

## Bionarratives and civilization values of african matrix in education in Joinville/SC

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Denísia Martins Borba<sup>i</sup>

Universidade da Região de Joinville - Univille, Joinville, SC, Brasil

João Carlos Ferreira de Melo Júnior<sup>ii</sup>

Universidade da Região de Joinville - Univille, Joinville, SC, Brasil

1

### Abstract

Orality is the means by which African communities transmit knowledge, memories, beliefs and traditions from generation to generation. The recording of bionarratives values these ancient roots and practices, which are often threatened with disappearing. Incorporating this practice into education contributes to dialogue and inclusion of different matrices in formal and informal education. This study uses the theoretical framework of valuing Bionas as an instrument of cultural preservation and social inclusion. The methodology includes a case study and semi-structured interviews in an African community in Joinville/SC, in addition to the analysis of documents and local public policies. The results show that the cultural bionarrative portrays the dialogue between the community and public management, valuing knowledge, practices, celebrations and the importance of forest heritage. Recording and building cultural bionarratives can promote diversity and equity in public policies, strengthening the identity and self-esteem of the black population in Joinville/SC.

**Keywords:** Memory. Education. Bionarratives. Experience yourself.

### Bionarrativas e valores civilizatórios de matriz africana na educação em Joinville/SC

#### Resumo

A oralidade é o meio pelo qual as comunidades de matriz africana transmitem conhecimentos, memórias, crenças e tradições de geração em geração. O registro de bionarrativas valoriza essas raízes e práticas milenares, muitas vezes ameaçadas de desaparecer. Incorporar essa prática na educação contribui com o diálogo e inclusão de diferentes matrizes no ensino formal e informal. Este estudo utiliza o referencial teórico da valorização da Bionas como instrumento de preservação cultural e inclusão social. A metodologia inclui estudo de caso e entrevistas semiestruturadas em uma comunidade de matriz africana em Joinville/SC, além da análise de documentos e políticas públicas locais. Os resultados mostram que a bionarrativa cultural retrata o diálogo entre a comunidade e a gestão pública, valorizando saberes, fazeres, celebrações e a importância do patrimônio florestal. Registrar e construir bionarrativas culturais pode promover diversidade e equidade nas políticas públicas, fortalecendo a identidade e autoestima da população negra em Joinville/SC.

**Palavras-chave:** Memória. Educação. Bionarrativas. Experiência de si.

## 1 Introduction

Education is crucial for personal, social and cultural development, but traditional educational models do not always meet all realities (Munanga, 2010). Traditional African communities have often been excluded from formal educational processes, which has threatened the preservation of their cultures and traditions (Caputo, 2012).

In this context, the concept of bionarrativas emerged, which values the knowledge of traditional communities, including those of African origin, and recognizes the importance of the human-nature relationship for the preservation of life on the planet (Kato & Fonseca, 2021). Bionarratives allow communities to tell their stories, passing on knowledge and strengthening their cultural identity and their relationship with the environment (Kato, 2020; Leal; Rédua; Kato, 2022).

For communities of African origin, bio-narratives offer an opportunity to value their ancient roots and practices, which have been lost over the years (Borba et al., 2021). It is crucial that formal education establishes channels for listening and dialog, respecting cultural diversity and promoting the collective construction of knowledge (Kato, 2020). In this context, self-experience also makes important contributions (Larrosa, 2011).

African knowledge was expanded and transformed during slavery and post-abolition in Brazil, forming today's Afro-Brazilian culture. In order to teach this culture, it is essential to understand and value this historical continuity, recognizing its contributions and influences in shaping Brazilian culture (Rocha, 2010).

Traditional communities of African origin in Santa Catarina carry out educational activities to protect their histories and memories, sometimes in partnership with formal education, with or without support from public authorities. This study carried out a "case study" in a community that develops educational practices both inside and outside its religious space, with the aim of including the black population in public policies, taking into account their knowledge, traditions, celebrations, forms of expression and the importance of forest heritage as a territory.

## 2 Methodology

The methodology was based on a case study, using interviews with *Ìyalòrìsà* Jacila de Souza Barbosa, priestess of *Ilé Àse Ìyá Omilodé*, in Joinville/SC. This was chosen because it is a type of research through which it is possible to understand complex phenomena in a short space of time, focusing on contemporary actions. The aim is, through a series of evidences, to generalize assumptions and conclusions through an inductive method (Yin, 2005).

When it comes to the case study, a qualitative methodology, Patton (2015) emphasizes that it allows an in-depth and contextualized exploration of complex phenomena. This allows the researcher to use multiple data sources and collection methods, such as interviews, observations and document analysis, to build a holistic understanding of the subject studied. The author also discusses the main challenges encountered when using this approach and offers strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. In the methodological debate, Merriam & Tisdell (2016) add categories for conducting a case study: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. In the case of the study in question, we chose to use the descriptive category, contributing a detailed description of the context and phenomena under study, and the explanatory category, seeking to explain the causes and effects of the political participation of a traditional community of African origin in Joinville.

To carry out the case study using social bio-narratives, the following script was followed:

1. *Ìyalòrìsà* Jacila de Souza Barbosa was selected, considering her cultural, political and social relevance to the traditional communities of African origin in northern Santa Catarina. This choice was made considering her experiences and perspectives relevant to the investigation into participation in municipal educational actions, which aim to present the civilizational values of the African matrix;
2. The participant's narratives were collected through in-depth, empathetic interviews, with the aim of listening to her life story and understanding how her experiences influenced her current attitudes, behaviors and beliefs;

3. The central themes in their narratives were identified and the information collected was analyzed in order to find common patterns and themes. The social, cultural and biological factors that interact to shape their life story were highlighted;

4. The results were interpreted and discussed, using the information collected to discuss how the participant's life is influenced by the interactions between social, cultural and biological factors. We explored how these interactions can influence the quality of life and social participation of the participant, who seeks cultural transformation in her community;

5. The findings were applied to the wider context, identifying the participant's experiences that can be applied to wider political, cultural and social contexts.

Part of this research process was constructed and interpreted as collective knowledge, aimed at discussing the phenomena of promoting African matrix culture, with the forest as the main focus, as the act of the researcher getting to know the cultural universe of the group, in this case, the *ilé* of Santa Catarina (Santos, 2022).

The interview with *Ìyalòrìsà* Jacila took place on May 23, 2023, at the headquarters of *Ilé Àsè Ìyá Omilodé*. A semi-structured script was followed, consisting of 29 questions. The interview was audio-recorded only, at the request of the interviewee.

The interview was transcribed in its entirety and edited, removing verbal tics and involuntary vocalizations. The interview was based on the individual memory of *Ìyalòrìsà* Jacila, but with full reference to the collective memory related to her individual experiences. It should be emphasized that, although the interview is the guiding thread of this study, it is not a question of establishing that oral sources are the only possibility for research with traditional communities of African origin. Nor is it an opposition to handwritten and printed documents; it is about valuing the memory, ways of narrating and identity of these communities (Bâ, 1980; Halbwachs, 1990; Alberti, 2004; Guimarães Neto, 2006; Candau, 2012; Bom Meihy & Holanda, 2017).

The case study explored the concept of a socio-state interface, especially in terms of consultative attributions, co-responsibility and co-management (Isunza & Hevia, 2006). The formation of political interfaces was observed, where the demands presented to

management resulted in the implementation of policies, showing that society can direct the state. This made it possible to establish co-management, where decision-making processes are the responsibility of both actors (Pires & Vaz, 2012).

We chose to write in narrative format, offered by *Ìyalòrìsà*, in order to value her experiences and provoke reflections on knowledge, practices, stories and identities that have been made invisible by coloniality (Rufino, 2019). The narrative dialogues with the social bionarrative (BIONAS), a term that originated from intercultural pedagogical workshops in higher education institutions in the Observatory of Education for Biodiversity project, funded by CNPq (Kato, 2020).

Bionarratives promote awareness and respect for socio-religious practices based on African ancestral heritage, contributing to pedagogical actions (Borba & Melo Jr., 2022). Traditional communities of African origin are based on orality, transmitting knowledge from generation to generation through observations and words, far removed from official teaching methods and writing. Even so, the *ilé* function as important educational spaces for different age groups (Caputo, 2012).

The case study and the bio-narrative came up against the experience of the self as a possibility of contributing to the dialog in educational practices between traditional communities of African origin and formal education. This is the experience in which the subject offers himself, at the same time as observing, defining, revealing, presenting and interpreting himself and, by narrating himself, tries to correct or redirect his actions in order to achieve the desired objectives (Larrosa, 2002).

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### From the founding of the *terreiro* to inclusion in public policies

BIONAS was produced with *Ìyalòrìsà* Jacila de Souza Barbosa/Jacila de *Òsun Òpára*, priestess of *Ilé Àsè Ìyá Omilodé*, founded on 21/09/1994 and opened to the public in October 1994. It is located in the Ulisses Guimarães neighborhood, in the southern part

of Joinville. When it opened, the first activities were Umbanda-only<sup>1</sup>, considering that the initiation time was insufficient to open its own *ilé àse*<sup>2</sup> (Machado, 2014).

In the beginning, the work carried out by *Ìyalòrisà* was more strongly linked to the social field. It began by housing 94 children and 36 adults in the 1990s, during the construction of its religious temple.

With the aim of developing affirmative action and valuing the culture of the African matrix, *Ìyalòrisà* founded the Casa da Vó Joaquina Association, recognized as being of municipal public utility by Law No. 6721 of June 30, 2010 and state public utility by Law No. 16,733/2015. The association, which is cultural and social in nature, supports the community and develops guidance and education projects for all ages, with the aim of improving quality of life. In 2019, it was registered with the Municipal Education Council (CME).

As well as running *Ilé Àse Ìyá Omilodé* and the Casa da Vó Joaquina Association, *Ìyá Jacila* also coordinates the *Afoxé Omilodê* group - which opens and closes Joinville's carnival parades, cultural and political events in the city. At the head of these organizations, she organizes the events of Black Awareness Week, regulated since 2017 by law 8.472, which establishes Black Awareness Month in the municipality. In addition, it coordinates actions relating to health and the environment in schools in Joinville and the region, and carries out social assistance in the community, serving 380 families who are registered in its own system.

The Association assists families who do not always have religious ties, providing food parcels, training workshops and a mothers' club that offers information and distributes kits to pregnant women. Since 2020, the Association has had an agreement with Joinville City Hall to maintain a Casa de Passagem, serving people in vulnerable situations.

<sup>1</sup> It is a manifestation of faith, of Brazilian origin, with an ecumenical nature that brings together elements from various religious origins, such as African, Catholic, Spiritist, indigenous and oriental. This mixture of traditions and customs results in a unique and original religious practice that represents the cultural identity of the Brazilian people. Umbanda's premise is the search for harmony between people and the sacred, the connection with nature and the appreciation of human diversity (Verger, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Jacila de Souza Barbosa was initiated on 30/01/1990 and, according to Rocha (2001), the initiation process in Candomblé lasts at least seven years, when she receives consent to have her own *ilé àse*.

The Casa da Vó Joaquina Association collaborated in the creation of the Municipal Council for Racial Equality Policies (COMPIR) and is part of the Municipal Council for Women's Rights and the Municipal Education Council. It is also registered as a partner institution of the Municipal Education Council, offering educational activities in the municipal schools.

## The terreiro and social bio-narratives

The story of *Ìyalòrisà* Jacila is an inspiration to many African priests. She presents herself as a brave woman who is only afraid of lizards. She says that she learned from her carnal father that courage should rule humanity. Mother Jacila, as she is known in Joinville, is a migrant from Campos dos Goytacazes/RJ and says in all her public speeches that *Òsun* chose Joinville in 1990 for her to build her temple on the water.

*When I arrived in town, there were some prize festivals going on, a bingo. It was hard to find a job, I was extroverted, my words were loose, I think people are very closed-minded. I ended up working for Mr. Valdomiro, the president of Joinville Esporte Clube (JEC). At the time, I was coordinating the sales team, and I earned a lot of money, much of which I invested in building this house (Barbosa, 2023).*

The history of *Ìyalòrisà* in Joinville is crucial to understanding its impact in the fields of social, cultural and educational assistance over the decades. However, traditional African communities still face significant challenges related to discrimination, exclusion and racism. It is crucial not only to understand the experience of the other, but also to value the bionarratives of the communities, which are fundamental to understanding the diversity that exists throughout Brazil. The experience of self and the social bio-narrative show that individual experiences enrich collective narratives, providing a meaningful context for the formation of personal identity, linked to collective values. This cycle of reciprocity promotes the continuity of cultural traditions and fosters inclusion and intercultural dialog.

The priestess's religious temple was not yet active, but the situation of the peripheral population was what caught her attention and mobilized her first actions.

*When the prize festivals ended, a lot of people found themselves unemployed, homeless and unable to look after their children. This house was under construction. There were girls from the community who became sex workers, working on the street. I told them to leave their children here, and I took many people in. Every Monday we would say the Grandma Joaquina prayer, and after*

*the prayer we would offer soup, risotto or feijoada. People would pray and almost always, they would talk to Grandma about their spiritual and material needs and Grandma would tell them to talk to me. When the prayer was over, I would go and talk to the people. And Grandma would say that it was to provide a roof for some people's children, to help find jobs for others, and if Grandma said it, it was done. And these people stayed here. There was a lady who lived here in the neighborhood and took care of the children, so that many girls could work at night. She came here for prayers, often it wasn't even for the prayer, it was for the food. That's how everyone got to know me. This little lady, who looked after the children, passed away. There were a lot of children left behind and many mothers no longer lived in Joinville and some didn't even come to see their children. And when things got difficult, they would send for Jacila's mother, to see if she would stay with the children because they had already looked for relatives, but many people didn't have relatives or didn't know where to find them, or, if they did, they often didn't want to look after the children. And so they stayed here, others came to pray, with their aunts, grandparents and stayed here. They grew up and stayed. Many grew up, studied, others didn't, there are people who, when they don't want to study, there's no way. There are people who lived here and are now teachers, there are people who work in different places. Some got married or had children and the children stayed here, and the next thing I knew there were a lot of children (Barbosa, 2023).*

The situation of the residents of the Ulisses Guimarães neighborhood and surrounding areas mobilized the initial work of *Ìyalòrisà*, who was more connected to Umbanda, considering that her initiation age in Candomblé was still insufficient for this practice of faith (Machado, 2014).

*When I built this house, my intention was to do religious and social work. This area is very deprived. Time went by and I began to see other issues, realizing the difficulties the children had at school. I realized that there was a lot of prejudice and racism in the schools. Of the 94 children who lived here, there were some teenagers, 55 blacks and 27 homosexuals. These children suffered a lot of prejudice, discrimination and racism (Barbosa, 2023).*

The work of social assistance, empathy and solidarity directed *Ìyá Jacila* towards the ethnic-racial struggle in the schools where the children who lived in her house studied. Social movements play a fundamental role in proposing policies to promote equitable coexistence between children in the school environment (Godoy, 2017). The children's complaints about discrimination at school pushed *Ìyá Jacila* to follow an irreversible path in the fight for racial equality.

*I came across racism, prejudice and discrimination, and I felt the need to do something more than what I was already doing. The children's difficulties at school were because they were black, and they faced racism and prejudice from an early age. Some children were discriminated against because they were black, of African descent and homosexual. (Barbosa, 2023).*



The education of the black population in Brazil, as reflected in Joinville/Santa Catarina, is marked by restrictions and challenges faced by this community. Changing this scenario requires an arduous struggle, with articulation and persistence in the demands of Brazil's black population. It is crucial to re-establish the social function of the school, reorganizing its educational practices to guarantee visibility and equity for all students (Romão, 2005).

The welcoming, social assistance, cultural and educational activities undertaken by *iyá* Jacila in the schools of the Ulisses Guimarães neighborhood continue to have a positive impact,

*Everyone knows me and if there's a child in a school who's having a hard time, I'm called in. I was advised to do projects to get funding. I did projects to have capoeira classes, dance classes, fanfare classes. This started to happen in the schools, and I got people from the House to teach these classes. When I say me, it's the House. If a capoeira project is approved, we put it on at the Luís Gomes School, at the Maria Laura School, at the Amador Aguiar School, at the neighborhood association, we always liaise with them, the schools currently welcome us, we're partners. We also offer supplementary education, workshops on Afro culture. And for some families it's important, because we're always studying Afro culture, not because I want them to come and dance to my drum, but because I want them to know and respect it. I'm friends with the pastor, the priest and I get on well with the community. I don't do anything to condition them to my religion. (Barbosa, 2023).*

*Iyalòrisà* emphasizes the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in contemporary society, promoting mutual understanding between people from different backgrounds. This dialog can help eliminate stereotypes and prejudices based on cultural and religious differences (Kimura & Mendes, 2021). In addition, it can inspire joint action in areas such as promoting peace, social justice and sustainability, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 10 (reducing inequalities) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and effective institutions) (UNICEF, 2023).

*Iyalòrisà* Jacila is not an academic scholar on traditional religions and/or communities of African origin, but she was brought up in Umbanda and Candomblé communities, where education involves respect for ancestry and the importance of knowing

one's origins, without differentiating between those who deserve respect or not (Caputo, 2012). However, this was not the reality that the children cared for by *Ìyálòrìsà* witnessed.

*I saw a lot of prejudice, discrimination, children being beaten up at school, and the principals didn't take any action to change the situation. They said: - oh, but they walk like that, they have to walk differently. That's because the boy had a more delicate way of walking. He was homosexual and the school staff were prejudiced, they beat them up, many were raped in the toilets. I sought help, I wanted an explanation as to what I should do to resolve this situation, I started fighting with teachers and principals. I didn't know how or what, but I wanted to do something. So I went to various places, the town hall, the military police battalion, the police station, until I got to the education department. Because I think that, at that time, the school principals didn't have the capacity to be principals. When they said that my son, the son of my heart, but my son, had to walk differently so he wouldn't get beaten up by his classmates, when they called the children black with hard hair, macumbeira, I couldn't accept it. And when teachers and principals tried to convince me that they didn't need to say that they lived here, with the conscience that I have, as *Ìyálòrìsà*, the daughter of a black woman, I had to take action. When I arrived at the Department of Education, I demanded that they take a stand, because what was happening was absurd. I realized that we needed to do something to make people aware, they needed to look at what was happening to black children in schools, that the way schools treated black children was wrong. And I started talking about racism. So I started organizing events here at the House about Afro culture, prejudice, racism and discrimination. I would bring people from Campos dos Goytacazes/RJ, some of whom were teachers, who had training, to talk about what we were experiencing here. What my children were going through upset and angered me. So I looked for teachers and social workers there (in Campos dos Goytacazes) who were already working on racial issues, before Law 10.639 (Barbosa, 2023).*

During the 1990s, schools emphasized that good teachers should have outstanding technical skills. The enactment of the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDBEN No. 9394/96) and the drafting of the Curriculum Parameters (PCNs) for Primary and Secondary Education reflected this perspective, prioritizing science and technology as fundamental for the comprehensive education of students (Nascimento; Fernandes; Mendonça, 2010).

Aiming to change the scenario of education in Joinville, *Ìyálòrìsà* sought ways in which the lives of black and peripheral children could be different: "I approached the schools, until thanks to God and the sacred, a principal came and brought the students and, let's say, she opened many doors" (Barbosa, 2023).

Racist practices against children and the entire black population over the centuries have led to the creation of bonds and spaces of welcome, solidarity and empowerment.

This resulted in the formation of terreiro communities, which established themselves as contemporary quilombos, based on tradition and a sense of belonging (Azevedo & Medeiros, 2020). These communities, through family kinship ties, form a network of resistance, a web of traditional communities of religions of African origin.

With no financial support, all actions were carried out using their own resources.

There were no institutional partnerships, not even with schools. Everything happened in the community.

*We did it outside, on the corner plots, so that people could see and take part. We started putting capoeira on, we wanted to bring the children to take part in the events. At first nobody wanted to come, the children wanted to, but their parents wouldn't let them. When we did it in the street, the children started to stop, they started to look, and they ended up staying, through capoeira (Barbosa, 2023).*

With insistence and consistency, the city began to perceive the movement represented by the externalization of African culture, offering a new possibility of existence and identity. This experience was significant for *Ìyálòrìsà*, for the schools and for the city of Joinville. It was time to reflect on this movement of exteriorization, in which *Ìyá* Jacila left herself to represent her people, but also returned, affected by the experience, not just as a priestess, but as a person (Larrosa, 2011).

And the desire was to insist until all that movement resulted in a transformation in thinking and in the educational model.

*When they liked capoeira, I brought in Jongo. I danced Jongo, my Holy sisters who also danced, and so we started, but it took a long time. In 1995, it was the first year that we opened the doors to distribute feijoada at the House, and on May 13th<sup>3</sup> it will be 28 years since we started. (Barbosa, 2023).*

The events were always held on commemorative dates for Umbanda and/or the black movement: "*in the month of November we held activities on the 20th - feijoada, roda de Capoeira Jongo, Maculelê*" (Barbosa, 2023).

The celebration of May 13 is seen by black movements as something that diminishes the historical role and abolitionist struggles of black people. For the Brazilian

<sup>3</sup> According to Dias (2020), Umbanda is the only religious sect of African origin that celebrates May 13 as a date evocative of struggle, and on this day, most terreiros hold the Pretos-Velhos festival.

black movement, the real day that represents the struggle of their ancestors is November 20, known as the National Day of Black Consciousness, suggested by Oliveira da Silveira. This date is a political act, symbolically recognized as the day of the death of quilombola leader Zumbi dos Palmares (Gonzalez; Hasenbalg, 1982).

During these two dates, schools address the presence of the black population and use these moments to raise awareness about the importance of respect for everyone, regardless of color.

*One day I invited the mayor, and I started inviting people from the city administration. I tried to find out who the secretary of education was, the police commander, the police chief, someone from television, from the radio, because, as I play billiards, these people started coming here to play billiards, and so we started making friends. So I started calling them to come and watch our actions. Within a year I invited the mayor of the city, Carlito<sup>4</sup>. And he came, watched our activities and was amazed by the House, the beauty, the work done, the paintings, everything that happened here. He told me to take our activities outside the walls of the House, because the city needs to know and see. Here, if I couldn't wear a bead around my neck, I always walked around with my kaftan, printed skirts, cloth on my head, and when people saw me in the street, everyone stopped. We had the teacher Maria Laura, who for me is the greatest black reference in the city, and we became friends. But when you went to a bank, you didn't see a black employee, in the schools, there wasn't a black teacher, you didn't see anything in the city's official festivals that indicated the presence of black people. There was a club here where only black people could enter, because in the other clubs, black people weren't allowed in, that was less than 40 years ago. And when I had access to the mayor I took all these situations to him, today it's very different (Barbosa, 2023).*

The importance of educational networks is evident, where the terreiros are seen as ecomuseums, transmitting content about the communities, including material and symbolic cultural heritage, knowledge, practices, forms of expression, celebrations and their educational potential (Caputo, 2012; Lody, 2005).

During the various battles fought by iyá Jacila, many advances were made by Brazil's black population. From the creation of SEPPIR in 2003, and the enactment of law 10.639/2003, amended by law 11.645/2008, which provides for the compulsory teaching of African history, Afro-Brazilian culture and indigenous history during basic education, to the approval of law 14.532/2023, which makes racial insult a crime.

<sup>4</sup> Carlito Mers, of the Workers' Party (PT), was mayor of Joinville between 2009 and 2013.

According to *iyá* Jacila, "*Joinville is a prejudiced city, less so today, but there is still prejudice. There used to be people who came here to the House to take part in a party or lecture and asked us not to take their photo, because they could even be fired*" (Barbosa, 2023).

In 2023, 20 years after the enactment of Law 10.639/2003, there is still resistance to its enforcement. Various obstacles stand in the way of progress in implementing this public policy, from the lack of knowledge of the content on the part of teachers and school managers, which makes it difficult to incorporate it into political-pedagogical plans, to the ideological resistance of the school community to presenting the history of resistance of black and indigenous populations against the oppression of the colonizers (Aguiar, 2015).

From the actions developed in and around her community, *iyá* Jacila got to know other people in the city who were sympathetic to her struggle. As a result, her actions transcended the limits of the city's South Zone.

*And I started looking at the history of Joinville, studying it, meeting Professor Diney Cunha, who told me a story about the burial of Afro-descendants in the Immigrants' Cemetery. Everyone thought that there were only white people, Italians, Swiss, Germans... when I found out that there were black people buried there, I wanted to show the immigrants' cemetery to the black Joinvillians, because it's their cemetery too. They have to know this history. The same thing happened with the immigrant monument, a monument erected to pay homage to immigrants, black people are also immigrants, and black people need to be represented too. And that's how we started. (Barbosa, 2023).*

Since then, every November 20th, *iyá* Jacila pays homage to her ancestors at the cemetery. The act reinforces belonging and contributes to the recognition of the black presence, which has always been invisible in local historiography. This event occupies all public and power spaces in the city.

*As part of the awareness month events, we are holding an event called *Ìpàdé*, which means meeting. Do you know where? In the Town Hall. The first year we did it, we presented the dance of the *Òrìsà*, from Esu to Osaala. One daughter of a saint dressed as *lansã*, another as *Òsun*, a son of a saint dressed as Esu. The other day, the whole town was talking about the fact that Mother Jacila had played *macumba* inside the town hall. It was a terrible thing. But we coped. We started doing activities in schools. There was no such thing as laws (10.639 and 11.645). When we held the first *roda* in *Praça da Bandeira*, at the National Museum of Immigration and Colonization, at the Monument to the Immigrants, I brought people from outside, because the city's own Saint people wouldn't take part, for fear of being discriminated against (Barbosa, 2023).*

In a city that takes pride in having started its history with the arrival of the Colon Boat, the official historiography survives with the hegemonic narrative, with the occupation of migrants from the Germanic Confederation (Deutscher Bund) and other regions of Europe, especially Switzerland and Norway, it counts on the presence of a migrant, from Campos dos Goytacazes/RJ, to demand that the presence of the black population in local history be recognized. And if at some point in history silence was a weapon of resistance against the persecution of black people (Caputo, 2012), for *iyá* Jacila, the word is movement, expansion, transformation and *àse*.

*One day I was called to a meeting to choose new members of the Board of Education. Before, I didn't value my knowledge, but I came forward, was chosen and joined the council to defend my children (Barbosa, 2023).*

The work carried out, combining culture, education and dialog, has been consolidated in the city. Casa da Vó Joaquina is registered with the Department of Education as a partner institution, authorized to develop after-school projects.

*Today we can do supplementary schooling here, during the after-school hours. The children stay at school during one period, and during the other, they can stay here to complete their schooling. We keep opening doors (Barbosa, 2023).*

In the process of becoming a member of the Municipal Education Council (CME), *iyá* Jacila had the opportunity to take part in the Education Conferences and the drafting of the Municipal Education Plan (PME). The PME follows the guidelines of the National Education Plan (PNE), which is a ten-year plan approved by Law No. 13.005/2014.

Based on the National Education Plan (PNE), states, the Federal District and municipalities were instructed to draw up local plans, following the guidelines of the national plan, which are essential for the educational, cultural and social development of each locality. To draw them up, it is essential to have a dialog with the communities to reflect their wishes in the document. The plans must be intersectoral and involve different state and municipal government bodies. Although they contribute to achieving the national targets, they should not just reproduce those of the PNE, as each locality has its own specificities (Brasil, 2014).

In Joinville, the community had problems during the process of approving the PME in the City Council, according to *iyá* Jacila.

*We participated in the municipal education plan and the municipal culture plan. I got onto the Municipal Education Council during a conference, but I got there because of the pain of my children, discriminated against because of their color. (Barbosa, 2023).*

15

The activities developed by *iyá* Jacila had already completed a decade and she continued to fight for respect for black children. According to her, "I think our actions even had some impact on the PME, a small opening, but I think it was to say that there was no prejudice here" (Barbosa, 2023).

The federal government's guidelines for drawing up municipal PMEs were not followed to their full extent, as far as local specificities are concerned, considering that the agendas of the traditional African matrix communities of the black people were not expressed in Joinville's PME (Joinville, 2015). The population's participation was broad, but the indications were not followed.

*We were allowed to participate, something may have been agreed, but it was very hushed up, but we fought hard for it to happen. There was no Public Hearing to approve the Municipal Plan, they withdrew the proposals put forward by the black and LGBT communities. The councillors didn't listen to the population. The Plan was approved without our proposals (Barbosa, 2023).*

Over time, *iyá* Jacila has developed new networks of dialog and action. In 2011, she took part in the Workshop for the Elaboration of Public Cultural Policies for Traditional Terreiro Peoples, promoted by the Ministry of Culture, where she interacted with various terreiro, quilombola and indigenous leaders, government managers, academics and representatives of social movements from all over Brazil. The aim of the event was to subsidize the construction of cultural policies to protect, promote and consolidate the traditions of these groups. Drawing up specific public policies can help preserve and strengthen their cultural practices and traditions, guaranteeing the continuity of their cultural identity as part of Brazil's heritage.

The recognition and appreciation of traditional terreiro peoples by the state, through public policies aimed at their needs, can significantly contribute to their appreciation in society, promoting an understanding of their identities (Borba *et al.*, 2021).

Including people of African descent in these public policies can reduce discrimination and prejudice, making public managers and society in general aware of their demands and contributions.

Political maturation was taking place with the active participation of *Iyálòrìsà*. She evaluated the importance of having taken part in the workshop for the Elaboration of Public Policies on Culture for Traditional Terreiro Peoples, where she met leaders of African origin from all over the country and exchanged experiences of struggle.

*This workshop made me much stronger in the political field. I became aware of how important it was to embrace and really enter into this path of action in our cities. My meeting with the Minister of Policies for Racial Equality, learning about the work of the Palmares Cultural Foundation, the workshop in Maranhão, I think it was very important to strengthen me here. For example, at Rio +20, the only person from Joinville was me. There was no one from culture or education, there were people from all over the world and I was the only one from Joinville. Because I'm part of the Afro-Environmental Network, so we're invited to many events where there are many important debates for us of African origin, but also for public management, for universities (Barbosa, 2023).*

The absence of the state in the dialogue with traditional communities of African origin can be attributed to various reasons, including a lack of financial resources and a lack of political will, awareness and knowledge about the demands of these communities. This results in significant impacts, from marginalization and exclusion to the deprivation of fundamental rights such as health, education, housing and security, as well as the violation of cultural and religious rights. For Mother Jacila, this absence also has other meanings:

*[...] it's a disregard for our culture, it would be very important for them to participate and see how it happens in other places. They don't participate, they don't contribute financially so that someone can go to other places to learn, to be informed. Without resources I think I can do a lot, which is the job of management, but if I had resources I could do a lot more. I'm not just talking about our House, but other places. And it would be very good for Afro culture, it would be good for the city (Barbosa, 2023).*

The participation of traditional communities of African origin in education can contribute to a more inclusive, fair and equitable society, where diversity is respected and valued as a cultural heritage of all humanity. And according to *Iyá* Jacila,

*Grandma Joaquina's House had a lot of importance, a lot of influence, but also a lot of courage, all the people who helped me develop the actions, gather, call, do, show. I think we made a lot of people aware, so that they could embrace the cause*



*and move forward. Our people's awareness is what makes our actions happen for everyone (Barbosa, 2023).*

Social bio-narratives, representing life stories and experiences shared by communities, are crucial for transmitting ancestral knowledge and know-how. By involving traditional communities of African origin in education, these narratives can be used as pedagogical tools to strengthen the cultural identity of these populations (Borba *et al.*, 2021). *Iyá* Jacila, by listening to her ancestors' narratives of struggle, challenged colonialism and Joinville's official history. Faced with a prejudiced society, she committed herself to the struggles for space and liberation from the imprisonment of black people, defending traditional communities of African origin and black people (Rufino, 2019).

Education is an important variable in the social context, because it is through education that the culture and history of African peoples is promoted, as well as contributing to the formation of a positive and affirmative identity of all the peoples that make up a country. According to *iyá* jacila:

*We have contributed a lot to changing race relations here. But there needs to be awareness and commitment. The councillors should fight harder, demand more from the executive, they should be on our side, so that the municipality has public policies for our people. We have wonderful teachers and principals, but there are deputies who stir up the population to attack those educators who are doing nothing more than applying the law. The executive and legislative powers cannot prevent laws from being applied because of their religion, because of prejudice, because of ignorance. I don't want the City Council to give me medals or titles, I want them to do their part, to support the work we do with the children, education is fundamental, the school is fundamental. Principals can't be afraid to say something because the secretary won't accept it or because the mayor will take away their job. I don't know about this fear, because I'm not afraid, I have respect, I'm only afraid of lizards (Barbosa, 2023).*

The transmission of knowledge from generation to generation and memories make it possible to value the knowledge and traditions of traditional communities, which therefore justifies recording and making this narrative available. In the case of Joinville, according to *iyá* Jacila, there is still no reason to celebrate.

*If you put it from 1 to 10, we're around 4 or 5. Schools and colleges should be putting the holy fathers and mothers in classrooms to teach, to talk about the importance of our culture. How many people sometimes have their nerves shot, can't think and sometimes if they took a leaf bath they would feel better. So we could teach them about the importance and the good that leaf does, but our knowledge is not respected. That same leaf, from which the medicine was made,*

*was taken, macerated and the pill or tea or syrup was made and it's there in the pharmacy being sold, expensively. I've been told that SUS will prescribe natural remedies, but nobody has shown me a prescription like that yet. It may be happening, but I don't know about it yet (Barbosa, 2023).*

The knowledge of traditional matrix communities can contribute to a fairer society and a more protected planet. If there were acceptance and dialog with the priests/priestesses, terreiros, if this population were closer to educational institutions, society could even count on a more balanced environment, because, according to ìyá Jacila:

*if people had access to our knowledge they would be much more careful with the environment and if there was really an opening for this to be taught, if people became aware of the importance of this, we would have a better world, we have a lot to teach (Barbosa, 2023).*

Education is an action in the present about ancestry, but also thinking about the future. Dialogue needs to be established between the community and public management, because raising awareness about the legacy of these communities and making the history of black people visible will not happen quickly. It takes persistence, commitment and demanding recognition (Machado, 2014). In Joinville, the seed has been planted, but we need to keep cultivating it, keep doing and talking so that other communities join the fight.

Ìyá Jacila's narrative, as an "experience of self", is the possibility for the priestess to talk about her experiences, but also about local biodiversity, considering all the subjects involved: her community, her cultural/religious network, public managers and other partners. This involves building different formative spaces outside the school walls, since the school is not prepared for its culture to enter through the front door and free itself from the hegemony of thought.

Ìyalòrisà's bio-narrative, as a representative of the struggles undertaken by traditional communities of African origin, points to the need for an inclusive education that values cultural diversity. These communities bring with them a rich cultural background, which is fundamental for building a plural and diverse education (Kato & Fonseca, 2021).

These narratives are concrete examples of people and communities, their lives and experiences, and can humanize understanding of social, cultural and historical issues. By

sharing these bio-narratives, we hope to broaden understanding and empathy towards different collectives. Incorporating social bio-narratives into education can help create a more inclusive, welcoming and respectful learning environment (Sá *et al.*, 2022).

## 4 Conclusions

19

The production of Mother Jacila's BIONAS is a reminder that for an inclusive anti-racist education it is important that the masters of knowledge, who experience the cultural practices of the African matrix on a daily basis, are present in the process of producing this knowledge. It is essential that they are heard and that there is space for them to socialize their knowledge.

Education, bio-narratives and self-experience are fundamental elements for strengthening traditional communities of African origin, for preserving biodiversity and for promoting a more sustainable and fair development model.

Traditional communities of African origin also have a strong connection with the territory in which they live, considering their cosmology and spirituality, which are deeply linked to nature and its elements. They know what natural resources are available and have the ability to use them sustainably, without damaging the ecological balance. It is therefore important to value and respect traditional communities of African origin as partners in forest conservation and in the fight against environmental degradation.

And now they want to talk about it in educational institutions, because there are no limits to the possibilities of reframing the perspectives of management and educators, and opening up space for other educational practices that include other worldviews and histories, in which diversity is present. For this to happen, it is necessary to adopt anti-colonial practices aimed at building a more just and equitable society.

In order to broaden the political debate, it is important that traditional communities of African origin have a place in all the bodies that propose and deliberate public policies. This will allow the civilizational values of the African matrix to be present, including the environment, considering that, regardless of the issue addressed, the narratives always

highlight the indispensability of forest territory for the maintenance of the culture of the African matrix. After all, for these communities, the proverb "KOSI EWÉ, KOSI ORISÀ" - without leaves there is no Òrisa - functions as a dogma to be followed. In education, this can be interpreted as a suggestion of a holistic approach that recognizes the importance of cultural traditions in the formation of identity and knowledge. Promoting this integration can help build an education that is more equitable, respectful and connected to students' diverse cultural heritages.

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## Fonte Oral

BARBOSA, Jacila Barbosa [70 anos]. [mai. 2023]. Entrevistadora: Denísia Martins Borba. Joinville, SC, 23 mai. 2023.

<sup>i</sup>Denísia Martins Borba, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9993-8477>

Doutora e Mestre em Patrimônio Cultural e Sociedade pela Universidade da Região de Joinville - UNIVILLE; Historiadora pela UFMG; Coordenadora do Comitê de Salvaguarda do *Ilé Wopo Olojukan*/BH/MG;

Authorship contribution: Writing and editing.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/8847191709636283>

E-mail: [denisiamartins10@gmail.com](mailto:denisiamartins10@gmail.com)

<sup>ii</sup>João Carlos Ferreira de Melo Júnior, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6800-5508>

Prof. Dr. João Carlos Ferreira de Melo Jr.; Laboratório de Morfologia e Ecologia Vegetal; Laboratório de Anatomia da Madeira; Departamento de Ciências Biológicas; PPG Saúde e Meio Ambiente; PPG Patrimônio Cultural e Sociedade; Universidade da Região de Joinville - UNIVILLE

Authorship contribution: Supervising, writing and proofreading.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/9349272647053308>

E-mail: [jcmelo\\_wood@hotmail.com](mailto:jcmelo_wood@hotmail.com)

**Responsible publisher:** Genifer Andrade

**Ad hoc expert:** Mirelle Araújo da Silva and Sarah Berrios Kreuger.

## How to cite this article (ABNT):

BORBA, Denísia Martins.; MELO JUNIOR, João Carlos Ferreira de. Bionarrativas e valores civilizatórios de matriz africana na educação em Joinville/SC. **Rev. Pemo**, Fortaleza, v. 6, e12889, 2024. Available at: <https://revistas.uece.br/index.php/revpemo/article/view/12889/version/11886>





Received on April 12, 2024.  
Accepted on May 25, 2024.  
Published on July 5, 2024.

