

LETTER TO THE READER

São Carlos, August 2015.

Almost 80 years ago, sociologist Florestan Fernandes carried out his first research works on some social actors who had been the object of little investigation so far in Brazil. Such social actors included indigenous people, black people and children. He also always studied the situation of women, whose role was highlighted in “A Função Social da Guerra na Sociedade Tupinambá”. In “As ‘Trocinhas’ do Bom Retiro”, when the author was studying the groups of children who played outdoors, in the streets, he formulated the concept of children’s culture, by showing the way children participate in the construction of social reality. Regarding black people, he stated in 1972:

White people take advantage of a complete and total hegemony, as if the prevailing social order was, literally, a hybrid combination of the caste system and the class system. As regards the integration of white people to the system of social relations, only the latter is fully effective. When it comes to black people or mulattos, however, the two regimes combine in several ways, always making archaic influences to operate freely, thus extensively and deeply revitalizing a racial order that should now be a historical relic. (FERNANDES, 2007, p.117)

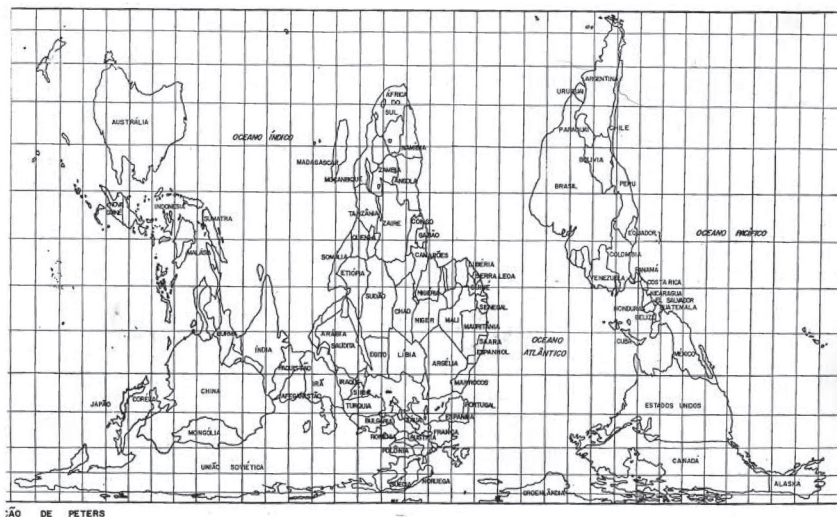
Fernandes’s advisor, the French professor Roger Bastide, was delighted with the Brazilian irreverence and the academic and scientific contributions derived from the theme. The preface that he wrote for “As Trocinhas do Bom Retiro” is exquisite, as is the preface to his book “Brazil, land of contrasts”. I selected the two sentences below to refer to what, in my opinion, gave rise to the education of social relations.

In order to study the child, one must become a child. I mean that it is not enough to observe the child, from the outside. It is not enough either to observe their toys; it is necessary to penetrate beyond the magic circle that separates us, in their concerns, their passions. It is necessary to live the toy. And this is not granted to everyone (BASTIDE, 2004).

And

If even in the contrast there is harmony, it also persists in reconciliation (...). There are antagonist forces within the forces of adaptation, accommodation, and assimilation, in the same way that the forces of accommodation exist within conflicting forces and in the game of contrasts. Thus, the sociologist who studies Brazil does not know which concepts system to adopt any more. The concepts that they have learned in European or North American countries do not qualify here. The old and the new are mixed. The historical epochs are entangled. The same terms, such as “social class” and “historical dialectic” do not have the same meaning, do not cover the same concrete realities. It would be required, rather than rigid concepts, to discover somehow liquid notions, that are able to describe melting, boiling, or interpretation phenomena, notions that would be shaped in a living reality, in perpetual transformation. The sociologist who wants to understand Brazil often needs to become a poet. (BASTIDE, 1971, p. 5)

Twenty years before that period, there was another important approach that would today be called postcolonial, the “Anthropophagic Manifesto” of 1928, signed by Oswald de Andrade. We talked then of an upside down world, just like the world map designed by Peters in 1957, where Africa is in the center and a very small Europe is at the bottom.



GEOPOLITICS AND THE WORLD REPRESENTATIONS

Peter's projections (public domain)

In the area of Infant Education, Tizuko Kishimoto has been using as reference “As trocinhas” and children’s protagonist role through a ludic point of view for a long time. Today we talk about plural *infant cultures*, in order to materialize Brazilian black, indigenous, quilombola, landless, rich, poor childhoods... We talk about a Macunaímica pedagogy with blacks, whites and Indians (as in the subtitle of the book by Mario de Andrade: the hero with no character).

More recently, Amita Gupta (2006), from India, an Education Professor at the City College of New York, explored the tension between western theories of child development (more specifically Vigotsky’s sociocultural constructivism) and the Indian forms of being and thinking. She calls the attention to the contributions of the postcolonial paradigm for children’s education from birth and the formation of infant education teachers.

In this issue of the UFSCar Electronic Journal of Education, under the perspective of replacing Africa and the African diaspora

into world history (as Valter Silvério here declares in his article), Anete Abramowicz, the editor of the *Journal*, presents us with these articles on race relations education.

We are therefore celebrating eleven years of Law 10.639/03, which amends the LDB and introduces in the educational field a regulation regarding the human formation of the professional teacher to combat and eradicate racism! It is worth remembering that this law is not only about school content, but also about social relations. It explains that we teach racism even when we do not give a class on how to be a racist. And this must also be upside down!!!

It is in this context that I am pleased to write this letter to the reader of the *Electronic Journal of Education* in this thematic issue about “Childhood and Ethnic-racial Relations, which won the prize (from ANPEd) of Contest n. 001/2014-FUNAPE/UFG/MEC/SECADI. Process n. 108112014.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers for the invitation to write this letter. My congratulations to Anete Abramowicz for the prize that does her justice. She is a researcher of the differences. She is renowned in the area and, as a militant of the black movement and a militant of childhood, she brings to the scene another provocative debate that includes various aspects of racial relations education.

Although the research on early childhood and ethnic-racial relations has been growing both in quantity and density since the first investigations conducted by deeply missed Fúlvia Rosemberg and Regina Pahim in the early 1990s, the Law has not yet provided for an excluded social actor: the young child before going to school, in kindergartens and preschool units, in infant education, the first stage of basic education.

At the same time, unfortunately the studies do not usually listen to the children (specially the very young ones). Nor does the research on ethnic-racial, gender or class relations.

Regarding the data collected in 1995, according to which 1,100,000 Brazilian children older than 7 years of age are in

preschool, of whom the majority are black children from the northeast region, Rosenberg writes:

A sinister and aberrant scenario, an educational early death – these are moved (but not emotional) expressions uttered, due to the outrage the data trigger. The search for understanding, aimed at overcoming such inequity, leads me to the theoretical model that seeks to integrate gender, class and race hierarchy into the economic, cultural and political plans¹. (ROSEMBERG, 1996, p. 61)

This issue of REVEDUC, however, includes the entire period of childhood, from 0 to 10 years old, in daycare centers, preschools and initial years of elementary school, also by listening to them (which happens in some of the articles), and thus fills these gaps. We therefore have this issue about childhood and ethnic-racial relations within and outside educational institutions, in children's literature, in the black community, in public policy, in the context of differences. Anete and her research group have articulated race, gender, class and age. They represent, today, the group with the widest scope and the border group in the area of education, childhood and difference. In this issue, as mentioned by Chimamanda Adichie, we do not have a unique history. Therefore, this set of articles denouncing the neutrality and universality in human sciences (as stated by Míghian Danae Ferreira Nunes, in her article), induces to overcome the antagonisms and binarisms, which consist the base of stereotypes and prejudices.

Children resist, transgress and request an anti-racist education that assumes the differences. Reading here about the plurality of black children, we recognize the production about infant cultures and the possibility that decolonizing pedagogies

1 Translated from the text in Portuguese: Quadro sinistro, aberrante, morte educacional precoce são expressões (mas não emocionais) pela indignação que provocam. A busca de sua compreensão, visando à superação de tamanha iniquidade, me conduz ao modelo teórico que procura integrar hierarquia de gênero, classe e raça nos planos econômico, cultural e político. (ROSEMBERG, 1996, p. 61)

take the place of a whitening pedagogy. We can join Boaventura and say “I have the right to be equal when the difference diminishes me. I have the right to be different when equality decharacterizes me”². (SANTOS, 2003, p. 56)

Bastide (2004, p.195) speaks on my behalf about the child we have inside us adults. Upon finishing this letter, I leave you the invitation, almost an appeal, to release our playful dimension:

What are we, for the children who play around us, but shadows? They surround us, cry against us, answer our questions in a condescending tone, when we pretend to be interested in their activities; but we perfectly feel that, for them, we are just like the house furniture, a part of the external cosmos, who do not belong to their world, which has its pleasures and sufferings. And we, the adults, also live well within our own borders. We look at the children playing, we reprimand them when they make too much noise, or, if we give a friendly look at their games, is not at them that we look, but, through them, we look at the nostalgic images of our long gone childhood³.

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2 Translated from the text in Portuguese: “Tenho direito de ser igual quando a diferença me inferioriza. Tenho direito de ser diferente quando a igualdade me descaracteriza”. (SANTOS, 2003, p. 56)

3 Translated from the text in Portuguese: Que somos nós, para as crianças que brincam ao nosso redor, senão sombras? Elas nos cercam, choram contra nós, respondem às nossas perguntas, num tom de condescendência, quando fingimos interessar-nos por suas atividades; mas sente-se, perfeitamente, que para elas, somos como os móveis da casa, parte do cosmo exterior, não pertencente a seu mundo, que tem seus prazeres e seus sofrimentos. E nós, os adultos, vivemos também dentro de nossa própria fronteira, olhamos as crianças brincar, repreendemo-las quando fazem muito barulho, ou, se deixamos cair sobre seus divertimentos um olhar amigo, não é para eles que olhamos, mas, através deles, para as imagens nostálgicas de nossa infância desaparecida.

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Good reading!

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