

## Slavery and Afro-descendants: a proposal for teacher training

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**ABSTRACT – Slavery and Afro-descendants: a proposal for teacher training.** This article will seek to reflect on a series of experiences with elementary school teachers from the city of Buenos Aires concerning ideas on slavery and Afro-descendants in the colonial period and during the wars for independence. It is an account of representations that have circulated on these topics in school events, textbooks and instructional materials. Next, the paper focuses on an educational experience aimed at the questioning of those traditions from the production of didactic sequences that considered a multisensory teaching. Thus, teachers appropriated the new knowledge and were protagonists of the curriculum development.

**Keywords: Slavery. Afro-descendants. Argentina. Elementary School. Teacher Training.**

**RESUMEN – Esclavitud y Afrodescendientes: sobre una propuesta de formación docente.** Este artículo buscará reflexionar sobre una serie de experiencias en las cuales se ha abordado con maestros de escuela primaria de la ciudad de Buenos Aires las ideas sobre la esclavitud y los afrodescendientes en la época colonial y durante las guerras por la independencia. Se realiza un *racconto* de las representaciones que han circulado sobre estos temas en actos escolares, textos curriculares y materiales educativos. Luego el trabajo indaga sobre una experiencia de formación en la que se propuso cuestionar esas tradiciones a partir de la producción de secuencias didácticas que consideraran una enseñanza multisensorial. Así, los docentes se apropiaron de los nuevos saberes y fueron protagonistas de la construcción curricular.

**Palabras-clave: Esclavitud. Afrodescendientes. Argentina. Escuela Primaria. Formación Docente.**

The black, pursued from afar, alone and unknown, sang  
his heart's music in the night, between waves and wild  
beasts.

Jose Marti, *Our America* (1891).

## Introduction

Every society builds its myths. In a text, already classic, Roland Barthes warned that:

The myth is a special type of discourse: it does not describe the nature of things. This discourse is a message, and therefore not necessarily must be oral; it can be composed of writings and representations: the written discourse, as well as photography, cinema, news story, sports, entertainment, advertising, everything can serve as a support for the mythical discourse (Barthes, 1999, p. 200).

This multiplicity of *media* raised by the Barthesian analysis suggests the ways in which the school culture is a receptacle of various representations, many of which may not be problematized during a long time.

Various highly enrooted stereotypical images on the slaves and Afro-descendants have been forged in Argentina. Several authors have analyzed examples of assertions that still circulate today: “there is no racism in Argentina because there are no black people in the country”, “all blacks have disappeared” or that “the Argentinians descended from the ships”, alluding to the extremely high proportion of European immigration and to the supposed absence of a population with a significant African past in our country (Andrews, 1989; Schávelzon, 2003; Ocoró Loango, 2009; Geler, 2011; Grimson, 2013). This is not the place to reconstruct the entire history of these ideas, but they could be traced from Sarmiento who, in the book *Conflictos y armonías de las razas en América* (1883), stated that the action of nature was doing away with the “black race” and that “in twenty years, it will be necessary to go to Brazil to see them in the whole purity”) (Sarmiento, 1883, p. 39); or, in 1905, the positivist sociologist Carlos Octavio Bunge held that alcoholism, smallpox and tuberculosis decimated the indigenous population and African people of Buenos Aires province (Terán, 2008).

Despite everything, an idea of a *happy legend* has been built about the African past in the colonial period. This legend referred that, particularly in Buenos Aires, in comparison with experiences such as plantations of other Caribbean or South American regions, the slave was “well treated”, being even a member, while subordinate, of many families of the 19<sup>th</sup> century elites. In a retrospective text published in 1881, José Antonio Wilde recalled that the masters who abused their slaves were an exception and that, in general, blacks were considered with “true affection” (Wilde, 1960, p. 116).

In elementary school, the African past usually emerges sporadically: as we will explain later, in the 25<sup>th</sup> of May celebrations it is perhaps the only time when the African enters the scene in the school celebrations and in the national history (Grimson, 2007). Although in recent years various afro-descendants' organizations (which differentiate those who come from the colonial lineage from those who are linked to different migration processes in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries) have generated greater visibility to the issue in the Argentinean history (Tamargo; Maffia, 2014), the circulation of these ideas is still noticeable and the shortage of didactic approaches on the subject is evident.

We will question in this article how the instances of teacher training can contribute to review and to create tension on these topics. Next, we will seek to reflect on several experiences in which the ideas of slavery and Afro-descendants in the colonial time and during the revolutions and the Independence wars have been discussed with elementary school teachers of Buenos Aires. In the first part, we will provide a detailed account of the representations that have circulated on these topics in various texts, educational materials and didactic support. Then, questioning those traditions, our work will inquire on the avatars of an instance of training in which teachers appropriated collaboratively of the new knowledge that was built there.

We will return to Benoit Falaize's ideas concerning the approach of *socially alive questions* (Falaize, 2014). One of the conditions to characterize various themes according to it is that society has interest and considers them lively. At first sight except among specialists or Afro-descendants, the situation of the slaves of African origin of centuries ago would not be a topic of discussion of everyday life; however, in recent years this situation is becoming well known, even with a media treatment. Some examples are numerous situations of labor hyper-exploitation called "slave labor" in the textile industry within the City of Buenos Aires and locations of their conurbation (Benencia, 2009). Many children attending public schools are children of workers in that situation of *modern slavery*.

One of the assumptions that will be addressed in this article is that, to approach this *socially alive question*, it is necessary to raise approaches and teaching logics that transcend the naive treatment of slavery and blacks experience during the colonial and postcolonial periods. For that, much of this work will consider the education practices of writing, the access to and the appropriation of various didactic materials, as well as it will explore the ways in which there is a circulation of ideas on the subject within a set of schools.

## **An Interpellation to the Pedagogic Discourse on Blacks**

This work with schools is framed in our task as trainers-teachers in the CePA Escuela de Maestros, a space created in 1984, at the end of the long night of the dictatorship, betting on the cultural and school democratization. There we develop fortnightly meetings between teach-

ers, librarians and school principals in service, that is, with the teachers in their work place and hours, based on the criteria of flexible organization and responding to the demand from school principals and school supervision, with recognition of the institutional context that allows building alternatives of professional growth. Anchored to the recognition of teachers learning ways and the challenge of transforming their practices, not only as a cognitive problem, but also as cultural and social one and crossed by the particularities of the school culture, these lines depart from an assumption: the spaces of teacher training should not be understood as places of passage of technocratic solutions, but as a *continuum* between the teachers-trainers experience and the frameworks in which the teachers act, so as, a whole, the capacity of reinvention and adaptation can be strengthen<sup>1</sup>.

Our reflection originates from an experience. In mid-2012, the School Supervision of School District No. 11 of Buenos Aires asked us to work specifically with elementary school 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, as the following year, 2013, would mark the bicentenary of the renown *Asamblea del Año XIII*, as it is traditionally called in history books. This assembly was a congress during the process of the Revolution initiated in May 1810, thus becoming a decisive milestone in the process of the creation of the national State<sup>2</sup>. All this justified the request for a preparation for this event.

Following this invitation, we claimed a somewhat divergent axis as a training team. Based on the belief that, in the elementary school, the culture of the ephemeris [events] has given rise to a history teaching and learning linked to the sense of *the ephemeral*<sup>3</sup>, i.e., knowledge focused only on recalling what it celebrates, therefore fragmented, descriptive and focused on various decontextualized events, devoid of questioning and problematization. We proposed to focus the attention on slavery and the place of Afro-descendants in the colonial period and in the Independence Wars. In other words, to convey that the long process of abolition of slavery was much more complex than the mere recitation of an isolated measure, *freedom of wombs* – the freedom of the children of the slaves – established by the *Asamblea del Año XIII*.

The *black* like happy *seller* during the events of May was one of the first myths we find<sup>4</sup>. And this is because, among books and screens, the preparation and discussion of this training proposal faced us with some challenges. First, we had to question the school celebrations of 25<sup>th</sup> of May as one of the few spaces of the national memory that includes the Afro-descendant population (Ocoró, 2014). Historically, and even today, the school stages are dotted of girls and boys –with their faces blackened – embodying the blacks of the colony dancing or selling *empanadas* or candles: in this way, a patriotic grammar was generated, in which “[...] the identity of the black is built and announced through the body, expressed in the dance and the costumes, the color of the skin and its condition of slavery and of language [...] [and] a funny way is a salient characteristic” (Ocoró, 2014, p. 78). In this way, said Anny Ocoró Loango, the role of the blacks in the Revolution of May is reduced to a mere spectator.

Secondly, it is relevant to focus on the ways in which this representation is articulated with the one that was developed by the *school texts*. Although little research is devoted to analyze the ways in which blacks were constructed historically in the Argentinian context, most of it coincides with pointing out that they have been almost exclusively associated with the colonial past, associated to the division by caste of the society of the time and to slavery. Concerned with the construction of the nation in textbooks published between 1873 and 1930, Cucuzza claims that the space granted to blacks is small and, in general, limited to certain historical events such as the English invasions, the Battle of Ayohuma or the heroism of “*negro Falucho*”<sup>5</sup> (Cucuzza, 2007 apud Balsas, 2011). In the same way and in an investigation based on the semiotic analysis of images included in the pages of textbooks from the creation of the national education system up to the present, María Soledad Balsas (2011 p. 674) notes that:

[It is possible to conclude that the textbooks used in the Argentinian compulsory education system [...] contributed in large measure to forge a hegemonic vision of national identity that excludes the participation of blacks. This is achieved mainly through the construction of their social participation linked, above all, to the colonial period. This strategy was also particularly effective for the purposes of disseminating a dominant imaginary through which blacks were traditionally attached to a condition – first biological and then cultural – of inferiority].

And she adds that:

The lack of recognition of participation of blacks in the Argentinian contemporary society and its stereotyped presentation through the association with the natural, the underdeveloped and dirty/ugly/impure on the one hand and to entertainment, animation and sports, on the other, remained almost unchanged until the present (Balsas, 2011, p. 674).

Thirdly, the school has also built these representations through the repertoire of activities of educational magazines, as traditionally *La Obra*, nowadays in the *Maestra de Primer Ciclo* or *Maestra de Segundo Ciclo*, Editorial Ediba’s journals or long standing children’s publications as *Billiken* (Ocoró, 2014). On the other hand, in literary texts written for children the supposed “friendly” treatment that the slaves received in colonial Buenos Aires is observed. For instance, in the story *El negro Tubúa y la Tomasa* by Pedro Orgambide, an author with a wide recognition and even exiled during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983), expresses that:

Among the slaves there was a black who later would be known as Tomasa [...]. *Don Tubúa* and *doña Tomasa* were married.  
But that happened after. Before, they went to work in *Don Philemon* and *Doña Catalina*’s house. Good people. Their

slaves were not treated badly, their servants. *Don Philemon* and *Doña Catalina* were good people. Tomasa prepared *mate*. Tomasa cooked a turkey. Tubúa cared for the pigs. The work was not ugly. Being a slave was ugly. In Brazil, it was known, slaves were treated very badly; the slaves from the coffee plantations were usually beaten with the whip (Orgambide, 2005, p. 4-6).

Finally, a few lines on the approach of this topic in various curricular texts. Based on a strong descriptive content, the *Diseño Curricular de Estudios Sociales (Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1981)* (Curricular Design of Social Studies - Municipality of the City of Buenos Aires, 1981) includes the generic content “[...] colonial Argentine. Social life. Forms of life. Political life. Cultural life. Religious life”, suggesting activities such as listing the ethnic groups of the period, describing the activities of different groups of the population and some aspects of the daily life of an *elite* family, recommending, subsequently, making references to Spaniards, Creoles, *mestizos*, mulattos and blacks for 4<sup>th</sup> grade children. Already in democracy, the 1986 Curricular Design hardly presents a few changes to the addressing of the topic. It appeals to the teaching of the colonial period, in general terms, considering the population in social (social groups and functions), economic (resources, activities, work and technical development), cultural (uses and habits, values and beliefs, traditions) and political aspects (forms of government and power groups), although with a greater conceptual density and a reconstruction from everyday life. Subsequently and as part of the transformations of the curriculums of the 1990’s, the 1999 Pre-Curriculum Design for Elementary General Education contained a chapter for 4<sup>th</sup> grade entitled *Whites, Blacks and Indians in the colonial society* which included the treatment of their positions according to their ethnic origin and their economic power by appealing to the analysis of paintings and engravings. For the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the chapter *Times of Revolution and War* focuses on how these affect men, women and children of different social groups, proposing the teaching, on the one hand, on the creation and maintenance of the armies that – implicitly – could allude to the black slaves and, on the other hand, to the changes in the social conditions of the people, including the binomial *From subject of the King to citizen, and from slave to free man*. Considering these transformations of the official curriculum and in spite of the many advances that have been achieved in terms of renewing the teaching of Social Sciences, when we began to think on the training, we found that the proposals of the current curricular design for the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of the Elementary School in the City of Buenos Aires, prescribed in 2004 and based on a review of that Pre-Design, remain scarce: the term *slave* appears only twice in all that text, as part of the same subject linked to the colonial past, although reference is made to the influence of the groups of African origin, among others, in the language, religion and customs of American societies today and also the *slave traffic* in connection with the Industrial Revolution. For instance, for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade it intends to study the “[...] recognition of indigenous labor and the presence of slaves in

America as major members of the colonial society” (GCBA, 2004, p. 288). In the 5<sup>th</sup> grade contents, it refers, in general, to the consequences of the Independence wars, the lives of men, women and children of different social sectors and then, in a particular way, to the “[...] participation of some politicians and military of the period (for instance, Castelli, Belgrano, Artigas, Güemes, Juana Azurduy, O’Higgins, Bolívar) and the project of independence of San Martín for South America” (GCBA, 2004, p. 294) to expand the listing of the glorious life of the “great men” who were participants in the revolutionary process, but without questioning the narrative structure of the school history, built on a political-military account.

That is why the first of the decisions taken by us throughout the activities was to begin to work with these *myths*: most of the teachers recognized this almost *funny* place the blacks had in the colonial period, perpetuated through various objects typical of the school culture, children’s magazines, educational journals, figurines that thickened notebooks and folders, dialogues and costumes in school events, textbooks or posters in the classroom walls. Addressing these issues made it possible to reflect on those strata of pedagogical common sense remaining in the school and which are not always problematized, which results in a basic purpose of these instances of training<sup>6</sup>.

## The Meaning of the Didactic Sequences

Rethinking all this sedimentation in History teaching is part of a task which is still in process. Following Isabelino Siede, we could mention that

Teaching Social Sciences has often been to provide answers to questions that nobody has formulated, to accumulate data that does not offer a solution to any problem, to offer knowledge chewed by teeth of others and little useful to satisfy an appetite that students have not expressed (Siede, 2010, p. 270).

This metaphor is highly useful to think a key for this section of our article: to disarm the myths of Argentinean history, it is necessary to generate *powerful questions* that may be appropriate for teachers. The other key that structures our proposal relates to the understanding of the relationship between the ways in which teachers pose their writings and the capacity to generate significant projects for children.

This last point implies challenging a tradition rooted in the annual planning that has been conceived as an almost exclusively writing practice, with rigid formats, specific terms and a purely bureaucratic character. To discuss this topic, we proposed to the teachers the individual or group production of didactic sequences for their students to be brought to the classroom for the second four-month of the training. Understanding the teacher as an architect who organizes a tour of classes on the same subject, we conceive the didactic sequence as a network of activities organized from a question/s that mobilize, open, guide and



challenge what you can think from what is already known. The production of a didactic sequence invites teachers to think with their own voices, with the knowledge and tools that each has and in relation to other subjects, always considering the political nature of the questions (Siede, 2010). In turn, sequences are tools guiding the teaching practice, a vehicle of dialogue among teachers and school principals and an exchange material and construction of knowledge among teachers, i.e., traces of teaching. Another idea proposed by us is that the *writing of a didactic sequence consumes a significant part of the teachers' work*, that is, it cannot be quickly developed to answer to school hierarchy demands.

The initial moment was organized around the idea of *studying to teach*, that is, this practice will become the starting point of each teaching proposal. We share Serulnicoff and Siede's idea (2010) that a teacher cannot do the base research neither the disclosure of the mass media. Then, convinced that "[...] a bibliographic relationship cannot be a simple series of titles [...] [and that] the one who suggests it should know what is being suggested and why. The one who receives it, in turn, must find in it not a dogmatic prescription of readings, but a challenge" (Freire, 1984, p. 47). Thus, the offer of texts in the broad sense of a range (academics, disclosure<sup>7</sup>, didactic, journalistic, among others) renewed the question concerning *what the teacher reads when planning his classes*.

These materials allowed to enquire into various sub-themes linked to the slave trade, slavery and Afro-descendants in the colonial Buenos Aires for elementary school 4<sup>th</sup> grade (9 to 10-year-old children), while for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade (10 to 11-year-old children), the slow and winding process of abolition of slavery and the weight of the participation of the slaves in the Independence wars. An investigation into the alleged *disappearance* of blacks throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was possible: according to Laura Segato, we can claim that, in fact, "[...] the disappearance of the blacks in Argentina was ideological, cultural and literary built, instead of properly demographic" (Segato, 2007, p. 255). The other question that we would discuss was the supposedly *good treatment* that the masters favored to slaves.

Some texts produced by experts were decisive to discuss this topic. One of them, the classic *Los Afroargentinos de Buenos Aires*, from the North-American historian George Andrews. Following the ideas of the historian of reading Jean Hébrard (Hébrard, 2000), who states that what is essential to prepare the readers is not allowing them to embark alone in the books and that all knowledge begins with a question, these materials were offered in the middle of a work of *preparation for the sustained reading in a powerful question* to provide curiosity and elements for discussion (Freire, 2013). For instance, if we question *what did the slaves in the colonial times in Buenos Aires work for?*, one of the contributions that arose from Andrews' book is that it is difficult to continue thinking of a "happy *negrito* selling *empanadas*" when he was obliged to give the master almost all the money he earned (Andrews, 1989). Another academic material which enabled new entries was the very interesting *Buenos Aires Negra* by the Argentinian archeologist Daniel



Schávelzon. One of the chapters refers to the feeding of the slaves. Facing the teachers with the account of black women looking on the floor of the slaughterhouses for leftovers to assemble some type of sausage, the idea of an *affection* of the dominant class towards their slaves was totally dismissed (Schávelzon, 2003). In turn, the reading of other sections of Andrews books, particularly the annexes where the life stories of slaves who participated in the Independence wars allowed to demonstrate such participation and, in a certain extent, to remove them from anonymity. Also, to generate a crossing between slavery and the gender issue, the excerpts of *Las afroargentinas*, by Marta Goldberg (Goldberg, 2000) were relevant. A reflection is required here: the presence of academic texts in the hands of elementary school teachers is not something usual for the planning of teaching.

However, this allowed to strengthen the capacity to generate *good questions*. Studying the topic, teachers were rehearsing, reinventing, recreating valuable small movements of subjects in the task of *studying to teach*. Thus, a range of questions circulated: *How was the journey of the slave from Africa to America? Who could buy slaves in Buenos Aires? How was the relationship between masters and slaves? When was slavery abolished in these lands? Does slavery still exist today? How was the way to the abolition of slavery? How did the life of the slaves change from the Independence wars? What were the main causes of the “invisibility” of the African population and Afro-descendants in our territory?*

The treatment of the visual made possible new approaches to the resolution of these questions. Although most teachers recognize that children “like to look at images, they are visually attracted”, not always they prepare cognitive and didactic tools to *read* images in Social Sciences classes. We agree with Dussel and Gutierrez, that this time is “oculocentric” and coexistent, at the same time, with “a certain *anorexia of the gaze*, a certain saturation that trivializes even the most terrible images, which urges us as educators to think a new pedagogy of the gaze” (Dussel; Gutiérrez, 2006, p. 11).

In the case that concerns us in this article, this need for rethinking *education of the gaze* is interlaced with the poor development the teaching work has with the pictorial representations on the classes in Social Sciences. If the production of watercolors, lithographs, paintings and other elements of the visual culture from between the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is tracked, it can be found that in various records the slaves and Afro-descendants are represented pictured. It is important to look at, as proposed in the working with teachers, different works ranging from the *pintura de castas* (castes paintings) of the colonial period, passing by the *traveler artists* like the British Emeric Essex Vidal and Richard Adams, to Swiss lithographers as Hipolito Bacle and his namesake Moulin, and the early Argentinean painters, like Prilidiano Pueyrredón.

A conclusion to be drawn is that the observation and analysis of images requires of a greater didactic time than it is usually used. As Gabriela Augustowsky claims,

At school, we accept that the reading of written texts requires abstract intellectual skills; therefore, this demands a learning and a true effort [...]. In comparison, the picture observation is assumed every day as a simpler and more natural process and that it does not need specific learning (Augustowsky, 2008, p. 73).

Many teachers have appropriated a way to work with images that required a major density of analysis. Recalling that aphorism by Aby Warburg, *Der Liebe Gott steckt im Detail* [God nests in the details], the meticulous study on how the slaves and Afro-descendants were represented in various everyday situations and labor times allowed to collate this entire series of images as a discourse that does not escape from the mental schemes of the period. In this way, the reader can envisage the way in which the artists (who in its entirety were white and even foreigners) reproduced that *benevolent* place of slavery in Buenos Aires.

At each meeting, the questions were enriched by the context that emerged constantly in the dialogue: many families of the children of this school district are victims of the so-called *slave labor* in sweatshops, often in places located at a few meters from the schools where we worked<sup>8</sup>. The teachers report that their students only see their parents during the weekends, when the owners of the workshops allow them to leave work. This increases even more the ethical and political relevance of the topic of the history of slavery and its effects. So, at each meeting we witnessed how teachers began – to paraphrase Freire – to live the question/s, live the indignation, live the curiosity aroused by the questions. Starting from this curiosity, we prepared ourselves to put into play another *didactic decision: writing the teaching*.

We expect teachers to find other links between writing and teaching. The development of the didactic sequence started from the cut of a content to be taught, expressed in the question that was recreated initially. It also required the design of a course of activities to investigate the previous knowledge of search and analysis of information, recording and communication of the information and systematization or closing, that is, reading and writing activities, the selection and reading of films, paintings, engravings, excerpts from the textbook, webpages or the possibility of visiting to a museum, among other alternatives. Multiple peer feedbacks, of teachers and trainers in face-to-face meetings and via email –between the on-site meetings –, allowed to each teacher or group of teachers the appropriation of the topic to teach, as proposed by Roger Chartier (1992), that is, to appropriate of fixed and moving texts and images to recreate their didactic sequences.

We present the reader with an outline of a didactic sequence produced by an elementary school teacher in the framework of this training. In uppercase, we have added comments and feedback from the trainers-teachers.

*How did the life of the slaves change from the Independence wars?  
What were the main causes of the 'disappearance' of the black race?*

CLARIFY THE DIALOGUE WITH THE CURRICULAR DESIGN, TAKING BLOCK, BASIC IDEAS AND SCOPE OF CONTENT THAT CONSIDERED BY YOUR SEQUENCE.

Stage 1

Students will be presented with information of the censuses of 1778 and 1887.

Población de Buenos Aires 1778 - Censo Carlos III			
	Población africana	Población total	% población africana sobre total
Ciudad	7.268	24.205	30%
Campaña	1.650	12.925	13%
Jurisdicción	8.918	37.130	24%

The census carried out by Juan Jose de Vértiz y Salcedo in 1778 yielded very high results in the provinces with the highest agricultural production: 54% in the province of Santiago del Estero, 52% in the province of Catamarca, 46% in the province of Salta, 44% in the province of Cordoba, 42% in the province of Tucumán, 24% in the province of Mendoza, 20% in the province of La Rioja, 16% in the province of San Juan, 13% in the province of Jujuy, 9% in the province of San Luis. In other provinces, they formed a major part of the population. Concerning the city of Buenos Aires, the same census estimated at 15,719 the number of Spaniards, 1,288 of *mestizos* and indigenous people, and 7,268 of mulattos and blacks. PLEASE INDICATE THE BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCE? IS IT WIKIPEDIA?

In 1887, the official percentage of black population was 1,8% of the total. WHICH TERRITORY? FOR THE WHOLE ARGENTINA?

After presenting and working on this information with the students, they will be asked why they believe that decreased the black population significantly in this period.

Each of the children will write his hypothesis on the folder to then share it with the whole group.

Stage 2

The movie "Revolution" (2011)<sup>9</sup> will be watched with the students. After that, students will work on several issues, but now we will emphasize the recruitment of soldiers for the army.

THINKING THAT THIS SEQUENCE COULD BE READ BY ANOTHER TEACHER, PLEASE INCLUDE ALL REFERENCES, DIRECTOR AND YEAR OF THE MOVIE, FOR INSTANCE. IT'S EVEN BETTER IF YOU CAN RECORD MINUTES OR SCENES WHERE THE RECRUITMENT TOPIC IS APPROACHED.

Stage 3

You will watch a video of the *Canal Encuentro* referring to the *Asamblea del Año XIII*<sup>10</sup>.

[http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/sitios/encuentro/Noticias/getDetalle?rec\\_id=116119](http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/sitios/encuentro/Noticias/getDetalle?rec_id=116119)

[http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/sitios/encuentro/Programas/detallePrograma?rec\\_id=117314](http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/sitios/encuentro/Programas/detallePrograma?rec_id=117314)

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO WATCH? IS IT A DOCUMENTARY? IS IT A TV DOCUMENTARY? I INSIST ON THIS ESPECIALLY BECAUSE QUITE OFTEN A VIDEO ALLOWS ONE TO SEE DIFFERENT THINGS. YOU CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE ALSO TO WORK WITH THE CHILDREN ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FICTION LIKE "REVOLUTION" AND A DOC-

UMENTARY LIKE THIS ONE, HOW EACH ONE IS CONSTRUCTED. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE CHILDREN CAN REFERENCE AUTHORS, FOR INSTANCE, "DI MEGLIO", LIKE ONE OF THIS DOCUMENTARY'S AUTHORS.

*What were the most important decisions that were taken in that Assembly? Which of them led to a significant change in the rights of the people of the society?*

VERY GOOD QUESTIONS!

Establishment of the freedom of wombs

All the children of slaves who were born from 31<sup>st</sup> of January, 1813 in the territory of the United Provinces of Rio de La Plata shall be free, as established by the Assembly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February. This decision had a very strong social significance, which placed the local government to the highest international public opinion. The black population had collaborated with enthusiasm in the defense and reconquest of Buenos Aires during the English invasions of 1806 and 1807; they also fought bravely in the fights for independence. At that time, there was a military corps called *Defensores of Buenos Aires*, consisting of more than two thousand freed slaves, conceptualized as one of the most disciplined and organized in the city.

The 'Law of Wombs' sanctioned by the Assembly established that at the age of 20, men will obtain freedom and, if they show interest in the tillage and are married, the state will give them a plot of land and tools to work. In the case of women, freedom was obtained at the age of 16. INDICATE BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCE? IS IT WIKIPEDIA?

Art. 15.- In the Argentinean Nation there are no slaves: the few that exist today are free from the swearing in of this Constitution; [...]. Any contract of purchase and sale of people is a crime [...]. And the slaves who in any way be introduced are free by the mere fact of stepping on the territory of the Republic.

After reading the article on the freedom of wombs of the *Asamblea del año XIII* and article 15 of the National Constitution, please answer the following questions:

*What changes were sought through these measures?*

*Which social actors benefited from them?*

*Do you think that these changes were positive for all social sectors? Why?*

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO ADD A QUESTION THAT LEADS US TO THINK WHY SO MANY YEARS PASSED BETWEEN THE FREEDOM OF WOMBS AND THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, REFERRING TO HOW AN EARLY ABOLITION WOULD VIOLATE THE PROPERTY RIGHTS OF THE RULING CLASSES.

I AM THINKING OF SOMETHING THAT I WAS REPEATING THROUGHOUT OUR MEETINGS... TO WHAT EXTENT THE KIDS UNDERSTAND THE LINK BETWEEN REVOLUTION AND WAR AS A SCENARIO FOR THE CHANGES IN THE LIFE OF THE SLAVES.

Fragment of teacher Daniel Poza's didactic sequence. It can be observed the "mixed" authorship, with texts from different sources.

As it is evident from this case, it was not a linear process: there were multiple drafts. On several occasions, it was complex to design activities that really contributed to answer the question originating the sequence or revisions and adjustments based on the needs of teaching and learning in their classrooms were generated. Also, the heterogeneity of teaching experiences that coexists nowadays in the school result-

ed in the modes and rhythms of appropriation of the space that were often dissimilar. However, this process was the initial step towards reversing the immobilization, the ritualization, locating the reflection on the task in the foreground.

## Conclusions

The results of the work allow us to think in a movement of the topic among teachers beyond the time that was devoted to the training. For instance, a teacher invited her partner teacher, a member of the *Movimiento Afrocultural*, an organization that achieved in 2013 a ministerial resolution that declares the 8<sup>th</sup> of November the *National Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro-culture* in a context of strong African migration and Afro-Latin American as the current<sup>11</sup>. Another colleague made us listen to the voices of her students on the theme worked from a presentation with the software Prezi. Two teachers found a child novel, *El fantasma del aljibe* de Laura Ávila, whose protagonist is a slave, and share with their colleagues the excerpts that most fascinated them and their students. A teacher enthusiastically tells us how she gave to her students a digital material from a didactic magazine to read, so that they become critical of the stereotypical view of the slaves that it conveys. A teacher writes in a teaching magazine a sequence on *Who form the liberating army?*, directed by General San Martín, a work filmed and projected in a school celebration. A teacher shares his desire to organize his own library, buying monthly a book, and chooses the following title: *Ser soldado en las Guerras de Independencia*, by Alejandro Rabinovich, which was discussed in one of the meetings. Another teacher proposed to her students to write a chronicle as if they were a slave who travels from Africa to America in the colonial times and was astonished by the *great historical rigor* – we quote her excited words– of her pupils.

This training experience promoted a space of encounter among peers, a horizontal cooperation, recognizing the fundamental role of teachers in curriculum development, through their *everyday work*, as noted by A. M. Chartier, knowledge whose authority is the authority of the practice, of the experience, of the established, quite often hidden even for the teachers themselves (Chartier, 2000). One of the teachers noted in the closure: “I could reconsider and feedback myself from the experience of my colleagues”. In a society where the voice of the *experts* exceeds too much to the *teachers*’, this claim of the teacher seems to summarize a task of collaborative training.

We return, to conclude this article, to the beautiful words of José Martí that were reproduced at the beginning. The Martian reference about the *lonely and unknown* black was a cultural mark that we needed to rethink. We believe that granting them a place in the classes of Social Sciences makes it possible not only to rethink certain myths of the history of our country that is intended to be *white*, but also to generate a perspective that reviews the intricacies of the society in which we live. Showing the searing experience of thousands of Africans who were

forced to move to America three or four centuries ago is a way of visualizing the modes acquired by modern slavery, often present in the reality of the parents of many children who sit daily at the desks of our schools.

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## Notes

- 1 We have proposed to attend to an experience of training centered on the school, that is, answering to the concrete demands and needs of the teachers. It was articulated with the daily reality, seeking to overcome the preeminence of external motivations like marks and certifications, or the academic and theoretical character of the training or the devaluation of teacher's previous experience (Finocchio, 2001).
- 2 Although the *Asamblea del Año XIII* didn't achieve its main mission, that was to adopt a Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, its congressmen decided to replace the use of Spanish Crown symbols in coins and shields by new national symbols. Also, they established from that time certain civil liberties and rights as the "freedom of wombs" - the children of the slaves would be free -, the annulment of forced labor systems as *mita*, *encomienda* and *yanaconazgo*, the elimination of titles of nobility, the destruction of all the torture elements and the establishment of civil authority primacy above the Church, the subjugation of regular orders and the abolition of Inquisition.
- 3 "*Ephemeral*" and "*ephemeris*" have a common origin, from the Greek: *ephémeros* that means passenger, of short duration, which lasts only a day (Siede, 2007, p. 208).
- 4 The reading of "La representación de la negritud en los actos escolares del 25 de mayo" in the educational magazine *El monitor de la Educación* No. 4 <http://www.me.gov.ar/monitor/nro0/pdf/monitor21.pdf> allowed the review of this myth. Its author was invited for a talk with teachers to closure this training project.
- 5 Falucho was a black soldier who was shot in 1824 by the Spaniards in El Callao, Peru, on having refused to hand over a patriotic flag. His history and his life were included in the national pantheon towards the end of 1880. For Anny Ocoró Loango (2014), although it was a recognition about the black contribution to the armies during wars of independence, Falucho becomes visible as a missing hero.
- 6 After this training experience, INADI (Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism), a National Agency which had been created through Law No. 24515 in 1995, published a research linked to the topics of this article. That investigation was a collaborative project and started in 2008 between INADI, various activists' groups and publishers, concerning the presence of several forms of discrimination in school texts, related to Afro-descendants in Argentina, among other groups such as indigenous peoples and women. Shared among teachers in training institutions, after this article, this material allowed to detect problems and to share orientations to review stereotypes. It can be read in: INADI. Análisis de libros de texto desde una perspectiva de



Derechos Humanos [Analysis of textbooks from a Human Rights Perspective]. Available at: <<http://inadi.gob.ar/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/analisis-books-perspectives-rights-humans.pdf>> Accessed: 1 August 2015.

- 7 *Canal Encuentro*, a channel created by the Ministry of Education (*Ministerio de Educación de la Nación*) in 2004, has allowed the multiplication of a wide historical dissemination in TV and available and downloadable in Internet. It has been particularly valuable for the teachers and librarians the production of some documentaries scripted and presented by historian Gabriel Di Meglio, like *Historias de un País* or *Bajo Pueblo*.
- 8 Subjection to servitude labor in the clothing industry is not a novelty in Buenos Aires. Most of the workers had migrated from Bolivia and they were victims of trafficking for labor exploitation in clandestine workshops. They were victims of a mafia with alleged coverage of the local authorities and/or the police. They were isolated by their status as immigrant and shut in workshops. They couldn't move, they were in debt, with low incomes product of a piecework. They lived on the top of each other and weak health conditions. These workers and their families charged visibility through tragic accidents as the fire that in April of this year. Two victims were two public school students of the School District No. 12.
- 9 This is the film "*Revolución. El Cruce de los Andes*" (Revolution. The Crossing of the Andes) directed by Leandro Ipiña, a co-production of Televisión Pública (Public Television), Canal Encuentro and INCAA, with the support of Spanish Television (TVE), the government of San Juan province, and the Universidad Nacional de San Martín (National University of San Martín -UNSAM) (Available at: <[http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/sitios/encuentro/programas/detallePrograma?rec\\_id=105285](http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/sitios/encuentro/programas/detallePrograma?rec_id=105285)> Accessed: 21 October 2016).
- 10 This is the *Canal Encuentro* program *Asamblea del Año XIII* (Assembly of the year XIII) presented by Roberto Carnaghi, an Argentinian actor (Available in: <[http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/sitios/encuentro/Programas/detallePrograma?rec\\_id=117314](http://www.encuentro.gov.ar/sitios/encuentro/Programas/detallePrograma?rec_id=117314)>. Accessed: 21 October 2016).
- 11 In 2013, the National Law N° 26852 was approved (Available at: <<http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/> 21 November 2016), which shows a commitment with the right to identity for Afro-descendants and Afro-Argentines whom had been made invisible for traditional historiography. This law declares November 8th National Day of Afro-Argentines and Afro-culture, an event which still has few traces in educational practices.

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