









## RACIAL QUOTAS AND BLACK IDENTITY IN THE UNIVERSITY<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This work, based on doctoral research, aimed to analyze whether racial quotas contribute to the construction of the identity of quota students at public universities. Racial quotas were important for the democratization of access to higher education, as well as a space for visibility and transformation of the benefited group, and the resistance engendered by the various black fronts plays an important part in these achievements. The purpose of this article is to present the results obtained in this research regarding the net benefits that the social policy reverberates in each beneficiary subject, in their social environment, in the university and in society.

**Keywords:** Affirmative action policies; Racial quotas; Identity.

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## COTAS RACIAIS E IDENTIDADE NEGRA NA UNIVERSIDADE RACIAL

**Resumo:** Este trabalho, oriundo de pesquisa de doutorado, teve como objetivo analisar se as cotas raciais contribuem para a construção da identidade de graduandos/as cotistas de universidade pública. As cotas raciais foram importantes para a democratização do acesso ao ensino superior, bem como, espaço de visibilidade e transformação do grupo beneficiado e as resistências engendradas pelas diversas frentes negras tem parte importante nessas conquistas. A proposta deste artigo é apresentar os resultados obtidos na referida pesquisa no que tange aos benefícios líquidos que a política social reverbera em cada sujeito beneficiário, no seu meio social, na universidade e na sociedade.

**Palavras-chave:** Políticas de ação afirmativa; Cotas raciais; Identidade.

## CUOTAS RACIALES E IDENTIDAD NEGRA EM LA UNIVERSIDADE

**Resumen:** Este trabajo, basado en una investigación doctoral, tuvo como objetivo analizar si las cuotas raciales contribuyen a la construcción de la identidad de los estudiantes beneficiarios en las universidades públicas. Las cuotas raciales fueron importantes para la democratización del acceso a la educación superior, así como para ofrecer un espacio de visibilidad y transformación para el grupo beneficiado. La resistencia promovida por las diversas frentes negras juega un papel importante en estos logros. El propósito de este artículo es presentar los resultados obtenidos en esta investigación respecto a los beneficios netos que esta política social genera en cada sujeto beneficiario, en su entorno social, en la universidad y en la sociedad.

**Palabras clave:** Políticas de acción afirmativa; Cuotas raciales; Identidad.

## Introduction

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The resistances and pressures articulated throughout the history of Brazil against the persistent racial inequality in society advanced in the political scene demanding reconfigurations of the State's role through social policies that promoted equality of conditions and opportunities for the black population. The universalist policies advocated in the constitution were inefficient in guaranteeing access to rights, so focused social policies were necessary to reduce racial and social inequalities.

In this context, this work addresses the benefits arising from affirmative action policies of the racial quota type, which have a scope beyond access to higher education, contributing to the construction of the collective and individual identity of quota students and reverberating in struggles for rights and social guarantees for the black population.

Racial quotas involve complex issues with significant impact on society. Resulting from the growing pressures of the black movement from the redemocratization process, with an agenda present in the formatting of the 1988 Constitution, the struggle to combat racism and repair racial inequalities gained more space on the political agenda in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, through studies that evidenced racial inequalities in the country and campaigns of the black movement. Also in this period, the international community extended efforts to combat racism and racial discrimination with the holding of the III World Conference against Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, which boosted and guided internal actions of the Brazilian government. The mobilization and political articulation of blacks over decades led to the recognition of the existence of racism and racial discrimination, inciting public awareness of its consequences for the black population and society in general, in order to sensitize the government to the implementation of policies to combat racism and inequality between whites and blacks.

Law No. 12.711/2012, which instituted quotas in federal universities and institutes of education, was one of these actions. The reservation of social vacancies and groups ethnically and racially discriminated intends to include groups in the university space that were excluded from this level of education, constituting an instrument for improving the democratic process by recognizing legitimate collective demands of the black group; it represents an expansion of material opportunities and life perspectives, in addition to cultural diversity in the university environment that provides knowledge, coexistence between the various ethnic and

socioeconomic groups and guided this research with some results that follow throughout this work.

### **Brief methodological presentation**

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We chose to analyze the experience of the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in the racial quota cut in a federal university in order to know the experience of undergraduates who entered higher education through Law No. 12.711/2012, in the racial quota criterion and who went through the evaluation of the heteroidentification board.

The choice for a federal university occurred because it has in common the legal framework of Law No. 12.711/2012 and the same guiding parameters of policy execution and funding of the Ministry of Education, which consider the demographic data for the application of the minimum percentage of the vacancy reserve.

Regarding racial quota undergraduates, they are the first subjects of public policy and to which discussions and experiences about racial identity and their constructions in the midst of the normative processes that access to some rights advocates fall.

The research universe was the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul, University City Campus in Campo Grande. Some specificities collaborated for this choice, such as: a) the formation of the state, with emigrants from various regions of the country and immigrants from the border countries, Bolivia and Paraguay, mark the mixture of cultures, customs, religion, as well as carries a white hegemony, among others; b) its demographics, considering the results of the National Household Sample Survey Continuous quarterly, the population of the State was composed, in the first quarter of 2020, by 41.5 white, 6.7 black, and 49.7 brown<sup>5</sup> (IBGE, 2020); c) its tender age also contributes as a propitious research locus, in order to know the reality lived and experienced by the black population in the regions less incorporated by the large urban, economic, industrial, academic, cultural centers and, perhaps, consequently, less researched; d) UFMS was the only public university in the midwest region that had not implemented affirmative actions with vacancy reserve until the approval of quotas by federal law.

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<sup>5</sup> The complete table can be accessed through the following website: Complete Table.

Regarding the research techniques, we conducted a semi-structured interview with quota undergraduates about the process before and after university entry (base year 2018), as well as with the implementing agents of the affirmative action policy of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul - UFMS<sup>6</sup>.

The active search for conducting the interviews began with the survey on the UFMS entry website of the results of the university selection process and via SISU. From these files, candidates with deferral for the racial quota vacancy reserve of the different areas of knowledge chosen for conducting the interview were mapped. The contact and invitation were made through email located in the lattes curriculum and the search for the profiles of the students on social networks - Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn.

We reached seven undergraduates coincidentally from Mato Grosso do Sul in courses from the following areas of knowledge: Biological Sciences (biological sciences); Engineering (production engineering); Health Sciences (medicine); Agrarian Sciences (zootechnics), Applied Social Sciences (law; architecture and urbanism); Human Sciences (economic sciences). In the areas of Linguistics, Letters and Arts and Exact and Earth Sciences, we did not find people to be interviewed.

The option to go through the different areas of knowledge was due to the fact that it is intended to analyze the experiences of the subjects without incurring the influences, at first sight, that the formative path can cause, but knowing that the experiences differ and influence later. Also, in the course of the search process for possible subjects to conduct the research, we obtained return only from undergraduates, thus, the research is indirectly crossed by the gender issue.

A brief questionnaire was applied together with the interview in order to complement the data with the approach of the social and family characteristics of the interviewees. These data are presented below and the girls/women interviewed were identified from pseudonyms, names of Brazilian black women who had significant importance in their areas and in the history of the country, as follows: a) Ruth de Souza (1921-2019), first black actress of Brazilian theater, cinema and television and the first Brazilian actress to be nominated for the Best Actress award at an international film festival; b) Laudelina de Campos Melo (1904-1991), political activist, created the first union of domestic workers in Brazil; helped found the Brazilian Black Front; c) Glória Maria Matta da Silva (1949-2023), was the first black reporter on television in Brazil

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<sup>6</sup> The perspective of the implementers will not be addressed in this work due to its extension.

and the first woman to use the Afonso Arinos Law; d) Lélia Gonzalez (1935-1994), teacher, activist, was one of the founders of the Black Movement; e) Antonieta de Barros (1901-1952), journalist and teacher, was the first black state deputy in the country and the first woman deputy in the state of Santa Catarina; f) Maria Beatriz do Nascimento (1942-1995), teacher, activist, writer, relevant to the construction of black feminism in Brazil; and g) Enedina Alves Marques (1913-1981), first black engineer in Brazil.

**Figure 1** - Mind map of the social characteristics of the interviewees



Source: prepared by the authors (2024).

## Hetero-identification panels

We return here to some situations of recent history that clarify the process of self and heteroidentification. The organizations of the black movement launched in 1990 the Campaign



"Don't Let Your Color Pass in White - Answer with Good Sense"<sup>7</sup> to make their demands visible in the 1991 census survey.

The campaign encouraged the black population to assume their color/race without fear or shame, as it was intended to obtain more accurate data about the black population in the country in order to claim public policies for the democratization of rights. The campaign started from three main objectives:

- 1) Encourage black and mixed-race people to declare [sic] their color for the 91 Census: white, black, yellow, brown, indigenous;
2. To convey a more positive image of the black and mestizo population, helping to restore their dignity, value their culture and build their citizenship. In this way, we will be creating a fairer, more fraternal society;
3. To help ensure that the information from the 91st Census indicates the real living conditions of the black and mixed-race population (IBASE, 1990).

The fusion of the brown category into the black category that black movement entities have achieved in recent decades aims at a union to strengthen the political reach of the claims and promote positive changes in the situation of the black population. In this interim, the campaign of social movements for blacks to assume their ethnic-racial identity presented itself as a political act, of expanding the reach of the claims.

In addition to the mobilization for the self-identification of the black population, the campaign had other motivations related to the IBGE classification system, the use of the word "color" was understood as not being the most adequate from the point of view of black movement organizations, thus, the suggestion was the inclusion of the word "race" in the classification and the use of the category "black" instead of "black", there being still disagreement with the use of the category "brown" due to its conceptual imprecision for identifying the basic characteristics of population groups (Sant'anna, 2009).

The folder used in the campaign contained, on the first page, the image of the naked backs of three bodies, with different skin tones and a frame in the center with the five color/race categories used in the Census, followed by the graphic sign of interrogation.

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<sup>7</sup> Don't let your color pass in white. Answer with good sense. - Digital Archive of Latin American and Caribbean Ephemera (princeton.edu)

**Figure 2** - Folder for the “Don't Let Your Color Go Unnoticed - Respond with Common Sense” Campaign



**Source:** IBASE (1990).

The organizations of the black movement, perceiving the fragility and, at the same time, the strength existing in the identification pattern, began to walk politically in the handling of the identity debate in order to gain spaces for discussions of the demands of the black population.

In the 2000s, with the implementation of affirmative actions in education and the reservation of social and racial vacancies, black movements obtain an important achievement that renews the discussions about the color/race categories used by demographic censuses, the constructions around self-identification and the perceptions that lead to manifestations of racism in Brazil. Self-identification, encouraged years before, in the sense of feeling black,



assuming oneself as black, gains new dimensions with the discussions around heteroidentification.

Heteroidentification is a procedure complementary to self-declaration and consists of identification by third parties, it occurs "[...] through the observation of phenotypic characteristics of the candidate; a board decides definitively (based on previously established criteria and the free conviction of each member) whether or not he is a subject of right of affirmative policy" (Santos, 2021). The board would be like a sample of society, of how society sees it, so it is also diverse.

Law No. 12.711/2012 and Decree No. 7.824/2012 that regulates it provide that the vacancies reserved for ethnic-racial quota holders and people with disabilities will be filled by self-declared black, brown, indigenous and person with disability (Brazil, 2012a, 2012b). The need for the creation of heteroidentification boards to validate these self-declarations arises, therefore, from the improper use of the policy that occurs through frauds that encompass, on the one hand, the falsehood in the declaration made by a candidate consciously of not belonging to the beneficiary groups of the policy, on the other hand, the declaration made by the subject who believes to belong to the group, usually by ignorance, based on ancestry.

This complexity in ethnic-racial identification also affects the perception of the quota beneficiaries themselves, the light-skinned blacks: there are those who find themselves in the condition of recognizing themselves as black, possessing a racial belonging, often related to the mother or father in view of inter-racial marriages, however, they are not perceived, undoubtedly, by third parties as holders of a phenotype characteristic of a black person, as indicated in the normative documents guiding the heteroidentification boards; there are others who until then had not reflected on their ethnic-racial belonging, nor tried to fit into the classifications. Something not surprising if considered the age group of a portion of the candidates for university entry, young people who recently left high school and did not have in their experience the need to belong, to fit into certain categories. Both situations bring light-skinned blacks who are in doubt about their self-declaration and generate doubt for those who heteroclassify. These subjects end up fearful of competing for the reserved vacancies; are they or are they not subjects of right of public policy? In the imprecision that the subjectivity of racial belonging induces and in the complexity of Brazilian ethnic-racial formation, they are subject to the expertise of the board in what concerns "[...] the capacity to understand race, racism, racialization processes, the nuances and processes of subjectivation and constitution, in the social world, of ethnic-racial identities" (Rios, 2018, p. 244).

Thus, it requires the heteroidentification board a set of knowledge and experiences of the social world in the face of the complexity of society, for the task of confirming self-identification and fulfilling the purposes of affirmative action in the reservation of vacancies for racial quota holders.

### **Racial quotas: positioning and belonging**

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The forged identities, the plurality and the diversity that make up the country, as well as each Brazilian region, present their specificities and congruencies of formation that, at the same time, can bring closer or distance the struggles for rights of the black population and reverberate in the process of implementation of affirmative action policies at UFMS, which occurred only after the approval of Law No. 12.711/2012.

Positioning oneself and belonging carry meanings, senses and effects in social relations that can produce both valorization or approach hierarchies. Regarding racial positioning and belonging, they are processes enveloped in positivation and/or negation, that is, being black in our society permeates the subjective experiences of each subject, as well as the relations of these subjects with their environment.

The handling of the ethnic-racial issue occurs differently in the life of each subject. The approach or non-approach of such a theme in some family spaces can represent a range of feelings and limitations that this identification process finds within the family dynamics. The constitution of black and inter-racial families and of each subject in this context are also conditioned by the social whole and, therefore, influenced by the racism existing in society.

At the same time that racism and racial discrimination are clear to those who are subjected and are clear in the daily life of those who accurately observe around them (and only to those who want to observe) it is, also, a silence in many family "places". The way members and different generations deal with this common, yet complex and difficult-to-touch issue for many families that experience this reality, reverberates in the positioning and feeling of belonging of each individual.

The social marker of color, initially something objective is, in Brazil, an element that for some families can encompass different meanings and, at times, generate discomfort. In the reports of the interviewees there are differences in the attribution of senses to the issue of skin

color within each family, sometimes a void around color, race and racism, either by silence, by denial, by distancing (the choice for the brown color), sometimes affirmation, recognition and resistance, reverberating in the feeling and meaning, in belonging and positioning.

Lia Vainer Schucman (2018, p. 23), when analyzing the relational dynamics in inter-racial families with regard to the possibilities of attributing meanings to skin color, race and racism, explains that "[...] part of white subjects establishes bonds and affections with black people and still legitimizes the racial hierarchies of society within the family itself". In this context, one of the interviewees grew up and experienced this contradictory dynamic.

I am a black person, but my family is 90% white, it's that I pulled the northeastern side of my grandfather and I always suffered a lot of prejudice within my own family. My parents don't see me as a black person, they say I'm brown, so, like, it was always very hard for me, I suffered racism at the school where I studied. So, for me, like, choosing the racial quota not only to help me get into college, but also I thought 'wow, I went through so much for being black and many invalidated me because I don't have dark skin, I'm not dark black so you're not black, you're not black, but at the same time I suffered prejudice, so I chose to really think it was fair for me, you know?! And also to identify myself, because I was very much in that limbo, ah I'm brown, but people say I'm brown, but I suffer prejudice for being, for having black characteristics, so it was very confusing. So, from the moment I opted for the quota, I went through the evaluation board and was approved [...] it was a very important step for my identification too and also in society, you know?! And we get very, who is not dark black ends up being very much in that 'ah, but can I participate in race debates, black identification?! (Laudelina, Law course).

Munanga (1999, p. 140) highlights the complexity of the self-identification of the mixed-race person in a country where the mixed-race person is, initially, undefined. "He is 'one and the other', 'the same and the different', 'neither one nor the other', 'to be and not to be', 'to belong and not to belong'".

Thus, there may be an attempt to deny/eliminate the identification of the brown person with blackness by seeking ways to bring him closer to the white person, an effect of the whitening ideology that saw blackness as something negative and, therefore, some generations still yearn for the distancing of black identification from their descendants in the midst of a racist society.

For Laudelina, the attempt to distance herself from blackness carried out by her parents did not protect her, nor did it prevent her from feeling treated differently by the rest of the

family, on the contrary, it provoked a strangeness of herself within the family context, as she expressed "that limbo", in relation to her blackness, to her belonging.

In this doubt that many children of inter-racial families experience, Schucman (2018, p. 69) observes that the non-identification with the brown category, used by the IBGE, contributes to the complexity of the identification process. "Brown does not refer to an ancestral connection, does not refer to culture, is not a political option and does not seem to correspond to phenotypic traits. It is not, therefore, a way in which the subjects themselves identify themselves in the racial issue".

However, with the construction of a positivized black identity carried out by black movements in recent decades, which agglutinate blacks and browns in the "black" category, the new generations have been recognizing and reaffirming themselves as black girls and women. There is, in its majority, a political character in the decision of self-identification.

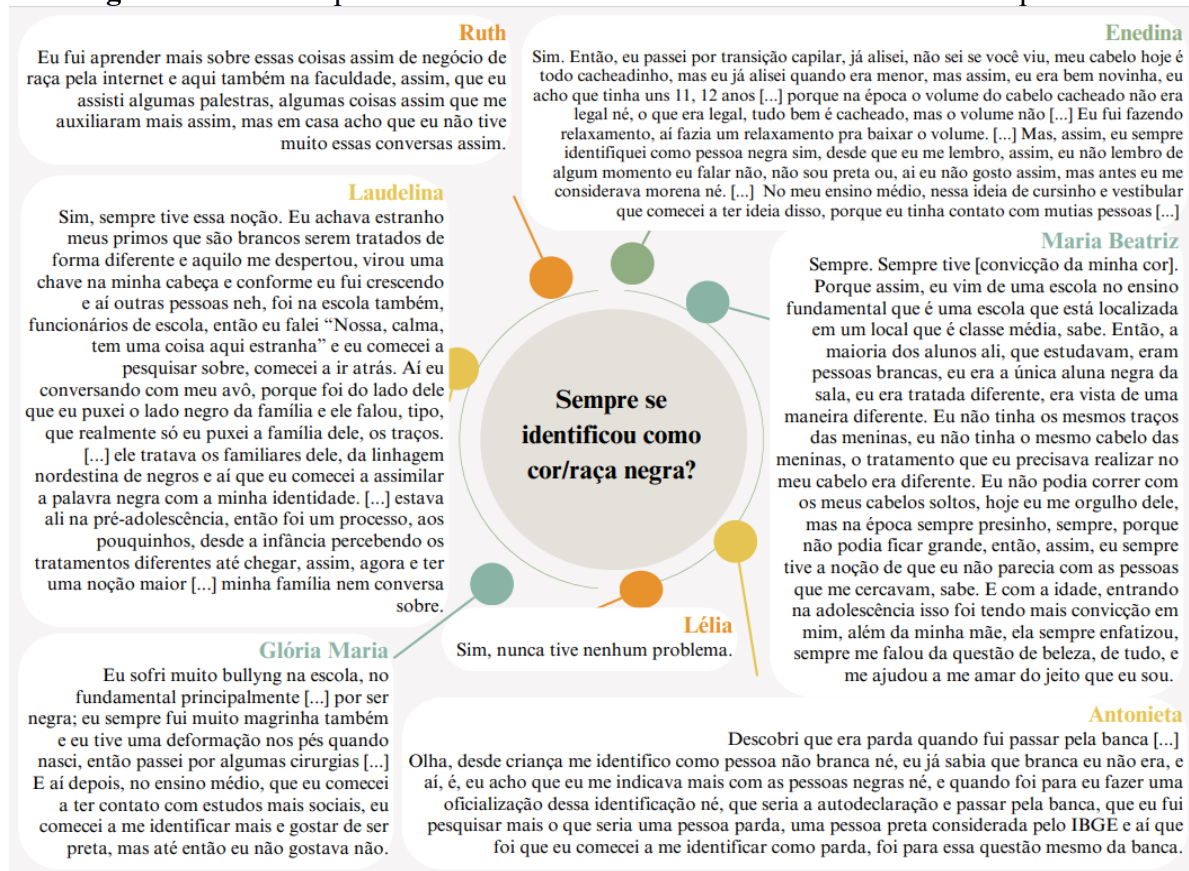
Before, people had a lot of that, I remember, when I was little I was brown, I wasn't black, today I say, man, I'm not brown, there's no way I can be brown, but before there was a lot of that, right? But I always identified myself as a brown person at the time when I didn't understand much, but today I understand that I always knew I was black, I just didn't understand this color thing" (Enedina, Production Engineering course).

The affirmation of being black or being black, especially by descendants of inter-racial families that border whiteness and blackness, gradually weakens the stereotypes cultivated by the whitening ideology, such as, for example, the "brown", "light brown" identifications that are commonly found in the self-classifications of brown and even dark black people, in a place of denial and/or distancing from their color.

This condition of denial and/or distancing from being black, whether lived or represented, contributes to the configurations of blackness as a socially constructed negative characteristic being reverberated even unconsciously and racism structures the very family relations.

One of the questions asked in the interview addresses the self-identification of the interviewees, if they always identified themselves as black color/race. Each in their experience, exposed the following answers, presented below in a summarized way.

Figure 3 - Mind map of the interviewees' ethnic-racial self-identification process



Source: prepared by the authors (2024).

Parts of the interviewees' reports demonstrate how such behaviors influence the experience of being black in each family dynamic and in society. For Maria Beatriz's experience, the mother's positioning in relation to color, the approach to the existence of these differences in the scope of society and the valorization of her beauty allowed the interviewee to grow up with security in relation to her own positioning. Even so, she reports that she went through situations of prejudice and discrimination experienced, according to her, since elementary school, such as occurrences of preterition by a teacher, however, perhaps because of the understanding of the issue already debated in the family space, she learned to deal with these situations in her own way:

I always tried to rationalize and I always talked a lot with my mother, you know? So it helped me a lot to understand this issue of racism itself, how things are, how the system works, how sometimes it's not necessary for us to get into certain fights, but sometimes it's necessary for us to get into certain fights. But it's important for us to arm ourselves with the right weapons. One of my weapons is education, you know? So, today I'm aware of that, and I

grew up and became aware of that, you know (Maria Beatriz, Medicine course).

Already for Glória Maria this experience was a little different:

So, my father is white and my mother is black, but she was raised by a white family [adopted], so at home we didn't have any racial approach, including, like, some people from the interior, like, even had some little jokes. Even today, my hair, they don't like my hair. My mother nowadays likes it, but my family doesn't like my hair, they say 'ah, it's too high, it's too frizzy'. So I went through a lot of that. So, at home I didn't have this, this connection with the racial side, I didn't have a representativeness. My mother always was, despite being dark-skinned, she always straightened her hair, she always said she was brown, so, like, she had this denial. She didn't have this identification that I started to have in high school, at school, from the knowledge of social projects, of the history of the African people themselves, like, it was a process that I went through alone, I didn't have family support or anything.

[...]

My mother who straightened my hair, then at 15 I said I wasn't going to straighten my hair anymore, I wasn't going to do any more chemicals. Then it was a very difficult process because my mother herself, as she always straightened her hair, she didn't know how to take care of her hair, nor did she have understanding. And I started straightening my hair at 7 years old, so I didn't know my hair, so it was a very difficult process (Glória Maria, Architecture and Urbanism course).

The feeling of welcoming the phenotypic characteristics of the black subject in the space of family relations has a unique meaning in a racist society. The pride of ancestral roots is, thus, synonymous with strength in facing racism and racial discrimination.

This confrontation, however, is present in different ways in the daily lives of the interviewees, proving to be a challenging subject. Some position themselves, confront, participate, others choose not to "defend flags", as exposed by the interviewee Lélia..

[...] I try not to defend any kind of flag because, in fact, I think that this business of defending a flag, whether for sexuality or for color, you actually end up creating these little things in your head, like, you start to see a problem in everything, like, sometimes the person, I don't know, treated you badly, but it's not because you're black, it's just because the person is like that, like, kind of rude. But if you start to raise a lot of flags, you think, 'oh, no, she treated me badly because I'm black', but in fact it has nothing to do with it, people don't even care about your skin color (Lélia, Zootechnics course).

The excerpt from the interviewee's positioning in relation to the question "what is it like to be black at university?" makes us reflect even more on this reality. Initially, it reminds us of the ideal of racial democracy, in which color/race would not represent any type of interdiction,



in which there are no barriers and social relations are egalitarian between whites and blacks; on the other hand, it indicates a neutrality, possibly as a protection mechanism, however, when she states that "people don't even care about your skin color" she exposes a complexity of feelings that is evident in other parts of the interview, as follows:

I feel that I have to be ahead, not ahead, for example: for visual, image issues, I have to be more dressed than everyday people, to me [sic] to be at the same level, right, because we even see, the great part of the population that is even low-income is black, not that it is, it's the reality, it's black indeed. [...] so much that if you walk down the street you see a lot of beggars, who are black people, not all, but most are black people, so sometimes I feel that I have to be a little more dressed like that, to be at the same [white] standard, it's not even above, like, 'wow, what a chic person', no, it's just at the same standard there of a person who is dressed like common, for example like that, right (Lélia, Zootechnics course).

Returning to the academic scope, it is also possible to perceive this demand to "be ahead to be/be equal", to have recognition.

[...] so much that, like, I was a very hardworking person like that, right, but like, it seems that being hardworking I was just, like, okay, it was normal there, so much that, for example, I did a program there at the university and like I was the person who dedicated myself the most, so much that people talked, because only I went there to do things and then, like, I got scolded with everyone there. So, right, I don't know what I could do like that to not go down the drain there (Lélia, Zootechnics course).

The formation of ethnic-racial identities has followed such ambivalent paths that can produce in the black person a perception of themselves and the social context that is quite confusing, according to the excerpts that follow (already presented previously): "[...] people don't even care about your skin color."; "[...] the great part of the population that is even low-income is black [...]"; "[...] I have to be more dressed than everyday people, to me to be at the same level, right [...]". The feelings of "social" unimportance of color, racial inequality and social demand/pressure present in the interviewee's report demonstrate, in a way, the impasses that racism has subjected in the positioning towards ethnic-racial issues. Even reporting never having been questioned by situations of preterition, she feels a demand, but that comes from herself, "[...] this issue that I commented on about having this pressure to have to be above to be equal is my issue, that I felt, but that no one told me, right, no one ever said anything, absolutely nothing, it's my thing [...]". The feeling of an unfavorable position in relation to

others, which makes her feel the need to be "above", "ahead", even believing that "[...] nobody cares about your appearance or the color of your skin, nobody cares, everyone is there taking care of their lives, right [at university]" can represent the stigmatization of the black person in society, introjected in the perception she has of herself.

As Munanga (1990) explains, the negative stereotyping of the black person throughout history ended up becoming a psychological pressure. Even though she is knowledgeable and aware of her intellectual capacity, competence, qualification and conviction/pride regarding her color/race, there is a feeling of demand/pressure from herself. This can occur because of the clarity that Lélia has of the existing differences between whites and blacks in society, even though she knows that there are no differences in the cognitive capacity of both groups, she feels racism present in the spaces, and each one responds in a way to these hierarchies, where there is a perverse subjective mechanism that builds an aesthetically negative image of the black person. For Schucman (2018, p. 69) the "[...] movement of appropriation of meanings and production of senses is always based on a set of certain symbolic materials constructed socio-historically within the culture and also within the family in which they are inserted". In this journey, the author reinforces, the subject needs to reconcile the often contradictory affective experiences present in the various social contexts, such as family, school, work, different social groups, etc.

In this sense, the experiences of the external world and the internal world can become a field of conflicts. The way Lélia positions herself and understands herself positioned in society demonstrates the inseparability of the constitution of the subject and society, of the internal and external world, of what social life is like. The experience is present in subjectivity, in the process of signification, in the social construction of race and in the social action of racism and, therefore, in the contradictions of being and living. Thus, assuming ethnicity as a process of politicization implies, also, going through these conflicts.

The process of existence and resistance throughout the history of the black population and in the life history of the interviewees demonstrates ways of dealing with racial identification in constant movement according to the surrounding society. Not submitting to external and internal oppression of racist structures is a characteristic of the present moment. The valorization of the phenotype, culture, ancestry boosted the feeling of belonging. The denial of blackness seems to be low, however, racial belonging is a step in the long process of combating racism. Even though the subjects are convinced of their color/race, there is also a conviction of

the differences regarding the conditions and opportunities experienced daily and found in the racial inequality indices.

Remembering Oracy Nogueira's study (1998), in which he states that the subjects of the old generation presented a certain subservience before whites and those of the new generation greater ease, we perceive that after a few decades of this study, these subjects are increasingly strengthened as a group, as denouncers of racism, as holders of rights, as active voices in a social organization and within a larger and racist social organization.

Antonieta exposes that nowadays things have improved a lot.

[...] when I was a child it was all very, people didn't talk about that, right, it was common for us to see racist jokes all the time and nowadays people are more aware, right, and we can see more influences also nowadays, people exalting black beauty, talking about the issue of self-acceptance, right, of you seeing that you are what you are, and you are beautiful, you don't need to change, you don't need to compare yourself to other people or follow an aesthetic standard that was imposed on everyone, right, of the white person, of the straight hair, that doesn't exist, especially in Brazil, we are in a country that is very diverse, here in Campo Grande itself there are many people of different nationalities, right [...] When we enter the university it's a much more diverse environment, right, the university is huge and there were all kinds of groups, ethnic groups, religious groups, all kinds of groups and I participated in a humanities course too, which was very humanities, so we were very strong in social causes, right, these reflection issues, especially when we were doing arts too, there are classes of Brazilian culture, quilombola culture, indigenous culture, so we learn more, both studying, right, academically, and living with people there. [...] so this coexistence in the university environment was a turning point for me, you know, I left school which was a very closed place, like, my school was very small, so every day you saw the same people, to go to a universe that opened up like that, it was much bigger and, this coexistence itself I think was the turning point [...] (Antonieta, Economic Sciences course).

In this university experience, many young people discover and/or self-recognize themselves as black and end up having a greater approximation with their ethnic-racial group.

It is perceived, in the interviews, a generation that is proud to be black, that developed this pride, but, despite the current self-affirmation of blackness, the interviewees have memories of situations of prejudice that they experienced, especially in childhood and adolescence and, each one, appropriates or adapts, without disregarding other dimensions, to the meanings of these experiences in adulthood in their own conjunctures, crossed by political, historical, cultural and social conditions. The current environment generated the possibility and courage to be as they are and to want to be as they are, and this refers to the age group, to the sense of maturity to make choices, as to the very climate of pride and belonging claimed in the social

environment, in art, in culture, by the media. However, it is something recent, so it is also a generation that had its childhood marked by the “white-beautiful” culture.

### **Final considerations**

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The intention of the research started from the attempt to identify possible “net benefits” of racial quotas at the university; its effects, expected or not, in the social environment. In relation to this, what we perceive from the affirmative action policy, racial quotas, is that it has reached spheres of social life, perhaps, beyond what was expected. Sônia Draibe (2001, p. 25) explains that

[...] the effects of a given program refer to certain changes – expected or not, others than those specifically intended – caused by the program and that, more than the focused target group itself, affect the participating institutions or organizations, the agents who implement the program or the social environment in which it takes place.

Racial quotas provoked positive changes, altering the conditions and, consequently, influencing opportunities, in order to advance in the normalization of the presence and occupation of blacks in spaces previously restricted to whites, thus gradually affecting the secular structures in which the imaginary of inferiority of some and superiority of others has not yet succumbed.

This expansion of access to higher education reverberated in the modus operandi of institutions, even the most conservative ones had to respond to the demands posed by affirmative action policies and positively changed the lives of the academic community and the direct beneficiaries of public policy.

Furthermore, the interviews demonstrated that quotas represented, initially, a hope for the future, to study at a public university, as they caused fissures in already anchored cultural, social, political and ideological fortifications that restricted spaces and maintained privileges, including in the very imaginary of this historically subordinated group. This hope fostered the initiative and a certain confidence and security to try the Enem/vestibular, as the competition would be between "equals" from public schools that were, in a way, at the same level of studies. Once inserted in the university space, confidence and strength are revived, as a stage in this inclusive and personal recognition process has been reached, even though the challenges of student permanence exclude many beneficiaries of social policy along the way.

The "university world" allows a freedom to be, be and recognize oneself much broader than the neighborhood school or the workspace, family and community. The change of perspective made possible for each beneficiary subject is also a mirror to their social environment of origin. It is perceived that the direct beneficiaries of public policy are not only receptacles of actions, they are also operating subjects of the policy, as occupants of reserved vacancies, denouncers of frauds and/or representing vocalization in their community.

These young women, in addition to visualizing other perspectives, possibilities and opportunities, also have their voices closer to the issues affecting social and racial inequalities, whose realities were altered and/or transformed through public policy and motivated other people to also seek improvements in their lives.

In this experience, a certain politicization or, at least, a critical deepening in relation to ethnic-racial issues occurs. Without disregarding the correlations of forces involved in the policy, we understand that it represents a tool in the inclusion process that boosted a movement of popular awareness and alteration of the social and racial inequality scenario existing in society. The university became a more plural and inclusive space.

The "net benefits", indirect of the public policy in question, the identification of the extension of impacts that are not measurable, but can be perceptible in changes of behavior, perspective, engagement or positioning were identified in the research that demonstrated a connection between the public policy in question and the construction of black identity by providing the opportunity for a reflection in relation to "being" and "being", in addition to the rich space of exchange, strengthening and confidence about this belonging that the university environment, with all its diversity, provides.

The quota policy is, thus, a social policy that alters a structural framework of privileges in access to public university, thus impacting a fortification that existed until then in the distribution of this social wealth. In addition, it projects effects on the quality of life of the direct beneficiaries of the policy, modifies some conceptions and perspectives of the beneficiary group, its close surroundings, the institutions that execute the policy, in some active agents in the theme and generates, in a way, awareness to those who are not directly linked to racial quotas, but approach and thicken the vocalization in view of a less racist society.

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