

Psychology, public policy for quilombola populations and racism

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Abstract: This paper summarizes part of the doctoral research on quilombo Maria Rosa, one of the first rural black communities in the state of São Paulo to be granted a quilombola land title. The aim is to understand whether, within that community, land titling public policy operates as a mechanism to counter racism. To reach the proposed objectives, observations and interviews were carried out based on the formulations of Enrique Pichon-Rivière. Other authors such as René Kaës contributed to the analysis of the material. The study concluded that the policy brings those quilombo residents into contact with the effects of slavery and racism. However, they still lack an adequate support policy integrating different government levels and addressing the issue of racism.

Keywords: racism, quilombos, public policy, social psychology.

Introduction

Our goal in this paper is to share part of the debate developed in a doctoral research aimed at investigating the possible relation between the establishment of land titling public policy and the strengthening of black racial identity among the black community of quilombo Maria Rosa, situated in the Ribeira River Valley, in the state of São Paulo. In other words, whether such public policy operates as a mechanism to counter racism.

The term “quilombo” is generally defined as “any rural black community composed of descendants of slaves leading a subsistence way of life and exhibiting strong cultural ties with the past” (ITESP, 2000, p. 7). However, in Brazil there are also urban black communities legally recognized as quilombos. In common, they are ethnic/racial black groups characterized by specific territorial relations and resistance to historical oppression.

Regarding racism, recent genetic research has failed to establish any biological differences separating individuals into distinct racial groups. However, despite the lack of race from a biological point of view, it is nevertheless an important component in social relations and structures from a political-ideological, sociocultural and psychosocial perspective.

In Brazil, phenotypical traits linked to the idea of race (such as skin color, lip and nose shape, hair texture and type) are used to differentiate and hierarchize racial groups, especially between individuals composing two main groups, the so-called whites and blacks.

Therefore, despite the absence of genetic elements indicating potential differences between whites and blacks, social relations are nonetheless racialized based on physical

and biological traits, with a historically greater impact on the black population.

Racism relates to all phenomena based on the concept of race/color that promote distinctions, preferences, exclusions and restrictions among individuals in any domain of life (Brasil, 1969). It is, therefore, a mechanism of domination guided by processes that single out, hierarchize and subjugate social groups considered to be ideologically inferior, as well as provide privileges for those deemed superior. Individuals are defined by the traits of the racial groups to which they belong, as if they were naturally different and hierarchized, some classified as good and others as bad. Thus, the subject is not viewed as a unique subject, but as a representative of his group (Munanga, 2004).

Racism creates an unbalance between social groups: one of its main functions “relates to racial stratification and perpetuating the privileges of the white racial group, who benefits from exploiting and controlling the subdued group” (Hasenbalg, 1988, p. 119). It is, so to speak, one of the main organizers of material and symbolic inequality in Brazil.¹

The studies on racial inequality carried out by Hasenbalg (1979, 1988) are based on hypotheses that the inequalities encountered between whites and blacks are related to differences of opportunity and treatment daily dispensed to each one of these racial groups, and not a heritage of past slavery. They claim a cumulative cycle of disadvantages hindering or preventing social mobility among black people exists, with an increase in social inequalities from generation to generation.

The authors also stressed that there is an attempt to confine racial conflicts within the sphere of social class or stratification. However, as claimed by Silva (2000), such a

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¹ For more on this topic, see, for example, the publication of the Laboratory of Economic, Social and Statistical Analyses of Racial Relations (2009-2010).

line of thought fails to explain why most blacks are poor. In their opinion, Brazil must create tools to face both class and racial inequalities. For Hasenbalg (1988), “in the first case, what is at stake is the class structure itself; in the second, the racial privilege of the dominant white group” (p. 140).

Still on racism and its relation with policy, Huntley (2000) reminds us that the effect of public and private policies and practices may seem to be neutral, but actually is (or can be) the opposite.

Concerning the relation between quilombolas and public policy, it is often fairly limited. “A high degree of institutional distance is observed between state and municipal governments and the quilombola communities” (Brandão, da Dalt & Gouveia, 2010, p. 10). The authors pointed out that, among other reasons, this is related to the restricted number of public policies addressing racial issues.

Not addressing racial issues in institutional programs, not prioritizing and implementing mechanisms and strategies to reduce inequalities and foster the equal access of blacks to benefits generated by the state are indications of racism, or of so-called institutional racism.² This also explains why only 6.9% (207) of the estimated 3,000 quilombola communities in Brazil have been granted land rights³. In addition, most of them are currently poverty-stricken and face dire conditions of infrastructure and access to basic public services. (Brandão et al., 2010).

Methodology

As mentioned, the research was carried out at quilombo Maria Rosa, situated in the Ribeira River Valley, municipality of Iporanga, state of São Paulo, approximately 350 km from the state capital. It is remote location of difficult access, reached by crossing the Ribeira do Iguape River and a set of hills.

Of the six quilombola communities in the state that have received land titles, this one occupies the largest territory, almost 3,400 hectares. However, most of the area is unproductive, being part of the protected Atlantic Forest. Maria Rosa has the smallest population: 16 families currently live there, a figure based on the number of occupied houses.

The field research was carried out in the actual quilombo. Five trips were made over four years, providing a rich source of material based on field observations and numerous interviews, 22 of which were recorded and transcribed.

Twenty-four people collaborated with the interviews. Most interviews⁴ occurred at the actual quilombo⁵ following an unstructured format. Individuals were asked to spontaneously relate their personal stories, as well the community's, with no pre-established script. Interviewees included people of different skin color, of all generations, working and retired, married and single, with or without children, men and women, people born in the actual quilombo and surrounding areas and those who had moved in after marrying someone from the community.

In general, conversations occurred more than once with the same quilombola. Some interviews were brief, almost casual, others were lengthy. Various sites were used: the Community Center, the river path, people's yards and sitting-rooms. Any occasion could lead to a talk, recorded conversation or informal chat.

A significant part of these interviews was carried out collectively, in a circle. The collaborators would improvise groups of three, four people. Many times they would pick up the recorder and interview each other, inviting other community members who were around to participate in the conversation. Children would suggest interviewing their parents and also ask to records their own accounts. Sing-song sessions were recorded and played back to everyone.

From a methodological point of view, observations and interviews were guided by the formulations in social psychology developed by Enrique Pichon-Rivière. In this perspective, interviews are organized around a topic that best embodies the objective of the research and constitutes an explicit task for the group, be it composed of the researcher-quilombola pair or three or more participants.

This psychology, whose theoretical object of study is “the development and transformation of a dialectic interaction occurring between social structure and unconscious fantasies of the subject” (Pichon-Rivière, 2005, p. 238), inquires into the subjectivity-building processes arising from the social macrostructure. And the optimum place to study such phenomena is the so-called operative groups. This term refers to the presumed existence of a task related to the elaboration of a common conceptual framework, a basic condition for the establishment of communication. As it is considered the hypothesis of the unconscious, two spheres are involved in the corresponding theory: explicit and implicit.

When considering the two dimensions (explicit/implicit) of the phenomena present in processes of interaction, the aim is to disclose the implicit occurrence, which, according to Pichon-Rivière, manifests itself within the field of observation through the advent of a new quality in this field, called emergent, which is expressed through the set of unconscious fantasies made explicit by the process of assigning and assuming roles.

2 Racism against blacks is expressed through different strategies. One of them relates to institutional racism, which exploits socially structured discrimination mechanisms. Originating in actual state structures, it spreads out to all social institutions. It relates to institutional actions and policies which generate vulnerability and create barriers and obstacles, denying the black population equal access to various social services and products.

3 Data obtained in July 2013 from the Brazilian National Institution for Colonization and Land Reform (INCRA). Available at: <http://www.incra.gov.br/index.php/estrutura-fundiaria/quilombolas/file/108-titulos-expedidos-as-comunidades-quilombolas>

4 Only one interview was done in the town house of a community member who lives in Iporanga.

5 The research was authorized by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology of USP.

The concept of the emergent is related to the concept of spokesperson, one of the pillars of Pichonian theory. The spokesperson of a group is the member who, at a certain moment, reveals the collective happening, the anxieties and necessities of the totality of the group, in other words, the fantasies that drive that group. He does not speak for himself, but for all; and in him come together what is called verticality (personal story) and horizontality (the process expressed here and now, in the totality of the group) and which allow the emergence of the aspects to be interpreted:

In this sense, to formulate hypotheses related to what happens in the subject and in the rearrangements of the group, we must allow ourselves to be penetrated by the different paths sustained along this course. And thus, without losing sight of our objective, we are carried away, guided also by those involved in the process in hand. “Carried away” means accepting the suggestions on whom to visit and interview, accepting the different invitations, which give us clues to the meanings, senses and other revealing aspects of the reality being investigated. (Scarcelli, 2002, p. 101)

From a practical point of view, the inhabitants of the quilombo, in a general and spontaneous way, suggested one another for the interviews, which, on various occasions, can be interpreted as emergent. It was observed that, despite the lack of any theoretical knowledge or orientation, they ended up conducting the research in a manner akin to what is proposed by the “snowball” technique developed by Biernarcki e Waldorf (1981).

This proved to be extremely valuable for the development of this study, since taking the quilombolas’ suggestions into consideration was one of our methodological principles, also supported by Bosi (2003), who suggests that, in research with a qualitative approach, researchers must strive for intimacy, listen attentively and be close to the interviewees and their world.

The analysis of what was offered by the residents of the quilombo drew on the contributions of René Kâes, who focuses on the psychoanalysis of group processes.

Within this perspective, the narratives were considered to represent aspects both unique to each subject and also commonly shared by the members of his group.

According to Kaës (2011), unique refers to the unconscious and individuated psychic space marking the structure, life history and subjectivity of a subject, who is at once the subject of himself and a member – constituted and constituent – of a chain to which he is submitted. He occasionally performs roles which, unconsciously, relate to himself and to the other, thus becoming a bearer of contents of his affiliation group. In these cases, the subject functions as the conveyor of the group’s voice, symptoms and dreams, which belong therefore, to him and those dear to him, since “the unconscious of each subject bears traits, in its structure and contents, of the

unconscious of another and, more precisely, of more than another” (p. 30).

Kaës (2011) pointed out two series of organizers which, from the point of view of the unconscious, enable, support and organize the process of psychic interaction between one or more individuals. One is the organizer of unconscious matter (common fantasies, alliances, fear or common desires) and the other of sociocultural elements (socially constructed through the work of culture). They provide normative models for the unconscious psychic organizers and support the construction of an origin for the group, as well as for its identification as distinct from other groups.

If the group and the group’s subject are, so to speak, determined by unconscious arrangements outlined by the members of the group, they are also determined by the sociocultural organizers. It is in this sense that laws, political and ideological statements become (or potentially become) the matter of internal arrangements of the groups. This broad picture, including the political-ideological and social catastrophes, partly determines the relations between the subjects and their psychic life.

Considering such a perspective, when we reflect on the sociocultural (or rather, legal-political)⁶ organizers related to the five centuries of black presence in Brazil, we can identify four which seem to have contributed to the establishment of ways of life in a specific period: slavery, abolition, the Republic and the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 (Costa, 2012).

These marks emerge as frameworks expressing themselves, for example, in *slavery* as a rule that considered blacks as objects and workforce. With the *abolition* blacks went from objects and workforce to free and inferior people, and in the *Republic*, based on 19th-century racial theories, they became racially inferior. Such frameworks established a fixed, stereotyped view of blacks, to which they responded with different strategies of confrontation, among them the creation of quilombos during the period of slavery. Concerning the *Federal Constitution*, the demands made during the period of the constituent assembly resulted in the establishment of legal marks aimed at opposing racism and ensuring to blacks the legal equality they were previously denied (Brasil, 1988).

Analyzing contemporary black history in Brazil entails revisiting these marks, including racism and, in the case of the quilombola populations, the public policies implemented in the last decades.

Concluding this topic, it is important to stress that the view guiding the comprehension of the accounts transcribed below was largely based on the land issue and the psychosocial stance taken by the interviewed quilombolas with regards to blackness, how they deal internally and publicly with black racial identity, how they interact, view themselves, are viewed and talk about blackness.

6 Legal-political because they relate to legal marks put into effect through political action.

Dona Cristina (50 years old), Dona Nega (55), Lina (34) and Aline (28) contribute frequent accounts. As we see it, the transcribed accounts, despite having been given individually, take on the form of group narratives, since they relate to aspects experienced by the men and women, the adults and children living in the researched quilombo. Their narratives are, at once, representative of what is unique to each one of them and what is common and shared by the group they belong to, quilombo Maria Rosa.

Some field data

My father became a forest ranger in 63, anything you did he was there, breathing down your neck. God forbid! . . . He got the job and wouldn't let us plant, no way, not even for food. When I got married, around 65, we cultivated a plot of land here. My brother offered my husband a partnership. They marked it out, and when my father left, they said: "let's go and clear it." But it didn't work out. When my father found out, he went there and stopped them, no way would he let them burn it, his own son-in-law and son's plot. So my husband abandoned the work and left. That year we left, it was November, the plot was half cleared. We left and went to my father-in-law's . . . My brother was furious because the clearing wasn't that big, there was only a part done and he had stopped the work. He'd say: "You can't clear, you can't deforest, you can't cut down! You can't cut down the trees; if you cut, you can't burn!"

Dona Nega⁷, the quilombola who gave us this account, and her father are originally from the Maria Rosa community. According to Dona Cristina, daughter of the woman who is considered the oldest member of the quilombo, the settlement is at least six generations old. Her ancestors founded the community almost 300 years ago, and since then agriculture has been one of its main sources of wealth.

At the beginning, they would produce all that was necessary, including fire, lard oil, raw cane sugar or sugar cane juice and would gather to work and dance. These collective harvesting sessions were followed by celebrations, music and dancing. The payment for cooperating with the harvest was a full day of festivities, of bonding among neighbors.

Life was hard at a time when, so they mentioned, no public policies existed at all. There was no electricity, roads or other necessary infrastructure. Nevertheless, they supported each other and celebrated whenever the work was done. Sadly, there are no more of these collective efforts, a traditional practice associated to rural cultural and working life, especially because planting as they knew it

is now considering an environmental crime: slash-and-burn agriculture, consisting of field rotation, felling of native forest, controlled burning of vegetation and natural fertilization.

With the emergence of the forest service, initially in the figure of Dona Nega's father, this practice fell into illegality. Unable to clear the forest, they could produce no food, and consequently some were forced to hire out their services. Once agriculturists, they became employees with no time or energy to tend to their diminishing agricultural produce, hard-hit by the strict anti-deforestation rules.

As a result, their diet suffered, they lived in extreme poverty. That was also the fate of Dona Nega's father: he suffered a stroke and fell on the protected soil of the Atlantic Forest. Maybe for no longer being able to endure a profession which, in that context, was quite ungrateful, since it estranged him from his own tradition, family and neighbors. In a community characterized by a collective way of life, as a forest ranger, he became isolated.

His body fractured, he moved away and other rangers were hired by the state government. Before he was the only one, then came a team of three, four, five. And the discomfort spread out within the community. The new rangers had helicopters and they not only banned planting, but also speculated about their lives, issued fines, seized animals with (now) clandestine loads taken from the forest⁸ and, in this case, could even bring the inhabitants down to the police station.

Fear of not being able to survive, of being arrested by the rangers, of not having anywhere to go became widespread among the residents. They lived in terror under this constant surveillance. At a moment's notice they could be punished, displaced, outlawed and invaded. This state of affairs calls to mind the potential authoritarianism of public policies:

Despite being indispensable, public policies often present an authoritarian streak. Founded on theoretical assumptions and guided by partial ideological principles, they fail to embrace what is most basic in promoting their supposed vocation: recognizing the subject as a citizen. (Scarcelli, 2002, p. 79)

It is obviously important to oversee the preservation of the environment. However, it is necessary to analyze how this process was conducted and understood by the population. Especially important is to consider that, according to the interviewed quilombolas, the environmental protection policies, as implemented in that region, have delegitimized a traditional practice of those black rural populations which, historically, has preserved the forest. It should also be stressed that the Ribeira Valley is acknowledged as the region in Brazil with the largest extension of continuous and preserved Atlantic Forest.

7 The names and nicknames of the interviewees are fictitious.

8 Besides agriculture, hunting and extraction activities in the forest have also become environmental crimes.

Agriculture is the substance of the sociological reality of the Maria Rosa community. It is the element that links them to their ancestors and among themselves. What's more, it can be viewed as a common element in quilombo history, since contemporary quilombos, those of the slavery period and those previously existing in Africa all subsisted mainly on agriculture, among other productive activities.⁹

Agriculture can be considered not only a labor activity, but also a practice related to black autonomy and ancestry, a family tradition linking parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, back to the most distant ancestors. It is through agriculture that present-day quilombolas guarantee their physical survival and preserved their cultural heritage. Branding them as criminals means perpetuating the image of blacks as bad, harmful people. Not allowing them to exert traditional agricultural practices means alienating them from their knowledge, their survival and their ancestral filiations. As stated by Benghozi (2010):

To attack filiation is to attack the basis of the organizational link of the identity . . . The group is wounded in its integrity and identity. It is a destructive attack, aimed not at all individuals, but at what establishes, structures and embraces the common identity: by attacking filiation, the identity is imploded. (p. 80)

The Maria Rosa residents try to organize themselves against these attacks. They protect themselves by all means available. Dona Nega, for example, is one who contests the oppression imposed by the government. This is what she said about working the land:

Think about it, if we who were born here, from our ancestors, if we don't have this knowledge, who has? We are teachers of these people from outside the country, aren't we? We are agronomists, we are all of that, isn't that so? . . . Our grandparents cared for it, and now so do we. That bothers us . . . I wish they'd support us to keep it that way instead of telling us, "Look, you must plant there, you can't clear here." Because we don't want to starve, we want to work our land.

This speech is representative of many of them, of how much they rely on their identity of "agronomic" workers. However, from a legal point of view, it has not been enough to counter their status of transgressors.

This situation of instability has persisted for decades. Moreover, in the 1990s, part of Maria Rosa's territory was incorporated into one of the region's State Parks. Some the inhabitants were actually forced to move out due to this restriction. They abandoned their links to the land in which they had collectively lived, worked, performed religious

rites and held celebrations. Where they developed their work from memory and their dreams.

These are land-territories (Gusmão, 1995) with symbolic and material values for each one of the quilombolas. A basic element of the psychosocial organization of these groups, the land and access to it represent the reverse of the logic of slavery, which, despite not being always successful, aimed to place blacks outside the land, outside the autonomous use of the land.

It was fear that drove them down the political path. It was the fear of losing what bound them together and gave their life meaning that led them to assume the identity as blacks over their identity as agriculturalists. Thanks to this new identity, that of quilombolas, they were able to reintegrate into their territory those lands incorporated into the State Park.¹⁰ Therefore, might this focus on a collective quilombola identity afford a possibility of protection, of political and psychic defense?

Isolated from almost everything, the first inhabitants had to open their way through the forest. Today the hoe is no longer needed, but the difficulties persist. Besides the poor conditions of the road from the quilombo to the town and of the narrow lanes within the settlement, a further infrastructure problem is the ferry or the lack of a bridge connecting the quilombo to the town. During various floods afflicting the region of the Maria Rosa community, the ferry broke down. Thus it was in July 2011. According to reports, the local administration provided them with a motorboat. The boat, which had a leak (or sprung a leak), has been replaced, but not before several arduous months with no satisfactory transport conditions had gone by.

Not having a road, bridge or ferry in adequate operational conditions means not having concrete elements that can function as a linking and separating channel between quilombo and town, between rural and urban life, between isolation and the possibility of social mobilization (of work and education, for example). It means not having the elements to provide them with their rights to come and go, to choose when to stay and when to leave. Not having them is a sign of imposed separation.

Such linking elements are necessary for the implementation of development-oriented policies. Their absence condemns the quilombolas to continuous poverty.

Concerning this aspect, the environmental and infrastructure – road and transportation – public policies in place in the region have not taken into consideration, in a broad and systematic way, the material and symbolic needs of that population. There seems to be no coordination among the policies themselves and the population's demands.

¹⁰ Based on article 68 of the Transitory Provisions of the Federal Constitution (Brasil, 1988), which establishes the right of quilombo communities to their land, the Maria Rosa community filed a technical-judicial claim to the status of quilombola identity in 1998. In 2001, they were granted the land title. Half-way through these proceedings, in 1999, they obtained the reintegration of the land appropriated by the State Park.

⁹ On this topic, see, for example, Munanga (1995/1996)

Despite such limitations, the land title and ensuing improvements, such as electricity in some residences and the construction of brick houses, represent an asset for those quilombolas. Nevertheless, there is much to be done before they obtain the right to a dignified life. An explicit link must be established between their poverty-stricken life and the post-colonial, racist-oriented degradation imposed on the quilombolas. And addition, what plagues them is not only the precarious material and infrastructure conditions, but also a psychic suffering related to racism.

Concerning this topic, Aline mentioned that, at the beginning of their land title process, in the late 1990s, many of them feared that becoming a quilombo meant being enslaved. They lacked a public policy repudiating the images of blacks as slaves and of whites as citizens, and therefore geared towards affirming black racial identity.

Aline was one who asked her mother not to accept the status of quilombo for the community. She believed her mother, being black and illiterate, might be enslaved, while she, having had some education, might escape slavery. Beset by such insecurity, they decided to become a quilombo because they believed it would allow them to continue living there and working the land. Lina also gave the following statement about fear:

Because the history of blacks was nothing but suffering; so, many knew this, but no-one had the courage to say it. We'd talk at home, but when my grandmother would say we were black, I never told anyone, because I was scared of being hunted down also. We knew that blacks had been hunted down, transported, brought over from Africa. Grandma told us everything, but I didn't have the courage to say I was black . . . When I turned 12, she went away and left me this story. But I grew up, turned 15, 20, started going out, and didn't have the courage to say I was descended from blacks . . . If I admit I'm black, soon I'll have to leave this place, they'll catch me and chain me up.

Lina's great-great-grandmother was hunted down in that region. This story was told to Lina, her mother and brothers by her maternal grandmother. The fear of being chained and enslaved haunts the family and governs the organization of the common psychic life shared by its members.

One could consider that this fear they live in is not restricted to a subjective heritage related to the traumatic situation experienced by the great-great-grandmother. Also resonating among them are the psychic and social scars imposed by the process of colonial domination and reinforced by the processes of contemporary racism.

The fear of slavery emerges nowadays because they live in a state of false freedom. The widespread image of black people in fetters and the systematic lack of a formal education allowing them to debate the complexity of historical slavery and, mainly, how blacks contributed to the

founding of the nation, emphasize this narrow view of slavery and the image of the shackled black.

Which word is less violent or more politically correct? Between appearance and language: what should be said and what silenced? What should be publicly shared and what not confessed?

In circumstances of racial discrimination, silencing about blackness means denying the humiliation. Being coerced to say "no, I'm not," can be equal to saying "I am the subject of freedom." It is a denial whose function is to assert what one wants to be. Moreover, it is a defense mechanism that allows bonded subjects to organize themselves intersubjectively concerning tolerable psychic contents and, at the same time, organize themselves defensively by renouncing what is intolerable (Kaës, 2011).

In Lina's case, we could say that, metaphorically, the limit imposed was the house walls. An obligation was between among her family members and herself, as a psychic defense: not to speak [about] with strangers.

From the perspective of the psychic subject, the word used or silenced by blacks to define their skin color and way of life functions as a maneuver in face of the past and present degradation imposed on them; it is a tool to counter the imposed violence.

The interviewee moved between both poles: from silence to assuming her blackness to herself and others. From the uncertainty of a possible captive future to the reassurance of being who she is. She needed time and courage to awaken word, body and context. But she still fears the shackles. She fears someone foreign to the community will come to humiliate and enslave her. Lina spent many years of her life silencing about her blackness. It was mainly after attending a course on gender and race given by an African person and organized by public bodies (the result of an isolated public action) that she discovered that she not only could, but should acknowledge herself as black. At the course she also learnt that being a woman is not synonymous to submitting herself to men. She commented:

It was about six years ago that I took this course on gender, which had many teachers, one of them from Africa . . . He said that "we, as descendants of slaves, should not deny our color, that our color or race, no matter which, was black. We should strike our chest and say it, because as long as we're afraid of saying that word, we won't have any rights anywhere.

In was during the course on gender that she learnt about power relations imposed on women and blacks. Dona Nega, on the other hand, learnt about being black in an affirmative way at home:

I am a great-great-granddaughter of blacks, because my grandmother was a granddaughter of blacks, my grandmother on my father's side . . . I am of the black race. My husband is also black. He, my husband, doesn't know much history, because his

father never told him much about history, because he didn't know about it, but my father told us, he even had a book somewhere.

Her name is Aparecida – like the black saint – and her nickname is Nega (Negress). The name, alongside the body and the narratives of her relatives about Brazilian black history – from slavery to black resistance movements, from slavery to black cultural expressions, etc. – allowed Dona Nega to view being black not as bad, as a thing, but as a subject of dignity, someone to love, to share life with. Black as a subject of his or her own autonomy. Through the narratives, her family was able to help her preserve the integrity of her combined genealogical and black ancestry.

She and the other members of Maria Rosa – even those still wary of possible enslavement – defend the quilombo. They are grateful for the land title and acknowledge the improvements, yet remain alert:

What I think has improved, and I forgot to mention, is about the farmers . . . When the farmers arrived, they started buying land, buying, even with tobacco, people who had no money for tobacco would sell a small plot of land. [Those who bought] cut down all of this area here, this was a field . . . Here on the riverbank, when a so-called B. appeared, they'd force people off the land, buy small plots, they even brought in thugs, people who killed, who shot for real. My, things got really ugly with these powerful people around. So I thank God for our recognition as a quilombo, because that put an end to it [But] we're scared now because, suddenly, as I tell you . . . we wonder, what does the government plan to do with us? (Dona Nega)

Being a quilombo rid them of the presence of land owners, their thugs and (partly) of death by ambush; it is an asset and also a reason for unrest: what does the government actually want? A government that, historically, has been more neglectful than protective. Can it be trusted? If they defend the quilombo and are “relieved” with the land title, it is only half-heartedly. Besides the fear of being enslaved, there is a further one: of being expropriated by the government, despite the land title. The first apprehension (of being enslaved) encompasses the second.

Mainly due to the often irregular and oppressive history of their relations with the state, the policies implemented there are not actually viewed as a legitimate right of theirs, but as government actions that might later take their toll.

They feel deceived by the public bodies, since accepting the condition of quilombo was associated with the possibility of preserving their work practices and link to the land. If one or another does so now occasionally, it is in a clandestine way, which enhances their fear of the government evicting them and, ultimately, reducing them to their condition during times of slavery: with no rights. On the other hand, they fear being equally expropriated if they don't plant and are thus branded as unproductive. So they are up against a paradoxical situation.

Therefore, if the quilombo policy provided them with a rearrangement concerning the violence brought about by environmental policy, it is an unstable condition, a fragile seam that, in their view, might fray again.

The land regularization policy forced them to peer deep into the past, the farthest possible: since when were they there? Who were they, and their ancestors? Where did they live, what did they do, were they quilombolas?

According to them, these were not questions accompanied by support, but interviews of an anthropological nature to establish their future right to the land. They were important questions, capable of taking care of the past and the future, but, apparently, due to the urgency of the situation, they were limited to guaranteeing their physical survival through the legal title to their territories.

The presence of government bodies brought about an overflowing of unrest without an attending channel, a sensitive ear for all this turbulence. They needed mediation to deal with these anxieties, the conscious and unconscious representations that had been awakened. Unassisted, they had (and have) to handle a situation so new and so old: who are they? What do they think and feel about blacks and about being black?

For Di Giovanni (2009), public policy must be viewed not merely as a state intervention in a social context deemed as problematic, but, over and above, as a contemporary expression of the exercise of power resulting from a complex interaction between the state and democratic society. This presupposes relations effected in the field of economy which, nevertheless, are structured in a context in which independent powers coexist and citizenship rights are upheld; in other words, in which there is a collective capacity to formulate public agendas to foster the full exercise of citizenship.

According to the author, this interaction between state and society should be the starting point to define situations requiring state intervention, as well as the forms, contents, means, meanings and methods of intervention.

Within this same context, which demands that the subject be treated as a citizen, we postulate that state intervention must consider different levels of action: from concrete actions to those geared towards social representations and unconscious representations; from actions related to the intersubjective to those concerning the intrapsychic; from the legal-political sphere to social-cultural spheres, among others (Scarcelli, 2011).

This approach to public policy means investing it with an ethical and complex framework and distancing it from other forms of doing politics, such as patronage, rural oligarchism and populism. It requires recognizing that principles, theories, practices, results, as well as actors, interests and financing, among other elements, must be coordinated, despite potential tension, conflict, dissension (Di Giovanni, 2009). It demands viewing it as a social action with a leading role by the state, and also resulting from and mediating social needs.

The region lacks, among others, a public policy on work and income, coordinated between different government levels, which caters to their needs and traditions and at the same time addresses the racial issue. The current policy

is partly dedicated to countering the community's poverty conditions, but lacks an explicit connection with racism.

From slavery to abolition, from abolition to republicanism and the 1988 Constitution. The quilombo bears marks of all these transitions. Legal regularization and the implementation of public policy geared towards the needs of the Maria Rosa population have not yet, from a psychosocial point of view, made them feel safe as a black community, but have raised their awareness on the topic of blackness. It is a cue for each one of them to publicly, in the formal political sphere, publicly recognize themselves as black and thus, perchance, consider their common, shared secrets.

They are alert to their conditions of inequality and aware of the means to face them. Nonetheless, they need support from, among others sources, public policies in their struggle to confront the inequalities imposed on them.

All public policy implemented in the region must be guided towards dismantling the racist ideology. This means denouncing a scenario which sustains poverty and subjective and social dejection, as well as indicating the possibility of creating new ways of life which emphasize ethics and respect. It is about historicizing black history, normally treated as ahistorical.

In this case, public policy can produce not only material, but also symbolic effects, of re-subjection. In other words, it can play a therapeutic role, collaborating to elaborate the subjective marks related to racism, which reinforce and modernize the psychic heritage of slavery. Thus, we believe it will produce what Benghozi (2010) calls a net mesh, creating areas of shelter, of comfort, of trust.

Final considerations

It is common knowledge that the quilombolas are not the only ones to undergo persistent processes of oppression. Small agriculturalists, traditional fishing communities and native populations, among others, are also daily exposed to situations of political inequality. However, concerning the black population, we believe on principle that the distresses they have historically suffered necessarily stem from institutional racism.

Based on the accounts of the interviewed quilombolas, we strove to investigate a possible relation within the quilombo Maria Rosa community between the granting of their land title through São Paulo state public policy and

the strengthening of black racial identity among the members of that community. In this sense, whether this public policy operates psychically against racism.

To this end, we considered that the political processes "inform the subjectivity, unfold themselves internally, unfold themselves "inward," but such unfolding undergoes a personal metabolism and assumes a unique figure – metabolism and figure which demand close and differentiated consideration" (Gonçalves Filho, 1998, p. 13).

In general, public policy for the quilombola population in different Brazilian regions has been viewed, at once or separately, as having two aims: redistribution of land use rights and acknowledgment of identity. According to Arruti (2008), these are – or can be – distinct political commitments. In our view, they are convergent commitments, or should so be considered.

Concerning the members of the Maria Rosa community, from the agrarian point of view, despite having the title to the land, they still feel insecure and fear losing it to the government, since their relation with the state government remains unstable, mainly due to agrarian restrictions enforced through environmental laws, which prohibit their traditional practice of slash-and-burn agriculture.

With regard to the agrarian issue, the Maria Rosa territory is not large enough to support the cultivation of cash crops, which could afford them some income. That is why they demand the right to continue practicing subsistence agriculture.

The few agricultural initiatives that could be developed through, for example, programs of the Ministry of Agrarian Development, and supported by state government policy depend on a basic item, which is the existence of a durable and well-made bridge effectively linking the quilombo to the town.

And despite all the fears resulting from the lack of effective support, and also from living in such adverse conditions, there are remarkable stories of achievements.

Today, supported by ancestral stories, they devise new projects.

They desire and strive for the quilombo to have adequate infrastructure and a vigorous existence, for public policy to be designed with their participation, well-planned, coordinated and enduring. They want transparency in public policy and improved working, health and leisure conditions; they hope to be able to study, including details of black history. In short, they want to realize their dreams, inasmuch as they are not hindered, since these are feasible projects to be executed in partnership with those who represent the state.

Psicologia, política pública para a população quilombola e racismo

Resumo: Este artigo sintetiza parte da pesquisa de doutorado realizada em uma das primeiras comunidades negras rurais do estado de São Paulo a conquistar título de terras quilombolas, o quilombo Maria Rosa. Objetiva-se compreender se, para aquela comunidade, a política pública de titulação de terras opera como dispositivo contra o racismo. Para atingir os objetivos propostos, foram realizadas observações e entrevistas fundamentadas pelas formulações de Enrique Pichon-Rivière e de outros autores da psicologia social e da psicologia de processos grupais, como René Kaës. Como resultado, constatou-se que a política convoca os moradores do quilombo em questão a entrarem em contato com os efeitos do escravismo e do racismo. Todavia, ainda falta uma política articulada, entre os diferentes níveis governamentais e voltada para a temática racial, que lhes dê o devido apoio.

Palavras-chave: racismo, quilombos, políticas públicas, psicologia social.

Psychologie, politique publique pour la population *quilombola* et racisme

Résumé: Ce rapport résume une partie de la recherche doctorale réalisée dans l'une des premières communautés rurales noires de l'état de São Paulo à remporter le titre de terres *quilombolas*, le *quilombo* Maria Rosa. L'objectif est de comprendre si, pour cette communauté, la politique publique de titrage de terres fonctionne en tant que dispositif contre le racisme. Pour atteindre les objectifs proposés, des observations et des entrevues ont été menées selon les formulations de Enrique Pichon-Rivière. D'autres auteurs de la psychologie sociale et aussi des processus de groupe de la psychanalyse, comme René Kaës, ont contribué à l'analyse de la matière. En somme, il a été constaté que la politique interpelle les habitants de *quilombo* à prendre contact avec les effets de l'esclavage et du racisme. Cependant, il manque encore une politique articulée entre les différents niveaux du gouvernement et la question de la race pour les donner un soutien adéquat.

Mots-clés: racisme, *quilombos*, politiques publiques, psychologie sociale.

Psicología, Política Pública para la población *quilombola* y racismo

Resumen: Este artículo sintetiza parte de la investigación de doctorado realizada en una de las primeras comunidades negras rurales del estado de São Paulo a conquistar el título de tierras *quilombolas*, el *quilombo* (En Brasil, los *quilombos* eran concentraciones políticamente organizadas de esclavos africanos y afrodescendientes huidos) Maria Rosa. El objetivo es comprender si para aquella comunidad la política pública de titulación de tierras funciona como dispositivo contra el racismo. Para alcanzar los objetivos propuestos fueron hechas observaciones y entrevistas apoyadas por las formulaciones de Enrique Pichon-Rivière y de otros autores de la psicología social y del psicoanálisis de los procesos grupales, como René Kaës. Como resultado se constató que la política convoca a los habitantes del *quilombo* en cuestión a entrar en contacto con los efectos del esclavismo y del racismo. Sin embargo, todavía falta una política articulada entre los distintos niveles gubernamentales y direccionada para la temática racial que los proporcione el debido apoyo.

Palabras clave: racismo, *quilombos*, políticas públicas, psicología social.

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Received: December 6, 2013

Revised: January 28, 2015

Accepted: March 6, 2015