

DOSSIER

THE BLACK EDUCATOR MOVEMENT

*O MOVIMENTO NEGRO EDUCADOR*ROBERTO BORGES^{1*}ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9373-748X>

GOMES, NILMA LINO. **O Movimento Negro Educador**. Saberes construídos na luta por emancipação. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2017.

The title of Nilma Lino Gomes' new book is arousing, and it invites us to know some construction identity fragments of a social group, whose history was, at the same time, misrepresented and obliterated in/from Brazil and Brazilian people's formation history. In its assertiveness, the title of the book informs us that the latter will approach an active black movement concerned about education, and it makes this point clear: such Educator Black Movement's knowledges were structured in the struggle for historical emancipation, which has featured the black populations' trajectories since the first black person's arrival in this country.

In the book's preface, Boaventura de Sousa Santos ratifies what the book title announces: "the movements have an intrinsic epistemological value" (p. 9), and they produce "a kind of specific knowledge, one that is born in the struggle", statements that will be later presented and developed by Nilma Lino Gomes' arguments. Boaventura points out to the necessary differentiation between the knowledge born in the struggles and the knowledge that is produced about them. It is important to stress that such differential is a fundamental feature of our times for the knowledge born in the struggles does advance in isolation, and perhaps principally because many subjects of this born-in-the-struggle-knowledge have recently reached the position of subject, a position that had been denied to them for centuries.

¹ Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica Celso Suckow da Fonseca, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil.

* PhD in Language Studies, professor at the Post-Graduate Program on Ethnic and Racial Relations, Responsible for the research group "Racismo e Discurso". (Centro Federal de Educação Tecnológica Celso Suckow da Fonseca - CEFET / RJ). E-mail: <roberto.borges@cefet-rj.br> .

Nilma Lino Gomes opens her text by stating that “The Black Movement is an educator”, and that her own life trajectory – as an educator, a researcher, a knowledge producer or her political actions – is based on such acknowledgment. In this very passage, the author already presents her distinctive style: light, pleasant, easy to follow and, simultaneously, deep, blunt and striking. Such style is typical in the writings of a woman who speaks from the inside, who constituted her knowledge from within the struggle. Hence, she raises a chain of issues that will lead the study, all of them connected to a central question: how do different knowledge areas interact or can interact with the Black Movement and what do they have to learn from it?

This book is the outcome of Nilma Lino Gomes’ first post doctorate, which was held at the University of Coimbra, under the supervision of Professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos. Her main research thesis is presented right in the title of the book and in its introduction: the Black Movement has an important educational role for it produces emancipatory knowledges, besides systematizing knowledges related to the racial issue in Brazil. In such thesis, there already is the questioning of both our entire educational formation and the education curriculum to which we were subjected. Moreover, such curriculum has still been subjected to Brazilian people in a variety of educational settings and institutions, no matter the level of schooling. According to Nilma Gomes, the social movements are “the producers and the articulators of the constituted knowledges constructed by the non-hegemonic and the counter hegemonic groups of our society” (p. 16). In this regard, the author underlines the outcomes of the Black Movement’s political, pedagogical, educational and emancipating actions (for example: the inclusion of racism as an unapproachable crime in Brazil’s Federal Constitution, and the changes in the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education, which made it mandatory the teaching of African and African-Brazilian history and culture) in relation to what we know in Brazil nowadays – be it the black people diaspora, and be it the knowledge constituted by black people, both of them important theoretical issues in the Human and the Social Sciences. Moreover, in the introduction, the author adds that the Black Movement is the protagonist in the enforcement of affirmative policies for the inclusion of black people in a plethora of segments of Brazil.

The first chapter of the book, “The Black Movement as a Political Actor”, presents the reader how the Black Movement, in

its educational role, by re-signifying the meaning of ‘race’, impacts whatever it is theoretical, political, ideological and analytical in the accounts of how racism operates in the State structure and in the Brazilian’s life. By giving ‘race’ a new meaning, the Black Movement makes it political, and, thus, withdraw the black population from an unrighteous place: the racially inferiors. Nilma Gomes explains that in order to be considered Black Movement, any (political, religious, cultural, artistic) group must feature the struggle against racism as an unmistakable political attitude, besides not eluding other possible fights in a hierarchical society. Such perception is of great importance because it disrupts various doubts concerning the definition of “black movement”, and it evinces that social segments may or may not be labeled black movement.

Nilma Lino Gomes singles out Education as the field for the analyses conducted throughout the present research, and informs us that such singling out was one by the Black Movement as well, since prohibition to Education was the major hindrance for black people accessing the work market. Briefly, as it had been previously announced, but vigorously, the author stresses the role of strugglers and protagonists of the *Frente Negra* (Black Front), the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (Black Experimental Theater) and the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (Unified Black Movement). Quoting Dias (2005), Nilma Gomes writes about a fact that is unknown to many people: the discussion on ‘race’ had already been present in the processing of the first Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law no. 4.024/61). According to Nilma Gomes, it is in the second half of the 1990’s that the re-signification of ‘race’ proposed by the Black Movement extrapolates the boundaries of the political militancy and the academic field. The author deems the “*Marcha Nacional Zumbi dos Palmares contra o Racismo, pela Cidadania e a Vida*” (“Zumbi dos Palmares National March against Racism, for Citizenship and Life”) – which drove a meaningful number of people to this demonstration – a striking moment in the enlargement of such boundaries. Another major historical mark for the Brazilian Black Movement was the “III World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance”: by being signatory of the Durban Action Plan, the Brazilian State recognized itself racist, and it committed to take on measures to overcome racism.

The second chapter, “Emerging pedagogies”, discloses the theoretical and methodological procedure: the development of

the “pedagogy of absences and emergencies”, drawing upon the “sociology of absences and emergencies” (p. 40) by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2004). This procedure aims at “making it emerge the Black Movement’s protagonism in the education-Social Movements relation” (p. 42), and it states that the Black Movement “has been one the main mediators between the black community, the State, the society, the basic school and the university” (*idem*). Going back to her style, Nilma Gomes casts a series of difficult-to-answer questions, and shows that paths already taken by Boaventura de Sousa Santos may be useful to her reflections.

The third chapter, “The Black Movement and Knowledges”, opens with a paraphrase of Sader (1988) in order to stress the importance of the Black Movement as a counterpoint to the Brazilian racial reality, especially because it points at the lack of critical interpretation regarding the issues involving or not the black populations in Brazil; therefore, positioning itself as the social “subject” that not only does it demand dignified treatment in view of the black peoples’ history and reality, it is also “the subject” that unveils “... the insidious and ambiguous racism that reasserts itself by denying itself, and that is crystalized in the structure of our society” (p. 51).

One of the issues raised in the fourth chapter is the difficulty towards the production of an educational social criticism despite the fact that there is so much to criticize. In this sense, the author chooses the “pedagogy of the absences” (p. 63) as an epistemological watchful stance in face of the educational knowledge, which considers the necessity of reflecting on the relationship between knowledge and knowing. Nilma Gomes comments on the fact that the knowledges produced by the black community and by the Black Movement differ from that knowledge considered scientific. Nonetheless, she is emphatic when she states that those knowledges cannot be taken as “knowing less” or “residual knowing”. The knowledges discussed in this book are specific knowledges, still, they are of paramount importance to understand our society because they are constituted knowledges via racial existence in a racialized, racist and excluding society.

Among the knowledges produced by black people and by the Black Movement, Nilma Lino Gomes chooses three of them: the identity, political and aesthetic-corporeal knowledges. Therefore, we reach the climax of the book, and we are taken by a huge wave of potent arguments that make us think not only about our enslaving and colonizing historical process, as well as about the legacy of all

these in our bodies, minds, intellects and knowledges nowadays, no matter our ethnical and racial belonging.

In relation to the identity knowledges, the book talks about the enormous profusion of texts on black identity in different social networks, with everything that such expression may trigger. It also talks about how the visibility of the racial issue is shaped in different social environments (culture, arts, education, literature...) and takes part in a vast array of critical debates, both online and off-line, by the diversity of black subjects.

Regarding the political knowledges, Nilma Gomes states that the political debate on race emerges in a very convenient perspective. She also states that we still have much to do in order to advance and overcome in relation to Brazilian racism. She considers important and impactful – for they caused a broad social debate – the following public policies institutionalized by Law: Racial Equality Statute (Law no. 12.288/10), Socio-Racial Quotas in the Superior Learning Federal Institutions (Law no. 12.711/12), and the Quota Law in Federal Public Tenders (Law no. 12.990/14).

As for the aesthetical-corporeal knowledges, this is the first issue raised: it is time the black body overcame the exotic perspective that has been historically impressed on it. The fact that there is a number of black people occupying spaces from which they have always been excluded (such as universities, government and media) demands a new and more respectful approach to these bodies and coexistence.

The author innovates and positively dazzles when she selects the aesthetical-corporeal knowledges as the bases for deeper considerations. She strongly believes that these knowledges open up a better understanding of both the black identity and the matters related to the political and epistemological dimensions of race, racism and anti-racism. These knowledges become educational actions for the Brazilian society in its educational, legal and social dimensions; they also embody resistance and struggle for political and academic rights of Brazilian black people. As an example, Nilma Gomes remembers an unforgettable and striking historical moment: the unanimous defense of the constitutionality of affirmative actions and racial quotas by the judges of the Supreme Court. In order to avoid false and groundless refutations in such respect, she uses as argument the result of academic researches, which conclude that the qualification of students who entered universities by the system of racial quotas is equal or higher than those who entered by other means.

The fifth chapter, “Black corporeity and regulation-social emancipation tension: regulated black body and emancipated black body”, talks about how the schooling process still is an important regulator of black bodies/identities, and how the Educator Black Movement, with the help of a black youth and/or faculty, has been the main actor in the changes in different School areas via artistic, pedagogical and poetical interventions. Therefore, in this chapter, the idea is to analyze several forms of regulation (dominant and dominated) and of emancipation of the black body. It is relevant the way Nilma Gomes argues about the black body still as a merchandise even to these days, and how this body gets free from a state of ignorance (colonialism/slavery), departing to another knowledge status: solidarity/freedom. Even in the dialectical struggle for the construction of emancipatory knowledges, there is still no escape from the regulation of racism and sexism that structure society.

The sixth chapter, “Dialectic tension and crisis of the social-racial regulation-emancipation pillar in the field of race relations and education”, deals with the abolition of slavery, black aesthetics and affirmative action. It is fundamentally clear that the struggle for the emancipation of the black bodies was present throughout the history and life of the enslaved African peoples who were kidnapped to this country, but it was also present in the life and history of their descendants. Rebellion and struggle were constant features of these people, embodied in rebellions, poisonings, abortions, formation of *quilombos* and participation in abolitionist movements. In addition, the text portrays the Brazilian shame of the legacy of slavery and the desire to take its marks away, among them the mixed body, which does not forget the African and black presence.

Nilma Gomes leads us to a powerful reflection on the black aesthetic, which escapes the patterns, the paradigms, the stereotypes that perversely formed us. In a brilliant way, she tells us that the senses of beauty and ugliness are cultural, and can undergo drastic changes in the historical and political process of societies. It is very interesting when the author reflects on the understanding of beauty as inclusive, but that when this concept is constructed in a context of domination, it may have the exclusionary, discriminatory role. Whether they TV shows, marketing or different media, they leave us in no doubt that the conflicts between who is handsome and who is ugly connects to an issue deeply intertwined with the ethnic-racial tensions that structure our country.

With regard to the affirmative actions, the book ratifies that the struggle for affirmative actions was the historical moment in which much more was learned, produced and discussed about racial inequalities in Brazil. Nilma Gomes reflects on how the university had to rethink its place to the extent that it was “discovered” that there was a Brazilian population outside academic spaces, and that this population was black; and that, upon arriving at the universities, these people brought on new knowledges and new ways of building academic knowledge.

In the last chapter of the book, “Social Movements, Black Movement, and destabilizing subjectivities”, the author argues how black people and the Black Movement have succeeded in activating the capacity for astonishment and indignation necessary for a destabilizing and nonconformist practice and theory. In its practices, the Black Movement tries to make the colonizing and enslaved past no longer automatically redeemed by the future, and points to the interpretation of these two processes of domination and oppression as aspects of human suffering. In this chapter, questions seem to matter more than solutions. There are no solutions yet, and we need potent questions to try to find them. The Black Movement, as well as other social movements, militate in the search for the ending of human suffering caused by the forms of discrimination, oppression and dehumanization that are the result of racism, global capitalism and the coloniality of power, of being and of knowing. What is still missing to the Black Movement and other social movements to reach this level? The union and the articulation of all social movements that struggle against different oppressions may be an adequate way of building common paths that do not deny their specificities. The investment in articulation, complicity and communication among the different social movements is the alternative of building a project before which emancipatory subjectivities will emerge and will point out new directions for a genuine democratization and for the decolonization of knowledge.

The author concludes her book by exposing the fact that the organization of black people, from the period of enslavement to the present organization of the Black Movement, has enabled the construction of a destabilizing, transgressive and emancipatory subjectivity in a way that has contributed positively to the overcoming of racism and the construction of radical policies of racial equality. It shows how the construction of a pedagogy of diversity (of race, gender, age, culture) is a challenge posited in the emancipatory process, and that this pedagogy of diversity is part of the history

of the struggle of black people, and it assumes radicalism in this millennium with the obligation to include the teaching of African and African-Brazilian History and Culture in the official curriculum. It is in this context that one can contemplate the emancipatory action, systematized and articulated by the Black Educator Movement.

“The Educator Black Movement. Constituted Knowledges the Struggle for Emancipation” is a necessary book for all of us that, somehow, teach and from which all forms we learn, because it deals with a fundamental theme for the understanding of how Brazilian society was historically built, and how it is constituted nowadays. It brings part of history that our School, colonized and Eurocentric, did not want (and still does not want) to teach us. “The Educator Black Movement” is a book that, when theorizing about emancipatory social and political processes, frees us, removes what prevents a clearer view of our society, and in doing so, it takes us away from the naivety that is an obstacle to analysis of society.

Submission: 15/03/2018

Approbation: 07/05/2018

Contact:

Avenida Maracanã, 229 - Bloco E - 5º Andar. Maracanã
Rio de Janeiro | RJ | Brasil
CEP 20.271-110