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## **IDEOLOGY OF WHITE RACIAL SUPREMACY: COLONIZATION AND DE-COLONIZATION PROCESSES**

### *IDEOLOGIA DA SUPREMACIA RACIAL BRANCA: PROCESSOS DE COLONIZAÇÃO E DESCOLONIZAÇÃO*

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This article is a literature review on how the ideology of white racial supremacy dehumanizes and colonizes the minds of Whites and Blacks in Brazil. For this aim I use critical references about whiteness to highlight dehumanization processes in Whites, and I make use of critical references of Black and African studies to examine specific dehumanization processes of the Black population. Furthermore, the work seeks to reflect on possibilities of mental humanization and de-colonization in both groups considering current policies of Affirmative Action in Education in Brazil.

**Keywords:** ideology of white racial supremacy; colonization; de-colonization.

#### **RESUMO**

Este artigo é uma revisão de literatura sobre como a ideologia da supremacia racial branca desumaniza e coloniza a mente de brancos e negros no Brasil. Para tanto, utilizo referências críticas sobre branquitude para destacar processos de desumanização em brancos; e lanço mão de referências críticas dos estudos negros e africanos para analisar processos de desumanização específicos da população negra. Além disso, o trabalho busca refletir sobre possibilidades de humanização e descolonização mental em ambos os grupos a partir de políticas de Ações Afirmativas atuais na área de Educação no Brasil.

**Palavras-chave:** ideologia da supremacia racial branca; colonização; descolonização.

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Discussions about the racial oppressive reality of Brazil are of prominent importance. This country is known by its particular kind of racism, called the Brazilian Racism. Its features are designed by a threefold ideological base: myth of racial democracy, whitening and prejudice of color<sup>1</sup>. One of the consequences of this specific racial dynamic is the characteristic silence about racial issues. The institutionalized racism in media, school and family based on that threefold ideological set makes us, Brazilians, think that in Brazil we do not have racism. It means that, if we do not have racism we do not need to talk about it. That is why the silence about race is so expressive.

The consequences of Brazilian racism for the psychology of different groups (Whites, Blacks and Native Indigenous) vary according to their social place designated by ideology of white racial supremacy in the society. Among Blacks, for example, these consequences can be captured in the following example: When the Black Psychologist<sup>2</sup> Maria Lúcia da Silva says that during decades of clinical work she

identified that, even inside the families, silence about race issues is predominant. Because of the internalized racism and the idea that in Brazil we do not have racism, Blacks suffer the day to day discriminations of racist oppression but sometimes do not perceive this consciously as a social phenomenon and do not talk about it at home among family. According to the aforementioned psychologist, they internalize the dehumanization in an individualist process. This affects their psychology negatively and produces illness like low self-esteem, that means, when they carry all the burden of the social disqualification as their individual fault and the feeling of not being good enough.

This discussion will give a general idea about how our complex racist reality can be harmful to the psychology of those considered Whites and those considered Blacks in Brazil. This author understands that Native Indigenous reality deserves a specific attention according to its social, political and cultural context and it will not be the focus of this present work, although it will be mentioned when appropriate. Thus, the reality is that we do have an oppressive

racial society structured by the ideology of white racial supremacy. This ideology states that European descents and white skin people are superior to other peoples, like African and Native Indigenous (Bento & Carone, 2002; Cardoso, 2008; Instituto Amma, 2008; Nogueira, 2008; Schucman, 2012; Souza, 1983).

The Social Psychology literature in Brazil about the impacts of the white racial supremacy idea on society is quite recent and timid. It is not yet a consolidated area as it should be. It has mostly been produced since 2000. Two exceptions of it are the work of Neuza Santos Souza in 1983 and the work of Cida Bento in the beginning of 1990.

Most of the knowledge produced about the white supremacy idea focused on the negative impacts of it on the psychology of Black people, like the work of Cida Bento, Isildinha Nogueira, Maria Lucia da Silva, Elisa Larking Nascimento, Ricardo Franklin Ferreira, Gislene Aparecida do Santos, Ronilda Ribeiro (Nogueira, 2008). Just a very few works are concerned with and include white people as those who actually benefit from the unearned privilege of this unequal ideology. According to Lourenço Cardoso (2008) the main authors are Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, Edith Piza, César Rossato & Verônica Gesser, Cida Bento e Liv Sovik.

Therefore, this paper aim to present a literature review that shows dimensions involved in the psychology of Whites and Blacks within a society socially structured by the idea of white racial supremacy. Its purpose is to demonstrate that this ideology dehumanizes Whites and Blacks, as well as to present possible ways to overcome these negative processes in search for a more just and democratic society through policies of Affirmative Action in Education, such as the inclusion of Blacks and Native Indigenous in universities and the requirement of teaching Afro-Brazilian history and Culture in schools (Lei 10.639, 2003).

In order to analyze the situation of both groups, Whites and Blacks, I will use some critical references produced in Brazil and also in United States. Even though the context of U.S. racial relations is socially and historically different from Brazil, their critical production about whiteness, blackness and africanity can be helpful to understand the impacts of the white racial supremacy idea on the psychology of white and black Brazilians.

This analysis assumes that ideologies and social categories are created and reproduced historically and affects the lives of people who constitute society. Furthermore, despite the hegemonic relations imposed

daily on our lives in Brazil, they are not the only models of relationships in our society. It is of utmost importance that future research on ethnic-racial relation be made to understand and possibly be combined with different cultural models for the transformation of Brazilian reality.

### **Ideology of white racial supremacy in Brazil**

The ethnic-racial relations analyzed here are those that happen among tensions socio-historically produced and reproduced since the period of European colonization in the world and in Brazil. These relations use domination strategies to colonize people as a way to deploy the system of power that governs the modern Western society (Dussel, 1997; Fanon, 1963, 1983; Memmi, 2007; Quijano, 2005;).

These ethnic-racial relationships contain politics of identity based on the ideology of white racial supremacy which is the foundation of racism. Therefore, studies point that such politics give a symbolic and material privileged position for subjects of white appearance and European origin when they are in relation with Blacks or Indigenous descents (Cardoso, 2008; Nogueira, 2008; Schucman, 2012; Sovik, 2004). These hierarchical, unequal and inhuman relations between colonizers and colonized, which are based on race, mainly contributed to the foundation of global capitalism and all the modern Western society. For this reason I termed this politic of identity as colonial / modern.

Although the Colonial period is over, its rationale still remains running within the social relations, structures of power, social division of work, production of knowledge and identities. This process has been called coloniality (Dussel, 1997; Lander, 2005; Quijano, 2005). Those coloniality processes based on white racial supremacy and racism have served to “shape minds” (Martín-Baró, 2009) or to “colonize minds” (Nobles, 2006). In the following sections I will present some reflections about how the idea of white racial supremacy colonizes the minds of Whites and Blacks in Brazil promoting different dehumanization processes in each group. As well as possible transformations from an inhuman condition to one that seeks humanization. It can also be called mind de-colonization or liberation (Martín-Baró, 2009; Nobles, 2006).

For this purpose it is important to contextualize whiteness because it can have different meanings according to the socio-historical context of each place. A White Brazilian Social Psychologist called

Lia Vainer Schucman (in press, author's translation) highlights that "in the USA, whiteness is strictly related to the ethnic and genetic origin of each person. In Brazil, being white relates to appearance, status and phenotype; in South Africa, phenotype and origin are important demarcations of whiteness".

Thereby, being White assumes different meanings, which are culturally shared in different locations. In the USA, being White means not having black blood, that is, if a person has one drop of black blood she<sup>3</sup> is considered neither White nor Black. It is called one drop rule and it defines whiteness in contraposition to blackness. It can be said that to be White means not be Black.

In Brazil, the rule is different; being White is defined by skin color, the reason why the phenotype and appearance prevail on the genetic origin. A person can be considered White if she does not have dark skin. Even if she has black blood, her skin color is pale, and she has social status, she can be considered White. It is important to note that also in this situation whiteness is defined in contraposition to blackness. This social determination of whiteness in Brazil can be very confusing and delicate. The consequence of this is that we have in Brazil a gradient of color for discrimination: the darker the skin color, the more one suffers discrimination. This can happen in the Brazilian context because the ideology of white racial supremacy blends with the threefold ideology: myth of racial democracy, whitening and prejudice of color.

Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1957), an Afro-Brazilian sociologist and politician, wrote about the social pathology of the White Brazilian. His work points that the pathology of the White Brazilian is because she is ashamed of the Black/African ancestry and culture while uplifting only the White/European culture, from which she is not fully part. Thus, being White in Brazil is a social function and implies to play an anti-blackness role that carries with it a certain authority or automatic respect, eliminating barriers and allowing transit in society (Cardoso, 2008; Schucman, 2012; Sovik, 2004).

Beyond the Brazilian context, whiteness is mainly captured by the notion of privilege. According to Schucman (2012), Cardoso, (2008), Jensen (2005), Ware (2004), Bento and Carone (2002), and Smith (1994) it is a position where subjects with white appearance and European origin acquire symbolic and material privileges when they are in relation to non-Whites or Blacks. Also, this privilege is maintained by invisibility strategies; strategies that hide the socio-historical construction of whiteness and impose it as

a universal model of humanity, such as the following rationale.

Schucman (2012) points that the idea of invisibility is complex. It does not mean that white racial identity is invisible, but it is seen by ones and not by others. The author indicates that the white racial identity can be announced or made invisible depending on one's interest. In this same direction Cardoso (2008) affirms that whiteness is not invisible for Whites and serves to distinguish Whites among themselves, as it is in the case of the poor and the rich White.

Beneath this strategy runs a kind of naturalization of the white racial superiority that gives an impression that people appearing white are naturally more beautiful, more intelligent, more human and "should" serve as a model for others. Those on the margin or outside of this model, like Africans and Indigenous, live in a subjective state of "lack" of something, lack of whiteness (Bento & Carone, 2002; Nogueira, 2008; Souza, 1983).

Again, everyone involved suffers processes of dehumanization and mind colonization, Whites and Blacks. The following topics will present analyses about the different dehumanization processes lived by those considered Whites and Blacks according to the lens of the white racial supremacy ideology.

### **White racial supremacy and the Whites**

Those who consider themselves Whites or are considered as such and accept all the unearned privilege uncritically (Cardoso, 2008), they live an illusory overvaluation condition of their appearance and ways of being. This social place creates barriers that disable them to recognize other ways, as human as theirs, of being and living in the world. Thus, they refuse to acknowledge the humanity of the Other<sup>4</sup>, otherwise they would need to recognize that their social place dehumanizes other peoples. In so doing, they also cannot recognize their own humanity within this inhuman relationship with the Other (Memmi, 2007).

To put it in a different way, when one does not recognize that the Other can be different and as human as oneself, and treats the Other as less human or not human, one is not able or refuse to understand that both may have different historical and cultural forms of belonging among humanity. Such position represents the dehumanization process or the state of colonized mind for Whites living in a racist society.

The overvaluation condition of the white racial identity is very expressive in television in Brazil. The great majority of Brazilians, from lower to higher social classes, watch soap operas every day. However, these TV shows do not represent the diversity of the ethnic-racial group reality in Brazil. Most of them focus on the lifestyle of the white upper urban middle class, and when other realities are shown, they appear from the perspective of that specific social group. Hence, this fact conveys the idea that the white lifestyle is the norm. Beneath this perspective, it is implied that other lifestyles, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous, are at least not normal or at last wrong or primitive or not worthy.

In regard to ethnic-racial relations, if a person is not able to understand and recognize that others may have other origins and may belong to other cultures as human as hers, she is not able to recognize that her own origin and her cultural belonging is not inherently better. Therefore, to be white uncritically (Cardoso, 2008) in social relations based on the ideology of white supremacy is precisely not to be able to see / perceive / recognize cultural differences (invisibility of whiteness) and not to realize or reject that other ways of being and living in the world are possible (naturalization of a single model). Consequently, the very development of the humanity of hers is forbidden. The person does not see or understand herself as culturally different from other people, but as the only possible kind of cultural model in the world (privileged condition).

In this sense, despite of contextual differences from the U.S., Jensen (2005), a White North American researcher who developed critical thinking and action in relation to whiteness says:

Maybe we should start by openly telling the truth: whiteness – the whole constellation of practices, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, that are mixed up with being white – is the problem. Whiteness is degraded and deprived, an insane belief that one can find meaning in life simply by virtue of being on top of a racial hierarchy. To the degree that we accept any of the meaning that the dominant society gives to whiteness, we white people are degraded and deprived. To the degree those illusions of superiority linger in me, I am degraded and deprived. (p. 93)

Jensen (2005) assumes that the focus of the race problem is in the whiteness, the social place that it creates and those who are privileged by its ideology. This political shift in the perspective of ethnic-racial relations studies is significantly important for the production of knowledge in Brazil. In this country, researches about ethnic-racial relations have historically been done focusing the problem on the

Black population. Just very recently, in those few critical whiteness studies cited, Brazilian thinkers have addressed to White people in this problematic relation (Bento & Carone, 2002; Sovik, 2004). Cardoso (2008) affirms that the emergence of whiteness as a research subject relates particularly to the protagonism of the Black movement. He also suggests that White scholars should be more critical about themselves and their work within whiteness.

Following Jensen's (2005) idea, I can say that the degradation and depravity of whiteness are related to the so called mind colonization. Therefore, degraded and deprived White people who believe uncritically in the insanity of white racial supremacy suffer dehumanization processes and develop a complex of superiority. Within this situation, they produce and reproduce inhuman social relations and society.

From these understandings, I identify and suggest three dimensions for the process of humanization or mental de-colonization to occur in Whites. First, one needs to realize that there are other ways of being and living in the world, ways that are different from her model and which are as human as hers. According to this stance, Jensen (2005) states:

Again, in many situation that shift is important, as white people learn more about other cultures and, we hope, understand both the unique contributions that various cultures make and the way in which all cultures share certain common qualities and values. Such understanding can contribute to the breakdown of white supremacy. (p. 03)

When someone has the sincere opening to learn with other peoples and cultures, as Freire (1987) states, this simple act is already a qualitative behavioral shift in social relations. In order to learn with someone, a person needs to recognize some humanity in the Other or see and act toward the Other which is as human as her. The humanization process can become even more effective while the White person learns, understands and recognizes the importance of the contributions of the different groups for the society and the whole humanity. In so doing, the White person can start to rupture the ideology of white racial supremacy and mind colonization.

The Affirmative Action in Brazilian universities can become an excellent opportunity to develop those humanization processes in Whites. Despite all polemic discussions, the fact that Blacks and Native Indigenous people will have now a greater inclusion in this historically white social place designs a chance of different cultural encounter and learning. The university will not be a white bubble anymore. Colored people



will bring with them not just a visual demographic impact to this place, but also and fundamentally, they will carry on with them and produce knowledge about their life experience and historical and cultural skills. White people who have a sincere opening to learn will have a chance to understand and recognize the human contribution that Blacks and Native Indigenous people gave and still give to the Brazilian society.

Probably, during this behavioral transformation, the White person will also pass through a second level process in which she will perceive and deal with the social degradation produced by whiteness. Thus, one will be able to develop a collective consciousness that her way of being in the world, based on the ideology of white racial supremacy, has historically oppressed other peoples for the purpose of domination and coercion. Ultimately, this awareness can lead the White person to the following understanding pointed by Jensen (2005):

We know we have things because others don't... and it doesn't feel good, in part because to be fully human is to seek communication with others, not separation from them, and one cannot find that connection under conditions in which unjust power brings unearned privilege. To be fully human is to reject a system that conditions your pleasure on someone else's pain. (p. XX)

The author is categorical; there is no possibility to establish social relations that produce humanization among unequal, unjust, unbalanced and hierarchical relationships. And he adds, in order to be fully human people must seek communication and must pursue collective development and well being for all. Again, this requires sincere opening and the recognition of the humanity of the Other (Freire, 1987; Jensen, 2005).

Returning to the reflection about the Affirmative Action in Brazilian universities, the presence of Blacks and Native Indigenous people in these places that have been historically white will highlight the institutional structure that kept those two groups on the margin. The unjust power, the unearned privilege and the hierarchical relation will all be in evidence. White people will feel it, and if they decide to keep the humanization achievement, they will need to deal with this uncomfortable situation.

This means that they need to take a position about the institutional structure and how to relate with it. This same perspective is pointed by Cardoso (2008) when he says that the first task for Whites could be individual daily dedication and then insistence of criticism and self-criticism regarding the privileges of their own group.

So, the collective awareness that the white model is not the only model of humanity that is worthy, and that it has historically oppressed and massacred other peoples is a meaningful understanding for a White person who is searching for de-colonize her mind. In this sense, the third level of the process is when one can get contact and learn how to respect other models of humanity, as well as engage and build sincere relationships with people of different culture and history. Then, together they can dialogue and collectively construct social relations that are more just and democratic.

Jensen (2005) goes further and points out that to really change the social structures in order to de-colonize society it is necessary in-depth ethical and political commitment:

Being not-racist is not enough. To be a fully moral person, one must find some way to be antiracist as well. Because white people benefit from living in a white-supremacist society, there is an added obligation for us to struggle against the injustice of that system. (p. 80)

For Jensen (2005) it is not enough for White people simply to police themselves and not to take racist attitudes in their day-to-day life (family, work, school, etc.). This will not change society. It will continue to be structured on the basis of the white racial supremacy and White people will always benefit from that, whether they like it or not. In this case, the author goes in the same rationale of Albert Memmi (2007), an African philosopher from Tunisia, pointing that White people have an additional duty: the obligation of positioning themselves ethically and politically as anti-racist and engaging in struggles against institutional racism, against the power structures that maintain white racial supremacy. So then, we can start thinking about a truly democratic and just society.

Ultimately, Affirmative Action in Brazilian universities will become an opportunity not just to breakdown the white racial supremacy ideology among White people but also an opportunity to struggle and change the institutional racism aiming to de-colonize the society and construct it in a more just and democratic way.

As a result of this reflection, I suggest that the mind de-colonization process in Whites involves a human metamorphosis from a condition in which the person perceives herself as superior to or more privileged than other human beings to a condition in which one recognizes, respects and communicates with other peoples or groups as human as hers, seeking humanization for all. This involves a true ethical and

political commitment with social change regarding the structure of the society based on the white racial supremacy.

### **White racial supremacy and the Blacks**

The second analysis of this article is about the impact of the white racial supremacy ideology, since the Colonial period, on people who consider themselves or are considered Black. Being Black by the lens of that racist idea generates different forms of dehumanization from those previously described. In this case what happen are systematic and secular attacks toward the humanity of Africans, Indigenous, Aborigines and their descendants. The sense of belonging to human kind was and still is disqualified and denied to these peoples as part of the process of colonizing their minds. Numerous ideological strategies and practices to dominate and oppress were developed based on white supremacy. The colonizers goal was to inculcate into the colonized ones that they were not as human as them or were not even human (Fanon, 1963, 1983; Memmi, 2007).

Wade Nobles (2009), an African-American psychologist and one of the founders of the Psychology centered on African worldview<sup>5</sup>, uses the metaphor of derailment to represent the impact of Arabic and European colonization processes in African psychosocial development. According to him, “the metaphor of derailment is important because when it occurs the train keeps moving off the rails; cultural derailment of the African people is hard to detect because life and experience continue” (p. 284, author’s translation). However, an imminent task is to recognize and respect the self-definition of the African as a human being, as well as historical and contemporary processes intended to destroy this meaning or reset it to dominate and oppress Africans. According to the author, “this process of decentralization or de-africanization is the psychological key issue in understanding the experience of Africans throughout the Diaspora” (p.285, author’s translation).

Nobles understands that Africans are all Black people in the continent and in Diaspora, and this includes Black population in Brazil. His point is that colonizers questioned and attacked the very sense of humanity of Africans in order to colonize their minds and use their workforce. So de-africanization is a fundamental part of Black’s mind colonization.

One example of this de-africanization process in Brazil is the secular attacks made against the Afro-Brazilian religions. Since the colonial period, the

Catholic Church and currently, the Evangelical Church have been demonizing and chasing Candomblé, Umbanda, Xango, as well as other Afro-Brazilian cultures. What is behind this harassment is that those practices are grounded in and reproduce secularly the very sense of what it is to be human in an African perspective. In order words, within those practices Black people in Brazil were and still are able to make up their humanity even though they live in a racist society like ours (Nogueira, 2008).

It is within these psychosocial dimensions that the threefold racist ideological base operates in Brazil. Briefly, whitening was a governmental politic installed in the country right after the abolishment of slavery in 1888. At that moment the population of Brazil was two third Africans descents; and one third Europeans and Indigenous and their descendents (Ribeiro, 2000). The government promoted the miscegenation of population while interrupted the African immigration and stimulated the European immigration with the purpose of whitening the nation. This politic was aligned with the national and international ideological propagation that Brazil was a racial democracy (Freyre, 1987).

The prejudice of color was one of the results of the atmosphere promoted by the idea and practice of miscegenation among Brazilians. So, what happens in Brazil until today is that the darker one’s skin is, the more discrimination she suffers, and the lighter one’s skin is, the more acceptance attitudes she may experience. But this certain acceptance only happens if the Black person hides or denies her African origin and adopts the white Eurocentric way of being in the world (Bento & Carone, 2002; Souza, 1987). Again, it is the de-africanization strategy operating to colonize the Black’s mind.

It is a perverse situation where Blacks were and still are submitted to the message of whitening based on the white supremacy ideology, which implies the idea that to be a person or a human being would mean, among other things, to be white. In other words, for Blacks, whitening would improve the race as a condition to become human (Fanon, 1983; Nobles, 2009; Nogueira, 1998; Nogueira, 2008; Souza, 1983). In this sense, African ways of being and living were and still are qualified as savage, primitive and non-human. For Nobles (2009), “whitening is a psychological attack to Black Brazilians’ fundamental sense of what it means to be a human person” (p. 287, author’s translation).

Therefore, Blacks have their humanity denied twice; by its historical and cultural origin and by the brand they carry on the body: black skin (Fanon,

1983; Nogueira, 1998; Nogueira, 2008; Souza, 1983). When African descendants internalize this ideological imposition of white racial supremacy and the double negation of themselves, they tend to develop a “desire to get closer to whiteness” (p. 289). This desire, according to Nobles (2009) and Akbar (2004), features a debilitating, pathological and destructive psychological condition. According to Nobles (2009) when:

Africans in Brazil, like everywhere, regardless of biological mixture, have this uncontrollable desire to be white, or want to get closer to whiteness, or suffer the illusion that they are not blacks; they should be clinically diagnosed as suffering from trauma caused by prolonged and constant experience of psychological terrorism. (p. 289)

A similar conclusion was proposed by Souza (1983) about Black Brazilians that ascended socially and economically in our society. Other psychologists in Brazil and all over the world are pointing to the depth psychological damage produced by the ideology of white racial supremacy in Black people’s mind (Bento & Carone, 2002; Fanon, 1983; Instituto Amma, 2008; Nogueira, 2008; Memmi, 2007; Nobles, 2006, 2009; Nogueira, 1998; Souza, 1983). In 1981 Na’im Akbar (2004), an African-American psychologist and co-founder of the Psychology based on African worldview, proposed four distortions or disorders of the Black personality in societies typically rolled by oppression, racism and white racial supremacy. They will be presented briefly because, despite of the contextual and historical differences between the USA and Brazil, those descriptions of the disorders seem to be useful also in the Brazilian reality.

The first is the alien self disorder, in which the person behaves in ways that are contrary to her nature and survival. She learns to act in contradiction to her welfare and, in consequence, she is “alienated” in relation to herself. Her natural phenotype and everything that records an African physical appearance displeases her (Nobles, 2009; Akbar, 2004).

The second is the anti-self disorder, in which the person expresses open or disguised hostility in relation to her own group and therefore, herself. She overly identifies herself with the dominant group and imitates or internalizes the hostility and the negativity of this group toward her own group (Akbar, 2004; Nobles, 2009).

In the third personality disorder, the self destructive, the people affected engage in destructive escapes of reality, such as drugs, romantic crimes, fantasies of acceptance, and so on. Crimes committed

by blacks against blacks are all symptomatic of the self-destructive disorder (Akbar, 2004; Nobles, 2009).

Finally, Akbar (2004) notes that there are physiological, neurological and biochemical dysfunctions provoking personality disorders. They are due to longtime (secular) racial inequalities in health care, education, housing and other socioeconomic conditions of life.

Nobles (2009) suggests that secular exposition to a society ruled by such great human disqualification, as whitening, made Blacks believe that their reactions and accommodations to racial oppressions constitute their normal or natural way of being. Furthermore, the author indicates that many Black Brazilians have denied their africanity for so many generations, accepting the false identity of being just Brazilians, that they do not perceive the attack against their human value and welfare anymore.

In order to Blacks overcome this social-historical inhuman process, Nobles (2009) indicates the necessity of therapeutic and clinical interventions. Those should project specific rehabilitation processes to support, stimulate and sustain behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, abilities and culturally relevant activities. They should have the objective of reproducing and refining what is best in africanity.

Nogueira (2008) in research about Blacks that practice *capoeira angola* found that Afro-Brazilian cultures that aim to preserve the African roots in their practices are the place with excellence to reconnect, to recover, to heal and to straighten the very sense of what it means to be human in an African perspective even though they live in a racist society. The ritual, the social relations, the values and philosophy and the community spirit make up a particular environment where people can learn how to be human in an Afro-Brazilian way and to struggle for a better society. Also, the law 10.639 (2003) that states all schools must teach Afro-Brazilian history and culture can become a powerful instrument to humanize Blacks in a broader way if not just the content but also the Afro-Brazilian manner be entered.

In this educational context Blacks should be able to recognize their own cultural conceptualization of what it means to be human. They should recognize the humanity of their original people. They should reconnect with their ancestral history and culture from the continent to the diaspora searching for historical, cultural and philosophical elements that will allow them to restore the meaning of humanity. That is, what it means to be a person or a human being within the African perspective.



In this sense, Nobles (2009) affirms that “simply not knowing, not admitting or denying being African limits our ability to heal ourselves and understand our human connection, as well as limits our ability to really take care of each other and heal each other” (p.291, author’s translation). The author highlights that African conception of what it means to be a person also dictates the conception of self. Thus, according to the African (Black) philosophy, the conceptualization of self (person) is in fact an extended self (Nobles, 1973, 1976). “That is to say, the African self-concept was by philosophical definition we instead of I.” (Nobles, 2006, p. 127) Therefore, according to this cultural determination, the patient has to be the whole community and the task is to heal the whole race. It is a collective humanitarian achievement that needs to be developed both in the diaspora and in the continent.

Thus, to de-colonize Black’s mind can mean a metamorphosis from an individualistic inhuman condition to another in which the person feels an integral part of her community, belonging to a group or people which gives cultural meaning to life. From there, one can have an African cultural base to analyze the socio-historical dehumanization processes that her people passed through. And also, one has the possibility to recognize the humanity of peoples and cultures developing a critical reading of the world. This critical reading can open up the possibility of engaging in dialogue with the Other seeking to construct a more democratic and just society for all.

### (In) Conclusion

This literature review aimed to provide an articulation of understandings about how the sense of humanity in Whites and Blacks is negatively impacted by the ideology of white racial supremacy. Those impacts are different on each group. Whites are dehumanized by a complex of superiority and Blacks are dehumanized by a complex of inferiority, both resulting from a historical mind colonization process.

The struggle to overcome those inhuman conditions involves different efforts from each group but, as it was shown, policies of Affirmative Action in Education, like the access of Blacks and Native Indigenous people to universities and the Law 10.639 in schools, can make up excellent opportunities to overcome those inhuman conditions individually and collectively.

In both policies, Whites have the opportunity to relate, learn, respect and dialogue with other groups

that have been historically marginalized and hopefully transform themselves and help to transform society. Also for Blacks (and Native Indigenous), those policies may represent an opportunity to reconnect, to recognize and to heal themselves based on their own history and cultural background. Those are social, educational and political potentialities of our current Brazilian reality. Its development and success will depend on the effort of everyone to make this humanization and de-colonizing processes become true.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> To better understand about Brazilian reality see: Nobles (2009); Nascimento (2006); Santos (2002); Ribeiro (2000); Munanga (1999); Skidmore (1992); Freyre (1987), and Valente (1987).
- <sup>2</sup> This report was given to me by Maria Lucia da Silva, in 2007. At that moment, we were talking about her clinical work with Afro-Brazilians in the *Instituto Amma – Psique e Negritude*. She was one of the founders, in the beginning of 1990, of this first institute in Brazil that works with psychology and Afro-Brazilian population.
- <sup>3</sup> I use the feminine article on this paper in order to respect and highlight gender differences and perspectives in a textual writing.
- <sup>4</sup> I use Other with the first capital letter because I intend to stress the difference; the others different to oneself.
- <sup>5</sup> African (Black) Psychology is defined as a system of knowledge (philosophy, definitions, concepts, models, procedures, and practice) concerning the nature of the social universe from the perspectives of African cosmology. African American Psychology can be traced to ancient Egypt in 3200 B.C. Ancient Egypt was known as Kemet.

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