

Pedagogical possibilities for an anti-racist education based on the movie *Executive Order*

ARTICLE

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Abstract

This work presents black cinema as an important pedagogical tool for the recovery and appreciation of Afro History and Culture, in accordance with Law No. 10,639, of January 9, 2003. It presents the movie *Executive Order* (2022), written and directed by Lázaro Ramos, as a didactic possibility. It makes a bibliographical review based on the theoretical assumptions of Abdias Nascimento (1840) and Frantz Fanon (2008), in addition to basing itself on three recent articles published by the *Revistas Educação & Formação*, and *Educative Practices, Memories and Orality* of the State University of Ceará – UECE. It discusses the need to break with the predominant colonizing thinking in Brazilian schools and encourages anti-racist education.

Keywords: Black cinema. Education. Film Provisional Measure. Racism.

Possibilidades pedagógicas para uma educação antirracista a partir do filme *Medida Provisória*

Resumo

Este trabalho apresenta o cinema negro como importante ferramenta pedagógica para o resgate e a valorização da História e da Cultura Afro, de acordo com a Lei n.º 10.639, de 9 de janeiro de 2003. Apresenta o filme *Medida Provisória* (2022), escrito e dirigido por Lázaro Ramos, como possibilidade didática. Faz uma revisão bibliográfica a partir dos pressupostos teóricos de Abdias Nascimento (1840) e Frantz Fanon (2008), além de pautar-se em três artigos recentes publicados pelas *Revistas Educação & Formação e Práticas Educativas, Memórias e Oralidade* da Universidade Estadual do Ceará – UECE. Discute a necessidade de ruptura do pensamento colonizador predominante nas escolas brasileiras e incentiva a educação antirracista.

Palavras-chave: Cinema negro. Educação. Filme *Medida Provisória*. Racismo.

1 Introduction

The first cinematographic projection took place in 1895, when the French brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière showed a short film in a Parisian café. Since then, the seventh

art has consolidated itself not only as a form of entertainment, but also as an artistic and cultural manifestation. A year after the French screening, cinema arrived in Brazil and gradually became part of education, especially in the mid-1930s. Today, it is seen as a powerful pedagogical tool, as it goes beyond providing more dynamic lessons: it stimulates discussions about urgent social issues such as prejudice, inequality, environmental factors, among others. In other words,

The production of a cinematographic work interacts directly with its time, its potential and its intentions. Since its emergence at the end of the 19th century, cinema has sought to dialog with the lived world of individuals, sometimes projecting reality, sometimes the desires, sometimes the daydreams of these individuals (SANTOS; JUNIOR; ZOBOLI, 2020, p. 9)..

It is well known that one of the problems that is historically and culturally rooted in the Brazilian reality is racism. The hegemonic precepts stemming from colonization and enslavement have contaminated the structure of collective thought, so that they persist to this day. Hostility towards black people is present in everyday life, in various spheres of society: from sports to school and professional environments. Despite the constant effort to deny the problem - after all, there are groups dedicated to the idea that racism doesn't exist in Brazil - racial discrimination is often blatant, through verbal, physical and psychological violence, which is not always reported by the major media outlets.

Thus, the normalization of prejudice favours the maintenance of aggressive speech and behaviour, which is introduced into everyday school life, given that the school is the place where - due to the plurality of backgrounds, contexts and values - social conflicts are repeatedly evident. In addition to the attempt to deny the problem, there is a movement - strengthened in recent years - that aims to intimidate educators when it comes to addressing issues associated with human formation, claiming that this is the exclusive responsibility of the family. However, such ideological positions have the opposite effect, in the sense that they highlight the need to adopt an anti-racist education in order to establish assertive and solid changes regarding the ethical principles and behaviors that permeate society.

Since school is an important space for building identity (CARVALHO; FRANÇA, 2019), it is essential to legitimize respect and appreciation of differences. Law No. 10.639, of January 9, 2003, establishes that

Art. 26-A. The teaching of Afro-Brazilian History and Culture shall become compulsory in official and private primary and secondary schools.

§ Paragraph 1 The syllabus referred to in the heading of this article shall include the study of the History of Africa and Africans, the struggle of black people in Brazil, black Brazilian culture and black people in the formation of national society, rescuing the contribution of black people in the social, economic and political areas relevant to the History of Brazil.

§ Paragraph 2 - Content relating to Afro-Brazilian History and Culture shall be taught throughout the school curriculum, especially in the areas of Art Education and Brazilian Literature and History.

(...)

Art. 79-B. The school calendar will include November 20th as 'National Black Awareness Day' (BRASIL, 2023, emphasis added).

Although relevant for a qualitative leap in the adoption of anti-racist education, the law, if taken as the only proposed solution, proves to be insufficient. Although it proposes a decolonial approach, as it "contributes to blurring the boundaries of black identity fixed in the slavery past" (SANTOS; JUNIOR; ZOBOLI, 2020, p. 2), in practice, black issues are still dealt with in a fragmented way and depend on specific events, such as November 20 - National Black Awareness Day. The lack of day-to-day representation affects the sense of belonging of students who may find peers in the school space - including in terms of color, origins and customs - but who, on the other hand, feel disconnected from the topics taught in the classroom.

Faced with this impasse, this article presents black cinema as an important teaching resource for promoting anti-racist education. The power of imagery, sound and textual representations is capable of raising awareness of the obstacles historically established in Brazilian ethnic-racial relations. It also raises discussions about the representation of the black body in various spaces, including national cinema, which is still so full of Eurocentrism and stereotyped views. By considering the aesthetics of films written, directed and/or represented by black people, many cultural elements are rescued, generating contact and appreciation of those who have always remained on the margins. Therefore, "school [...] becomes a fertile field for watching films, for producing films, for

reconstructing histories and memories." (SANTOS; JUNIOR; ZOBOLI, 2020, p. 1) Therefore, this article deals with the feature film *Medida Provisória* (2022), directed by Lázaro Ramos, as a pedagogical resource that can mobilize views, discussions and attitudes at school, especially among high school students, since the film's rating is for people aged 14 and over.

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2 Methodology

In order to deal with the film *Medida Provisória* (2022), an essentially bibliographical research methodology was adopted. The text was developed based on an analysis of Law No. 10.639 and a survey of publications dealing with the themes of "black cinema" and "education", articulating them through reflection on teaching practice and personal experiences with cinematographic language. After searching databases such as *Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO)* and *Google Scholar*, relevant literature was found, which was selected according to its up-to-dateness (preferring, when possible, works published no more than 5 years ago), adherence to the theme and theoretical basis.

From the journals *Educação & Formação* and *Práticas Educativas, Memórias e Oralidades*, of the State University of Ceará - UECE, articles were selected: *Strategies for tackling racism at school: an integrative review* (CARVALHO; FRANÇA, 2019), *Cinema, education and Africanities: memory in the documentary Caixa d'água: quilombo é esse?* (SANTOS; JUNIOR; ZOBOLI, 2020) and *Identity and ethnic-racial relations in school education* (ARAÚJO; SOARES, 2019) for study and theoretical background. We then carried out a bibliographical review and fiching of the ideas of Abdias Nascimento (1840), in *Quilombismo*; Frantz Fanon (2008), in *Black Skin, White Masks*; Aldri Anunciação (2020), in the dramaturgical text *Namíbia, não!* and Lázaro Ramos (2022), in *Diário do Diretor*.

With regard to the approach to the film, this article follows Penafria's (2009) presuppositions and first describes the central elements that make up the work; then it brings together these constitutive factors to examine the general content. In this way, it

exposes the theme of the feature film, deepening it from a critical perspective, articulated with the school reality, starting from the idea that the school has the pedagogical and citizen duty to promote anti-racist conceptions, contributing to the confrontation against discriminatory practices associated, in this context, with skin color.

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3 Overview of the feature film *Medida Provisória* (2022)

Fanon (2008, p. 35) defines a colonized people as "any people within whom an inferiority complex has arisen due to the burial of their cultural originality". Throughout Brazilian history, the traces of Eurocentric heritage are evident in the depreciation and erasure of Afro cultures, since blacks are often characterized by their phenotypes and reduced to inferior spaces and social roles in relation to whites. These, in turn, feel comfortable spreading segregationist ideas, in a process of inferiorizing and animalizing people based on their skin color. The following is an overview of the plot of *Medida Provisória* (2022), in order to elucidate and highlight historical, political and social aspects. In a dystopian future, citizens with accentuated melanin (RAMOS, 2022) - as black people are called in the plot - win the legal right to be compensated for years of enslavement. However, when considering the financial impact, the Brazilian government soon changes the measure: instead of receiving financial compensation, the black citizens are sent to Africa - at first voluntarily, then arbitrarily. The idea is so foolish that it can be seen as a joke, but the story takes on dramatic contours, inspired by everyday racism. The protagonists, played by Alfred Enoch, Seu Jorge and Taís Araújo, represent the black resistance, who fight bravely to occupy and establish their belonging in Brazilian territory, while other citizens with accentuated melanin take refuge in Afro-bunkers - a reference to quilombos - in order not to be found by the police and government agents. In a scene from the film *Medida Provisória* (2022), the character André, played by Seu Jorge, mocks the inspector Isabel Garcéz (Adriana Esteves) - a name that clearly refers to Princess Isabel, known for having signed the Golden Law. When he hears the proposal for repatriation to the African continent, André reinforces the question of who will polish the teeth of the

citizens with accentuated melanin (RAMOS, 2022), referring to the ontological animalization and objectification of black people. As such, the plot of *Medida Provisória* (2022) denounces everyday, structural and institutional racism, through an apparently absurd situation - were it not for the terrible similarity with Brazilian reality.

The feature is a film adaptation of the play *Namíbia, não!* (ANUNCIÇÃO, 2020), which in itself has some language obstacles. However, director Lázaro Ramos (2022, p. 8) reveals that "adapting a story about racism and identity for the ears of today's Brazil" also posed many challenges. "That play, which at first was close to the theater of the absurd, began to have uncanny similarities to our day in a cracked country. The text became more relevant and topical" (RAMOS, 2022, p. 12).

To analyse the work, it is important to consider some events that cross Brazil's history: the long process of enslaving Africans; Law No. 3,353, known as the Golden Law - which did not ensure the resocialization and dignity of enslaved people; the political polarization that has plagued the country in recent years, especially since Dilma Rousseff's impeachment in 2016, and the years of Jair Messias Bolsonaro's administration, marked by hate speech and behaviour against socially marginalized groups, such as blacks.

In addition, for a deeper and more critical look at the film, it is worth noting that the existence of a black person is marked by color, i.e. melanin determines the treatment received, regardless of efforts to adapt to the white reality. The story of *Provisional Measure* (2022) takes place in a dystopian and futuristic Brazil, despite its alignment with the present. Antônio (Alfred Enoch), a black man and lawyer, applies to the state for compensation for the years of slavery. The government considers the financial impact of the request and, in a stance antagonistic to democracy and respect for differences, implements Provisional Measure 1888 on May 13, which imposes that all "citizens of accentuated melanin" (ANUNCIÇÃO, 2020, p. 37) - as black people are called - return to Africa. This is supposed to be a form of reparation for the fact that their ancestors were forced to travel to Brazil to be enslaved. Faced with this scenario, the three protagonists: Antônio (Alfred Enoch), already mentioned; Capitu (Taís Araújo), a black woman and doctor; André (Seu Jorge), a black man and combative journalist, Antônio's cousin, and

other characters face episodes of racism as they fight bravely to have a guaranteed identity and space in the national territory. The resistance shown throughout the plot relates to Fanon's words about hope:

I wake up one fine day in the world and give myself a single right: to demand humane behavior from others. A single duty: never to deny my freedom through my choices. I don't want to be the victim of the cunning of a dark world. My life should not be dedicated to evaluating black values. There is no white world, no white ethics and no white intelligence. On both sides of the world, there are men who are searching. I am not a prisoner of history. I shouldn't look to it for the meaning of my destiny. I must remind myself at all times that the real leap consists of introducing invention into existence. In the world I am moving towards, I am continually recreating myself (FANON, 2008, p.189,190)..

The film corroborates the need for decolonization: it reminds black people that they should never surrender to the prejudices of whites, but reaffirm their individual and collective blackness, while whites need to understand that they are neither superior nor holders of the ideal models of society. Furthermore, it breaks established paradigms in national cinema, such as the predominance of white actors, directors, screenwriters and producers. Culture, as an institution, is still mostly occupied by privileged classes (and colors). In this way, Lázaro Ramos explains that in the project to create the film:

Conversations about the importance of having black professionals writing the script were ongoing (...) we were fundamental to the authorship of the project, as creators of black content and entertainment, stage and screen artists thinking about narratives from other perspectives. (...) There is a desire to explore the stories of the black population by experimenting with languages. (RAMOS, 2022, p. 15, 16)

It is a milestone in national cinema, because from the text and direction to the cast and the literary and sound references, the power of blackness prevails. The film brings visibility and representativeness, while at the same time denouncing and combating racism. From now on, this article selects some fragments of the work to be analyzed from a critical perspective and articulated with the thoughts of Frantz Fanon and Abdias Nascimento, in a pedagogical articulation aimed at encouraging anti-racist education.

3.1 Possibilities for working with the film *Provisional Measure* (2022) in the classroom

As for the protagonists Antônio (Alfred Enoch), Capitu (Taís Araújo) and André (Seu Jorge), it's possible to see that they escape the stereotype of marginalized subjects, given that they occupy prestigious professional positions: lawyer, doctor and journalist, respectively. The plot therefore proposes a break with expectations, since it is common - in national cinema - for black people to be portrayed in peripheral and criminal contexts. However, the social positions of the characters are not enough when the Brazilian government, represented by the fictitious Ministry of Devolution, begins an endeavor to deport citizens with "accentuated melanin" (ANUNCIAÇÃO, 2020, p. 37). The proposal is so absurd that it is laughable; however, when he realizes the seriousness of the situation, the character André (Seu Jorge) asks: "Boy, how could we have missed this? How did we let it get to this point? How did we laugh about it?" (RAMOS, 2022). The scene reflects on the normalization of racist comments, common in everyday school life and in the media, often justified as humour. It relates to Fanon's testimony about the recognition of his color. He recounts being watched by a child in the street: "Mom, look at the black guy, I'm scared!" Afraid! Afraid! And they began to fear me. I wanted to laugh until I choked, but that became impossible" (FANON, 2008, p. 105). A suggested educational activity to be developed in the classroom is: after showing the scene and reading the passage written by Fanon, instigate a discussion with the students about racist jokes and comments found in the media and in other contexts common to the environment in which they live. The class can even carry out mediated research on the subject - based on news and reports, for example. From this, it's possible to draw attention to the danger of treating prejudice and violence as mere anecdotes and to ask students to discuss and record how they will react on future occasions when this scenario occurs.

On discovering that he was black, Fanon describes his feelings:

"Dirty nigger!" Or simply: "Look, a nigger!" I arrived in the world intending to discover meaning in things, my soul filled with the desire to be at the origin of the world, and lo and behold, I discovered myself an object in the midst of other objects. Enclosed in this crushing objectivity, I begged the other (FANON, 2008, p. 103).

Therefore, the school needs to promote the idea that the fight against racism belongs to everyone. Another didactic suggestion is based on the question asked by the character Antônio: "Do we notice when the story is happening?" (RAMOS, 2022). This question, coupled with the showing of the scene, could serve as a trigger for the creation of a physical or digital panel with recent cases of racism, since there is a constant tendency to associate the problem only with the years of enslavement. The exhibition of a work like this could sensitize school officials, so that they feel the need to adopt a more incisive and active stance against prejudice.

At one point in the movie, there is heavy police repression and several black people are being arrested. In a desperate attempt to protect himself, one of the arrested boys claims to be white and is then rebuked by his friend, who reminds him of his color. The scene is similar to the problem presented by the character André (Seu Jorge), who covers his body with (white) shaving foam in order to symbolize whitening and denounce inequality and prejudice. There is an allusion to the title of the work *Black Skin, White Masks* (FANON, 2008), which should be presented to the students in the school library, if the institution has this active space and the work in question. Along these lines, here are some suggested questions to ask the students:

Você do you know of any real cases of police repression of black people? Do some research and then explain why, in your opinion, this happens. (You could use printed and/or digital newspapers and magazines here).

O movie features another scene in which a white person points a gun at the protagonists. What do you think about the culture that relativizes access to weapons and the use of violence? Do you see risks in this behavior? Why?

Nas scenes shown about police repression and André's (Lázaro Ramos) "escape", why did the characters symbolically wear "white masks" (FANON, 2008)?

Em your opinion, what are the consequences of erasing a color in terms of the history of a people?

Quais are your suggestions for making our classes a space for recognizing and valuing Afro history and culture?

In addition to these suggestions, other possibilities arise from the film's meticulous photography and camera framing choices, which highlight phenotypes and elements that relate to the color black, such as the focus on a cup of pure coffee, for example. In addition, the soundtrack includes songs by Cartola, Elza Soares, Emicida, among other prominent names in black Brazilian music. Both the lyrics and the rhythms can be explored in the classroom, stimulating rich and diverse work on artistic languages and cultural repertoire. The aim of this article is not to exhaust the pedagogical possibilities or systematically develop didactic sequences, but to point out the film *Provisional Measure (2022)* as a powerful tool for an anti-racist education proposal.

Abdias Nascimento reminds us that the Brazilian education system is largely to blame for the erasure of black history and the whitening of the country, given that

the ruling class and its technical spokespeople, historians, social scientists, literati, educators, etc., form a consistent alliance which has for centuries exercised the practice and theory of exploiting Africans and their descendants in Brazil (NASCIMENTO, 1840, p. 84).

It is a fact that for centuries schools have been training citizens with a Eurocentric mentality and references, since hegemonic thinking prevails in the selection of content and authors studied. On the other hand, critical education requires that these standards be questioned and broken, so that the voice of black people is finally heard. The plurality present in the educational context must encourage the breaking down of barriers to prejudice through an understanding of ethnic-racial relations. It's a mistake to believe that white people should give black people a voice. They already have a voice, what needs to be done - urgently - is to listen to them, in a concatenation of the scene from the movie *Provisional Measure (2022)*, in which the character Capitu (Taís Araújo) asks Santiago (Pablo Sanábio), a white man, to remain silent and just listen to what she has to say (RAMOS, 2022).

Society sees itself through the lens of whiteness and changing this structure of thought requires effort and resistance. Abdias Nascimento elucidates:

The dominant Eurocentrism wants to solve the problem of whites, because they are the minority that is always and always trying to compulsorily eradicate blacks.

Who are not even mentioned as existing, few or many (...) Under the blue eye of Ithamaratian hypocrisy and hatred, (...) they intend the mass liquidation of Afro-Brazilians. But this is only a pretension. Black people have resisted and will resist. Until the intolerable and inevitable moment of confrontation that black Brazilians will unleash in the face of the oppressors and exploiters of almost five centuries. (NASCIMENTO, 2008 p.163)

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In a scene from the final part of the feature film, the character Antônio (Alfred Enoch) shouts: "This country is mine too" (RAMOS, 2022). As Brazil truly belongs to all its citizens - regardless of skin color, gender, creed, sexual orientation and other biological and/or personal factors, the country's schools also need to belong to all students. The existence of black representation within formal educational spaces is becoming increasingly indispensable. In practice, this means the hiring of black teachers and managers, breaking the perverse and discriminatory (i)logic that the staff of black providers is restricted to cleaning services and maintenance of spaces; the adoption of black theoretical and cultural references in the school curriculum, since it is common for them to be worked on only in cross-cutting and elective themes (ARAÚJO; SOARES, 2019); the teaching and appreciation of Afro-Brazilian traditions, including artistic and religious manifestations, assuming the same importance attributed to festivities and expressions of European/Christian origin; the use of pedagogical tools and strategies that favor the recognition of black voices such as: black cinema, black music, speeches by black digital influencers, among other possibilities.

Therefore, admitting that Brazilian education is an offshoot of colonizing thinking is the first step towards changing it. In short, it is only possible to break down prejudice when it is noticed and recognized. It becomes urgent to unmask education, in yet another reference to Fanon (2008). The whitewashing of the curriculum, discourses, thoughts and pedagogical practices urgently needs to be replaced by the diversity of colors and histories that exist on national territory. In a country where more than half the population is non-white, it makes no sense to perpetuate the predominance of a Eurocentric standard. Ethnic-social relations must be a serious political, social and educational issue, and there is no room for denialist discourse or submission to attitudes that maintain, reproduce and justify racism.

Therefore, there is no place for working on the issue only in November or in isolated pedagogical actions. The fight against racism needs to be daily and collective. It is necessary to awaken students' criticality to issues associated with colorism, nomenclatures and the fact that part of history is erased from the school curriculum and the popular imagination. It is important to discuss the fact that the idea of Afro-Brazilian, in itself, is colonizing because it disregards the past of African peoples prior to the centuries of enslavement. Since the school is an important space for building identities (CARVALHO; FRANÇA, 2019), it must rethink its role as an extension of colonizing thinking (ARAÚJO; SOARES, 2019) or an agent of transformation and resistance. In order to help in the struggle, black cinema is a powerful resource for directing the gaze towards racial issues, through an approach that rescues Afro history and culture. The polysemy of cinematographic language allows audiences to watch, reflect and interpret facts from different angles, solidifying students' criticality, especially about social problems such as racism.

4 Final considerations

After the Lumière brothers presented the first short film in a Parisian café, cinema spread around the world and arrived in Brazil, being adopted as a teaching resource, especially in the 30s. Due to its ability to make lessons more dynamic, in tune with reality and to awaken critical thinking, the seventh art is seen as a powerful pedagogical tool for fostering discussions about social issues, such as racism. The school reflects the conflicts that exist in the country and in the community, as it is home to plural contexts and values. However, in recent years there has been a negative and intimidating discourse regarding the discussion of social issues, claiming that the school should merely be a reproducer of content. Such a view benefits and perpetuates hegemonic and segregationist thinking that doesn't fit in the school space, which contributes to the formation of identity and collective sense.

Law No. 10.639, of January 9, 2003, establishes that African history and culture should be taught in basic education. However, in order for the law to be effective, it's not enough to work on these themes across the board or on specific dates, such as November 20th. In this sense, black cinema is an important pedagogical resource for promoting anti-racist education, which raises awareness of ethnic-racial issues and offers representation in spaces dominated by Eurocentrism and stereotypes. This article selected the feature film *Provisional Measure (2022)*, written and directed by Lázaro Ramos, to articulate the themes of "black cinema" and "education". Based above all on the presuppositions of Abdias Nascimento (1840) and Frantz Fanon (2008), it presented some didactic possibilities to foster students' critical sense.

The aim of this study was not to exhaust the proposals for a didactic sequence based on the film, but to discuss the need to deconstruct colonizing thinking in Brazilian schools, which serve as an extension of a Eurocentric project. The film chosen, inspired by the play *Namibia, No! (ANUNCIAÇÃO, 2020)*, brings various historical, political and cultural references to be worked on with the students. It also addresses issues related to colorism, everyday violence, police repression and, above all, resistance. It is necessary to show the students that if resistance is necessary, it means that there is a social obstacle. The selection of the cast and the soundtrack promote a paradigm shift in national cinema, which is already accustomed to the predominance of whiteness. Thus, it is possible to refer students to essentially black personalities and productions, in a process of learning and valuing them.

The research also drew attention to specific scenes in the film and their possible consequences in the classroom. It presented suggestions for working on themes such as: racist comments and jokes; the history that is constructed in the present through everyday racism; police repression and whitening as an attempt to adapt black people to the prevailing standards. It was based on the considerations of Abdias Nascimento (1840) to question the reproduction and maintenance of Eurocentric structures in Brazilian education and to urgently encourage a break with colonizing thinking. Since the school is a space for everyone, it is essential that representation actually takes place - in the curriculum, in the

staff, in the choices of references that underpin teaching activities and in the resources used in the classroom. In this sense, black cinema is a powerful tool for critical education, combating inequalities and building a fairer, more diverse and happier society.

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