Black Popular Education: brief notes of a concept

Educação Popular Negra: breves notas de um conceito

Educación Popular Negra: breves notas de un concepto

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Abstract: In this essay, culture and popular education carried out by the black population are understood in the context of political struggles for liberation and emancipation. In this context, one wonders: do these struggles cause liberation and emancipatory knowledge? The conceptual elaboration of Black Popular Education (EPN) emerges as a way of grasping this generated knowledge that seeks to recognize and value a certain aphrodiasporic socio-political and cultural production. The ideas were developed through bibliographic research. To elucidate the conceptual operability of the EPN related to social practices, it sought to analyze, through the content analysis technique, three studies that guide the recognition of ethnic-racial diversity. The reflections point out that it is in the realization of social practices focused on the black popular culture that the liberation and emancipatory knowledge related to the recognition and appreciation of African and Afro-Brazilian culture is constituted, organized and shared.

Keywords: Popular Education. Black Popular Education. Black Popular Culture.

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Introduction

The ideas expounded in this essay have been constructed from dialogues conducted in social, political and academic ambients. These dialogues, based on a historical and social approach to the struggle of the Brazilian black population related to the right to education and respect for ethno-racial diversity, have led to think of the concept of Black Popular Education (in Portuguese, Educação Popular Negra - EPN) as a guide for the interpretation of studies, research and debate.

But what is EPN? How does this notion relate to Popular Education (EP)? What about its realization as a social practice? In general terms, the concept of Black Popular Education consists of a way of comprehending and interpreting the generated knowledge that seeks to recognize and value a certain aphrodiasporic socio-political and cultural production. Consequently, the social practices that have historically been promoted by the black population become central as a focus for study and analysis.

The anti-racist struggle that focused on the construction of socioracial justice is interpreted in this case as constitutive of an educational practice that takes place through a political action which is concretized in a dialogic way with the other (FREIRE, 1970).

Thinking in terms of EPN, there is the need to understand how the knowledge resulting from liberation and emancipatory struggles by the population is articulated in its dimensions of: class, race, gender, sexual orientation, among others, because, after all: “a concept always relates to what one wants to understand, and therefore the relationship between the concept and the content to be understood, or made intelligible, is a necessarily tense relationship” (KOSELLECK, 1992, p. 136).

Thus, it appears that the racial belonging of the subjects involved in popular cultural and educational processes is still little problematized in academic productions related to EP (STRECK, 2013). From this emerges the need to understand the dynamics of social practices of the emancipatory struggles for promotion of socioracial justice from the analytical perspective of the EPN. This approach refers to the usual two senses that, according to Brandão and Assumpção (2009, p. 12, words emphasized by us), define Popular Education:

The first, is in regards to the general reconstruction process of the necessary social knowledge, such as community education, and the second, regards the political work of struggling for social transformations, such as emancipation of the subjects, democratization and social justice.

The “black” predicate is thus related to the recognition of the protagonism mainly of this political subject, individual or collective. This recognition even seeks to assert itself as a matrix of knowledge. Therefore, reflecting on EPN in a more specific way, it is also linked to the legitimation of black population production in the course of history in different fields, namely: epistemic, ethical, aesthetic, socio-political, economic, and cultural, among others.

From this perspective, in order to achieve the general objective of this study, namely: to make conceptual use of the EPN conception as a way of interpreting the knowledge of liberation and emancipation caused by social actions performed mainly by the black political
subject in different sociocultural contexts throughout history. Bibliographic research has been presented as a privileged methodological approach, since: “bibliographical studies made from sources [primary or secondary] are original scientific memories” (SALVADOR, 1986, p. 12, emphasis added by the author).

In this case, the productions related to the history of black education (FONSECA; BARROS, 2016; ROMÃ£O, 2005; PERES, 2002), the struggle of the black population for the right to education (GONÇALVES, 2000; GONÇALVES; SILVA, 2000; SANTOS, 2007) and Afro-Brazilian popular education (LIMA, 1999; ROMÃ£O, 1999; PASSOS, 2002), among others, have become direct sources of inspiration.

**EPN: Recognition and Appreciation of African and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture**

Recognizing and valuing the contributions made by black social actors are some of the assumptions contained in Law nº. 10.639/03vii (BRASIL, 2003), which addresses the obligation of teaching Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture in public and private institutions.

In this sense, the process of implementing this law implies the realization of a historiographical rereading which was declared official because of its hegemonic know-power. After all, within these narratives, the struggles, confrontations and resistance on the part of this population were, and / or continue to be, invisible, silenced and ignored.

Ruling nº. 03/2004 and Resolution nº. 01/2004, issued by the National Education Council, by its Full Council (CNE/CP), in order to fulfill the purposes expressed in the referred to law, establish the text of the “National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian History and Culture” (DCNERER) explaining that:

Recognizing this implies justice and equal social, civil, cultural and economic rights, as well as valuing the diversity of what distinguishes blacks from other groups that make up the Brazilian population. **And this requires a change in speech, reasoning, logic, gestures, postures, and manner of treating black people. It also requires explicitly knowing their history and culture presented, seeking specifically to deconstruct the myth of racial democracy in Brazilian society** (BRASIL, 2015, p. 135, emphasis added by author).

Thus, highlighting a particular social interpretation based on the perspective of the EPN means conceiving other logics for the analysis of the phenomenon of popular struggles. In this case, it is basic to understand the realization of black popular struggles from different social spaces, namely: city and countrysideviii. It is also important to consider in this regard that the fight against racism and racial discrimination is also effective with “the process of formation of the human person from the popular strata, with a view to social change, contained in proposals of Popular Education” (GIOVANETTI, 2005, p. 244).
In this case, the process of humanization of the black person has a twofold character. The first is related to the positivized construction of his ethnic-racial self-image identity. This requires a **critical racial awareness**. It is important to highlight that the dehumanization processes, both material and symbolic, have a stronger impact on this sector of the population.

The development of this type of consciousness in capitalist-colonial contexts requires overcoming the social condition of **racial alienation** that affects black and non-black people. The different stages of alienation have contributed to deepening socio-racial inequalities, preventing socioeconomic, political, educational and cultural changes from occurring.

Therefore, social practices based on values focused on the recognition, appreciation and respect of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture have historically contributed to the socio-educational process of racial consciousness formation, thus bringing about new liberation and emancipatory knowledge.

It is noteworthy that black popular struggles go beyond the defense of an identity policy. It is necessary to consider that the anti-racist struggle carried out mainly by black political subjects and having in view the fight against gender, social, economic, cultural, political, subjective, educational inequalities, among others, is still a knowledge matrix.

It is for this reason that since the middle of the twentieth century, the principles of social, individual and collective formation have been consolidated in EP proposals, which besides being fundamental, are relevant formative references. The accumulated EP experiences were crucial in problematizing the still prevailing societal model, in which “the kind of colonial-imperial [republican-dictatorial] national state [...] where most political elites have always been representative of the economic interests subordinate to the great international capital” (GOHN, 2010, p. 224).

For Brandão (1985, p. 17), the mediation work of popular culture and education was done in a dialogical manner **with / together / and /for** the popular classes:

> [...] the fact that popular education does not seem to be a unique and parallel model of pedagogical practice, but a domain of ideas and practices governed by difference, to explore the very meaning of education, through the different modes of education. considered as popular education.

In the countryside or in the city, popular education emerges as critical thinking in relation to man's oppressive reality in / with the world. Consequently, educational institutions were not exempt from such criticism. Freire (1970), in his book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, makes a rigorous critique of the banking conception of education. In this case, approaches to educational processes that share the conceptions of EP confront head-on the oppressive know-how instituted.

Popular education should be conceived as a component of the dynamics of social movements, a component that contributes to the processes of individual and collective self-awareness; reinforces the processes of autonomy and cultural creation; favors the development of initiatives that formulate and permanently recreate “the public” and, in the midst of these processes, also favors “the leap” of
diversity towards the unprecedented and democratic processes of the unity of our peoples (GÁRCES, 2006, p. 89).

Starting from the understanding that EPN is part of the dynamics of social movements, thinking in terms of EPN means considering it as an integral part of the process of supporting the anti-racist struggle and the full right to citizenship of the black population. Thus, understanding which liberation and emancipatory knowledge brought about through the Afro-Diasporic popular socio-political and cultural manifestations in the daily life of social life, through the interpretative and analytical conceptualization EPN, is presented as fundamental.

But what is popular culture? The concept of popular culture is difficult to grasp. Therefore, Abreu (2003) states that the term needs to be contextualized from a given social, political and historical experience:

The aim is to place low-income people at the center of the investigation, generally identified and socially discriminated by skin color, place of residence, mode of dress and alleged criminality, [...] If they can be treated generically by the population (without obligation to suppress the possible major differences between them, such as the distinctions of gender, race, age, region and religion), it is because they share certain aspects that must be demonstrated, such as living conditions, meanings of holidays and dances, tastes [...] Popular culture is not conceptualized, it is faced. The concept only emerges in the search for the way ordinary people, the poor or the popular strata (or at least considered as such) face (or have faced) the new (not always so new) trends, the way they create (or recreate), live (or have lived) denominate, express, confer, meanings to their values, their holidays, religion and traditions, always considering the complex, dynamic, creative, conflicting and therefore political relationship maintained with different segments of society (ABREU, 2003, p. 94-95, emphasis added).

In order to understand the modus operandi in which black popular culture creates, produces, reproduces, signifies and re-signifies the material condition and societal cultural symbols of modern times, one must observe everyday life. It is in everyday life that Afro-Brazilian religions, black organizations, African technologies, among others have resisted over the centuries (MOURA, 1984; CUNHA JÚNIOR, 2010; SODRÉ, 2017).

Reflecting a little more on this consideration, it is worth recalling the intellectual contributions, African and Afro-Brazilian, given to Freirian thought. African philosophical principles, such as: self-determination, liberation through culture, reconversion (decolonization) of mentalities, among others, besides being incorporated by this author, were decisive in structuring the proposal of Brazilian popular education.

Similarly, the concept of awareness, principal issue in Freire's ideas, results from an elaboration by black sociologist Alberto Guerreiro Ramos with the contribution of philosopher Álvaro Viera Pinto:

It is generally believed that I am the author of this strange word ‘awareness’ as this is the main concept of my ideas about education. In fact, it was created by [...] Álvaro Pinto and Professor Guerreiro [Ramos]. When I first heard the word awareness, I immediately realized the depth of its meaning because I am absolutely convinced that education, as a practice of freedom, is an act of knowledge, a critical approach to reality (FREIRE, 1979, p. 25).
Ramos (1965, p. 61) considers that “without critical conscience, the human being or social group is a thing, being raw material for the happening”. Hence the importance of understanding awareness “as a process of dynamization of consciousness, the critical development of observation”. When it comes to interpreting liberation and emancipatory knowledge, in the field of anti-racist struggle, the term consciousness is also appropriate for the black movement, in the sense of promoting critical racial consciousness.

It is from the perspective of critical racial consciousness that the creation/re-creation of black popular culture is a pole of resistance that involves elements of transformation and renewal of social life. Thus, reflecting from the operationality, EPN is still a way of interpreting the actions of resistance, transformation and renewal that are promoted mainly by this political subject.

The way of interpreting social phenomena from the point of view of diversity is based on the epistemic contributions of the pluriversal philosophical perspective. According to the South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose, every social phenomenon has revealing particularities. In fact, universal definitions such as “social mass”, “nation”, “cross-breeding” etc., mask existing socio-racial conflicts as well as political achievements achieved through black popular culture.

In this sense, black popular culture produces knowledge that comes from political, social, religious, cultural, ancestral experiences, among others. Hence the importance of investigating black popular sociocultural practices, whereby one becomes aware of the knowledge caused by them.

Realizing different and new ways of dealing with the production-reproduction of aphrodiasporic knowledge requires considering the contribution of other epistemologies. The African of yesterday and of today has constituted, in this case, an important inspiring source.

Returning to the concept of pluriversality, elaborated by Mogobe Ramose (2011, p. 11), we have that: “Ontologically, a Being is the manifestation of the multiplicity and diversity of beings. This is the pluriversality of a Being, ever present. For this existential condition of beings to make sense, Beings are identified and determined by their specific particularities”.

Thus, in the concept of EP, there coexists infinite ways of being and acting. Bringing to the scene black culture and popular education seems to be, therefore, a possibility to understand the experiences of being and acting of the subjects who perform it.

An interpretation from the EPN notion of black popular cultural practices

It is necessary to reflect on possible interpretations of black popular cultural practices using the notion EPN. To this end, we highlight the analysis of three studies. In them, themes such as the knowledge of the African and Afro-Brazilian tradition, the struggle for the right to education through the Pre-College Entrance Examination for Blacks and Needy (in
Following the methodological orientation in order to meet the purposes of this study, the use of the content analysis technique made it possible to select, analyze and interpret the collected data. It is important to understand with this procedure: a) the recognition, appreciation and respect of African and Afro-Brazilian culture; b) black cultural and popular resistance; and c) educational potentialities in actions promoted mainly by the black political subject, among others.

It begins with the Master’s Degree thesis by Rocha (2011), who elected traditional Afro-Brazilian communities as the focus of study. Specifically, she investigated members of 8 “Congadeira” communities in Minas Gerais. The study was intended to “unveil the processes experienced by these people in the acts of teaching and learning the traditional precepts that govern the group of tradition to which they belong” (ROCHA, 2011, p. 16).

The researcher considers that “culture [traditional communities] is an important pedagogical space and privileged locus of learning, in which a consistent and significant process of education is configured” (ROCHA, 2011, p. 134).

By listing the following considerations: a) culture and knowledge construction; b) relational dynamics: ciranda of knowledge; c) the joy in learning and the pleasure of knowing: body-emotion-cognition; d) the mediating presence of the elders; e) observe-experience-experience, the author considers them inherent to the way of teaching and learning in these communities and, thus, constituents of the Pedagogy of Tradition.

Pedagogy of Tradition is the collective accumulation of knowledge, starting from the family, based on the lived reality and aiming at harmonious coexistence in the social group. Thus, intrinsically, life is knowledge, and knowledge is life. From this perspective, education takes place with a strong community and social bond, following the example of the Bantu philosophy of residing in a community, where the meaning of life is found in collective experience, in life, in relationships. Therefore, the bases of teaching / learning in “Congadeira” communities are the principles of circularity / communitarianism / integration, structuring elements of the African worldview, re-established in Brazilian lands (ROCHA, 2011, p. 135).

Thus, the political-religious-cultural manifestations are transmitters of learning, knowledge, traditions, values, etc. Considering the argumentation made, it is possible to conclude that the realization of these manifestations per se is configured as a space for the struggle, recognition and resistance of African and Afro-Brazilian culture. Therefore, they present themselves as a social action that produces and reproduces liberation and emancipatory aphrodiasporic knowledge capable of being interpreted from the conceptual point of view of EPN.

In the current context of the black population's struggle for recognition and redistribution through affirmative action policies, it is worth recalling the experiences of the Pre-College Entrance Examinations for Blacks and Poor People (PVNC). Created in 1993, in Baixada Fluminense, by the initiative of a team of four coordinators and 10 teachers, the PVNC is an important milestone in the fight against racism.
Santos (2002) gives a historical overview of the construction of the PVNC movement, which he considers a social agent in the role of transformations and changes in the anti-racist struggle:

Indeed, the PVNC is the result of a multiple convergence of actions based on powers - identity construction, valorization of alterities, conflicts, solidarity, values, and social projects mobilized by a myriad of subjectivities that are embodied in the forms of political militancy, voluntary work, charity, search for self-esteem, social capital strengthening, etc., in determining the involvement and awareness (discursive and/or practice) of each individual (SANTOS, 2002, p. 38).

The emergence of the PVNC dates back to the claim of the Black Pastoral Agents (BPAs) in regard to the low enrollment of young black people in universities between 1989 and 1992. Frei Davi Raimundo dos Santos (Frei Davi), Antonio Dourado, Luciano de Santana Dias and Alexandre do Nascimento, project coordinators, played a prominent role in organizing the PVNC structure.

Since then, with the founding of Educafroxvii, the dispersion of black popular initiatives, organized in different parts of the country, as well as changes in the admission process in Brazilian universities and political, partisan and ideological conflicts in the conduct of the PVNC, in the author's words, constitute “new configurations of black popular militancy agendas and political agencies” (SANTOS, 2002, p. 57).

Revisiting the PVNC experience that still exists todayxviii, leads us to reflect on the positive affirmation of black identity by popular young black people. In fact, in the daily dynamics of social life in the countryside and in the city, it is possible to see that these young people have occupied the cultural, artistic and political scene every day.

In this sense, the preparatory courses, especially those aimed at the poor and black youth population, are in fact constituted as political agencies of black popular formation which are inserted in the anti-racist struggle, for the right to education and the promotion of respect, for the dignity of human life. This type of interpretation guides the way of apprehending socio-racial practices using EPN principles.

In this direction, Silva (2012) inquires about the professional identity of the social educator in dealing with the education of children and adolescents between 6 and 16 years. In the constitution of this identity, the contributions of the EP legacy have been fundamental. It is noticed that the principles of EP structured the know-how practices in working with/for society.

The author reflects that overcoming the model of school practices, which at the same time are widespread and introjected in the social imaginary, is one of the main challenges faced by these professionals in the daily performance of socio-educational work:

With professional experience as a social educator, I find that the challenges are daily and constant. The survival challenges that people are subjected to require us to look at them from another perspective. It is not a matter of charity or assistance, but of a sensitive and deeply political, personal and professional construction committed to the framework of socio-economic, political, cultural and historical inequalities, etc., in which people from the popular strata in our country are involved (SILVA, 2012, p. 83).
Throughout the country, the performance of social educators during the school hours is notorious. The insertion possibilities of these professionals both in and out of school expanded from the perspective of full-time educational work. Thus, in addition to school subjects, public schools have begun offering art and culture workshops, such as: plastic arts (graffiti), dance (afro, funk and street), performing arts (popular theater), musicality (percussion), and sports (soccer, capoeira) etc.

Black cultural and popular knowledge is incorporated into these activities. Several socio-political and cultural expressions of Afro-Brazilian and African creation/re-creation are part of the formative repertoire of the educators being recognized and legitimized by the students.

However, the work done by these professionals related to the appreciation of black popular culture within the school institution is not always done in an integrated manner with school practices. This loses the possibility of consolidating other types of educational practices. These educational practices have the capability to articulate aphrodiasporic popular knowledge with school knowledge.

Thus, if, on the one hand, there is an educational socioracial practice being developed together with the children, youth and adults in relation to the recognition and appreciation of African and Afro-Brazilian culture, on the other hand, this knowledge is still poorly incorporated within school practices.

It is within social practices that aphrodiasporic sociopolitical and cultural knowledge is recreated and socially disseminated. Therefore, black popular culture and education are materialized through social actions led mainly by the black political subject. Thinking in terms of EPN contributes to highlighting the liberation and emancipatory knowledge that takes place within various socio-racial practices.

**Final considerations**

In the context of recognition policies, it is increasingly necessary to analyze and interpret social reality from a historical, political and cultural perspective, in view of the political struggles for popular liberation and emancipation. After all, from the historical point of view, they are the ones that have caused liberation and emancipatory knowledge in the dynamics of social life.

This knowledge derives from political, social, religious, cultural, and ancestral experiences, among others. They are embodied in the realization of socio-racial practices aimed at promoting black popular culture and education.

It is within the realization of these practices that men and women, children, youth, adults and old, black and non-black, immersed in the daily life of late-colonial modernity, circumscribed in social spaces - field and city, produce new subjectivities. The production of these new subjectivities is crucial to the process of constituting a positive black identity.
Thus, the conceptual and interpretative use of Black Popular Education (EPN) contributes to a better understanding of the way that liberation and emancipatory knowledge are concretized in daily life. Moreover, its use seeks to recognize and highlight the leading role of the black political subject in the realization of popular culture and education.

Therefore, in the realization of social practices focused on black popular culture, the liberation and emancipatory knowledge related to the recognition and appreciation of African and Afro-Brazilian culture is constituted, organized and shared.

From this emerges the need to understand the dynamics of social practices of emancipatory struggles aimed at the promotion of socioracial justice from the analytical perspective of the EPN.

References


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The dialogues established with friends, students, and graduate students of the Professional Master's Program in Education have contributed to deepen the reflections developed herein.

From Joel Rufino's argument concerning the organization of the black movement in the 1970s, we understand that the social stratum of the members of this movement was predominantly "overwhelmingly, or in transition to the lower middle class, due to the obvious fact that the majority of the black population is located in the lower middle class or lower (and, moreover, in the countryside and in the poorer regions of the country)" (SANTOS, 2015, p. 20).

Vázquez (1977) defines social practices as a set of sociopolitical and educational actions carried out by intentional social actors in the sense of transforming a certain state of affairs (praxis).

Black are understood to be people who declare themselves to be - black and brown - according to the classification adopted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE).

Race is approached herein as a social, historical and political construction.

Brandão and Assumpção (2009) recognizes that there are several definitions of Popular Education. The exposed feelings adequately serve the purposes of this study.

The law added art. 26-A, art. 79-A (Vetoed) and art. 79-B to the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (Law nº. 9.394/96 - LDBEN) (BRASIL, 1996). And in 2008, Law nº. 11,645 (BRASIL, 2008) was
amended and now includes the History and Culture of Brazilian Indigenous Peoples. In this essay, we address the perspective of the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations (ERER).

In view of Law nº. 12.288/2010 (BRASIL, 2010), which establishes the Racial Equality Statute, greater awareness of the Brazilian population regarding the struggle for the right to own land and the lives of black workers and rural black communities is needed. Similarly, we should be aware of the sustainable food produced by black people remaining from the quilombos communities, whose traditions, values and religiosities ought to be respected.

With Freire, this study agrees that awareness-raising takes place at different levels beyond a vague idea of awareness. In this case, the stage of critical racial consciousness “supposes to overcome false consciousness, that is, the state of semi-intransitive or transitive-naive consciousness and a better critical insertion of the conscious person into a demystified reality” (FREIRE, 1980, p. 90). For a deeper understanding of this concept in his work, see Marinho (2015).

Fanon (2008) identified that this type of alienation occurs in colonial (as well as postcolonial) contexts, making it impossible for the black person to construct a positive self-image of himself over the image of the other (colonizer/white).

Popular Education brings with it the political idea that involves the act of educating, which underlies the entire cultural and educational relationship established between subjects. For a deeper understanding of the history of Brazilian Popular Education, see: Beisiegel (1974); Brandão (1986); Fávero (1983); and Paiva (1973), among others.

Marilena Chauí (1986) considers that, within the logic of popular culture, there is an ambiguous character of conformism and resistance.


Bardin (2016) highlights - heuristics and test administration - as privileged functions of content analysis. In this case, the use of this technique “should be applicable to all forms of communication, whatever the nature of its support” (BARDIN, 2016, p. 35).

The selected works are part of a constellation of others existing in the field of Ethnic-Racial Relations which have been produced over the years.

According to jurist Joaquim Barbosa Gomes (2001, p. 95), affirmative actions can be defined as a set of public and private policies of compulsory or voluntary nature designed to combat racial, gender and racial discrimination of national origin, as well as the correction of the present effects of past discrimination, aiming at the realization of the ideal of effective equality of access to fundamental goods, such as education and employment.

The institution's website states as its mission “In all its activities, Educafro strives for the State to fulfill its obligations through public policies and affirmative actions in education, aimed at blacks and the poor, promoting ethnic diversity in the labor market, promotion of human rights, the fight against racism and all forms of discrimination”. To learn more: https://www.educafro.org.br/site.

Information about PVNC is available at: http://www.sentimentanimalidades.net/pvnc.