

## LISTENING TO HIDDEN CULTURAL ASPECTS: RACISM AND SUSPICIONS WITHIN A SCHOOL COMMUNITY

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**ABSTRACT.** This article addresses some effects of a political-clinical psychoanalytic intervention implemented at a public school in Sao Paulo. The focus conversations group held with adolescents enabled us to watch and to listen to a repeatedly returned scene, which allowed us to assume a social “unsaid” about students, their mothers and their family settings. Embracing the indications of Freud, Lacan, Benjamin and Gagnebin, we considered that the unsaid that accompanies these mothers as an enduring past unreconciled with the present, thereby causing a social and symbolic contiguity of the master’s slave girl to today’s black women. The social imaginary of these women points to a conception of servitude and sexually available body, which, despite the many historical changes and female achievements, still remains and is transmitted in the underground of our culture. Replacing both speeches and acts of the students and of their mothers, as laden with meaning and enrolled in a political and libidinal discursive network, allows us to rediscover the power and resilience of these subjects. It is fundamental to discern between a subject placed in the place of *rest* in the social discourse, and a subjectivation of the lack, since while the latter is what promotes the desire, the former is what violates and silences the subject.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalysis and politics; racism; schools.

## ESCUTANDO OS SUBTERRÂNEOS DA CULTURA: RACISMO E SUSPEIÇÃO EM UMA COMUNIDADE ESCOLAR

**RESUMO.** Este artigo pretende abordar alguns desdobramentos de um dispositivo de intervenção clínico-político em uma escola municipal de São Paulo. Utilizando um *Grupo de Conversas* com adolescentes foi possível observar e escutar uma cena que se repetia à exaustão e a partir dela supor um não dito social sobre os estudantes, suas mães e suas configurações familiares. Seguindo as indicações de Freud, Lacan, Benjamin e Gagnebin, consideramos o não dito que paira sobre elas como um modo de o passado perdurar de maneira não reconciliada no presente, acarretando uma contiguidade social e simbólica da mesma até as mulheres negras de hoje. O imaginário social sobre estas mulheres aponta para uma concepção de servidão e de corpo à disposição que, apesar de tantas mudanças históricas e conquistas femininas, ainda permanece e se transmite nos subterrâneos da nossa cultura. Recolocar tanto as falas e os atos dos estudantes, como os de suas mães, como prenes de sentido e inscritos numa rede discursiva política e libidinal, nos permite reencontrar a potência e a capacidade de resistir desses sujeitos. Torna-se fundamental discernir o que é o sujeito colocado no lugar de *resto* no discurso social e o que é uma subjectivação da falta, pois enquanto esta última é o que promove o desejo, a primeira, é o que violenta e silencia o sujeito.

**Palavras-chave:** Psicanálise e política; racismo; escola.

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## ESCUCHAR LO SUBTERRÁNEO DE LA CULTURA: RACISMO Y SOSPECHA EN UNA COMUNIDAD ESCOLAR

**RESUMEN.** Este artículo se propone abordar algunos desdoblamientos de un dispositivo de intervención psicoanalítica clínica-política en una escuela municipal de São Paulo. En un *Grupo de Conversaciones* con adolescentes, pudimos escuchar una escena que se repetía y, a partir de la misma, suponer un “no dicho” social sobre los estudiantes, sus madres y sus configuraciones familiares. Siguiendo la huella de Freud, Lacan, Benjamin y Gagnebin consideramos lo que no se dijo como un modo en que el pasado perdura de manera no reconciliada en el presente, acarreado una contigüidad social y simbólica de la mucama hasta las mujeres negras de hoy. El imaginario social sobre esas mujeres revela una concepción de servidumbre y de cuerpo a disposición que, a pesar de tantos cambios históricos, aún permanece y se transmite en los subterráneos de nuestra cultura. Volver a poner el discurso y las acciones de los estudiantes y de sus madres como llenos de sentido y matriculados en una red política y discursiva de la libido, nos permite redescubrir el poder y la capacidad de soportar de estos sujetos. Es esencial discernir lo que es el objeto colocado en la posición de *resto* en el discurso social y lo que es una subjetivación de la falta, pues una vez que esta última es lo que promueve el deseo, el primero es lo que violenta y silencia el tema.

**Palabras clave:** Psicoanálisis y política; racismo; escuela.

### Introduction

This study aims to elucidate some effects of a series of clinical and political interventions at a public school in São Paulo, Brazil, by means of a work team, *Grupo de Estratégias em Educação* (Brazilian Portuguese for “Group for Education Strategies”). Such interventions allowed the unveiling of some of the unrest present within the school environment as well as in what is frequently updated in the daily lives of Brazilian poor black children, adolescents, women and men.

Initially constituted of four psychoanalysts, the group proposed to carry out interventions and construct collective devices that could bring into discussion issues present in school daily life. Those issues, most times, are emptied and degraded when they are massively located in some few students – in such way that the invisibility of the tensions generated by the social bond falls over some subjects, individualizing their impasses and conflicts, pathologizing or criminalizing their ways of resisting or their exits (Rosa, 2016).

The finding that it was about replacing and including those conflicts as enigmas inside schools – and not about banishing them by means of excessive leadings to psychological treatment or excluding them by means of the expelling of “problematic students” -, there was the leading to a clinical-political intervention before the unrest. We agree with Cristina Vicentin in the sense that the distance, the non-effectiveness, the judgement or the moral prescription are decisive for the helplessness situations turn into physical violence, in case of adolescents whose ways of saying things do not find acceptance in their bodies or in their social and existential territories (Vicentin, 2016). Escaping from the privatization of conflicts and replacing those issues as potential dissipation to approach issues regarding body, life, death, the sexual and the pulsional, of intolerance and of segregation, in the totality of the school’s students, became our biggest challenge (Braga, Carmo & Rosa, 2013).

One of those devices, the *Conversations Group*, was a weekly-held meeting, with a voluntary participation, during the school time, with adolescents aging from 14 and 16 years old. Far from having an only and homogeneous identity, that device started from something common that was presented as contingency – the adolescents of the two last secondary school years of a public school in São Paulo State – which made them share close places in the discursive network. The group aimed at pointing out the singularity of what was construed in that network and the place that they occupied, as well as shedding some light on this social field. Its proposal was constituting itself as a room for word circulation, allowing the absolute certainties and the signifiers deeply attached to some students to make room for questioning that could open gaps in the discursive network. This way, the adolescents could replace themselves in that power network that attributes, to each one, places and positions completely unequal of visibility and invisibility, of value and non-value, of condemnation and exaltation, of prohibitions and of access, not only to material goods, but also to affection, to questioning, to pleasure and to enjoyment.

During the two months of interventions with one of those groups, a scenario started to frame our meetings. It was so intensively repeated and with so few variations, that it made us assume that there was something there that insisted to be listened. It was a group of students that, under their own request, was composed only of boys; despite being considered by the teachers as undisciplined, violent and uncommitted students, they kept their commitment with the week-held meetings for a year and a half, until they finished Brazilian secondary school level.

The plot we had in scene was basically the same: it started with the allusion to the name of the mother of some of the adolescents in the meeting, but it happened in such an indirect way that the group's coordinators could not even recognize to whom that speech referred to. It could be a fragment, or the initial syllable of a name, a nickname, or even the silence followed by a look understood as being provocative. Inevitably, those supposed references to the mother of some of the group's components were taken as a very serious contravention, which legitimated the student who had felt offended to ruthlessly attack the other. When they were asked about those attitudes, they would just claim that "*he was talking about my mother*" or "*he is saying my mother is a bitch*". The turn-taking of the ones who were the attackers and the attacked ones showed that that scenario concerned all of them and each of them.

We know that the behavior of the adolescents of that school could not be considered something specific and restricted to that group, or to that institution. Among other examples of the school universe or in institutions with adolescents, Noguchi (2011) presents interviews at *Fundação Casa* (A Brazilian Federal Institution where people below 18 stay in case they commit a crime), where the inmates themselves affirm that, at all units, "blaming someone's mother" is prohibited, and a severely punished act. It is regulated by the *system*, an internal code of conduct stipulated by them. The strictness of the punishments described in this research and in others, echoing the attitudes that we observed in the adolescents that we accompanied, was the fact that allowed us to assume, following the traces of psychoanalysis, that those teenagers said more than they intended to say, and that they knew more than they thought they knew, for it was about another knowledge, an unconscious knowledge (Musatti-Braga, 2015).

The repetition as a consequence of what was not elaborated by the subject was already approached by Freud (1914/2015) more than a hundred years ago, when he claimed that the analyzed person who cannot remember what was forgotten, repeats, acts. "They do not reproduce it as a memory, but as an act, they repeat it, naturally without knowing what they are doing" (Freud, 1914/2015, p. 199-200, free translation). Nevertheless, what we propose to gather here is not restricted to a relationship between what was repressed and its return, either by means of its symptom or by means of its act, which would be restricted to the subject. We are approaching the formulation of a repetition of an *unsaid* that does not belong to the subject individually, and that operates as an effect of a transmission that crosses subjects and generations. It was the clinical experience with children, for the perception that the child's symptom is crossed by their parents' *unsaid*, that opened a possible way to approach this question: if we considered the child as an individual subject, how could we explain an almost literal transmission, in their body, of what is not said by them? (Rosa, 2016). Proposing that there is a transmission between generations that is not only of values and traditions, which is not only known and conscious, but which is also of desire, of enjoyment, and of the symptom, demands caution and invites to reconsider our conception of subject, of social bonding and of signifier.

For us, the Freudian unconsciousness conception is not compatible with the illusion of the autonomy or of the individual, once the subject is founded in their relation with the Other, in relation to the Other's desire. We are affirming, then, that we do not conceive the subject as an individual for two fundamental reasons: the subject cannot be understood out of the bonding with the other, as if they were independent, individually defined, and cannot be conceived as a total subject, undivided and sole. "Have you ever found total beings? Maybe it is an ideal. I have never seen one. I am not total. Neither you are. If we were total, each of us would be in our corner, total, we would not be here, together, trying to organize ourselves" (Lacan, 1954-55/1985, p. 307, free translation). Thus, following Lacan's path, we always conceive the subject in the social bonding, what he says in his relation with the other and with his unconscious true, with what touches his relation with the desire, with the enjoyment and with the knowledge (Lacan, 1969-70/1994). From that, we can say that we consider the subject in one's *singularity*, not in one's individuality.

The subject is named by a repertoire of meaningful possibilities, characteristic of the one who named them, crossed by the context where this one lives and is within, him/herself and his/her family group, which characterizes possibilities and prohibitions, what is permitted and what is forbidden. We are summing the discursive network to a network of knowledge and power; therefore, the signifiers that mark and marked by the subject are integrated not only in the pulsional field; they are also historically and socially crossed. Besides that, we defend the idea that the subject and the ones who bathed him/her in the desire field and in the world of words must also be considered, taking into account what Castoriadis (1998) named as social imaginary significations, once each society constitutes a system to interpret the world, with its conceptions of virtue, taboo, sin, family, among others.

The understanding of a singular, but not individual subject, is also explicit in the conception of signifier that we can find in Lacanian work. The signifier circulates, once it is not within a subject: its articulation with other signifiers is not circumscribed to someone; it happens in the meeting and in the bonding of a subject with another. The signifier crosses us and also crosses generations.

What would be being enunciated by the adolescents we worked with, by means of their excessive and insistent reactions to the supposed mention to their mothers' names? Their speeches seemed to point out how much they felt considered as the *sons of those mothers about whom one says bad things, the sons of a whore*, as if a suspicion would fall on the adolescents and on their mothers and their (the mothers') reputation would be always at risk. That was the fact that made us suppose that there is an unsaid referring to the imaginary significations of what could *bemother* and *woman* within that school community that was transmitted through the signifiers that those *sons of a mother with a bad reputation* had.

Together with these suppositions, an impression was added; it stemmed from numberless conversations and interventions with the educators; that was seemingly reinforced along our seven years working at that institution. Although, at the beginning, it was a very imprecise and obscure impression, it seemed to us that some educators convoked certain mothers to a position that sounded excessively maternal to us, as if they had to be *exclusively mothers*. This convocation was not carried out at random; there was a selection, that, in spite of not being intentional, obeyed a grammar and a logic dictated by the place that those women occupied in the discursive network. It was noticeable that, in relation to a whole group of parents that used to be at the school, undergraduates and people with more purchase power were called to go to school in a much softer way.

There was not a doubt that, there, women who did not play the role of educators had to be convoked as mothers, once that was the place where they were recognized within the school space. However, what was being heard was a kind of thrust, imperative to the maternal position as the only way to be dignified and respected, which was strongly focused on certain women (Musatti-Braga, 2015). With variations of details or reasons, what was repeated towards those women were the comments, whose main point was an attack to everything that would extrapolate what was considered and established as maternal obligations: "She finds time to doll up, but not to come at a school meeting..." or "she likes to go out, but doesn't care about the homework...".

When we observe those women's speech, the wish of having some time only to themselves or to enjoy with their spouses, or in a situation in which their vanity, eroticism, desires and their pleasure to beyond having a child or being a mother was explicit, what appeared was a dissimulated criticism by means of ellipsis followed by disapproval gestures.

One more time, it is important to highlight that we do not consider those speeches as unusual or restricted to that school community. It is known that the valorization of the maternal position has its roots in very old times, in which the pulsional and the political fields are integrated, and that the noun *mother* is many times evoked due to the impossibility to find another name for what would be unique of the woman (Lacan, 1972-73/1985). However, what made us suppose that there was something being said about those mothers at the school, to beyond of the irrelevant comments, is the fact that there was a recrimination of some aspirations and attitudes that, if referred to women belonging to other social classes, could be celebrated or valued as a result of female struggles and achievements, but, to them, it seemed to be the opposite.

The valorization of the maternal place is very commonly discussed by the historian Mary del Priori, who reminds us that, since the first centuries of Brazilian colonization, the Church imposed training practices so women would carry the image of "kind-sinless-mommy".

The intention was avoiding the “tradition of cohabiting” that was spread by the relationships among white men and indigenous women, as well as the tradition of concubinage, brought by the Portuguese and largely spread among the subaltern classes”. (Del Priori, 2009, p. 93, free translation). The common sexual practices in those classes were caricatured, as part of a standardization project of the Church and of the State, establishing the stigma of “whore” for women who did not meet this standard.

The standard of “kind-sinless-mommy” echoes until nowadays, even though it appears in a very different way in the various contexts and social extracts and links to many other standards and representations. Among them it is worth to mention that, in poorer Brazilian classes, since the 1990s, many women, gathered by the desire for justice after their children were violently killed by the police, started to be recognized as “*mães de luta*” (Brazilian Portuguese for “fighting moms”). Black and poor women, without much formal education, and who lived in shantytowns, were responsible for the creation of many of those organizations: *Mães de Acari*, *Mães de Maio*, *Mães da Candelária*, *Mães de Vigário Geral*, *Mães da Baixada Fluminense* (Brazilian Portuguese for Mothers of Acari, Mothers of May, Mothers of Candelaria, Mothers of Vigario Geral, Mothers of Baixada Fluminense, respectively), among others. They seem to confirm the hypothesis that, from the position of *mothers*, those women are legitimated and respected (Brites & Fonseca, 2013). The credibility and the social recognition attributed to the mothers, without any doubts, is a great achievement: even the governmental social programs, which have mothers as the responsible for managing the money, provide them trust and competence to do so (Rego & Pinzani, 2013).

In both cases, however, it is necessary to notice that the participation of those women in public life happens by means of a place understood as belonging to the field of private life, the maternity. The research carried out many years ago by the anthropologist Cynthia Sarti (1985) takes the same path. When describing the dwellers of a neighborhood in the outskirts of Sao Paulo, she observes that women act politically in behalf of their mother’s role, and that gives them “legitimacy to their participation in the public sphere at work or at politics. ‘Being a mother’ is a category that allows the integration of all the spheres of their existence” (Sarti, 1985, p. 277, free translation).

We think that it is important to notice that, within those social classes, this legitimacy stemming from the role of mother does not happen together neither is extended to the field of the recognition of the *woman*.

The insistence of the educators to convoke certain women as completely mothers and the fact that their children re-affirmed obstinately that their mothers were not whores could not ignore this disparity as for the value and the legitimacy between the positions of the mother and of the woman in this social class. We noticed that the women that were claimed to be offended at school and the ones that the educators tried to mold as “kind-sinless-mommy” were the same people. It was only possible by listening to the students and to those women in diverse situations within the school, and, later in their homes<sup>2</sup>. From the dislocation and the repetition of those signifiers that crossed the adolescents and their mothers, it was evidenced that what vanished between the image of the mother and the whore was exactly the signifier *woman*, which, in their case, was more than silenced: it was omitted or erased.

<sup>2</sup> For our doctoral degree research, we carried out a series of interviews with mothers of students of that school in their respective homes (Musatti-Braga, 2015).

With that, acts or speeches apparently meaningless and exacerbated from the students or their mothers found a possibility to be signified, as we understood that there was an insidious transmission, a said impossible to be pronounced and inscribed. Little by little, it was possible to hear that many of those were responses to a violence or submission situation, concretely heard between the lines. This scene at the Group of adolescents became a paradigmatic example of the reaction to the supposed accusation to those students and their mothers, which, pronounced or not, was always heard; however, even though it was exemplar, it was not an isolated case.

### **Social imaginary on poor mothers: single mother or independent woman?**

*I feel I'm a great woman; I'm like a warrior, I'm hardworking. I practically raised my kids alone, I never had to ask anything to anybody [...] I never needed to ask for their father's help. (Cleide)*

What we first heard when we interviewed Cleide was the pride that she had for having raised her children, in spite of the difficult situations. This speech resonated and found its echo in the speech of other interviewees of ours, by means of the use of words that emphasized the values of their tasks—*great woman, warrior, very female*—, even though they were not together when they were interviewed.

*I'm very female for keeping raising my kids. (Silvana)*  
*I've always been a fighter, a warrior. (Neide)*

During so many years listening to these and other diverse mothers within the school space, that speech had never come up. The contrast among the statements that were present in and out of the school limits seemed to indicate the distance between the way that those women imagined that they were seen and recognized by the educators and the school managers— as representatives of the hegemonic discourse that hovers over them —, and how they see and recognize themselves within their community network, among their peers. It is probable that, within the school space, they were threatened by a conception of what would be expected from maternity and from a caring mother. Would that be the one mother who would be at every meeting and who would help their children in their homework, even though it was completely incompatible with her working hours? Would it be that mother who would reserve an “appropriate place” for their children to do homework, ignoring the fact that they lived in a one-room place, completely occupied by beds, cook, television, fridge and wardrobe? Would it be that mother who would read stories for their children to sleep, aiming at encouraging them to read, even though her working hours and work place did not allow her enough time even for sleeping properly?

We attribute the absence at school from that speech of Cleide and of so many other mothers on their achievements when playing the maternal role to the social imaginary that falls on them within the school space.

Like Bourdieu and Passeron (1975) observed in relation to French schools, we defend that that school of São Paulo, similarly to other Brazilian schools in general, not only reproduce, but also reinforce the social inequality, once the child or the adolescent is received in an environment strongly marked by the class character that crosses all the pedagogic process. Although the students of public schools do not belong to higher classes, they would remain subjected to their class habitus and to their social imaginary.

This claim is in accordance with the analysis carried out by Azanha (1995), concerning the stigmatization of the public education in Brazil. Until the massive offer of school places that occurred from 1967, the Brazilian public school was regarded as having high-quality, but many times, the fact that it was provided only to a very restricted part of the population was forgotten. The universalization process that the education network went through in Brazil, far from being seen as an extension of the right to education to the ones who, until then, were excluded from the classrooms, was seen with a social resentment by the medium-class segments, whose children would go exclusively to public schools until then. This resistance was resounded in the communication means and in the private and business interests and, also, it is important to highlight, in the educators themselves, identified with those two groups. Despite the fact that José Mario Azanha recognizes diverse factors that contribute to the conception and to the condemnation of the Brazilian public education as necessarily faded to failure, he points out the participation of educators who, in general, instead of adjusting to the new reality, were influenced by and identified with the interests of the dominant class, and resisted to adjust their professional mentality to the new school reality.

Remembering Cleide's speech spot by spot, we found hints on the conception of hegemonic maternity in our social discourse. The claim that she *was very female* does not seem only an exaltation for what she has done, but also the necessity of protecting herself, re-affirming the value of an act that could, at first, be criticized. This supposed criticism is heard when she says that she raised her children *alone*. It may seem contradictory that she affirms having raised her children alone, but, concomitantly recognizing that she had the help of her mother, what makes us think that she refers to another type of absence. The *alone*, instead of reinforcing the idea concerning the effort that was necessary for her to take care of them without a State structure that supported her in that function, is the term that seems to place her in a demeaned and suspicious position. For the place that those women occupy in the discursive network, the term *alone* points to a conception that something would supposedly be missing — the father's presence —, more than to what they had: the desire and the capacity to take care. According to the social discourse, that lack would have, as a consequence, a family disorganization, and would be frequently used to explain the affective and learning difficulties, or to behaviors considered aggressive (Musatti-Braga, 2015).

The achievements from the new parameters of the "post-modern family", which include "planned single motherhood", "re-marriages", and "families by choice" do not seem to be enjoyed equally and homogeneously by all the social groups. The urban anthropologist Claudia Fonseca (2000) points out that those new parameters seem to be very well accepted when they are within medium or medium-high social classes, but that does not happen in poorer families. In the later ones, there is a predomination of old labels, full of pejorative connotations, such as "single mothers", "abandoned children" and "unstructured families", terms that reveal a supposed failure at the realization of the centered family, understood as a standard. At that point, there was, at the school, such a parameter of family normality that, at a meeting in which we were assisting a fourth-grade teacher, the mother of a nine-year-old female student, when asked about her daughter's daily life, says:

*She meets her father, we aren't together anymore, but he lives near here and comes to visit. How is the visit? Like in a normal family. (Marta)*



The ferocity with which the hegemonic discourse pathologizes what escapes the supposed normality and the ideal culture set was exposed to us in an emblematic way by an adolescent who participated of another *Conversations* Group with whom we worked at that same school. When he observed that only two mates that were part of that group lived with both parents in the same house, he says:

*The rest is all “un-familied”!*

When we asked him about the meaning of this neologism, he completes:

“Un-familied” is a family that is not very close, but, at the same time, is very united.

The prefix *un-* may be understood as what highlights, in his speech, the distance between what would normally be expected and the family that he has, the hiatus between the social discourse and its signifiers preceded by *un-* or other prefixes with the same meaning—*dysfunctional* family, which *disqualifies* and *unfavors*—and his own and most of his friends’ family experience. The *very united* is what shows the resistance movement to the social discourse that tries to place him in a plot, together with his capacity to find recognition in a belonging network based upon horizontal bonds, upon family and neighbors bonds, which allows us to face that understanding.

That is explicit in the speech of another interviewee of ours, *Neide*, when she evidences the distance between what could be seen as worthy to be exalted within those new family parameters: the *independent woman*, but who is called *anyone*, due to the place that she occupies in the discursive network.

*A woman who lives alone is more coveted. They think she’s just anyone, do not respect, anyone wanna get closer, make a pass at us. When a woman lives with a man, she is more respected. Regarding responsibility, a woman can have even more responsibility. Sometimes, the woman has a man who lives with her, but it doesn’t work, it’s just for saying that she has a man, so other men won’t pick up at her. (...) Sometimes I see: “Look at that woman”. “Don’t say that, beware of him! She has a man!”. (Neide)*

The presence of a man as something necessary to “impose respect” at home, i.e., as a strategy to prove the moral integrity of women and as protection before the police insufficiency (Fonseca, 2000) is something that, having started decades ago, and which has been modified in diverse social groups, is still alive and explicit in this speech. What *Neide* helps us to identify is the way that she feels recognized, considering the social imaginary: she would only depend on a man/husband to protect that supposedly *accessible* body, which could *have a pass made at* or *talked about*. It is not about something individual, but about a social “permission” that authorizes the free access to that body and invites us to ask: who would be the ones who would possess supposedly accessible and permitted bodies, which would dismiss the authorization by the own subject’s desire or will?

### **Mothers, women, black and poor: the violence of the servitude position**

*Daiva*, the mother of one of the students of the second year, was one of the ones who helped us to frame that answer, in a situation of a fraternization party, with snacks and a soccer match, organized by some families, without the presence of the educators. In a certain moment, a group of children and their relatives called us in fear, due to the attitude

of a mother, who, according to them, was crazy or drunk, for she was talking to a ten-year-old-boy in a very angry way:

*Do you think you have blue blood? Just learn you also came from your mother's cunt, like he did. (Dalva)*

The fact that *Dalva* was out of her mind, instead of making people suppose that something very serious had happened, made them have suspect on her, and what she said was disqualified because of the way that she presented herself. When we asked her what that phrase referred to, *Dalva* explained that, when she was watching the students' soccer match, the boy who she had talked to had said to her son: *Kick this ball, little nigger!*

We believe it is important to meet the potency of that *Dalva's ill-said* within the power of those situations: the vigor or the excess that follow those speeches can reveal much more to us, up to some point, regarding the hostility present in the social bond, the insidious violence to which the subject feels subjected and his/her capacity to resist, than something that would point out to a pathology or aggressiveness inherent to that subject. *Dalva* had talked to a white boy, belonging to the middle-class, with undergraduate parents, in order to affirm that her son was like him, and the intensity and the fervor of her speech showed the measure of the violence and of the social humiliation that she had felt being expressed there. Her indignation required us to listen to that episode placing it as a domination conflict that crosses generations. As José Moura Gonçalves Filho reminds us, it is necessary to be aware to the relevance and to the necessity to link facts that, remaining disconnected for a long time, seem to be generated within the individual (Gonçalves Filho, Sader, & Koltai, 2012).

What started to be evident was the fact that several situations at school occurred because the students or their families denounced that they were being placed at a domination relation, occupying a domination place. *Dalva* convokes us to see that her son and she had a *second skin* that contracts realities and establishes a series of relations (Schwarcz, 2014). Being black, in Brazil, does not mean necessarily descending from ancestors who may have been slaves, but carrying marks that remind us of our slavery in the past, i.e., having some facial traits, skin color or type of hair that reminds us of a slavery and submission process (Segato, 2005).

The signifier *whore*, which was so insistently heard from the adolescents, evidenced this relation. Their mothers, continuously remembered as the one who would serve for providing pleasure to the other and that would be the other's object, pointed out to relations of symbolic contiguity with the ones who literally belonged to another one, enslaved women. Their mothers were being named that way for they were recognized only as women, mothers, poor and *black*. This is a very relevant identifying trace in Brazilian social imaginary, with a concrete and absolutely fundamental influence on the way that they are inserted within the discursive network, on the feeling of belonging, on the way of recognizing and being recognized of white or black subjects (Segato, 2005; Schwarcz, 2014). Those are social and political representations, which we consider identifying traces, and not homogeneous and fixed categories or identities, for the identification process is always integrated to the de-identification, in a way that one subject and another are never alike, and, what seems much stranger, one subject is not even like him/herself.

This point is fundamental: if the subject is always multi-faced and contradictory, disagreeing with oneself, the thrust that would so frequently seek to keep some mothers of

that school community seen as *whores* and some adolescents as *sons of a whore* evidences one of the modalities of violence and domination. The dominated are leveled up in a way that their plurality disappears, and only the inferiorization trace remains (Gonçalves Filho, Sader & Koltai, 2012). And that happens through two strands: one of the multiplicity of identifications of each subject that place them as if they were always identical to themselves, one and indivisible; the other strand concerns the diversity of the subjects who, contingently, share a common place in the discursive network, who are seen only and universally from the point of view of the submission and slavery trace.

*Silvana*, another interviewee, could transmit us that, explicitly. She reported a scene in which she was at a public place with her oldest son, whose skin is lighter than hers. When she was seen by a woman that she did not know, that woman immediately thought that *Silvana* was the boy's baby-sitter, not his mother. When she notices the misunderstanding, *Silvana* tells the woman that the boy is her son; then, the woman asks her if he were a result of some violent act committed by some male employer of hers.

We cannot help feeling, as Walter Benjamin (1940/2014) would say, the blow of the air that involved her ancestors and the echoes of voices of so many women who, before her, kept quiet. It is the servitude position that the look of a peer frequently gives it back to her, a black and poor woman, demanding us to remember the colonial Brazil with a division between the woman, the wife of the slaveholder, the stereotype of sinless-mommy and the women who did not meet those standards and carried the stigma of being "disqualified — remembering that one woman's place cannot be considered without another's. The speech of *Silvana's* interlocutor can be found in a repeated way in the speech of many Brazilian black women, denouncing a pasting between the woman who worked as a home maid and the one who would be seen as a body supposedly available. Despite of many historic changes, there would be social and symbolic contiguity relations from the "women who perform 'all' kinds of domestic tasks" to the regulated domestic work (Souza, 2012). It caused *Silvana* to be seen at a discursive position that has traces equivalent the wet nurse (which, in Brazilian slavery period, was an enslaved black woman who was chosen to breastfeed her owners' babies), the *mãe preta* (Brazilian Portuguese for "black mother"; it was an enslaved woman, who was responsible for the raising of her owners' children. Commonly, the wet nurse became the child's black mother) or the *mucama* (an enslaved woman who would work as a cleaner at her owners' house). In Brazilian history, all of these characters were women who worked on domestic tasks, but were also seen as "available" for sexual intercourse, at the will of their owners and their sons.

Such contiguity relations point to an impediment to the memory and to the production of a forgetfulness in relation to this slavery past that insists in updating itself. The try of silencing provokes a return, a repetition and the permanence of the violence that is not admitted or remembered. The myth of the racial democracy, with the supposed harmony at the mixture of races, accomplishes exactly the function of silencing, imposing itself as a fiction that omits how much that mixture stemmed from oppression and violence against black women. In this sense, we remember the "forgotten" of the official history, which is a historic and ethic demand (Gagnebin, 2015).

We are saying that, although the possibilities of recognition and insertion of a woman within the discursive network are infinite, the black poor woman is, numberless times, seen

only in a servitude position. One of the effects of the social discourse, aiming at the power maintenance and concentration, is the impoverishment and the desertification at the discursive and pulsional field, causing an aridity of worthy signifiers possible, with which the subject can identify him/herself, name and have his/her experiences named. Besides being a social abandonment, it is about a discursive abandonment (Rosa, 2016; Pujó, 2000).

With that, we are re-affirming that there is an unequal and unfair distribution of how the choices and the decisions fundamental for life are seen. To some, and only to them, there would be the right of being born and of mourning, understood as included in the subjective field and in the desire field. To others, their choices seem to be apart from the human experiences, as if they were integrated to a field of pure necessity, taken out and away from the pulsional field.

*Silvana* denounces precisely how much she notices this emptying of the pulsional dimension at the look that the other places on her, when she is questioned about her maternity and the birth of each of her children. The questions that she listens to in those situations evidence her that the other does not assume her situation as a desired or loving act, but a domination act. The scene with her oldest son was not an isolated situation, for she feels that it is repeated any time that someone knows that she has many children.

*When people ask me how many children I have, they say "Gosh! Nine kids!" I interrupt them right away, I say "but you know why?". (Silvana)*

*Silvana* pronounces the question that she assumes that the other would not make her, for it is only with this question that she could describe the birth of her children within a pulsional mesh. She says that in this mesh there are very old threads and marks, which started when she was a child.

*I saw my uncles and aunts, cousins, coming in and out and I thought to myself: "I want a home with many people". Since I was nine I've always wanted a big family. (Silvana)*

*It doesn't harm anyone. If it did, the other women of my family would not have had so many [children]. All my father's sisters have many. Only one had six, and another, four, but the others all have eight, nine, seven. (Silvana)*

The disapproval that she seems to listen from the other, although it is not completely explicit, appears to be the justification for her to start with *it doesn't harm*. She highlights the disproportion between the terms with which she noticed that she was named and what was transmitted to her in her family group. What she highlights is the importance of recovering the legitimacy and the value of certain family dynamics within her belonging group, among her peers, in her neighborhood, in her community, in her family, making a separation between what would be the Other's discourse and the disqualification of the hegemonic social discourse. She seems to be able to notice that the social and political discourse does not cover the language field, even though, aiming at keeping her power, she wears the mask of the Other's discourse to plot and to imprison the subject within her meshes (Rosa, 2016). This is even more marked when she tells us that she frequently listens to the question whether all of her children have the same father and the way that this question is made, which makes her think that there is something implied there, something that she tries to diminish.

*"If she had nine kids... will she have been a prostitute, will she have had sex with anyone?". (Silvana, 2014)*

*Silvan* calls our attention to a secret meeting arranged among generations (Benjamin, 1940/2014). In this meeting, this supposed “permission” on black poor women’s body, as well as the birth of their kids being mentioned as merely a reproduction process, would be transmitted to the following generation. It is worth to remember that, even among Brazilian historians, it was only from 1970, under the influence of a change of the paradigms of the American and European social history, that new formulations started to be provided on the enslaved family. Until then, the representations of how life within the slaves’ quarters would only bring ideas of sexual promiscuity, reinforcing a stereotyped view of the lack of bonds of solidarity and responsibility, in which the view of unstable unions and absent parents appeared very frequently (Slenes, 2013).

A way of domination is impeding the possibility of equivocation characteristic of the signifier, attached to the subject as something that would identify him/her and say completely who he/she is. *Silvana*’s children, before the social discourse, are easily talked about as stemming from a domination relationship, and not a relationship of desire of a couple, and then they are not recognized as the children of a desiring woman, whose desire would not finish in them and would be beyond them, but of a relationship inherent from servitude. To beyond the mother, the woman, the feminine desiring dimension indicates the necessary separation to give a child a place beyond her desire, in the *polis*. It also indicates, to the child, a direction and the desiring position to be accomplished, The continuous try to degrade the mother’s, the father’s and the child’s positions at the naming of *son of a bitch/son of a whore*, demonstrates a difficulty in relation to parental affiliation, not specifically within the family mesh, but within the social network.

## Final considerations

Focusing again on our Conversations Group, the adolescents seen as undisciplined or as having learning difficulties were the ones who insisted in denouncing the place of *rest* where they felt they were placed at within the social discourse. The subject subjected to the discursive abandonment can present speaking modalities very different from the one who has the assurance of a minimum field of signifiers to integrate his/her ghostly fiction. “Without possible addressing to the Other, the subject turns silent, being thrown to nonsense and to the difficulty of recognizing him/herself, his/her suffering, his/her truth, his/her space within the social bond and in the discourse.” (Rosa, 2016, p. 47).

The social and racial inequality causes differences of opportunities that are not restricted only to the access to goods; it is necessary to pay attention to the subjective effects of the differences concerning what is supposed as belonging to the pulsional field. When, at school or at a treatment space, the intention of communicating something that crosses people, to beyond their rational or conscious discourses, is assumed for some and not for others, the recognition of those subjects as having a right to have a worthy and singular human existence, inserted in a political and libidinal field, is produced. When, on the contrary, what is offered is the degradation of the speech and of the act of the subjects, as if there was not any communication crossed by coordinates of pleasure and enjoyment, the desire field

is transformed into instinct or necessity. Understanding the subject in an objectifying relation is a kind of violence, one who tries to take humanity out of the subject: when he/she is diminished by claims that place them within the animal field, their acts are considered as being out of the pulsional field, and their speech, their affection and their struggles are delegitimized.

In order to oppose that abandonment, it would be necessary to relocate those situations in the human field of shared experiences, restituting and composing a discursive field in which the subject's experiences can have other names. It is about *supporting them discursively*, questioning the signifiers of the *dis-* that are daily offered them by the social discourse, from *disorder* to *disqualification*, so that other forms of recognition can be evidenced, apart from the ones that are predominant in the hegemonic discourse, so the subject can, at last, ask him/herself about the emptiness that touches us and that is *common* to all of us (Alemán, 2013). In this sense, it is fundamental to distinguish what is the place of the *rest* in the social discourse and what is a subjectification of the lack, for the latter is what promotes desire, while the former is what violates and silences the subject.

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