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EMPOWERMENT OF BLACK STUDENTS

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EXPANDED SUMMARY

The challenges facing black women in Brazil are countless. In addition to having less access to education, public services and work, they still experience a reality of violence and stigmatization. And it is no different with black girls, as it is throughout childhood that black children, especially girls, are faced with the first forms of prejudice and end up being victims of harsher forms of verbal and in some cases physical violence. The experiences of black girls are marked by several factors such as racism, sexism and classism. These factors of structural oppression mean that the childhoods of black girls are often shaped by racist stereotypes, having major repercussions for the lives of the victims.

A girl who is empowered from an early age will certainly become a woman more prepared to deal with everyday machismo, prejudices and social pressures directed at her body. However, before starting this process, the family needs to be empowered. Empowering girls is, above all, making a true historical-cultural recovery of their ancestors, as it will contribute positively to the process of building the empowerment of dark black girls. Freire (2021) highlights that it is through critical self-analysis that the oppressed liberates themselves, that is, frees themselves. The author also makes it clear that "If understanding is magic, action will be magic". Awakening the reader to the importance of not waiting for liberation from others, but from the oppressed themselves.

Berth (2019, p.210), goes in this direction in his book "Empowerment" by highlighting the meaning of power,

> When we assume that we are giving power, we are actually talking about the articulated guidance of individuals and groups at different stages of self-affirmation, self-valuation, self-recognition and self-knowledge of themselves and their most varied human abilities, of their history and, mainly, of an understanding regarding their social and political position.

For the author, "self" recognition is the path that leads to empowerment and the social and political framework always comes together with empowering oneself, and is related to the social and political liberation of an individual. With this look, mediated by the school environment, the dark black girl, when seeing the other, begins her process of self-knowledge and from this the construction of her black Identity.

A society permeated by a sexist and racist logic, such as Brazil's, conditions black women and girls in a situation of double discriminatory processes. According to Crenshaw (2002),

> the association of multiple systems of subordination has been described in various ways: compound discrimination, multiple charges, or with double or triple discrimination. Intersectionality is a problem conceptualization that seeks to capture the structural and dynamic consequences of the interaction between two or more axes of subordination. She specifically addresses the way in which racism, patriarchy, class oppression, and other discriminatory systems create basic inequalities that structure the relative positions of women, races, ethnicities, classes, and others. Furthermore, intersectionality deals with the way in which specific actions and policies generate oppressions that flow along such axes, constituting dynamic or active aspects of disempowerment (CRENSHAW, 2002, p.177)

The author's concept of intersectionality makes us reflect on how many social ills Brazilian girls, young women and black women are subjected to. The situation of submission most of the time does not allow for an emancipatory process, even though these women have changed the historical legacy of their ancestors. It is necessary to reflect on the number of girls who have also gone through and are going through this type of violence.

The girl and the empowered woman is resilient and tends to be an inspiration to others, it was not an act that black women were subjected to.

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silenced, patriarchy never wanted black women to occupy their place of speech. Eurocentric thinking leaves dark black women out of soap operas, commercials, bookstores, theater, universities and this is also racism. Ribeiro (2000, p.31) clarifies that racism is a system of oppression that aims to deny rights to a group, which creates an ideology of oppression for them, this is recurrent with black women, who suffer racism from society in general, sexism and also machismo.

As for racism, according to Ribeiro (2000), there are different ways of being racist, but she highlights that for there to be racism it must be related to some form of power, which is in line with what Almeida (2021, p. 67) describes by mentioning that black women are considered incapable because there is an entire economic, political and legal system that perpetuates this condition of subalternity, maintaining low wages, outside decision-making spaces, exposed to all types of violence.

This position dialogues with Akotirene (2019) who brings the focus of intersectionality on black women, this term, despite few people knowing it, says a lot about black women. For the author, black women need to be seen from an intersectional perspective, as there is in this woman some overlapping oppressions: beyond skin color; she is a single mother; sexism; she lives on the outskirts of cities; racism.

All empowerment must be based on and consolidated in a girl's racial consciousness. Empowerment, which is not consolidated, but which has been a very positive reference for trying to recover the strength of black girls in their educational process and in their lives as a whole.

- **Representation as part of teaching learning**

Education is fundamentally important for structural changes, a strategic place for overcoming mechanisms that do not allow a break with a racist past and present. Individuals positioned at the base of the social pyramid are the biggest targets for discriminatory practices, injustice, lack of professional opportunities and subject to a multitude of situations that lead to social subordination. In Latin America, among the many discriminated against, there are, most of the time, black and indigenous people and among these are black women, who are at a greater social disadvantage. These are individuals whose rights to citizenship carry the stigma of inferiority, which was conferred on them by another who considers himself superior, between whites and blacks, a supposed white power. Thinking about school beyond the domain of teaching and learning, this space is configured by the reproduction of the hegemonic standards of a society where the values: "what can and should be taught", are authorized by a dominant class. Thus, the construction of black identity from school benches does not start from neutrality, since the literature and speeches disseminated throughout the school career were reflections of a Eurocentric perspective. For Freire (2021, p. 41),

> The great humanist and historical task of the oppressed – to free themselves and their oppressors. Those who oppress, exploit and violate, because of their power, cannot have this power, the strength of liberation for the oppressed or for themselves. Only the power that arises from the weakness of the oppressed is strong enough to free both.

Using a metaphor, we can understand that the oppressor is society and the oppressed is the school. In this way, the school can only free itself when it also frees society. This apparently neutral power exercised by the school reinforces unequal gender relations and racism, reproducing the patriarchal order.

According to Santos (2015), the teacher needs to be attentive to the student's specificities, and the student needs to respond to the process of their development. Education is not in the hands of one or the other, but in the hands of both in constant negotiation. Socioeconomic conditions determine social inequalities, but we cannot deny that these inequalities have a racial basis in Latin America. The intention to characterize the problem of racial relations as a problem of the working classes devalues the discussion of the racial issue in Brazil (HASENBALG and SILVA, 1988),

> A good project for a democratic society cannot ignore the obstacles to the establishment of true citizenship for the black Brazilian population. Racism is still a strong barrier to be overcome in order to achieve an egalitarian society.

We assume that ignorance about the peculiarities of racial relations constitutes fertile ground for racist practices. However, studies that enable reflection on this topic are necessary to change the *status quo* of the black population. It is necessary to deepen discussions on racial relations in the formal school context and create opportunities for critical analysis of educational reality. Researchers on this topic are expected to provide support to uncover intricacies of the school web, in order to enable pedagogical reformulations and the improvement of racial relations, which directly influence the learning process of students.

To implement an education focused on ethnic-racial diversity, it is necessary to do more than praise differences, it is necessary to deepen reflection on the particularities of ethnic-racial groups, as well as to implement public policies, change power relations, redefine choices , take new directions and question the dominant culture. In

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In short, it is necessary for Brazilian society, in all its areas of activity and, particularly, to highlight the importance of education and its multiracial condition with respect and dignity for all people.

No educational process occurs if the teaching-learning being is uprooted from its values, its beliefs, its objects, its own being. We can often see that, in the school environment, certain students need to deny or camouflage who they are in order to fit into the hegemonic perspective of the school environment. These schizophrenic processes prevent emotional attachment and the full exercise of intellectual talents. It needs to be in its entirety, to teach, learn and transform.

The theoretical hegemony that privileges only Eurocentric content in Brazilian schools has for a long time removed black people from socio-historical knowledge, hindering a reflective and emancipatory consciousness among our population. And in this sense, with the creation of Law 10,639/03, it enabled the need to create spaces and elect other social actors for differentiated educational knowledge.

For Collins (1990), the dominance of hegemonic power is a form of social organization that uses ideas, ideology and culture to absorb and depoliticize the opposition created by oppressed groups. This means that education, school curricula, religious teachings, cultural and family relationships are all used to manufacture ideologies that maintain oppression.

In this way, the significance of the hegemonic power domain is its ability to shape collective consciousness through ideas, images, symbols and ideologies. According to the author, portraying black American women as certain stereotypes is a way of creating a narrative that justifies the oppression of these women. Finally, the domain of interpersonal power is constituted by the discriminatory practices of everyday experiences, but because they are so routine, they are often not noticed or identified. The strategies of everyday racism and everyday resistance are present in this domain of power.

Each of these four domains of power can influence the school environment in some way. Based on these concepts outlined by Collins, we can understand that formal education and the school environment, therefore, end up being spaces in which the current dynamics in society are reproduced. One of these dynamics is precisely the incidence of violence against black girls.

Collins (1990) also demonstrates that one of the instruments of colonization was the construction of certain stereotypes about black women. This culminates in what the author calls images of control, that is, stereotypical and racist images of black women contribute to the creation of mistaken perceptions about our sexuality and humanity. These images of control that are perpetuated by the media, education, and culture have repercussions on the lives and experiences of black girls and women, including in the school environment. There are a multitude of authors who analyze the occurrence of racism in the school environment in general and a large number are specifically dedicated to understanding how this phenomenon affects girls. Many of the studies produced refer precisely to images of control and how they affect daily school life, influencing the behavior of teachers, staff and students.

Monique Morris (2016) is another researcher dedicated to the topic and states that it is necessary to understand how stereotypes about black femininity influence the experiences of black girls in the classroom. She conducted dozens of interviews with black girls and young women who report having experienced racism and sexism in the schools they attended. Her central argument is that many black school-aged girls are being affected (physically and mentally) by racist beliefs, policies and actions that degrade and marginalize their existence, creating conditions that expel them from schools and leave them even more vulnerable. This set of racist stereotypes and beliefs that make up the cultural universe of American society generate tangible repercussions in the lives of black girls, both inside and outside of school.

A similar scenario happens in Brazil. According to Ellen de Lima Souza (2016), school is usually an inhospitable environment for black children. The author researched how black children are seen by education professionals and found that from the time they were babies, black children are punished more than white children, receive derogatory nicknames and, in conflict situations, are overlooked or blamed.

Historical representations of black women, added to contemporary representations, can influence the experiences of black girls in the school environment. The racist practices and beliefs of our society, although they do not begin at school, can count on the reinforcement of the school environment to be disseminated. The notion that black children are more undisciplined, incorrigible and naughty allows for a distortion in the way people respond to actions of these children. In addition to being influenced by stereotypes, many educators are also unprepared and uninformed about gender and racial relations issues - which prevents them from fully exercising the role they are assigned to is expected, that is, the role of positively contributing to the successful trajectory of black students. Thinking about racial and gender diversity in the educational area is to enable inclusion, respect, content and solidarity with children and young people who carry the stigma of difference, whether due to their skin color, their religiosity, their sexual orientation, or their their ethnic group or just because they are different from what is considered the ideal or standard. Collins (2019), highlights that we have as a matrix of domination, a classist, racist, sexist, heteronormative and corponormative, colonialist society, which organizes the dominance and reproduction of power structures from the perspective of capitalism. In view of this, there is a need for social processes of empowerment, individual, but, above all, class,

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through the construction of knowledge anchored in the social experiences of oppressed groups, spaces for densification and critical awareness, in order to contribute to liberating praxis and the construction of another societal project that has as its goal the liberation of humanity and the social justice.

Finally, Freire's (1996) understanding is corroborated that prejudiced practices regarding class, race and gender radically deny democracy and substantially offend human beings. In the current situation, the critical reading of the world, but above all, the empowerment of 'being more', reaffirms.

The school has transmitted historically constructed prejudices. Since colonization, Brazilian society has had mechanisms to maintain a racist social structure and the school has become one of these oppressive mechanisms. Racism in the school environment has several implications. One of them is that children learn to associate phenotypic characteristics related to race with economic and social inequalities and begin to see “being black” as being inferior and “being white” as being superior.

It is therefore necessary to see school as an environment that perpetuates racist practices. The impact of this phenomenon is felt mainly by black children and the silence on the issue has also been a mechanism that serves to maintain this scenario of symbolic violence that is sometimes silenced and sometimes explicit.

Some considerations

It is necessary for black girls to see black women with their phenotypic characteristics occupying spaces that have been erased and silenced for a long time. That is why there is an urgency to study how dark black girls perceive empowerment in the school space, for those who have been there and had this experience. Because anyone can talk about black female empowerment, but only black girls/women know how important it is to them.

With oneself-esteemEvaded and fortified, girls will be more confident in themselves and will have a different relationship with their bodies and skin color. It will be a relationship of love and not hate, as usually happens due to standards and impositions. As they are the center of their lives, they will not depend on male approval, as well as having a broader awareness of their capabilities and tastes, not allowing themselves to be subjected to other people's desires. Relationships with other girls also tend to be different, one of solidarity and empathy, rather than competition, which contributes greatly to the advancement of all women in the future.

Therefore, it is necessary to seek paths to emancipation for black girls and women and help educators to better understand their own educational experience and develop more positive cultural identities. Thus, symbolic-educational, supportive and affective practices that allow for the emancipation of women are essential components for a true paradigmatic revolution. For a new social order to occur, in which black women are in places of demands, they can support a logic of power and strengthen fragmented identities and consolidate positive self-concepts.

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