text, there are two divergent opinions about the result of the research. What are they? With which opinion do you agree? Why? (Braick; Mota, 2006, p. 239, our translation).

In the activity, it is interesting to observe the concern with discussing the historicity of social life and of racism as part of the present issues. This discussion brings to the school environment aspects which are usually not discussed in the main text of the chapter, which are mainly focused on a narrative of the political aspects of a certain historical period. Thus, we observe how the conception of the History that should be taught is relativized, since this conception is not limited to the merely informative perspective of the past. Moreover, it is worth highlighting the analysis of the theme racism through the possibility of understanding that the racist practice changes over time, i.e., the existence of racism, such as the fight against it, is developed over time by the action of men.

Another issue presented by the activity is the role of the appropriation of texts produced in other contexts of production, circulation and reception in the elaboration of exercises for History textbooks. We verify a sort of *bricolage*<sup>9</sup> with respect to the appropriation of historical

documents in the construction of current History textbooks. This asserive is based on the observation of a constant selection of information sources which were originally destined to other social spaces, not necessarily linked to the school context, and that end up being part of the textbooks. According to Batista (1999), the *construction* of the school text in contemporaneity happens through the large recontextualizing of texts produced in (and for) communities of non-school discourse, as well as through the appropriation of different sources of information extracted from many social supports and contexts of production and circulation. Faricelli (2005, p. 138) problematizes the functions of the activities in History textbooks produced in the mid-1990s and considers that:

[...] History textbooks have assumed the task of revealing portraits of reality to the classroom, which has been made mainly through journalistic texts – which requires hard work from the authors or other people linked to the elaboration of exercises. This work provides to the teacher with several possibilities to choose and establish relations that can be very productive. However, it requires time and makes textbooks outdated very quickly concerning the information about the present conveyed by them (our translation).

However, it is important to consider that these documents are constantly used as contents that express the *voice of authority* of an expert, such as the aforementioned case in which the excerpt of the textbooks quotes the opinions of two academics from the field of racial relations, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz and Marco Chor Maio.

The strategy of using texts produced for non-school purposes and that quote authorities, such as through fragments of academic works, can be observed in other works as well. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade volume of the collection *História em Projetos* [History in Projects], in the editions of 2008 and 2011, in the section entitled *Parada final – A derrota da cidadania e a vitória do racismo: a construção de uma ideologia que justificou a exclusão dos libertos* [Final stop – The defeat of citizenship and the victory of racism: the construction of an ideology that justified the exclusion of the freedmen], inserted in the chapter *Como se desenrolaram as lutas pela liberdade em fins do século XIX no Brasil?* [How did the fight for freedom in the late 20th century come about in Brazil?], there is the elaboration of a narrative aimed at integrating images, song lyrics, teaching texts, excerpts from academic texts, excerpts from poems, with the purpose of providing a foundation for the proposed discussion. To render the narrative effective, a text synthesis is elaborated to briefly narrate the “construction of the difference” between the human groups of light skin and dark skin, based on the increase of transcontinental encounters between Europe and Africa, after the maritime-commercial expansion of Europe. According to the text, until the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was no justification for the assumed European *superiority* with respect to Africans, a conjuncture which triumphed with the

elaboration and circulation of pseudo-scientific theories, especially throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, claiming that:

[...] the domination of the European people in the African and Asian continents [...], and in Brazil, prevented the freedmen and their descendants from having their basic rights ensured after the abolition (Oliveira; Ferraresi; Santos, 2006, p. 250, our translation).

Several documents linked to text syntheses are extracted from academic works with two purposes: reinforcing the narrative of the text and being an instrument for the development of the activities. A set of documents from many works, recontextualized in the textbook corresponding to the form of direction indicated above, is observed in Oliveira, Ferraresi and Santos (2006, p. 251):

16. Analyze the following documents. Next, answer the proposed questions in the notebook.

Doc. 20

The natives are worshipers, superstitious and live in extreme filth; they are lazy and drunk vagrants who do not think about the future, they are insensible to any events, whether happy or sad, that give them pleasure or make them suffer; they are shameless and unrestrained with respect to the pleasures of life, each of the sexes deep into each other as a savage from the most primitive of ages!

Apud: Appiah, Kwame. Na casa de meu pai. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 1997, p. 45.

Legend: Excerpt from the entry “Guinea” (African country), from the French Encyclopedia, written by the Illuminists in the 18th century.

Doc. 21

Black people are big, fat and well-built, but naive and without any intellectual creativity.

Apud: Appiah, Kwame. Op. cit, p.45

Legend: Excerpt from the entry “humanity” from the same French Encyclopedia.

Doc.22

The “black wave”, a racist image present in the debates about the abolition of slavery and the European immigration throughout the 1870s and 1880s designated all those – slaves and poor free men – whose physical marks of African descent revealed them as members of a race which was inferior and dangerous to the futures of civilization and of the progress of capitalism.

Azevedo, Célia M. M. Antirracismo e seus paradoxos: reflexões sobre cota racial, raça e racismo. São Paulo: Anablume, 2004, p. 11-12 (our translation)

The comparisons and/or analogies between different historical realities with the goal of identifying differences and similarities is another teaching procedure which was verified. In the fourth volume



of the collection *História, Sociedade e Cidadania* [History, Society and Citizenship], approved in the PNLD 2008, in the chapter *Economia e sociedade colonial* [Economy and the colonial society], we observe an activity proposed in this sense, and it is suggested that:

In pairs: in the colonial society, the fact that a person belonged to the female gender or to the black ethnicity made their life improvements harder or prevented them. In today's Brazil, is the situation of women and black people much different than that? (Boulos Júnior, 2006, p. 24, our translation).

The exercise asks students to form pairs and think about the situation of women and black people in the Brazil of today, comparing the present scenario with elements of the situation of historical subjects who were female or black and who were already developed in the study of the Portuguese Colonies in America.

About the use of analogies as a pedagogical resource in school History, Monteiro (2007) studies teaching practices and highlights the importance and the required care for the use of this resource in the school context. According to the author:

[...] the work with the analogous rationality, i.e., the search of similarities in different situations to enable the historical comprehension, is an often-used resource. Situations of the same type in different times and societies, with one of them being the current society, in the present time, are related [...].

This resource, which meets first and foremost the demands of the education field, may cause anachronisms that often lead to wrong visions from the point of view of the historical analysis. [...] More than identities, the goal should be to identify similarities and differences that enable students to start noticing the diversity of the human experience, while they also construct concepts, instruments of analysis to understand it (Monteiro, 2007, p. 129, our translation).

The activities bring a set of pedagogical procedures which are typical from schools, aimed at the students developing an attempt to construct skills that consider the debate, the problematization, the construction of scenarios, oral and written argumentation etc., as fundamental curricular perspectives. The work *Histórias em Projetos* [History in Projects], the volume for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, approved in the PNLDs of 2008 and 2011, is particularly expressive in this sense. In the excerpt reproduced below, the goal is to use a text to situate the post-abolition period for the students, and with the questions, problematize racism with the directions typical from schools. Thus, in the section *Ponto de partida* [Starting point], it is observed that:

The fight for the end of slavery in our country, which culminated in the Abolition, was a process carried out by

different agents whose interests did not always coincide. This theme brings us to racism, an ideology that brought very harmful consequences for human beings and that unfortunately was used during a long time to justify the social exclusion of a large part of the black population of Brazil, even among people whose ancestors did not experience life in captivity (Oliveira, Ferraresi, Santos, 2009, p. 247, our translation).

In the continuity of the exercise, the following proposal is observed:

Under the guidance of the teacher, create a debate about racism, trying to define it. Then, create a scenario indicating actions and activities that you consider racist (Oliveira, Ferraresi, Santos, 2009, p. 247, our translation).

Another recurring aspect, which is revealed in the passage above, as well as in other passages, is the proposition of activities to be performed in pairs or in groups. We understand that this proposition suggests performing activities that presuppose a debate and a discussion among the students, the collective problematization and formulation of the synthesis and/or concepts of the presented questions. As a result, the conception of teaching-learning for history is revealed – in this case, especially the Afro-Brazilian history in the post-abolition period – which should be constructed collectively and in a shared way, which implies the interlocution between the members for the elaboration of the answers to the questions, whether through the collective construction of concepts or through the problematization of the social places occupied in the past and in the present by historically excluded collectives.

Lastly, another representative approach with respect to the attempt to create a shared teaching-learning process, as well as an interlocution with the students, although not very significant numerically, is the resource of historical empathy. In the only activity of this nature, it is observed that:

Imagine yourself black, born free or a slave in the Brazil of the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, knowing all the stereotypical representations of the black person you have just analyzed. How would you feel? How did it convey a mark of rejection to everything related to Africa and its descendants? What are the consequences of racism in our country? (Oliveira; Ferraresi; Santos, 2009, p. 258, our translation).

The analyzed exercises, as a whole, enabled us to realize that formative purposes aimed at the anti-racist fight, which is needed nowadays, constitute an important part of the enunciates and of the proposed activities, revealing the apprehension of the social and cultural uses of school history, as formulated by Moniot (1993) in the problematization of learning expectations in History. In this sense, even if the goal is for students to understand passively the existence of racism in

different contexts, the expectation is linked to the attempt of the students to produce reflections about the present time, giving their opinion on the theme, positioning themselves and collectively producing syntheses and concepts.

## Final Remarks

The reflections based on the analysis carried out about the constructed teaching directions and the objectives attributed to the activities proposed in History textbooks, which bring episodes related to the historical dimension of the racist practices of the post-abolition period in Brazil, indicate a relativization of the *encapsulated place*, which limits the historical path of black people to the context of slavery. Considering the results, we can see that the limitations indicated by the few researches on the relationship between the post-abolition period and the Teaching of History seem to be under tension.

Another relevant reflection is related to the use of the history of the post-abolition period as a teaching instrument aimed at the anti-racist fight and at the teaching-learning of values related to the education of ethnic-racial relations. This type of analysis was verified in all textbook collections, especially through the proposed activities, revealing the position which is socially attributed to the teaching of history. These activities contribute to defend the position of history in the curriculum of K-12 education, as a subject responsible for the discussion in the school environment of socially relevant aspects of the Brazilian society of today, not limiting themselves to the transmission of information about the past that should be memorized by students, which is significant in terms of curricular expansion and resignification. However, considering that the contents of the school subjects result from choices and selections, and also the moral and political prerogative that struck Brazilian education related to the construction of strategies aimed at the promotion of a perspective of discussing ethnic-racial relations and their consequences to history in school, a question remains: is the creation of strategies and teaching directions aimed at the discussion of socially relevant themes of the present a way out for a History curriculum based on a perspective of learning limited to the acquisition of factual knowledges? Or is the way out the colonization of the teaching-learning of History through formative questions of an ethical-political-cultural nature which are demanded by the present time?

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## Notes

- 1 The use in this work of the listed legislation, especially Law 10639/2003, is associated with its alteration by Law 11645/2008. With the alteration, in addition

to the compulsoriness which was already considered, there is the inclusion of the teaching of Indigenous History. However, the nominal reference to Law 10639/2003 results from the understanding that its publication was an act of political force that redefined symbolically the place of the ethnic-racial agenda in Brazilian education.

- 2 See Cavalleiro (2001); Gonçalves and Silva (2000); Rosemberg (2003).
- 3 *Guia do Livro Didático* [Textbook Guide] is a material produced by the Ministry of Education (MEC) with the purpose of presenting to the teachers the teaching collections of each subject approved in each edition of the PNLD, as well as the evaluation criteria established for the approval of the works.
- 4 The researches that aim to *recuperate* histories and memories which were silenced, without limiting themselves to providing visibility to the Afro-Brazilians of a certain historical period, are sufficiently instigating from the historiographical point of view and try to surpass the warning given by Joan W. Scott. Scott (1998) points out that a path revealed in studies committed to recovering the past of invisible groups is the simplification of the historical experiences through homogenizations and a relative essentialism. Moreover, the author highlights as well the risk of creating interpretations about the past which are merely celebratory, without confronting the dominant historical narratives.
- 5 For a general understanding of this research field, see Cunha and Gomes (2007); Gomes and Domingues (2011), Gomes and Domingues (2013).
- 6 The term *Black press* refers to the set of print publications produced by Afro-Brazilians aimed at developing the circulation of information targeted at the fight against racism and at the integration and organization of the black population.
- 7 Together with the political presence in the press, part of the Afro-Brazilians worked together in organizations aimed at the creation of spaces of sociability and solidarity within the black community, such as charitable and mutual aid societies, recreational societies, religious groups, professional associations, soccer teams, carnival associations, civic centers and schools targeted at the formation of the black population. This set of institutions, generically called *black organizations*, was a reactive action to the prohibition of the presence and circulation of Afro-Brazilians in similar institutions organized by white people.
- 8 According to the caption, the text is written by Antônio Gois, Desigualdade entre negros e brancos caiu em 10 anos, diz estudo. In: Folha de São Paulo, May 15 2008.
- 9 The concept of *bricolage* is used here based on the reflections of Perrenoud (1993). According to the author, bricolage with pedagogical purposes is the hegemonic way that moves teaching practices in the search for pedagogical strategies that support teaching-learning actions. As a result, teaching resources are prepared and developed with texts, games, images, documents, objects and activities, for their use in a school context. Similarly to the bricolage made by the teacher, the textbook goes through a related process with the appropriation of texts, images and activity proposals, which were produced in other contexts, in its composition.

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