THEMATIC SECTION: EDUCATION AND AFFIRMATIVE POLICIES

EDUCAÇÃO & realidade

Antonietas e Abdias: affirmative action for black students and internationalization in Brazilian Graduate Education

João Matheus Acosta Dallmann[I]
Joana Celia dos Passos[I]

[I]Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), Florianópolis/SC – Brazil

ABSTRACT – Antonietas e Abdias: affirmative action for black students and internationalization in Brazilian Graduate Education. This article examines the internationalization of Brazilian graduate education through the lens of affirmative action policies, with particular attention to the Abdias do Nascimento Program. It argues that such initiatives constitute not only opportunities for academic mobility but also practices of historical reparation and strategies to confront epistemic racism. Amefricanity is discussed as a key interpretive framework, and the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) and the Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB) cooperation project is presented as a case of critical internationalization. The international circulation of Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola students is understood not merely as participation in global academic networks but as a political intervention that repositions historically marginalized trajectories at the core of scientific knowledge production.
Keywords: **Internationalization. Affirmative Action. Amefricanity. Decoloniality. Abdias do Nascimento Program.**

RESUMO – Antonietas e Abdias: ações afirmativas para negros/as e internacionalização na Pós-Graduação Brasileira. Este artigo analisa a internacionalização na pós-graduação brasileira a partir das políticas de ações afirmativas, com destaque para o Programa Abdias do Nascimento. Argumenta-se que tais iniciativas representam não apenas oportunidades de mobilidade acadêmica, mas também práticas de reparação histórica e enfrentamento ao racismo epistêmico. O texto discute a relevância da amefricanidade como chave interpretativa e apresenta o projeto de cooperação entre a Universidade Nacional Autônoma do México (UNAM), a Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) e a Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB) como experiência de internacionalização crítica. A circulação internacional de estudantes negros, indígenas e quilombolas não é mera inserção em redes globais, mas gesto político que reinscreve trajetórias historicamente silenciadas no centro da produção científica.
Palavras-chave: **Internacionalização. Ações Afirmativas. Amefricanidade. Decolonialidade. Programa Abdias Nascimento.**

Introduction

It's five in the morning and we receive a photo in our messaging app group. The photo shows a graduate student waiting at the airport with his family for a flight to Mexico City. The radiance of their smiles is not merely individual but collective: it reflects pride, a sense of achievement and, above all, the effectiveness of public policy that connects personal journeys with a historic project of racial justice. This simple yet powerful image takes on specific meaning within the context of resumed affirmative action policies in Brazil, following a period marked by stagnation, setbacks, and attempted coups between 2019 and 2022. Over the last twenty years, significant milestones have been reached—such as the passing of the 2012 Quota Law (Law 12.711), which expanded university access for Black, Indigenous, and public-school students, and its recent renewal via Law 14.723/2023. Yet, despite these undergraduate gains, graduate-level internationalization has largely remained a space reserved for the elite. Against this backdrop, the Abdias Nascimento Academic Development Program[1] stands out as a groundbreaking policy aimed at expanding the international mobility of historically excluded students, placing them firmly on the global scientific map.

More than just a mobility experience, these policies confront epistemic racism—that is, the systematic devaluation of knowledge produced by racialized subjects and non-hegemonic epistemologies. As decolonial authors point out, the modernity/coloniality framework has imposed knowledge hierarchies that marginalize Black, Indigenous, and popular forms of knowledge. Thus, considering access to internationalization for Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola researchers, as well as trans individuals, also means contesting the institutional spaces where knowledge is produced and circulated.

It is within this context that the concept of amefricanity – formulated by Lélia Gonzalez (1988) – emerges as an interpretive key for understanding the experiences of the Black and Indigenous diasporas in the Americas. A Black Brazilian student's journey to Mexico for a doctoral research exchange can be viewed as an Amefrican reunion. It is a powerful act that reconnects histories disrupted by colonization and slavery – an intersection within the diaspora marked by movements of affirmation and belonging.

This article presents data from the first phase of the Antonieta de Barros: Education for Racial Equality and the Fight Against Racism Chair project, supported by the CAPES Abdias Nascimento Academic Development Program2. The project promotes comparative Brazil-Mexico studies through multidisciplinary approaches to analyze intercultural actions, strategies, and public policies. Through a partnership between Universidade Nacional Autônoma do México (UNAM), Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), and Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB), it seeks to establish networks of scholars focused on anti-racist policies. The initiative is driven by the graduate programs comprising the Antonieta de Barros Chair, the Graduate Program in the History of the African Diaspora and Indigenous Peoples at UFRB, and the University Program for the Study of Cultural Diversity and Interculturality at UNAM.

In this article, we reflect on internationalization as a practice of historical reparation and a means to combat epistemic racism, drawing inspiration from perspectives rooted in Black feminism, decoloniality, and amefricanity. By intersecting narratives, policies, and theories, we aim to highlight the transformative potential of affirmative action in the internationalization of the graduate academic trajectories of Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola individuals.

Affirmative action in Brazil: reparation and contestation

In 1983, then-Federal Deputy Abdias Nascimento proposed a set of public policies for compensatory action aimed at implementing the principle of social equality for Black people vis-à-vis other ethnic segments of the Brazilian population, in accordance with the right guaranteed by Article 153, Paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the Republic (Nascimento, 2013, p. 9). Bill No. 1.332/1983 highlighted proposals such as the establishment of quotas for Black people in public and private education at all levels, as well as in access to private-sector employment and the civil service. Furthermore, the bill included the granting of scholarships, the guarantee of equal pay for equivalent work, the inclusion of African and diasporic history and culture in curricula, the provision of anti-racist orientation courses in police training, the production of disaggregated data by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and the Ministry of Labor, and mechanisms to monitor the implementation of these measures in coordination with civil society.

In the public sphere, affirmative action in Brazilian higher education is the result of long-standing social and epistemic struggles; it should be understood not as a concession, but as a policy of reparation and justice. This historical process – which did not begin in the 1980s or 2000s, given that anti-colonial resistance originated deep within the forests and persisted through the diaspora – became consolidated in the 21st century. Regarding the State, this movement "must be understood as a coherent and responsible response by the Brazilian State to the various international legal instruments to which it has adhered" (Nascimento, 2013, p. 15). This includes the 1969 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), which emerged from the Third World Conference against Racism, officially titled the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001. Ultimately, the Durban Conference (2001) denounced structural racism and demanded decisive responses from member states.

The 1995 Zumbi dos Palmares March Against Racism, for Citizenship and Life, held in Brasília, marked a significant milestone in acknowledging the existence of racism in Brazil. The public and academic pressure exerted by the March on the Federal Government led to the International Seminar on Multiculturalism and Racism: The Role of Affirmative Action in Contemporary Democratic States, organized by the Ministry of Justice. This seminar aimed to discuss racism and formulate policies to combat racial discrimination, including affirmative action measures. It was within this con-

text—and building upon the pioneering initiatives undertaken by Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) and Universidade do Estado da Bahia (UNEB) in 2002—that the path was paved for Law 12.711/2012, which was subsequently revised and expanded by Law 14.723/2023. The Supreme Federal Court's (STF) unanimous ruling in 2012 (ADPF 186) upholding the constitutionality of quota systems reinforced the understanding that substantive equality requires effective policies to combat inequities.

A recent survey by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP) showed that, despite advances in recent decades, racial diversity among master's and doctoral degree holders in Brazil remains deeply unequal (Marques, 2025). In 2021, white individuals accounted for approximately 68.6% of doctorate holders and 62.9% of master's degree holders – figures that do not reflect the country's racial composition. This data reveals that graduate education, a historically elitist sphere, continues to perpetuate structural barriers to access. When discussing affirmative action in the internationalization of graduate education, it is essential to consider how such internal inequalities shape and limit who is able to participate in mobility programs, scholarship schemes, and global academic networks.

It is worth noting that these policies only came to fruition because other multidimensional strategies operated in tandem. Understanding poverty from a multidimensional perspective was the focus of policies during the transition between the Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) era and the Workers' Party administrations. For the first time in the country's history, a working-class figure reached the Planalto Palace, bringing with him massive social support and a critical mass. Together, they tirelessly crafted policies that would, years later, culminate in pressure to invert the positions of groups within the social pyramid. Along this path, numerous studies have demonstrated the substantive changes driven by highly impactful social mechanisms, such as the Bolsa Família Program (Dallmann; Lago, 2012).

In this context, affirmative action initiatives advance amidst the ongoing struggle regarding class and race. From legal and political standpoints, they encounter resistance that invokes an abstract ideal of merit—one fundamentally incompatible with a racialized society (Gomes, 2001). From an epistemic perspective, they challenge cultures of epistemic racism that create hierarchies of knowledge and render Black, Indigenous, and popular epistemologies invisible. As Sueli Carneiro (2005) warns, this struggle is not merely for institutional access, but also for recognition and the transformation of curricula, methodologies, and academic narratives.

Although the participation of Black and mixed-race individuals in graduate education expanded between 1996 and 2021, severe underrepresentation persists. This disparity is particularly acute among Indigenous peoples, who accounted for only 196 master's and 54 doctoral degree holders in 2021 (Marques, 2025). These figures demonstrate that institutional challenges extend beyond initial admission to encompass retention, degree completion, and the efficacy of student support policies. "When considering internationalization, the challenge widens; low domestic diversity and economic hardships reduce the likelihood of

Black, mixed-race, and Indigenous students participating in academic exchanges, thereby reinforcing global exclusion.

Thus, reparation cannot be understood solely in terms of the redistribution of places, but also as cultural recognition and effective political representation (Fraser, 2002; Young, 1990). It is a matter of shifting the position of racialized subjects within universities and, by extension, within the nation-building project itself. While Abdias Nascimento spoke of reparation as a historical debt as early as the 1980s, contemporary affirmative action measures within the internationalization of the academic career bring this call up to date.

The contemporary challenge is that, although Black, mixed-race, Indigenous, and Quilombola individuals—as well as public school students—already make up more than 50% of the undergraduate student body at federal universities, they remain underrepresented in graduate studies, internationalization programs, and spheres of academic prestige. A survey conducted by Centro de Gestão e Estudos Estratégicos (CGEE), a social organization linked to the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MCTI)[3], analyzed data from 1996 to 2021. It revealed that only about 20% of master's and doctoral students are Black, mixed-race, or Indigenous. Specifically, Black individuals account for just 4.1% of master's degree holders and 3.4% of doctorate holders, while mixed-race individuals make up 16.7% and 14.9%, respectively. Indigenous individuals represent only 0.23% of master's degrees and 0.3% of doctorates.

It is in this context that the Abdias Nascimento Program becomes strategic; it broadens the horizons of affirmative action, shifting the struggle from access to undergraduate education to the international circulation of knowledge, while challenging the limits of institutional and epistemic racism.

This same perspective resonates at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), which, by approving Normative Resolution 175 in 2022, established the Policy to Combat Institutional Racism and gave rise to the Antonieta de Barros Chair: Education for Racial Equality and Combating Racism. Our reflection is grounded in this institutional milestone, which emerged from collective struggles.

UFSC and Confronting Institutional Racism

In recent decades, the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) has played a prominent role in formulating and implementing affirmative action policies. Between 2002 and 2006, UFSC labor union movement and local Black movement were already discussing the reservation of places for Black and Indigenous individuals, signaling alignment with the national agenda. However, it was during the Pensamento Negro e Educação no Brasil Colloquium – organized by Núcleo de Estudos Negros (NEN), a historical organization of the Black Movement, and held at UFSC in February 2006, with significant participation from nationally recognized researchers and anti-racist activists – that the university administration

committed to establishing a committee tasked with discussing the expansion of access to UFSC with a focus on socioeconomic and ethno-racial diversity (Passos, Chaves, Sayão, 2024).

Thus, in 2008, UFSC adopted a quota system for undergraduate admissions reserved for Black and Indigenous students, people with disabilities, and public school graduates. It extended this system to graduate programs in 2020, approved specific slots for refugees in 2022, and consolidated its admission and retention policy for trans, travesti, and non-binary individuals in 2023. Finally, in 2025, the university revised and expanded its undergraduate affirmative action policy alongside its guidelines for hiring faculty and technical staff through public exams. This demonstrates that UFSC not only keeps pace with national milestones but also innovates, anticipating and broadening the equity agenda within public higher education.

In this context, the approval of Normative Resolution 175/2022/CUn/UFSC represents an institutional milestone. Drafted democratically—with a leading role played by Black faculty and staff, as well as Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola movements – the resolution established the Policy to Combat Institutional Racism, affirming the university's commitment to fighting epistemic racism, expanding affirmative action, and producing knowledge dedicated to racial justice. As Sueli Carneiro (2005) aptly noted, institutional racism is not an aberration but a mode of institutional operation; confronting it requires structural and sustained measures, such as those UFSC has set out to adopt.

Emerging from this resolution – alongside numerous other social and academic struggles – the Antonieta de Barros Chair: Education for Racial Equality and Combating Racism[4], was established. Coordinated by Vice-Rector Prof. Dr. Joana Célia dos Passos, the Chair is now part of the UNESCO Chairs network. It serves as an academic and political hub that integrates teaching, research, outreach, and public policy formulation. Through an interdisciplinary and inter-institutional approach, it connects the university with social movements and historical struggles against racism. The choice of Antonieta de Barros as its figurehead is deeply intentional: her legacy as a teacher, journalist, and Brazil's first Black female deputy reaffirms the central role of Black women in democratizing education and politics.

In 2024, the Chair sent its first cohort of seven students from various graduate programs – Education, Information Science, Interdisciplinary Humanities, Law, and Anthropology – on an international academic mobility exchange through the Abdias Nascimento Academic Development Program. This diversity of fields evokes Nilma Lino Gomes's (2018) concept that affirmative action initiatives constitute a political-pedagogical project: one that goes beyond merely guaranteeing access to actively transforming academic culture and challenging its epistemic boundaries.

> Recognition and political will alone are not enough to decolonize the mind, politics, culture, curricula, and knowledge. To be realized, this decolonization must be accompanied by an epistemological, political, and social rupture. This is achieved through the presence of Black

> people in spaces of power and decision-making, in academic structures, and in the management of education, health, and justice systems. In other words, decolonization must extend beyond the realm of knowledge production to transform structural power dynamics (Gomes, 2018, p. 225-226, our translation).

Addressing this challenge requires policies of recognition (Taylor, 1994), as affirmative action does not mean quotas. It demands the public validation of marginalized identities and knowledge systems. Drawing on Gonzalez (1988), the presence of the Chair within the Abdias Program can be conceptualized as an "Amefrican" space – one that centers Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola epistemologies to formulate anti-racist policies. Consequently, UFSC establishes itself as a leading Brazilian institution in forging a critical, situated, and decolonial model of internationalization.

The establishment of the Antonieta de Barros Chair and the approval of Resolution 175/2022/CUn/UFSC place UFSC within a broader movement to democratize Brazilian higher education. However, beyond the institutional level, it is crucial to understand how these initiatives align with wider-reaching national policies capable of expanding the impact of affirmative action on a global scale. It is in this context that the Abdias do Nascimento Program stands out. By redefining the perspective of internationalization, this public policy projects the struggle against institutional racism beyond national borders, connecting Brazil to international anti-racist academic networks.

The Abdias Nascimento Program: Internationalization as an Affirmative Action Policy

The Abdias Nascimento Academic Development Program, first launched in 2013 by CAPES Foundation, represented an unprecedented innovation in higher education internationalization policies in Brazil. Unlike other initiatives historically geared toward the academic elite, the Abdias program was conceived as an affirmative action initiative aimed at the international mobility of Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola students, as well as transgender individuals, people with disabilities, and those from historically marginalized groups. Its institutional and policy design directly addresses the historical demands of the Black movement.

However, the program did not follow a linear trajectory. Following its inaugural iteration in 2013, it was suspended during a period of fiscal austerity and social policy reversals between 2016 and 2022. Its recent resumption coincides with current debates on public sector affirmative action, which remains a crucial factor for the efficacy of public policies.

The new edition of the Abdias program reinforces the importance of combating gender inequalities by reserving 50% of the spots for women, responding to a long-standing demand from Black women's and feminist movements. This specific feature underscores the policy's intersectional nature, aligning it with the contributions of Lélia Gonzalez – who denounced the double invisibility faced by Black women – and Sueli Carneiro, who emphasizes the centrality of policies promoting Black rep-

resentation as a means to democratize public spaces and academic production. Beyond the gender focus, the program also targets Indigenous students, neurodivergent students, students with disabilities and students with high abilities. This broad range of potential beneficiaries expands the scope of internationalization and scientific production to include the realm of human diversity.

In this regard, the reflections of Nilma Lino Gomes (2017) help us understand the depth of this policy: affirmative actions are not merely mechanisms for access but constitute a political-pedagogical project to transform the university, wherein new presences challenge and reconfigure the understanding of legitimate knowledge. Similarly, Sueli Carneiro (2005) reminds us that democratizing science also entails decolonizing its canons, recognizing that Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola epistemologies are indispensable for building a society grounded in social and racial justice. Thus, the Abdias Program stands as a policy that expands the boundaries of affirmative action, extending the debate on university access to the realm of international circulation. It establishes itself as a practice of historical reparation and a project of decolonial internationalization.

A recent study by Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and Instituto Federal do Norte de Minas Gerais (IFNMG) reveals that, between 2000 and 2023, the proportion of Black and Mixed-race leaders in research groups in Brazil nearly tripled, rising from 8.1% to 22.6% of the total coordinators registered in the CNPq Directory. Although this progress is significant, underrepresentation persists – even in regions where Black and Mixed-raced individuals make up the majority of the population, such as the North, Northeast, and Center-West. These data demonstrate that affirmative action, quota programs, university expansion, and public policies regarding racial recognition have significant effects, yet institutional and cultural barriers still hinder the advancement of Black and Mixed-raced individuals to academic leadership positions. Such leadership is crucial for the internationalization of graduate studies, as research group coordinators influence funding, international cooperation networks, the setting of research agendas, and opportunities (IPEA, 2024).

The centrality of the Abdias Program lies in its potential to reposition historically excluded subjects within the global circulation of knowledge. By integrating internationally, the program creates space for Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola trajectories to connect with global experiences, fostering epistemic dialogues that challenge Eurocentric hegemony. It is precisely here that Lélia Gonzalez's concept of Amefricanity becomes fundamental. By recognizing the Americas as a territory of encounters, displacements, and resistance for Black and Indigenous peoples, Gonzalez invites us to view internationalization not as a rupture, but as a diasporic reconnection. This framework underpins our decolonial approach, conceiving internationalization in a situated, Amefrican manner – as a political and epistemic horizon for affirmative action.

Internationalization and affirmative action: an Amefrican journey

Academic internationalization is generally conceived within the parameters of neoliberal globalization, characterized by a logic of competitiveness, international rankings, and the restricted circulation of academic elites. This model reinforces inequalities, fosters exclusion, and—as Sueli Carneiro (2005) warns – operates within a regime of epistemic racism that devalues knowledge produced by racialized individuals and collectives.

Upon its relaunch in 2022, the Abdias Nascimento Program shifts this perspective, enabling a vision of "situated internationalization" that seeks not merely to conform to Eurocentric standards of excellence, but to construct alternative modes of knowledge circulation. This approach acknowledges the historical nature of racial inequalities in Brazil and Latin America and aims to address them by actively integrating Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola individuals into global spaces of scientific production.

In this regard, the concept of Amefricanity, formulated by Lélia Gonzalez (1988), offers a fundamental key. For Gonzalez, the Americas should be viewed as a territory of encounters, resistance, and reinventions shaped by Black and Indigenous populations. Internationalization, when informed by affirmative action, can be understood as a diasporic reunion—not merely a geographical relocation, but a revitalization of the historical, cultural, and epistemic ties that coloniality sought to sever. As Gonzalez (1988) noted, “The political and cultural implications of the category of Amefricanity are, in fact, democratic; precisely because the term itself allows us to transcend territorial limitations, opening up new perspectives for a deeper understanding” (p. 76, our translation).

Thus, when Black and Indigenous Brazilian students arrive at the Universidade Nacional Autônoma do México (UNAM), they do not simply occupy an academic space; they also become part of a network of Amefrican resistance, connecting their own trajectories to the similar experiences of Afro-Mexican and Indigenous peoples.

The experience of Cape Verdean political scientist Eurídice Monteiro sheds light on how academic internationalization—while often viewed as a pathway to democratizing knowledge—can still reinforce existing inequalities. Monteiro points out that within global research networks, partners from countries with limited infrastructure frequently find themselves in subordinate positions, a phenomenon described as "helicopter research" (Monteiro, 2023, p. 8, our translation). Conversely, the Abdias Nascimento Program opposes this dynamic by fostering reciprocal South-South academic partnerships.

This approach aligns with Patricia Hill Collins’s (2016) reflections on Black standpoint epistemology, which demonstrate that knowledge produced from Black experiences is not marginal, but rather constitutes a critical epistemology capable of transforming both the academic canon and community realities. Similarly, Ochy Curiel (2009) emphasizes in her discussion of Latin American decolonial feminisms that decolonizing

knowledge requires actively valuing the historical experiences, languages, and methodologies produced within the Global South.

Thus, Amefrican internationalization breaks with the notion that academic mobility must equate to assimilation into Eurocentric standards of research. On the contrary, it represents a movement of epistemic insurgency in which historically marginalized trajectories assert their centrality in shaping the future of science. This is the political and reparative dimension that underpins both the Abdias Program and the Antonieta de Barros Chair.

Although Lélia Gonzalez conceptualizes Amefricanity as a diasporic reconnection and epistemic insurgency, it is through institutional projects that this affirmative internationalization becomes concrete. The network linking UFSC, UNAM, and UFRB, coordinated by the Antonieta de Barros Chair, serves as a practical example of this movement. By bringing together researchers and students from diverse fields to analyze race relations and affirmative action policies in Brazil and Mexico, this project translates theory into practice. Consequently, our project has woven Amefrican academic networks that not only generate knowledge but also rebuild historical ties and envision shared futures of resistance and racial justice.

Transnational relations underscore the urgent need for inclusive public policies across Latin America's diverse democratic landscapes. Intersecting inequalities – rooted in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and accessibility – present global challenges that demand scientifically grounded, socially oriented responses. Ultimately, promoting diversity within institutions strengthens both academic excellence and public policy development, a relationship demonstrated by world-class universities and their transformative impact on the public sphere (Viana, Sandim & Knop, 2024).

Interculturality and Anti-Racist Networks: The Antonieta de Barros Chair

The materialization of Amefrican internationalization finds concrete expression in the cooperation project involving (UFSC) Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, (UNAM) Universidade Nacional Autônoma do México, and (UFRB) Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia under the auspices of the Antonieta de Barros Chair. In this ajeun – a ritual offering – the blending of cassava flour from Santa Catarina, dendê (palm oil) from Bahia, and Mexican mezcal serves as a *padê* to open paths for this academic intersection. The agreement promotes researcher mobility and advances comparative Brazil-Mexico studies on affirmative action, race relations, and interculturality, engaging graduate students and faculty across all three institutions.

The proposal integrates two key dimensions: knowledge production, through research on racism, affirmative action policies, and the educational experiences of Black, Indigenous, and traditional peoples in Brazil and Mexico; and researcher training, which will prepare 56 new

Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola scholars through the anticipated defense of 28 doctoral theses and 28 master's dissertations. Inherently interdisciplinary, the project unites graduate programs across Education, Law, Anthropology, History, the Humanities, and Information Science, alongside Mexico's Programa Universitario de Estudios de la Diversidad Cultural y la Interculturalidad (PUIC/UNAM) and Brazil's UFRB Graduate Program in the History of Africa, the Diaspora, and Indigenous Peoples. This diverse coalition of fields reinforces the premise that the anti-racist struggle is not restricted to traditional humanities but actively permeates the entire spectrum of scientific production.

Beyond its academic impact, the project addresses urgent geopolitical challenges. In southern Brazil, for instance, UFSC operates in a region where active neo-Nazi cells have been identified in recent years. In this context, the partnership with UNAM and UFRB is as political as it is scientific, functioning to build international networks of resistance against racism, fascism, and colonial violence. As Gonzalez (1988) highlights, Amefricanity is both praxis and memory; here, it translates into research methodologies and academic alliances that unite African descendants and the Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala.

While the UFSC–UNAM–UFRB project embodies critical internationalization, its most radical dimension lies in its methodological choices to cast off colonialism. By integrating perspectives from Black feminism, decolonial and postcolonial studies, and critical discourse analysis, the project proposes not only new research questions but also transformative ways of producing knowledge.

Racial Equality and Combating Racism: methodologies and epistemologies

Black feminism – as articulated by authors like Patricia Hill Collins (2016), Sueli Carneiro (2005), and Lélia Gonzalez (1988) –proposes a standpoint epistemology. Within this framework, knowledge produced from Black and female experiences is not marginal or secondary; it is an indispensable source for understanding reality. This perspective breaks with the myth of scientific neutrality, acknowledging instead that all knowledge is situated. By drawing upon Black feminism, this project reaffirms that Black and Indigenous epistemologies fundamentally challenge academic canons.

Decolonial studies, in turn, offer a vital critique of the coloniality of power and knowledge. Intellectuals such as Ochy Curiel (2009) and Catherine Walsh (2010) highlight that decolonizing knowledge requires displacing Eurocentrism as the universal benchmark for scientific truth. In this project, that critique translates into a practice that combines qualitative and quantitative analyses. Crucially, this approach operates within a political horizon that views racism not merely as a social fact, but as a historical and epistemic structure that organizes inequalities and sustains capital. Finally, critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001) serves as a methodological tool to reveal the racial relations embedded in official documents, educational policies, and everyday practices of exclusion and

affirmation. When linked to Black feminism and decolonial studies, discourse analysis transcends its role as a mere linguistic technique. It becomes a political instrument to expose injustice and construct alternatives.

Producing knowledge entails intervening in reality—exercising social oversight of public policy while collaboratively formulating and building mechanisms for racial equity and the fight against racism. This approach moves beyond the traditional divide between "objectivity" and "subjectivity" by valuing narratives, memories, oral history, and lived experiences as legitimate data sources. Furthermore, it critically articulates an interdisciplinary framework, bringing together fields such as Law, Education, Anthropology, Information Science, and History around a shared ethical-political commitment. By adopting a methodological perspective rooted in Black feminism, decolonial studies, and critical discourse analysis, the project demonstrates that its scope extends far beyond theoretical reflection. In short, this insurgent methodology does not merely interpret reality; it actively transforms it.

The trips to UNAM undertaken by the scholarship recipients in the program's first phase have already demonstrated the potential and legacy of this initial cycle. The symbolic journey of Antonieta and Abdias to Mexico was the focus of our panel at the 2024 UFSC Seminar on Graduate Internationalization, where we presented their research reports, insights into ethnic-racial relations in Mexico, and recommendations for future students.

Between October 2024 and March 2025, the seven scholarship recipients selected by the Chair's interdisciplinary research team undertook their academic mobility, an experience that has had a significant social and academic impact on their trajectories. While the topics within the scope of the Chair's broader project were diverse, they were all guided by a common thread: examining racial relations in Mexico through the lens of Afro-Latin American and Caribbean feminism. Research areas included the social and racial coverage of conditional cash transfer policies, the construction of Black identity through Brazilian and Mexican experiences, children's and young adult literature, anti-racist pedagogical practices, and access to information analyzed through the lens of Black critical theories.

The greatest epistemological challenge in 'Amefricanizing' our analytical tools lies in the social and academic recognition of Afro-Mexican people. This is especially true when considering the accounts of students who experienced the historical construction of the 'Black' category in Mexico. This limited perspective can only be deconstructed by the groups that have lived through the daily struggles of Mexican social movements—including the active Afro-Mexican movements that directly challenge both society and the university.

Antonieta, Cruz e Sousa, Abdias, Lélia, and Eshu: Carrying a *Padê* in Intellectual Luggage

In the academic realm, the project contributes directly to the transformation of the trajectories of seven students – five Black women and two Black men. This figure is significant not only for the number of participants but also for the deeply transformative nature of the themes addressed, all of which are linked to race relations, affirmative action, and interculturality. The challenge lies in reaching diverse audiences – a goal almost entirely achieved during this second phase.

From a social perspective, the international mobility of Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola students carries both symbolic and practical weight. Symbolically, it disrupts the colonial mindset that historically associates the global circulation of knowledge with white, male elites. Practically, it enables these individuals to integrate into international research networks, thereby enhancing their career opportunities and their active roles in decision-making spaces. The following testimonial, presented here in its original Spanish, reinforces this perspective:

> Participating in the doctorate with Movilidad Internacional del Programa Universitario de Estudios sobre la Diversidad Cul-tural y la Interculturalidad (PUIC) de la UNAM was a deeply enriching experience on a cultural, personal and intellectual level, which significantly contributed to my formation as a researcher and as an Afrodescendant woman in Brazil. The completion of this training process highlights the contribution of international exchanges in the promotion of studies and the improvement of academic investigations. For the formation of the human being, it is essential to expand your points of view, improve your cultural repertoire and your vision of the world. I highlighted the wealth of learning that I now carry with me, an accumulation of knowledge that gives new meaning to my trajectory. This experience, acquired throughout the study period, has an incalculable value, which cannot be bought or paid for by anyone (Emanuele, 2025, our translate).

As Nilma Lino Gomes (2017) notes, affirmative action is not limited to university admission; it is fully realized when it strengthens the retention, recognition, and social advancement of students and researchers. By valuing individual trajectories as part of a collective project for racial justice, such programs foster an insurgent mobility that transforms the students' own communities of origin.

Coloniality refers to the persistence of colonial power within a nation's subjective structures, violating identity construction and entrenching colonial logic long after the formal end of colonialism (Gomes, 2018). Within this context, the project helps institutionalize anti-racist practices in southern Brazil. Furthermore, the international partnership reinforces the building of Amefrican networks of resistance, as the African diaspora and Indigenous peoples share experiences of colonization and struggle rooted in the same intersectional framework.

Consequently, the project's impact lies in its potential to reshape the academic space and the public sphere, shifting who produces knowledge, the topics addressed, and the frames of reference employed. As Sueli Carneiro (2005) asserts, the fight against epistemic racism entails not merely

occupying the university but transforming it. In this sense, the project's effects extend beyond the boundaries of academia, fueling social movements, solidarity networks, and public policies committed to historical reparation and social justice.

The Amefrican journey of Abdias Nascimento, Antonieta de Barros, Cruz e Sousa, and Lélia Gonzalez – enshrined as deified ancestors within our researchers' intellectual constellation – illustrates the paths guided by Eshu. In Yoruba and Afro-Latin American philosophy, it is said that Exu killed the bird yesterday with the stone he threw today. In practice, he launched an idea into the past for our elders – an idea that is now blossoming into new paths for us. The *padê* (offering) for this counter-colonial philosopher is embodied in his very greeting: Laroiê! – he who speaks all languages. The meeting point and the crossroads established here unite two fundamental ingredients for this offering: communication and politics.

Final Considerations

The Abdias Nascimento Program and the Antonieta de Barros Chair demonstrate that internationalization can serve as a practice of historical reparation rather than a mere academic policy. By promoting the global mobility of Black, Indigenous, and Quilombola students, as well as individuals with disabilities or high abilities, and trans individuals, who are explicitly included by the Chair, these initiatives dismantle the elitist structures that have historically characterized the international circulation of academic knowledge.

In this process, each individual trajectory becomes a collective achievement, illuminated by the Bantu philosophical principle. A Black student departing for Mexico, for instance, represents not just an academic experience, but the outcome of ancestral struggles waged by generations demanding recognition and justice. As Gomes (2017) notes, affirmative action must be understood as a "political-pedagogical project" that goes beyond mere access to transform the university itself, dispelling the colonialism that persists in daily academic life. The same applies to internationalization affirmative policies; they constitute a diasporic reconnection – actualized through Lélia Gonzalez's (1988) concept of Amefricanity – that links the Americas as a territory of resistance and epistemic reconstruction.

At the same time, reparative internationalization strengthens both institutional policies and social movements. The creation of the Antonieta de Barros Chair at UFSC, the resumption of the Abdias Nascimento Program by CAPES, and partnerships with UNAM and UFRB reveal that the fight against epistemic racism requires coordination across various levels: the individual subject, the university institution, the nation-state, and international networks. It is, therefore, a strategy of cognitive justice (Carneiro, 2005) that places historically silenced voices at the center of knowledge production and weaves a global anti-racist network.

Thus, it is concluded that affirmative internationalization not only expands opportunities but also reshapes individual and collective meanings. It is an affirmative policy that advances the struggles of Abdias Nas-

cimento for reparation and of Antonieta de Barros for racial and educational equality, projecting them onto new generations who cross borders and build anti-racist academic networks. More than just a public policy, it is a seed for future generations. It stands as proof that the academic trajectories of Black, Indigenous, Quilombola, and trans individuals—as well as those from other historically excluded groups—are not only possible but indispensable to building a truly plural and emancipatory body of knowledge. Therefore, affirmative actions in internationalization should not be viewed as exceptions, but rather as a central component of a strategy for social justice and for strengthening scientific production from a plural, anti-racist, and global perspective.

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Notes

[1] Information available at: https://www.gov.br/capes/pt-br/acesso-a-informacao/acoes-e-programas/bolsas/bolsas-e-auxilios-internacionais/encontre-aqui/paises/multinacional/programa-de-desenvolvimento-academico-abdias-nascimento. Accessed on: Sep. 22, 2025.

[2] The Abdias Nascimento Academic Development Program was established in 2013, suspended in 2022, and reestablished in 2023 by CAPES Foundation and the Secretaria de Educação Continuada, Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos, Diversidade e Inclusão (SECADI) of the Ministry of Education. The program's central objective is to structure and strengthen graduate education, focusing on international student and faculty mobility and the combating of educational inequalities.

[3] Information available at: https://noticiapreta.com.br/so-2-em-cada-10-alunos-de-mestrado-e-doutorado-no-brasil-sao-negros-ou-indigenas/. Acesso em: 22 set. 2025.

[4] Established in 2023 at the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), the Antonieta de Barros UNESCO Chair is an international initiative dedicated to anti-racist education, combating institutional racism, and promoting racial equality in higher education.

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João Matheus Acosta Dallmann holds a PhD in Political Sociology from the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (2018) and has been a faculty member in the Department of Medical Sciences at the UFSC Araranguá campus since 2018. He leads ÌLERA—an anti-racist research and outreach group focused on health—and coordinates the Center for Afro-Latin American, Indigenous, and Quilombola Studies at UFSC Araranguá. He also coordinates the Anti-Racist Education and Health initiative and serves as executive director of the Antonieta de Barros Chair: Education for Racial Equality and Combating Racism, which is part of the UNESCO Chair network. He is an associate of the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers (ABPN) and a member of its Black Population Health working group.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2108-8147
E-mail: acostadallmann@gmail.com

Joana Celia dos Passos holds a PhD in Education from the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC). She coordinates the UNESCO Chair in Education for Racial Equality and the Antonieta de Barros Chair: Education for Racial Equality and Combating Racism (UFSC). She is a member of the Conselho de Desenvolvimento Econômico Social Sustentável da Presidência da República (CDESS); of the Red Interuniversitaria Educación Superior y Pueblos Indígenas y Afrodescendentes en América Latina (RED ESIAL), and the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers (ABPN). She is also a member of the Comitê Científico do Centro de Estudos da Sociedade, Universidade e Ciência (SOU Ciência). She conducts research on education, race relations, and affirmative action, with a focus on the Black population.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9946-7900
E-mail: passos.jc@gmail.com

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