

## Black cinema and anti-racist education


### ARTICLE

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### Abstract

This article aims to consider the role of black cinema in building an anti-racist education. We carried out bibliographical research on ethnic-racial relations in society (CARNEIRO, 2005; GONZALEZ, 1983; NASCIMENTO, 1978; SOUZA, 1983); anti-racist education in a decolonial perspective (MIGNOLO, 2003; OLIVEIRA; CANDAU, 2010; WALSH, 2005); and the trajectory of cinema regarding racial issues (CARVALHO, 2022; SOARES, 2009), with a focus on black cinema (PRUDENTE, 2018, 2019; SOUZA, 2013, 2020). In addition, the pedagogical role of cinema was discussed (BENATTI; TERUYA, 2022; FREITAS; COUTINHO, 2013) and black cinema's contributions to an anti-racist curriculum. Finally, we presented a proposal for pedagogical intervention through the film "Ewé de Òsányìn: o segredo das folhas." As a result, we found the potentiality of the intercrossing debates on ethnic-racial relations, black cinema, and anti-racist education to think about concrete possibilities for approaching an Afro-Brazilian epistemology in school life.

**Keywords:** Black cinema. Anti-racist education. School life.

### Cinema negro para uma educação antirracista

### Resumo

Este artigo teve como objetivo pensar o cinema negro na construção da educação antirracista. Para tanto, realizou-se uma pesquisa bibliográfica acerca das relações étnico-raciais na sociedade (CARNEIRO; 2005; GONZALEZ, 1983; NASCIMENTO, 1978; SOUZA, 1983); da educação antirracista numa perspectiva decolonial (MIGNOLO, 2003; OLIVEIRA; CANDAU, 2010; WALSH, 2005) e da trajetória do cinema quanto às questões raciais (CARVALHO, 2022; SOARES, 2009), com enfoque no cinema negro (PRUDENTE, 2018, 2019; SOUZA, 2013, 2020). Posto isso, discutiu-se sobre o papel pedagógico do cinema (BENATTI; TERUYA, 2022; FREITAS; COUTINHO, 2013) e as contribuições do cinema negro

para um currículo antirracista. Ademais, foi apresentada uma proposta de intervenção pedagógica através do filme “Ewé de Òsányìn: o segredo das folhas”. Como resultado da pesquisa, destaca-se a potencialidade do intercruzamento dos debates sobre relações étnico-raciais, cinema negro e educação antirracista para se pensarem possibilidades concretas de abordagem de uma epistemologia Afro-Brasileira no cotidiano escolar.

**Palavras-chave:** Cinema negro. Educação antirracista. Cotidiano escolar.

## 1 Introduction

When addressing white supremacy, Neusa Souza (1983) explains that whiteness crosses the ontological and epistemological fields, determining ways of knowing and being. In this sense, white aesthetics, narratives and subjectivity are a model to be followed in a racist society. This reality is no different when it comes to the knowledge perpetuated and constructed at school: most of the references are white and European.

In this context, a decolonization of the curriculum is proposed so that it is possible to build an anti-racist education that emphasizes social and epistemic practices that are not based on whiteness (MIGNOLO, 2003). Hitherto erased knowledge and narratives emerge as a confrontation that is not limited to denunciation, but is propositional: the construction of new ways of knowing is at stake (WALSH, 2005). This dispute includes Law 10.639/2003, which provides for the history of Africa and Afro-Brazilian culture in the school curriculum. It is legislation with decolonial and anti-racist references (OLIVEIRA; CANDAU, 2010).

This article takes this context as its starting point: how can this legal provision be applied in everyday life, given that the reality of the school is complex and still a space for the reproduction of colonized values and epistemologies? How can we create the conditions for the classroom to become a space for denunciations, confrontations and epistemic negotiations? In order to answer these initial questions, we propose a more in-depth discussion of racism and anti-racist education. Subsequently, we address the relationship between cinema and racial issues and point to black cinema as a counter-narrative that challenges white hegemony and deconstructs racist stereotypes.

As an aesthetic and ideological representation that broadens the understanding of black experiences, black cinema has great potential in the field of education. This brings us to the last (more specific) question to be answered in this article: how can black cinema contribute to the development of an anti-racist teaching proposal in history classes? As will be seen later, there is already consistent research on black cinema itself (PRUDENTE, 2018, 2019; SOUZA, 2013, 2020). This study is justified more by the urgency of thinking about possibilities for dealing with white supremacy at school. It is true that there is also research on anti-racist education and the educational function of cinema. However, as we will see later, Freitas and Coutinho (2013) point to the use of audiovisuals for didactic training, criticizing the mobilization of this resource only for the transposition of already established ideas.

The authors propose other ways of using cinema in the classroom. These are ways that we have tried to contemplate with a didactic proposal that addresses an Afro-Brazilian epistemology through the film "Ewé de Òsányìn: o segredo das folhas" (Ewé of Òsányìn: the secret of the leaves). The film sparks a dialog about symbolic and spiritual issues, bringing out black narratives and subjectivities in a delicate and poetic way. Thus, inspired by Benjamin's (2012) idea of history in reverse, the didactic sequence aims to increase visibility and recognition of the contributions of black people to Brazilian culture and society, encouraging critical reflection and appreciation of ethnic-racial diversity in the educational environment.

The idea is that, from theoretical reflection to didactic proposal, this article contributes to thinking of black cinema as a powerful language for creating learning spaces that promote respect, appreciation and understanding of diverse racial experiences and perspectives, making it possible to train students who are committed to defending an anti-racist society.

## 2 Methodology

In order to meet the objective of thinking about black cinema in the construction of an anti-racist education, a bibliographical survey was carried out on race relations in

society; anti-racist education; cinema and racial issues and the pedagogical potential of black cinema.

The way in which race relations occur in society was approached from the point of view of black authors such as Carneiro (2005), Gonzalez (1983), Nascimento (1978) and Souza (1983). As for anti-racist education, it was thought of from a decolonial perspective (MIGNOLO, 2003; OLIVEIRA; CANDAU, 2010; WALSH, 2005), which highlights the need to deconstruct relations of domination in the educational process, addressing other ways of seeing, feeling and understanding the world than the white and European one. When dealing with the trajectory of cinema, we focus on analyses that focus on racial issues (CARVALHO, 2022; SOARES, 2009), highlighting discussions about black cinema (PRUDENTE, 2018, 2019; SOUZA, 2013, 2020). Subsequently, we raised reflections on the pedagogical role of cinema (BENATTI; TERUYA, 2022; FREITAS; COUTINHO, 2013) and the potential of black cinema in building an anti-racist curriculum in everyday school life

In addition to the bibliographical research, as a contribution to thinking about anti-racist education, we present an idea for a pedagogical intervention (OLIVEIRA, 2017) based on the film "Ewé de Òsányìn: o segredo das folhas" - chosen because it allows for discussion about the relationship between humans and nature in an Afro-Brazilian epistemology.

### 3 Ethnic-racial relations in Brazilian society

The notion of "race" plays a fundamental role in structuring social relations and access to basic rights. Although it is widely accepted that it does not exist biologically, it remains a significant social factor in social inequalities, and is even a category that leads to animalization, i.e. the systematic dehumanization of black people.

Although it is fundamental to think about the idea of race in order to understand Brazil's social dynamics, an ideology persists in the country that masks racism as the source of inequalities. According to Nascimento (1978), the myth of racial democracy is a fanciful narrative that exalts miscegenation and religious syncretism with the aim of

preserving the hegemony of white elites. It is a falsification of our historical trajectory, seeking to hide the existence of racist violence at the heart of national identity.

The power of falsified narratives like this shows the impact of white supremacy on the way we understand social reality. As Neusa Souza (1983) explains, this supremacy (which she calls whiteness) is not determined by biological or genetic aspects, but is the result of a historical and ideological construction that confers privileges and power on white people. In this sense, whiteness plays a decisive role in the production of an ontological, epistemological and power field. These fields are interconnected to shape forms of knowledge and subjectivation, configuring the so-called power device. According to the thinker Sueli Carneiro (2005), there are two ways of understanding raciality in Brazil. One is based on the training of racialized subjects, based on visions historically produced by whiteness. The other is the logic of biopower, which operates on a broader scale and configures a hybrid device: the norm is that blacks and whites need to demonstrate in their lives what is attributed to their respective races, and the production of these realities is imperative for the legitimization of hierarchies. This device is responsible for the systematic production and reproduction of subordinate races.

In this context, Lélia Gonzalez (1983) highlights the importance of differentiating between consciousness and memory when dealing with these power devices. Consciousness refers to ignorance, concealment, alienation and even the knowledge to which ideological discourse manifests itself. Memory, on the other hand, is considered a non-knowledge that knows, a space of inscriptions that rescues an unwritten history, a place where truth is structured as "fiction". Consciousness is the place of rejection, expressing itself as the dominant discourse (or its effects) in a given culture, concealing memory and imposing its own version of the truth. But memory has its tricks and its psychosocial dynamics, it speaks through the flawed acts present in the discourse of consciousness.

It is in the dialectical interplay between these two notions that we can better understand racism and sexism in Brazilian culture. According to Lélia Gonzalez, it is precisely the anonymous black woman, who lives on the peripheries and in the most marginalized layers of society, who suffers the effects of racial oppression most intensely.

In this sense, being black is a complex experience permeated by various forms of oppression. This experience involves the suffering caused by the suppression of identity, in which black women are constantly disregarded in their perspectives and subjected to alienated demands. However, becoming black also implies rescuing history through memory, recreating one's own potential. It is a commitment to free oneself from the constraints imposed by society, valuing black culture and identity in the fight against racism. In this way, becoming black is a process of resistance (SOUZA, 1983).

If, on the one hand, the self-affirmation of blackness is an act of empowerment, on the other hand it is problematic that the black person's reference continues to be white, whether to affirm or deny themselves. Souza (1983) explains that white continues to be seen as something that transcends the concrete subject and is inscribed as a symbolic structure or a place in discourse. The author proposes a precise definition of what this normative instance would be, called by Freud the "Ideal of the Self" - an ideal that creates the objective conditions for whiteness to reproduce racial inequalities by working with the idea of a "white standard" as the norm to be followed.

Neusa Souza points out that this fragments the identity of black people, undermining their pride and dismantling group solidarity. Thus, experienced subjectively, this situation has serious repercussions on the social fabric. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the existence of a raciality/biopower device and understand how it operates, for example, in Brazilian basic education. Explicitly, it manifests itself mainly by controlling access, success and permanence of racialized students in quality public education (CARNEIRO, 2005). In addition, the device of raciality and biopower is also responsible for producing and reproducing an education based on knowledge and practices that promote whiteness and silence the experiences and knowledge of people of African descent, thus reinforcing racism and epistemicide (CARNEIRO, 2005).

However, these processes are not fully realized, since there is a resistance movement. The very recognition of how the machinery of whiteness operates is important for the struggle of marginalized communities against oppression and subjugation. There are many strategies and tactics adopted by black communities in Brazil, among them the dispute over narratives in the educational context.



## 4 Anti-racist education

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It is proposed that anti-racist education starts from the perspective of decolonization, that is, "the struggle against non-existence, dominated existence and dehumanization" (OLIVEIRA; CANDAU, 2010, p. 24). With this, it is possible to build other ways of living, power and knowledge, giving visibility to non-white and non-Eurocentric social, epistemic and political practices. Mignolo (2003) explains that this is a proposal for a geopolitical reordering of knowledge, which involves criticizing the historical inferiorization of knowledge and the need to build a new epistemological modality in this sense. In other words, in the context of an anti-racist education, students would have the opportunity to recognize and reflect on historical erasures, but would not be limited to this criticism: there would also be the study of other references, building knowledge from narratives and knowledge whose main pillar is not whiteness.

It is worth noting that these narratives and knowledges would not be completely free from the perspectives of whiteness. The concept of "critical border thinking", worked on by Walsh (2005), makes it clear that the decolonial approach does not imply the creation of an ideal society, because power relations are structural and do not disappear easily. Thus, border thinking is committed to the continuous questioning and transformation of dominant thinking - which remains a reference, but the idea is to put it in check, creating cracks in its hegemony.

Walsh (2005) also points out that interculturality plays an important role in this decolonial approach, as it involves another idea of the world and of knowledge, an epistemic turn. In this sense, it wouldn't be enough to include topics related to race in the curriculum, the author points out the need to question the ideological basis of school knowledge and not limit oneself to the narrative of re-victimization - which is quite common in the study of topics such as slavery, when black people are not seen as subjects who construct history, but only figure in it. Walsh (2005) therefore suggests a propositional educational insurgency, so that denunciation is not enough and new ways of knowing need to be constructed.

Considering the recent efforts to decolonize the curriculum, Oliveira and Candau (2010) discuss the changes in Brazilian legislation since 1988 and highlight Law 10.639 of 9 January 2003, which provides for the compulsory inclusion of the history of Africa and Afro-Brazilian culture in the school curriculum. They add that this is not a one-off, but a proposal that has been considered at different levels of Brazilian legislation, and that it is in line with decolonial and anti-racist reflections.

However, the question remains as to how to apply this law, creating the conditions for the classroom to become a space for denunciations, confrontations and epistemic negotiations. Cavalleiro (2001) lists eight characteristics of an anti-racist education, which can help us think about how to build the curriculum in everyday life:

1. Recognizes the existence of the racial problem in Brazilian society.
2. Constantly seeks to reflect on racism and its derivatives in everyday school life.
3. repudiates any prejudiced and discriminatory attitude in society and in the school environment and ensures that interpersonal relationships between adults and children, blacks and whites are respectful.
- 4) Does not disregard the diversity present in the school environment: uses it to promote equality, encouraging the participation of all pupils.
- 5) Teaches children and adolescents a critical history of the different groups that make up Brazilian history.
6. seeks out materials that contribute to the elimination of 'Eurocentrism' from school curricula and take into account racial diversity, as well as the study of 'black issues'.
7. thinks of ways and means of educating for the positive recognition of racial diversity.
8. develops actions to strengthen the self-concept of pupils belonging to discriminated groups (CAVALLEIRO, 2001, p. 158).

In his study "Racism and anti-racism in real schools", Gillborn (1995) also makes contributions to thinking about everyday school life. He points out the importance of the teacher making the classroom a democratic space in which students can express themselves without fear of the interpretations and judgments of others, providing a context for elaborating racist ideas and deconstructing them and for epistemological confrontation. In addition, the author addresses the importance of multiculturalism being approached critically, going beyond celebration. Thus, going from pointing out difference to analyzing inequality is essential not only in classroom reflections, but also in the hidden curriculum, after all, this allows for a de-automatization in the unequal treatment of the subjects that make up the school.

As for methodological possibilities in anti-racist education, it is important to bring non-white narratives into the classroom, broadening the students' perspective on ways of



power, living and being. In this context, cinema is a powerful language, as it articulates aesthetic and ideological possibilities in the construction of universes that can break with the current social order. As Bell (2003, p. 4) points out, "stories are not simply individual productions, but cultural and ideological ones as well [...] the stories we tell are those that are culturally available for us to say". Thus, as a cultural and ideological production, cinema can both perpetuate and disrupt established values.

## 5 Cinema and racial issues: considerations on black cinema

As Carvalho (2022, p. 26) explains, "cinematographic language can - and not infrequently does - naturalize a social order and its hierarchies". Throughout the 20th century, audiovisuals established themselves as a tool for conquering and disseminating ways of life. Specifically with regard to cinema, Hollywood was and is fundamental in spreading the consumption of the American way of life, establishing it as a model of cultural homogenization (SOUZA JUNIOR, 2018), with the protagonist figure of the white, Western man. Similarly, European and Soviet cinema also took on hegemonic characteristics (QUEIROZ; PACHECO; SOARES, 2022).

In the early history of cinema in the United States, only a few films showed African-Americans as human. Both on stage and on screen, most of the characters were white actors and actresses wearing black makeup (blackface) - which continued throughout the history of cinema until the moment when black activists and artists began to question racist stereotypes and demand self-representation (CARVALHO, 2022).

Based on the need for black people to be represented by black people and beyond stereotypes, Willian D. Foster founded the Foster Photoplay Company, the first black film company, in 1910 in Chicago. His first film, "The Railroad Porter", a pioneer for being directed and acted by blacks, was released in 1913 (ALMEIDA, 2013, p. 16). In 1916, George Johnson and Noble Johnson founded the Lincoln Picture Company and released "A Negro's Ambition". In 1918, they released "The Birth of a Race", their best-known work, which depicted black soldiers, families and heroes (SOUZA, 2013).

Like the aforementioned companies, many others run by blacks began producing so-called "race movies", which can be considered the birth of black American cinema. This reaction to stereotypes and the near absence of black actors and actresses in Hollywood was made with scarce resources and in parallel circuits, but had an impact especially on communities of African descent. One of the most important directors of this early period, between the 1920s and 1950s, was Oscar Micheaux, with the film "The Homesteader", the first feature film produced by a black man in his country (SOUZA, 2013).

In Brazil, at the beginning of cinematographic production, in the days of silent cinema, black men and women were represented in several films, such as "Dança de um baiano" (1899), "Dança de capoeira" (1905) and "O carnaval cantado" (1918) (CARVALHO, 2022). However, this representation was marginal, peripheral in framing and content. Carvalho (2022, p. 26) explains:

It is possible to draw a homology between the social positions of black people in the period immediately after abolition and their side images occupying the edges and background of the frames. They "escaped" the control of the cameramen. From the 1910s onwards, with the development of decoupage, professionalization and the commercial development of production, these invasive images disappeared completely.

When they were purposely represented on screen, blacks were left with stereotypes based on the dehumanization of the life experience of this population, in an allegorical way, confirming the hegemonic discourse (CARVALHO, 2022). In a different way, dominant groups are not represented allegorically, but are shown as naturally diverse, without generalizations (SHOHAT; STAM, 2006).

Stereotyping was an essential element in Chanchada, a Brazilian film genre which, through satire, explored the comicality of everyday situations and popular events such as samba and carnival. At its peak between 1930 and 1950, this trend followed the American Big Studios in order to receive foreign funding. Thus, a national popular cinema was created based on folklore, representing culture as something static and generic. Following an industrialist positivism, peasants and indigenous people were portrayed as alien to progress, while black people were made invisible, despite the fact that samba assumed the position of national unity. The soul of the black man was used, but his body as an interpreter was denied (PRUDENTE, 2019).

On a global level, a major milestone for black cinema were the productions of the 1970s in the United States, which followed the civil rights movements of the black population in the 1950s and 1960s. Even in Hollywood, several films were produced that were directed, interpreted and aimed at black audiences. This trend later came to be called "Blaxploitation", characterized by a more real and authentic representation of the black population, unlike the stereotyped standards of classic American film productions.

In the so-called "Third World", the 1960s was a period of powerful reaction to the cultural homogenization of hegemonic cinema. It can be said that, based on ideologies of identity construction, opposing the national to the foreign, and also cultural policies focused on social change through the mobilization of the masses (SOARES, 2014), the idea of an autochthonous cinema characterized and united this "cinema on the margins", despite the diversity of productions (SOARES, 2009).

Manifestos for the creation of "new cinemas" proliferated in the Americas, such as "Aesthetics of Hunger" (1965) by Glauber Rocha, "Por un cine imperfecto" ("For an imperfect cinema", 1969) by Julio García Espinosa and "Hacia el tercer cine" ("Towards the third cinema", 1968) by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino (NASCIMENTO, 2015). Thus, as in the artistic avant-garde, the cinema of the peripheral context presents "the character of novelty and rewriting, of breaking with traditional nuances", which "leads to the need to produce not only artistically, but also theoretically" (SOARES, 2009, p. 211).

In particular, the Brazilian Cinema Novo sought to break with the colonialist perspective and undertook new ways of representing national identity, with another perspective for thinking about the role of blacks and indigenous people in the construction of Brazil (COSTA; GALINDO, 2018). What marked the movement was, above all, the development of national themes, the political and social character, as well as production from more limited resources.

In this scenario, black people became the aesthetic reference point: their culture came to be heralded as Brazilian popular culture, in opposition to outsiders, to cultural colonialism. With a Marxist bias, black people came to signify the expression of poverty, at the base of the class struggle against the white bourgeois, symbol of wealth (PRUDENTE,

2019). In this way, Cinema Novo films featured characters who adhered to Afro-Brazilian cults, heroes and samba dancers, for example (SOUZA, 2013).

Anthropologist and filmmaker Celso Prudente understands that this movement "radicalized the position of Africanness in the cinematographic context" and sees director Glauber Rocha as "the inventor of Brazilian black cinema", giving special prominence to the film "Barravento" (1962) (PRUDENTE, 2019). According to the author, the new cinema placed black people and their culture in an unequivocal leading role that was substantial to its aesthetic, in the brilliant artistic-intellectual effort of the Afro-Brazilian Glauber Rocha" (p. 20).

On the other hand, there are authors who disagree with this position, believing that Cinema Novo was unable to change the way black people were represented in national cinema. For José Carlos Rodrigues, for example, the film "Barravento" presents black people as culturally backward (SOUZA, 2013). In a different way, Carvalho (2022) interprets that, in fact, Cinema Novo put the issue of racial representation at the center, inserting black people as a metaphor for the people, illiterate, slum dwellers, peasants, workers and migrants, figuring as the "Brazilian man". However, he argues that there was a de-racialization, because the black man was idealized as universal (people, proletarian, exploited) to generate identification on the part of a mostly white, intellectualized and left-wing audience.

In any case, Edileuza de Souza (2013) recognizes that, even though it was still bound by stereotypes, Cinema Novo portrayed various themes and characteristics of black Brazilian culture, as well as playing a significant role in introducing black actresses and actors to the world of cinema, such as Léa Garcia, Luiza Maranhão, Antônio Pitanga, Zózimo Bulbul, Milton Gonçalves and Valdir Onofre. This space was also important because many of these artists later went on to direct their own films, such as Zózimo Bulbul, with "Alma no olho" (1973) and Músicos brasileiros em Paris (1976), Valdir Onofre, with "As aventuras amorosas de um padeiro" (1976) and Antônio Pitanga, with "Na boca do mundo" (1978) (CARVALHO, 2022).

In all phases of national cinema, as Edileuza de Souza (2013) explains, militancy, through different forms of collective organization, was decisive in bringing about

discussions about the construction of images of black people in the media. One example is the Brazilian Black Front (FNB) which, in the 1930s, demanded the need for black representations in the São Paulo media and culminated in the creation of the newspaper "O Menelik", later "O Clarim d'Alvorada". For its part, the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN) emerged as a company of artists and intellectuals in the 1940s, with the aim of increasing and qualifying the presence of black men and women in Brazilian theater and which served as inspiration for several other black groups in dramaturgy.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time when countless organizations and entities of the black social movement were in turmoil, most notably the Unified Black Movement (MNU), founded in 1978 by activists Neuza Maria Pereira, Wilson Prudente, Celso Prudente, Milton Barbosa, Rafael Pinto and Hamilton Cardoso. This organization was fundamental in overthrowing the myth of racial democracy in Brazil and denouncing institutional racism (PRUDENTE, 2019).

The activists then went on to make their own films, such as the short film "Why Eritrea?" (1978), shot in Ethiopia; the short film "Axé, alma de um povo" (1987), by Celso Prudente, shot in Angola; as well as "Alma no olho" (1973), made in France by the artist Zózimo Bulbul, now recognized as the father of Brazilian Black Cinema. Thus, according to Celso Prudente (2019, p. 23), this was the moment when the "invention of black cinema took place, as a trend in which black people went beyond the role of aesthetic reference of the new cinema", but assumed "the role of historical subject, writing their own history with the lens".

In 1998, black documentarians and short filmmakers joined forces to promote their work. In 1999, Daniel Santiago and Jefferson De organized a meeting of black Brazilian filmmakers at the 11th São Paulo International Short Film Festival, when they launched the "Dogma Feijoada Movement", which created an agenda for thinking about black cinema and provided an opportunity for discussion on the subject. In 2001, at the 5th Recife Film Festival, the "Recife Manifesto" was launched, calling for greater participation by Afro-Brazilians in all spheres of audiovisual production.

Based on situations like this, Edileuza de Souza (2020, p. 178-179) understands black cinema as a "concept coined in the daily struggle to combat racism, prejudice and



any and all discrimination", "embodied by black militancy that is rooted in territory and territoriality and guides us that it is possible to transcend from the gate to the inside". In a similar vein, Prudente (2019) states that black cinema has become the cinema of minorities, exploring possibilities that are averse to Euro-heteronormativity. In this movement, we can see the construction of an image of positive affirmation of Afro-descendants as a minority. This reveals the pedagogical dimension of black cinema:

In this way, minorities build their image of positive affirmation through the pedagogical dimension of black cinema, further humanizing human relations, as it teaches society to free itself from the weight of prejudice, which makes it difficult to live the contemporaneity of knowledge, which is antithetical to prejudice (PRUDENTE, 2018, p. 105).

## 6 Black cinema and anti-racist education: a didactic proposal

First of all, a brief contextualization of the use of cinematographic language in education is in order. According to Benatti and Teruya (2022), in 1912 there were already mentions of the systematic use of cinema in schools, more specifically in the teaching of history. By the end of the 1920s, there was a consensus regarding the pedagogical function of cinematographic language and its impact on teaching methodologies (DUARTE; ALEGRIA, 2008).

With regard to its educational character, Freitas and Coutinho (2013) compare the trajectory of cinema to baroque art, whose visual image generates devotion, incites ways of being and regulates the actions of the faithful. In this sense, the authors point out the hegemonic, repeated and utilitarian path of cinema in education, criticizing its use for the didactic transposition of ideas, situations or concepts that have already been established - what they consider to be a predominantly disciplinary and normalizing proposal. In light of this, Freitas and Coutinho (2013) question what cinema can do beyond didactic training and, based on Deleuze, propose three different uses.

Firstly, it would be up to cinema to shake up current thinking, causing a rupture in the way we understand reality. It is a blow to our reason from the moment it reveals the near absence of thought, since there is no originality or authorship, and ideas are repetitions of socially established representations. Secondly, cinema would be a space for



the invention of what is missing, making it possible to create a revolutionary becoming that inspires the viewer to build new ways of being in the world. Finally, cinema for a cartography of the present time would allow for an analysis of the ways in which life is subjectivized, enabling a more lucid perception of what is happening in contemporaneity and what we have become and are becoming.

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It is possible to point to working with black cinema in the classroom as a way of contemplating the three points raised, after all, the social existence of white as the norm is challenged, creating universes that reverberate other symbolic interpretations, other ways of regulating collective and individual identities (BENATTI; TERUYA, 2022). In this sense, it is worth explaining that black cinema is not limited to addressing the issue of racism, it is a language that recognizes and affirms black subjectivities, deconstructing stereotypes and, for this reason, it is an anti-racist cinema (LACERDA; BENATTI, 2021).

In this logic, Afro-diasporic aesthetic formulations are also configured as a counter-strategy to the racist regime. Benatti and Teruya (2022) explain that, because aesthetic rationality has been less colonized, the creative integrity of a film can be a way of working out a counter-hegemonic idea of reality:

As an intrinsically artistic manifestation, film production articulates creation [poiesis], contemplation, reverie, fiction, chance and disorder. Neither science (but potentially one), nor logic (but potentially one), nor technology (but potentially one), films are an exercise in signification, in the production of meanings that evoke and provoke from the most banal instances of everyday life, to the most metaphorical forms of fantasy existence. Transterritorialized, the film requires a translation process that mediates between the world, the subject who produces it and the subject who experiences it. The pedagogical possibility of translating the real through the continuous operations of filmic language brings us closer to a praxis of phenomenological explanation, contrary to a philosophy that essentially seeks truth. (p. 16).

Therefore, it is not just a question of using black cinema to address issues such as slavery, but of offering students other narratives and ways of composing reality through fiction. In this sense, anti-racist education through cinema is structured as much by deconstructing whiteness (hitherto seen as the truth and the only way of understanding the world and living) as by the task of "affirming the process of constructing black identity" (p. 18).

In this context, for Cruz (2022, p. 23), Cinema Negro de Animação (CNA), in opposition to Eurocentric colonizing education, "is a contemporary griot tool that equips educators to carry out educational practices that promote black aesthetics and epistemologies". A griot is understood to be a storyteller who passes on ancestral wisdom to new generations. The CNA would have the important function of telling traditional stories from African and Afro-diasporic cultures, performing an aesthetic mediation for the formation of anti-racist youth.

Having explained black cinema and education, we return to the more specific question of this article: how can black cinema contribute to the development of an anti-racist didactic proposal in history classes? First of all, in order to think about the relationship between history and anti-racist education, it is essential to recognize that the former is not a static narrative, but a continuous construction, shaped by the interpretations and choices of historians. Thus, the historian is responsible for the act of "separating, bringing together, transforming into 'documents' certain objects distributed in another way" (CERTEAU, 2008, p. 8). Thinking of history as a reflection on the past - based on the selection of documents - it is possible to point out that, over the centuries, narratives have been shaped by the victors, the conquerors and those in power. It is common to find accounts that extol the glorious deeds of the victors, highlighting their victories and conquests, while relegating the voices and experiences of the vanquished to oblivion.

In this sense, Walter Benjamin (2012) points to the need to "make a history against the grain". The author defends the idea of challenging the traditional narrative, questioning the victors and bringing to light the stories of the silenced. Telling history from the perspective of the vanquished allows us to challenge existing power structures and question dominant narratives. By listening to marginalized voices, stories of resistance and struggles for social justice, we are confronted with the contradictions and injustices that may have been overlooked in conventional versions of events.

In this context, the aforementioned Law 10.639/03 is in line with the proposal to "make a history against the grain", since the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian and African history in school curricula is a way of breaking with the dominant narrative and opening up space for the construction of a more critical history, which recognizes that it is from the power

relations, choices and interpretations of historians that historical narratives are constructed. Although it is "necessary to broaden the debate and pedagogical preparation in order to implement an Anti-Racist Education" (ROCHA; SILVA, 2013, p. 24), controversial issues involving the conditions of black men and women, such as violence, forced labor and poverty, are now being addressed more frequently. However, the law is quite comprehensive and allows Afro-Brazilian history to be worked on beyond the question of black people as slaves or as contributors to Brazilian culture.

Based on studies on cinema as an instrument for reflecting on society (FERRO, 1976; MEIRELLES, 1995; STAM, 1996), it is possible, for example, to work on the film "Ewé de Òsányìn: o segredo das folhas" in the classroom, placing black people as protagonists in the production of knowledge. The film revolves around a child who is born with leaves on his body, which leads him to face discrimination at school: he is bullied and isolated by other children who don't understand his uniqueness. Feeling out of place, the protagonist decides to flee into the woods, seeking refuge and answers in an environment closer to nature. It is on this journey of self-discovery that she encounters enchanted beings inspired by African and Afro-Brazilian traditions.

Among the characters the child meets are Ossanha (the orisha of leaves) and Ogum (the orisha of paths). These beings become guides and mentors for the protagonist, helping her to understand her own identity, find strength and embrace her uniqueness. In the film, the orishas are portrayed in a way that goes beyond mere distant mythology or a mystical, old-fashioned view of the world. They are presented as representations of the forces of nature and as ways for human beings to connect with the environment around them, highlighting the importance of spirituality and the relationship with the natural world. The encounter with Ossanha, for example, represents the deep connection between human beings and nature, valuing the wisdom of plants and the connection with the plant kingdom. The encounter with Ogum, in turn, represents the main character's quest to walk his own path, face his fears and find the inner strength to overcome challenges.

In short, by exploring the main character's journey, the film highlights the importance of reconnecting with nature and the forces that govern it. The orishas are metaphorical constructs that constitute a black epistemology. They are presented as symbolic

representations of forces and aspects of nature and the human experience, providing a unique way of understanding the world and oneself. This metaphorical approach to the orixás highlights the richness and depth of African and Afro-Brazilian spirituality. They are not seen as mere mythological figures, but as models that encompass universal aspects of the human condition and the relationship with the environment. Each orisha represents a specific facet of human existence, such as wisdom, courage, love, justice, fertility, among others. They are personified through stories and symbols, providing a poetic language for us to understand and relate to these abstract concepts.

Made using the "stop-motion" technique, the short film is made up of several shots of modeling clay objects, which are placed in sequence, creating the idea of movement. Contrary to what is expected in films using this technique, the main character doesn't seem to have the necessary finish: you can see that his hands, fingers, legs and feet have excess mass. While at first it may seem like a mistake, this aesthetic can also be seen as a choice to emphasize that the character is made of clay, implying a relationship with the Yoruba myth of creation. According to the ancestral narrative of the people of southwestern Nigeria (LEÃO; SANDOVAL, 2019), Oxalá was given the task of creating human beings by Olodumaré, but only with the help of Nanã, who had mastery of still water and the swamp, was he able to fulfill his mission: with the clay she offered, he shaped the human figure. Nanã, in turn, made only one demand: that one day the human being would return to the dust, to the clay from which he came - which is a reference to death. Thus, the emphasis on clay in the film "Ewé de Òsányìn: o segredo das folhas" (Ewé of Òsányìn: the secret of the leaves) could be an aesthetic approach with ancestral references and also aligned with the idea that it is not possible to separate human beings from nature.

Having put the animation into context, we will now describe the proposal for how to work with it in a history lesson for the final years of elementary school. Initially, the teacher would raise awareness with the students, asking whether there is a correct way of seeing the world; whether other peoples, such as the indigenous people, see and relate to nature in the same way as we do; and how nature is seen by white people. After listening to some of the answers, the teacher would show the movie and ask the students to pay attention to how humans and nature relate to each other in the film.

Once the animation had finished, the teacher would hold a discussion with the class using a few trigger questions: "What is the meaning behind the fact that the main character was born with leaves all over his body?"; "Why don't Ogum and Ossanha open their mouths to speak?"; "Explain what Ossanha means by saying: 'Those who did this (deforestation) don't want to see the mysteries. Like you didn't see. They don't see. Just like you didn't'. First, if no student has touched on the subject, the teacher would talk about the fact that the characters are black and, from there, lead the discussion so that the class realizes how the film tries to elucidate that, in other ways of knowing and being, human beings and nature are intrinsic elements. Based on this reflection, the teacher would systematize, together with the class's comments, the reason for the main character having leaves all over his body.

As for Ogum and Ossanha not opening and closing their mouths to speak, the students should realize that the audiovisual resources are being used to show that, in fact, they are not human beings, but orishas, so that what we see is just a humanized representation. In addition, as already mentioned, the teacher should explore the students' comments about Ossanha's speech: "Those who did this (deforestation) don't want to see the mysteries. Just like you didn't. They don't see. Like you didn't". The idea is for students to recognize blindness, that is, the limitation of the white perspective, and to understand how different peoples and ethnic groups have built more complex and less destructive ways of relating to nature.

With this hook, the teacher would discuss how, for a long time, whiteness has relegated black people to secondary roles and made their ways of knowing, being and power invisible. In this sense, the discussion would lead students to think of the black perspective as a legitimate point of view that allows us, for example, to understand nature not as something external to us - and therefore subject to unbridled exploitation - but rather as part of a relationship of interdependence.

## 7 Final considerations

With the research carried out, we concluded that building an anti-racist society involves not only denouncing violence, but also proposing ways of knowing that are not based on whiteness. Thus, anti-racist education needs to be proactive, so that educators must commit themselves to working on black narratives and subjectivities. In this context, we believe that Law 10.639/03 plays a crucial role in helping to break away from whiteness as a reference for knowledge. By proposing the inclusion of black culture and history in the school curriculum, this law opens up ways of approaching other ways of knowing, being and power.

Black cinema is a powerful language in this movement of epistemological rupture in schools because, instead of perpetuating the current order, it challenges structural racism by creating universes that reverberate other symbolic interpretations, other ways of regulating collective and individual identities. In this way, this cinema denaturalizes ways of subjectivizing life, being a space for inventing what is missing. Thus, it is possible to create other ways of living in it and through it.

However, we believe that this finding is not enough and that research is needed to propose, in a more concrete way, how black cinema can be approached in the classroom in order to build an anti-racist education. Thus, with regard to the didactic proposal, we highlight the importance of the teacher having strategies to mediate the experience of the film not only in terms of the plot and theme, but mainly in relation to the aesthetic and ideological aspects, so that the student recognizes black symbols, concepts and paradigms. We hope to have contributed to educators who, in everyday school life, try to break the pact of whiteness and think about other narratives with students, allowing the school to be a space where history is brushed against the grain and where cracks are increasingly created in hegemonic ways of knowing.

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