

## Review

# The educational black movement: knowledge built in struggles for emancipation

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“The black movement is an educator,” that is the introductory phrase of this instigating book by Nilma Lino Gomes (2017, p. 13), which invites the reader to think of and unveil issues intrinsically present in the constitution of Brazilian society.

It is through the Brazilian Black Movement, a political and educational space, that the struggles for social emancipation are born. Thus, the author exposes her critique of the paradigm of racial democracy and raises issues such as racism, racial discrimination, racial inequality, racial equality, gender, youth, affirmative actions, Africanities, and ethnic-racial relations education, among others.

The book’s preface is written by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, whose influence permeates the author’s entire work. It is no coincidence, having in mind that Gomes (2017) has been one of his most brilliant postdoctoral tuition students – according to her, without the Black Movement struggle, in its various forms of expression and organization, and in the midst of tensions, challenges, and constraints, much of what we know today about the racial and African issues would not have been learned. The very critical and emancipatory

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perspective of social theories and even the racial equality promotion policies would not have been designed and deployed in our society.

Gomes (2017) emphasizes in this book the epistemological richness of the Black Movement by having education as its core. The movement is educative precisely because it has the potential to generate new knowledge, not only strengthening social struggles and constituting new political players, but also contributing to society's appropriation of further knowledge by enriching it as a whole. Thus, pedagogy and epistemology are two dimensions in the same process, as well as prefaced by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and the cognitive enrichment of society itself occurs both through the so-called *sociology of absence*, i.e. the revelation and denunciation of realities and silenced players, and through the *sociology of emergency*, the revelation-potential of new knowledge and other dimensions of social emancipation.

The author emphasizes the potential of these categories of analysis, resignifying them by devising pedagogies of absence and emergency. At the same time, she inquires:

- What would pedagogy, the humanities, and the social sciences have to learn from the Black Movement?
- What do teacher training courses teach about this movement and its demands for education?
- How have curricula embraced the educational processes historically constructed by the Black Movement?
- Does the graduate program dialogue with these learning experiences?

Questions like these guide the book, where the author shows that the knowledge strategies developed by the black population and the African diaspora, currently observed in disciplines within human sciences and social sciences, only achieved the due epistemological and political value due to the Black Movement action. It was also through the emancipatory struggles born out of this social movement that we could see the protagonism of social players in their claim for affirmative action policies, understood as policies to correct racial inequalities designed by the Brazilian State. Thanks to the Black Movement action, we began to observe and appreciate the art, corporeality, curly hair, and colors of Africa in the field of aesthetics and beauty, recognizing the representativeness of the black population in this country – something around 53% of inhabitants.

The book *The educational black movement: knowledge built in struggles for emancipation*, published in 2017, contains 7 precious chapters.

In Chapter 1, the author contextualizes the reader about the Brazilian Black Movement as a political player. This movement is responsible for bringing to the public scene the debate on racism, investigating public policies and State commitment to overcoming racial inequalities. It is by means of this social movement, the author reinforces, that race is reaffirmed and politicized, giving it an emancipatory and non-lowering perspective.

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By resignifying race, Gomes (2017) warns, the Black Movement thinks of Brazil's history and the black population's history in our country, she builds new utterances and theoretical, ideological, political, and analytical tools to explain how Brazilian racism operates both in the State structure and in the daily lives of its very victims. As far as race is politicized by the Black Movement, its constitution is unveiled in the context of power relations, overcoming distorted, negative, and naturalized views about the blacks in our society, their history, their culture, their practices, and their knowledge. Thus, race is interpreted affirmatively and as a social construction, challenging the myth of racial democracy observed in sociological theories.

In the dialectics between theory and praxis, Gomes (2017) warns that, rather than appreciating the presence and participation of blacks in Brazilian history and culture, it is necessary that actions of this social movement can be explicitly present in various spaces, aiming to fight against racism. In this sense, education is the field chosen for the author's reflections, since this is a social right hardly won by non-hegemonic social groups in our society. The Black Movement is a right conquered by the black population over hundreds of years, more precisely from the 20th century on.

In Chapter 2, entitled "Emerging pedagogies," Gomes (2017) resignifies Boaventura de Sousa Santos' interpretations in what concerns the sociology of absences, whose objective is turning absence into presence and the sociology of emergency, which aims to replace the emptiness of the future as linear time for a future of open and plural possibilities. It is through these sociologies that the author develops theoretical-epistemological procedures named as *pedagogies of absence and emergency*, in order to give rise to the Black Movement's protagonism in the relation between education and social movements. It is assumed that the Black Movement has become one of the main mediators between the black community, the State, society, elementary school, and university.

In Chapter 3, it is shown how the contemporary Black Movement situates itself in historiography. The strength that this collectivity has been gaining in Brazilian society since the 1970s is depicted. However, the author indicates how the struggle of the black peoples is much earlier, dating back to the 17th century, with Zumbi dos Palmares, among others. Western history, in turn, in constant denial of the trajectory of the black population's struggles, tries to make its protagonism invisible. At this point, Gomes (2017) emphasizes the place and significance of this political player in Brazil's history. The school becomes a great ally in this struggle, although educational theory keeps wasting crucial knowledge that evolves in the Black Movement's field of action, reiterating the tense relationship between modern science and other forms of knowledge production. Boaventura de Sousa Santos names such tension as *abyssal thinking*, which social movements and epistemologies of the South have been contributing to overcome.

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Chapter 4 is the one that brings greater intensity of theoretical discussion and analysis, dialoguing more intensively with concepts coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos, which show to be relevant for grasping the Black Movement and the regulation-emancipation tension in the making of a post-abysal pedagogy. Here, the pedagogy of absence and emergency is one of the aspects pointed out by the author to understand both poles, i.e. regulation (State, market, and community) and emancipation. Analyzing the knowledge produced by the Black Movement from the perspective of knowledge ecology, so dear to Boaventura de Sousa Santos' work, Gomes (2017) identifies some of their main types: identity, political, and aesthetic-bodily knowledge, and these pillars are intrinsically connected.

The debate on race, in turn, is still permeated by several difficulties that need to be increasingly broadened and discussed, so resignifying this term is positive. Denunciation of racism, as exemplified by Gomes (2017), grows increasingly in social media and gains new air even in the political field. According to the author, today, there is greater visibility of blackness in Brazilian society. This issue is closely linked to political knowledge, which refers to achieving public policies, such as Laws No. 12,711/2012 (socio-racial quotas in Brazilian federal Higher Education institutions) and 12,990/2014 (quotas in federal public tenders). Such achievements go beyond the field of ethnic-racial relations, reverberating on gender and youth issues, among others.

Corporeality and aesthetics have taken a central role in the Black Movement, especially in the last years. The cultural issue, which is linked to symbols and the body, undergoes necessary changes and the black person's presence in spaces that were previously unrecognized is the result of political struggles. Thus, aesthetic-bodily knowledge "concerns not only the aesthetics of art, but aesthetics as a way of feeling the world, as corporeality, as a way of experiencing the body in the world," Gomes (2017, p. 79) highlights.

Chapter 5, therefore, claims that the issue of corporeality is part of a historical demand in the Black Movement. Today, the black youth is featuring its Afro hair on the social media, on YouTube channels more often. The black body, historically regulated by society, gains other positive expressions, showing the achievements of recent years in terms of political, identity, and aesthetic representativeness. However, this does not mean there is full acceptance of the black body. According to Gomes (2017), there is a dominant and a dominated body, where black stereotypes are present, which are still in circulation in the Cultural Industry.

In Chapter 6, getting close to the book's end, Gomes (2017) claims there have been times of emancipatory regulation in Brazil, but she recalls they do not have linearity. Although the country celebrates an official date symbolizing the abolition of slavery in Brazil, we cannot forget the emancipatory struggles of blacks in the pre- and post-1888. Our false abolition is marked by a not so clear emancipation of the black body and the State

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has contributed to perpetuate structural racism. In this way, affirmative actions seek to guarantee to the black people certain spaces that have been denied to them on a historical basis. With the greater insertion of blacks in universities, in research institutes, and in the publishing market, knowledge production interconnected to the Black Movement grows quantitatively and qualitatively, taking knowledge production to another level of debate.

The author ends her book asking:

- What do the Black Movement and other social movements lack to make their communication and complicity stronger?
- What do we lack to build the boundaries that separate us based on the wise strategy of providing many entrances and exits?

This is a provocative representation of a new political scene that emerges at both the national and global levels. As proposed by Nilma Lino Gomes (2017), it is imperative that the various political players who led the struggle for democracy, against capitalism, racism, and patriarchy, come together and build common paths, without disconnecting from their specific guidelines or succumbing to an innocuous universalism.

## Reference

Gomes, N. L (2017). *O movimento negro educador: saberes construídos nas lutas por emancipação*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.

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