



OBSERVATÓRIO DAS DESIGUALDADES

TALKING ABOUT RACISM: A few notes on racial inequalities in Brazil

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Talking about *racism*: a few notes on racial inequalities in *Brazil*

*"You must be
wondering what you have to do with it. From
the beginning,
for gold and
silver, look who
dies,
then look who kills (...)"*

Nego Drama – RacionaisMC's (our translation)

Introduction¹

The formation and construction of Brazil as a State and Nation is inseparable from the historical violence represented by several centuries of massive and institutionalized slavery and the ideological and domination mechanisms necessary to sustain it. Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery and the leading destination for the trafficking of enslaved people from Africa: in all, it is estimated that about 4.8 million enslaved people arrived in Brazil, against, for example, 400 thousand who arrived in the United States of America. Slavery was finally outlawed from the legal order in Brazil in 1888. However, the social organization it engendered is far from an exclusive subject of History: inequality of opportunities and discrimination, prejudice, and repression are not only echoes or residues of a superior society but part of the daily experience of millions of Brazilian citizens of African descent. They are also a persistent complaint addressed to all of us as a nation, until we

recognize racism and the society of privileges and oppression it sustains and take the obligation to finally extend to all Brazilians the rights of citizenship seriously, concluding, albeit with secular delay, the task of the abolitionist struggle.

Because if there has been – and there is – oppression and injustice, there has been – and there is – resistance and utopia. Quilombolas, rebels, abolitionists, organized movements of manumission, and liberation routes; or the widespread escapes, the persistence of religious practices, and rhythms are fraternized with so many other contemporary forms of affirmation, institutionalized or not, in the same lineage that has in common the refusal to resign in the face of injustice and the hope that a society can be built for all. Thus, there are also many achievements that black movements have obtained in recent years, the result of resistance processes, which denature the image of white people as universal and reveal the racial inequalities present in Brazil, with all its specificities.

By bringing the theme of racial inequalities in this Bulletin of the Observatory of Inequalities, we seek to indicate some of these manifestations

¹ The views expressed in this bulletin do not necessarily represent the position of the institutions.

to contribute to breaking ever more with ideas that serve the status quo, such as the “myth of racial democracy”, and reaffirm the relevance and urgency of combating racism, a structural and structuring element of our society. Thus, we will try to show the mechanisms by which education, the labor market, violence, and repression express and reproduce Brazil's unacceptable racial inequality. The division between these scopes occurs only didactically for better categorization and presentation of the data; however, all these elements are articulated and mark the construction of black lives in the trajectories and daily life of social interactions.

It is necessary to emphasize that we do not refer only to an individual conception when discussing racism; we are not addressing only direct discrimination or a purely moral debate, but social and power relations. Discussing racism individually often leads to hearing, in our daily lives, people address this issue with phrases like: “I even have black friends” or even “we are all human”, without actually reflecting on the institutional and structural character that carries racism in Brazil (ALMEIDA, 2019). In this sense, Munanga (2000, n. 24, our translation) defines racism as “[...] a belief in the existence of races naturally hierarchized by the intrinsic relationship between the physical and the moral, the intellect and the cultural”.

In a society such as the Brazilian one, it is fundamental to question and combat the manifestations of racism, which are more frequent in our daily interactions than we would like to admit, sometimes dressed as humor, stereotypes, or negative expectations, but which appear explicit in their brutality and violence in situations of

tension or confrontation, always at the service of maintaining inequality in social positions. However, it is also necessary to reflect and understand how the conformation and functioning of social institutions and public policies incorporate, under the deceptive veil of neutrality and formal impartiality, unequal and discriminatory treatment of different ethnic groups.

This is called institutional racism. In Brazil, the Program to Combat Institutional Racism (PCRI), implemented in 2005, defined institutional racism as “the failure of institutions and organizations to provide a professional and adequate service to people due to their color, culture, and racial or ethnic origin. It manifests itself in discriminatory norms, practices, and behaviors adopted in the workplace, resulting from racial prejudice, an attitude that combines racist stereotypes, lack of attention, and ignorance. In any case, institutional racism always puts people from discriminated racial or ethnic groups at a disadvantage in accessing benefits generated by the State and other institutions and organizations” (CRI, 2006, p. 22, our translation).

Danin (2018) summarizes how these different manifestations of racism - interpersonal and institutional - are always combined to reproduce racial inequalities and positions of power in society. Therefore, their confrontation has to dispute constraints and minds, as well as institutions, rules, and social and political standards.

Thus, it is essential to understand racism as a power relation, not only to perceive the conditions of black people but also the privileged conditions of the white population. As Ribeiro (2017) points out, white people will experience racism from the perspective of those who benefit from oppression compared to black people who experience racism from the perspective of those who are the object of oppression.

Chart 01: Primary differences between Racism and Institutional Racism

Dimension	Traditional Perspective	Institutional Perspective
Discriminating agents	Individual	Multiplicity
Actions	Individual	Multiple
Occurrences	Episodic	Continuous
Victims	Individual or group	Individual or group
Explicit/Hidden	Explicit	Hidden
Dimension of the Discriminating Group	A definable person or group	Institutions and Organizations
Intentional/Non-Intentional	Intentional	Both

Source: Danin (2018) adapted from Wieviorka (2007).

Therefore, there is no unaccountability for the subjects of power who have a fundamental role in the anti-racist struggle.

Another fundamental aspect of this debate is how the place that people occupy can influence even the variability of the definition that people make of themselves, as white or black, referring to the power structure built in Brazilian racial relations. For this discussion, we consider the study by Sansone (1996), who demonstrated this variability of racial definitions according to age, time, affective ties, income, and, especially, place. Considering this study, Rosa (2014) adapted the arguments in a chart, which we will represent below.

It is interesting to note that the position occupied by the person, concerning their income and occupation, directly influences racial classification, with people in “subaltern positions” tending to be seen as darker, with “whitening” on the other side. In addition, special attention should be paid to observing the existence of “hard areas”, “soft areas”, and “black spaces”. The first category corresponds to spaces where black

individuals suffer more discrimination because they are hegemonically white spaces, and the labor market is one of these places. If we look at this category considering the relationship between social class, we notice that the labor market is a hard area in the sense that positions of a higher level of remuneration and social status advance. In contrast, other occupations and the informal market continue to be “soft areas” for black individuals.

Therefore, the soft areas presented by Sansone (1996) are the areas that have the most black individuals. Thus, a situation of competition for status and power is not observed. They are especially areas connected to leisure, in which being black does not become a significant obstacle compared to hard areas. On the other hand, the black spaces are those in which black culture becomes the basis of the activities developed, such as capoeira and carnival groups.

As an example of a “hard area”, Nascimento et al. (2015) highlight Shopping Centers as a specific area that reassembles aspects of socio-spatial racial segregation. Because they are considered symbolically valued, these places should be restricted only to a particular group,

Chart 02: *Contingent factors and perceptions about race and racism in Brazil*

Contingent factors		Perceptions of race and racism
Time	By	During the day, when people are fighting, the tendency is to minimize color differences and avoid talking about black. If necessary, one speaks of brunettes,
	At night	At night and on weekends, when it comes to rest and leisure, the racial terms are used as an expression of friendship ("meu preto") or vehemence ("branquelo").
Affectivities	Strong	When there is closeness due to friendship, kinship, or respect, terms such as brunette are used instead of black and mixed instead of white or black.
	Weak	When there is no proximity, dark or "escurinho" is used, or in the case of darker people, black or "negão" to underline the low status.
Income or Social Class	High	People who occupy status positions (professionals, authorities, etc.) tend to be seen as lighter, such as brunettes or whites.
	Low	People who occupy subordinate positions (servants, masons, street cleaners, etc.) tend to be seen as darker, such as "escurinho", dark, or even black.
Age	Old	Among older people (over 50 years old), miscegenation discourse predominates, with broader use of floating categories such as light and dark brunette.
	Young	Younger people tend to identify with the term black provided by fashion and music, leading them to self-identify as black.
Place	Hard areas	They correspond to the labor market, the marriage and flirting market, and the relationship with the police. In these spaces, black people suffer greater discrimination because they are hegemonically white spaces where competition, aesthetics, and status leave black people at a disadvantage.
	Soft areas	Here, the situation is mitigated because there are more black individuals, and this tends not to be a surprise, nor does it involve competition for status and power. These are the spaces in the field of leisure, such as the bar, dominos, cheers, serenades, forró, chat with neighbors, etc. These are spaces where being black is not an obstacle.
	Black spaces	This place reverses the logic of hard areas. Here, being black is an advantage. They are the afro block, the "batucada", the "Umbanda" and "Candomblé" yards, the pagode and samba circles, carnival groups, capoeira etc. Places where black culture is the basis of the activities developed.

demonstrating how the social construction of racial relations also operates in specific organizational and urban spaces.

Thus, more than showing racial inequality with a set of data and mechanisms, we propose in this bulletin a reflection on the possibilities of overcoming this scenario of inequalities, either concerning education, which will be the first point addressed, or the labor market, which will be presented next, or even regarding violence. We also expect a reflection on the responsibility of each of us in its confrontation – or its maintenance.

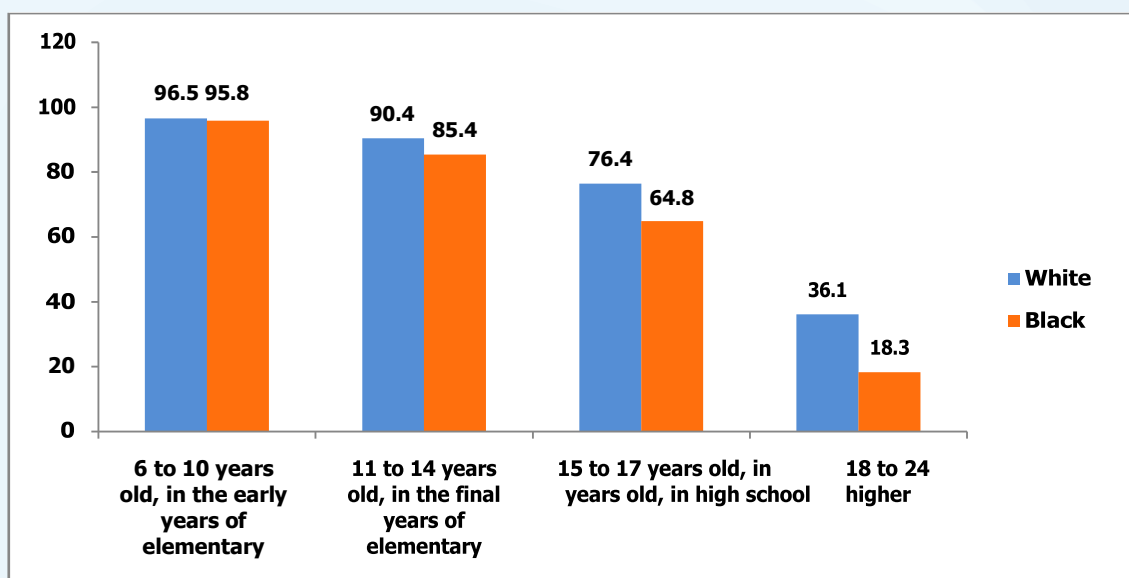
Racial inequality and education²

Educational inequality is one of the critical mechanisms by which racial inequality persists and is transmitted between generations. There is an intense

educational disparity between black and non-black individuals from any angle observed: access, quality, permanence, progression. In this context, a fairer distribution of educational opportunities between the two groups becomes increasingly necessary since, in addition to the countless benefits generated by education and its substantive importance, this inequality partly explains the occupational and income differences in society.

To understand educational inequality, first, we observe the most basic level of the search for equal opportunities between black and white individuals. Everyone must have at least the same conditions of access to educational institutions. However, there is still a significant disparity in this aspect in the country, as can be seen in Graph 1, which shows the net enrolment rate³ of

Graph 1: Adjusted net school attendance rate of the resident population aged 6 to 24 years, according to age groups and level of education (in %) – Brazil - 2018

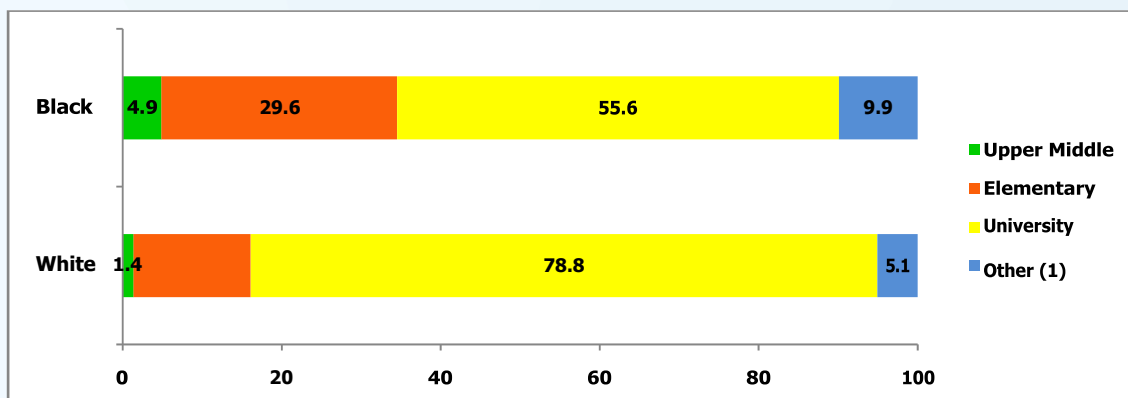


Source: IBGE/Pnad Continuous 2018

²To learn more about the fight for educational opportunities in Brazil and the elements that mark racial inequalities in education, access [Bulletin nº 5](#) of the Observatory of Inequalities.

³The net enrolment rate measures the access to the education system of those at the recommended age for each level.

Graph 2: Distribution of students aged 18 to 24 according to the level of education attended (%) - Brazil, 2018



Source: IBGE, Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua, 2018.

(1) It includes youth and adult literacy and youth and adult high school education.

white and black individuals⁴ in elementary, middle, and higher education. We can see that this inequality widens as educational levels advance: while access to the initial years of elementary school has been practically universalized in Brazil, access to the final years of elementary school already presents a significant difference between white and black individuals (90.4% and 84.4%, respectively), which increases in high school (76.4% and 64.8%) and higher education (36.1% and 18.3%).

Moving forward in this analysis, we observe (graph 2) that, of the students between 18 and 24 years of age, 78.8% of

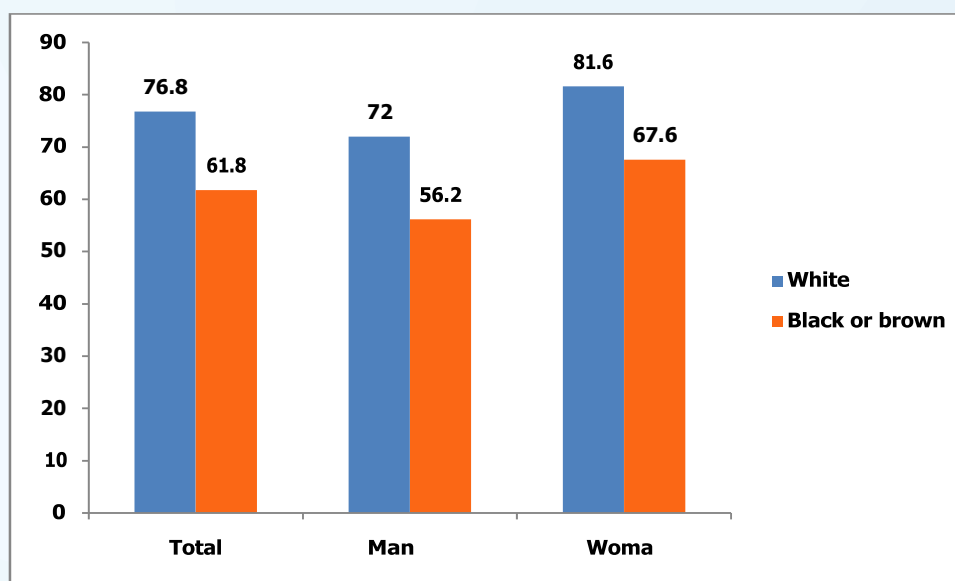
white individuals are attending or have completed higher education, while this proportion among black individuals is 55.6%. Observing these data is fundamental because, as Carneiro (2011) shows, the current educational requirements for allocating labor in the labor market operate as a filter of racial nature, selecting those who will be preferentially allocated.

Still addressing the access of the black population to higher education, we highlight the high school completion rate of individuals aged 20 to 22 years by race/skin color, presented in graph 3. The lower proportion of the black population completing high school contributed to a lower proportion of individuals accessing higher education. In addition, even among those who were able to complete high school, a higher proportion of black individuals do not follow up on their studies due to the need to work or seek employment: according to IBGE (2019), 61.8% of young people between 18 and 24 years of age with a complete high school education who were out of school, for this reason, were black.

The next step is to understand that even when everyone can attend school, the school

⁴Within the scope of this bulletin, we consider the category "black" as the sum between "black" and "brown" individuals since this combination has come to be accepted by public policymakers and academics, given that the vast literature that addresses the racial issue indicates proximity between the indicators of both groups. In addition, brown and black individuals are discriminated against by society, being subject to the same barriers imposed for their socioeconomic achievement. Differences in data can be considered insignificant when statistically observed (PAIXÃO et al., 2010; SANTOS, 2002).

Graph 3: High school completion rate (%) - Brazil, 2019



Source: IBGE, *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua*, 2018.

Note: People 20-22 years of age.

attended is not the same. According to Malaguth and Costa (2015), who analyzed the relationship between school characteristics and the socioeconomic characteristics of students in high school state institutions in Minas Gerais, the higher the percentage of black individuals in schools, the lower the quality of infrastructure and pedagogical resources and the number of teachers with higher education and graduate degrees.

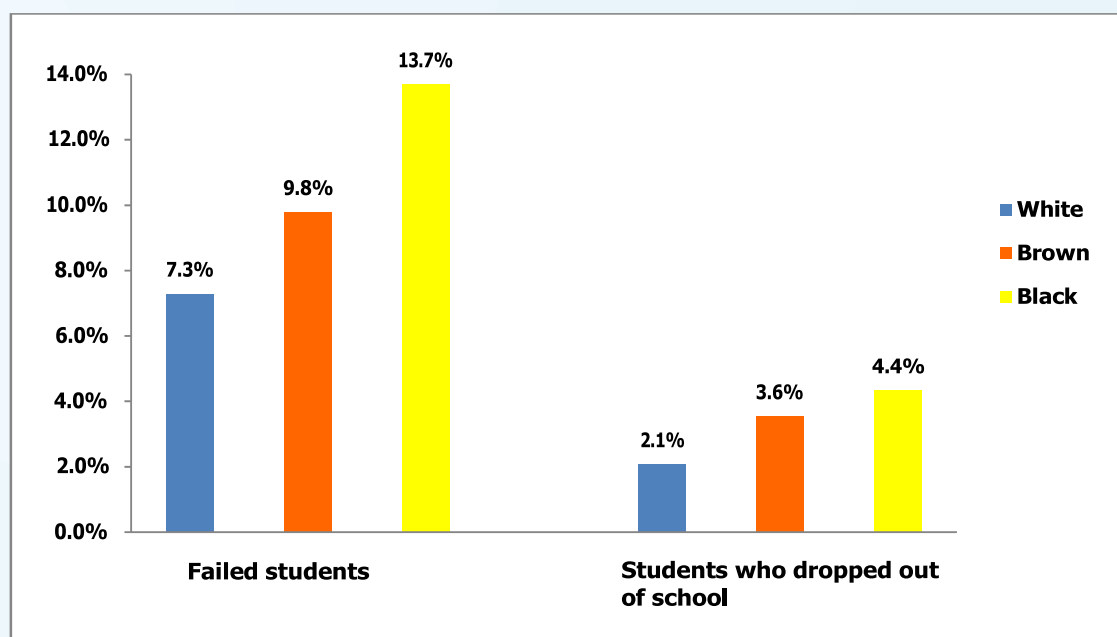
Another aspect to be analyzed concerns the higher incidence of failings and dropouts among black individuals, central aspects of school failure, according to Paula Louzano (2013). A study conducted by Unicef (2019), based on data from the 2018 School Census, indicates that 13.7% of black students and 9.8% of brown students failed that year, while among white students, the rate was 7.3%. In addition, 4.4% of black and 3.6% of brown students dropped out of school in 2018, with a rate of 2.1% among whites (graph 4).

Louzano (2013) also analyzed the relation between school failure and race in Brazil from data from the Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Básica (Saeb, National

System of Evaluation of Basic Education) for 4th-grade/5th-grade students of elementary education, isolating factors such as gender, parental education, and geographical region. The study indicates that being black in Brazil increases the probability of school failure between seven (result found in the north region) and 19 (result found in the south region) percentage points.

One of the mechanisms that can be associated with school failure is widespread racism, even in school culture, causing many teachers, often unconsciously (sometimes not), to endorse more negative expectations about black students. According to Telles (apud BARBOSA, 2005), the treatment teachers give to white students — even in early childhood education — is more welcoming and favorable, receiving more attention from teachers. Still, when teachers are absorbed by the negative image of black students that is widespread in society, even the different forms of evaluation can reflect this prejudice, thus achieving a self-fulfilling prophecy. Added to this is the cultural universe that opens few spaces for the perspective of black individuals (in

Graph 4: Students who failed or dropped out of school according to race/skin color - Brazil (2018)



Source: School Census 2018, with data worked by Unicef (2019). Own elaboration of the graph.

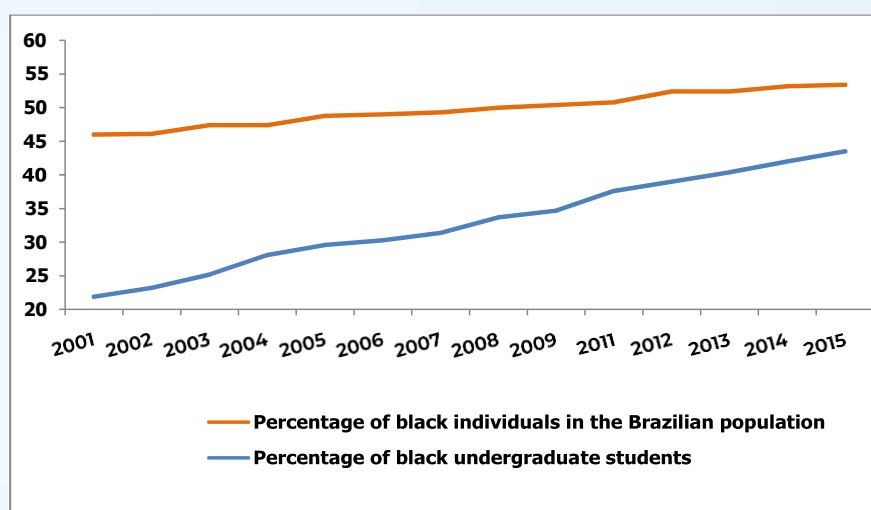
didactic books, literature, TV, and movies) (BARBOSA, 2005).

Although the challenges are still many, some achievements have already been reached toward greater democratization of education in the country. Among them, we highlight a series of public policies that have expanded the participation of black individuals as higher education students, such as the creation/expansion of Reuni (Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais), affirmative actions - the primary being Law nº 12,711/2012, which guaranteed the reservation of racial and social quotas in public universities -, Pnaes (Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil), Enem (Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio), Prouni (Programa Universidade para Todos), and Fies (Fundo de Financiamento Estudantil). Graph 5 shows that while the percentage of black individuals in the Brazilian population rose between 2001 and 2015, the percentage of black higher education students grew much

more, approaching the two values over time (OLIVEIRA, 2019). Still, if we observe only the higher education institutions of the country's public network, in 2018, black or brown students became, for the first time, the majority (50.3%, according to IBGE), which indicates a greater convergence between the profile of the undergraduate student in the direction of the average profile of the Brazilian population.

On the one hand, if the increase in the number of black students in higher education represents an important advance in the democratization of access, Brazilian universities that have already implemented affirmative action face a new challenge since they must address the arrival of concrete social subjects, with other knowledge, another form of building academic knowledge, and with another life trajectory - in addition, obviously, to material conditions to face the demands and dedication to higher education - very different from the previously hegemonic and idealized type of university student in our country. Thus, themes such as diversity, racial inequality,

Graph 5: Percentage of black individuals in the population and among undergraduate students – Brazil - 2001/2018



Source: IBGE, PNAD. Oliveira, A.L.M. (2019) worked the data.

and experiences of black youth, among others, come to figure in the academic context, but still with great difficulty (GOMES, 2011).

Thus, universities must redefine themselves from within, take care of the permanence of the new social collectives that arrive at university banks, value their knowledge and practices, re-discuss curricula, and recognize the capacity of this portion of Brazilian youth to produce knowledge and address the demands of academic life. These new forms of academic regulation are essential for social exclusion not to be perpetuated, even within a proposal for the democratization of the university (GOMES, 2011).

Gomes (2011) understands that one of the powers of affirmative action policies is the possibility of confluence of identity, political, and aesthetic (corporeal) knowledge, systematized in Chart 03. Such knowledge contributes to the formation of black identities by deconstructing the ideology of racial democracy. They are also important because they make educational and social elites more diverse and, perhaps, less tolerant of

discrimination and inequality. The diversification of elites, increasing their representativeness, increases the demands and expectations of discriminated groups regarding their possibilities and opportunities. Opportunities matter, but representativeness matters too.

We will now move forward in the discussion of racial inequalities by presenting labor market data. The points highlighted in this topic on education will be fundamental for the debate. However, as we will see, they do not represent its only explanatory factor.

Racial inequality and the labor market⁵

The educational inequality of black individuals in relation to white is most reflected in the labor market, making the former more likely to be found in low-skilled and remunerative manual labor occupations. Performing tasks of less prestige, even among these.

⁵The Observatory of Inequalities focused on inequalities in the labor market, emphasizing gender and race in its <http://observatoriodesigualdades.fjp.mg.gov.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/OD3.pdf> third bulletin.

Chart 03: Political, Identity, and Aesthetic Knowledge

Political Knowledge	Never before have universities and government agencies debated so much on the subject. Universities now have to address the arrival of concrete social subjects that bring new knowledge, new forms of constructing academic knowledge, and new life trajectories different from those naturalized in our society.
Identity Knowledge	Once again, it places the discussion about "race", the construction of a black identity, and the discussion about the racial issue at the center of the debate. This identification as a black individual begins to take the agenda of various places, with all its contradictions.
Aesthetic (corporeal) Knowledge	Affirmative actions re-educate black individuals in their relationship with the body. In seeking to understand the process that leads to this issue, there is repositioning in relation to the black body in the sense of valuing black traits. In other words, a reaffirmation of an identity is often denied by racism.

Source: Gomes (2011)

As Teixeira, Saraiva, and Carrieri (2015) remind us, manual labor, within a hierarchy of professions, is less valued insofar as they are not linked to "thinking".

However, as will be seen later, educational inequality does not tell the whole story of injustice against black individuals in the Brazilian labor market; the world of labor mirrors educational inequalities but is also a specific cog in the complex machinery of Brazilian inequality. Thus, the labor market is one of the essential definers of the unfair character of the insertion of black individuals in the social structure (OSÓRIO; SOARES, 2005).

According to research conducted by IBGE, published in the report "Síntese de Indicadores Sociais 2019", black or brown individuals are more markedly present in the activities with the lowest incomes: agriculture (60.8%), construction (62.6%), and domestic services (65.1%). On the other hand, white individuals predominate in the highest-paid groups, such as information, financial, government, education, health, and social

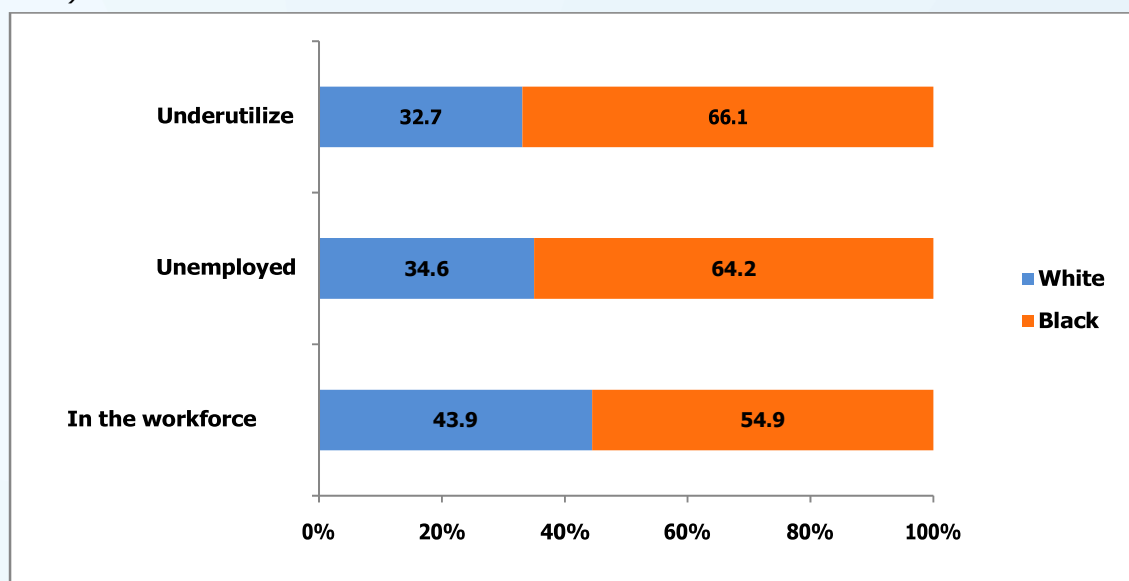
services. In addition, 68.6% of management positions in Brazil are occupied by white individuals, and only 29.9% are occupied by black or brown individuals (all data from 2018).

According to the report "Desigualdades Sociais por Cor ou Raça no Brasil", published by the IBGE in 2019, despite being just over half of the labor force (54.9%), black individuals formed about $\frac{2}{3}$ of unemployed⁶ (64.2%) and underutilized⁷ (66.1%) in the labor force in 2018, as can be seen in graph 6. Although these disparities can be attributed mainly to educational inequalities between black and white individuals, graph 7 shows that this is not the only explanation

⁶We classify as unemployed during the reference week of the study those individuals without work in an occupation that took effective measures to achieve it within 30 days and who were available to begin during the reference week. We also considered as unemployed those without work in occupation during the week of reference which took no effective measures to achieve it in the 30-day reference period because they had already achieved it and would begin less than four months after the last day of the reference week.

⁷Understood as those who, among the employed individuals, work less than 40 hours a week, and wish to and can work more hours, that is, underemployed due to insufficient hours.

Graph 6: Population in the workforce, unemployed, and underutilized (%) – Brazil (2018)

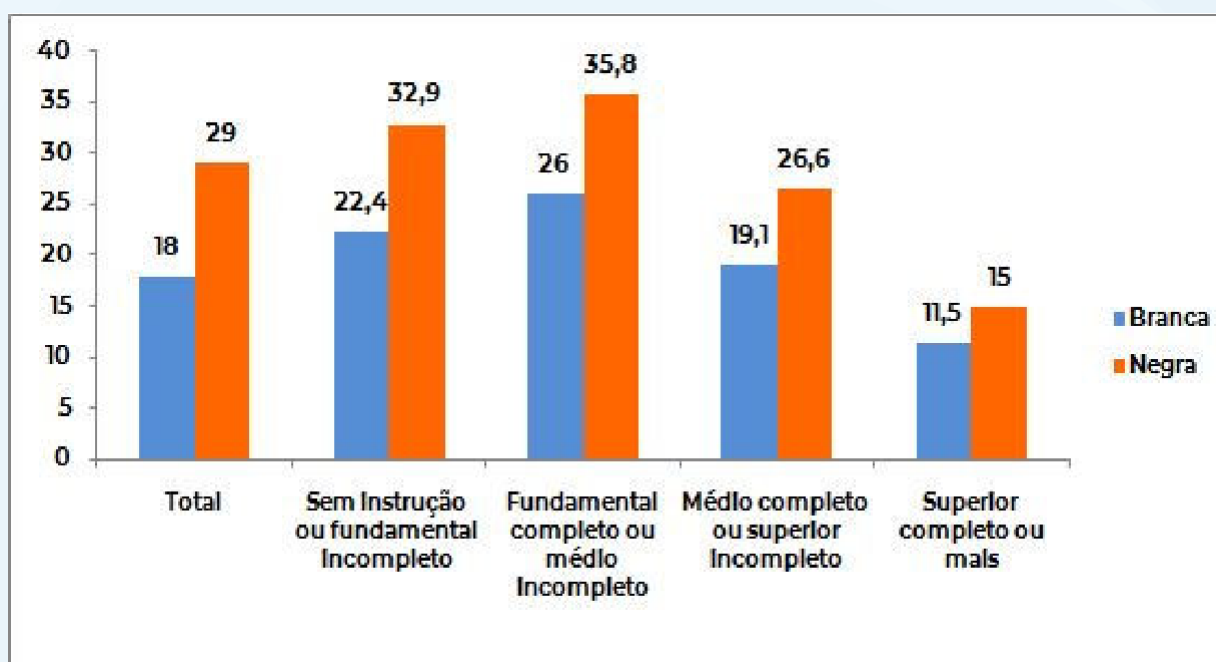


Source: IBGE/Pnad Continuous 2018

since, even among those who have the same level of education, the rate of underutilization of the labor force is higher among people of color or black

or brown race, whatever the educational level considered. In addition, the IBGE report informs that, after a period of fall, the informal occupation - more

Graph 7: Composite underutilization rate, according to education level (%) - Brazil (2018)



Source: IBGE/Pnad Continuous

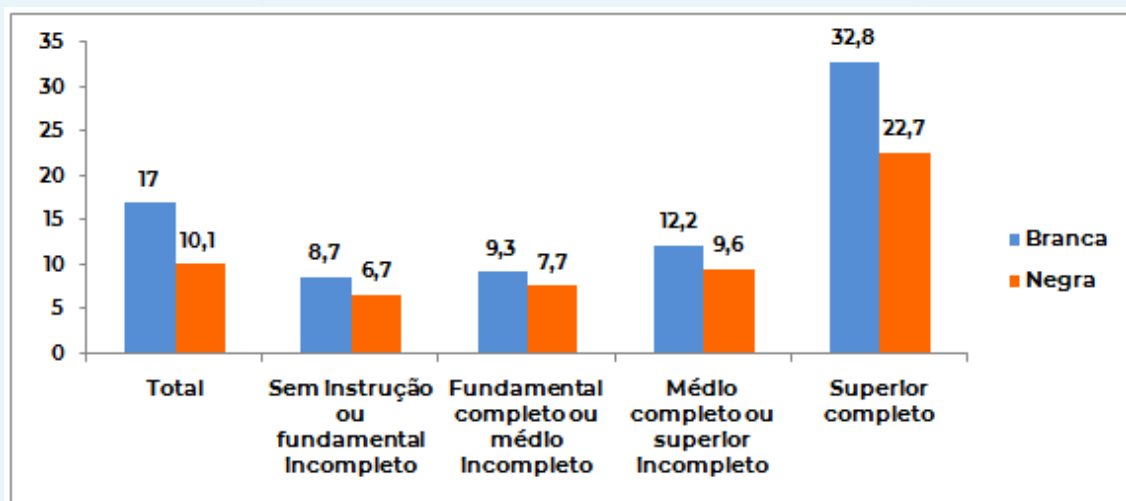
unstable, precarious, and insecure – began to register growth in 2016, with the expansion, in relative terms, of employed personnel without a signed workbook and on their own. In 2018, while 34.6% of employed individuals of color or white race were in informal occupations, among those of color or black or brown race, this percentage reached 47.3%. Informality in the labor market is often characterized by precarious work and/or lack of access to some social protection, which can limit access to fundamental rights, such as minimum wage remuneration and retirement.

In 2018, white individuals earned, on average, 73.9% more labor income than black or brown individuals (BRL 2,796.00 and BRL 1,608.00, respectively). Furthermore, as shown in graph 8, which considers the income per number of hours worked, white individuals received higher remuneration per hour in all levels of schooling than black individuals. In general, the hourly income of the employed population of color or white race (BRL 17.0) was 68.3% higher than that of the black or brown population (BRL 10.10).

In addition, graph 8 shows that the most significant difference in income per hour occurs among workers with a complete higher education level: BRL 32.8 for whites and BRL 22.7 for black or brown individuals. In this context, an interesting ratio is to compare these data with a study conducted by Sergei Soares (2000), who demonstrates that the better positioned the individual is in the income distribution among the black population, that is, the higher hundredth of income, the greater the income differential resulting from discrimination.

To reach this result, Soares (2000) decomposes the income differential between qualification differences (schooling, age, experience), differences concerning the position occupied by the individual in the labor market, and pure wage discrimination (understood as that which the two previous items cannot explain). Thus, the author shows that, excluding the discriminatory factor, if wages were determined only by qualification and different insertions in the labor market, the poorest black men would only have to earn - something around 5% to 7% -. In comparison, the wealthiest black men would have a 27% increase in salary.

Graph 8: Average real hour-income of primary work by race or color - Brazil (2018)



Source: IBGE, Pnad Continuous. **Elaboration:** Synthesis of Social Indicators 2019.

Thus, the study demonstrates a shared vision in the Brazilian Society of what is the place of the black individual in society: that of exercising manual labor without strong qualification requirements in less dynamic industrial sectors. Thus, if the black individual remains in the place allocated to them, they will suffer little discrimination. However, the discrimination suffered will be progressively greater if they attempt to advance and occupy more favorable positions in the income structure (SOARES, 2000).

According to Cerqueira and Coelho (2017), the mechanisms that produce this discrimination in the labor market can be seen both from work demand and supply perspectives. Through the demand for work, racist employers can block job opportunities and interdict individual careers. In addition, the discriminatory perception of a specific social group can cause such individuals belonging to this group not to have access to specific sectors that remunerate their work better, which can occur for two reasons. The first relates to occupational segregation, in which these sectors or jobs can function as a kind of “closed clubs” reserved for people who fit specific social requirements of which skin color is one of them. The second is linked to what economists know as “statistical discrimination.”

The idea is that the employer is faced with a problem of information asymmetry when filling the job vacancy, given that he does not know how to identify a priori which is the pretender to the position with more or less skill or who will have more or less productivity. In this case, the employer will hire or pay differentiated salaries based on some observable characteristic of the candidate and an accurate subjective understanding of this characteristic. When

such a decision-making is based on the individual's skin color, statistical discrimination sanctions and reinforces racism, in which black people are socially perceived as more indolent and unprepared for specialized services, as dictated by stereotypes forged over time and present in various cultural expressions (Cerqueira and Coelho, 2017).

Concerning labor supply, the authors indicate that racism creates certain negative stereotypes that affect the identity and self-esteem of black children and young people. At this point, they pay attention to the extent and effects raised by racism in society. This does not only concern the black individual discriminated against by white individuals but also a racist ideology (and, therefore, a mechanism of social control and division of power in society), hidden in the various cultural expressions and often assimilated by black individuals who, without due criticism, propagate and internalize the stereotypes reflected in the words and looks of others, which help shape their identity.

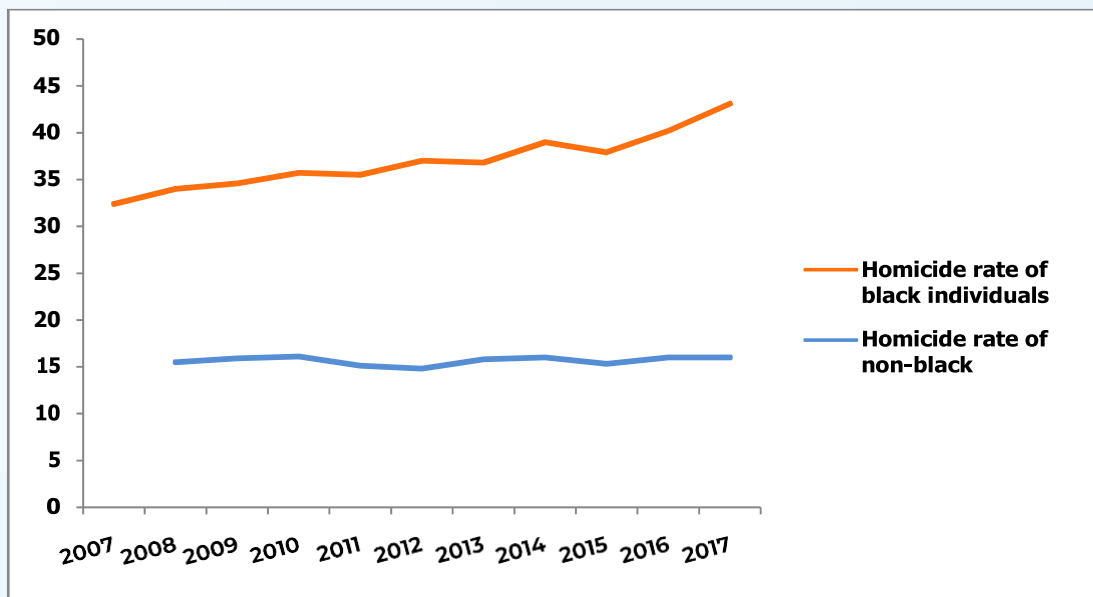
Racial inequality and violence⁸

One of the most brutal facets of Brazilian racial inequality is the concentration of homicides in the black population. The 2019 Atlas of Violence points to the foundation of this inequality: in 2017, 75.5% of homicide victims were black individuals. The homicide rate per 100,000 black individuals was 43.1, while the rate for non-black individuals (white, yellow, and indigenous) was 16.0. In other words, proportionally to their respective populations, for every non-black individual who experienced homicide in 2017, approximately 2.7 black individuals were killed.

The worsening in the scenario can be observed in graph 9: over a decade (2007 to 2017), the homicide rate of black

⁸This issue was deepened in [Bulletin nº 4](#) of the Observatory of Inequalities.

Graph 9: Homicide rates of black and non-black individuals per 100 thousand inhabitants within these population groups - Brazil (2007-2017)



Source: Homicide data were obtained from the MS/SVS/CGIAE - Mortality Information System - SIM. Observation: The number of black individuals was obtained by adding brown and black individuals, while that of non-black individuals was given by the sum of white, yellow, and Indigenous people; all ignored did not enter the accounts. Elaboration: Diest/Ipea and Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública.

individuals grew by 33.1%, while for non-black individuals, there was a slight growth of 3.3%. Analyzing only the variation in the last year, while the death rate of non-black individuals decreased by 0.3%, that of black individuals grew by 7.2% (Atlas da Violência, 2019).

Study by Cerqueira and Coelho (2017), from a sample with socioeconomic characteristics of residents and people who died in Rio de Janeiro in 2010, indicates that black individuals are 23.5% more likely to suffer lethal aggression. Furthermore, the study shows that, at the age of 21, when there are greater chances of being a victim of homicide, black individuals are 147% more likely to be murdered than non-black individuals.

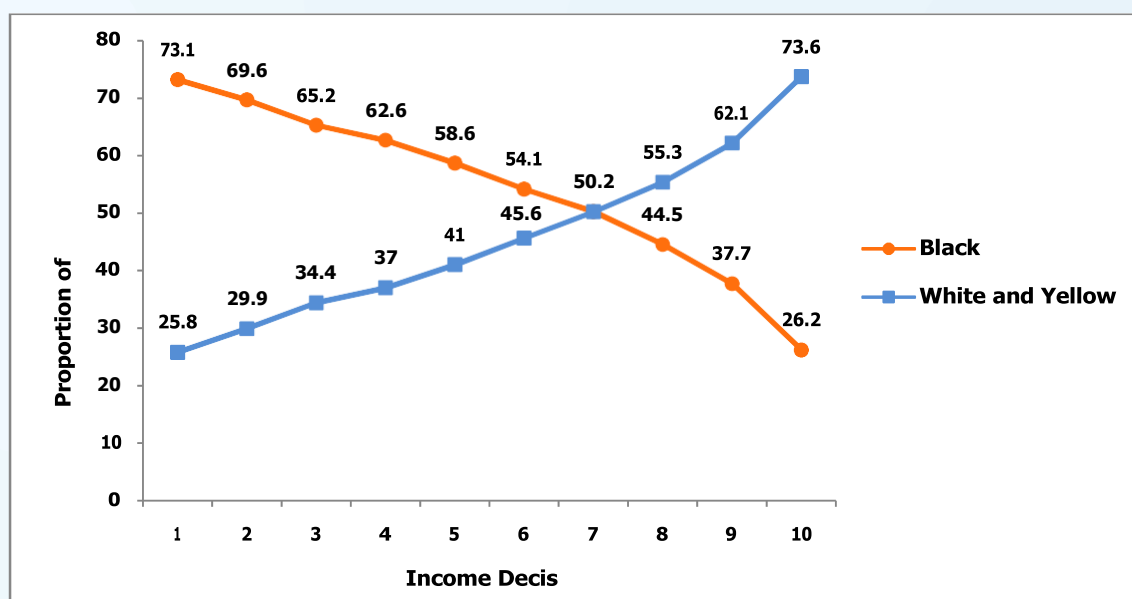
Given this reality, the study proposes the answer to the question of what explains the phenomenon. The greater victimization

of black individuals, especially young people, would only be a consequence of a worse socio-economic positioning of this population group, or it may directly or indirectly reflect racism.

In fact, in 2014, among the poorest 10% of the Brazilian population, 73.1% were black or brown, while 25.8% of the poorest were white or yellow. The situation was reversed at the other end of the distribution, when 73.6% of the wealthiest 10% were white or yellow, while black individuals represented 26.2% of this group (Cerqueira and Coelho, 2017). Graph 10 exposes this situation, guiding the defenders' arguments that the problem is only linked to the socioeconomic position of black individuals.

However, Cerqueira and Coelho (2017) argue that part of the difference in socioeconomic conditions between black and non-black individuals stems from racism, either due to discriminatory educational policies and practices or discrimination in the labor market, as shown above.

Graph 10: Appropriation of household income per capita by race/skin color by Decis, Brazil, 2014 (in %).



Source: PNAD/IBGE 2014. *Elaboration:* Cerqueira and Coelho (2019).

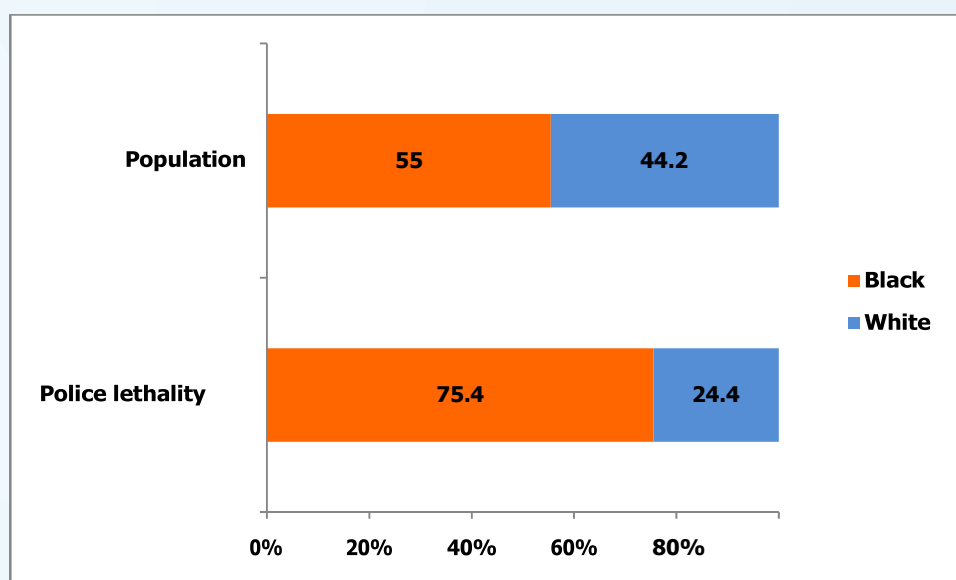
However, in addition to the two factors, the authors indicate direct channels to link racism and lethality of black individuals, such as the perpetuation of stereotypes as dangerous or criminal individuals, implies a reification process. These individuals are not perceived based on their individual identity but only by their skin color, leading to a process of profound dehumanization and dramatically increasing their chances of victimization.

According to the authors, the direct association between racism and lethality occurs through institutional racism, in which diffuse actions in the daily lives of specific state organizations end up reinforcing color prejudice. The police operation is highlighted, and it is not difficult to collect situations in which police approaches and excessive use of force are completely differentiated when relations occur with black citizens. An example of the dehumanization process is the popular saying in the police media that “a still black individual is suspect, black individual running is a bandit” (CERQUEIRA; COELHO, 2017).

This scenario is corroborated by the data brought in the Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública of 2019 on the profile of victims of police lethality: constituting about 55% of the Brazilian population, black individuals are 75.4% of those killed by the police (graph 11).

The second mechanism indicated in the study relates to media coverage of black and white deaths. The death of black (and poor) individuals is often not even reported or, when it is, ends up stigmatizing the image of the victim as a “criminal”, “trafficker”, or “vagrant” (despite investigation or any judicial conviction that the person has suffered). On the other hand, the death of white people (and of the middle class) is repeated and problematized in newspapers. As the process of criminal prosecution, which begins with the investigation, is strongly influenced by the media repercussion, the death of white individuals implies a greater chance of accountability and punishment of the author. In contrast, inquiries into the death of black individuals often end up unsolved. In turn, such a phenomenon is perceived by potential aggressors, which in some way contributes to shaping their decisions (CERQUEIRA; COELHO, 2017).

Graph11: Demographic composition and deaths from police interventions in Brazil between 2017 and 2018 (%).



Source: Analysis produced from the microdata of the police records and the Public Security and/or Social Defense State Secretariats; IBGE. Elaboration: Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública

Therefore, if racism indirectly influences the greater lethality of black individuals by deepening social inequalities, it also directly impacts the number of homicide victims.

Conclusion

In this issue of the bulletin of the Observatory of Inequalities, we analyzed the impacts of racial inequality in Brazil from three perspectives: education, labor market, and security. Concerning educational inequalities, we have seen that black students make up the highest failing and dropout rates, which results in the lowest net tuition rates at all levels of education. These data can be considered a reflection of some discriminatory mechanisms, such as the segregation of black and white individuals between public and private schools and racism by the teachers. Despite all the challenges still present, Brazil presented a remarkable achievement in

2018, with black students representing the majority in public universities.

Educational differences are reflected in the Brazilian labor market: black individuals occupy the majority of the professions with the lowest incomes; they are minorities in management positions and the majority in informal work and among the unemployed and underutilized. However, not all inequality in the labor market results from educational inequality: for a similar schooling level, and whatever the educational level, black individuals receive less than white in Brazil.

Regarding the data on violence, we have seen that black individuals are the majority of homicide victims in Brazil, including regarding police lethality. The greater victimization of this population group can be attributed, in part, to its worse socioeconomic position, which is already the result of racism that generates inequalities in education and the labor market.

However, the genocide of the Brazilian black population, especially of young individuals, is also a direct reflection of racism, be it institutional, mainly manifested by the Brazilian police, or propagated by the media, which, in the few times it reports these deaths, ends up stigmatizing black victims.

Although we have not addressed the issue of black women more directly in this bulletin, we cannot fail to mention the importance of thinking about race relations articulated with gender discussions. Hooks (1995) highlights that the joint action of racism and sexism perpetuates an image in the collective cultural consciousness that women are inserted in society with the primary function of serving, thus highlighting that black women are treated as if they were more connected to the body than to the mind. Contributing to the debate on the condition of black women in Brazil, Nascimento (1990) also highlights the hypersexualization of black women as an element of this dynamic, in which black women are seen as more erotic or sexually ardent but not as someone with whom it is desirable to establish a formal and institutionalized relationship.

Clearly, the manifestations of racial inequality in Brazil go far beyond the limits of this bulletin and occur in such complex ways in our society that they are often impossible to measure in data. However, the information presented here is sufficient to show what should already be recognized by all Brazilians: the idea, widely propagated, that Brazil would be a racial democracy finds no correspondence either in the structural conditions of life or in the daily life of Brazilian society.

More than a deception, the myth of racial democracy serves to disqualify the denunciation of racism - often branded as victimhood or "mimimi" - and policies of affirmative action or of confronting racial inequalities - pointed out as unnecessary or, worse, privileges in a perverse inversion between those who suffer and those who are privileged in a racist society. In any case, failure to recognize individual, institutional, or structural racism and its role in the reproduction of social inequalities in Brazil contributes to maintaining the status quo of a social structure that is still so unjust and violent and an obstacle and delay to the construction of an inclusive society that recognizes and protects the dignity of all citizens; that will become, in fact, a gentle mother of all the children of this soil.



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