











## ACADEMIC TRAINING AND POLITICAL ACTION: NEIAB IN THE PRODUCTION OF AFFIRMATIVE POLICIES AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF MARINGÁ-PR<sup>1</sup>

Delton Aparecido Felipe<sup>2</sup>    
Ana Paula Herrera de Souza<sup>3</sup>    
Catarina Messias Alves<sup>4</sup>    
Lílian Amorim Carvalho<sup>5</sup>  

### Abstract

This article aims to present the trajectory of the Center for Afro-Brazilian Interdisciplinary Studies at the State University of Maringá-PR (NEIAB/UEM) to promote policies to combat institutional racism. Based on the records of the experiences and activities that the nucleus develops and the analysis of the institution's documents relating to the adoption of affirmative actions for access to undergraduate and postgraduate courses, the possibilities and institutional limits for NEIAB's activities are discussed at UEM. With this, it was possible to observe an ambiguous process that highlights, on the one hand, the limitation of advancement and institutionalization of the agenda through the institutional structure and, on the other, the importance of centers such as NEIAB for the implementation of affirmative policies to combat racism in educational institutions.

**Keywords:** Anti-racist education; NEIAB/UEM; Affirmative policies; Institutional racism.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation performed with the assistance of AI-GEMINI.

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D. in Education from the State University of Maringá. Professor in the Department of History and the Professional Master's Program in History Teaching at the State University of Maringá. Maringá - Paraná, Brazil. Email: ddelton@gmail.com.

<sup>3</sup> Master's student in Education in the Graduate Program in Education at the State University of Maringá (PPE/UEM). Researcher at the Center for Interdisciplinary Afro-Brazilian Studies (NEIAB-UEM). Email: herrera12souza@gmail.com.

<sup>4</sup> Ph.D. candidate in the Graduate Program in Education at the State University of Maringá (PPE/UEM). Researcher at the Center for Interdisciplinary Afro-Brazilian Studies (NEIAB/UEM). Email: catarina06alves@gmail.com.

<sup>5</sup> Ph.D. candidate in Sociology at the State University of Londrina. Researcher at the Center for Interdisciplinary Afro-Brazilian Studies (NEIAB/UEM). Maringá - Paraná, Brazil. Email: lilianamorimcarvalho@gmail.com.

## **ENTRE FORMAÇÃO ACADÊMICA E A ATUAÇÃO POLÍTICA: O NEIAB NA PRODUÇÃO DE POLÍTICAS AFIRMATIVAS NA UNIVERSIDADE ESTADUAL DE MARINGÁ-PR**

**Resumo:** Este artigo tem por objetivo apresentar a trajetória do Núcleo de Estudos Interdisciplinares Afro-Brasileiros da Universidade Estadual de Maringá-PR (NEIAB/UEM) para o impulsionamento de políticas de enfrentamento ao racismo institucional. A partir dos registros das experiências e atividades que o núcleo desenvolve e da análise de documentos da instituição relativos à adoção de ações afirmativas para acesso a cursos de graduação e pós-graduação, discute-se as possibilidades e os limites institucionais para a atuação do NEIAB na UEM. Com isso, foi possível observar um processo ambíguo que evidencia, de um lado, a limitação do avanço e da institucionalização da pauta mediante a estrutura institucional e, de outro, a importância de núcleos como o NEIAB para a efetivação de políticas afirmativas de combate ao racismo nas instituições de ensino.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação antirracista; NEIAB/UEM; Políticas Afirmativas; Racismo institucional.

## **ENTRE FORMACIÓN ACADÉMICA Y ACCIÓN POLÍTICA: NEIAB EN LA PRODUCCIÓN DE POLÍTICAS AFIRMATIVAS EN LA UNIVERSIDAD ESTADUAL DE MARINGÁ-PR**

**Resumen:** Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar la trayectoria del Centro de Estudios Interdisciplinarios Afrobrasileños de la Universidad Estadual de Maringá-PR (NEIAB/UEM) para promover políticas de combate al racismo institucional. A partir de los registros de las experiencias y actividades que desarrolla el núcleo y del análisis de los documentos de la institución relacionados con la adopción de acciones afirmativas para el acceso a cursos de pregrado y posgrado, se discuten las posibilidades y límites institucionales para las actividades del NEIAB en la UEM. Con esto, se pudo observar un proceso ambiguo que resalta, por un lado, la limitación del avance e institucionalización de la agenda a través de la estructura institucional y, por el otro, la importancia de centros como NEIAB para la implementación de políticas afirmativas. Políticas para combatir el racismo en las instituciones educativas.

**Palabras clave:** Educación antirracista; NEIAB/UEM; Políticas afirmativas; Racismo institucional.

## Introduction

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The Afro-Brazilian Studies Centers (NEABs) emerge in the Brazilian academic landscape as an institutional response to the need to recognize and value African and Afro-Brazilian contributions to the formation of Brazilian society. Their establishment is embedded in a context of civil rights struggles, affirmative policies, and a growing movement advocating for the appreciation of Black culture, particularly from the 1980s and 1990s onward. This period was marked by intense social and political mobilizations that pressured for significant changes in how racial issues were addressed in universities and public policies in general.

The creation of these centers represented a crucial step towards institutionalizing studies and research focused on racial issues, enhancing visibility and respect for Afro-Brazilian traditions and knowledge. Since their foundation, NEABs have played a vital role in fostering academic debates, producing critical knowledge, and implementing affirmative actions within Brazilian universities. These centers have become spaces of resistance and opposition to racism, contributing to the formation of critical awareness regarding racial inequalities and strengthening Afro-Brazilian identity. Moreover, they serve as key agents in the articulation of educational policies aimed at racial equity, collaborating with social movements and other institutions in the construction of a more just and inclusive society.

It is important to highlight that Brazil's re-democratization process, initiated in the 1980s, was a crucial factor in the creation of Afro-Brazilian Studies Centers, as well as in the strengthening of discussions on affirmative actions across various societal sectors. Silva (2021) asserts that the first study centers dedicated to reflections on the Afro-Brazilian population and culture became visible in the late 1970s, coinciding with the efforts to establish the Unified Black Movement (MNU).

The history of NEABs is closely linked to the actions of the Black movement amidst the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution, which officially recognized racism as a crime, among other advancements. Rios (2018, p. 261) highlights that:

[...] the Black movement, in coordination with legislators aligned with its projects, secured some of the most significant constitutional gains in the history of Republican Brazil. Although previous constitutions prohibited racial discrimination, it was through intense parliamentary and extra-parliamentary interaction—wherein a mature and bipartisan articulation of Black-identified legislators and activists took place—that, in the 1988 Constitution, racism was classified as an unbailable and imprescriptible crime (Article 5, section XLII). This achievement not only made the punishment for

racism and discrimination more severe but also enshrined a limited set of principles recognizing Brazilian racial plurality" (Silva, 2002).

As Gomes (2011) points out, it is within this context that scientific production in the country underwent significant transformations, driven by the increasing presence of Black intellectuals in Brazilian universities, which contributed to the expansion of studies and research on racial issues. Martins (2022) further emphasizes that the origin of NEABs in higher education institutions is tied to the activism of the Black movement and an academic Black identity that, especially between the late 20th and early 21st centuries, spearheaded numerous initiatives and events aimed at exposing Brazilian racism through academic and scientific productions while promoting policies for racial equality.

NEABs form an extensive and diverse network of centers dedicated to racial themes, coordinated by the National Consortium of Afro-Brazilian Studies Centers (Conneabs) of the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers (ABPN). In general, they aim to strengthen academic production, promote the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture in higher education institutions, and advocate for anti-racist education policies. Currently, approximately 138 NEABs are distributed across various Brazilian universities, spanning all five regions of the country (ABPN, [2024]). While they share common objectives related to ethnic-racial education and the appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture, these centers may differ in their specific activities. It is within this formation and historical context of NEABs that the Afro-Brazilian Interdisciplinary Studies Center at the State University of Maringá (NEIAB/UEM), located in Maringá-PR, is situated. Established on November 21, 2007, through Ordinance No. 1190/2007-GRE, as a program linked to the Department of Social Sciences of the Center for Human Sciences, Letters, and Arts at the mentioned university (DCS/UEM), NEIAB has played a fundamental role in producing knowledge and anti-racist policies at the institution throughout its trajectory. This article aims to present NEIAB's trajectory, highlighting its role in advancing policies to combat institutional racism.

Based on records of the experiences and activities conducted by the center and an analysis of institutional documents related to the adoption of affirmative actions for access to undergraduate and graduate programs, we seek to discuss the institutional possibilities and limitations regarding NEIAB's role at UEM. To this end, the article first presents the center's history, emphasizing its main activities since its inception, including its engagement in discussions on affirmative actions when the university began deliberating on the quota system until the adoption of the Black Quota System in 2019. Subsequently, we discuss the

implementation process of this system, which involves NEIAB's direct participation, considering the impacts of this policy. Finally, based on the center's experiences in this process, we present the scope and limitations that define the institutional framework for either the advancement or restriction of affirmative policies to combat racism at UEM.

### **NEIAB/UEM as a promoter of affirmative actions at the university**

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NEIAB/UEM was established as a research and university extension program and, as such, seeks to foster discussions on prejudice and racial discrimination against the Black population, advocating for affirmative actions that promote racial equality. This character aligns with the broader process of forming these centers, in which activism and science are interconnected, driving a new way of producing knowledge aimed at responding to social demands, specifically those of the Black Brazilian population.

It is important to emphasize that NEABs and related groups work towards strengthening the anti-racist agenda and promoting affirmative action policies. Among their key roles is the implementation of Federal Law No. 10.639/2003, which made the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture mandatory in schools, along with its curricular guidelines (Brazil, 2003). These centers are identified as fundamental agents with specific responsibilities outlined in the National Implementation Plan for the National Curricular Guidelines on Ethnic-Racial Relations Education and the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (2013). According to this document, NEABs and related groups in higher education institutions are responsible for:

- a) Collaborating in the initial and continuing education of teachers and undergraduate students in Ethnic-Racial Relations Education and the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture, in accordance with Resolution CNE/CP No. 01/2004, Opinion CNE/CP No. 03/2004, and Laws No. 10.639/03 and No. 11.645/08; b) Developing specific teaching materials for classroom use on Ethnic-Racial Relations Education and Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture, in compliance with Resolution CNE/CP No. 01/2004 and Opinion CNE/CP No. 03/2004; c) Mobilizing resources for the implementation of this topic, to meet the needs of continuing teacher education and the production of teaching materials for Municipal and State Education Departments and/or research related to the development of educational technologies addressing this theme; d) Disseminating and making available studies, research, teaching materials, and continuing education

activities to the communication bodies of education systems (Brazil, 2013, p. 44).

Since its foundation, NEIAB has been involved in various outreach activities organized both by the center itself and by other institutions<sup>6</sup>. These activities covered a wide range of topics, including African-derived religions, ethnic-racial education, African history, Black identity, racism in schools, racial quotas, quilombola communities, Afrofuturism, and the works of influential intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon, among others. Additionally, the center carried out initiatives in partnership with Black social movements in Maringá-PR and the surrounding region, including lectures in schools, study groups, discussion circles, film screenings, and exhibitions. NEIAB also responded to invitations from communication channels across various media platforms to discuss racial issues (Cardoso; Araújo; Martins, 2022).

With a focus on fostering and ensuring interdisciplinarity, the center is composed of professors, undergraduate and graduate students from different UEM programs, as well as members of anti-racist social movements. It is important to highlight that this is an open space for anyone, regardless of racial identity, who is interested in learning, studying, engaging with publications, and participating in discussions on racial issues in support of initiatives aimed at combating racism. For Black individuals, it also serves as a space where they can find encouragement to face everyday adversities. The physical space itself—the headquarters of NEIAB—features an aesthetic and equipment such as a mini-library, study table, and computers, providing a place where Black students and faculty can identify with and find an environment for rest and experience-sharing among their peers, fostering a network of solidarity throughout their academic journey.

Beyond promoting discussions on Afro-Brazilian topics within and outside the university, NEIAB has also been actively engaged in the implementation of affirmative action policies. At the time of its founding, it played a significant role in the debate on the first attempt to implement racial quotas at UEM in 2007. On that occasion, the university approved the so-called social quotas, establishing a reservation of spots for public school graduates from families earning up to 1.5 times the minimum wage. The discussion on reserving spots based on racial

<sup>6</sup> As an example, we can mention NEIAB's participation in freshman welcome events, the Flim – Maringá Literary Festival – and other municipal events, in addition to the annual organization of two academic events: in July, the Black Feminism Colloquium, held since 2014, now completing 11 editions, and the Afro-Brazilian Week in November, held since its founding in 2007, reaching its 18th edition in 2024.



criteria—an essential policy for combating racism—would only resurface a decade later (Felipe; Carvalho, 2021).

In 2014, NEIAB carried out the VIII Afro-Brazilian Week, held between November 17 and 21, 2014, with the theme "Racial Quotas in Brazilian Universities." The content was explored in two lectures given by the philosopher Djamila Ribeiro: "Quotas Are Not a Matter of Opinion," delivered on the 17th as the opening event, and "The Need for Racial Quotas in Universities," which took place on the 18th, directed at high school students and the external community. The program also included a book signing session for *O negro no século XXI* by Judge Luizlinda Valois and the broadcast of the roundtable "Quotas at UEM" on the university's channel, TV UEM. Following this, the center began producing a series of informational videos on racial quotas to expand the discussion of this affirmative policy within UEM. During this period, new members began participating in NEIAB—many of whom were part of Coletivo Yalodê-Badá (a Black youth collective in Maringá). This new composition, reflecting the growing presence of young Black students at the university, intensified the racial debate at UEM, strengthening the continuity of discussions and research already underway (Felipe; Alves, 2023).

As a result, a new campaign in favor of racial quotas, initiated in 2016, began to appear on the agenda of Black movements in the city of Maringá. Throughout the campaign, NEIAB played a significant role, serving as a communication channel between social movements, the university administration, and faculty members with seats on the councils responsible for voting on the affirmative policy. We emphasize that all actions and events carried out during this period were developed jointly, bringing together the work and coordination of various individuals, groups, and movements from both the municipality and other cities in the region.

NEIAB also carried out important discussions and guidance on racial quotas within UEM's institutional context, engaging in debates with faculty, students, and other members of the academic community who either opposed or were unaware of this policy. In doing so, it strengthened an educational discussion focused on affirmative actions and racism, aiming to foster a well-informed debate on the country's racial relations and the functioning of quotas. This effort was marked by a diverse set of initiatives, involving both the academic community and local social and cultural movements.

In 2019, the Pro-Quota Professors Group was created during the process of discussing the implementation of racial quotas in the university's higher councils, encouraged by the actions of faculty members linked to NEIAB. The formation of this group of university

professors in support of racial quotas was based on two main points: There was a need to mobilize specific sectors of the university in favor of this cause, through the actions of its own members rather than solely relying on social movements. The importance of expanding the demand for racial quotas by involving other groups beyond Black organizations and collectives, which, until then, had led the campaign. The result of this coordination was the approval of the Black Quota System at UEM on November 20, 2019.

NEIAB's work as a promoter of affirmative actions, particularly regarding racial quotas at UEM, is the result of years of mobilization. Thus, the implementation of the quota system for Black students at the university was the outcome of a continuous process, driven by a Black intellectual movement committed to the anti-racist struggle and the promotion of diversity in Brazilian higher education. Once the Black Quota System was approved, it became necessary to monitor its implementation to ensure that the rightful individuals filled the reserved seats. This is what will be discussed in the next section, where we seek to present NEIAB's role in implementing quotas for Black students at UEM.

### **The role of NEIAB/UEM in the construction of the quota policy for undergraduate and graduate programs**

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In the experiences undergone by NEIAB/UEM during the process of discussing quotas for Black students, debates occurred that laid the groundwork for their approval. Within this context, the first regulation on the topic approved by the Council for Teaching, Research, and Extension (CEP) was initially drafted, namely, CEP Resolution No. 028/2019 (UEM, 2019a, p.1), which was characterized as an "instrument for promoting democratic values, respect for ethnic-racial difference, and socio-economic diversity." In the approved text, it was established that the Black Quota System should be linked to the university's Office of Undergraduate Studies (PEN) and that the quota reservation would apply to undergraduate programs through the university entrance exam (vestibular), specifying in Article 5:

20% of the university entrance exam spots for candidates opting for this admission modality who self-declare as Black (Black or Brown), with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of these candidates meeting the criteria established by CEP Resolution No. 012/2010, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  regardless of these criteria, in each course and session. In



cases where this percentage results in a fractional number, rounding should be done to the nearest whole number (UEM, 2019b, p.2).

In addition to social quotas approved in 2008 and quotas for Black students approved in 2019, UEM also reserves spots for people with disabilities (PwD) and offers various entry modalities besides the traditional vestibular, such as the Serial Assessment Process (PAS) and the Indigenous Entrance Exam, among others. To better manage access to undergraduate programs, the administration chose to replace multiple regulations for each affirmative action type with a single normative framework encompassing all modalities. This was addressed through the drafting of CEP Resolution No. 013/2023, which regulated affirmative action policies for quotas in selection processes for undergraduate admissions.

Among the modifications applied to this regulation, Article 8 stands out, stating that "committees/verification panels (heteroidentification) must be established for candidates who self-declare as Black (Black or Brown)." This mention is complemented by Article 11, which specifies that "any candidate whose assessment by the heteroidentification committee is inconsistent with their skin color and/or other phenotypic traits identifying them as belonging to the Black racial group shall be eliminated from the selection process" (UEM, 2023, p.5-6).

As Felipe (2022, p.101) discusses, for the effective functioning of the Black quota policy, it is necessary to verify the rightful and wrongful occupancy of reserved spots, ensuring "recognition, reparation, and representation." Affirmative action policies for the Black population, such as the quota system—reserved spots in public selection processes—are part of a broader agenda to combat racism in Brazil. Recognition and reparation address the need to overcome historical inequalities created in the past, while representation indicates the opportunities that open up for Black individuals in the future, aiming to eliminate racism in society. In higher education, this representation must occur in both access and retention, at both symbolic and material levels.

Material representation refers to the mention and/or presence of the Black population in educational materials and institutional spaces (Ferreira & Gomes, 2019). Symbolic retention, according to Santos (2009), pertains to the presence and representation of minority groups, considering them beyond mere numerical inclusion, ensuring cultural diversity and fostering an inclusive university environment. Meanwhile, material retention relates to the concrete and structural conditions that allow students to remain in university throughout their studies, which encompasses financial support, infrastructure, and assistance services, such as student aid scholarships, food subsidies, housing, and/or transportation assistance.

Given this, once heteroidentification committees were normatively established, NEIAB committed to assisting in the execution of the heteroidentification procedure in selection processes using the Black Quota System. This includes training sessions for committee members, organizing and guiding procedural protocols for this stage of the selection process, ensuring, in this way, the promotion of equal opportunities for access to higher education at UEM. Alongside efforts to advise on policy development, implementation, and revision, NEIAB has worked with the institution to ensure that Black quota policies are properly enforced and that rightful candidates occupy these reserved spots, materializing the goals of historical racial reparation, material representation, and both symbolic and material retention.

University entrance exams with reserved quota spots and heteroidentification committees have transformed UEM's reality in terms of racial diversity and material representation, although the most significant impact remains in the humanities fields. Beyond access, retention raises concerns about the academic success of Black students. Among the possibilities for addressing this issue, we highlight the continuity of education in graduate studies, whether in *lato sensu* or *stricto sensu* programs. At UEM, challenges arise regarding the transparency of enrolled student data and the regulations governing selection processes. Thus, this article restricts its discussion to the historical aspects of graduate programs that have adopted affirmative action policies in the form of quotas for Black students.

Regarding graduate programs at the institution, a regulation mandating that programs implement reserved spots is currently under discussion in the Council for Teaching, Research, and Extension. Until this regulation is formalized, each program retains autonomy to adopt or reject the policy. According to Felipe and Carvalho (2021), the first graduate program to implement the quota system in its selection process was the Social Sciences program in 2019, followed by both the Professional and Academic History Graduate Programs in the same year. In 2020, expanding beyond the humanities, the Graduate Program in Business Administration adopted affirmative action policies focused on Black and Indigenous applicants. That same year, the Graduate Programs in Education and Nursing jointly adopted the policy in their selection processes. In 2022, the Graduate Program in Psychology approved the implementation of reserved spots in its selection processes.

As Felipe and Lima (2022) emphasize, the presence of affirmative action policies—including Black quotas—in graduate programs has been implemented with the mediation of NEABs and related groups. At UEM, NEIAB/UEM has played a direct and indirect role in this process through its various activities and initiatives. However, resistance was also encountered,

particularly from engineering, dentistry, and medical programs, which opposed adopting quotas in their selection processes. These forms of resistance intersect with institutional management procedures, revealing both the limitations and possibilities of affirmative action policies. The following section will address the specific elements related to NEIAB's role in implementing affirmative action policies for Black students and the management challenges surrounding this policy at UEM.

### **Limits and possibilities for NEIAB in the management of affirmative actions in UEM**

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According to the above, NEIAB/UEM is a locus for the production and dissemination of knowledge on racial issues, highlighting how this theme permeates various dimensions of social life in Brazil. In this sense, the center holds technical knowledge on the specificities of social inequalities in Brazil, which are defined, among other factors, by racism. Thus, the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of public policies can be guided with the participation of centers such as NEIAB to be adequately tailored to address the problem, adopting an effectively anti-racist stance.

As already discussed regarding the importance of these centers in supporting the execution of affirmative policies, the National Implementation Plan for the Curricular Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture, which already emphasized the role of NEABs and related groups such as NEIAB/UEM—also a member of the national network of these centers linked to the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers (ABPN), CONNEABs—guides the actions for the implementation of Law 10.639/03:

The Forums for Education and Ethnic-Racial Diversity, the Afro-Brazilian Studies Centers (NEABs), the Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Studies Centers (NEABIs), and the Working Groups and Committees generally have the capillarity to introduce the theme into different interest groups. Therefore, the importance of these bodies for the implementation of this National Plan. [...] The Afro-Brazilian Studies Centers (NEABs) and/or Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous Studies Centers (NEABIs) and related groups, established in Higher Education Institutions, represent an important research arm, the

development of materials, and the structuring of courses within the themes addressed by this Plan" (Brazil, 2013, p. 43-44).

It is also stated in Resolution CNE/CP No. 01/2004, which establishes the National Curricular Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture:

Article 4: Education systems and institutions may establish communication channels with Black Movement groups, Black cultural groups, teacher training institutions, study and research centers such as Afro-Brazilian Studies Centers, to seek support and exchange experiences for institutional plans, pedagogical plans, and teaching projects" (Brazil, 2013, p. 43-44).

Beyond the possibility of contributing to the curricular policy described above, NEABs and related groups have also been essential agents in the implementation of affirmative actions for the Black population, not only in mobilizing for the approval of racial quotas but also by participating—through the presence of Black researchers from these centers—in the formulation of resolutions, protocols, and procedures within the institutions where they operate. They also oversee, alongside social movements and civil society, ensuring that the policy is effectively directed toward its rightful beneficiaries, i.e., Black individuals. This is because they serve as hubs for knowledge production based on the lived experiences of intellectuals who belong to this racial group.

In this sense, they act as an agent that can provide a unique reference point to help educational institutions properly implement and adopt procedures aligned with the objectives of affirmative action policies, specifically racial quotas. They are, therefore, an entity capable of contributing not only to proposing a public policy but, more importantly, with the technical expertise required for its implementation, considering the entire racial discourse and the peculiarities of Brazilian racism.

The fight against this social affliction, racism, involves, among other issues, the problem of the hermeneutics of whiteness. According to Felipe and Lima (2022, p. 44), this problem can be understood as a “phenomenon in which, in any interpretative possibility, when the subject refers to racial issues, the interpretation of the concrete case will hinder progress in combating racism,” insofar as “the ideological foundation, whether conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect, that constructs the subjectivity of operators” is oriented by a Euro-white-centered worldview. Thus,

The naturalization of the prevalence of the ‘white presence’ in higher education programs in the country prevents institutions from questioning the hermeneutics of whiteness that permeates their daily institutional practices. With these naturalized practices, institutional racism is reaffirmed instead of being questioned (Felipe & Lima, 2022, p. 56).

This white-centered hermeneutic is intrinsic to the *modus operandi* that shapes Brazilian institutions, revealing itself as one of the mechanisms through which institutional racism is propagated. According to Santos (2015, p. 27),

[...] institutional racism is revealed through mechanisms and strategies present in public institutions, explicit or not, that hinder the presence of Black individuals in these spaces. This occurs because access is hindered not only by written and visible norms and rules but also by formal obstacles embedded in social relations that are reproduced in institutional and public spaces. The action is always violent insofar as it affects human dignity.

Bernardino-Costa and Machado (2017, p. 17), in turn, recall that “in everyday life, it ensures the maintenance of power relations” and that “the concept refers to the understanding that institutions can act in a racially exclusionary manner.” Considering institutional racism in the way public administrative bureaucracy was constituted means recognizing that institutions can act in a racially violent manner by developing legal-administrative procedures that produce and reproduce exclusionary behaviors, thus legitimizing the absence of Black individuals within them.

With this, while NEIAB has the potential to contribute and has been actively engaged in the implementation of the UEM’s Affirmative Action System for Black Students, particularly in the organization of heteroidentification committees, it also faces institutional limitations. This is because it was established as a program within the DCS/UEM, operating primarily as a research and extension group and, therefore, is not formally incorporated into the university’s management structure.

Moreover, it is the institution’s responsibility to integrate the Affirmative Action System for Black Students into its protocols and procedures, assuming accountability for the implementation and monitoring of the policy. NEIAB, within its capacities, can solely contribute by providing guidance and directives for the development of internal processes aligned with anti-racist practices to be adopted by the university. This means that NEIAB lacks both decision-making power and resources, being able only to propose a management orientation for the policy. The final decision on whether to adopt such recommendations

ultimately rests with the university, which bears the actual responsibility for execution and oversight.

Following the approval of the Affirmative Action System for Black Students through the ratification of Resolution CEP No. 028/2019, Ordinance GRE No. 1025/2019 was issued, establishing operational procedures for the implementation and monitoring of this policy. The first university entrance examination (vestibular) under this affirmative action system took place amid the COVID-19 pandemic, with the public notice issued in September 2020 and the application period running from October 7 to November 30, 2020. During this period, NEIAB assigned a scholarship student to assist the University Entrance Examination Commission (CVU) in addressing candidates' inquiries regarding the university's Affirmative Action System for Black Students.

Beyond responding to these inquiries, the NEIAB scholarship student prepared a detailed report on inconsistencies that arose when comparing various existing regulations governing the university's entrance examination process. It is worth noting that, up to that point, besides PAS (Alternative Admission System) and the Indigenous Entrance Examination, UEM had already implemented a quota system for socio-economic conditions and for persons with disabilities (PcD), specifically for selection through the vestibular. With the introduction of the Affirmative Action System for Black Students, two new categories were added: "Quotas for Black Students" and "Social Quotas for Black Students," whose rules overlapped with social quotas while maintaining distinct normative criteria.

In the aforementioned report, NEIAB identified inconsistencies not only among the different regulations but also within Ordinance GRE No. 1025/2019 itself. Certain terms used in the ordinance were legally questionable—considering the hermeneutics of whiteness—and could have been avoided and replaced prior to publication if NEIAB had been involved in its drafting. The very nomenclature of the two categories, “Quotas for Black Students” and “Social Quotas for Black Students,” was established without the participation of NEIAB, occasionally leading to confusion that could have been prevented.

Another challenge faced by NEIAB during the selection processes under the Affirmative Action System for Black Students was the organization of heteroidentification committees, which had already been stipulated in Ordinance GRE No. 1025/2019. However, the entrance examination public notice is drafted by the CVU, which defines the deadlines for the entire selection process up to the enrollment stage, which falls under the responsibility of the Department of Academic Affairs (DAA). As previously mentioned, the Affirmative Action



System for Black Students, including the heteroidentification procedure, was under the responsibility of PEN. Consequently, when NEIAB was called upon to organize the committees and execute the heteroidentification process, the deadlines stipulated in the public notice for publishing the summons and results were extremely tight, failing to account for the legally required timelines.

In other words, UEM had not yet fully integrated the heteroidentification stage into the entrance examination selection process with all the necessary requirements to ensure the proper execution of this affirmative policy. This gap stemmed from a lack of awareness regarding the legal and administrative implications of this quota system.

Through its active participation in the initial university entrance examinations under this quota system, NEIAB sought dialogue with various involved sectors to highlight difficulties and implications, propose improvements, and, most importantly, emphasize the necessity of institutionalizing the policy. This institutionalization should include the creation of protocols and procedures necessary for the Affirmative Action System for Black Students to be implemented by the relevant administrative bodies at each stage—from the initiation of the selection processes and enrollment registrations to the subsequent phases of monitoring and evaluation.

The university determined, upon approval by CEP, that the Affirmative Action System for Black Students at UEM must be evaluated after five years. NEIAB continues to act as a contributing agent for the improvement of the policy, while the institutional management remains responsible for its implementation and oversight. It must also take on the challenge of overcoming the hermeneutics of whiteness to establish practices aimed at eradicating institutional racism.

### **Final considerations**

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NEIAB at UEM and NEABs in other higher education institutions have been among the primary forces responsible for increasing the presence of Black and Indigenous students in the university environment. They have also played a crucial role in fostering the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge that enhances the understanding of racism and its manifestations, both at the individual and collective levels in Brazil. NEABs have consolidated

themselves as academic research centers where knowledge production is guided by scientific rigor and a firm commitment to combating racism, aiming at social transformation.

At UEM, NEIAB has been fundamental to the success of the Affirmative Action System for Black Students, serving as a central agent in the heteroidentification process. This process, in itself, is a mechanism of social control that ensures, on one hand, that the reserved spots are occupied by those entitled to them, and on the other, that the allocation and occupancy of these spots follow the approved lists and ranking order.

Throughout this process, we can affirm that NEABs play a fundamental role in the promotion and realization of affirmative actions in Brazilian universities. By fostering debates, research, and educational activities centered on racial issues, these centers directly contribute to raising awareness and implementing policies aimed at racial inclusion and equity within academic spaces. Their work is crucial to ensuring that affirmative actions are not only discussed but also effectively put into practice, promoting social justice and diversity in higher education.

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