

Black youth, High School and democracy: the fight for school¹

Juventude negra, Ensino Médio e democracia: a luta pela escola²

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ABSTRACT

This work presents ethnographic data from a doctoral research conducted in a public school in the north area of the city of São Paulo. In the researched reality, black girls played an important role in the organization and maintenance of the occupation movement that occurred at the end of 2015. In this article, we intend to show how the presence of black culture in the school curriculum of a High School institution, along with other policies for valuing and recognizing this culture, may have contributed to the articulation of these young in the decision about the movement. The occupation took place in the midst of a greater movement in the state of São Paulo in 2015, with the main objectives: a) resisting the reform of High School announced by the São Paulo State Department of Education and b) claiming a more democratic school, that recognizes the differences and enables the participation of young in decision-making processes. The research conducted in this school unit is based on the studies of sociology of education and anti-racist studies. It was carried out through observations and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers before, during and after the occupation period. It is noticed that despite the difficulties, such as persecutions of teachers and students who participated in the movement, the occupation process contributed to the

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constitution of fundamental knowledge for the construction of a democratic, anti-racist and feminist thought in the institution.

Keywords: High school students. High School. Anti-racism; Schools' occupations. Students' movement.

RESUMO

O presente trabalho apresenta dados etnográficos de uma pesquisa de doutorado realizada em escola pública na zona norte de São Paulo. Na realidade pesquisada, as garotas negras tiveram um papel importante na organização e manutenção do movimento de ocupação ocorrido no final de 2015. Nesse artigo, pretendemos evidenciar como a presença da cultura negra no currículo escolar de uma instituição de ensino médio, junto a outras políticas de valorização e reconhecimento dessa cultura, pode ter contribuído para a articulação dessas jovens na decisão sobre o movimento. A ocupação se deu em meio a uma movimentação maior ocorrida no estado de São Paulo em 2015, tendo como principais objetivos: a) resistir à reforma do ensino médio anunciada pela Secretaria de Educação do Estado de São Paulo e b) reivindicar uma escola mais democrática, que reconheça as diferenças e possibilite a participação das jovens nos processos de decisão. A pesquisa realizada nessa unidade escolar tem como fundamentação teórica os estudos da sociologia da educação e os estudos antirracistas. Realizou-se, através de observações e entrevistas semiestruturadas com estudantes e docentes antes, durante e após o período de ocupação. Percebe-se que apesar das dificuldades, como perseguições à docentes e estudantes que participaram e apoiaram o movimento, o processo de ocupação contribuiu para a constituição de saberes fundamentais para a construção de um pensamento democrático, antirracista e feminista na instituição.

Palavras-chave: Estudantes secundaristas. Ensino médio. Antirracismo. Ocupações de escolas. Movimento estudantil.

Introduction

High School was defined as the final stage of Brazilian Basic Education System since the Federal Constitution of 1988. However, it was at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st Century, that a significant advance in the expansion of its offer was envisaged (CORTI, 2016). It is important to note that in this period this expansion took place mainly through the State Public System.

Data from PNAD (National Survey by Household Sample) from 2004 to 2014, point out that during this decade there was a greater presence and possibility of young students staying in school, considering the Brazilian population between 15 and 29 years of age. Such conditions became effective due to an articulation of public and social policies of the federal government, such as the expansion of the formal job offer, the valorization of the minimum wage and the greater access of the population to social programs such as Bolsa Família. However, as highlighted by Spósito, Souza and Silva (2018), we found a great inequality in the school trajectories and in the levels of schooling that these different subjects reached.

With regard to High School, in this period only 67.2% of young students between 15 and 17 years old were in High School. In this group, there was an increase of 10.6% in the presence of young people belonging to families that are among the poorest 20% of the Brazilian population. For Spósito, Souza and Silva (2018), this was a decade that represented an increase in the permanence of these young students in school, although still with the marks of social, racial and gender inequalities. The difficulties to remain in the education system continue linked to the urgency of work: in 2014, 16.3% of young students in this group needed to articulate study and work and 5.7% of them only worked. Half of this group (50.4%) worked without any formal employment ties and 36.9% had a workday equal to or greater than 40h/week.

High School continues to be the stage of “persistent inequality”, that is, the expansion of students over the past decades, even with a certain regularization of school flow, was accompanied by the maintenance of educational stratification. In this process, women were the main beneficiaries of the slow progress in democratizing educational opportunities. As for race, if for white and yellow young students the greatest difficulty is to enter University education, for black and indigenous young students the main obstacle in their schooling remains the completion of Basic Education. (SENKEVICS; CARVALHO, 2020).

In the period between 2016 and 2018, we can see an increase in access to education by the black population, however, at rates still much lower than those of the white population. In the same period, according to Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2019) data, there was a decrease in the proportion of black and brown people who were out of step between age and grade. The completion of High School among students age 20 to 22 years old had increased among blacks (58.1%), but still remained below that of the white population (76.8%) in that same age group. However, there were already indications, in the year 2018 of the setback we are experiencing in relation to the schooling of young people in our country and which is worsening in the context of the severe health crisis we have been going through.

Different authors point to the deepening of Brazilian social and economic inequalities in this pandemic moment (NERI, 2020; CADÓ; BORSARI, 2020). In particular, with regard to racial theme, it is possible to state that the process of bringing the Brazilian State closer to the demands and desires of this population, which had been taking place since the 1990s, with greater force in the first decade of this century, is under strong threat (ZAN; KRAWCZYK, 2020; LIMA, 2010). In recent article, Lima (2020) highlights that the various measures of public policies since then, although they have not immediately reduced inequalities, have created an important space in the Federal Government sphere for actions aimed at racial inequality. According to the author with the election of the Federal Government plus federal and state legislatures, the racial agenda has not left the government agenda, much worse, it is present in a regressive way and committed to the deconstruction of few advances and the increase of exclusion and marginalization of these subjects.

In a way, we can say that at the time of school occupations in São Paulo, young High School students understood that the recently achieved process of slow and gradual democratization of the educational system was at risk.

The context of the occupations in the state of São Paulo

In 2015, the State Department of Education of São Paulo (SEE/SP), presented data on a loss, in the period from 1998 to 2015, of 2 million students in the public system of the state. At the same time, it released data from the previous year in which it established a direct relationship between the improvement of student performance, about 9.4% above the average, and the offer of a single cycle in schools, that is, schools exclusive to Elementary Education and others that attended only High School students. The argument was then mounted that, in the department's view, justified the proposed reform. The project included the closing of schools in the state and the transfer of 311 thousand students, many of whom would start attending institutions distant up to 1.5km from their residence.

For Giroto (2017) the SEE/SP disregarded, in their diagnosis, that a considerable part of schools that were indicated to be closed in 2015, were defined as passing schools, that is, they did not serve young residents of their surroundings, but the many who came to work in the region of the institution where they were enrolled. In this sense, according to the author, schools that could or may not be closed cannot be evaluated from the region's birth rate. The proposed reform by the state of São Paulo, in a way, is in line with a project,

which has been underway for some years, which influences the managerial and technical logic of the education in São Paulo and nationally.

That same year 2015, the teachers union of São Paulo public system, Union of Teachers of Official Education of the State of São Paulo (APEOESP), denounced that at the beginning of the school year, 3,323 classrooms were closed, which led to the dismissal of teachers and overcrowding of classrooms. In that year a long strike by teachers plus the greatest evasion of professionals took place: about 26,000 teachers, among permanent and temporary employees left the state education system. It was in this context that the movement of occupations with national repercussion broke out (CORTI; CORROCHANO; SILVA, 2016).

The movement started on social networks, it also exploded in mobilization on the streets and in schools. On November 10, the first school was occupied and soon a total of 213 public schools were occupied throughout the state. (JANUÁRIO *et al.*, 2016).

The movement that started in São Paulo and later expanded to different parts of the country, in a way expressed resistance to a conservative project that presented itself for High School. The disputes regarding the project for this level of education have been in place for some years, but it was in the context of the political worsening experienced since the 2016 coup that a “dusty speech” (SILVA, 2018) of technical and instrumental conception of the curriculum has strengthened, which certainly was perceived by the students who started to react. The Common Base National Curriculum (BNCC) High School document released by Ministry of Education (MEC) at the end of 2019, indicates a reduction in the time and content of general education and the flexibility in the offer of this level of education as central aspects of the current proposal. We are facing a clash that is historic and that, at this moment when conservative projects for the country and education are being strengthened (ZAN; KRAWCZYK, 2019), the curricular guidelines are articulated to the interests of pragmatic, technical and professional education, very distant from the human schooling project expressed in the constitutional text and claimed by the students during the movement of occupations.

For Groppo (2018, p. 110) it is important to understand the movement of occupations in the context of broader social struggles and mobilizations that had been taking place in the country since 2012/2013. According to the author, the school occupation movement resembles the students’ movement classically addressed in the social sciences, as it deals with broader issues of the social and political life of our country. At the same time it distances itself from it, “... since it was not organized and became effective since the formalized student entities...”, except for the presence of a student union or for supporting a central student directory.

It is in this context of broader struggles that we also understand the approval of the Law 10.639/2003 (BRASIL, 2003)³, which makes teaching African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture in schools an obligation. This contributed to the expansion of criticism of the curriculum centered on Eurocentric knowledge. According to Régis and Basílio (2018) when studying a set of theses and dissertations produced on the subject of the implementation of the Law, it is possible to see that there are still many difficulties for schools in teaching African History and Culture properly. However, the studies point to an intensification of actions and projects in schools aiming to implement this policy.

Even with the growth of studies on the education of ethno-racial and gender relations at school in recent years (SILVA, 2018; AUAD, 2004), it must be considered that the democratization of relations in the school environment requires, as a first step, to know it, as the Brazilian public school is still not well-known, especially in what concerns its daily life, marked by complex power relations, which often escape the comprehension of its actors and are no longer evidenced through multiple silences that occur within a process of denial and non-recognition of certain subjects as belonging to that space (AUAD, 2004; CAVALLEIRO, 2000).

At the same time, it becomes necessary to consider what researcher Maria Victória Benevides, drew attention during an opening lecture at an event on Education in Human Rights at the Faculty of Education of the University of São Paulo, in 2000. According to Auad (2003), Benevides emphasizes that a school does not present itself as democratic without its daily practices being democratic. This reveals a central difference between a democratic education and an education for democracy, while the first encompasses democratic rules and discourses, the second is concerned with promoting democracy in its daily relations, a perspective without which it is not possible to achieve an education free from racial, gender and class discrimination.

The debate about the democratic school must not disregard the way in which young people relate to it. If, on the one hand, the various theoretical-methodological appropriations on the youth have allowed a broader view both on its own concept and on its relationship with school life, on the other hand, youth has been increasingly perceived as a category that acts through an interrelation with several identity categories (CASTRO, 2004; SANTOS, G.; SANTOS, M.; BORGES, 2011; CORSINO, 2019).

3 Law 10.639 / 03 makes it mandatory to teach African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture in schools.

The sources of the research

For this study, the ethnographic research methodology was used. The data of this work are partial results of a doctoral research (CORSINO, 2019) carried out in 2015 in two high school institutions in the North Area of the city of São Paulo, which had a total of 20 interviews with students and 7 with teachers.

For the development of this article, one of the schools that went through an occupation process at the end of the school year was chosen, and the results were constructed by analysing the interviews with 2 teachers who took part and contributed to the occupation activities, and with 3 high school students, in addition to the observations noted in the field diary. Both interviews and observations were used as a source for data analysis.

In the first moment, a re-reading of the field diary and interviews was carried out, focusing on the occupation process, with the objective of defining which data would be most relevant for this study, followed by a view directed by the theoretical foundation. Subsequently, it was possible to recall details and perceive important aspects that did not attract attention at first, which made it possible to cross the data and realize the similarities between events that had not been identified (BEAUD; WEBER, 2007).

It should be noted that the research participants were preserved and at the time of the interviews and in the transcripts of the field diary, they were instructed to choose a fictitious name. For this article, interviews with teachers Bah and Antonieta and with students Reginaldo, Gustavo and Laís were chosen.

Bah is the Arts teacher, a white, thirty-year-old heterosexual woman. Although she was not interviewed during the observation period of the classes, she was invited to speak after the occupation period, for having actively contributed to the activities carried out by the students. Bah teaches in the afternoon and the observations during the school year were made in the morning, period in which the high school classes were concentrated.

Antonieta is a twenty-nine-year old teacher, she has been working for just over four years, she has a degree in Sociology, no postgraduate, but did an exchange at a Spanish University during her graduation course, she has tried and continues to compete in order to complete the master's course in Education. Heterosexual, she attends Umbanda religion and was chosen to participate in the research due to the huge frequency of comments from the students, who always insisted on praising her classes and pointing out that they liked the way they were conducted. Antonieta identifies herself as a black woman and emphasizes that recognition as a black woman is a difficult process, but that her

family helped her a great deal, especially her grandfather, who was a member of the black movement in a city in the interior of São Paulo.

As for the students, Laís is a seventeen-year-old lesbian girl, who identifies herself as black, brown in color. Reginaldo is a heterosexual sixteen year old who identifies himself as white. Gustavo is a fifteen-year-old heterosexual who identifies himself as black. Their reports were chosen to compose the present text, as their contributions were important for the analysis of the occupation's daily life and their interviews took place in an "in-depth" manner (BEAUD; WEBER, 2007).

To choose the interviews, Beaud and Weber (2007) show that the researcher needs to be attentive to three usual types. The "informative" are rare, the informants speak in the first person and generally address only the points of view of the institutions where they work or study, these are the ones that can be discarded the most. In the more "personal" interviews the interviewee did not let go much and speaks more on his own behalf. The "in-depth" are the ones that seem most important and are fundamental to the research, they can be long or short and must be transcribed in full for subsequent analysis.

In this sense, we selected the interviews that came closest to what Beaud and Weber (2007) defined as "in-depth", considering their relevance for addressing the occupation process in the investigated school and their relationship with the daily lives of young high school students in the institution.

The collected data both in interviews and observation were thoroughly read and analyzed. This process, according to Gil (2010), is important for the researcher to become familiar with the material. During the analysis, the data were crossed, compared and confronted, a fact that enriched the expected results for an intersectional analysis in ethnographic research (CAVALLEIRO, 2013).

Education and ethnic-racial and gender relations at school 2

During the observations made since February of the 2015 school year, it was possible to notice that the pedagogical work of the teacher Antonieta, especially regarding Education for Ethnic-Racial and Gender Relations, took a prominent place (CORSINO, 2019).

The sociology teacher was known at school for her involvement and for the way she addressed the contents towards implementing the teaching of Afro-Brazilian culture in her High School classes. Her work goes beyond what is known as the tourist curriculum (SANTOMÉ, 1998) or the "racial micareta"

(ALMEIDA, 2020), that is, the activities that are carried out only on the black conscience day, in a superficial way.

Contrary to what was observed in the work carried out in most of the school's curricular components during the school year, the pedagogical work of the teacher Antonieta occupied a place of resistance and dialogue with young students and the community. Students who were seen as terrible students said they loved the sociology class, one of the only ones they insisted on entering and participating actively.

During conversations with students, they reported that the school chose three and a half days for activities related to black awareness week. Teacher Antonieta was largely responsible for organizing the event. In the interview given during the field research, she emphasizes the importance of an activity such as that developed at school. For her, there was great participation by the students, who had a great opportunity to reflect on racial and gender issues during the activities of the event

So, the week was incredible, yeah, it was all structured with it, right? The only thing I did was to stay during the break, because the workshops, Gisele gave workshop on Abayomi doll, there was turban worksho, there was a conversation about aesthetics, there was a discussion about genocide of black youth, where we analyzed some rap lyrics, mainly from Racionais and Fação Central, and there was ah, and they really wanted to talk about religion questions, they wanted to talk about religion intolerance, so it worked, yeah, it was four days, right? Three and a half days, I think it was three days, each day had its workshops, one in the morning, one before the break and one after. And they could sign up for these workshops, right? (Excerpt from the interview with teacher Antonieta for the doctoral thesis of CORSINO 2019).

I noticed that there were few teachers helping to organize the courtyard and classrooms, while a large part was in the teachers' room talking. Some teachers who participated in the organization were talking and then, after the researcher approached, they said that at school *Antonieta is the teacher who makes things happen, does different activities, organizes activities*, referring both to classes during the school year and specific activities like the black awareness week.

From what they were talking, it was possible to understand that only three teachers organized everything, the others did not get involved, as it was possible to see in the teachers' room, where they sat talking about personal matters during the organization of the rooms for the event. As described by teacher Antonieta:

[...] there were five teachers taking care of the students while the others literally remained in the teachers' room, I'm sorry, but it is something that revolts me. They didn't even have the capacity to go upstairs to see what was going on. When I went down to the teachers' room they were looking at lingerie. The whole school was mobilized on the Black Awareness Week, the students had a political, social, economic discussion, taking on a conscience, in addition to class consciousness, a racial consciousness, the girls taking a stand on gender issues, and then the rest of the teachers downstairs looking at lingerie or whatever. So, for me it was absurd. (Excerpt from the interview with teacher Antonieta for the doctoral thesis of CORSINO, 2019).

Teacher Antonieta questions the teachers attitude who did not participate in the organization either before or after the event. This fact reinforces the current idea that Afro-Brazilian history and culture has been approached within the school only by those teachers who already have some familiarity with the theme or who do so through militancy, which seems important, but which should not be the only motivation. Those who do not have any approach to the topic, do not see themselves in conditions or even know the need to address this topic and often think that only history and sociology disciplines should address it.

The activities took place simultaneously in the classrooms, among the activities carried out on the first day. There were sessions of cine debates, with the presentation of documentaries such as: "Vista a minha pele", "Por uma outra globalização", "A que horas ela volta?" and others. What called the researcher's attention was the fact that an average of 40 young students, with a majority of black girls, was present in one of the classrooms, the maximum number of places previously announced throughout the school.

In contrast to the daily classes observed during the school year – in which the number of students in each class varied between 8 and 15 and seemed discouraged in face of the proposed activities – Sociology classes were marked by the presence of a greater number of students who were willing to participate in the class. However, it was possible to observe that the black awareness week happened even more profitably, from the point of view of quantitative and qualitative participation of the students than the entire school period.

Adherence to the activity was impressive, both in terms of the number of students present, and in the enthusiastic participation in moments of the debate about the documentaries. The students seemed excited, they were there not for marks or obligation, as demonstrated during their presence in the regular classes, and during the debates they established relation to what they studied in Sociology classes.

After the film productions, the teachers who mediated the debates asked questions so that the students began to reflect and establish relationships between the content of the videos and their daily lives. Another point that caught attention was the fact that the school principal was present in one of the activities, she liked one documentary on racial issues and told the teachers who were present (Geography, Sociology and Philosophy) that they should take the opportunity that this debate had started and so work on identity issue the following year.

Teacher Antonieta promptly replied: “*Actually this is a job that I do every year, since I arrived at this school*”, showing that the principal lacked knowledge about how the work was being developed in that school, or at least in the discipline of Sociology. She did not respond to the provocation and seemed to agree with the observation made by the teacher.

There was also a play and an Afro beauty contest. It was a very interesting moment that made it possible to reflect on Afro-Brazilian aesthetics, in addition to allowing black students to establish a relationship between their own aesthetics and what is considered beautiful in our society. It is an important moment for the empowerment of young blacks at school, which contributed to the construction process of a positive identity.

Despite the variation of themes in the documentaries, such as religious intolerance, poverty and others, it was noticed that the focus was on discussions about the aesthetics of the black population combined with female empowerment, raised mainly by documentaries such as “*Vista minha pele*” (2004) and “*Espelho, espelho meu*” (2013), which was a theme that insisted on appearing during the debates that crossed the question of identities and there was no lack of examples of situations involving the young students. Both at school and outside, their racialized experiences emerged at all times as a cry for help.

The mentioned events revealed the school as a place where variations on black beauty emerged, many girls took on curly hair, for example, and this often sounded like an insult, as if they were “insolent” in assuming their hair and show everyone their beauty. The activities carried out in these three days confronted an established order, confronted a standard of socially accepted beauty nowadays.

During the school year at this school, it was noticed that the students’s body presence, the black presence, the poor, the female presence, the one which diverts a heteronormative order, bothered. This presence, in itself, was resistance, resistance to an institutionalized form of racism, sexism, homo-lesbo-transphobia and, therefore, an aesthetics based on a perspective of decolonization of school spaces.

Occupation as a response to everyday oppressive relationships

A few days after the end of the black awareness event, the school was occupied and the field research continued within the occupation. After talking with some students, we agreed one day and had a conversation, in which four main themes were discussed: racism, violence against women, homosexuality and reduction of the penal age. However, in this work, we chose to deal with the debates on racial and gender issues, with emphasis on what they experienced in their school routine.

It is important to note that we were under an extremely complex moment, there was a great tension in the school environment, because at the same time as we were having the debate, we needed to be attentive to the expected and unexpected demands, such as, the sudden arrival of police officers passing around the school, residents opposed to the occupation who appeared to try to break the padlocks and or even colleagues and students who came and went all the time to take turns⁴.

In the midst of the atmosphere of tension that took over the environment, the activity started with the presentation of the documentary “Cores e botas” (2010), it is a strategy to introduce the racial and gender theme, and thus arouse the interest of the young ones to participate. So, I asked what they understood about the documentary and without difficulties, one young student promptly took a stand

ehh, I noticed this video about racism, right, because it is a black child and a huge fan of Xuxa, I realized and I think her dream is to be a paqueta, right, she went to audition at school and there was only her; she was a black child and all the whites passed, except her; what I understood was that (Reginaldo, white, heterosexual, 16 years old).

The debate over the documentary continued without contradictory positions, they all agreed with the idea that the central objective of the video was to show a situation in which a child was victim of racism at school, which in turn, maintained a European female standard in choice of activities.

Then we started to talk about Africa. They were asked about what they know about that continent and if the school worked on the theme during classes.

⁴ The experience of this occupation is recorded in Corsino and Zan (2017).

In general, the debate showed that they perceive it as a *precarious place*, as they all corroborate the idea that what they know about Africa is just that it is a place that lacks housing, food, health, that is, it is seen as a place where poverty, hunger and death prevail. They point, in a critical tone, to the fact that they do not study Africa as school content, showing that the school is an environment in which tension and curricular disputes occur constantly and, in this case, a dispute over teaching African history and culture in the school curriculum.

Africa itself is a continent, for me it is a place where people go hungry, in my opinion, because they are black I think people do not care if they are going hungry, with the situation they are going through (Reginaldo, white, heterosexual, 16 years old).

Likewise, when asked about what the school works on Africa, there was a consensus that there is no systematic approach to the theme, it seems that the contents referring to Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture come up against the idea usually disseminated in the most various instances of socialization, through the media, for example, that it is about a precarious place. The students' statements reveal the collective perception that *they [the teachers] work very little* (Lilian, black, heterosexual, 18 years old), as one of the high school students complements

They are things, like, generally obvious, which is the precarious situation and the difficulty of access, several things, uncle, very general [...] They don't have a structure, they don't have an exact structure of knowledge about Africa (Gustavo, black, heterosexual, 15 years old).

By disregarding the identities inserted in the school routine, the school acts through a pattern in which white supremacy predominates, which incurs prejudiced treatment and the absence of contents related to Afro-Brazilian history and culture, and which may be responsible for producing discouraged students and diminish the possibilities of meaningful learning (MUNANGA, 2015).

When we moved on to the theme "everyday racism", they were all emphatic confirming that racism is present both in ordinary social relations and within the school. One of the aspects we call attention to concerns the corporeal dimension

yeah, I think it's related, there is also the appearance and to be exact also because the color too, 'I don't like the black color, color black', so many racist people are racists, I think it is more about color (Reginaldo, white, heterosexual, 16 years old).

As researcher Gevanilda Santos and her collaborators point out, in addition to all the difficulties intrinsic to youth, young blacks have found yet another type of difficulty, which is daily discrimination and, at times, is more pronounced at school and at work. Competing for a job vacancy, for example, young blacks still have a disadvantage which are the requirements for “looking good” or “having a good resume” (SANTOS, G.; SANTOS, M.; BORGES, 2011). In other words, it is possible to assert that youth, race, class and gender act as connected categories in a process that worsens the oppression suffered by young black working-class people (KERGOAT, 2010).

When reporting what people interviewed in a hairdressing salon said, in her doctoral thesis, Gomes (2003) points out that these people, in most cases, mention the school as a negative space in the construction of black identities, being the skin color and the curly hair characteristics that act with great potential in this process and are considered as inferiority markers of identity that affect, above all, black women.

When supporting Auad and Corsino (2016; 2018), the young high school students reports indicate that body perception is one of the ways in which both racism and sexism usually manifest themselves in school routine, that is, what Raewyn Connel (2016) called “social embodiment”. For her, social embodiment is a collective and reflective process about how bodies get involved in social dynamics and how social dynamics influence bodies.

She calls attention to colonization as a peculiar way of reconfiguring bodies on the global peripheries. In this perspective, the body must be perceived as a historical product, determined by social dynamics. Social embodiment is seen as a way of configuring social relations based on body expression, so that it is crossed by oppressions of gender, race and class. The repercussion of this form of perception of bodily constructions based on social relations, supported by colonization processes appears in the account of the young high school student Laís

For those who know me, like a long time ago I had big hair, my hair was just like Paulina's, bushy and very curly, this way, so people looked at me and said look at the hard hair, things like that I didn't even care, I couldn't

care less, but over time it becomes boring, it ends up becoming, they think it was a joke, it ends up becoming offensive, the person ends up being kind of depressed because of the embarrassing nicknames and if we do that in the classroom in front of other people is much more embarrassing [...] (Lais, black, 17 years old, lesbian).

Having the body, especially the skin color and hair, as reference in the symbolic and institutional construction of racism, is a common issue in school daily life, both in the relationship between teachers and students, and the relationship between the young people themselves. Gomes (2003) shows that there are spaces where both curly hair and skin color are re-signified and constitute spaces for revaluation, such as social movements, ethnic salons and some family contexts.

The reports of the young students, when addressing daily racism, show the absence of teaching Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture, which reveals, in a way, results of the institutionalization of racism, as there seems to be no collective actions for its approach during the classes. On the contrary, the work ends up being concentrated on some teachers who are sensitive to the theme, which on the one hand, produces great results, but on the other hand, affects only the groups in which the teacher works. For young Gustavo, “[...] *in the afternoon only few teachers deal with this subject, now in the morning, for example, I, Lilian already saw, Wilson already saw, we have already had many lectures emphasizing it with Antonieta [...]*”.

It seems that teacher Antonieta is known for her representativeness in themes related to Afro-Brazilian culture at school. The young students make a point of mentioning her as a teacher who addresses this theme on a recurring basis and during the year in the Sociology classes, as young Lilian insists when referring to the teacher as someone who usually addresses this issue during classes: “*it is always with Antonieta*”.

Final considerations

The interview with teacher Antonieta reveals that she perceives the school occupation as a cry for freedom from the students. For her, the young students were claiming a space that was theirs, but that the school had been systematically denying. Antonieta also draws attention to the tension that arose during the occupation period.

The students who were mostly under 18, many from 14 to 16 years old, took on an enormous challenge when facing a complex situation in which at any time they could be victims of teachers who were against the movement, people from the community and the police officers themselves, who were constantly patrolling the school (CORSINO; ZAN, 2017).

Teacher Antonieta reports that the fact that some teachers have positioned themselves favorably to the occupation movement was decisive for the young students to feel a little safer with the situation. She understands that one of the major reasons why the occupation occurred was the fact that the students did not have their space guaranteed at school. For her, the students' autonomy was constantly denied in the daily relations of that school and with the occupation they were able to show the opposite. In this sense, Antonieta shows that the purpose of the occupation was beyond questioning the "School Reorganizer" policy proposed by the Governor of the State of São Paulo at that time.

It is important to note that the students participating in that movement are exactly those who were marked by not wanting to study, being absent a lot, not doing activities, having bad grades, failing one or more years, and even dropout students who returned to that space especially to contribute to the occupation process. In addition, there is the fact that most of the students participating in that movement, were black boys and girls, lesbians, bisexuals, all residents of the hill, who certainly experienced countless moments of discrimination because of their class status, race and gender in the daily life of the school and outside it.

The high school students were aware of their condition and the subalternization processes to which they were subordinate, both at school and in society, more broadly. What Antonieta and BA do not explicitly point out, but which the results of this research indicate, is that among the reasons why some students of this school decide to carry out the occupation, there may be a relationship between the systematic processes of daily discrimination and the denial of the school space to high school students.

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