

EDITORIAL

The anti-racism theme in the debate on Brazilian social formation and social classes: a challenge to contemporary Social Work

Ana Paula Procopio da Silva¹

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4420-1114>

¹ Rio de Janeiro State University, Faculty of Social Work, RJ, Brazil

The world is undergoing a civilizational crisis that, aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic, has made historical contradictions striking. We are experiencing the crisis – and fighting for the overthrow – of the Western civilization invented by whiteness, a model that in the past five centuries has used everything and everyone as merchandise and excluded from the human condition those who are not within its scope.

Race and the social relations derived from it, while being developed as a modern idea, shaped the racial hierarchy worldwide, altogether with the contemporary structural and structuring racism of capitalism. In Brazil, it is at the base of inequities in access to rights when comparing the living conditions of white populations with black and indigenous ones. Race refers to racism, slavery, colonialism and historically constructed images of “being black”, “being indigenous” and “being white”. It has a political and ideological meaning that creates and perpetuates social inequalities and privileges linked to racialization of social groups.

Conquerors put the conquered in their “places”. The natives and enslaved Africans were set in a “natural” condition of inferiority to Europeans. It is the constitutive and founding idea of colonial domination from the conquest, whose ideological formatting outlives the demise of the system through the strong internalization of its ordinances, even after the independence of the colonies.

An important particularity is present in the Brazilian case, while the “miscegenation” was sublimated to manage racial conflicts by way of creating and spreading a myth: the racial democracy. A reading that naturalizes the miscegenation, hiding the social circumstances in which the biological fact occurred, as it conveniently “forgets” the concrete origin of the “Brazilian mixture”: the rape of indigenous and African women and their descendants. The state incorporated this strategy, which simultaneously denies national racism and stifles the debate on the role of historical reparation public policies for the oppressed and exploited populations, as it dampens the founding antagonism of Brazilian society.

The predominant mode of production that lasted in the country for more than 300 years is not only relegated to the background of other social processes, but also softened in terms of its dehumanization and brutality. Slavery in Brazil was not gentle, just as none of the dictatorships that occurred during our Republic were soft. It is not surprising that the democracy installed with the 1988 Constitution formally equated us as citizens, but was unable to shimmer down the state’s violence against black populations. The daily result of the white fear towards the black wave is in the daily numbers of deaths and their widespread trivialization. *Black lives matter?*



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In Brazil, the idea of the wage worker was built and anchored in the downgrading of those elements that, during slavery, performed all productive and unproductive activities in the condition of enslaved. The whitening of labor is a key process and a structuring condition of the Brazilian working class. Therefore, the social question in Brazil, although intrinsic to the hegemonic sociability of capitalism, simultaneously condenses the historical specificities of the country, which emerged by the exploitation of compulsory labor and by black and indigenous resistance against oppression. Thus, a critical apprehension of class struggle and the social processes in their totality requires an analysis of the historical movement of society, which pushes us to deepen racial relations in their fundamental aspect, through the way of conflict and not harmony.

An important review in the field of Social Sciences is required, particularly, in Social Work. A profession assumed to be inscribed in the fabric of relations between social classes and the state, whose social direction in contemporary times is guided by critical theory, by the apprehension of the social totality in its dimensions of universality, particularity, and singularity and, having labor as a central category in the understanding of social relations. It is a step forward compared to the structural-functionalist model that previously led the profession, but which requires permanent mediation between the structural and structuring elements of social life, and the concrete conditions of socio-occupational spaces. For example, the correlations of power, institutional culture, the demands of employers, and the claims and living conditions of subjects who access policies and services. Such living conditions are intersected by different dimensions: class, race, gender, and sexuality experienced as material expressions of inequality due to pauperism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia.

Currently, our struggles within the class, anti-racist and anti-fascist movements, with or without a pandemic, mean to defend the right to life, for us to exist as human beings beyond the legal-formal aspect. And they are, in a broader perception, struggles against the civilization model itself in crisis. Because as Angela Davis said so well: “*In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.*”

There is no “new normal”, because what was considered normal before the pandemic still exists, only now in a mask and in a sharper way. The pandemic did not end racism, decrease femicides (of transgender, transvestite, and cisgender women), not limit exploitation, or not dampen capital’s impulse to expropriate socially produced wealth. The pact between the state and necropolitics stands.

The sociologist and historian Clovis Moura emphasized in his studies the methodological coherence in the production of knowledge about social reality, in the sense of determining from objective criteria of analysis -- the data -- what is decisive and what is secondary. Contemporizing, we can ask ourselves: *What is new after all? What can we no longer be indifferent to? What can open paths for a social praxis that acts on what is fundamental? What maintains system stability?*

The works in this issue of *Katálysis Journal* do not directly answer all the questions raised, but the diversity of approaches to the themes of Social Work, Racism and Social Classes comprise a comprehensive and innovative mosaic to interpret (and transform) contemporary Brazil.

May it be an instigating reading for critical thinking and provocative anti-racist action that “*disturbs the sleep of the unjust*” as Conceição Evaristo wisely advises us.

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Ana Paula Procopio da Silva

anapaulaprocopio@yahoo.com.br

PhD in Social Work at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)

Adjunct Professor at the Faculty of Social Work – Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ)

Coordinator of the Program of Studies and Debates of African and Afro-American Peoples – PROAFRO UERJ

UERJ

Rua São Francisco Xavier, 524, Maracanã

Rio de Janeiro - RJ - Brazil

ZIP CODE: 20.550-900