





## FOR A TRANSGRESSIVE EDUCATION: ON RACISM, MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This article aims to reflect on mental health in the academic environment in the face of a neoliberal State. To this end, an integrative review methodology was employed, based on research in Cultural Studies and their intersections with racism, mental health, and educational institutions. The concerns arise from understanding mental health as a political concept that encompasses the structural factors of society, and from recognizing educational institutions as key spaces for health promotion — although they may also become harmful environments when reproducing the neoliberal and hegemonic logic (of cisnormativity, heteronormativity, white and elitist supremacy) embedded in the social fabric. In this context, the study seeks to understand the role of academia in mental health. Finally, the text offers provocations and an invitation to write about the transformations occurring in these spaces, through the lens of Black feminist scholars.

**Keywords:** Education; Mental health; Racism.

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## **POR UMA EDUCAÇÃO TRANSGRESSORA: SOBRE RACISMO, SAÚDE MENTAL E EDUCAÇÃO**

**Resumo:** Este artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre a saúde mental no meio acadêmico frente a um Estado neoliberal. Para isso, utilizou-se a metodologia de revisão integrativa, com base em pesquisas dos Estudos Culturais e suas interfaces com o racismo, a saúde mental e as instituições de ensino. As inquietações surgem ao considerar a saúde mental como um conceito político, que envolve fatores estruturais da sociedade, e ao compreender as instituições educacionais como espaços fundamentais para a promoção da saúde — ainda que possam também se tornar ambientes adoeecedores ao reproduzirem a lógica neoliberal e hegemônica (da cisgeneridade, heteronormatividade, superioridade branca e elitista) presente no tecido social. Nesse sentido, busca-se compreender o papel que o meio acadêmico exerce na saúde mental. Ao final, o texto apresenta provocações e um convite à escrita sobre as transformações nesses ambientes, à luz de pensadoras do feminismo negro.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação; Saúde mental; Racismo.

## **POR UNA EDUCACIÓN TRANSGRESORA: SOBRE RACISMO, SALUD MENTAL Y ÁMBITO ACADÉMICO**

**Resumen:** Este artículo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre la salud mental en el entorno académico frente a un Estado neoliberal. Para ello, se utilizó la metodología de revisión integradora, basada en investigaciones de los Estudios Culturales y sus intersecciones con el racismo, la salud mental y las instituciones educativas. Las inquietudes surgen al considerar la salud mental como un concepto político que abarca los factores estructurales de la sociedad y al reconocer a las instituciones educativas como espacios clave para la promoción de la salud —aunque también pueden convertirse en entornos que generan malestar cuando reproducen la lógica neoliberal y hegemónica (de cisgeneridad, heteronormatividad, supremacía blanca y elitista) presente en el tejido social. En este contexto, se busca comprender el papel que desempeña el ámbito académico en la salud mental. Finalmente, el texto presenta provocaciones e invita a escribir sobre las transformaciones que ocurren en estos espacios desde la perspectiva de pensadoras del feminismo negro.

**Palabras clave:** Educación; Salud mental; Racismo.

## Introduction

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*If we are committed to a project of social transformation, we cannot be complicit with ideological stances of exclusion that only privilege one aspect of the reality we live.*

(Lélia Gonzalez)

The university environment is often violent. It is difficult to find someone who has never heard about the inadequacy of occupying this space, not directly, but through a language that affirms exactly that: "you have to try harder, you are not doing enough"; "if you can't, give up! Drop out (the subject, the year, the semester) and do it later"; "this is a high-level space and is not open to silly questions"; "you need to know two languages"; "your personal life doesn't matter, you chose this." This is not about an individual who reproduces it; it is about the structure.

For some time, mental health research focused only on the individual, seeking something biological or personal, disregarding all the socio-historical influence in which the subject is inserted. However, all the transformations that occurred and influenced the change in the conception of culture, identity, and cultural studies also modified the ways of thinking about what mental health is and how "psy" knowledge understands subjectivity, which is formed by all factors such as class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and territoriality. However, even today, schools and universities tend to individualize this suffering.

The profile of students in public universities and institutes has been changing since the affirmative actions, through Law No. 12,711, of August 29, 2012. However, we still witness an elitist and white-centric view in these environments. It is extremely important to democratize access to public, free, and quality education. This requires more than just increasing the number and reservation of places; it also implies thinking about permanence and questioning demands and needs. The discourse that the university is for the people and by the people, when dissociated from a practice that does not value and welcome all individuals, makes the environment stressful.

Another aspect that causes mental suffering is the demand for productivity (perhaps the term "productivism" could be used). Institutions are part of the neoliberal logic, which requires enormous performance in the shortest possible time. It is known that, with the neoliberal model, the idea of education shifts from being a social and political field and becomes merely a way to enter the job market, operating with the same principles of neoliberalism, that is, the logic of

production and market. There is not only a demand for the quantity of production but also the control of the time dedicated to it, normalizing sleepless nights and self-exploitation. There is, therefore, a romanticization of suffering, of individualization, and of blaming those who do not accept or adapt to the established logic. It is necessary to point out that there is also suffering on the part of the staff.

This article arose from concerns experienced in various moments and spaces, from occupying places with distinct roles, especially as a psychologist at a Federal Institute and as a postgraduate student, from meetings, conversations, readings, and, specifically, from the "Advanced Topics in Culture" discipline and dissertation guidance. Our objective is to reflect on the possible connections between Cultural Studies, mental health, and suffering in the academic environment. It is considered that thinking about mental health is thinking about a political body, which involves issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, and ableism. However, this text primarily explores the issues involving ethnic-racial relations.

Given this, it is worth highlighting the places from which we write and occupy: a white, cis woman from the interior of Bahia and a Black, cis man from the greater São Paulo area. Starting from cultural studies, the text seeks to think about racism and the production of subjectivities, which are permeated by questions about the academic environment, its social function, and the colonial influences in spaces where, at times, epistemologies aim to break with oppressions, but in practice, continue to reproduce them. In this way, the question is raised: what is the role of formal academic spaces in the production of health or mental suffering? Thus, the following lines will not provide answers but rather offer an invitation to reflect and build together.

### Revisiting Cultural Studies

In his book, *The Cultural Identity in the Postmodernity*, Stuart Hall (2006) seeks to understand if "identity crises" exist in postmodernity or late modernity. The author presents historical questions to contextualize the debate and propose new ways of understanding identity. He describes three conceptions of identity. The first is that of the Enlightenment subject, who is seen as a centered, unified person endowed with reason and consciousness, with their inner core as the center (Hall, 2006). The author also states that, throughout their life, this subject would remain virtually the same.

The second conception is that of the sociological subject, which opposes the previous idea by arguing that the inner core was not self-sufficient and autonomous but was formed by the relationship with other people, through culture (Hall, 2006). From this perspective, identity would be formed by the relationship between the person and society. Hall (2006) shows that some researchers claim that this conception of a unified and stable identity has been undergoing changes, making identity increasingly fragmented. Thus, the postmodern subject, by not having a fixed identity, opens the debate to an "identity crisis" (Hall, 2006).

Hall (2006) presents the changes that occurred in late modernity, relating them to the theme of subjects' identity(ies). In this way, the author contextualizes modern societies, defining them as "societies of constant change" (Hall, 2006, p. 14). Additionally, modernity is a reflective possibility of life. He states that the changes that occurred caused subjects to free themselves "from their stable supports in traditions and cultures" (Hall, 2006, p. 25).

Hall (2006) argues that modernity gave rise to a new form of individual subjects and new forms of identity, because, previously, identity was understood as something provided by a deity and without the possibility of change. In this period, the sovereign subject was born, which had two conceptions: one that is indivisible and one that is unique, that is, singular. However, there were several changes brought about by the Protestant Reformation, Renaissance Humanism, and scientific revolutions, which proposed a new conception of man, considered scientific and rational, with René Descartes as one of the great forerunners.

In addition, Hennigen and Guareschi (2006) assert that Hall exposes understandings about the change in the understanding of culture and its influence on the production of identity and on the way in which the processes of subjectivation occur. The scholars state that, from this cultural turn, culture began to be understood with a symbolic bias, which has meanings and forges subjectivities. For this to happen, the linguistic turn was also necessary, which constitutes language not just as a tool of expression in a neutral way, but as something discursive, which has a signifier that produces and reproduces the structuring issues of society.

All these changes reverberate in the field of cultural studies, by sustaining that culture is only possible by and in language, being, therefore, associated with issues of power. Bordini (2006), in the text "Cultural Studies and Literary Studies," explains that, until the 1960s, culture was understood as a monolithic concept, and only what was considered a high achievement could be included in this concept. The author points out that only some restricted works were considered literature, always leaving aside the productions of subordinate bodies and epistemologies (Bordini, 2006). The scholar, like Hall (2006), states that with modernity, these

concepts underwent several transformations. Furthermore, she develops the concept of multiculturalism, in which it is recognized that culture is a set of symbolic manifestations, built by various parts of society and which can transcend borders (Bordini, 2006).

Lima (2013) explains that cultural studies were institutionalized in the 1960s and, in Brazil, they sought to recover feminist criticism, by bringing writers who were silenced and hidden during the process of forming national identity. The author also shows that this process has as a consequence that other sectors erased from national history can claim their place in the constitution of the nation. Considering the topic in evidence, in a colonized country like Brazil, it is noticeable how racism, as proposed by Grosfoguel (2019), would be a classification system, based on the line of the human, in superiority and inferiority. In this way, people who are below the line of the human, therefore, have their humanity questioned and delegitimized. On the other hand, those who are above enjoy access to rights, a formation of positive subjectivities, and recognition as lives that deserve to be recognized as life.

In the same way that a dividing line is proposed for bodies and lives, it also reverberates in the field of epistemologies and knowledge, as pointed out by Bárbara Carine Soares Pinheiro and Karemari Rosa (2018), addressing how African peoples were marginalized and how this silenced their knowledge and scientific productions to the detriment of a whitewashed school curriculum. The organizers begin by questioning:

[...] who profits from the invisibility of a past in Science and Technology of African peoples and the diaspora? How did this social, political, and ideological construct originate? What does science as a whole have to do with this? Every time a society begins to organize, this happens due to common interests, general lines of importance, and they legitimize cultural practices. The organization of a society is directly linked to the ways in which it interacts with and transforms the reality in which it lives. In turn, this organization starts from the material needs of individuals and is marked by processes of transformation of matter, now, by the work performed. Thus, every society from the "considered" most primitive to the most complex—produces work and, therefore, Sciences and their precursors (Pinheiro; Rosa, 2018)

With a view to overcoming the hierarchization and invisibilization of certain forms of knowledge production, epistemology, and literature, Lima (2013) argues that it is the role of the cultural critic to problematize the consideration of only one aesthetic, seeking to consider various aspects of the texts based on various factors, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

**Questioning  
Institutionalized  
Knowledge, Proposing  
Supplementary Readings**

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*I cannot fail to write one last paragraph to remember that language, however poetic it may be, also has a political dimension of creating, fixing, and perpetuating power and violence relations, for every word we use defines the place of an identity.*

(Grada Kilomba)

It is worth reinforcing the powerful texts of Maya Angelou, a fantastic writer and a great Black American activist who fought for the end of racial segregation in the country. The scholar states that, even after several publications, every time she had to deliver a new one, all the fear of being discovered as a fraud would come, given that the ideal for writing is still considered to be white, cishetero, and European. We therefore bring what Lucas Lima (2013, p. 267) draws attention to, that it would be necessary to "pay attention to the power effects generated by discourses, and in the case of sexist and homophobic discourses in particular, which seek to found a non-subject, dispossessed of humanity and inhabiting the margins of social intelligibility."

Corroborating the issues displayed, Audre Lorde (2019) points out the dangers that this social imposition of silencing and denial of the place of knowledge producers and intellectuality cause in subaltern bodies, which internalize these issues. In order to break these chains, the author states that "white patriarchs have told us: 'I think, therefore I am.' The black mother within each of us - the poet - whispers in our dreams: 'I feel, therefore I can be free.' Poetry creates the language to express and record this revolutionary demand, the implementation of freedom" (Lorde, 2019, p. 47).

Thus, it is perceived that there is a way to confront this place that proposes itself as hegemonic. In Brazil, we can consider that it is occupied by the mystique of patriarchy, sexism, and compulsory cis and heteronormativity, elitism, and whiteness. Everything that deviates from this standard is understood as inferior, and what is produced from an intellectual point of view is seen as of lesser value.

According to Lima (2013, p. 269), there is a delegitimization of:



[...] non-white, non-heterosexual, and non-Western cultural productions, relegating these literatures and other cultural textualities to a condition of unviability within the current Western value system. Such unviability, or 'non-place,' gives rise to the (un)desired ghettos, places, as I understand it, of protection and cultural solidarity. Logically, with such a statement I do not despise the market character that is at the root of the processes of 'ghettoization' to which Black and homosexual cultures, for example, are subjected in the United States and other central and peripheral nations.

In this way, Lima (2013) resorts to Judith Butler to define "discursive reiterability" as a naturalized way in which certain subjects can occupy this space while others would be abject and undesirable in literary productions. Given this, Lima (2013) states that queer theory and feminist criticism are forms of resistance and breaking these patterns. In addition, it highlights the fallacy of the idea of a literature as non-ideological, because it is just a way of maintaining the dominant ideology. Nothing is more ideological than this supposed neutrality, which only serves to maintain the patterns of domination and violence. Proposing oneself within neutrality is a way of wanting things to stay as they are, without accepting changes and the loss of privileges.

Lima (2013) also explains that the strands of cultural studies clash with these hegemonies. One of the main tasks of the cultural critic is to question institutionalized knowledge and propose supplementary readings. Therefore, queer thought, in addition to being theoretical, carries a political position of questioning the norms that are in place. Thus, it is possible to infer that independent publishers have a strong role in this struggle, since they seek to disseminate subaltern productions. The publishing industry is still marked by hegemonic discourses. It is visible that, in recent years, the number of publications has grown, perhaps even due to capitalist interest, but it is still insufficient. It is also valid to consider the translations of the works and the huge time gap between the publications made in the country of origin and the Brazilian translation.

In this sense, Terezinha Oliveira Santos (2020), in the article "Weaving words with (un)threads, resilience, and resistance: reflections of a Black woman and academic teacher," portrays this place of writing as politics and resistance against all the denial of humanity that the colonized have been suffering since the European maritime expedition to the present day. The text is also a tribute to all the Latin American women who inspired her, including Conceição Evaristo, Carolina Maria de Jesus, Lélia Gonzalez, and Gloria Anzaldúa (Santos, 2020). I therefore bring the phrase of Carolina Maria de Jesus, who in 2021 was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. In "Child of the Dark," the



author exposes: "I said: my dream is to write! The white man replies: she's crazy. What Black women should do... is go to the washbasin to wash clothes" (Jesus, 1963, p. 201).

This relationship demonstrates what Kilomba (2019) and Fanon (2008) bring as a separation between what is considered human (the white European), endowed with reason, power, intellectuality, and linked to development, and the other, not a universal "other" that makes up "us," but an "other" object, something that must be reduced to the body. Thus, it is not allowed to theorize about racialized groups, since they are necessary for the capitalist construction. They are reduced to manual labor, without reason. It is even possible to praise them, as long as it is a compliment to the body, to dance, or to something in the field that has been conventionally seen as nature, and not as reason.

This intellectual inferiorization of Black people has been happening since the period of slavery in Brazil. In the last decades of slavery and after abolition, the Brazilian elite and government made use of two strategies to continue placing Black people as inferior: the importation of racist theories and the massive immigration of white Europeans. It was in this period that people began to talk about the subjectivities of Black people. Before, Black peoples were treated only as objects. However, subjectivity was related to what is essentially violent, less intelligent, and prone to madness. Theories emerged, with Nina Rodrigues, that associate phenotype with moral and intellectual characteristics.

This place, even today, continues to be transmitted in various environments, including school, because by denying the history of Africa and overvaluing Europe as the only possible history, whose only human reference is the white person, symbolic violence is committed. As effects of a dehumanizing action, given that, even without using words that animalize Black people, the silencing of the contributions of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture is a way of denying humanity and, thus, animalizing.

These points are highlighted by Lélia Gonzalez (2020, p. 165), who states that:

Meanwhile, Black children who go to school suffer the stigma of the sin of being Black, because the pedagogical discourse subjects them to different ways of being ashamed of themselves. We are tired of knowing that neither in school nor in the books they tell us to study is there talk of the effective contribution of popular classes, women, Black people, and Indigenous people in our historical and cultural formation. In fact, what is done is to folklorize all of them. And what is left? The impression that only men, white men, socially and economically privileged, were the only ones to build this country. This triple lie is called: sexism, racism, and elitism. And since there are still many women who feel inferior to men, many Black people to white people,

and many poor people to the rich, we have to try to show that things are not quite like that, right?

Thus, the application of Law No. 10.639/2003, implemented through the struggle of social movements, especially the Black Movement, is of extreme importance. This law made the Teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture mandatory, “rescuing the contribution of the Black people in the social, economic, and political areas pertinent to the History of Brazil” (Brazil, 2003). This is a way of propagating the contributions and placing Black people in a position of human being, breaking the practices of inferiorized and distorted images of Black people that are internalized since childhood.

Considering the application of Law No. 10.639/2003, it is necessary to pay attention to a crucial aspect: education for ethnic-racial relations, considering the collective, with sensitive listening, and for the entire academic community. To this end, Machado (2019) proposes the adoption of the Odus Methodology, which is an Afro-referenced methodology built from historical memories. In it, ancestry delineates the present so that the future is free, seeking a decolonization of the curriculum. This methodology also goes through a training that seeks the construction of a more just, antiracist, anti-patriarchal, democratic society and against all forms of oppression, because “valuing Black memory and resistance against hegemonies is a decolonial and re-signifying process, which strengthens the fight against prejudice and racial discrimination that affect our society, enabling the change of the scenario of inequality experienced in Brazil” (Correa, 2018, p. 127 *apud* Machado, 2019, p. 23).

Law No. 10.639/2003 and Afrocentric methodologies contribute to the construction of a positive subjectivity for Black people and a critical and racialized consciousness for whiteness, since, often, positive history and African and Afro-Brazilian ancestry are still unknown. However, it is understood that racism is structural and this action can only generate fissures in the structure. Because it is structural, we need structural changes. Thus, it is possible to affirm that psychic suffering (self) begins with this lack of information and the consequent difficulty in recognizing that Black people are part of something positive and had a fundamental share in the construction of Brazil. This creates a wound in self-esteem and a view that they are inferiorized.

We then turn to Gloria Anzaldúa (2000), in the text “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers,” who calls and reflects on the writing process for Black women, pointing out that whiteness does not want to know racialized people, nor their language, culture, and spirit. She also points out that school processes are still marked by silencing and denial of

using language marked by class and ethnicity, speaking of her difficulty in writing this text because she is linked to the standards that have always been imposed on writing (Anzaldúa, 2000).

The theories of cultural studies and their function as political projects corroborate Anzaldúa's call (2000), who invites people who are in subaltern spaces to speak and write, since writing is a movement of resistance. With regard to silencing and erasure, we return to the training in Psychology in Brazil, with curricula still white-centric. An example is the invisibilization of Virgínia Bicudo, Neusa Santos Sousa, and Lélia Gonzalez. To deal with psychoanalysis, only European theories are brought, without a critical analysis based on the structural elements of the country. The denial of learning from other sources that are not European contributes to the maintenance of subjectivities forged and negativized in the space that should be destined for empowerment and the promotion of mental health, which are functions of psychology. Erasure is a political project.

In view of all these issues, to think about the formation of subjectivity and mental health, it is valid to expose Grada Kilomba (2019), who, in the book "Plantation Memories," explains that one becomes a subject through writing, based on bell hooks's concepts of "subject" and "object." The former would be those who can build their own identities, realities, and name others, while those who are considered objects have their reality and identity forged by others and by the way they relate to those who are subjects. It is worth considering the concept of the line of the human brought by Grosfoguel (2019), who asserts that people are defined through this line: who is above is considered human (subject) and has access to rights and the possibility of building a positive subjectivity, while who is below (object) has their humanity questioned and denied.

Fanon (2008), in "Black Skin, White Masks," points out that, in colonized societies, the Black person is not a man, they are the Black person, because their humanity is denied and they are considered as an object, since the Black body, through this colonial denial, becomes an absent presence, in which it cannot even be considered human (Faustino, 2020). Here we need to talk about the sexization of language (including, at the beginning of "Plantation Memories," Kilomba reflects on several terms) in which the word "man" acquires the function of representing all humanity. Grada Kilomba (2019) argues that, within societies structured by racism and sexism, race and gender are markers for the construction of identity and also for the subalternization of bodies; in a performance she states that "a black woman says that she is a

black woman. A white woman says that she is a woman. A white man says that he is a person” (Kilomba, 2019).

Although Fanon (2008) uses a patriarchal<sup>4</sup> resource to define the human group, the scholar comes to denounce what Achille Mbembe (2016) describes as the necropolitics of modern societies, because Black men and women are not seen as human. Thus, the place of the Black woman, as “the other of the other” (Kilomba, 2019), has her humanity doubly denied, as a woman and as a Black person. To talk about silencing and denial, Grada Kilomba (2019) discusses the Flanders mask, an iron instrument used during the period of slavery that demonstrated a power and subjection relationship of the enslaved. Officially, it was said that the Flanders mask was used by the imposition of white masters to prevent Africans from eating what was produced on the plantations. However, the main function of this mask was to impose silencing and fear.

Kilomba (2019) also explains that, in relation to colonization and racism, the mouth, which symbolizes speech and enunciation, becomes an organ of oppression of the things that the white person wants to control. Given this, the scholar considers that writing is a political act, in which the writer leaves this place of object and becomes a subject, not being the Other but a I/subject.

Both Kilomba (2019) and Anzaldúa (2000) invite and encourage Black women to write, which is a movement of resistance so that others do not define them. “It is the search for a self, for the center of the self, which we women of color are led to think of as ‘other’ – the dark, the feminine” (Anzaldúa, 2000, p. 234). For Kilomba (2019), it is an act of becoming a subject.

Thus:

Write with your eyes as painters, with your ears as musicians, with your feet as dancers. You are prophets with pens and torches. Write with your tongues of fire. Do not let the pen frighten you from yourselves. Do not let the ink curdle in your pens. Do not let the censor erase the sparks, nor gags smother your voices. Put your guts on paper. We are not reconciled with the oppressor who sharpens his scream in our sorrow. We are not reconciled. Find the muse within you. Unearth the voice that is buried in you (Anzaldúa, 2000, p. 234).

An important aspect brought by Grada Kilomba (2019) is the timeless character of racism, discussing the concept of plantation, in which memory emerges as a way of seeing and

<sup>4</sup> The patriarchal resource refers to a notion of power in the relationships between men and women, using man as a representative of a whole.

talking about the new colonial forms and the traumatic place of racism, which is often denied and/or silenced. The scholar explains that the memories of racism are alive and are always revived from the (re)updates of colonial practices. This concept explains the way in which whiteness, in the formation of its own subjectivity, introjects positive aspects and imposes everything that is negative on racialized groups.

Kilomba (2019, p. 40) questions the way in which psychoanalysis proposes the forms of subjectivation:

It seems, therefore, that the trauma of Black people comes not only from family-based events, as psychoanalysis argues, but from the traumatizing contact with the violent barbarity of the white world, which is the irrationality of racism that always places us as the other, as different, as incompatible, as conflicting, as strange and unusual.

It is noticeable that Kilomba (2019) and Fanon (2008) agree on the need to think about **sociogeny** as a dimension of suffering and traumas experienced by Black people. Thus, thinking about care and mental health for groups that are daily placed in subaltern positions requires considering that this violence is expressed from fears, anxiety, low self-esteem, and other forms of suffering due to racism, and not just considering the symptoms described in psychiatric classification manuals. Doing this would be a way of only pathologizing and individualizing the reactions that are derived from this traumatic experience.

It is also important to highlight that racism is not a trauma of a specific or punctual moment, but a process of a whole life (perhaps, from the moment the subject is in the womb, they already begin to be exposed). Given this, a historical and colonial memory is activated since the process of slavery, as Kilomba (2019, p. 158, emphasis ours) points out:

Suddenly, colonialism is experienced as real – we are able to feel it! This immediacy, in which the past becomes present and the present past, is another characteristic of classic trauma. One experiences the present as if one were in the past. On the one hand, colonial scenes (the past) are reenacted through everyday racism (the present) and, on the other hand, everyday racism (the present) refers to scenes from colonialism (the past). The wound of the present is still the wound of the past and vice versa; the past and the present intertwine as a result.

Therefore, thinking about the subjective processes and mental health of Black people is to think about the confrontation of racism, and it involves recognizing that Brazilian society is racist, unlike the denials (such as "racism does not exist in the country") present in the

imaginary, in school curricula, and in the forms of health care, as can be seen in the following report.

"My psychologist said racism doesn't exist": this is the title of an article from the Geledés Portal. This article, through the reports of patients, shows that many psychologists still do not know how to deal with racism inside the office. In addition, it shows that there is a lack in the curricular training, in order to address the problem of racism in Brazil (Arraes, 2015). One of the women interviewed stated that she heard from the psychologist, who is white, that she should change her behavior and stop "playing the victim and transforming normal events into racism" (Arraes, 2015).

From the psychologist's speech, it is noticeable what Grada Kilomba says about the mask of silencing, in which, although the phalanges mask is no longer used, there is still a silencing of the speeches of Black people. Given this, the author questions: "why must the mouth of the Black subject be tied? Why must she or he be silent? What could the Black subject say if she or he did not have their mouth covered? And what would the white subject have to hear?" (Kilomba, 2019, p. 41). Thus, the white subject carries the fear that, if the colonized subject speaks, the colonizer will have to listen. In this way, talking about racism and the suffering brought by it is a way of confronting the colonizer subject through the truths of their Other. Psychology/psychiatry, which was part of the knowledge that imported racist theories, used to inferiorize Black subjects, by denying that it talks about racism and its consequences for mental health or by delegitimizing these pains, continues to reproduce the logic of silencing, in which the truths of the Other are denied, repressed, and kept secret.

Kilomba (2019) explains the white person's fear of hearing the colonial subject, demonstrating that it can be understood through Freud's mechanism of repression, that is, it seeks to move something away from oneself and wishes to continue maintaining this distance. In addition, it is through this mechanism that truths become unconscious. Thus,

[...] the mask sealing the mouth of the Black subject prevents her/him from revealing such truths, from which the white master wants to 'turn away,' 'keep a distance' on the margins, invisible and 'quiet.' So to speak, this method protects the white subject from recognizing the knowledge of the Other (Kilomba, 2019, p. 42).

When transposing the theme to the psychotherapeutic space, it is known that it is through speech (or writing) that the subject re(knows) themselves. It is a space through which they can see and affirm themselves as a subject. However, when this speech is forbidden by the discourse

that racism does not exist or when the demands brought are simply ignored, the message is passed that the subject must remain in the position of object. Given that speaking is understood as a negotiation between who speaks and who listens, there is no speech if there is no listening. "Listening is, in this sense, the act of authorization towards the speaker. Someone can speak only when their voice is heard" (Kilomba, 2019, p. 42).

Given this, it is necessary to understand that mental health is a political concept, in which the factors that structure our country, such as racism and colonialism, are determining for the experiences and for the formation of subjectivities and identities. It is as Du Bois (2021) describes when talking about double consciousness, placing racism as a veil that blurs vision. Therefore, even being a part of and belonging to this country, the Black person does not feel at home and does not feel that this is their place, because the imposed world is white.

Fanon (2008, p. 28) argues that:

However painful this finding may be, we are forced to make it: for the Black person, there is only one destiny. And it is white. Before opening the file, we want to say certain things. The analysis we undertake is psychological. However, it remains evident that the true de-alienation of the Black person implies a sudden awareness of economic and social realities. There is only an inferiority complex after a double process: - initially economic; - then by the internalization, or rather, by the epidermization of this inferiority.

Thus, for psychology to think about mental suffering beyond an individualizing model, it is necessary to consider economic and social issues. In addition, to analyze individual cases, it is necessary to consider sociological issues (Fanon, 2008). Racism and colonialism are not just two more ways of discrimination, but they are issues that make the subject remain unable to deal with the necessary absences of the subjectivation process and to live their subjectivity in a healthy way. Racism and colonialism create a fragmentation in the process of humanity, causing racialized and colonized groups to be seen only as specific (Fanon, 2008; Faustino, 2018; Kilomba, 2019).

Racism as an expression of violence is an act of terror, its terrifying threats cause daily disturbances in the Black person. The police, when they approach a Black man - more susceptible to this than a Black woman - already put him under suspicion for the simple fact of being Black. When they wake up - this is sometimes not even conscious - the Black person is already preparing to live a daily struggle, because several racial harassments will happen throughout that day. Even if it is believed that the racist threats will not be fulfilled, this does not make the fear of living the humiliation disappear, because their body carries the meaning of the execrable, which incites and



justifies racial violence. Racism survives in an endless 'becoming.' You sleep and wake up, and it is present (Silva, 2004, p. 220).

Thus, Maria Lucia da Silva (2004) demonstrates that the Black person lives in a state of alert all the time as if there were no safe place or, as Deivison Faustino comments during the lecture "Colonialism, Racialization and Psychic Suffering": "you die before you die for not being within this pact of the human" (Colonialism [...], 2021). In view of these issues, psychology needs to question how the subjectivities of people who are not within what is considered human are forged and how relationships occur in a country that is mostly composed of people who would be outside the standard of humanity.

It is necessary to understand that to think about mental health, it is necessary to consider intersectionalities, although, in the social imaginary, the idea has been created that people from racialized groups are equal and suffer and live in the same way. This is a fallacy. For example, we can state that white people have privileges just for being white. However, despite enjoying privileges because of their racial belonging, when they make a mistake, the situation is analyzed based on their singularity. In contrast, if it is a Black person who makes a mistake, they will be analyzed by the fact of being Black. Therefore, this mistake will be transmitted to every Black person, building racist "ideas" that corroborate the emergence of some phrases, such as: "it could only be a Black person."

Thus, it is necessary to understand that there are particularities in the way racism affects subjectivity. Black men and women are hypersexualized. Black women are the most violated. The last Atlas of Violence showed that, every two hours, a woman is killed: of these, 60% are Black (IPEA, 2021). Black women are the ones who marry the least, and young Black men make up the largest portion of the prison population. Even with all these particularities, racism draws something in common: Black men and women are killable, as Achille Mbembe (2016) conceptualizes as necropolitics, the decision of who should live and die.

### **Final Considerations**

Despite all the issues raised, mental suffering is often seen in an individualized way, excluding the structural factors of society and institutional factors. For example, when a student experiences psychic suffering, they are referred to a psychologist or mental health professional, which is extremely important but not enough, nor the only solution. By treating the situation as only individual, without thinking about modifying contexts or questioning the practice beyond

the epistemologies we research, we reinsert this person into an environment that is potentially sickening.

It seems more comfortable to associate psychic suffering with the individual. In this way, the collective is made invisible and it is disregarded that certain groups experience things that other groups do not experience. An example: people who are mothers are the most overloaded in times of pandemic. Is it possible to pretend that this data is not real and say that mothers have the same study conditions and availability as other groups? I believe not. Educational environments have the social function of offering permanence and success to all people. If a person gets sick, it is not just about referring them to a psychologist or mental health professional: it is necessary to reflect on what in this context has interfered, propose changes, and create an environment that produces mental health, not suffering.

The public of these environments has changed in recent decades. These places need to be reviewed, given that those discourses are being internalized and produce a feeling of guilt, as if this were only an individual thing, disregarding all that culture imposes and all that cultural studies propose, that is, that culture forms subjectivity and occurs in and through language, in addition to the scholar also being responsible for the dismantling of this structure. It is not enough to use a Pedagogical Political Project and research with decolonial epistemologies only in theory: it is necessary to incorporate this into daily life and life.

Grada Kilomba (2019) states: it is in speaking that people move from the place of object to subject. It is in language and through language that power relations are transmitted. Therefore, talking about these issues is necessary, because the more you ignore, the more people feel oppressed and believe that it is something that only happens to them. So, my invitation is that you speak, write what you feel and what happens in these environments. Report the overload, racism, sexism, misogyny, LGBTphobia, and pressure in the academic environment. And that you also reflect on whose service and what our words are being propagated for?

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