



## **CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: DECONSTRUCTING RACIAL PREJUDICE IN THE SCHOOL SPACE**

*Ana Paula de Carvalho Fernandes Colombo<sup>1</sup>*

*Keity Bordignon Rocha Dutra<sup>2</sup>*

*Sawana Araújo Lopes<sup>3</sup>*

### **ABSTRACT**

It is observed that racial prejudice is a sad reality experienced even in school spaces. Admitting its existence and thinking about how to deconstruct it is the obligation of every citizen. Thus, understanding the act of reading as a pedagogical and methodological action capable of transforming society, it is proposed to use literature as a proposal to explore the theme of ethnic-racial relations. Thus, the main objective of this article is: To evaluate the guidelines of Law n° 10.639/2003 in the educational field, as well as to demonstrate how children's literature can be an important pedagogical tool to help deconstruct racial prejudice. Methodologically, the research assumes a qualitative character and is characterized by bibliographical analysis with documental Law n° 10.639/2003. The analysis of the Law problematizes the discussion about the existence of current legislation that guides the pedagogical work carried out by educators and the proposal to use reading and literature as actions to deconstruct racial prejudice. In this perspective, the school actually assumes its democratic role, with a curriculum that contemplates diversity, in which the school presents itself as an inclusive space. This is the wish of people who are really committed to education and who hope that through conscious work on the subject of ethnic-racial relations there will be a fairer and more equal society of rights, where mutual respect and diversity are a constant practice in human life.

**Keywords:** Literature, Racial Prejudice, Identity.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Racial prejudice, unfortunately, is still very present in our society, prejudice that is observed from a very early age in our schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Specialist in School Management by IFSC/ Campus Tubarão/SC.

<sup>2</sup> Specialist in Pedagogical Coordination by UFSC/Campus Florianópolis/SC.

<sup>3</sup> PhD in Education.



A feeling materialized in some children who receive this burden of discrimination from their parents.

The child, in his thinking and in his identity construction process, ends up unconsciously committing acts of prejudice against blacks, making this prejudiced culture perpetuate from generation to generation.

Knowing that literature is an instrument of great value to educate and inform readers, it can also be considered as a great tool to address different topics with regard to racial prejudice, which can influence both positively and negatively in the construction of personality and identity our children.

When dealing with discrimination, some works of children's literature presented to children, portray in a simple and direct way the issue of racial prejudice, valuing and praising black culture.

Leading the little reader to perceive and reflect on existing issues in relation to people's physical differences, showing that black is different from white, which in turn is different from oriental, yellow, red. And that, consequently, each culture must be respected, valued, cultivating its roots and helping to build the history of humanity.

On the other hand, there are other well-known works of literature in the children's universe, such as traditional tales, for example, which end up revealing a certain discrimination, even if implicitly about the characters, establishing standardized and elitist stereotypes of beauty and end up encouraging racial prejudice. Therefore, the guiding question of this article is: "How can children's literature collaborate in the deconstruction of racial prejudice?".

Making adults stop being prejudiced is an arduous, difficult and, from a certain point of view, almost impossible task, since this prejudice is already naturalized in many people.



This fact is prevented, it is that we must bet on a conscientious methodology, that is, work with a literature that addresses diversity, so that this child can perceive the differences naturally and, thus, little by little, we will be able to eradicate racial prejudice in our society.

The main objective of this article is: to evaluate the guidelines of Law n° 10.639/2003 in the educational field and to demonstrate how children's literature can be used as a pedagogical tool to help deconstruct racial prejudice.

So, we can say that this article seeks to enable educators and people involved with education to reflect on the issue of racial prejudice; making children's literature an ally in the formation of critical citizens capable of understanding social inclusion, capable of understanding cultural diversity and, above all, respecting and accepting differences.

Therefore, we will approach the following topics: Children's literature and racial prejudice, Law n° 10.639/03 and discussions about the chosen theme, it is important to emphasize that this theme arose from the need to explore the issues that involve respect for diversity in the classroom.

In the first topic, we will analyze the role of literature in the construction of each one's identity, as well as how it can collaborate on issues involving racial prejudice, reviewing concepts, teacher training, planning and everything that makes the school a democratic and inclusive space. .

Then, we will explain about Law n° 10.639/2003, its objective, its practice within the teaching units and the curriculum for diversity. In the last topic, the methods used and possible discussions will be presented, about children's literature as an agent in the process of school inclusion, in the deconstruction of racial prejudice, guaranteeing access for all, the permanence and success of students, respecting their individualities and helping them build their identity in a positive way.



In the final considerations, we will reflect on the urgent need to work on issues that involve racial prejudice and, thus, realizing through a critical and peculiar look how children's literature can help us to overcome the challenges of forming a just and aware society of their rights and duties, which must be based on mutual respect, fraternity and peace among nations so that people can live better with those they consider “different”.

### **CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND RACIAL PREJUDICE**

In the society in which we live, new concepts and new educational proposals have led us towards a more conscious, transformative and, above all, inclusive education, in which people's ethnic, cultural, moral and religious diversity is respected.

We live in a world where personal and physical differences are a constant, that is, to be part of the normal group is to have your specificities considered different, as this is one of the common characteristics of human beings.

However, we observe that in many situations to be different, whether by color, creed, way of being or dressing, is to be a victim of prejudice or discrimination. Ziraldo (2005, p. 20) exemplifies:

They had been together practically since the day they were born, playing, talking, making things up, fighting, rolling in the grass, punching each other in the face, making up, fighting again, walking in the square, playing at school. , always together, always laughing, always inventing fashion. And they had never worried about one being one color and the other being another. Now, they wanted to know what was white and what was black and whether that made the two different.

Thus, a lot has been sought to understand, because in the 21st century we can perceive our society as victimizing and stimulating racial prejudice and, perhaps the worst, even within educational institutions this prejudice is perpetuated and taught to our children.

Literature is a reflection of certain social, historical and cultural contexts. Therefore, it is its role to be an auxiliary instrument in learning, and



to demonstrate the current historical context and the vast cultural plurality in which we are inserted, for children.

Thus, we observe that:

To live democratically in a plural society, it is necessary to respect and value the ethnic and cultural diversity that constitutes it. Due to its historical formation, Brazilian society is marked by the presence of different ethnic groups, cultural groups, descendants of immigrants of different nationalities, regions and languages (BRASIL, 2006, p. 9).

So, for this to really happen, it is necessary to understand that in order to have an education for diversity, it is necessary to guarantee an ethnic conscience and that some stereotypes begin to be rethought, mainly those related to the figure of the black character that, until recently, did not he was mentioned in literary works, except as a slave.

Navarro (2009, p.23), states that “Nowadays, it is necessary to live well with those who are different, to know how to relate to diversity”, thus cultural, ethnic, religious and gender diversity needs to be considered in the more diverse learning situations and the look of the educator, in relation to these issues is important for the constitution of a more human subject.

In this way, the great relevance of reading in the formation of this little being who craves new knowledge at all times is highlighted, since it is in the childhood phase that the human being is constituting his personality, recognizing his identity and begins to assimilate some values primordial humans to live in society.

Elias (2011, p. 51) contributes:

Values are taught and learned in living together, through the example of people who are supportive, know how to dialogue, are fair, fight for human rights. They are transmitted in coexistence, as well as in other aspects of life. [...] With values, the process is very similar. When someone observes another person acting with justice, there is an attunement with the value of justice in question, which awakens and nourishes the observer. Values are experienced in the environment itself, in reality and in the context in which students live



In today's society, the educator's gaze could not be in another direction, but in search of transformation, in the construction of a subject who knows and respects diversity, as Freire (2002, p. 39) tells us that “Teaching it demands risk, acceptance of the new and rejection of any form of discrimination”. Thus, seeking new pedagogical practices that help to eradicate racial prejudice from the school environment should be the choice of every professional.

It is important that the student is considered as a subject who has rights, duties and, above all, who has an identity, a life story to be respected by those around him and thus understand that one is not the same as the other, Greive (2006, p. 30-34) makes us reflect:

Why do we like to feel like we're a member of a species, yet build so many defensive walls around our feelings that we can never get really close with anyone? Perhaps the confusion exists because life is not always what it seems. As a species we are obsessed with appearance.

As teachers, we are full of values and principles that are different from our students and in the learning situation it is necessary to consider, first of all, the cultural diversity that makes up the classroom.

For this, it is important to abandon religious, ethnic, beauty, etc., standards (or at least try to) and emphasize diversity itself, whether in murals, photos, books, in the choice of films, which portray black people, the indigenous people, the eastern people and their respective cultural and religious traditions so that respect and appreciation of differences are developed. According to Freire (2006, p. 39-40):

The prejudiced practice of race, class, gender offends the substantivity of the human being and radically denies democracy. How far from it do we find ourselves when we live with the impunity of those who kill children in the streets, those who murder peasants who fight for their rights, those who discriminate against blacks, those who demean women.

In schools, the curricular contents are comprehensive and complex, many times, they bring contents that are disconnected from the reality and the real needs of the students, we know that a lot of knowledge and values are



built in the daily situations experienced by the children, so we can use these situations to valuing respect, love, the differences of human beings, which should also be prioritized as important content.

We find in schools, groups of students, in the most diverse age groups, participating or being victims of situations of discrimination, acts, gestures and even words of prejudice, of course in a classroom, there will be many differences. “And why are we so fussy about our disagreements, when in fact it is our differences that make life more interesting?” (GREIVE, 2006, p. 25); understanding that we can learn and evolve with differences is a way to overcome prejudices.

However, under no circumstances should the educator remain silent in such situations, with his role as mediator, he should take advantage of the situation and make those involved realize the seriousness of such acts and understand that differences are normal.

The school, as a training space for future citizens and as a learning environment, has the function of contributing to the deconstruction of these prejudiced stereotypes, and children's literature can be a great ally, if well explored in the school context.

So, it is also the educator's role to deconstruct these stereotypes, "the teacher needs to adapt his function today, to teach, to educate in the globalized world, even to profoundly transform the dominant model of globalization, essentially perverse and excluding", as stated by Gadotti (2003, p. 21), proposing a reflection on the transformative role played by the educator.

The elaboration of the Pedagogical Political Project of the school units can guarantee a pedagogical work focused on reading and literature, and mainly to implement the theme of ethnic-racial relations in the school routine.





Thus, the importance of this document that guides the work of the school requires a certain commitment on the part of the educator who must be clear about what the act of planning is, Ostetto (2000, p.199) states that:

Planning is this attitude of tracing, designing, programming, elaborating a roadmap to undertake a journey of knowledge, interaction, multiple and meaningful experiences with the group of children.

And planning cannot be just another document to be shelved, nor can it be limited to a list of contents to be worked on in each discipline, planning must be flexible, adapt to the reality of students and the needs of each class, address cross-cutting themes and explore cultural and ethnic aspects. Ostetto (2000, p.177) thus defines the act of planning:

Pedagogical planning is a critical attitude of educators towards their teaching work That's why it's not a form! On the contrary, it is flexible, as such, it allows educators to rethink, revise, and seek new meanings for their pedagogical practice.

School education must consider the diversity of each student as an essential part of learning, meeting the specific needs of certain students, analyzing each student's learning possibilities and evaluating the effectiveness of the methods used.

The basis for the transformation of a people and the responsibility for the formation process of any society, opening the way for the expansion of the citizenship of a nation.

Therefore, it is the role of the school, the democratization and the commitment with the formation of the human being. Forming critical, thinking and active citizens in a society that changes every day is one of the many characteristics and duties of education.

In the introduction of the National Curriculum Parameter, it is clear that being aware of diversity means considering not only the intellectual abilities and knowledge available to students, but also their interests and motivations. This set constitutes the student's overall capacity for learning at a given time. (BRASIL, 1998, p. 6).

In this way, both reading and literature are certainly opinion makers, sources of imagination, research possibilities and collaborators in learning.





Both undoubtedly can and should be considered as effective means for building the child's personality and affirming their identity.

Children's literature can be an agent in the fight against racial prejudice, from the moment that everyone has access to books that present black, indigenous and other characters, as protagonists, heroes, princes and princesses, and, all forms of access to other cultures from other peoples, which are part of our cultural diversity.

In the next subtopic, Law n° 10639/2003 is presented, which regulates and guides the work with the theme of ethnic-racial relations in school spaces, with the objective of eradicating racial prejudice.

### **LAW No. 10639/2003 AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION**

Our country seeks to implement the condition of a democratic place by law, emphasizing citizenship and human dignity, however, it is marked by a sad reality marked by acts of prejudice, racism and discrimination against blacks, who historically face great difficulties in gaining access , permanence and success in school.

According to the National Curriculum Parameters (1998, p. 51):

The school's great challenge is to invest in overcoming discrimination and make known the richness represented by the ethnocultural diversity that makes up the Brazilian sociocultural heritage, valuing the particular trajectory of the groups that make up society.

Africans have long been prevented from participating in school life and society as a whole, being mostly marginalized and excluded, for this very reason, they have been deprived of so many opportunities such as their intellectual and social development.

According to this context, Lopes (2006, p. 26) presents the:

Law no. 10,639, of January 9, 2003, amends Law n. 9394, of December 20, 1996, which establishes the Guidelines and bases of National Education, to include in the official curriculum of the education network the mandatory theme "Afro-Brazilian History and Culture, and other measures.



With the regulation of Law n° 10.639/03, the mandatory teaching of the History of Africa in the school teaching curriculum was implemented, and this decision historically rescues the contribution of blacks in the construction and formation of Brazilian society. However, not all professionals work on this content in the classroom, not because they do not know about the existence of the law, but because of so many banal excuses that demonstrate the practice of a professional who is not committed to inclusive learning.

The PCN's seek to announce that, respecting the cultural, regional, ethical, religious and political diversities that cross a multiple society, education can act in the process of building citizenship, having as a principle to achieve the ideal of a growing equality of rights among citizens. (BRASIL, 1998, p. 7).

To be successful in schools, teachers cannot improvise, that is, it is not enough to know Law n° 10.639/03, it is necessary and urgent to put it into practice.

The educator's mission is to undo this racist and discriminatory mentality that many students, parents and the school community itself present, overcoming the challenges of teaching the History of Africa and not concentrating its contents on European history and colonization.

The educator's role is to provide other views that can clash with common sense and promote debates in the classroom. For this, the teacher must be aware of new ideas in general, in addition to his specific field.

It is necessary to update and bring students new knowledge regarding prejudice, otherwise it will also be collaborating with racial discrimination and exclusion, as it is subject to common sense and the invisibility of the black character as an active in our society.

Even today, so long after the law was enacted, there is still a lot of resistance to working with the theme naturally in the classroom, the difficulty in working on these racial issues lies in the teachers' engagement. According to Silva (2012, p. 123):



A tendency to treat racial equality promotion policies in a circumscribed and specific way is identified in educational public policies, without consistently taking part in broader educational programs and projects.

The racial issue belongs to everyone, and cultural diversity is present at school and needs a careful look to meet its specificities through inclusive pedagogical proposals.

As we mentioned earlier, looking at these issues needs to be very creative and sensitive, activities need to be guided by this same look, and especially regarding the teacher's posture in the classroom, which must be in accordance with his actions and words.

In the school reality, there are quite diverse cultural characteristics and, the coexistence between different groups in the social and cultural planes are often marked by prejudice and discrimination; recognizing the importance of children's literature and encouraging the formation of the reading habit is a path that leads the child to develop imagination, emotions and feelings in a pleasant and meaningful way.

Literature should serve as a background for all disciplines, it instigates sensitivity and opens the way for creativity, access to works that work with the black character makes children know and recognize the real value of African culture. According to Lopes (2001, p. 265)

We teachers are, in fact, storytellers. We tell the history of humanity to our students. But the story we tell is not the story of a single people. Our mission is to tell the story of many peoples, in different times, who also had different ways of living.

However, it is necessary to reflect on certain issues and actions about racial prejudice, as suggested by the proposal of this article, the role of the educator is essential, determining for providing reflections that can clash with common sense, with myths and untruths about the issues racial.

Promoting debates in the classroom, preparing materials that meet the needs of the class, consciously selecting works of children's literature that deal with different cultures, selecting in the textbook only the significant contents,



texts and images, these are practices that will certainly help in the deconstruction of racial prejudice.

To do so, it is necessary to constantly update oneself and bring students new knowledge regarding racial prejudice, otherwise it will also be collaborating with discrimination and propagating the invisibility of the black character as active in our society.

Well, we know that it is at school, more specifically in the classroom, that the best transformations may or may not happen, and mainly because we believe that literature can and should be an instrument “agent in the fight against racial prejudice”.

### **THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL COURSE**

As for the problem researched, we can say that the approach used is qualitative, which according to Gonsalves (2011, p. 70) “[...] was concerned with understanding, with the interpretation of the phenomenon, considering the meaning that the others give to their practices, which imposes a hermeneutic approach on the researcher.”, in the movement for the search to understand reality, to identify a problem, but mainly in the search for notes on solutions, paths and reflections.

Thus, the theme of ethnic-racial relations inserted in the literature was chosen, precisely because we perceive the existence of racial prejudice in the environment in which we live and, mainly because of the urgency to eradicate this problem present in our society and in school spaces.

It was based on bibliographical research, seeking the contribution of authors on the theme presented, thus trying to answer the guiding question of this article, in which we seek to understand how children's literature can collaborate in the fight against racial prejudice. According to Gonsalves (2011, p. 36-37):

Its purpose is to put the researcher in contact with what has already been produced regarding his research topic. Bibliographical research is characterized by the use of secondary sources, that is, by the



identification and analysis of data written in books, magazine articles, among others. Its purpose is to put the researcher in touch with what has already been produced regarding his research topic.

This article will present the documental analysis of Law n° 10.639/2003, verifying the possibilities of applying it in the daily school life through reading and children's literature. Gonsalves (2011, p. 34) conceptualizes documentary research as someone who “resorts to materials that have not yet received analytical treatment, that is, primary sources”, which seek to accurately portray and directly relate to the researched documents.

So, to enable a reflection on the issue of racial prejudice still present in our society, using children's literature to contribute to the formation of critical citizens capable of social inclusion, capable of understanding cultural diversity and, above all, respecting and accept the differences.

### **LITERATURE AS A POSSIBILITY OF DECONSTRUCTING RACIAL PREJUDICE IN THE SCHOOL SPACE**

While reading the contribution of the researched authors for the preparation of this article, we verified that Law n° 10639/2003 guides the work of educators on the theme of ethnic-racial relations. According to Gomes (2011, p.9):

Law 10.639/03 and its guidelines need to be understood within the complex field of Brazilian race relations on which they affect. This means going beyond the adoption of specific programs and projects aimed at ethnic-racial diversity carried out randomly and discontinuously. It implies the inclusion of the racial issue in the country's educational goals, in the National Education Plan, in state and municipal plans, in school management and in pedagogical and curricular practices in a more forceful way.

Through reading and literature, children understand the importance of respecting others as they really are, and especially what our attitudes reveal to us in the most different situations.

However, some educators, for the most part, approach this theme only on commemorative dates, with a certain insecurity, although they know the



law 10.639/2003 and recognize the importance of it being worked on in the classroom. Gomes (2011, p. 12) contributes by stating that:

It is important to realize that Law 10.639/03 and its guidelines represent the implementation of affirmative actions aimed at the black Brazilian population, which are (and should!) be developed together with public policies of a universal nature. This is a political demand of the Black movement today and of other social movements participating in the anti-racist struggle in the construction of democracy. A democracy that assumes the right to diversity as a constitutive part of social rights and thus more systematically equates ethnic-racial diversity, equality and equity.

Thus, believing that it is possible to build a more just and egalitarian society in terms of rights, we conclude that through children's literature we can indeed collaborate to deconstruct racial prejudice and live in harmony with diversity. The school, from a perspective of building citizenship, should be concerned with valuing different cultures, providing different social groups with access to knowledge.

Quality education must also seek to form citizens capable of critically interfering in reality and transforming it, it must encourage the potential and capabilities of each individual.

Finally, the social function of education is to break paradigms, it is to do everything possible so that students can learn to build their history and, above all, to help create a different history, in which citizenship be present and that people become better.

And, this is how school and education will overcome their constant challenges, overcoming one by one, short but constant steps, believing that it is capable of transforming itself through education, that it is capable of forming citizens capable of building an identity, not to conform, to be concerned about injustice and oppression, to fight for a better and fairer world.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

In reading, children find a source of fantasy and imagination, bring to their reality and to their world what they read in books, so it is essential that



they can see in books the ethnic and cultural diversity that surrounds them in the world in a way Natural.

The main objective of this article would be to evaluate the guidelines of Law n° 10.639/2003 in the educational field and demonstrate how children's literature can be an important pedagogical tool to help deconstruct racial prejudice.

So, to enable a reflection on the issue of racial prejudice still visible in our society, using children's literature to contribute to the formation of critical citizens capable of social inclusion, capable of understanding cultural diversity and, above all, respecting and accept the differences.

It is verified that literature can and should be an agent instrument in the deconstruction of racial prejudice is that activities must be planned through literary works, storytelling that not only praise but also value black culture.

It is perceived that the role of the educator, in the process of deconstructing racial prejudice, is really challenging, because the teacher has a great responsibility, that of transforming, liberating, raising awareness and many other words that we would not know how to express here. , to ensure meaningful and relevant learning for your student.

The great challenge of those involved with education, perhaps, is to make the stories that are taught establish meaningful relationships with the interests of the students, breaking with the prejudice and discrimination of a society that believes that with the transfer of certain contents, it fulfills your role.

But that is not enough, it is not enough to be part of a society if I am not part of it, if I am not active in it, if I cannot make decisions and be truly valued for its identity.





But the truth is that education glimpses hope, hope for change in the world we live in, it may sound like demagoguery, or even utopia, but that is what we have to emphasize here.

It is the role of the school to make people believe that through it we can grow socially, really know and transform society, seeing ourselves as active beings capable of making a difference, these at least are the perspectives of those who really believe in a transforming education.

Thus, the school, by taking upon itself the objective of forming citizens capable of acting consciously with criticality and autonomy in society, will also be seeking for itself the commitment to teach what is really necessary so that students can exercise their rights and duties with dignity.

The school as a reading space, plays its role by developing individual potential in a social context, promoting equality to people who are so different, as they bring with them social and affective aspects that deserve respect and a careful look to promote interaction.

The school space, from a perspective of building citizenship, should be concerned with valuing different cultures, providing different social groups with access to knowledge.

Thus, it is believed that it is possible to build a more just and egalitarian society in terms of rights, we conclude that through children's literature we can indeed collaborate to deconstruct racial prejudice and live in harmony with diversity, everyone just needs to do their part.

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